THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF THE AGROMARKETING IN THE VEGETABLE-FRUIT FIELD

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Abstract: The aim of the present paper is to review the literature in the field of agromarketing for vegetables and fruits. The paper includes aspects which differentiate the agromarketing form marketing, the aspects related to the demand and offer of the agroalimentary products as well as the aspects concerning the consumer’s behavior in relation with purchasing vegetables and fruits. Since the recent research disclosed confusion among the customers in what the consumption of the fresh vegetables and fruits vs. BIO products concerns, the present paper highlights in the final part research results, which emphasize the main reasons for which the customers prefer BIO products.

Key words: agromarketing, agribusiness, vegetables-fruits, agro-alimentary marketing

INTRODUCTION

The first action (N. Paina, et al., 1996, p.1) which incorporates marketing elements seemingly belongs already in 1790 to a hatter who hired an artist to design hat models for stylish ladies in New York. This artist was performing also practical demos in the city streets. Thus, these are two activities (product development and its advertisement) that have leaded to an immediate raise of the turnover. The first marketing publication was issued around 1915 being authored by R.S. Butler and entitled Marketing Methods. Less than an year latter, in 1916 is published the paper of Mac-Millan company (written by Wfed L.D.H., 1916, p.10) entitled The Marketing of Farm Products. Hence, the origin of agro-marketing coincides with the origin of marketing, is a branch of it, being an integrative component of the agribusiness, including all of the activities with contribute to the production coordination, distribution and promotion of the agro-alimentary products in agreement with the consumer demands.

In a broad sense, the agribusiness includes the activates situated upstream with respect to the framer, which offers the agriculture the resources for the production as well as the activities downstream of the farmer: collection, preparation, distribution and marketing of the agricultural products. In many of these activities within the economy of developed countries large companies are involved many of them operating beyond the national frontiers (Carter, S., 1996).

A key feature of Agricultural Marketing is a micro approach modern agribusiness. Agricultural Marketing micro level is defined as “the performance of business activities that direct goods and services to customers and meets the objectives of the enterprise management” (Manole, V. et al, 2011). The main purpose is to meet its business objectives and maximize profits.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The authors of the paper were used as methods of work: data collection, processing, analysis, observation and their interpretation.
RESEARCH RESULTS

Characteristics of demand for agricultural products

Demand for final consumption of food is different from the demand for food products that require transformation (processing) and involves a different request endorsed by processors on production market and it is called demand for production.

Consumer needs is likely physiological (hunger and thirst), food products ensuring human body needs nutrients for the normal metabolic processes, man needing water, proteins, carbohydrates, lipids, minerals and vitamins.

According to some analyzes (Funar, S., 1999), based on the weight of energy and protein needs of different food for human feeding 9 geographical zones were determined based on the prevailing share of different food groups. Thus, Romania is in the B zone where food caloric intake has the following structure: 39% cereals, fats and sugar in the same proportion 13%, 11% meat and fish, eggs and milk 10%, 7% succulent roots, fruits and vegetables 4%, 3% legumes. Protein requirement consists of: cereals 39%, 26% meat and fish, eggs and milk 22%, 5% succulent roots, legumes and fruits 4%.

Endogenous factors related to the nature of the person and can influence food consumption are: income, age, gender, body size, mental activity, physical effort, etc. metabolic peculiarities. Exogenous factors are: climate, working conditions of the individual, pathological, fatigue, environment etc. Committee for determination of the energy needs within F.A.O (1985) demonstrated that reduction of the temperature with 10°C, increases the energy requirements of the body by about 3% and a temperature increase by 10 °C, decreases the requirements by about 5%.

Subjective factors that may influence the demand for agricultural products and are related to the individual are: preferences, desires, aspirations, perceptions about the different products on the market. These factors are very sensitive to product disembodied components such as brand, price, provenance, etc. In the case of fresh food consumers show their willingness to pay more for a brand, but studies show that it would be more effective if companies were to create a global brand to customize to local needs, a strategy called "think globally and act locally" (YHH Jin et al., 2011, pp.141-152).

After four experiments conducted by Raghunathan et al. (2006, pp. 170-184) on healthy foods and less healthy, a marketing study authors have drawn the same conclusions, namely that less healthy products are preferred due to taste, enjoy more time that has be to assign one cooking healthy product, and always consumers prefer to choose taste on the expense of the quality. Upon further investigation by Garg et al. (2007, pp.194-206) it was found that sad, unfortunate people consume large amounts of unhealthy food, but their use would decrease dramatically if they really know the harmful elements of these food, whereas when they are happy, people tend to consume larger amounts of healthy food. Campaigns are carried out by marketing managers and health professionals to limit the consumption of unhealthy foods, but consumers should be aware of the need to make individual efforts.

Tangible elements of food products such as taste, odor, color, appearance, flavor, consistency and freshness (How BR, 1995) are major factors influencing purchasing decisions, demand is higher in those products that generate pleasurable sensations. Private shops regard freshness as a particularly important attribute in products such as meat, fruits and vegetables, fresh fish (Esbjerg, 2004). At the same time, the literature suggests filtering of the shelf products for making efficient the assortments (Boatwright, P., Nunes, JC, 2001, pp.50-53), (Broniarczyk, SM, et. Al., 1998, pp. 166-177) (Cadeaux, JM, 1999, pp.367-377).
The sector of fruits and vegetables provides ample opportunity for differentiation and creating its image and identity store "display attractive, fresh and colorful shop entrance is a symbol of quality." (Wilson, 2000, pp.6-17).

Following a study in Switzerland it was shown that people have a right sensory perception of freshness of products (feathers, S. et al., 2009, pp.243-256). Product differentiation is less through energy and biological characteristics, and much more through sensory properties. This type of differentiation increases the role of the subjective nature factors in the event of market demand.

Bech-Larsen, T. and Esbjerg L. (2006, pp.87-102) studied the characteristics of the image of the sector dedicated to fruits and vegetables in order to see if they have influence in the creation of the whole image of the store in the minds of consumers, and in what extent they affect the image. The authors concluded that the image created by the sector of fruits and vegetables positively influence consumer attitudes towards products as such, consumer attitudes towards store and quantities of fruit and vegetables bought from the store.

Evans A.E. et al. (2012, pp. 1137-1143) conducted a pilot study to assess whether only the introduction of farm stands (without other marketing strategies) in low income communities increases consumption of fruit and vegetables. Such studies have been performed with positive results, but in those cases additional strategies such as vouchers and nutrition education were used. (Racine et al., 2010, pp. 195-202), (Kropf et al., 2007, pp.1903-1908), (Anderson et al., 2001, p.195-202) (Herman et al., 2008, pp.98-105) and (Galfond et al., 1991, pp.1991). Results showed a significant increase in consumption based on increasing awareness and changing attitudes for healthy eating.

**Characteristics of agricultural product supply**

For small producers agriculture works with different constraints as compared to large scale agriculture producers (Poole, N. et al., 2003, pp.551-557) (Pichon, FJ, Uquillas, JE, 1997, pp.479-514) (Marsh, RR, Runsten, D., 1996) (Valdes, C., 1994, pp.20-23). The will of small agricultural producers in developing countries to participate in global markets is an important driver of economic and social progress for all developing countries (Rock MT, 2002, pp.485-510). Trade liberalization is fueling this desire, but their attempt to navigate through increasingly complex and global supply chains, has led small farmers to their limit of affordability. (Van der Meer, 2006).

Due to globalization the rules of the market changed (Ghezán et al., 2002, pp.389-408) (Van Der Meer, op.cit); it passed from eating foods containing often differentiated services, to mass consumption of standardized products. Another major change was the sold amount which created a great disadvantage to small firms (Cacho, J., 2003, pp.1162-1173) (Goldman, A. et al., 1999 pp.126-139) (Kumcu, E ., Kumcu, ME, 1987, pp. 26-40) (Shultz, CJ et al., 2005, pp.24-37). Also, the prices set in open markets are more rare; more often are those established by contracts with better coordination therefore also sale conditions have changed (Singh, S., 2005, pp.217-34) (Stanton, JV , Burkink, TJ, 2008, pp.199-210)

Stock agricultural merchandises is a market that trades only agricultural products standardized, interchangeable. On this market leading manufacturers and traders can sell wholesale and here can buy both processors and wholesale traders.

Processors market is established for those products that require a change to become food or for products which by improvement receive another destination. On this market can sell manufacturers and wholesalers, and the act of buying can be done by wholesale merchants and retail and direct consumers who prefer direct supply from the processor.
Wholesale markets are available for both unprocessed and processed products as in this category fall large refrigerated warehouses or centers for fruits and vegetables. Producers can sell in this market, processors and enter goods purchased on the stock exchange, and the purchase may be made in the present case retailers and processors.

Retail markets ensure the distribution of agricultural products to end users, the vendors being represented by retailers, farmers, processors respectively, while buyers are the final consumers. This category includes peasant farmers markets, generally located in urban areas which are appreciated in general, due to product freshness. Direct marketing of agricultural products by the farmer to the consumer is increasing in popularity and prevalence in the past decade (Shore, R., 2010).

Perner L. (2006) argues that the significant difference between the prices of agricultural products and food prices is due to low labor negotiation of farmers in the relations with the economical agents placed downstream in the distribution circuit. Therefore, farmer incomes are significantly lower than those of the processors, and those of large retailers. It is estimated that farmers receive less than 5% of the price paid by consumers for wheat.

**Features of purchase and consumption behavior**

Food purchasing and consumption behavior of individuals defined by M. Diaconescu (2005, p.32) is "all response reactions to internal or external stimuli that requires food intake ... comprises a series of reactions and innate reflex responses through experience gained in the course of life."

A survey conducted in India, a growing market (Ali, J., Kapoor, S., Moorthy, J., 2010, pp.109-124) which has studied the determinants of fruit and vegetable consumption, clearly indicates that fruit and vegetables are most often purchased from nearby markets by women while men are willing to buy from greater distances. The criteria underlying the decision point of purchase selections in order of importance were: quality, packaging and storage of goods, price and in the last place the convenience of purchase. Also, services such as: toilet, parking, ATMs, phone booth, pharmacies begin to outline their importance in choosing the buying place.

During the period 2000-2005, a study by Howlett et. al (2012, pp.17-20) on marketing programs funded by the U.S. has found that in areas where there has been no marketing campaign, the consumption of fruits and vegetables was significantly lower than in areas where the campaign was organized.

The decision to purchase is largely determined by subjective factors such as the characteristics of the distribution unit, the services associated with the product, the product information. A study on vegetable food prices undertaken in 1999 (La Via G., AMD Nucifora, 2002 pp.319 - 336) in several EU countries, in 47 of the largest retail stores specializing in the food products, revealed that almost half of the retail price of the products investigated are unit features distribution and product related information and services.

In a study on people with low incomes, Blitstein et al. (2012, pp.1-6) concluded that such people buy more fruits and vegetables if they like the place where they shop. They also found that when fruits and vegetables are associated by the buyer with a pleasant place, they will buy even if the price is higher. Therefore, the authors warn the marketing managers that only with rich offers they will not get an increase in sales, since they must take into account the appearance and quality of the point of sale.

Consumption habits are transmitted from generation to generation vertically, influencing each new generation. Our eating habits are largely determined by the attitudes
that are acquired in childhood, and they evolve in response to environmental, life experiences, many products combined with a huge number of purchases over a lifetime. All these factors create challenges in understanding purchasing behavior. (Hughner, R., et al., 2007, pp. 94-110)

A recent study to find tomato consumer preferences conducted in three European countries (Netherlands, France and Italy) showed that preferences were quite homogeneous across countries and the country of origin, culture and practice food is segmentation variables market. Tomato taste and texture are two important criteria in customer satisfaction, followed by its appearance. (Causse, M. et al., 2010, pp. S531-S541).

Penetration of new products in the market and their familiarity can create problems if the eating habits are unknown. Carlos J. et al. (2012, pp. 397-416) studied consumers in three countries (Germany, the UK and the Netherlands) and found that familiarity with the product has an effect on the relationship between indications of origin of products and the image perceived by the consumer and that significant differences in perception between the three nationalities exist. Another study to show that there is a "country of origin effect" has revealed a direct link between consumer's positive image of Brazil and its positive attitude towards Brazilian fresh fruit. (Giraldi, J.M.E., Lopes I.B. 2012, pp.18-38)

In China, in recent years, has increased significantly the consumption of fresh fruit, but decreased the consumption of fresh vegetables. (Liu, KE et al., 2011, pp. 276-296) A study that examined customer expectations has highlighted four main criteria to re-buy fresh food supermarket: product value (quality, variety, quantity and safety of fresh food in supermarket), the service (attitude of supermarket workers), the cost of products (fresh food prices and promotion sensitivity) and two demographic criteria (consumer education, marital status). (Wu, YL. Et al., 2010, pp.289-294).

**BIO market**

In recent decades the EU increased consumption of fresh vegetables (green and non ecological) and fish at the expense of red meat and dairy products. Specifically, consumption of fruit and vegetables in the EU increased from 34 kg/man/year in 1960 to 42 kg in 1999 (La Via, G., Nucifora, A.M.D., 2002, p.319). This change, with the upward trend is due to the increase in consumer income levels and to increased awareness of the importance of healthy eating (Bellia, F., 1987, pp. 235-48) (Connor, JM., 1994, pp. 155-73) (Senauer, B., 1990, pp. 412-30).

Organic foods have been analyzed from several perspectives and in many countries. In 20 years of research a substantial amount of information on how the marketing of organic products was introduced. The existence of organic food is a result of a long series of events, separated in different countries that began in the 1940s and 1950s. The concept of "organic farming" was born in Switzerland, in the writings of Muellers, Germany and Austria Rudolf Steiner which introduced the concept of "biodynamic agriculture" in the United States where the writings of Jerome Rodale talk about the soil and health, and in the UK Albert Howard and Eva Balfour introduced the concept of "organic farming" (Pearson D. et al., 2011, pp.171-177). Today, there is a general consensus on identifying products as different terminologies are used (eco, bio, organic, etc.) which practically mislead many consumers (Bhaskaran, S. et al., 2006, pp.677-690).

The reasons for buying organic food, with small differences due to the importance of cultural factors and demographic factors are: personal health, product quality and concern about the degradation of the natural environment. They have been identified (Tregear, A. et al., 1994, pp.21-25) and were validated by further inquiries (Hughner, R. et al., 2007, pp.94-110) (Pearson, D. et al., 2007, pp.1-9) (Ergin, E.A., Ozsaçmacı, B., 2011,
Healthy eating motivation occurs when the consumer believes that organic food is healthier or that these foods can have a positive impact on his health. For example, parents of babies and young children often become interested in organic food. Similarly, health and motivation occurs in older people or people who are ill and believe that organic food is a contributing factor in their recovery (Wandel, M., Bugge, A., 1997, pp.19-26) (Krisberg, K., 2006, p.19) (Lee, E., 2005) (Gunn, C.A. et al., 2013, p.23).

Although consumers consistently say that the main reason for buying organic food is a healthier diet, scientific findings do not support all this, saying only that they are more nutritious (Benbrook, C. et al., 2008) (Burton, S., 2006, pp.37-47).

A report by the Food Standards Agency in the UK in 2009 weighed organic benefits (vitamins, minerals and other properties that are considered to generate health) and negative aspects perceived non-organic foods (artificial chemicals used in production, processing and product storage). The report concludes that "there is no evidence of health benefit to eating the consumption of organic products to conventional products." (Dangour, A. (coord.), 2009, p.2).

The second reason cited for buying organic products, the quality in consumer perception is measured by two parameters: better taste and freshness. These parameters are specified, the more often, especially fresh fruit and vegetables (Pearson, D., Henryks, J., 2008, pp.95-108). But the quality of a product is subject to more variables and may vary depending on the individual consumer expectations and often it relates to a product acquired at a given time and for a specific use (Pearson D. et al., 2011, pp.171-177).

The third important reason mentioned for buyers who purchase organic products is the concern for the environment. In this case the evidences to support that organic farming is less damaging to the natural environment was not found (Fuller, R. et al., 2005, pp.431-434) (Mäder, P. et al., 2002, pp.1696–1697).


There is a gap between the positive attitude towards organic food and actual purchasing behavior (Shepherd, R., et al., 2005, pp.352-359), i.e. a positive attitude towards organic food does not necessarily translate into buying it (Pearson D. et al., 2011, pp.171-177). This gap was investigated (and by Padel, S., Foster, C., 2005, pp.606-625) leading to the conclusion that the decision to buy organic products is extremely complex and requires research additional compromises to see what consumers do. Perhaps this is because some people want to be healthy and eat organic food, but loses sight of this because it does not justify the higher price, giving priority to conventional foods (Pearson D. et al., 2011 pp.171-177).

The desire to segment the market of organic food buyers, most literature used demographics, but inconclusive. Research indicates that organic food buyers are in all demographic segments, with small significant trends: may have a higher level of education may have higher incomes, are women and have young children or can be vegetarian (Pearson, D., 2002, pp.31-34).

Zepeda, L., et al. (2006, pp.385-394) in their report stressed that when using only variables of gender, income, education, family and household size, results can be contradictory because people reasons are more complex.
CONCLUSIONS

We may conclude that although the origin agro marketing actually coincides with the origin of marketing, it is a branch of it, being an integral component of agribusiness, including all of the activities contributing to the coordination of production, distribution and promotion of food products in line with consumer demand.

At the same time, the penetration of small producers on the large markets of vegetables and fruits is practically limited both in terms of quantities produced and from the point of view of the lack of marketing. A new market, the one of organic products, is emerging and growing, being more accessible to small producers who have the advantage that they can be dynamic and prone to change.

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