

## QUALITY FOOD VERSUS NON QUALITY FOOD

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**Abstract:** *Food quality is considered to be particularly important for consumers. Therefore, a case study was carried out based on a questionnaire addressed to a representative sample for the population of the county of Sibiu. After data processing and analysis it was shown that the consumers' opinion on food products underlines the importance of food quality when products are purchased. The reason for the purchase of food that did not meet the organoleptic criterion was because of the incomplete and improper ticketing, which was answered by 53 % of consumers. Prevention of marketing food that does not meet the organoleptic criterion can be achieved by ncreasing the number of inspections carried out by the controlling authorities, which was answered by 37 % of consumers.*

**Key words:** *food product, quality, consumer, control, non quality*

### INTRODUCTION

The importance of the usage value of products in a market economy is regarded both in terms of goods produced, their volume and the characteristics that underlie their usefulness in the sense of their correlation with consumer needs. The major objectives pursued to be included in national and international regulations on agro-food products are: harmonization, organization, differentiation, maintenance and quality improvement (Constantin M., 2007, page 99).

Quality is in a certain relation to use value, it individualizes products in between themselves according to the number of the useful features they have and the way they correspond the usage field they were destined to (Boboc D., 2006, page 12).

Nowadays, quality is a particularly controversial subject because of multiple meanings that are found in various definitions that have been given to this concept. To give a dimension understood and accepted by all, the standard SR EN ISO 9000/2000 was adopted - Quality management systems, where quality is defined as "the extent to which a set of inherent characteristics meet the consumers' needs". The same standard states that the concept of quality can be accompanied by adjectives such as poor, good, excellent.

The goal of knowing the nature of the properties and characteristics aspiring to a certain level of quality involves the need to know the needs for which it is intended. The specificity of this approach to food products consists of assessing the nutritional value in all its forms - sensorial, energetically, biological, health and hygiene. (Diaconescu M., 2005, page 72). In this context the usefulness of a food product, i.e., the amount of use, required customization by the concept of nutritional value (Dima D-tru., Pamfilie R., Procopie R., 2001, page 199).

A food product is characterized not only by nutritional value, but also by the information elements which make it popular. A special role in this regard lies with the ticketing. The content of the informing message of the labels on commercialized products is regulated under different aspects: mandatory message, nutritional message, distinctive signs and messages of the quality. However, more and more manufacturers adhere to the idea of transforming the label into a true consumer guide to choosing products; by carrying

messages able to attract attention and highlight the strengths of the product (misleading the consumer is severely punished) (Diaconescu M., 2005, page 12). As a means of communication between industry, trade and consumer, fair and comprehensive labeling of food products represents a useful data base: for the consumer and the economic operators (Dima D-tru., Pamfilie R., Procopie R., 2001, page 211).

Traditionally, it is considered that the packaging is simultaneously a means of protection and preservation of food products, rationalization and streamlining trade flows, to inform consumers and promote products on the market.

Concerns regarding the adjustment of products to the needs and desires of consumers, but also to the rigors of law determined that the classic system of functions attributed to packages be filled with a number of new requirements which shall include: environmental protection; facilitating the food preparation of products; and improving the function of protection and preservation of agro-food products related to the packaging and its extension in the use area of the product (Diaconescu M., 2005, page 63).

At the same time, standardization for both consumers and producers has an important role.

The most important advantage offered by standardization is the improvement of products, processes and services chosen according to the desired purpose, the prevention of trade barriers and the facilitation of technological cooperation (Boboc D., 2006, page 38).

Standardization, together with certification, may have a decisive role in the convergent effort of both ensuring food quality and of providing the consumers with means to identify and recognize quality product. Standardization and certification can be useful tools for quality assurance and the grounding of distinctive signs for quality levels (Diaconescu M., 2005, page 72).

The standards for the economic factors are: rationalization of production factors; standard enables mastery of technical characteristics, to satisfy the customer, to validate manufacturing methods, to increase productivity, giving a sense of security to operators and providers (Diaconescu I., Ardelean D., Diaconescu M., 2007, page 57).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to answer whether consumers purchase quality or non-quality food, a case study was done on assessing consumer views on food purchase in the county of Sibiu. The data on the population structure was taken from the National Statistics Institute of Sibiu. The study was conducted between October 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> of 2013, as well as the pre-testing. The population of Sibiu is of 425 961 inhabitants. We determined the size of the sample. The formula used for determining the sample is  $n = z^2 * s^2 / s^2$ .

The probability of guaranteeing the research results is 95 %, to which the coefficient associated with the likelihood of ensuring research results is  $t = 1.96$  according to Annex 1 (Cătoiu I., 2009, page 719), and "n" emerged as  $n = 139$  consumers representing sample size. Using the quota method, a sample was built to serve the information. From the evaluation of the questionnaires it was shown that 136 subjects and 3 subjects do not

purchase food products. From the processing and assessing of data, it results that questions responding to consumers' opinion on food quality and non-quality foods are:

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### 1. Assessing the subjects' opinion on the influencing factors when they purchase a food product

When purchasing food products, 18% of the subjects focus on food quality and 11% on price. Perhaps subjects attach great importance on the quality-price relation. 6% of subjects attach importance to the chemical composition. 5% of subjects attach importance on the validity term and 60% of respondents consider all factors when purchasing food, as presented in Figure 1.

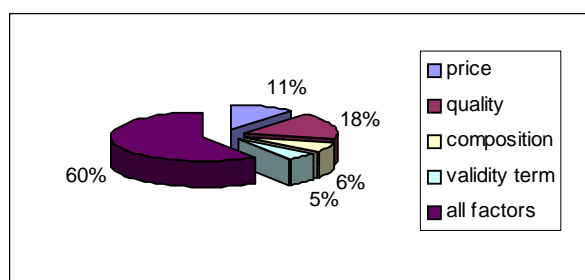


Figure 1. Distribution of influencing factors when choosing food products

### 2. Assessing the subjects' opinion on the reason that led to the purchase of food products that did not correspond in terms of organoleptic criterion

We selected the top four answers after having assessed the answers given by the subjects in this open question. See Figure no. 2: 41% of respondents purchased food products that did not meet the organoleptic point of view due to the fact that they rushed when they purchased. 53% of respondents stated the reason for purchasing certain food items that did not meet the organoleptic point of view was because of the incomplete and improper label. 6% of respondents indicated that the reason for purchasing certain food items that did not meet the organoleptic point of view was because the food products were frozen.

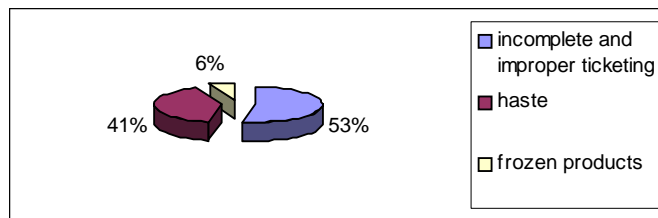
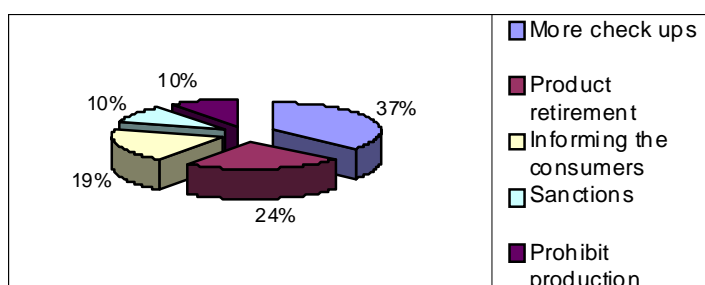


Figure 2. Percentage distribution of the reason that led to purchasing certain food products that did not meet organoleptic criterion

### 3. Assessing the subjects' opinion on the prevention of marketing food products that do not meet the organoleptic criterion

24% of respondents stated that food products that do not meet the organoleptic criterion should be retired from the market. 37% said there should be more frequent check ups from controlling authorities. 19% of consumers indicated that they needed to be better informed about the quality of food products. 10% of respondents pointed that there should be sanctions for those who sell food products that do not meet the organoleptic criterion. 10% of the respondents said that their production should be prohibited.



**Figure 3. Percentage distribution of the subjects' opinions on preventing the marketing of food products that do not meet organoleptic criterion**

The effects caused by the lack or insufficient regulations in the field of food products internationally accepted are particular and they materialize in the development of several types of risks:

- Risks of new non-tariff barriers against international economic exchanges, due to the absence of a recognized system of quality assessment and differentiation levels for products;
- Risks related to the average quality of products offered for sale which may experience a gradual alignment to a low quality, routine and uniformity or the emergence of a harmful competitive environment due to more or less successful imitation products;
- The inability of consumers to identify and distinguish the goods desired especially because of the pressure of advertising campaigns and of the multitude of products in a constant motion of renewal and diversification

(Diaconescu M., 2005, page 72).

Official controls shall be based on rules designed to ensure:

- Prevention, elimination or reduction of risks to acceptable levels for public health;
- Ensuring fair practices in food trade and protecting the interests of consumers, including food ticketing and other forms of informing the consumers (Dima Șt., 2007, page 8).

The main deviations found by ANPC in March 2014 are the following: minimal durability term was exceeded; violating the conditions of storage; organoleptic changes - color, appearance, texture and smell; damaged packaging; labeling deficiencies: incomplete elements, the information was not translated, missing price ([http://www.anpc.gov.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=featured&Itemid=72,04.04.2014](http://www.anpc.gov.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=72,04.04.2014), ora 11.12).

## CONCLUSIONS

Even if nowadays, the quality represents a particularly controversial, the widely accepted definition is the one according to the standard SR EN ISO 9000/2000. Standardization can have a decisive role in ensuring food quality and to provide consumers with a means to identify and recognize the quality product

After the assessment and the analysis of data, it was shown that the questions corresponding to the consumers' opinion on quality food products and non-quality food products, highlight the following: 60 % of respondents are considering all factors (price, quality, composition, validity term) when purchasing food products; 53 % of respondents stated that the reason for the purchase of food items that did not meet the organoleptic point of view was due to incomplete and improper ticketing and 37 % said there should be more frequent checks from controlling authorities.

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