

CERTIFICATION OF FOOD PRODUCTS AND THE IMPACT ON THE MARKET

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ABSTRACT

Insecure food has always been a problem, even now days, that's the government is obligate to control food chain. Product certification is a process that aims to prove that the production process of a product is analyzed and evaluated by the relevant authorities and ensure that the product is analyzed and evaluated by the relevant authorities and ensures that product before launching it fulfills all the conditions European or National legal. The quality management of products and their certification is not only a condition set by the EU (European Union), but also a necessity to meet requirements always growing by customers for a healthy food with controlled nutrients. For the promotion and protection of food products to the European Union has established a quality label system. According to this system the material of food products must come from protected areas of origin, protected geographical indication and traditional specialty guaranteed. This system allows not only control over the food products, but enables consumers to be better informed on the specific characteristics of production. Certification of products is made by independent institutions which valuate compliance of the standards required with management systems or product. In our country certification and food safety is still in the development stage. We do not have a consolidated system monitoring and control and because not product certification in origin, many food industry companies cannot export their products in the countries of the European Community while produce by the same technology and equipment with the international food industry businesses.

Keywords: *certification, food industry, certification standards, food safety*

JEL Classification: *L66, D4*

1. Introduction

In the food business often talk about certification because it is considered as an important gateway to success for any enterprise that aims to standardize products and consolidate in the commerce. In a market increasingly globalized in constant evolution where consumers are increasingly more informed thanks to social media and the Internet spread. Consumers are more conscious of product choices. Businesses must necessarily respond to requirements for safe and quality products. Quality certification is recognition of products from authorized organizations (third parties) to confirm that the commenced product conforms to a predetermined regulation of production and the predetermined quality standards. The certified products must respect the same standards like all other products placed on the commerce. Quality certificate guarantees the consumer that there is no cheated in food. However this assurance is not absolute, especially in our country where we have many cases of falsification and fraud on certification of products

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traded. This comes as a result of not functioning correctly control authorities. Certification has advantages not only for the producer who separate in the commerce through certification but also for consumers because a controlled product means: safety, nutritional value and organoleptic qualities. The objective of this study is to identify the main certifications, the role they have in certain products. With the results collected from questionnaires is given a detailed explanation of the information who own Albanian costumers over the food certification and the importance of certified products.

2. Why certification should?

To understand why it is important certification is required to specify the quality term .A very used term but variable meaning. With time meaning of quality has experienced some changes, which range from "quality is the ability to have a particular product to satisfy the requirements of a specific customer" to "quality means compliance with the requirements" but despite definitions that attribute for this word standard UNI EN ISO 22000 legally defines the concept of quality as "grouped features of a product and the system for compliance of customer requirements or other interested groups". The same rule also defines the meaning of the request, and cites it as a "need" or expressed or implied expectation. Certification is a guarantee of quality for consumers to use a product or service. Certification means to increase transparency to offer consumer security so that there is no doubt. Companies that successfully pass the certification procedure and receive a certificate used as a symbol of quality in the commerce to reduce customer insecurity, thus reducing the transactions costs. There are various certifications for quality management, environmental management organizations, food safety, certification of cosmetic & pharmaceuticals' products etc. The certification bodies are responsible for the verification and correct application of the rules. Businesses use product certification as a method to suit the commerce norms, to enhance the image in the commerce, quality guarantee through certification, to differentiate from competitors, to reduce customer insecurity over products.

3. Distribution of certification systems

In the contemporary scenario of food industry there are different types of certification often with the same goals but with different requirements. The high number of certification schemes may cause confusion at consumer; therefore it produces the opposite effect. The European Commission has compiled a list of certificates recognized at European level and international. Depending on the requirement that the business organization has done for product made the selection for certification type. The quality of food products management today represents a concrete development for businesses operating in the agro food sector; because it connects in direct way protection and safety of life through the controlled products. Constantly repeat for national and international episodes about food scandals has made consumers but also producers to be more careful in quality control, food safety and choice of suppliers. Quality guaranteeing and food safety from the moment of production until the distribution is necessary for firms in order to survive in the commerce. Possession of a rigorous and effective in management of quality and products control, in response to concerns that consumer's raises, carefully

communication with customers and information are effective instruments to gain credibility. The product quality management systems are very specialized. Normative standards of reference are:

- HACCAP certification (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) is a procedure of risk assessment and the risk of hygienic safety of products and processes to stabilize an appropriate control measures. This procedure provides that the responsible person of agro food or food company can give guarantee that has realized in hygienic way the preparation, transformation, manufacture, packaging, storage, transportation, sale or supply of products trades. The initial concept of certification HACCAP was born in 1959 in a NASA study for "the fabrication of a safe food for astronaut diet during missions (zero defects program). Case publication of FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) and WHO (World Health Organization) has influenced the European food industry practices and the development of legislation food safety. HACCAP rate today presents one of the best systems of food safety management. This method is not an optional norm but set by law, which allows the organization that implements communicate to external parties its commitment to management and hygiene conditions required.
- IFS certification (International Food Standard), this type of certification is support and developed by the Federal Union of German Trade Organization and a representative body of the French resellers. Is equivalent of BRC standard for counties are in the middle of Europe (Austria, Switzerland, Germany and France). The standard management system ISF derives from planning and methodology of HACCP system.
- ISO Certification 22000-2005: There are incalculable economic losses resulting from waste or residues that fail from daily production, defects in food storage, damages and accidents along the food production chain and each subsequent negative effect could introduce a risk of life. The standard EN ISO 22000 identifies the requirements of a proper system of food safety management system (FSMS Food Safety Management System), enabling organizations to identify the risks in their business management and control to guarantee food safety and customer satisfaction. ISO 22000 is a standard known worldwide for certification and food safety management. Implementing a certification system such as ISO 22000 businesses improve the performance in the field of food safety.

4. "Bio" certified products and the impact on the commerce

BIO certified products are foods produced according to the standards set by the CE (symbol of the European Council brand) and controlled by official bodies authorized in each country. In Albania the control of BIO products is made by the State Commission for Organic Production (SCOP), which approves and monitors the activities of certification bodies. These bodies have a duty to control the produce process at every stage of the production and carefully verify of the produced companies that from the other hand should guarantee quality products and consistent in accordance with legislation. Certification is the only real guarantee that a firm which operates in the biological sector can provide the products by following protocols and strict norms above the production of raw materials as well as the transformation into the final product. There are many brands that operate in the labeling of bio products is one of them Demeter label that guarantees

that food products labeled Demeter come from biological farms. Mark operates on all continents, control and certifies all range of biological products. Albanian legislation based on European code has set some rules on products labeled BIO. The label stuck on "Bio products" should present the true nature of the product. It is written in Albanian language, without excluding the use of other languages. Also, as obligated request, the label contains organic production indicators and built according to the following requirements:

- the term "Bio" as an obligatory index that refers to organic production, should be used in products and accompanying documents.
- labeling in compliance can only be used for products produced in accordance with the established rules - indicator that includes the name of the certifying organization that has performed the last inspection; - indicators that imported products are covered by the inspection scheme by countries come - products advertisement should be in accordance with the labeling.

5. The control system of products in Albania

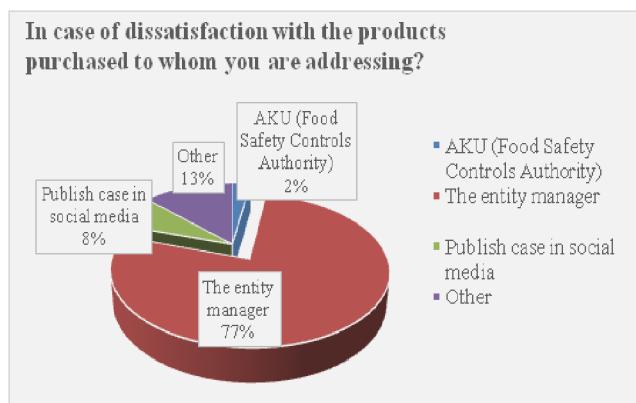
Government in the context of European integration considers relevant politics over the food safety. These politics are under the responsibility of MBRZHAU (Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Administration) which is responsible for creating the legal framework and coordination of legislation with EU regulations. Department of Food Safety Policy and Consumer Protection (GDFSCP) established in 2005 and later been restructured in 2010, it is responsible for drafting food security politics and strategies as well as in the preparation of legislation. Currently the competent authorities involved in the political management of food security in Albania and implementation of legislation in this area are:

- MBRZHAU and dependent institutions, namely: National Food Authority, Institute of Food Safety and Veterinary, Regional Directorates of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, local government.

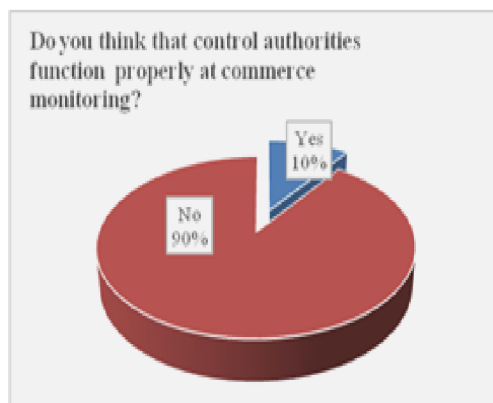
In the area of food security operates DPSUMK in MBRZHAU and is organized in three sectors:

- Quality Division, Food Safety and Consumer Protection
- Sector of plant protection
- Water sector products

Though of how legislation and control bodies Albania has as well as other countries, the Albanian consumers are skeptical about the way they perform, some customers expressed or that are no longer functioning organs or function and heard in the interim period in cases where has publications for irregularities or deficiency control. According to collected data also note that consumers do not address the competent authorities, but they prefer to make the public case on social networks or to looking for their right at the subject where they buy product, it is observed from the chart below. Where do consumers address to the AKU about problems that have account for only 8% of respondents. One part of them comment the fact that is more effective publishing in social networks than complaints to the competent authorities, this initiate by the importance that individuals pay to social networks today Once the consumers think that the control authorities are no longer functioning as it should and this is reflected in the chart below. Where 90% of those interviewed think that the control authorities do not function according to the procedure they do temporary controls or campaigns and are not systematic monitoring and control products.



Graphic 1

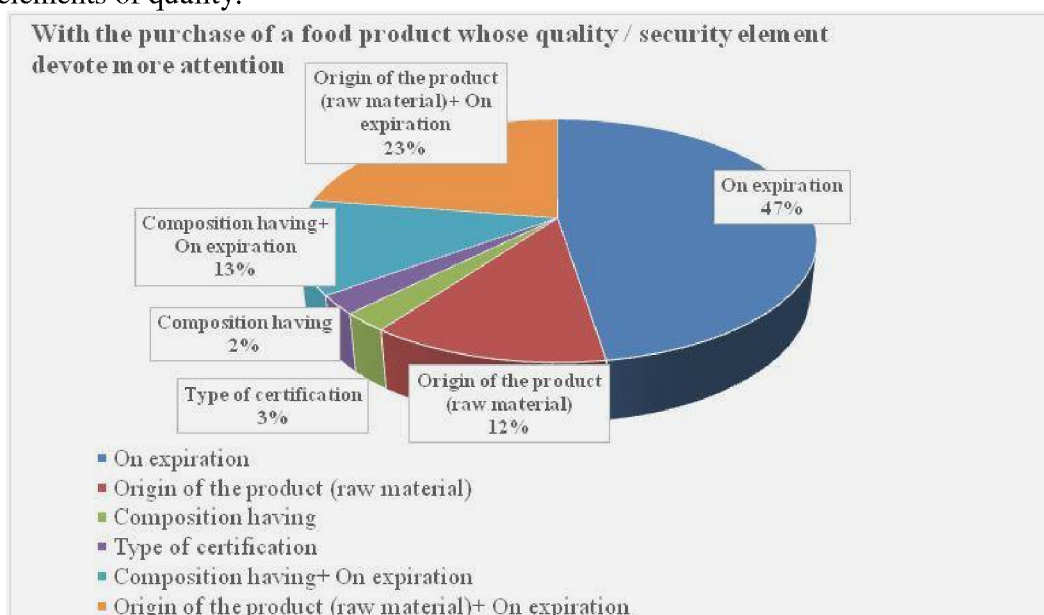


Graphic 2

5.1. Food quality

Product Certification is born as a market need for positioning rate and distinguish the product and informing consumers and large distributor for some features and characteristics that distinguish the product from other products of the same category. The advantages of certification are: evaluation of product characteristics, the certification directly to product communication, promoting the company, increased guarantee and food safety, and evidence certification of organoleptic and nutritional characteristics of origin of the product and his features, consumers through certification control sanitary conditions of production of all these elements increase the value and nutritional qualities of the product.

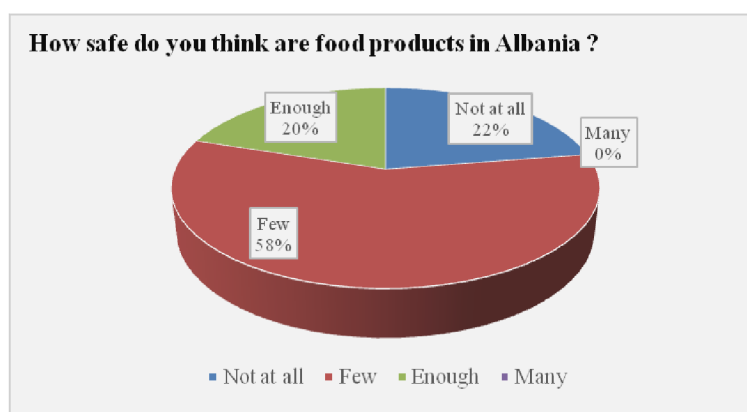
In our country, according to information collected consumers group is informed about labeling or quality of products is low most of them consider the primary element date of expiration, as shown from the chart, 47% of the respondents cost importance expiration and non-nutritional or other elements of quality.



Graphic 3

5.2. Food safety elements

Food security is understood in wider sense than the ability to provide a continuous water and food to complete basic biological needs. The definition of internationally accepted is designed by the World Food Summit (world Food Summit) in 1996, according to this is described a situation in which all people at all times have physical, social and economic access in sufficient food, safe, nutritional value, guaranteeing their needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. With regard to food safety have different views according to medical one food safety understands completes of sanitary conditions and food products. From economic and social point where a part of the population is characterized by high malnutrition, with food safety it means measures that guarantee coverage of the population needs from the harvest and a reserve level of negative phenomena. In countries where the security risk is generalized low food security issues are mostly qualitative (hygiene and quality). The concept of food security is linked to food sovereignty. Despite that food security is one of the standards to get closer to the EU. In our country food security continues to be a problem, consumers complain about circumstantial edge commerce improvised on street pavements, where products are kept under the direct influence of the atmospheric conditions. As regards to food safety interviewees comment the fact that security is linked so directly with the control system so that is why we have so many products not controlled. As it is seen from the graph below 58% of respondents think that the products are poorly secured and controlled.

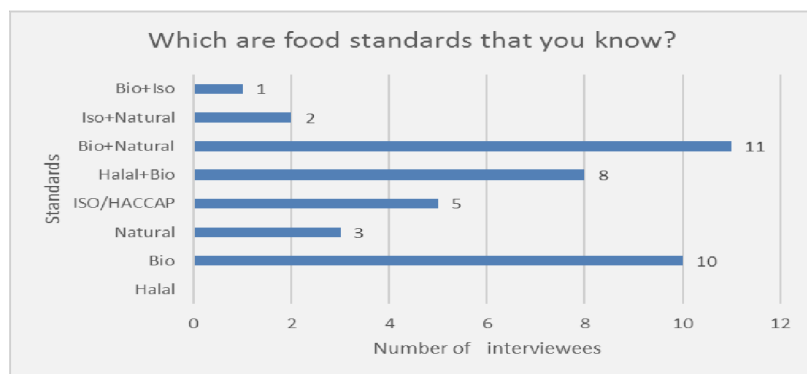


Graphic 4

5.3. Consummator information for food product and certifications

The rapid globalization of food production and trade has significantly increased the possibility of international accidents dealing with food contamination. National authorities across the world have become aware that food safety should be high not only in national level but also through cooperation between national authorities in a national level. This process is important for the exchange of information on food safety issues. Consummator can obtain information by tools and different forms, but today an important source of information is the electronic one. Customers can obtain information on prices and products but about the rights they have in case of dissatisfaction against product. Although today consumers have access to be informed through various channels in our country the number of consumers who know their rights is very low, cases that have resulted in judicial proceedings because of dissatisfaction products are very low.

If we compare with other European countries the difference is too high, European consumers make the strangest complains, they open law processes against companies for different dissatisfactions. In our country, the opposite happens and the fact that consumers do not trust the competent authorities. Regarding certifications consumers who know the BIO certification referred to BIO products they buy to small farmers although with BIO is understood products produced according to CE (European Community standards). Whatever the degree of education that have customers their knowledge of certification of products are very low.



Graphic 5

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Relevant authorities should inform consumers on politics, certification and product safety, but in our country the number of customers informed is very low and despite the education that have. From respondents 42% of them have finished university but 63% of them say that they have no information on certification and food safety and the part that are informed represent 37% of respondents said they do not trust the AKU or the competent authorities the information they possess is obtained through the written media or the electronic information. Their dissatisfaction to the competent authorities to monitor and check the quality of products is very pronounced with 90% of them express that AKU does not operate according to commerce monitoring. That what we recommend seeing the interviewing results is that firstly offices for consumer protection should make information on the rights that consumers have especially on basic rights such as: The right to health protection, environment and safety of life, the right to protection of economic interests, the right of appeal and compensation where in our country is very low, the complains of not made by the competent institutions but through investigative emissions. An important stage on the information process is consummators education that we recommend to begin at school and so children as future consumers are informed.

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