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THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ASSESSMENT, FORMING AND ANALYSIS FOR OBTAINING AND COMMERCIALLY DISTRIBUTING OF FOOD PRODUCTS

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Abstract *The "ideal" quality of food products must ensure consumer satisfaction both subjectively, trough the organoleptic component of quality, and objectively by the nutritional component and trough the satisfaction of the implicit needs regarding food safety.*

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INTRODUCTION

International Standardization Organization has defined quality, trough the standard 8402, as all properties and characteristics of a product or service which gives it the ability to satisfy the needs expressed and implied. Thus, according to this definition, quality exists only in relation to consumers' needs and can be expressed by a set of properties and characteristics and has to the demands known as of the potential consumers.

But to express the quality of goods (of whatever nature they may be) the more complex process of obtaining those goods can also be considered. A situation in which the quality would represent all the traits that define their value in use and express the extent to which needs of the consumer/user are met, based on technical, aesthetics and economic parameters, the usefulness and the efficiency of consumption/use.

From this way of defining the quality of goods, it can be seen that it results from the production process and can occur in the process of consumption. We must therefore view taken on the one hand, the quality of production processes of goods (production) and, on the other hand, the inherent quality of goods that results from the expressed needs of consumers. These two aspects of the concept of quality are interdependent. The quality of production takes on a part of is aspects such as design and engineering, technological processes and organization of production. So we can talk of quality of each of these sides (quality of design, quality of organization, etc.). The intrinsic quality of goods involves using a system of specific (quality) indicators classified according to several criteria (Banu 2007, 15) such as (1) the purpose of goods, (2) the reliability, (3) the technological aspects (4) the technical issues, (5) the aesthetics and (6) the economic aspects.

1. EVALUATING FOOD QUALITY

The forming of the quality of food is not limited to its production, but also includes the consumption as an important step. Actually it is a five-step process (2007 Banu, 19) which includes (1) the planning, (2) the design, (3) the production, (4) the reception and distribution and (5) the use. The planning (1) involves researching the consumer needs and requirements, scientific and technical research, setting the needed tasks and designing a production development plan. The design (2), includes

technical and technological activities in preparation for production, based on a constructive and technical documentation. Production (3) includes the actual making of the product, from a technical standpoint, while during the receiving and distribution (4) the good is sent to the customer for consumption within the validity period. Finally, the consumption (5), involves the actual use of the good food by the consumer in order to meet its food needs.

These five steps represent a process that continues to take place after the last one because producers receive from the consumption a series of information allowing continuation of the process by returning to the programming in which this information is used for a new cycle of the process. At the same time, the quality creation process is an integral component of logistics cycle which insures the distribution of food to the final consumer trough the specific supply chain, starting from the raw materials.

Food quality is directly determined by the relationship between the five stages of the process of quality forming (2007 Banu, 19). Taking into account only the quality of design and of the manufacture, they affect the quality requested by the consumer, but not all efforts involved in the design and manufacture are found in an ideal quality, which requires full consumer satisfaction.

The differences between the quality desired by the consumer, the quality of design and the quality of manufacturing quality, directly reflects the level at which the final food quality meets consumer requirements and thus the economic performance of the manufacturer. Thus, the greater the difference, the less performant the economic activity of the manufacturer in the field of quality can be considered. However, the complete satisfaction of the consumer, which would correspond to a maximum level of performance of the manufacturer, can be considered as a more than ideal.

2. SITUATIONS IN THE ANALYSIS OF FOOD QUALITY

Quality of food (and not only food) can be analyzed in terms of temporary positions that a product occupies in the logistics supply chain. A position determining the emergence of distinct situations in which the quality of those products can be analyzed and differently understood, depending on the number of quality characteristics, on their structural typology and of the admissibility limit for each value of each quality characteristic (Banu 2007 21). We find the quality of the food in eight such situations namely (a) designed quality (b) certified quality (c) prescribed quality (d) negotiated quality, (e) real quality, (f) quality of manufacture (g) commercial quality and (h) as "ideal" or global quality.

Designed quality (a) is the prototype implementation of common technical specifications. Designed quality reflects on the one hand, the extent to which the designed product meets (intermediate or final) customer requirements, and on the other hand, the possibility to use economically optimal technological processes in the manufacturing of products, so that the profitability objectives of the producer to be achieved.

Certified quality (b) expresses the values of the product characteristics, approved by an independent body attesting that the product can be manufactured in accordance with the quality parameters as designed. Prescribed quality (c) indicates the limit of individual values of the product characteristics, as recorded in the standards, technical specifications etc.

Negotiated quality (d) expresses individual characteristics values, agreed upon by the contracting parties. In general it corresponds to the prescribed quality but it may also be higher. Failure to achieve negotiated quality generates trade disputes between the contractual parties.

Real quality (e) expresses the quality of the product, determined at some point on the logistic channel. This aspect of the quality is typically compared to the prescribed quality and negotiated quality respectively. Making this comparison gives the level at which the manufacturer should fulfill its contractual obligations. While the real quality level is generally very clear when object of relations between firms, tending to match the prescribed and the negotiated quality, this level it is not as clear when object of relation between food producers and

individual consumers. This lack of clarity can lead to consumer interests damages as a consequence of an inadequate response to consumer quality requirements. This probability is all the greater as the food market is more inelastic, a context usually generating a poor satisfaction of nutritional needs of the population.

The quality of manufacture (f) reflects the degree of conformity of goods with the technical documentation. This quality results from the production process and is determined by the production equipment, the management of the technological process, the quality of workmanship, and by the way in which control is carried out.

Commercial quality (g) expresses the consumer perception over food product quality. It influences their decision to buy a certain food product and in this sense, the consumer is considering product cost, presentation and packaging, warranty, some sensory attributes, nutritional and health safety issues related to that food product.

"Ideal" or overall quality (h) must ensure consumer satisfaction regarding four explicit needs expressed by the five senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, hearing), by the ease of use (cooking, conservation) and by the implied needs regarding health safety, innocuousness and the covering of the nutritional requirements (energy and nutritional value).

In carrying out trade with food products, companies should consider the evolving nature of real quality of thees products. Thus, if inside the supply chain, the real quality of food products can be found in a given moment as static, often, real quality evolution, as a result of the interaction between product and environment, determines its placing it in the position of dynamic quality (Banu 2007, 21).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Starting from these premises, to ensure and improve quality it is generally necessary to act in the following areas:

- in the technical field which involves improving manufacturing technology, improving production conditions and improving standardization;

- in economics which involves ensuring adequate funding of the enhancement potential, strengthening incentives and material liability, judicious planning of production costs and of the price system;

- in the organization of production field which involves organizing specialization and cooperation, organizing and preparing manufacturing, organizing quality control, organizing material and technical supply and the aftermarket.

Finally, the "ideal" quality of food products must ensure consumer satisfaction both subjectively, trough the organoleptic component of quality, and objectively by the nutritional component and trough the satisfaction of the implicit needs regarding food safety.

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