

The impact of food security in the establishment of food and nutritional policies

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Abstract The EU's alimentary policy is built around the food safety concept, which serves to the protection and promotion of the consumers' health. The base principle of the White Book shows that the food safety policy must be based on scientific data, analyses, control and information, as well as on an approach integrated on all the elaboration and implementation stages.

In this paper it is underlined and therefore analyzed the impact of the food security in the substantiation of food and nutritional policies at global level.

In what concerns the food's safety, we hold as an important landmark the Reglementation no. 178/2002 of the European Council and Parliament through which the general principles of the food legislation are established, the creation of the European Food Association and the fixation of the procedures regarding the food's safety.

Keywords: nutritional policies, food security, .

1. Introduction

On a global level, the policies for assuring the corresponding average consumption are based on: the improvement of the buying power; the easing of the access to products which corresponding from the quality's point of view, to resources and technologies necessary for the production's optimization; the increase of the occupation's grade in non-agricultural and social political domains.

The alimentary politics are represented by a correct ensemble of objectives, priorities, principles, norms and decisions adopted and applied by the factors and institutions invested with the necessary competences to assure the whole population with the social-economical conditions of a rational alimentation and a corresponding nutritional state, which lead to a good state of the public and individual health [1].

The nutritional politics have the purpose of correcting the insufficiency in the consumption of a certain nutritional factor; as result, they must focus on strengthening of the positive alimentary behaviours and, respectively, the elimination of the threatening ones, in order for the food to fully exercise its sanogenesis function, and the food consumption behaviours not to become the

fundamental causes of a permanent state of individual or collective malnutrition.

Moreover, the nutritional and alimentary politics have an important role in the realization of the food products' offer, in linking the offer with the demand in the economical plan, as well as the metabolic one [1].

On an European level, the problematic of the food's safety and, respectively, its security seem to be differentiated; thus, the food's safety refers particularly to the foods' innocuity, emphasizing on the lowering, elimination and avoidance of the risks they may present towards the consumers' health, and the problematic of the food's security targets the assurance of the self-sufficiency/sufficiency of the foods for certain target entities (countries, area, country groups, regions etc.), appealing to diverse alimentary help instruments (projects, donations, programs etc.) [2].

2. The policy of the food's safety on the European Union's level

The international frame regarding the food safety has significantly developed together with the growth of some international organisms like Codex Alimentarius, the International Office for Epizooties,

being based on the Accord for the application of sanitary and phytosanitary measures within OMC, OMS and, respectively, FAO. All these organizations and/or organisms have the purpose of encouraging and defending the rights of all the member countries to maintain a high standard regarding public health; all the consumers have the right to purchase of the market products safe for consumption, characterized by a high quality level, indifferently of their provenience.

The EU's alimentary policy is built around the concept of food safety, which serves to the protection and promotion of the consumers' health.

The European alimentary chain is considered one of the safest in the world because the safety measures have been adopted since the establishment of the European Community. But, the recent crisis has proved the existence of weak points which impose certain movements from the authorities responsible for the direction of the systems' development which exist in an integrated manner [3].

The food safety policy of the EU is presented in the White Paper on Food Safety, which appeared in January 2000; the strategic priorities of the White Paper refer to [3]:

- The creation of an European alimentary committee (The European Food Safety Authority – EFSA was established through the Regulation nr. 178/28.01.2002 of the European Council and Parliament);
- The coherent approach of the law on the whole food chain;
- The establishment of the principle which states that the principle responsibility for the food's safety goes to the agents of the food sector and that of the animals' feeding; thus, the member states must assure the surveillance of these enterprisers, and the Commission must verify the efficiency of their control capacity through audits and inspections [5].

The responsibility for the legislative actions is found on national, regional and local levels, whereas the unique market's functioning presumes the fact that there are no national exclusive responsibilities, but that each member state participates to the protection of all the EU's citizens and of the third-party countries through foods made on their territory.

The basic principle of the White Paper shows that the food safety policy must be based on scientific data, analysis, control and information, as well as an integrated approach for the elaboration and implementation stages. The integrated policy covers all the sectors of the food chain: the production of food for animals; prime materials; processing; storage; transport and distribution, the traceability implemented through scientific procedures being deemed necessary.

The EU's food policy is based on the risk's analysis with its three components, as follows [2]:

- The risk's evaluation (scientific data and information's analysis);
- The risk's management (control and regulation);
- The risk's communication.

In what concerns the food's safety, we hold as an important landmark the Regulation no. 178/2002 of the European Council and Parliament through which the general principles of the food legislation are established, the creation of the European Food Association and the fixation of the procedures regarding the food's safety. The main elements included in this regulation refer to [1,3]:

- The principle of prudence;
- The increase of the consumer's trust towards the alimentary authority;
- The establishment of the general requirements so that only the safe foods enter the market;
- Traceability and identification elements;
- The establishment of the EFSA as an independent scientific organism and its role.

Moreover, in this regulation's structure we find:

- Purpose;
- The definition of the food notion and of those associated with it;
- The general food law: purpose; principle and general objectives; risk analysis; the principle of prudence; the protection of the consumers' interests; the principle of transparency (consulting and informing of the beneficiaries); general obligations in the food commerce; general demands of the food law;
- EFSA: mission, tasks; organizing; actions – scientific opinions, technical-scientific assistance, scientific studies, data collection, the

identifying of the potential risks, rapid alert systems, specialized organisms network, independence, transparency, confidentiality and communication, access to documents, contacts with interested parties;

- Rapid alert systems, the management of crisis and emergencies;
- Procedures and final provisions.

The base tasks of the EFSA consist of the assurance of consultancy and scientific information on problems with direct and/or indirect impact on health and security, linked to the food consumption.

In the case of emergencies, the EFSA collects, analyzes and distributes relevant information towards the Commission and member states, mobilising multiple scientific resources to efficiently respond to these situations.

The Precautionary principle seeks the assurance of a high level of protection for the environment and the health of people, animals and plants in the cases in which the available scientific data do not permit a full risk evaluation. The implementation of this principle is based on the scientific evaluation through which the incertitude level is determined on each level, the risk is evaluated and the potential consequences of the lack of reaction towards it, as well.

As an essential element for the food safety, the hygiene quality needs a holistic approach; a special attention is given to the contaminants; pesticides and veterinary medicine wastes; radioactive contaminations; new foods, especially OMG; additives; flavours; packaging; labelling; advertisement; irradiation and natural mineral waters.[6]

Due to the fact that the consumer is considered to be an important participant in the adoption of the decisions linked to the food's safety, he is consulted about all of its aspects through the creation of a specific frame for discussions with science experts and through the easing of the transnational dialogue between consumers, on an European level, as well as a global one.

3. Particularities of the relationship: nutritional policies – food safety

The elaboration of the nutritional policy refers to numerous aspects already presented in the White

Paper. The efficient implementation of the nutritional policy presumes actions of monitoring, data collection. The information linked to the food contribution, diets and nutritional status must be included in the data collection systems which function on a national and communitarian level; for these there are necessary different researches, studies on nutrition, scientific consultancy. The results of these scientific steps must be available and transparent.

Other important aspects of the nutritional policy refer to:

- The consumers' efficient and correct informing (Directive regarding the nutritional labelling);
- The elaboration of the corresponding informational instruments;
- The organizing of informing campaigns;
- The elaboration of nutritional guides;
- Communication with the consumers [3,4].

In numerous countries, especially North-Western Europe and North America, the authorities in the sanitary domain have elaborated *food instructions* which serve the purpose of lowering obesity, of the cardiac disease and of cancer. The main recommendations can be synthesized as follows:

- The total food quantity used as food must not be bigger than necessary for the energy consumption;
- Due to the fact that fat is a concentrated energy source, the total fat quantity which is consumers must be reduced; there has been noticed a certain link between coronary cardiac diseases and saturated fat acids (especially animal fats), fact for which this type of fats must be replaced with polyunsaturated fats;
- Another very important concentrated energy source is sugar, which is responsible for the appearance of dental cavities (in most of the cases), thus excessive consumption must be avoided;
- The cellulose from foods helps prevent certain gastric-intestinal diseases and, thus, the consumption of such foods must be increased;
- The excessive consumption of salt contributes to the appearance of affections of the circulatory system; as result, we must adopt an alimentation with a low salt consumption.

The recommendations presented above have not been completed with the specification of certain consumption levels because the individual necessity varies for each substance type.

These official food instructions, as others of this type have influenced, in a small measure, people's food habits; the consumers can purchase from the units which commercialise foods, fat-free dairy products, vegetal alimentary foods with a low content of cholesterol, bakery products from whole flour, decorticated rice etc.. To these offers there are added those from the shops specialized in the commerce of "natural foods", "bio" products or "ecological" ones.

On the opposite pole we find an increase in the consumption of "junk foods" (food consumed while "walking" and not during meals) and of beverages, especially sodas based on cola; the main consumers of such products are children and teenagers.

In the opinion of the European specialists in the field, the consumers' health protection does not limit to the physical, chemical and biological safety of the foods, but also includes the assurance of the optimal contribution of essential nutrients, limiting at the same time the content of diverse compounds which can cause adverse effects.

In what regards the diet products, destined to satisfy special nutritional needs of certain consumer groups, the Commission proposed (and realized in a small measure) to elaborate of regulations regarding the foods destined to persons who make intense physical effort, who suffer from diabetes, obesity etc.

Moreover, in the Commission's sights there are the alimentary supplements, fortifying foods, as well as their components' purity criteria.

In what concerns the innocuity of the foods, the Commission reviews the community hygiene rules for food safety, coming up with regulations which state that each party implicated in the food chain becomes a main responsible for the food safety. The new regulations have the purpose of harmonizing and simplifying the detailed and complex prescriptions which appeared in the Directive 94/43/EEC of the Council regarding the food's hygiene, as well as in a series of annexed directives. The proposed innovation consists of the applicability of a unique and transparent policy regarding hygiene, as well as some efficient

instruments for the guaranteeing of the food's safety and handling of eventual crisis, for all the goods and operators of the food sector [3].

The reviewed rules were/are based on numerous measures, like [5]:

- The practical application of an approach on the whole food chain ("de la ferme a la table"; "farm o table");
- The introduction of a HACCP system for all the food producing enterprises with the purpose of identifying all the moments in which the control is essential for guaranteeing the food safety and to supervise the identifying, application, maintenance and reviewing of the adequate safety procedures;
- The elaboration of guides about the good hygiene practices and for the application of the HACCP principles;
- The introduction of special dispositions regarding the guaranteeing of the availability of goods produced in far/isolated zones (mountains, islands);
- The introduction of special dispositions for the production of foods in conformity with the traditional methods [2]:

4. The EU's policy regarding food security

The food aid was established in 1967 based on the International Wheat Convention; in initial phase, it was mainly conditioned by the logic of the community stocks' handling (help could vary from year to year in function of the agricultural surplus).

Throughout the years, this approach has evolved into a concept of food aid which is regarded as an instrument susceptible to contributing to the easing of food security, of the access to nourishment.

It can be said that this conception is resting on the following principles [2]:

1. The concentration of the programs' financing;
2. The defining and concerted application of policies and integrated instruments regarding food security;
3. The amplifying of the collaboration between donors;
4. The complete dissociation of the food aid from the handling of the European agricultural surpluses;
5. The progressive development of the triangular and local acquisitions

For the applying of these orientations there have been consolidated and applied new instruments for food security [2]:

- The multiyearly character of the programs (late 80's);
- The actions of replacing of the food aid deliveries (1984);
- Local acquisitions and triangular operations (1978 and 1986);
- Support actions regarding the security stocks and informational systems (1987);
- Food aids donated by the government and sold on the local markets;
- The support of the local products' competitiveness, on the markets' integrity (especially the most underdeveloped countries) [1,3].

The increase of the foods' availability – through the growth of the local product offer, through the growth of the import capacity – is essential for many countries; despite that, in this direction, the efficient functioning of the markets and development of the competition has a special role. But the durable improvement of the food access for the vulnerable populations renders itself as an increasingly serious difficulty. The lowering of the vulnerability presumes the corresponding identifying of those groups and the understanding of the applied strategies to handle the food risks' dynamics. The risks' elimination can be realized through *actions* tightly correlated with the fight against poverty:

- The improvement of the access to the production means;
- The easing of the access to credits and information;
- The development of the work force usage and of the remunerated activities outside the agricultural sector;
- The increase of the competences and participation to the decision taking;
- The rights' guaranteeing [3].

The multidimensional character of the food security and fight against poverty needs a good intercorrelation between sectors (agriculture, commerce, infrastructure, health etc.) and between intervention levels (local, national, regional, international), because the coordination and active implication of the interested parts are a determining fact for the success of any program.

5. Conclusions

The implementation of all the measures proposed in the White Paper allows the organizing, in an integrated manner, of the food safety in the purpose of reaching the highest level of health protection. In this direction is promoted the principle of reviewing and sanctioning of the law on all levels, as often as needed. The Commission considers that the establishment of new authorities, as a scientific referential nucleus for the EU, will contribute to the realization of a high level of protection and the gaining of the consumer's trust.

The success of these measures is indissolubly linked to the support from the Parliament and European Council, while the implementation depends on the engagement and implication of all the member states.

The White Paper calls for the active implication of all the economical operators who carry the main responsibility for the permanent application of the requirements for the food' safety. The transparency growth on all levels for the food safety policy represents the key element which fundamentally contributes to the growth of the consumers' trust in the EU's policy.

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