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CHALLENGES OF WINE CHAIN IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to identify new challenges of wine chain in Romania, referring mostly to wine safety and traceability. The reason why the research was underpinned is that many unauthorised products or products obtained using forbidden substances exist on the wine market. In this paper, food safety and traceability principles and requirements are applied to wine chain. Food safety and protecting consumers' interests represent concerns for people, professionals and organizations. Wine is a product for which consumers manifest lack of trust in those regarding the content and methods of production.

The research method consists in documentation and legislation analysis. The main results show that problems on the wine chain, including consumers' lack of trust, might be overcome by implementing and respecting the principles of traceability.

Key words: *traceability, wine, food safety*

Introduction

The establishment and implementation of a traceability system in the domain of agribusiness are useful to the effect that the internal market of agro-food products could function well, to grow the quality of the products and, thereby, to grow competition of the products on the domestic and external markets.

The run of agro-food products' markets may be put at stake if the traceability is not assured on the product's chain. It can be taken into account the example of wine, on the market whose exists unauthorised products – fake products – or products that contain forbidden substances in the wine obtaining technology. Consumers accept to buy these products because of their low price, even though they are dangerous for the health of people.

Unauthorised products or products obtained using forbidden substances exist

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on the wine market. According to a handout sent by the National Authority for the Consumer Protection, 42% of the wines on the market are fake. This is the conclusion of a check regarding the quality and the way of wine marketing, done by NACP in over 80% of the counties of the country. Wines that were found fake had in their composition dyes, synthesis sweeteners, added sugar, and aromas; also, they did not fit the declared wine type. After another check made at many wine distributors in Bucharest, it has been ascertained deviations at 25 from the 42 economical agents who were controlled (Infonews, 2006).

Material and method

The research method consists of documentation and legislation analysis. It has been studied the Regulation (CE) no. 178/2002 of the European Parliament and the Council, from 28 January 2002, establishing the principles and general requirement of alimentary legislation, institution of the European Authority for the Food Safety and procedures in the domain of the food products safety.

As regards to the study material, there will be presented the defining of traceability, the principles and requirements of food safety and traceability encompassed in the reminded regulation.

According to the definition contained in the article 3, aligned 15, from the Regulation CE 178/2002, traceability means the ability to trace and follow a food, feed, food producing animal or substance intended to be, or expected to be incorporated into a food or feed, through all stages of production, processing and distribution.

Generally speaking, the food legislation has as purpose to assure a high protection level of life, human health and the protection of consumers' interests, including right practices in the food trade. The principles of food safety and traceability are: the principle of precaution, the principle of consumers' protection, the principle of transparency (consulting and informing the large public).

The principle of precaution refers to the fact that, in typical conditions where, after the evaluation of the disposable information, it is identified the possibility of the existence of some harmful effects to the health, but it persists the scientifically uncertainty, there can be adopted temporary measures to manage the risk, needed to assure the high level of human health protection established in the Community, until emerging new scientific information needed for a more comprehensive evaluation of the risk.

The adopted measures must not impose commercial restrictions bigger than necessary to achieve the high level of protection of health established in the Community, taking into account the technical and economical feasibility, and also other agents considered lawful for the certain problem.

The principle of consumers' protection refers to the fact that the food legislation has as a purpose to prevent fraudulent or deceiver practices, the counterfeit of food products and all kind of practices that may mislead the consumer.

The principle of transparency has as purpose to ask and inform the public. People are consulted openly, straight or through the representative body, along the preparation, the evaluation and the revision of food legislation. If there are any reasonable reasons to suspect that some food products or feed may represent a risk for the human and animal health, then, considering the gravity and dimensions of the certain risk, the public authorities take adequate measures to inform the people regarding the type of the risk for health, identifying, mostly, the type of food products or animal feed, the risk that these may present and the measures that are taken, or are about to be taken to forewarn, reduce, or eliminate that risk.

The requirements of the food safety and traceability are:

The prohibition of putting on markets food products that do not present safety.

1. The food products that do not present safety are those that: are injurious for health and that are not proper to the human consume.
2. To determine whether an alimentary product presents or not safety, it must be taken into account:
 - the normal conditions of using the food product by a consumer in each phase: production, processing and distribution;
 - the information delivered to consumers, including the information on the label, or any other information disposable for consumers regarding the avoidance of certain negative effects on the health of a certain alimentary product or certain category of alimentary products.
3. To determinate whether an alimentary product injures or not the health, it must be considered:
 - the immediate conceivable effects and also the ones on short or long term of that food product on the health of a person who consumes it, but also on the next generations;
 - the probable cumulative toxic effects;
 - the distinguished sensitivity, referring to health, of a specified category of consumers, when the food product is intended for that category of consumers.
4. To determinate whether an alimentary product is proper or not to human consumption, it must be taken into account if the alimentary product is inadmissible for the human consume according to the utilization to whose it was delivered, from reasons regarding the contamination, no matter if that one is made though a outside substance or in other way or through putrefaction, deterioration or decomposition.

The 18 Article from the Regulation CE 178/2002 makes referrals to the traceability of food products and any other substance delivered or intended to be incorporated in an alimentary product for all production, processing and distribution phases. The Article forecasts that the operators from the alimentary branch could identify any person from who had been supplied with an alimentary product or any other substance intended to be incorporated in an alimentary product. To this effect, the operators of the chain must dispose of informational systems that allow that this information could be put out to the able authorities. Also, the informational systems must offer information regarding the identification of other societies to whom it has

been delivered their products.

In the same regulation it is provided that the alimentary products introduced on the market must be tagged or identified in a suitable way to facilitate their traceability, through documentation or appropriate information.

The operators of the chain are beholden to initiate withdrawal procedures of products on the market or inform about the situations in which they consider that an alimentary product that had been imported, made or distributed does not content the requirements regarding the food products safety. If the product might have reached the consumer, the operator informs the consumers about the products that had already been delivered to them, when other measures are not enough to realise a high level of protection of health.

Results and discussions

The main digressions tripped up after the analysis within the Laboratory for the Analysis of the Quality of Wines and Alcoholic Drinks, Bucharest, are divided in digressions regarding the sensorial characteristics and digressions regarding the physical-chemical characteristics. Table wine "Buchet", red and white table wines packaged in bulk were analysed.

Regarding the digressions of sensorial characteristics, the analysed wines presented:

- the mild smell given by the wine
- extracting, irritant, unspecific and mild taste
- unspecific colour for the red wine
- opalescent aspect
- yeast smell
- distasteful, unbalanced, of excessive acidity taste
- yeast taste
- turbid aspect, specific smell and taste, starting to turn into vinegar
- turbid aspect, pointed yeast smell and taste and excessive acidity.

Regarding the digressions of physical-chemical parameters, it has been found that the analysed wines were unfit for the human consumption and contradicted the legislation.

Most of the quality problems are found to the wines packed in PET bottles, the products being faked. Still, they have an assured market, because they have an extremely low price compared to the wines of origin. The fakes consisted in the utilization of the picket, or the „second-hand wine”, product that, according to the law, it is not allowed until the fabrication of the vinegar and until the distillation. Also, artificial alimentary pigments, added sweeteners are used. In many cases, in PET bottles wines are packed without being conditioned; they ferment and change their colour in time and depose.

The producers who falsify the wine contradict the Vine and Wine Law in those regarding the labelling of the product, the geographic indications from the legislation.

They mention trade marks as assortments and create confusions among consumers.

Starting with the observed deviations, the principles and requirements of the food safety can be implemented. Thus, *the principle of precaution* refers to the identification of the possibilities that wine products put on the market have harmful effects on the health. With an informational system of monitoring traceability on the wine chain, the moment, quantity and place where a product was obtained and delivered can be identified. Thus, traceability leads to improving food safety.

To respect the *principle of the consumers' protection*, the operators of the wine chain must respect the legislation to prevent the fraudulent or deceiver practices, the wine counterfeit and any other practices that may confuse the consumer.

The principle of transparency bears in mind the consultation and information of the people about the wine products: vineyard, assortment, fabrication years, the fabrication method, etc.

The requirements of the alimentary safety and traceability on the wine chain refers to the prohibition of putting on the market the wine that do not present safety, that injures health or that is not proper to the human consume.

In this respect, the wines that do not represent safety, that injures health or that are not proper to the human consumption are the ones that do not have smell, taste, and aspect typical to the wine; also they have a distasteful, outbalanced, of excessive acidity or a taste of yeast, they have an turbid aspect, specific smell and taste starting to turn into vinegar; they contain artificial alimentary pigments, sweeteners added, unfit wrappers, because wines fermented and change their colour etc.

Conclusions

The implementation of the informational system for monitoring traceability on the wine chain is necessary so that the domestic market could function well, the quality of the products could grow and, so, also, the competition of the products on domestic and external markets will grow.

According to the legislation, the operators on the wine chain should be able to identify any person from who it has been supplied with raw material and products and, in the same time, they must be able to identify the economical agents to whom they have been sold the products resulted from the technological process. To that effect, the operator of the chain must dispose of informational systems that allow that this information could be made available to the competent authorities.

All the operators of the chain have something to gain after the implementation of the traceability of the food products. Through the medium of traceability system, the consumers are better informed regarding the composition of the products and the way they are made, becoming trustful in the buying process for which the traceability is certified. Therewith, the apparition of some problems in the alimentary safety domain is avoided.

The agricultural producers and the processors of agricultural products are the most well situated operators of the alimentary chain to make a safe supplying system

of agro-food products, safe for health. They must have the main legal responsibility for the safety of food products.

By introducing the informational system for monitoring traceability on the product chain, the producers that obtain products according with the requirements of the traceability will difference the offers towards the ones that refers to disloyal practices and that will develop their own market for the products in which the consumers trust. This informational system becomes a marketing instrument that can be successfully used by the wine producers to attract the costumers and gain their faith.

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