

# Aspects of Food Safety Policy in the European Union and Romania

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*Abstract:* This paper is intended as an incursion into the extremely important and complex security and food safety. We highlighted here a number of aspects of the EU strategy on food security and the situation of Romania along with ways to improve it, as they were presented in the study dedicated to Security Strategy and food security of Romania in the next 20 years, by a group of Romanian Academy.

*Key-Words:* food security, food safety, producers, consumers, EU market, traceability, Codex Alimentarius

## 1 Introduction

Strong diversification of the range of food products on the market and the globalization of trade caused the need to develop, at European level, the most important standards for quality and safety, to be met by food that are sold on the single European market.

## 2 EU food safety concerns

The concept of food security is an important EU directives. European Union food safety policy is based on the concept -from farm to the consumer's table - a holistic approach that integrates every phase of the supply of the product on a vertical axis, from feed production, plant health and animal welfare, production and primary processing, secondary processing, packaging, storage and delivery to retail in import or export [7].

By food safety, any firm conducts in addition to food quality and added value in the form of social consumer confidence and producer and consumer food products and is focused on increasing sales. Commodity turnover ensure food safety, company profits and continuity justifying its existence.

The main advantages of implementing a food safety system are:

- aligning the food industry of Romania to EU requirements on food production.
- preventing outbreaks of food poisoning that would affect the health of consumers.
- fostering constructive dialogue both between producers and consumers as well as producers and controlling bodies.

### 2.1 Food Security and Food Safety Concepts

According to the "Declaration of the World on Nutrition" (FAO/WHO, Rome, 1992) and the "Declaration on World Food Security" (FAO / WHO, 1996), "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical access and economic access to safe and nutritious food to meet the needs of the body, to lead a healthy and active life "[6].

There is a global policy on food security. Earth's population nutrition is a concern from the International WHO (World Health Organization), FAO (Food and Agriculture), the Codex Alimentarius Commission etc.

Each country's food security can be ensured primarily from internal resources through its policies of each country.

Food security at the individual's "right to eat". According to Mircea Bulgaru "food security is given by the amount of food needed for an individual expressed in physical units, conventional (calories), and to ensure their physiological balance and cover their daily rations of consumption: intake maintenance ration growth and content of work"[3].

**Food safety** is a component of food security which refers to three conditions that must be met by food [7]:

- to have intrinsic nutritional value that is expressed by the quality and quantity of the main nutrients (proteins, lipids and carbohydrates) which are both time and energy suppliers. Also important is the content in biomineral compounds, vitamins and other biologically active substances.

- to have a bioavailable nutritional value as high as possible.
- bioavailability refers to the extent to which the nutrients, biominerals, vitamins and biologically active substances in food are used by the human body
- to be innocuous, ie: be healthy and not to endanger the normal healthy consumer.

According to the *Codex Alimentarius* (collection of standards internationally recognized, codes of practice and guidelines for food internationally), food security is "the assurance that food will not cause harm to consumers when they are prepared and / or consumed in accordance specifications on how to use "[6]. Food - processed or fresh - which are sold to final consumers should not affect their health as a result of direct consumption or preparation, according to each destination.

Food safety is a parameter that the consumer and ensuring they are involved all the parts that participate in the production, processing, transportation and distribution of food.

## 2.2 The Need for a European Food Safety policy

Food safety is a cross-border issue, as many of the foods we consume come from imports.

The EU is a single market, the products, including food, can circulate freely inside its territory. Food is not marketed only on the territory of a single country, so competition grows and consumers benefit from a much wider range of products at lower prices.

In this context the single market requires the development, at European level, of the most important standards for quality and safety.

If every country should have its own rules for controls on products, there would be no free trade and producers in some countries could benefit from an unfair competitive advantage from the existence of several sets of rules.

Also, agricultural policy is within the competence of EU, that gives to the EU the opportunity to influence the quality and food safety through rules and support measures for farmers agreed at European level. Thanks to EU rules, European citizens benefit from some of the highest international standards in food safety.

Along the food and agricultural chain, mandatory controls are in place designed to ensure that plants and animals are healthy and that food and feed are safe, high quality, properly labeled and conform to the strict rules at European level.

Events such as dioxin, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the lack of uniform rules in areas such as food fortification, dietary supplements, microbial contamination, leading to the need for a new legislative framework, which aims to review all procedures established by the food legislation in the European Union (EU ) for the implementation and adaptation to scientific and technical progress. The White Paper contains proposals that converts food policy in a prospective tool, dynamic, coherent and comprehensive, based on the following general principles [8]:

- a. A global, integrated approach - principle applicable to the entire food chain, all sectors involved in food and feed, in each EU Member State, and followed in drafting regulations and measures to be taken.
- b. Clearly define responsibilities - that all parties involved in the food chain - feed manufacturers, farmers, food industry producers, operators, competent authorities, consumers - should have clearly defined responsibilities.
- c. The traceability of food - according to this principle, operators must record all suppliers of raw materials and ingredients so that the emergence of safety problems, to be able to identify the cause and place of issue and be able to withdraw the product from market.
- d. Consistency, efficiency, dynamism and transparency - which basically argues that food policy to be constantly analyzed to be improved and adapted to ongoing developments in food production.
- e. Risk analysis - constitutes one of the fundamental principles of food safety policy.

Food safety policy is based on scientific information. Therefore, scientific advice on food safety must be of the highest quality.

## 2.3 EU Strategy on Food Safety

This strategy is based on three main elements [5]:

### ➤ Food and feed safety legislation

General legislative framework on food safety, both at European and at national level, establishes the consumer's right to safe food and to be properly informed.

The normative acts adopted at Community level designed to achieve harmonization of national standards on food safety, so that the free movement of foodstuffs to be achieved more effectively.

The European Union has developed a rich body of laws on food safety, animal health and welfare and plant health, which is binding in all EU countries. Also, these texts partially applies to third countries exporting animals, animal products, plants and plant products in the EU.

- Substantiated scientific advice necessary decisions in the field

EU food safety policy is developed based on basic scientific advisers. **European Commission** bases its decisions to act on the precautionary principle. In other words, if the scientists say there is at least a potential threat, the Commission will withdraw the product from the market without waiting for scientific evidence. Also an important role in making decisions about food security it holds **the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)**, to give advice when drawing up draft legislation or where policy makers are facing a food safety threat.

- Implementation and control policy

Commission, the institution with competence in developing and coordinating policy implementation and control, requires the implementation of European legislation on food and feed checking incorporating appropriate into national law and its implementation in all EU countries, through inspections land held inside and outside the EU.

If the main responsibility for compliance rests with the 28 Member States, the Commission must ensure, in turn, each of them correctly apply EU law. To fulfill this responsibility, the Commission set up in 1997, the **Food and Veterinary Office - FVO** (Food and Veterinary Office - FVO).

The Office carries out audits and spot checks, its main task being to verify food safety controls in Member States and countries exporting to the EU under the legislation.

Findings and recommendations are reported to the national and European authorities and also made public on the FVO website.

## 2.4 Romania's Policy on Food Safety

After joining the EU, Romania has received a number of advantages such as free movement within the European Union, the right to work in the EU, but also have returned a number of duties, one of which is harmonization national legislation to the EU, including in the food industry.

A prime example of this is the implementation of the enactment of European law known as the General Food Law, from Pre-Accession period, in

Law no.150/2004 of food safety, with gradual implementation in 2002-2005 [4].

Joining not mean only the harmonization of legislation with the European one, but also the implementation of the said requirements at national and Romania, like other Member States face a number of complex challenges.

Therefore, proper management of these challenges, the Romanian Academy has made a considerable contribution by establishing, in 2014, a study entitled Strategy for Safety and Food Security of Romania [1], developed later, in 2015, under Strategy Romania's development in the next 20 years, in Chapter 5, entitled Security and food safety [2].

This initiative of the Romanian Academy in food safety aims to outline a vision for food security and safety of Romania for the period 2016 - 2035. The document is sounding the alarm too slow progress made by Romanian agri-food system, caused by the need to ensure convergence the performance indicators of the EU member states, which is supported by maintaining poverty in vast areas in rural areas, low agricultural production, instability in domestic supply and price fluctuations, as well as poor access to food of large population groups to the potency manifestation of a condition exacerbated by food insecurity nationwide. The studym carried out by Romanian Academy, contain a SWOT analysis on the state of food security and safety in Romania, detailing these issues and highlighting a number of major vulnerabilities such as:

- a) insufficient supply of domestic agricultural to a wide range of products (meat, vegetables fruit, fish and sugar);
- b) higher farm gate prices in relation to regional prices (Hungary, Poland) for a range of products such as pork, potatoes, certain fruits and vegetables;
- c) poverty and low purchasing power of large groups of population;
- d) the precarious road infrastructure and health;
- e) poor food consumption in terms of quality;
- e) the existence of population groups with high nutritional risk and food, particularly in rural areas.

In addition to these vulnerabilities identified by the SWOT analysis, it should be noted that about 70% of farmland in Romania was estranged in recent years by foreign citizens, losing thus national control over the degree of exploitation and valorisation of the agricultural potential of the country. It also can not be ignored phenomena such as the aging and depopulation of agricultural

potential through labor migration abroad or insufficient funding and technology equipment of the agricultural sector.

On the other hand it highlighted the growth potential of agricultural production Romania, in a manner similar to other profile studies, showing that operation suitable potential domestic agricultural could provide enough food for a population of about 80 million individuals.

Although the current country profile reflects a level precarious state of food security, Romania has the potential to remedy this state of affairs and even to become a regional supplier of food security. The study developed by the Romanian Academy, in addition to the SWOT analysis on the state of food security of Romania, propose to the political factor the adoption of certain policies and directions of development for horizon 2035, so that the state of food security at the national level to improve considerably.

### 3 Conclusion

Food safety is a cross-border issue and the free movement of goods, especially the food, within the

EU has resulted in the need of adopting a unique set of rules for food control in order to protect their consumers.

Romania's accession to the EU has brought its many advantages, but put it in the face of complex challenges, which requires the adoption of a well-grounded strategy on food security for the next 20 years at national level.

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