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Quality Label as the guarantee of higher quality of food – A Case Study of Slovak food market

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Abstract

The aim of the present paper was to realize the Slovak consumer's opinion about the purchase and quality level of food available on the Slovak market, as well as to realize their knowledge and preference of Quality Label "Značka kvality SK". As research methods, there have been used the methods of survey and structured questionnaire. The total number of respondents was 2.808 randomly selected respondents. For a deeper analysis of the obtained results, there have been set out assumptions, which have been tested with the use of Pearson's chi-square test, Fisher's exact test, Mann-Whitney U-Test and Cramer's contingency coefficient. The results of the present paper show, that the knowledge and preference of higher quality food is between Slovak consumers on a pretty high level – more than 44% respondents think that in their purchase they choose higher quality food, more than 28% of respondents think that the food produced in Slovak Republic is rather higher quality, more than 58% of respondents know the Quality Label "Značka kvality SK" and over 56% of respondents could describe its logo.

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1. Introduction

Food quality is one of the decisive criteria in their purchase. To guarantee the quality, tradition and originality of the products produced in one or another part of the European Union, as well as to make it easier for customers to choose the higher quality products – different forms of Quality Labels have been introduced.

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The European Union is a broad cluster of people and cultures, which have their own eating and consumption habits. “*The Quality Policy of European Union represents a common vision of quality development of original and traditional products and support of cultural traditions and regions of Member States, where these products are produced*” (Nagyová, Košičiarová & Kádeková, 2014). To the quality attributes, which are normally taken into account in an agricultural policy context, apart from the basic assumptions of health, safety, and taste, relate exactly to (European Commission, 2007):

- specific product characteristics, often linked to geographical origin or production zone (e. g. mountain areas), animal breed or production method (e. g. organic farming),
- special ingredients,
- particular production methods often resulting from local expertise and traditions,
- observation of high environmental or animal welfare standards ,
- processing, preparation, presentation and labelling in ways that enhance the attractiveness of the product for consumers.

The European Union approves, protects, promotes and registers the control of certain food and agricultural products on the basis of principles and legislation of EU agricultural quality policy. Specific EU quality schemes, guaranteeing quality, can be differentiated into four main categories (European Commission, 2015; www.mpsr.sk, 2015; Erhart, 2013; Food today, 2013):

- designations associated with the territory – Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographic Indication (PGI), which include agricultural products and foodstuffs, wine and spirits, flavoured wine,
- designations concerning on the specific production process –Traditional Specialities Guaranteed (TSG), used also for labelling of agricultural products and foodstuffs,
- designations concerning on the products of organic agriculture – Organic farming,
- outermost regions– products specific for the Azores, Canary Islands, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, La Réunion, Madeira and Martique.

Besides the above mentioned EU quality labelling scheme, the Member States may also use their own – National quality labels. In the case of Slovak Republic we can talk about Quality Label “Značka kvality SK”, which was for the first time awarded at the exhibition AGROKOPMPLEX 2004 in Nitra and which represents a guarantee of higher quality agricultural and food products produced in Slovak Republic from domestic raw materials. Its aim is to inform the consumer about that, that the product marked with its logo (created in national colours – white, blue and red) fulfils all the quality requirements given by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

2. Material and methodology

The aim of the present paper was to realize the Slovak consumer’s opinion about the purchase and quality level of food available on the Slovak market, as well as to realize their knowledge and preference of Quality Label “Značka kvality SK”. In order to achieve the aim, as research methods, there have been used the methods of survey and structured questionnaire consisting of 13 questions formulated as closed, so that respondents (total number of respondents was 2.808 randomly selected respondents, Table 1) had the possibility to choose one, or more options.

The questionnaire was evaluated with the use of contingency tables, which were prepared by Excel, under which they were subsequently developed graphic representations. For a deeper analysis of the obtained results, there have been set out nine assumptions about the dependence resp. independence between buying the higher quality products and the category of respondents; impulses leading the respondents to the purchase of higher quality products and their category, as well as their age; the knowledge of Quality Label “Značka kvality SK” and the category of respondents, as well as their age; the knowledge of the logo of Quality Label “Značka kvality SK” and the category of respondents, as well as their age and between the situation that product was at same time labelled with Quality Label “Značka kvality SK” and label of European agricultural product quality policy and the category of

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