

CHARACTERISTICS OF BAKERY PRODUCTS CONSUMPTION IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

Since ancient times, bakery, namely the bread and bakery sector, is one of the most important sectors of the food industry in our country. As in every region of the world there are "basic foods" such as rice in Asia, the potato in Western Europe, in our country, bread is the basic food. However, bread consumption decreases from year to year on the one hand because more and more Romanians leave the country and on the other hand because new products have emerged and the consumer has become more demanding in choosing products. Even under these conditions, Romania occupies a leading position in Europe, to the consumption of bakery products. Starting from this desideratum, this paper presents a series of analyzes undertaken by firms specialized in market research in order to determine the characteristics of consumers of bakery products in Romania.

Keywords

bakery, consumption, quality, food safety.

JEL Classification

L66, Q18, D18, E21

Introduction

Most of the people consume daily products based on cereals such as bread, biscuits, pasta and various pastries. Therefore, we can mention that there is no individual who does not have in his diet at least one product from the assortment of bakery products, whether it is a simple bread or a derived assortment product, which allows us to affirm that the factories bread and bakery products have always consisted a basic component of any national economy (Mencinicopschi, 2005, p71).

Bakery, respectively, bread and bakery products, was one of the oldest occupations in our country, being an important branch of the food industry. All nutritional guidelines recommend daily grain consumption. In addition, higher consumption of these products equates to a healthy lifestyle.

The development of the production and consumption of bakery products led, in the majority of companies, to a change in the concept of technological processes for obtaining them, following the transition from the classical technology to the technology based on frozen dough. According to the President of the Romanian Bread maker (ROMPAN) Aurel Popescu, approximately 4-5% of the total bread sold in Romania is frozen, the rest is fresh or packed bread and has a validity of several days, up to 30. (Magda Marincovici, 2016). The new technology allows processing of the production peaks to ensure its fluency, as well

as the possibility of selling the products at the place of production. Although frozen dough products have a higher cost, their sales increase due to the freshness and possibility viewing by the customer. The quality of the bread obtained by the frozen dough technology is generally lower due to the lower volume than that traditionally obtained. In order to minimize this defect, it is necessary to use appropriate flour, increase the yeast dose and introduce it to the end of the kneading process, which should be done intensively and with low temperature. In the technology of making bread based on frozen dough, specialists consider it unreasonable to freeze the dough because both freezing and defrosting are long duration processes (Niederauer, 1991).

A strategic orientation of Romanian big bakery producers and distributors, is also the concern to retain the original features of these products for as long time, to ensure an increase in food security by using some modern packaging technologies. Thus, packaging of bread and bakery products through technologies such as vacuum packing (VP), controlled atmosphere packaging (CAP), modified atmosphere packaging (MAP) are basic strategies for major Romanian companies. Of these technologies, specialists appreciate that modified atmosphere packaging is the closest to consumer requirements, to have a non-deformed product with a fresh, natural product look, with no chemical additives, convenient to use. The modified atmosphere packaging technique is most commonly used by bakery manufacturers and distributors in Romania and this consists in replacing the air contained in the packaging with a gas or gas mixture at the time of packaging and hermetically closing the product in this environment. Packaging used is gas-tight to avoid gas exchange with the atmosphere throughout the shelf life (Bordei, D. et al, 2000, p. 287).

According to the Euromonitor report, bread is the product that dictates the performance of the bakery sector in Romania. (Nițulescu, 2017)

For Romania, the bread is the most important food, so the quality of the wheat grains from the annual crops in our country is of special importance. Wheat quality is determined by physical, chemical, organoleptic tests, resulting in useful information on its final capitalization in a most efficient way (Anon., 2003).

◆ Regarding the population, we note that the first requirement of the bakery consumer is to be protected against an unacceptable risk, certification confirming the compliance of the products and services with the applicable security standards.

◆ Consumers are also interested in the life of the product and the way the product meets the intended use. Legislation in the field of foodstuffs is also applicable to products of the bakery industry and according to these normative acts the economic agents in the field have the obligation to label these products with the following information: the name under which the product is sold; the list of ingredients; the amount of certain ingredients or categories of ingredients; the net quantity for pre-packaged food; the date of minimum durability; consumer end date (shelf life); conditions of storage or use; the manufacturer's or distributor's premises (in the case of imported products, the name and registered office of the importer or of the distributor registered in Romania is entered); place of origin or provenance of the product (Anon., 2007).

Consumption of bakery products in Romania

Although bread consumption, as the main product of the bakery industry, has declined from year to year, Romanians will not give up on this food. They will become more and more demanding in choosing products as they pay more attention to 'healthy' products.

This is supported by the information provided by Ro.aliment (Food Industry Specialists Magazine).

In the article "Bakery and pastry - a market where consumers are becoming more and more sophisticated", the author Gabi Nițulescu presents the guidelines on the bakery products market regarding the consumption of these products. The author believes that bread will

remain a product consumed by all segments of the population, but consumers will be more attentive to products, looking for those that are beneficial to health and wellness. Thus, an increase in the small producers' market share is expected.

According to Euromonitor, in the category of "sweet biscuits", the Romanian per capita consumption increased from 1.3 kg in 2004 to 2.1 kg in 2014 but is still below the European average of 3.5 kg per capita in Eastern Europe and 5.2 kg in Western Europe. In recent years, there has been an increase in biscuit consumption, as snacks or as a substitute for breakfast.

For biscuits and salty snacks, statistics show an increase of 4.3% in 2015 to 61.000 tonnes) compared to 2014 and 1.8% as compared to 2010, which shows a consumer orientation towards salty snacks (Nițulescu, 2017)

According to "Packaged Food in Romania" published by Euromonitor in January 2016, sales of baked and packaged bakery products registered a decrease of 02% in 2015 (1775700 tones) as compared to 2014, and are projected to reach 1698500 tonnes in 2020. (Euromonitor, 2017).

Representative of Rompan (Romanian Bakery Employers) told Agerpres that, according to analyzes, Romanians do not like frozen products, accounting for only 2-3% of bread consumption. (Agerpres, 2018)

As far as the consumption of pasta is concerned, Romania is not a big consumer, although, as a result of the influences of the consumption habits of other peoples, it has begun to use pasta more and more in consumption, mainly using the Italian preparation. According to the information provided by Piața Magazine, most pasta is consumed in the area of Bucharest and in the west of the country, where there is a large community of Italians.

Trends on the European Union market in consumption of bakery products

Bread production in EU-27 countries is relatively stable in most countries, but there are some countries where there is a slowdown trend of 1-2% per year in the United Kingdom and Germany. Bread consumption patterns vary widely within the EU, the average bread consumption per person per year is around 60 kg of bread at EU level (in 2017).

According to the latest report published by AIBI (The International Association of Plant Bakeries), bread consumption per person per year in the main countries of the European Union is the one presented in Table 1 (AIBI, [2015](#))

In Romania, consumption of bread has decreased year on year, according to Rompan (Romanian Bread Management Association), bread consumption decreased from 118 kg / year / inhabitant in 2000 to 96 kg / year / inhabitant in the year 2016, as a result of changes in Romanian food habits. In recent years, Romanians have become more and more familiar with foreign cuisine and have become more and more careful in choosing beneficial products for the body. That is why they preferred to reduce the consumption of bread, which is rich in calories.

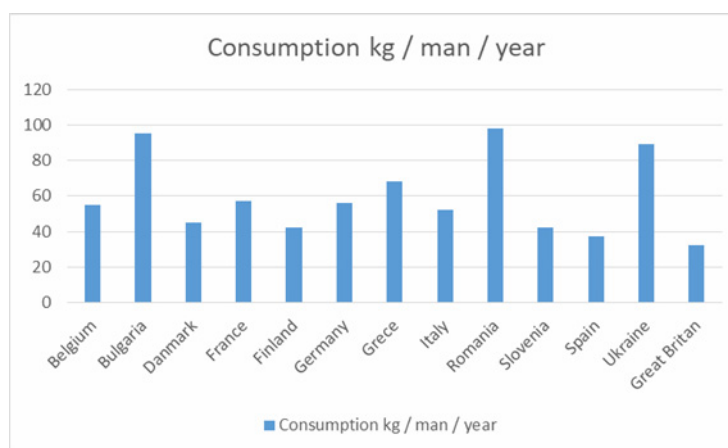
Trends in the consumption of bakery products on the EU market are aimed at informing the consumer so that there is a full understanding between the producer and the consumer about the consequences of the consumption of bakery products. We exemplify in this regard the recommendations of the French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA) on the regular way of decreasing the quantity of salt in bakery products. They provide for the legal obligation to be filled by a moral obligation towards the conspirator: "to be informed" (Pamfilie et al., 2016).

There is already a regulation on poor sodium products and the following indications regarding sodium content: low sodium content are permitted if the sodium product percentage is reduced to less than 50% relative to the reference product; low or equal to 102 mg per 100 grams of sodium; very low in sodium less than or equal to 40 mg per 100 grams; free of sodium less than or equal to 5mg per 100 grams.

In its recommendations, the French Agency for Food Safety seeks for systematic labeling of the sodium content in grams per 100 grams of product. French law also allows the indication "low in sodium" if the percentage of salt does not exceed certain specific values (I.N.B.P., 2003).

Table no.1 Bread consumption/ kg / man / year in the main EU countries

Country	Consumption kg / man / year
Belgium	55
Bulgaria	95
Danmark	45
France	57
Finland	42
Germany	56
Grece	68
Italy	52
Romania	98
Slovenia	42
Spain	37
Ukraine	89
Great Britan	32



Source: <http://www.aibi.eu/wp-content/uploads/draft-AIBI-Bread-Market-report-2013.pdf>

Taking into account the way bread is produced, the arrangements for informing the consumer should be the subject of a full understanding with producers and consumers.

In Finland a label has been developed for a set of foods with the indication "high salt content". For bread, the salt content in Finland is below 1.3%.

In the UK, a policy of voluntary reduction of salt quantities used in the food industry was launched. During a colloquy organized by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the importance of reducing salt intake for cardiovascular disease prevention, one of the first causes of UK mortality, was remembered. The maximum amount recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and consumption standards in the United States and the United Kingdom provide 6 grams / day / person for cooking salt consumption. The amount of salt found in Belgian bread before 1970 was 18 grams / kg of fresh bread, and the maximum amount of salt in bread allowed by current regulations in Belgium is 12 grams / kg of fresh bread.

In France, the average amount of salt used in bread is 19 grams / kg of fresh bread. Current studies on the perception of salty taste in humans tend to prove a good acceptability of less salty products.

Research in the European Union countries on the influence of bakery products on consumer health has led to the creation of dietary products recommended for a particular segment of the population. Thus, the International Dietetics and Bakery Company, based in Nimes, France, has been presenting a special weight bag in its stores since 2002. This bread, called

"Regente," reduces the problems of overweight, and this has been demonstrated by the fact that daily consumption for two months has a decrease in body fat of 35 millimeters. The baguette, having a functional health action, contains a complex that is weakened - after a ten-year research - from edible seaweed and which favors the consumption of triglycans in fat cells. Black bread made from wheat and rye and whole rye bread seem to have a more protective effect compared to fruit and vegetable fibers that do not have significant effects. The trends in the European Union bakery market are therefore aimed at achieving a high level of protection of health, consumer safety and environmental protection, including conformity assessment procedures and market surveillance through a system of appropriate standards and legislation. These guidelines have been and are also a priority for milling and bakery firms in our country so that products manufactured to meet the quality requirements imposed by European Union rules can cope with the competition of the globalized market. In Romania, according to Mediafax, (Mediafax, 2017), Romanians are increasingly attentive to the product label, searching for "clean and clear labels", namely by looking at the fat content, sugar content, genetically modified ingredients and salt content. Thus, in Romania, as in the developed countries of the European Union can be seen a constant orientation to a healthy bread. More and more demanding consumers are increasingly turning to brewing and bakery, the simple franchise declining in preference. Bread is no longer seen as an absolutely necessary product, being increasingly viewed as a fiber-rich product, absolutely necessary for the individual's health. Nutritionists claim that whole bread is poorer in calories than white bread and contains three times more vitamins and trace elements than white bread. (Ziare.com, 2016)

Conclusions

The bakery market is continuously dynamic and the consumption of the main bakery product, namely bread, has decreased year on year as a result of consumer orientation and other products in the sector.

At the same time, consumers have become more demanding, more trained, and are becoming more and more attentive to the label of the product they buy.

In Romania, as a result of the increase in consumers' demand, bakery producers are increasingly trying to diversify their products, capitalizing on local traditions and, on the other, militating to educate consumers about other products countries.

Being aware of the European Union's concern for food security throughout the logistics chain, from the producer to the ultimate consumer, there must also be in Romania the concern of producers to produce bakery products that meet hygiene and food safety standards. (Mencinicopschi, 2005, p.41).

Therefore, Romanian consumers of bakery products are becoming more and more aware of the hygienic aspects of food and market, which requires compliance with hygienic and sanitary requirements as well as technological ones.

The current trend toward consumer products as natural and as healthy leads bakery manufacturers to move towards production of products with low fat.

Manufacturers of bakery industry must find ways to diversify products and improve processes so that they can meet the high demands the best conditions of consumers.

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