

ELABORATION OF AN ACTION PLAN IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE FRUIT CONSUMPTION IN BIHOR COUNTY

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Abstract

In Romania, in the last 10 years the fruit consumption has increased. However, it is represented in a high proportion by imports from foreign countries (40%) which consist a fierce competition for local producers. The proposed action plan contains strategies which would help the producers from Bihor county to increase their sales with a promotion campaign for a period of 16 months.

Key words: fruit consumption, development, action plan

INTRODUCTION

Global context: Nowadays, the global food demand is on the rise due to the continuous urbanisation, higher input prices, limited water and soil resources and the spread of diseases among crops and people. Another important aspect of the population growth in such a manner is the fact that by the end of 2050 it is estimated that the food demand would increase with 70%.

National context: According to the National Statistics Institute, the average annual fruit consumption is the following:

Table 1

Fruit consumption in Romania

Year	2014	2015	2016
Fruit consumption/person (kg)	71,1	73,7	80,2

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2017

Looking at the consumption rate over the last 3 years for which there are existent official statistics, it is clear that the annual fresh fruit quantity which

is consumed by a person is steadily rising each year, most probably due to the ongoing national educational campaigns regarding our nutrition.

Local context: In Bihor county, between 2005-2014, the fruit production has increased with approximately 5% starting with year 2011.

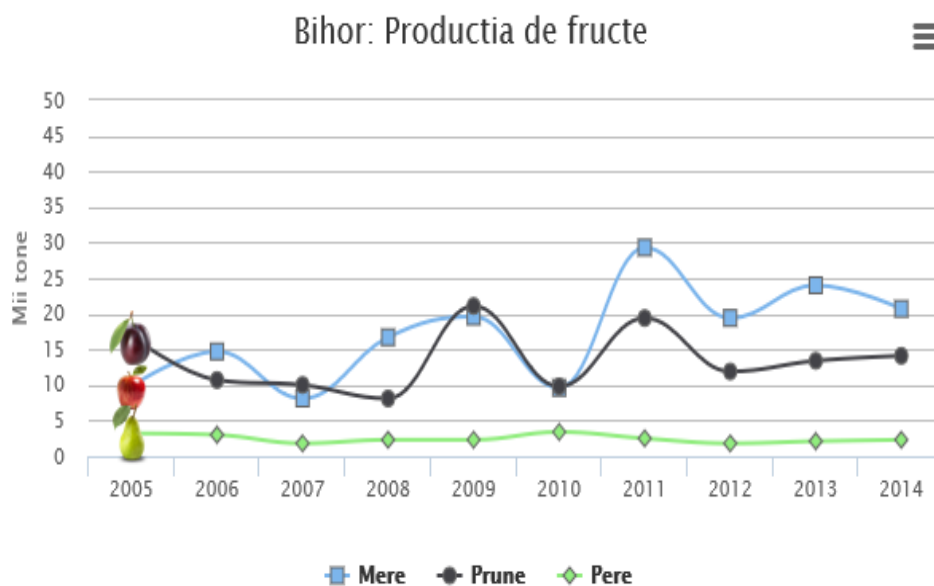


Fig. 1. Fruit production in Bihor county

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României

The data that has been presented above reveals the fact that although there is a large fruit consumption in Romania, thus a market exists, the main problem of this sector is represented by the fierce competition generated by the imported fruits. Therefore, between 2014-2016 the vegetables and fruit imports in Romania recorded the following:

Table 2

The vegetables and fruit imports in Romania

Year	2014	2015	2016
Vegetables and fruit imports (mil euros)	543	652	768

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2017

Thus, it is noted that the growth rate of imports is far above the growth rate of the consumption among the population, which assumes that the local producers are losing ground against the competition from the outside.

According to economica.net (INS takeover), in 2015 the apple imports increased by 37%, Romania reaching about 40% of the consumption of fruit across the border. The same source mentions that 60% of pears consumed by Romanians, 86% of peaches and 66% of grapes are imported.

The main issue of domestic producers is the fierce competition on the Romanian market resulting from the easy access of producers from Poland, Italy and Turkey. They have, as a major competitive advantage, the existence of adequate storage facilities and the capacity to provide large enough quantities to ensure access to supermarkets and hypermarkets.

In the other hand, studies show that, in recent years, more and more Romanians have developed an interest in domestic products, especially when it comes to fruit and vegetables. Moreover, a study conducted in 2013 by the National Institute for Research and Development for Food Bioresources shows that Ionatan apples produced in Romania have 20% more sugars than those produced in Poland, making them sweeter. When it comes to the Golden variety, native apples are much sweeter than those which are being produced in Italy and Turkey. More precisely, the Romanian apples have 22% more sugars than Italian ones and 14% more than the Turkish ones.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to make the action plan, I will be using the SWOT analysis, this representing a great method of identifying the general ways to do so that I would be able to elaborate a development plan, in which to emphasize the strengths and opportunities on the market and to exclude the weaknesses and emergence of potential threats.

Main strengths are the following:

- Very favorable pedoclimatic conditions, the Crișana region being recognized nationally for having a very high agricultural potential.
- The quality of fruit, because fruits that are produced in Romania, as shown by a study of the National Institute for Research and

Development for Food Bioresources in 2013, are more tasty and richer in nutrients than imported fruits from the main competing foreign markets: Italy, Turkey and Poland.

- Product freshness, since the distribution chain is a short one, the products reach the consumers shortly after harvesting (except apples and pears, which can be kept for a long time), which is why the vitamin intake is higher than in the case of fruit coming from export or marketed through long chains.
- Superintensive production. In Bihor County there are producers that cultivate in a superintensive system and therefore have reached a certain optimum level in terms of production costs and realistic estimates of the quantities that can be delivered annually can be made.

Weaknesses:

- The lack of bio / eco certified products, the existence of such certification would allow trading at much higher prices as well as attracting premium segment customers.
- High seasonality, due to the specific climate of our country, the harvesting period is June to November, and for most of the fruits the harvest period overlaps with the sale period due to the high degree of perishability.
- The small range of products, by the nature of the partnership, the fruit assortments are limited to those produced in the Crișana region, so to traditional and thermophilous varieties, therefore, compared to specialized shops or supermarkets where there are suppliers of fruits including from other continents , there will be a much smaller number of fruit types in the two proposed locations.
- The lack of education of the general public regarding the benefits of the development of the Romanian agroalimentary sector and the quality of domestic fruits.

Opportunities

- Increased demand for fresh fruit and agroalimentary products in general.
- Increasing the number of consumers showing preference for quality local and regional products, as demonstrated by the Tetra Pak study in 2013, which shows an increase in the number of consumers who read food labels to make the purchasing decision. Also, according to the same study, most consumers are willing to pay more for foods that provide additional health benefits.

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the Strategy for the Development of the agroalimentary sector, elaborated in 2015, has established as a strategic objective the increase of the level of food consumption in the domestic production, therefore we expect a more active involvement of the Government in the direction of increasing the competitiveness of local producers.
- Increasing the confidence of small producers in the success of joint actions and their cooperation in order to ensure the minimum quantities and continuity required by the big chain stores.
- The nutritional properties of the fruits produced in the Crișana region due to the lack of initiatives to promote indigenous products and due to the excessive fragmentation of agricultural land in Romania and hence the impossibility of small producers to market in large chain stores for a large part of the population and, in particular, generations born and raised in the urban area, autochthone products represent an unexploited segment. This is despite the fact that studies show that native fruits are richer in nutrients and antioxidants due to very favorable pedoclimatic conditions.
- The freshness of the fruit; one of the important aspects, not to be neglected when it comes to buying behavior is the freshness of the products, and when it comes to fruit it can materialize in a much better taste, more pleasant texture and low amount or even no chemicals intended to conserve the products (ex food wax).
- Authentic taste, as it is a short chain, fruits are picked at full maturity when all baking processes have been completed and then they go directly to the trading venues where they reach consumer meals within 2 days, this contributes to delivery of fruit with great taste. In contrast, fruit from the import or marketed through a large number of intermediates, due to the longer time period from harvesting to marketing to the final customer, must be harvested long before baking, with chemical processes to be activated by the application of chemical substances that allow baking independently of the orchards of origin. For this reason, the fruit does not have a specific taste, or it is very fad.

Threats

- High fruit imports from neighboring countries: Hungary, Poland and Turkey
- Low prices of the imported products

- Expanding hypermarket networks

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to implement these strategies, an action plan for a period of 16 months was elaborated:

Table 3

Action plan to increase the food sale in Bihor county

Period	Activity	Target consumers*	Objectives
M1	Purchase of offline promotion services	Individuals from Bihor county	Concept and promotion materials achievement
M1	Offline promoting materials	Individuals over 55 years old in Bihor county Individuals from Cluj county	Promoting materials achievement
M2-M16	Promoting materials distribution		Increasing the notoriety of the partnership, promoting it and the trading goods
M1 – M2	Purchasing online promotion services	Individuals from Bihor county Individuals over 55 years old in Bihor county Individuals from Cluj county	1.Increasing the brand visibility in the online, taking into consideration the target group 2.Increasing the traffic on the website 3.Optimisation on search-engines 4.Promoting the partners
M2-M16	Online promotion campaign		
M1	The organisation and deployment of the project's start	Large public	
M4	The organisation and deployment of the second promoting event	Large public	Consumers acknowledging

M7	The organisation and deployment of the second promoting event	Large public	the importance of local products consumption and the one of a short-chain promotion
M12	The organisation and deployment of the second promoting event	Large public	
M16	The organisation and deployment of the second promoting event	Large public	
M16	The organisation and deployment of the project's final	Large public	

CONCLUSIONS

The activities proposed by this action plan are likely to contribute to the development of local markets, the increase of local fruit consumption, to educating the consumer about the importance of fruit consumption in general and about local fruits in particular and finally to the marketing increase of local fruits.

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