THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ASSOCIATIONS OF THE FOOD PRODUCERS IN THE NORTH-WEST REGION OF ROMANIA

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Abstract: The article aim is to analyze food producers from the North-West region of Romania and their attitude towards association, given its major importance within the national economy. The method used consisted in a qualitative one, the structured interview among food producers from a Fair. Results indicate the very few are members of a producer association, while all of them pursue to take part from those associations which offer them promoting facilities and free access to fairs or access to information.

Key words: Fair, association, food producers

INTRODUCTION

The producer associations play a very important role in the economy because their increased power to confront the market demand and the changing environment. Sonntag et al. (2005) highlight that the producer associations and their development are strictly related to market economies and the growing demand for products and services which throughout these forms of association between producers, can easily be offered on the market. In Romania the process of building such associations is very slow and often encounters serious barriers among the producers. According to MADR (2014) in Romania were given 157 of operating agreements, of which 128 for producer group associations and 24 for preliminary recognized associations and 5 for producer’s organizations. According to the same source the highest percentage of producer associations in Romania are in the South-East region (22%) followed by the Center region with 18% and the South region with 16%. The North-Western region has only 14% of the total producer associations (Figure 1).

Fig. 1. Distribution of producer associations by regions of development
Source: own processing after MADR (2014)
MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article aim is to analyze the perception of food producers from the North-Western region of Romania regarding the producer associations. In order to achieve this goal, the method used was the structured interview, a qualitative one. The study was developed in 22-24 September 2013 at the Local Fair Transylvania Fest, were small producers from the North-Western region presented their products. From a total of 100 participants, 21 were food producers. 14 producers agreed to answer the interview which was based on a structured questionnaire containing twelve opened-questions. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) consider that this type of questions offer a stronger feeling of freedom to the respondents. Two persons were needed to proceed with the interviews because the answers had to be transcript. The main objectives of the study are:

- Determine the number of food producers which belong to an association
- Determine the main advantages as a member in an association
- Determine the reasons for which some producers refuse to take part in an association.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The interviews were conducted among 14 of 21 food producers present at the Fair. 24 % of the respondents produce different types of jams (strawberry, raspberry, blueberries), followed by tea producers, syrup producers, honey, oil and palinca producers (12%) (Figure 2).

![Fig. 2. Food producers field of activity](image)

Each participant to the Fair is a member of the “Produs de Cluj” association. The participants mentioned the main benefits of being a member, which refer mainly to marketing activities: support for promoting their products, access to important Fairs, free selling place within the fair, support, access to consumers and suppliers.

Regarding the number of food producers which are members of a producer association, only four belong to one, while ten producers are not members. Two palinca producers are members of the Palinca Producer Association and the other two are jam producers which belong to associations which promote traditional products. The rest of the
respondents are members of other forms of associations like: union ships, touristic associations and promoting societies. A honey producer member of Slow Food association appreciates that the main advantage of being a member consists in the possibility to take part at the international food fairs. A chicken meat producer, member of the Chicken Raisers Union considers that a huge advantage of being a member is the access to information about pests, prices and governmental measures and the possibility to take part to symposiums. An oil producer, member of a society which promotes the Romanian products is satisfied with the fact that his interests are represented in front of the authorities by the society manager. He also has the possibility to take part in different fairs.

A tea producer and an apple juice producer are not members of other associations beside “Produs de Cluj”. Their reasons consist in the restrictions imposed by the associations and the cooperation system of sharing opinions.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that the food producers from the North-West region of Romania understand and appreciate the main advantages of associations, of which the most important refer to the free access to local and international fairs and the access to information. The majority of the respondents are members of a form of association, but only four are members of a producer association. The rest choose to take part in associations which deal with promoting activities. The reasons for which some producers refuse to associate with others are linked to their attitude regarding the limitations and regulations of such an entity and also to financial aspects.

REFERENCES