Quality assurance schemes: the Lithuanian case

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This paper deals with the experience in designing and setting standards for quality assurance schemes within the EU, attention being focused on the different classification and orientation of the existing schemes, organizational structure, costs and benefits that are incurred by participating in the schemes, also to the strengths and weaknesses of the quality assurance schemes.

In modelling the Lithuanian case, it is essential to analyse the consumer demands and the stakeholder views upon the necessity of a national quality assurance scheme. This paper presents results of interviews and workshops, which show a high level of interest in added value products in the market. Based on the outcome of the research on existing quality assurance schemes and conducted surveys, this paper presents a possible model of the Lithuanian quality assurance scheme and outlines the necessary tasks to be accomplished in order to introduce this scheme to the market.

Key words: consumers, food, market, quality assurance schemes

INTRODUCTION

Food quality is an issue of major importance not only in Lithuania, but also in all the EU member states. The high competition results in adding quality next to price as a product attribute and a source of competitive advantage on agricultural and food markets. The supply chain members constantly try to adapt to this changing situation and consequently improve overall product quality. In this context, various quality assurance schemes (QAS) with different quality standards have been developed and are applied within the food supply chain in the EU. As there is no QAS in Lithuania, it is obvious that members of the supply chain will not be able to compete with the high quality products from other EU member states. As there is no research done in Lithuania in this sector, in order to improve the competitive position of the Lithuanian agriculture and food industry and to improve the overall agricultural and food quality, the *objective* of this paper is to analyse the QAS existing in the EU, to explore if there is a necessity for high quality labelled products in Lithuania, and to design the possible Lithuanian QAS model. To realise the objective, several *tasks* were completed:

- Analysis and evaluation of the food quality assurance schemes in the EU member states.
- Survey of the Lithuanian food market and its potential in the field of quality assurance.
- Substantiation of the needs of the national QAS and the necessity to orient it towards the needs of consumers.
- Presentation of a possible model of the Lithuanian QAS, based on the experience of other EU member states.

The research object. Quality assurance schemes.

Methodology. The article was framed by analysing different sources: primary and secondary data, national and international literature, statistical data, Internet sources and legal acts.

Analysis was made by using descriptive – analytic and modelling methods. Also, the views of the stakeholders were explored and the opinions evaluated on the basis of workshops and individual interviews.

THE QAS CONCEPT

QAS classification

At present, many types of quality assurance systems are applied along the food chain in the EU member states. Consequently, every scheme stresses different quality standards suggested by different institutions.

There is no common classification or orientation of the QAS existing within the EU, therefore they are based on different variables:

- Targets (food chain or consumer). This classification system is one of the most popular ones and expresses the core of quality systems. The systems oriented towards the food supply chain assure compliance with qualitative production standards within the chain, but the consumer is not informed about the existence of such systems – they are called "business-to-business systems" (B2B), such as EUrepgap (the European Retail Parties Good Agricultural Practices), while "business-to-consumer systems" (B2C) are established to meet the needs of consumers and to implement qualitative criteria considering the quality standards of the consumer. Consumers are informed about such systems and their application. The national quality assurance systems such as Qualität und Sicherheit (QS), Label Rouge are mainly based on this principle.
- Content (requirements of the system). These standards vary depending on each scheme. Some schemes emphasize the higher food safety, traceability standards, while

other schemes are oriented towards a better quality of nutritional characteristics or implementation of animal welfare standards.

- Owner of the scheme. Every scheme is established by an initiator, or a group of initiators, who determines its objectives, standards and requirements. Depending on the initiator who establishes the system and the institution administrating the system, establishing and improving the standards, the schemes are classified into public (EU (PDO, PGI, TSG)) and private (QS) or public-private (VLAM).
- Areas of application (local, regional, national, international systems). The systems oriented towards the food chain are often established at the international level. These schemes determine the standards the application of which enables compliance with the same universally accepted standards in food production and processing. The consumer-oriented schemes are usually established at the national level, because the needs of consumers in different countries may vary.
- Number of stages involved along the food supply chain. Many schemes strive for certification involving all the participants in the food chain, starting from the primary producer to the final consumer. However, many systems are oriented only towards one link in the chain, such as farmers or industrial processing.

The most important classification was considered to be the one based on different targets: targeting the participants along the food supply chain ('*business-to-business*') or the final consumer ('*business-to-consumer*').

Legal basis

There are no legal acts in the EU or on the national level, which would be specifically designated for the QAS. The key legal act is Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 January 2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety (better known as the General Food Law). This Regulation provides definitions, principles and obligations for all participants of the food chain. There are also other EU regulations laying down hygiene rules, state control of food of animal origin, etc. All these regulations are applied to all links in the food supply chain regardless whether or not a certain entity participates in the QAS. What is more, QAS participants definitely must follow national legal rules. For these reasons, QAS are governed by a private law which is a composition of EU, national legal acts and additional requirements that are typical of an individual QAS.

Organizational structure

The owners of the standards are generally private or public–private bodies which initiate the development of the QAS and set the standards. The body of the QAS determines its internal organizational structure. Usually, every QAS body has a Council to stipulate QAS policy, Sectorial Committees to deal with specific issues of a certain sector, and an auxiliary Secretariat to assure the appropriate functioning of the QAS body administrative apparatus.

Every QAS is supposed to have a certification and control body that checks whether a QAS participant conforms to all QAS standards, certifies it for the use of the quality label and controls how the certified participant follows QAS requirements. The certification body can be both a standard holder (scheme initiator) and an independent body, whereas the control body is independent in all QAS (third party control). Usually, every QAS participant must also assure a self-control mechanism, i.e. an internal audit performed by a QAS participant.

Participants of the schemes differ depending on the type of the scheme. It may operate only at the farm level (Eurepgap) or may set the requirements for all members of the food supply chain: producers, processors, transporters, wholesalers and retailers (*QS*).

Sanctions

After certifying the QAS participants, it is necessary to assure that the participants keep on meeting the scheme requirements and do not break their obligations since any incompliance can significantly harm all the participants in the QAS and affect the reputation of the quality label. For this reason, every QAS sets a sanction mechanism for non-compliance with the requirements. Besides the sanctions applicable to QAS participants, there are also sanctions applicable to certification bodies in case they do not fulfil their obligations.

Costs, benefits and weaknesses

One of the main aspects when designing the scheme is considered to be costs and benefits incurred by the participants of the scheme. The participants of the QAS have to pay:

- certification fee;
- inspection fee;
- annual membership fee;
- process analysis costs;
- training costs;
- investment costs in order to adapt to the requirements of the scheme.

QAS benefits are multiple and include the following aspects:

- Benefits for the consumers:
    the participation in a B2C QAS enables the consumer to recognize a labelled product as being of a higher quality;
    national QAS are established exactly on the basis of a detailed and thorough analysis of the consumer needs. In this case, consumer confidence in the quality of such product is obvious, therefore consumption of such product is assured.
- Benefits for the farmers, processors and retailers:
    firstly, participating in a QAS is often a prerequisite for entering the market. Currently, retailers require their suppliers to provide certificates proving participation in a particular QAS. Consequently, it is hardly possible to enter particular markets without certification. However, since the participation in QAS requires investment, it may be an obstacle for small entities;
    secondly, whereas the requirements applied to a QAS product are higher than the ones applied to a product that does not participate in any QAS, such product

becomes more competitive both on domestic and foreign markets;

thirdly, the requirements applied to agricultural production, processing and trading are very important. QAS assures that all procedures applied "from the field to the table" or "from farm to fork" are strictly regulated, performed and supervised;

fourthly, the aspect of cross compliance is also a factor that determines the participation in QAS. Support provided to farmers is related with the compliance provisions of 19 EU regulations. In some cases such as animal welfare requirements, these regulations are related with the quality management systems;

fifthly, participation in QAS strengthens relations among different links of the food supply chain participating in the same scheme. QAS requirements strengthen the ability to trace and follow a food, feed, food-producing animal or substance intended or expected to be incorporated into a food or feed product, through all stages of production, processing and distribution. In this way, the compliance with the traceability requirements through relevant documentation or information in accordance with the relevant requirements may be better assured;

a QAS can help participants to reduce costs of inter-transactions because, in case their partner is certified for the quality label, such partner is considered reliable. For this reason there is no need to check the partner's activity and there are no doubts about the quality of the activity or product;

participation in QAS increases the turnover of the participant. This aspect also depends on the strategy on which a QAS is based. In case the key objective of QAS is to assure meeting the requirements of legal acts, the product price is the same as the one of conventional products, but the participants get a higher income because the consumption and sales of such product increase. In case the QAS policy addresses the production of a product which distinguishes it from the conventional products for its specific characteristics (taste, method of production, better nutritional value, less additives), such product is more expensive, but a consumer is ready to pay for the obviously higher quality.

Despite the benefits of QAS to the participants, these schemes have also some negative aspects. Firstly, participants of a food supply chain usually collaborate with several suppliers and clients with the intention of reducing risks related to collaboration with one single partner. Since no unique or uniform QAS exists, many partners ask for different QAS certificates. In this way companies participate in several schemes. Mutual recognition of the schemes at both national and international level hardly exists, despite little differences in the standards applied. Nevertheless, QAS participant is forced to participate in a few schemes that have specific systems of certification, auditing and control. This results in increasing costs.

Other negative QAS aspects are the following:

- not all the participants in the food chain, especially those who are small, are capable to join the schemes, because certification and control costs are too high for them. Consequently, these players are excluded from entering the market;
- reimbursement of costs of participating in a QAS is not guaranteed;
- a wide range of different QAS labels can mislead consumers about the quality standards applied and raise doubts about the concept of food safety and quality in a particular QAS.

Standard requirements

Requirements and their content, intensity and strictness are different in every QAS. The most typical requirements applied almost in every QAS are:

- *food safety.* Every product, regardless of the presence of a QAS label, must be safe. Participation in QAS means that supervision and independent control are assured, which means that in addition to the control by public authorities, also private inspection bodies verify food safety requirements;
- *product specialty* (taste characteristics, packaging). The QAS label means that the product must comply with higher standards than conventional products. Depending on the QAS standards, consumers are able to recognize the product among others as a higher quality product in terms of taste characteristics as well as appearance characteristics such as package, colour, etc.;
- *product origin.* Consumers perceive locally or domestically produced food products as being of a higher quality, because they have more knowledge about the standards and conditions applied in the process of local food production. Thus, the criterion of origin is an important factor while choosing the product;
- *product traceability.* Requirements for product traceability are defined by EU regulations for all food products without exception. Participation in QAS requires a detailed documentation to be able to trace back the product production processes. For this reason, the level of traceability and opportunities to identify the link in which the requirements were not observed are higher;
- *environmental requirements.* These requirements are present not in all QASs and are infrequent. These requirements are often stressed in the umbrella systems which define additional requirements for the QAS that use the label of the umbrella system (for example, Assured British Meat, using the Little Red Tractor label, has to observe additional environmental and other requirements);
- *animal welfare requirements.* These requirements are relevant for the QAS that are related with animal products. Usually, QAS related to animal husbandry integrate stricter requirements for topics such as animal keeping, feeding and transportation.

According to the consumer study, Lithuanian consumers most often relate food quality with the requirements of food safety, origin and animal welfare.

FOOD QUALITY ISSUES IN LITHUANIA

After joining the EU, Lithuania faced new markets and a much higher competition which affected the food sector in particular.

It is obvious that striving to stand the competition, it is necessary to pay more attention to higher requirements for the food quality, innovation, and to balance economic relations between agriculture, processing and trade enterprises.

The Community Strategic Guidelines for Rural Development (programming period 2007–2013) stimulate Lithuania to develop a modern and competitive agricultural and food sector, to implement standards for agricultural production, to improve food safety and quality.

In Lithuania, different food quality laboratories operate, conferences on the food quality issues are organized, but there is no integrated system in witch consumer requirements, quality standards, training of specialists and control of product quality are combined together. The first step to the QAS may be considered the pilot project "Tatula programme", which developed rules for sustainable farming and registered the label "Lithuanian natural product".

Apart from "Tatula programme", the JSC "Palink", the owner of the IKI retail chain, has also started the project "IKI Gurmanai" (Gourmet). At present, retail chains sell different products marked with a quality mark, which are distinguished for their unique recipe, specific production technology and a very strictly controlled high quality. Retail chains conclude long-term contracts with suppliers, which stipulate the terms of supply and quality control. Retailers have a right to check whether products are produced according to the stipulated rules.

The fact that retailers start establishing quality schemes within a trade chain themselves before the state institutions will prepare national QAS requirements shows the needs for quality schemes in Lithuania.

Consumer requirements

The main consumer requirements related to food quality attributes in Lithuania are:

- Quality and price ratio. According to the data of a survey carried out by the Lithuanian Institute of Consumers, 55% of consumers in Lithuania mention price as the most important purchase criterion. Quality is important for 70% of the consumers. Compared to the Eurobarometer survey 64.1, carried out in 2005, the importance of quality in 2006 increased by 31% and the importance of price by 9%. This tendency shows that even though the price is still important when choosing the product, Lithuanian consumers pay even more attention to a higher product quality.
- Risk. According to the data of the Eurobarometer 64.1 survey, 76% of consumers in Lithuania indicated food additives as one of the main risk factors related to food products, such as preservatives, colourings, flavours, etc. About 76% of consumers in Lithuania were concerned about the residues of antibiotics and hormones in meat, the same part of consumers were concerned about the residues of pesticides in fruit and vegetables. According to data provided by the Lithuanian Institute of Consumers, the consumer before selecting a product pays special attention to freshness (98.2%), taste and aroma (93.7%), nutritional value (89.7%) and the amounts of synthetic food additives (86%). Hence, it may be concluded all these qualities are very important characteristics of a product.

- Origin. In 2005, the Lithuanian Institute of Consumers carried out a market research illustrating that consumers appreciate Lithuanian products very well. It is striking that even 44% of the consumers buying organic products thought that all Lithuanian products are equal to organic products. It should be noted that a survey carried out by the Lithuanian Institute of Consumers in 2006 shows that the importance of origin has declined significantly and only 19% of consumers outline the origin as an important characteristic for choosing a product.
- Animal welfare. According to data of the Eurobarometer 63.2 (2005), 58% of consumers in Lithuanian state that the national agricultural policy pays insufficient attention to animal welfare.

It should be noted that the Lithuanian consumer already chooses food products paying more attention to quality than to the price as the main criterion. What is more, the tendencies of increasing income show that in the future the demand for higher quality products will increase. Thus, a high quality product, having distinguished characteristics and recognized by the competent state institutions, will undoubtedly form the segment of consumers who will buy only high quality products. Such product, having a sufficient demand, will be able to compete on the market with cheaper conventional products.

Interviews and workshops

To explore stakeholders' interest in developing a national QAS, interviews and workshops were organised. The participants in the interviews and the workshops included members from different farmers' and processors' associations (meat, grain, milk, fruit and vegetables), representatives of retail associations, consumer institutions, research institutes, Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders. The respondents were asked about the possible advantages and disadvantages of the national quality scheme. The advantages mentioned are the following:

- consumers get safer, higher quality and different products;
- such systems can help to re-establish the consumer's trust in producers, to assess the added qualitative value of the product;
- the system commits producers to pay more attention to the quality and healthiness of the product as well as to assure the quality of production processes;
- increases the prestige and competitiveness of the product, its higher demand and higher price;
- the scheme enables to get compensation for production and control costs of the product during the first year.

The main disadvantages are:

- higher production costs;
- additional labour costs and expenses of establishing such a system as well as of establishing and controlling a system of compliance assessment;
- the abundance and repeated technical requirements and standards;
- risk of a larger bureaucratic apparatus.

In regard of standards applied in QAS, a list of specific characteristics that should distinguish the product in the QAS was presented to the respondents. The most important characteristics, in the

opinion of the respondents, are naturalness, taste, freshness, the absence pesticides and synthetic preservations. Other indicated but less important characteristics are as follows: animal breeding and crop cultivation far from pollution sources, appearance and package of the product, animal welfare, animal fodder, natural conditions of animal keeping and crop cultivation.

QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME POTENTIAL IN LITHUANIA

After analysis of the experience with quality schemes existing in foreign countries and the evaluation of consumer needs, it may be concluded that the target of the Lithuanian QAS should be both the consumers and the food supply chain. In order to achieve this objective, while designing the Lithuanian QAS it is necessary to adhere to the *Eurepgap* and *Qualität und Sicherheit* systems and their standards.

As mentioned above, a QAS may be oriented towards the food production chain or towards consumers. Our research revealed consumers' interest in specific quality attributes such as food safety, origin, animal welfare, etc. Consequently, the Lithuanian QAS should be grounded on these qualities important to and stressed by consumers. This scheme must provide the consumer with all the necessary information about the standards applicable to the products, their specific qualities and differences from traditional products.

Since the QAS should enhance close and strong relationships among all participants within the food chain, the system also should be based on strengthening inter-collaboration and control. Thus, the Lithuanian national QAS should be a combination of both approaches: "business-to-consumer" and "business-to-business".

When establishing the QAS requirements, it is necessary to consider existing schemes and experience in the implementation and application of quality management and production requirements. Considering the main Lithuania's foreign trade partners in the EU and the present situation in the quality area in EU countries, the Lithuanian national QAS should be based on the following systems:

- the QS system, oriented towards the needs of consumers.[1]
- the Eurepgap system oriented towards the food chain.[2]

To join international schemes in the long-term period, first of all the basic QS and Eurepgap requirements should be considered. At the beginning, the scheme should be based only on the basic criteria of these schemes and organisational systems such as the certification mechanism, audits, the system of sanctions, the major standard requirements. Later on, aiming to the compliance of requirements with these two systems as much as possible, additional and recommendable standard requirements should be involved.

Observing the importance of the requirements of the two mentioned QASs, it should be noted that the requirements should fulfil the consumer's needs expressed during surveys, therefore, the requirements for safety, nutritional value, food additives should be clearly set.

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[1] http://www.q-s.info/QS-System.92+M52087573ab0.0.html

[2] http://www.eurepgap.org/Languages/English/index_html

Organizational structure

Given the fact that communication with consumers should be clear and simple, the use of one single quality label for all agricultural sectors is recommended. In this way, economies of scale can be realised when organising promotion both towards consumers and the business community. Therefore, the "umbrella" system should be established and the following topics should be worked out:

- the overall objectives and principles of the QAS, mandatory for the participants from all sectors, i. e. fundamentals emphasizing the essence of the scheme and differences in QAS products from conventional ones should be listed.
- The structure of the scheme:
  the owner of the quality label and its organizational structure should be chosen, as well as its operational objectives, rights and obligations, financing mechanism should be clearly defined;
  it is necessary to identify QAS participants to be certified. It is supposed that striving for quality assurance in all links of the chain it is necessary to certify every participant related with the product coming on the market, i. e. from producer to retailer. In the fruit and vegetable sector, producers, transporters, processors (if a product is processed) as well as wholesalers and retailers should be certified;
  specific requirements for every agricultural sector (fruit and vegetables, meat, milk, etc.), i. e. the most important quality aspects the observance of which is strictly controlled;
  every QAS participant must be certified and controlled afterwards. Therefore, it is necessary to identify certification and control bodies, their organizational structure, operational objectives, rights and obligations, financing mechanism, also a certification and control scheme.

Given the fact that both financially and considering labour costs it is more useful to establish the QAS body within the frame of an already existing institution. It is supposed that most advisable should be to form a new subdivision at such an institution with the possibility that in future the QAS body could become independent. In this case the QAS body would undergo an intermediate phase before separation into an independent body, which would be more cost effective. The list of institutions that could undertake QAS functions as well as their advantages and disadvantages should be presented to the stakeholders who have to choose the best institution suitable for QAS functions.

To have an effectively functioning body or subdivision, it is necessary to set a structure that can assure a proper activity of the QAS body. The suggested structures of the QAS body are:

- one QAS Council composed of the representatives of all chain organizations. The Council would have the right to decide questions concerning all participating sectors. The right to present proposals related to the improvement of standard requirements would be delegated to the institutions that represent concerns of the corresponding sector;
- two-level management: established QAS committees for every agricultural sector of the scheme and the Council.

The committees delegate their members (committee chairpersons) to the Council which deals with strategic issues related to the common QAS requirements and the use of the quality label.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. There is no QAS in Lithuania, therefore, there are no sufficient amounts of value added products in the market and the competition is not ensured. The lack of labeled products shows the need for the Lithuanian QAS.

2. There are lots of QAS in the EU, classified according different variables. The Lithuanian QAS should be mostuly adhered to the consumer's requirements expressed in surveys.

3. Every QAS has an independent specific organizational structure and specific QAS requirements which mostuly depends on the targets of a QAS.

4. One of the main characteristics of QAS is that the labeled product has a value added and differs from the conventional products depending on the qualities, outlined by the QAS strategies. According to the consumer's demands, it is suggested that the production / processing of QAS products would be characterized by these qualities:

5. *Safety.* Additional risk control points, other than established by the EU or NATIONAL legal requirements according to product specification are evaluated; all production stages are controlled, complete traceability assured.

6. *Naturalness.* Limited destinations from fields to pollution sources, limited quantities and frequency of mineral fertilizers, pesticides, medicines, no synthetic additives (preservatives, sweeteners, taste strengtheners, colorants and others).

7. *Nutritional value.* Products are fresher because the time period from the end of production phase to the consumer is shortened, the products are distinguished by exceptional taste, smell, appearance and consistence, the processing methods preserving their nutritional value are used, specifically according to every product group the content of minerals, vitamins and other biologically valuable materials is increased, the energetic value, content of fat, salt, sugar are decreased according to each product's specification.

8. *Traditionality.* All production process is carried out in the same country, maximizing the usage of local raw materials. In the production process, longevous plant varieties and animal species are used, products are distinguished for their specific qualities, authentic method of production and are well known in the market.

9. *Environmental issues.* Environment-friendly technologies are used, with increased biodiversity, limited usage of synthetic or non-reprocessable packaging materials, maximum usage of production waste.

10. Participation in the QAS means that the participants get benefits – the value added means that the product price is higher, but alongside getting benefits, the participant has to incur QAS costs.

11. Developing the Lithuanian QAS, first of all it should be decided upon the institution and the structure of the Board. It is an essential decision to transfer the initiative of QAS development to the private sector. It should be decided if there is a real need for sector expert committees; also, the exact number of representatives in the Board should become clear, the candidates should be chosen and the Board statute approved.

12. The QAS operational documents should be prepared, revised according to the suggestions of the stakeholders and interested institutions and finally approved by the stakeholders and the Board.

13. On accomplishing the first two tasks it is important to publish the QAS, to organize a launching event, to invite stakeholders, other groups of interests to the launching event, possibly organizing a press conference so that consumers would become aware of the QAS and of the main principles it declares.

14. At the moment of the QAS launching, the certification bodies should be already prepared to certify QAS products, to have detailed rules and specialists qualified to properly perform certification and control procedures.

15. As the main target of the QAS is the consumer, a very important task is organization of the promotional campaign where consumers would get a clear message of the QAS products and their qualities in such a way that the QAS products would be clearly identified.

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MAISTO KOKYBĖS UŽTIKRINIMO SCHEMOS RENGIMAS LIETUVAI

Santrauka

Pastaruoju metu Europos Sąjungoje (ES) yra pabrėžiama maisto kokybės svarba. Išsilaikyti konkurencinėje kovoje galima tik pasiūlant vartotojui išskirtinius, pridėtine kokybine verte pasižyminčius produktus. Siekiant šio tikslo daugelyje ES šalių kuriamos įvairios kokybės užtikrinimo schemos (KUS). Šiame straipsnyje pateikiama ES šalių patirtis kuriant KUS, ypač daug dėmesio skiriant organizacinei KUS struktūrai, tikslams, kokybės reikalavimams, naudai ir trūkumams.

KUS poreikiui pagrįsti ir sektoriaus, kuriame bus įgyvendinama KUS, išskirti surengta suinteresuotųjų KUS dalyvių apklausa, pasitarimai bei pateikiami jų rezultatai – KUS poreikio patvirtinimas bei vaisiaus ir daržovių sektoriaus pasirinkimas.

Įvertinus tyrimo rezultatus, pasirenkama į vartotojų poreikius bei verslą orientuotų sistemų derinys, modeliuojama Lietuvos nacionalinės KUS organizacinė struktūra, nustatomos jos dalyvių pagrindinės funkcijos bei suformuluojami uždaviniai, kuriuos būtina atlikti siekiant sukurti KUS ir įgyvendinti ją praktiškai.

Raktažodžiai: maistas, kokybės užtikrinimo schemos, rinka, vartotojai

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РАЗРАБОТКА СХЕМЫ ОБЕСПЕЧЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВА ПРОДОВОЛЬСТВИЯ В ЛИТВЕ

Резюме

В последнее время значение качества продовольствия подчеркивается в пространстве ЕС. При росте предложения в условиях конкуренции можно выстоять лишь предлагая более качественные продукты. Для достижения этой цели во многих странах ЕС создаются схемы обеспечения качества. В статье изучается опыт стран ЕС в создании таких схем, особое внимание уделяется при этом их целям, организационной структуре, требованиям качества, а также преимуществам и недостаткам.

Для обоснования необходимости такой схемы и определения сектора, в котором она будет внедряться, был организован опрос заинтересованных участников внедрения схемы, проведены совещания и представлены итоги проведенной работы: подтверждение потребности, а также выбор плодоовощного сектора.

В результате исследования и оценки его выводов была отобрана комбинация систем, ориентированных на нужды потребителей и на предпринимательство, а также разработана организационная структура национальной модели схемы обеспечения качества для Литвы, определены основные функции участников такой схемы, задачи, которые надлежит решить в целях её создания и практической реализации.

Ключевые слова: продовольствие, потребители, рынок, схемы обеспечения качества