



# A perspective from consumers in new EU member states

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# A perspective from consumers in new EU member states

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# The new member states' background

Before the second world war:

This part of Europe has a historical background, most of the countries were always big food producers and exporters:

„the pantry of Europe“

It means they had to have good agricultural and food producing regulations and manufacturing expertise.

Typically large territories with professional management

# The new member states' background

Between 1945 -1989

First divide the territory into small parts, but the owner had to have good expertise.

Then collect the farms and develop communes.

No one was interested directly in keeping the experts. There was a little bit of confusion.

But later newly educated professionals came to the agriculture and food industry.

Big, concentrated plants were also typical

## Situation after the political change

After the political change, the result of „compensation“ was a lot of small farms, some times the new owners did not have agriculture expertise.

The big food plants, without the Soviet Union's market, did not have enough work. They were ruined.

# Situation after the political changes

## Handicaps:

- After the war no one took care of the environment
- The soviet armies also left behind a lot of environmental problems
- The sanitisation of villages did not exist, but the new technologies (washing machine, mains water, gas heating) is a reality
- The enviroment burden by households increased

# Situation after the political changes

## Benefits

- Agriculture did not use too many chemicals (artificial fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, hormones etc.), because of the financial point of view
- Because of the centralized control, the safety of food was at a high level
- There were well educated professionals in the agriculture and food industry

# What is the current situation?

Central and Eastern Europe has to accept the community regulations, and also change the agriculture and food industry structure.

It means a liberalisation in regulation: the responsibility moved from the state to the producer, retailer and also to the consumers.

The single market is very large, for example the food assortment has increased more than 10 times.

# The consumer's position

- The food safety issues increased
- We have the same regulations as the old EU countries (food law, consumer protection law etc.)
- Some of the countries have organised the food safety authority
- There are also state organs for control
- And now NGO's, for consumer protection, exist in each country.

# The consumer's position

- The state control works in parallel, different ministries have different institutions and some times they do not work together.
- Most of the laboratories are not well equipped, except for the private ones, for example SGS, Dr. Wessling

# The consumer's position

NGO's position:

- In all new member states there exist associations for consumer protection and most of them are members of BEUC, the European organisation and the Consumer's International
- The organisations do not have financial support, they live from tenders. It is a problem, because they can not plan their work.

# The consumer's position

- We can realise, consumers are in the same situation Europewide, regarding the obese, nutrition, food labeling, fortified food, nutrition and health claims.
- But in the new member countries the consumer believes the claims more, because they have got used to the state keeping them "safe".

# The consumer's position

BEUC helps us:

- co-ordinate our work at EU level,
- involve the national associations in different campaigns
- organize education trainings and network
- invite the experts to the meetings and conferences
- negotiate, and help us to be able to be involved in EU projects

# The consumer's position

Consumers International involved, not only the Eu member state's, but also the other's in different actions, for example: GMO actions, fair trade, Codex Alimentarius work, Consumers World Day

They ask our opinion about Codex standards

Some times organised meetings, so we have possibility to meet the neighbor consumers representatives

# The consumer's position

The Commission also helps us directly or indirectly:

- With financial support, to be able to take part in EU level at conferences, workshops, consultations
- With the support of network projects, surveys
- With information

# The consumer's position

The main tasks now:

- Obesity campaign - especially the children obesity
- Lobbying for food labelling, simple labelling, nutrition and health claims, nutrition profile regulation
- Lobbying for *GMO* free agricultur, and *GMO* labelling

# The consumer's position

The main tasks now:

To be involved in projects regarding the

- food contaminants,
- Environmental protection,
- *GMO*, and co-existent,
- chemicals (REACH)
- technologies (HETOX)

# The consumer's position

The main tasks now:

- Establish coverage informations possibility, for example consumers magazine
- Make daily contact with media, to ensure publicity of our work
- Ensure the financial background

**Thank you the attention!**