



THE NUTRITIONAL LABELING OF THE DAIRY PRODUCTS IN ROMANIA, TENDENCIES AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: The main goal of the present essay is to improve the degree of information through more efficient labeling of the alimentary products. The observation method has been used for the establishment of the offer of milk and dairy products class on the Romanian market during 2013, and the investigation stage consisted of data collection from labels and their graphical interpretation. The 3 concern groups regarding the classification of the chosen products have been: Any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use, % of Saturated fat specified on product and % of Salt specified on product. The label of the products has to offer the consumer the necessary, sufficient, veritable and easy to compare information, which will allow them to chose their alimentary product according to their exigency, financial possibilities, to know the eventual risks they may be subject to, so that they will not be mislead.

Key words: dairy products, labeling, nutritional information, storage information

INTRODUCTION

The development and improvement of the technologies in the food industry as well as the alimentation behavior of the consumer are being directly influenced by a complex component represented by the information that is present on the label of the product. The feedback of the consumer as well as

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their buying capacity influences the evolution of the production and of the consumption of the alimentary products (Ene, 2009), (Olaru, 2001).

In this context, the main goal of the present essay is the impartation and improvement of the knowledge level regarding the access to free information regarding the nutritive and hygienic-sanitary qualities of the products on the Romanian market (Watson, 2000), (Stănescu & Voicu, 2009). The ideal model of labeling must respect the quality requirements imposed by the national and European regulations. Based on adapted marketing strategies and policies, the labels must present correct and complex information, in tight relation to the needs of the consumer. (Romanian Ministry, 2002), (Reg.UE no. 1169/2011), (Reg.C.E. no. 834/2007).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method of observation realized in four steps has been used in order to be able to establish the offer of food products as milk and dairy products on the Romanian market in 2013:

- 15 locations for the observation process have been established;
- the objectives that needed to be followed in the 15 locations have been established, in view of framing the observation sheet;
- the choice of 3 concern groups has been carried out, regarding the classification of the chosen products: Any special storage conditions and/or conditions of use, % of Saturated fat specified on the product and % of Salt specified on the product;
- grouping the alimentary products like milk and dairy products into 3 groups of concern, for a better and easier filling in of the observation sheet.

Bearing in mind the objectives of the present essay, the investigation stage consisted in data collection regarding the content of the labels and the graphical interpretation of the obtained data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A few hypotheses could be formulated based on the analysis of the obtained results, regarding the variety of information existing on the labels of milk and dairy products observed in the 15 locations chosen in Sibiu.

Even if the majority of the consumers are interested in the information on the labels, information regarding the nutritional aspects (Watson, 2000), the

information regarding the conservation of the products are considered necessary and compulsory. Figure 1 shows the incidence of the information regarding conservation conditions.

Due to the fact that, by their nature, dairy products present a high risk of out ageing, we consider the recommendation of including as much and as explicit and readable information on the label as being opportune.

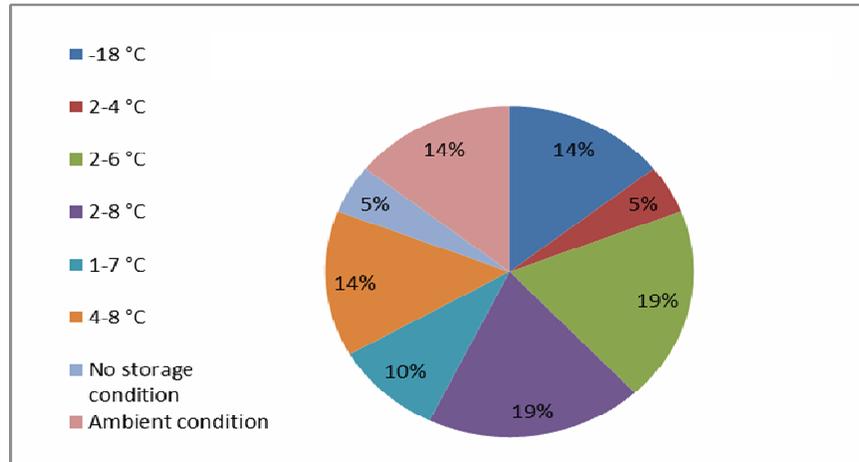


Figure 1. The frequency of information regarding the storage conditions shown on the labels of the alimentary products

Saturated salts have been in the center of many debated during time, pro and cons being mentioned by numerous medics during the years. The majority of the consumers state that saturated fat consumption arises the risk of heart diseases and rises the cholesterol level, and some experts mention the fact that people need this type of fat.

Due to this aspect, one of the main indicators that has been studied on labels has been the frequency of saturated fat percentage indication. After collecting and analyzing the date, it can be stated that 75% of the labels on the Romanian market do not mention do not mention the saturated fat percent (as shown in Figure 2), information which should be compulsory.

Even if 43% of the products presented information regarding the saturated fat content, no label on no product presented information regarding the monosaturated fat acids (MUFA) and polinesaturati (PUFA) content. Under these circumstances, the capable and educated consumers will not be able to decide objectively regarding the dairy products consumption.

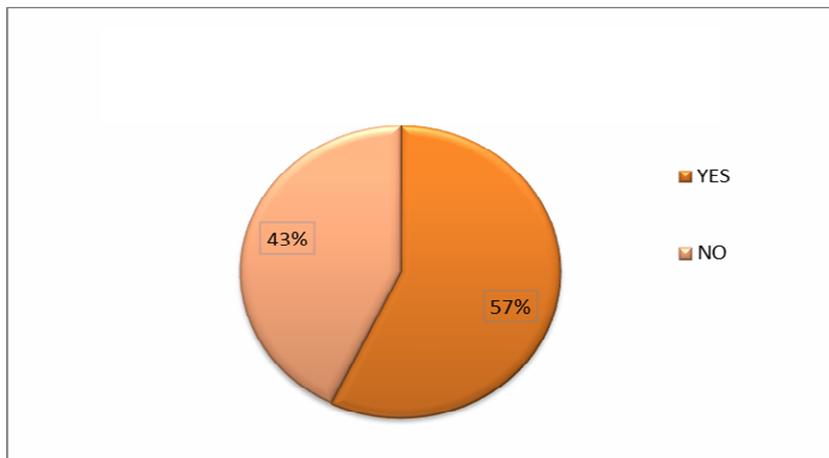


Figure 2. The frequency of indication of the saturated fats percent shown on the labels of the analyzed products.

The experts mention that excessively consumed salt affects the brain and the heart. Elderly persons that follow a salty diet and have little exercise suffer a much faster mental decline compared to the more prudent ones. Even so, 62% of the producers have no mentions on the label regarding the salt or sodium content of the product, a fact that is to be taken into consideration by the competent authorities (Figure 3).

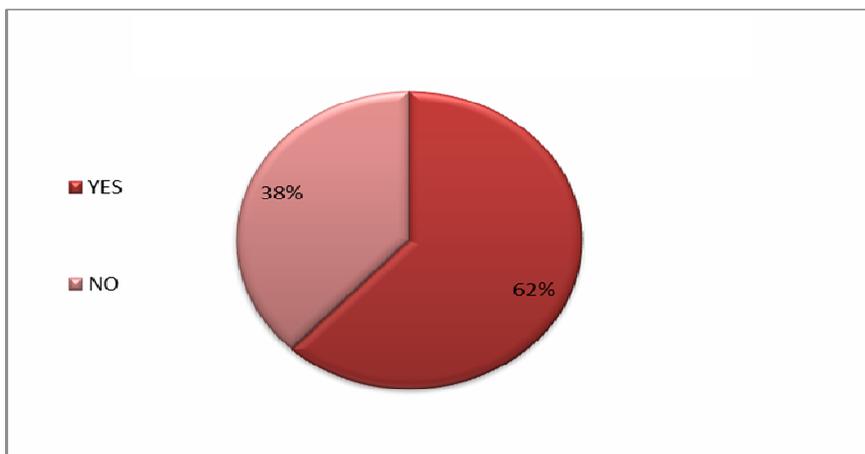


Figure 3. The frequency of salt percent indication on the labels of the analyzed products

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the comparative research regarding the presence or absence of some information on the labels of milk and dairy products that has been conducted and based on the comparative analysis of the testing result, analysis and experiments carried out, it can be concluded as follows:

1. A rarely discussed problem in Romania would be regarding the saturated fat content in food, the label offering incomplete or inexact information. As shown in the study, there are some products that do not have any labeled information in this regard.

2. The majority of the consumers wish to exclusively consume fresh and natural products, products that have not been processed at all. But this aspect proves not to be probable due to the frequent consume of salt, ingredient which, some experts claim, creates dependence.

The labels of the alimentary products must provide the consumers with necessary, sufficient, veridical and easy to compare information, which will allow them to chose the corresponding alimentary product according to their exigency, financial possibilities, to allow them to be informed about the eventual risks to which they are subject to so that they will not be mislead. The label must be placed in such a manner that its separation from the recipient will not be possible and in such a way that the contained information can not be deleted.

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