

Chapter 16

Food Consumption Patterns in Romanian Economy: A Framework

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ABSTRACT

The chapter covers both the evolution of yearly average consumption, for the main food products and beverage, and the evolution of daily average food consumption expressed in calories and nutrients, per inhabitant. Also are presented and analyzed the evolutions of total expenditure of households, on main categories of households (employees, farmers, unemployed, pensioners), and grouped by number of component persons, in Romania compared to similar data from the EU28. Are highlighted the trends of percents of total consumption expenditure of households for agro-food products, non - alcoholic drinks and for beverages and tobacco, and the structure of total expenditure of households, by deciles. Starting from these are also analyzed correlations with total income of households, by main categories and by number of component persons. The analysis covers a period of 10 years and covers the years before the economic crisis, its impact and the characteristics of the post crisis on food and beverage consumption structure by main categories of households.

INTRODUCTION

The fall of communism and the return to democracy in the former communist countries of central and Eastern Europe has led to significant changes in the lifestyle of families and their members including the free flow of persons and labor participation as a real agent in competitive markets, access to education, freedom to choose the life paths etc. In Romania, unlike other former Communist countries transition processes were accompanied by social turbulence strong in the early years (alternations of advance towards democracy, with attempts to return to communism with a human face) that have slowed Romania's road to Europe.

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Same time, the liberalization of food markets and access to food has led to changes in food consumption patterns of the population. In Romania, due to shortages, and lack access to food during the communist period, this process has wider implications than in other former communist countries.

The period of economic growth (in the early years of the last decade), and the economic crisis have caused mutations in food consumption programs, by substituting of various categories of products by consumers, even to the detriment of their health.

Gradually, the development of transnational retail chains have led to some convergence of food and beverage consumption, somewhat determined by similar mode of organization and presentation of food and beverages in the countries in which they operate. Also, this process is favored by the free movement of labor, by significant number of citizens living and working in other countries than their own, borrowing and sending elements of their lifestyle, and their food consumption patterns.

It is hard to imagine how far can reach the convergence of food consumption patterns at the various geographic regions level. The cultural, geographical, social and religious particularities, the traditions, way of life, and not only are important factors that determine a great diversity of today's consumer patterns. This diversity is manifested both between countries and between regions within these.

Based on these considerations, the chapter presents the evolutions average consumption per capita of the five categories of foods (cereals and cereal products, meat and meat products, milk and dairy products in equivalent per capita, vegetables and vegetable products and fruit and fruit products), and beverages (wine and wine products, beer, distilled alcoholic beverages, soft-drinks) during the past 25 years, with the evolutions the number of calories and quantities of nutrients (proteins, lipids and carbohydrates) per capita. Also is analyzed monthly average food consumption per capita by social category (employee, farmer, unemployed and pensioner), residential area and macro regions.

BACKGROUND: FOOD CONSUMPTION BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Development of transnational retail chains and free movement of people and labor and the development level of education are factors that lead to reducing the differences between consumption patterns of the population. The differences are still significant.

Numerous studies on food consumption patterns relates in particular to countries with problems of ensuring food resources (Goyal & Singh, 2002). But there are a number of studies concerning food consumption patterns in Europe. They present both comparative analysis across countries, regarding to the preference for purchasing domestic products compared to foreign ones (Moritz, Ornella & Hannah, 2015) as well as studies regarding to food consumption patterns at the country level (Hossain, 2000; Stanciu, 2010; Szigei & Podruzsik, 2011).

The process of European integration, a process that is still ongoing, aims besides the convergence of levels of education and socio-economic development as a whole, and homogenization of ways of production and preparation of food and beverages. Gracia and Albisu (2001), based on the study of consumption patterns and the factors that determine consumer choices, conclude that there are significant differences between consumer preferences which causes fragmentation of the market for food and beverage products. Such fragmentation is manifested not only between European countries but also within them.

The diversity of consumption patterns is a reality of our time emphasized by a large number studies. An example is the study of Petrovich, Riston and Ness (2005), concerning European disparities and similarities in food consumption patterns. Based on factor analysis, and starting from the consumption of

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