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ANALYSIS OF SOME SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE LOCAL FOOD MARKET IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

A particular importance is given to the local food products (LFP) during the last 20 years, due to the impact they could have on the public health, local economy, community and environment. Our research purpose is to determine: consumption and production, reasons, fidelity, trade mode and place. The research has been carried out: by means of two surveys, addressed to the consumers and producers in the North-East Development Region of Romania; Exploratory Factor Analysis and Cluster TwoStep Analysis. LFP consumers interact face-to-face (70.7%); they prefer the specialised shops (41.5%); have good knowledge about the production process and traceability (37.0% and 41.5%, respectively); consider LFP as being healthy (30.3%); prefer the lower price by 20% versus those in supermarkets (27.8%) and they will buy up to an increase by 30% (44.2%). The reluctance arises sometimes from the lack of quality certification (29.3%). The producers prefer the face-to-face interaction (53.5%); sell mostly on the agri-food market (31.6%); are poor informed about the production process and traceability (31.4% and 39.2%, respectively); they motivate the selling by the supply of healthy products to fellow citizens (19.9%); consider that they sell by 20% cheaper than the supermakets (46.3%), but they will give up if the prices would decrease by 20% (35.8%). The TwoStep Cluster Analysis suggests the following profiles: "elevated consumers" (49.2%) and "pragmatic consumers", "conservative producers" (61.1%) and "trader-producers".

***Key words**: local food products, consumer behaviour, rural economy*

INTRODUCTION

The research regarding the local food products (LFP) is subject to numerous debates: LFP are considered healthy products; the consummers are willing to pay a higher price for these; this type of trading would offer to the farmers a high feeling of social acknowledgement; this market would encourage the social connections, it would stimulate the local economy, and, as far as the consumers are concerned, there are reasonable grounds for believing that they prefer these procesees, because these would be beneficial for environment [10].

Some products could face an impairment of their quality during transportation or due to microbial deterioration and nutritional losses. Usually, LFP benefits from short chains and, consequently, they should not be affected by these problems. However, it cannot be categorically said that the locally produced fruits and vegetables will be always of a higher nutritional quality than the non-local products, if all the processes which they are going through are unknown [9]. The origin, along with their quality, play a significant role regarding the behaviour of the LFP consumer from Izmir, Turkey. The preferences are focused on the products sustaining the local economy [1].

Gracia A. *et al.* (2012) consider that, for the analysed local food product, the consumers are willing to pay a higher price than for those which go through longer supply chains [12]. But Willis D.B. *et al.* (2016) are of the opinion that rather a part of the population, with higher income, more concerned with health and preferring ecological products, is oriented towards this type of products [23].

Some studies achieved in Ukraine indicate a revival of consummer interest for the dishes obtained from niche food, such as wild and cultivated local plants [20]. In the same area, Chemerys V. *et al.* (2019) proposed an economic model based on the setting-up of family farms specialised on food supply to the local population, which contribute to the increased employment and to the social and economic revitalization of the rural areas in Ukraine [8].

In Romania, the LFP consumption represents about 21% of the minimum value of consumption basket [18]. This products are preferred than those from national sources (65%) or from EU countries (77%) [6], and the producers are interested in trading their products to the population from the close proximity [11]. By means of tourism and on-line trade, local bee products are highly appreciated, thus stimulating the production of honey and bee products, which leads to improved quality [16].

Some studies on the local smoked cheese products from Baia Mare, Romania, highlight the correlation between the microbiological quality of cheese and the appropriate hygienic conditions of processing and storage [22]. The LFP quality is tackled also by studies concerning some products processed within the rural household. Also in this case, the processing conditions are those influencing the quality [17].

The aim of the research presented in the current paper consists in determining the main coordinates of the LFP market in the North-East Development Region of Romania, by taken into consideration: the structure of consumption and production, trade mode, place and channels, reasons of LFP purchase / sale, the consummers and producers fidelity on this market.

The North-East Development Region of Romania had, in the year 2020, a population of about 3.3 mil. inhabitants, with a monthly average income of 438 euro/inh. From the total population, 41.9% residents live in the urban area and 58.1% residents, in the rural area. The structure by gender was 49.7% women and 50.3% men, while the structure by age groups was: 34.2% (0-29 years old); 40.5% (30-59 years old); 25.4% (over 60 years old). Considering the educational background, the population in the region is characterised by: primary education level - 32.6%, secondary education level - 55.1%, university degree - 12.3% [15].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The proposed objectives led to the accomplishment of a field research based on the conducting of two surveys: one targeted at consumers (Table 1), with 21 questions, and the other one targeted at producers who sell the products obtained within an area delimited by a radius of 100 km far away from the farm, with 20 questions (Table 2).

The questions in the survey for consumers are addressing: the determination of the subject profile; the quantification of the LFP consumption; the mode, price, place, reason, fidelity and obtained information concerning these products.

The survey for the local trader - producers is structured on: the determination of the subject profile; the quantification of the LFP sales; the mode, time consumption, price, place, reason, fidelity and provided information concerning these products. Both surveys have been drawn up based on the questions with filling-in items, selection items with text answer and multiple answers.

The order of questions is based on progressive difficulty in two stages: for the consumer survey: 1-2, 8-13, 3-7, 14-21; for the producer survey: 1-2, 6-11, 3-5, 12-20. The platform used to create and distribute the surveys was Google Forms [19]. The sampling of results has been carried out during the second trimester of the year 2021, on-line, from subjects in the North-East Development Region of Romania.

The data processing and analysis have been achieved by using Microsoft Office and IBM SPSS Statistics 23 applications, in order to set-up the main databases and, respectively, to make the validation and analysis of collected data. The validation of survey results has been done with the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) from the application SPSS, because this explains the covariation from a set of measured variables and identifies the common factors which establish the structure and order among the variables [21].

The data analysis was performed with the statistical tool TwoStep Cluster Analysis from the SPSS application.

Table 1. Survey for the consumers of food products - content and form

Nr. crt.	Objective	Form	Variants of answer / content
	Subject profile		
1	Gender	multiple answers	feminine, masculine
2	Age	filling-in item	text (years)
3	Studies		studies: primary, secundary, academic
4	Residence environment	multiple answers	rural, urban
5	Income per family member	multiple answers	<2,000, 2,000-4,000, >4.000 (lei/pers.)
6	County of residence	multiple answers	Iași, Botoșani, Suceava, Vaslui, Bacău, Neamț, Vrancea
7	Health condition	multiple answers	weak, acceptable, good, very good
	LFP consumption		
8	Fresh vegetables	filling-in item	text (kg)
9	Fruits	filling-in item	text (kg)
10	Eggs	filling-in item	text (buc.)
11	Milk and mik-derived products	filling-in item	text (l/kg)
12	Honey	filling-in item	text (kg)
13	Meat and meat-derived products	filling-in item	text (kg)
	Mode, place, information, reasons		
14	Interaction form with the local producers	selection items, short text	face to face, by telefon, on-line, others
15	Place of purchase	multiple answers	agricultural market, doorstep subscription, online, agrifood shops, at farm, fairs, festivals and other events, tourist resorts, specialised shops, others
16	Knowledge on the production process	multiple answers	not at all, some, good, very good, in full
17	Knowledge on traceability	multiple answers	not at all, poor, good, very good
18	Motive of LFP purchase	selection items, short text	healthy products, non-certified ecological products, confortable purchase, lower prices than those from supermarket, lower content in chemical substances, sustaining the local producers, shpping as a relaxation mode, pleasant contact with the local producers, others
19	Motive of not purchasing LFP	filling-in item	text
20	LFP price versus in supermakets	multiple answers	-30, -20, -10, +10, +20, +30
21	Value of the increased price when giving-up arises	multiple answers	+10, +20, +30, +40, +50

Source: Own data.

Table 2. Survey for the agricultural producers – content and form

Nr. crt.	Objective	Form	Variants of answer / content
	Subject profile		
1	Gender	multiple answers	feminine, masculine
2	Age	filling-in item	text (years)
3	Studies		primary, secondary, academic
4	Residence environment	multiple answers	rural, urban
5	County of residence	multiple answers	Iași, Botoșani, Suceava, Vaslui, Bacău, Neamț, Vrancea
	LFP sales		
6	Fresh vegetables	filling-in item	text (kg)
7	Fruits	filling-in item	text (kg)
8	Eggs	filling-in item	text (buc.)
9	Milk and milk-derived products	filling-in item	text (l/kg)
10	Honey	filling-in item	text (kg)
11	Meat anf meat-derived products	filling-in item	text (kg)
	Mode, place, information, reasons		
12	Interaction form with the local producers	selection items, short text	face to face, by telefon, on-line, others
13	Sale place	multiple answers	agricultural market, doorstep subscription, on-line, agri-food shops, at farm, fairs, festivals and other events, tourist resorts, specialised shops, others
14	Information about the production process	multiple answers	not at all, some, good, very good, in full
15	Information about the knwoledge on traceability	multiple answers	not at all, poor, good, very good
16	Motive of LFP sale	selection items, short text	healthy products for local inhabitants, non-certified ecological products, confortable sale, high prices at purchaser, cost saving, sustaining the local consumers, direct sale stimulates the quality, pleasant contact with the local consumers, others
17	Motive not to sell LFP	filling-in item	text
18	LFP price versus supermarkets	multiple answers	-30, -20, -10, +10, +20, +30 (%)
19	Value of price decrease when giving-up arises	multiple answers	+10, +20, +30, +40, +50 (%)
20	Time consumption	item de completare	text (hours/week)

Source: Own data.

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This tool allows the creation of natural groups (clusters) in a data set that would not otherwise be obvious in another way. This grouping is based on both categorical and continuous variables, involves the automatic selection of the number of clusters and efficiently analyzes large databases. It also uses a measure of the distance of probability that assumes that the variables in the modeled cluster are independent [4].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After the validation of the subjects' answers to surveys, a representative distribution for the studied area has been obtained. The subjects - potential consumers (n=244) have been structured as follows: 42.2% urban and 57.8% rural; 49.5% women and 50.5% men; age: 34.0% 0-29 years old, 40.2% 30-59 years old, 25.6% over 60 years old; studies: 32.8% - primary, 54.8% - secondary, 12.4% - academic; income: 33.6% below 2,000 lei, 44.3% between 2,000 lei, 22.1% over 4,000 lei.

The subjects - potential producers (n=54) have been structured as follows: 41.8% urban and 58.2% rural; 49.6% women and 50.4% men; 34.4% with ages between 0-29 years old, 40.4% with ages between 30-59 years old and 25.2% over 60 years old; studies: 32.5% primary, 55.3% secondary, 12.2% academic.

The conduct of the Exploratory Factor Analysis has been done on 244 potential consumers and 54 potential producers from the North-East Development Region of Romania. The set of data has been appropriate for EFA, the coefficient Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = .69, Barlett's test for sphericity, (x^2) = 151,332 $p < .001$ for the analysis of consumer’s answers and respectively, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = .71, Barlett's test for sphericity, (x^2) = 1671,543 $p < .001$ for the analysis of producer’s answers. EFA has been applied on 6 items and it has been identified a single factor, quantity of sold and purchased products, for both surveys.

The studied subjects have purchased in the last month, on average, from the local producers: 19.4 kg fresh vegetables, 10.5 kg fruits, 14.8 pieces eggs, 8.8 l/kg milk and milk-derived products, 1.7 honey and 5.6 kg meat and meat-derived products.

The LFP consumers have a general profile (Table 3) based on face-to-face interaction (70.7%). They buy mostly from specialised shops (41.5%). This characterstic has been identified also at the LFP consumers from Turkey, where the specialised shops have recorded a significant purchase frequency [13].

The subjects studied by us declared that they have good knowledge on the production process of the purchased LFP (37.0%), as well as on the traceability of these products (38.7%); they motivate the purchase of LFP through the wish to consume fresh products (30.3%); they consider the price of these products as being lower by 20% in comparison with that of the food products in supermarkets (27.8%) and they are willing to further buy LFP, even if the price would increase by 30% (44.2%). The subjects who declared that they do not consume this type of products motivate their decision by the fact that they do not benefit from a certified quality (29.3%).

Some of the claims concerning LFP, sustained in the specialized literature, have been partially confirmed by the results of our research. The main reasons of LFP buyers are the quality, the traceability and the confidence in producer, while the main dobts are caused by the low food security [7].

Regarding the use of technology, about 30.7% of consumers use the telephone and Internet in communicating with the producers. This fact is encouraging, because it facilitates and makes more efficient the sale – purchase processes. These are also those who use more a products purchase channel. Among them, 73.0% have secondary and academic studies and are more loyal to LFP consumption that the sample average, willing to continue to buy up to a price increase of 36.3%.

In turn, the LFP consumption in the studied area and for the studied population seems not to have a solid ground, because the consumers argue that they are motivated by the product quality and they have enough information about the traceability and the production process.

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Table 3. Answers of consumers and producers

Nr. crt.	Objective	Variants of answer / content
	LFP consumers	
14	Interaction form with the local producers	Face-to-face (70.7%), by telephone (22.0%), on-line (7.3%)
15	Place of purchase	Agricultural market (16.5%), doorstep subscription (3.5%), on-line (3.0%), small shops (18.0%), direct from the farm (7.0%), from fairs, festivals and other events (5.5%), from tourist resorts (5.0%), specialised shops (41.5%)
16	Knwoledge on the production process	Not at all (5.3%), some (28.4%), good (37.0%), very good (26.3%), in full (2.9%)
17	Knowledge on the traceability	Not at all (5.5%), poor (32.8%), good (38.7%), very goode (23.0%)
18	Motive of purchasing LFP	Healthy products (30.3%), ecological products, but they are not certified (9.9%), confortable purchase (9.2%), lower prices than in supermarket(14.6%), low content in chemical substances (1.9%), I sustaine the local producers (12.6%), shopping as a relaxation mode (2.7%), I like to meet the producers (7.3%), I protect the environment (11,4%)
19	Motive not to purchase LFP	Poor hygiene (21.4%), disconfort (23.2%), decentralised selling (26.1%), non-certified quality (29.3%)
20	LFP price versus supermarkets	-30 (11.1%), -20 (19.7%), -10 (27.4%), +10 (27.8%), +20 (14.1%), +30 (4.3%)
21	Value of price increase causing giving-up	+10 (25.3%), +20 (32.5%), +30 (44.2%), +40 (20.1%), +50 (35.7%)
	LFP producers	
12	Interaction form with the local consumers	Face-to-face (53.5%), by telephone (29.7%), on-line (16.8%)
13	Place of sale	Agricultural market (31.6%), doorstep subscription (5.1%), on-line (18.4%), small shopss which sell also local products (13.3%), direct from the farm (27.6%); from fairs, festivals and other events(4.1%); from tourist resorts (0.0%), specialised shops (2.0%)
14	Information about the production process	Not at all (0.0%), some (31.4%), good (29.4%), very good (15,0%)
15	Information about the traceability	Not at all (0,0%), poor (39.2%), good (31.4%), very good (29.4%)
16	Motive for selling LFP	To benefit from healthy products (19.9%), they are ecological products, but they are not certified (9.9%), the manner of selling is confortable (15.9%), the prices are lower than those from en- gros purchasing (3.3%), is more economic (13.9%), I help the local consumers (11.3%), the activity of direct selling motivates me to produce with a higher quality (14.6%), I lenjoy to meet the local consumers (11.3%)
17	Motive not to sell LFP	It produces cereals (7.4%), higher trading costs (22.9%), uneven sales (28.4%), high costs of transportation (15.1%), disorganised market (26.2%)
18	LFP price versurs supermarkets	-30 (3.7%), -20 (46.3%), -10 (7.4%), +10 (25.9%), +20 (7.4%), +30 (9.3%)
19	Value of price decrease causing giving-up	-10 (45.3%), -20 (35.8%), -30 (15.1%), -40 (0,0%), -50 (3.8%)
20	Time consumption	9.52 (ore)

Source: Own calculation.

But this information cannot be verified and is not sustained by the certification from the institutions specialised in food security. Consequently, the main reason for purchasing LFP is superficial and can disappear in time. The community- and environment-related reasons are almost non-existent. Only 12.6% of the questionned persones declared that they are motivated by the support given to the local producers, and only 11.4% consider that they are protecting the environment.

The interveiwed producers sold LFP, during the last month, on average: 3,706.1 kg fresh vegetables, 263.2 kg fruits, 395.1 pieces eggs, 743.9 l/kg milk and mik-derived products, 186.8 kg honey and 282.2 kg meat and meat-derived products. They prefer the face-to-face interaction (53.5%); they sell mostly on the agri-food market (31.6%); they poorly inform the consumers about the production process (31.4%) and about the traceability of products (39.2%); they motivate the selling on this channel by the preferrence to supply their fellow citizens with healthy products (19.9%); consider that they are selling products cheaper by 20% than in supermarkets (46.3%); they would decide to stop the consumption on this way if the price would decrease by 20% (35.8%) and they consume cca. 9.52 hours / week for this selling form. Subjects who stated that they do not sell the products to the local consumers motivate their decision especially by the uneven sales during the year (28.4%).

Regarding the distribution channel, about 33.1% of producers use other sale means than the traditional ones (direct from the farm, on the agrifood markets and the client doorstep subscriptions). This share of producers take oders online or telephone and deliver at home or at other locations, established in advance. All the subjects from this category have secondary or academic education level and they are less loyal to LFP consumption than the sample average, being willing to continue to sell up to a price decrease by 17.0%. They can represent the group of LFP producers that would stenghten the short chain and could benefit from their advantages.

The conduct of the TwoStep Cluster Analysis, on the LFP consumers on the 21 characteristics resultated from survey (Fig. 1) has allowed to set-up two clusters with a good quality of form (0.64) with the main predictors of importance: place of purchasing LFP, type of interactions with sellers and client gender. The continous variables have been the sold quantities, and the discret ones have been those referring to: subject profile, sale mode and place, received information and the purchase motivation.

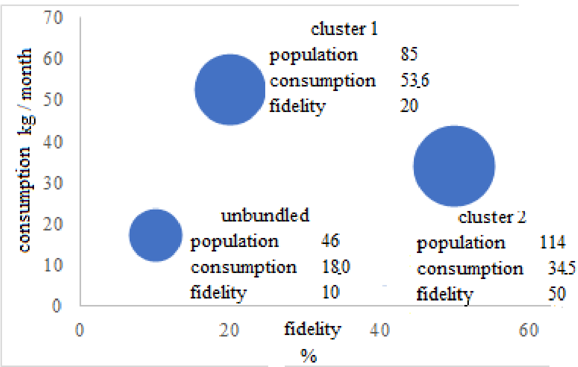

Fig. 1. Highlighting the population grouped in clusters, according the consumption and fidelity to clients
Source: Own calculation

The Cluster 1 for consumers (49.2%) has been formed by persons: with the residence address in urban area (frequency – frq. 72.0%); with ages between 30 and 60 years old (frq. 15.2%); with academic studies (frq. 50.0%); women (frq. 58.5%); who are willing to buy these products even at a price increase by 50% (frq. 52.5%); who have an income between 2,000 lei and 4,000 lei (frq. 49.1%); who declare to be very well informed on the production process (frq. 47.5%); who prefer to interact face-to-face with the producers (frq. 43.2%); who declare to have a very good health condition (frq. 36.4%); who consider that LFP are by 10% more expensive than those in supermarkets (frq. 28.0%); who buy from the agri-food market (frq. 16.1%) and motivate the purchase decision by the fact that LFP are healthy products (frq. 11.9%).

These cosumers may be named "elevated consumers", because they display a higher interest on the food impact, as they are older than those belonging to Cluster 2 for consumers, and they have a higher educational level and urban residence. They consider to have got enough information about LFP, they agree to pay a higher price than for the products in supermakets and they remain loyal even by a signficant price increase. This group has common elements with that of the Polnish LFP consumers, who usually are 30-40 years old, well educated and with a good financial status. But they are more interested by the trading with on-line tools than those belonging to this cluster [5].

This segment of consumers is partially similar to "organic meat consumers" and families with children of preschool and early school age mentioned in the study conducted by Leonidivna S.N. and Pylypivna A.O. (2017), who are focused on a healthy lifestyle, have above average income and seek high quality [14].

The Cluster 2 for consumers (50.8%) has been formed by persons from the rural area (frq. 68.0%), with secondary education (frq. 73.3%), men (frq. 88.5%); who prefer face-to-face interaction with the producers (frq. 93.4%); who declare that they are well informed about the production process (frq. 44.3%); who consider to have good health condition (frq. 41.8%); who are poorly informed about LFP traceability (frq. 41.8%); who obtain an income between 2,000 and 4,000 lei (frq. 37.7%); who consider that the prices of these products are by 10% lower than those in supermarket (frq. 32.8%); who are willing to continue to buy, even if the price would increase by 20% (frq. 32.0%); who prefer the agri-food market (frq. 23.8%); who are young people, under 30 year old (frq. 14.7%), motivating the LFP purchase by prices smaller than in supermarket and the fact that LFP do not contain harmful chemical substances (ff. 13.1%).

The consumers from this cluster may be named "pragmatic consumers", being attracted by the smaller prices of LFP in comparison with those in supermarkets. They are not very convinced about the tehnological process referring to LFP and are less loyal regarding this category of purchases. These persons, in general young, are accustomed, like the rural population, to buy a large part of products from the local agri-food market. The same perception upon the LFP impact seems to be highlighted also within other research conducted in Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia and Ukraine, where the opinions of the interviewed buyers could be noticed in the case of the following criteria: taste, price and freshness of products [2].

The conduct of TwoStep Cluster Analysis in SPSS on LFP producers on the 20 characteristics resultated from survey (Fig. 2) allowed to draw-up two clusters with a qood quality of the form (0.61), having as main predictors of importance: providing the clients clients with information on the production process, the reason and place of trading. The continuous variables were the sold quantities, while the discret variables were those concerning the subjects' profile, the sale mode and place, the provided information and the reasons to sell.

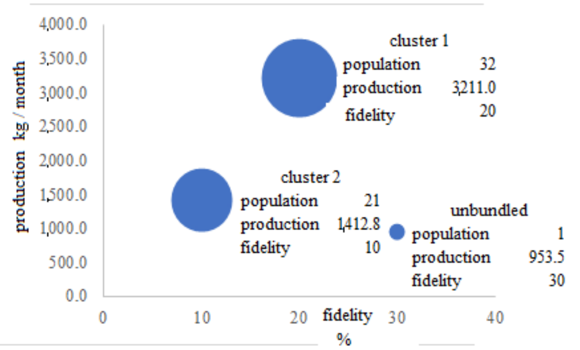

Fig. 2. Highlighting the population groupped in clusters, according to production and fidelity to clients
Source: Own calculation.

The Cluster 1 for producers (61.1%) has been formed by producers from the rural area (frq. 87.9 %), with secondary education (frq. 75.8%), men (frq. 69.7%); who interact prioritary face-to-face (frq. 57.1%); who provide the clients with poor information regarding the traceability of the food products they produce (frq. 57.1%); who appreciate that their products are cheaper by up to 20% (frq. 51.4%); who are willing to accept a price decrease by up to 20% (frq. 48.6%); who moderate inform their clients about the production processes of the food they produce (frq. 45.7%); who are accustomed to sell directly from the farm (frq. 34.3%); who have for this a time consumption of cca. 3 hours (frq. 31.4%) and apply this type of trade because they consider that this mode of selling is confortable (frq. 22.9%).

The producers form the Cluster 1 can be generic named “conservative producers”, because they have a stronger profile of producer than of seller, though they consume less time for selling and they prefer to sell rather from the farm, without making significant efforts to inform about the traceability and production processes. The preferred interaction form derives from the nature of sale, but it does not seem to represent a client fidelisation tool. They appreciate the prices as lower than those of the products in supermarkets by a share of 20%, value considered resonable for price reduction. Practically, they are not open to accept the non-favourable situations when they have to step back, in order to keep the consumers' interest.

The Cluster 2 for producers (38.9%) has been formed by producers from the rural area (frq. 52.4%), with secondary education (frq. 71.4%), women (frq. 63.2%); who inform very well the consumers about the production processes of the products they sell (frq. 78.9%); who carry on a mixed interaction: face-to-face, by phone and on-line (frq. 63.2%); who are open to sell up to a price decrease by maximum 10% (frq. 63.2 %); who inform very well the clients regarding the traceability of their products (frq. 47.37%); who consider that they have a price lower by 20% than the price of the agri-food products in supermarkets (frq. 36.8%); who sell their products on the agri-food market, by oders via Internet and delivery at home or in the residence zone (frq. 36.8%); who motivate this type of trading by declaring that they wish for their clients to benefit from healthy products; the direct selling activity motivates them to produce with higher quality; they enjoy to meet the consumers (frq. 31.6%) and they consume for this cca. 5 hours per week (frq. 26.3%).

The Cluster 2 of producers can be named generic “trader - producers”, because they undertook the role of seller more proeminent than the Cluster 1. Include in majority women concerned with the clients' information, who provide a more complete communication and are motivated by this communication. They consider that it is ethically to provide quality products to the people in the neighbourhood. At least they declare this fact. Probably, this profile is more efficient taking into account the smaller consumption of time for the post-production activities, but also the higher quantity of sold LFP. This type of local producer seems to be like the Ukranian local producers studied by Babych M. (2018), who promotes the social interaction, community and relations development, increase of social cohesion and access to healthy products, among others [3]. We consider that the producers characterised by this cluster can represent vectors for the development of the local product markets in Romania. This producers correlate the consumers' requirements with the production processes and undertake with responsability the role of traders.

The population not included in clusters is characterised by a signficant diversity determined by: aspect of the demographic profile, interaction type, forms of purchasing / selling, perception on prices and trading process. From here is possible to imerge innovative forms of networks for the production-trading of LFP. The limits of our reseach rely precisely in the difficulties to determine such profile with an early stage of development, but which could be highlighted within some broader research studies.

CONCLUSIONS

The LFP consumers interact face-to-face with the sellers (70.7%); they buy especially from specialised shops (41.5%); they have good knowledge about the production process (37.0%) and, also, about the traceability of products (38.7%); they buy LFP because these are healthy (30.3%); they consider the price as being lower by 20% in comparison with that from supermakets (27.8%) and they will further buy up to a price increase by 30% (44.2%). The reluctance regarding LFP is caused by the lack of quality certification (29.3%).

A share of 30.7% consumers use phone and Internet in communicating with the producers, thus facilitating and increasing the efficiency of the purchasing - selling processes. They use more than one channel to purchase products. In turn, the main reasons may dissapear in time. The opinions about the higher quality of LFP and the information concerning the traceability or the production process can not be verified.

The reasons with community and environmental character are present by 12.6% and 11.4%, respectively.

The producers prefer the face-to-face interaction (53.5%); they sell mostly on the agri-food market (31.6%); they poorly inform the consumers about the production process and traceability of products (31.4% and 39.2%, respectively); they motivate the selling by the supply of healthy products to their fellow citizens (19.9%); they consider that they sell cheaper by 20% than in supermakets (46.3%), but they will give up if the price would decrease by 20% (35.8%).

The producers using other modalities of selling than the traditional ones (33.1%), who have secondary or academic education, may represent the actors who would strengthen the short chains of food products and who could benefit from their advantages.

The TwoStep Cluster Analysis suggests the profiles: “elevated consumers” and “pragmatic consumers”, “conservative producers” and “trader - producers”.

The Cluster 1 for consumers, “elevated consumers” (49.2%), is characterised by the residence in urban area (frq. 72.0%); they have academic studies (frq. 50.0%), they are women (frq. 58.5%) and have an income between 2,000 lei and 4,000 lei (frq. 49.1%); they are very good informed about the production process (frq. 47.5%); they interact face-to-face with the producers (frq. 43.2%); they appreciate the prices as being by 10% more expensive than in supermarkets (frq.

28.0%) and they motivate their purchase decision by the fact that LFP are healthy products (frq. 11.9%).

The Cluster 2 for consumers include the “pragmatic consumers” (50.8%), who are persons from rural area (frq. 68.0%), with secondary education (frq. 73.3%), men (frq. 88.5%); who prefer the face-to-face interaction with the producers (frq. 93.4%); who declare that they are well informed about the production process (frq. 44.3%); who consider that they have a good health condition (frq. 41.8%) and they are poorly informed about the LFP traceability (frq. 41.8%). These are the followers of the customs originating in the communist period, marked by shortcomings, or even before it.

The Cluster 1 for producers, including the “conservative producers” (61.1%), has been formed by persons from the rural area (frq. 87.9 %) with secondary education (frq. 75.8%), men (frq. 69.7%); who interact prioritary face-to-face (frq. 57.1%); who provide the clients with poor information regarding the traceability (frq. 57.1%) and who appreciate that their products are cheaper by up to 20% (frq. 51.4%). They are not open to make efforts to strenghten this chain.

The Cluster 2 for producers, the “trader - producers” (38.9%), are characterised by the residence in the rural area (frq. 52.4%), secondary education (frq. 71.4%), women (frq. 63.2%); they inform very well the consumers about the production processes related to the products they sell (frq. 78.9%); they carry on a mixed interaction: face-to-face, by phone and on-line (frq. 63.2%) and they are open to sell up to a price decrease by maximum 10% (frq. 63.2 %). These undertake the responsibility for the role of seller and they correlate the consumers' requirements with the production processes.

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