

ASPECTS OF THE ROMANIAN FRUIT MARKET

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Abstract: *Fruit culture represents a major branch of agricultural production in Romania with major implications in our national economy and particularly in the population nutrition. Its place and role are given by the importance of fruits in human nutrition, the existence of an important demand of fruits on urban markets, on climate favourability for several fruit tree species, the skill and traditions of the cultivators. Organising the fruit market should be a major concern for both producers and marketers, and society: the first ones should be interested in valorising their productions with maximum profit, in meeting Romanian consumers' needs, and in developing export opportunities.*

Keywords: *market, demand, offer, import, export.*

INTRODUCTION

The fruit market is characterised by a series of specific features. Some of the most important features of the fruit market are a wide variety of produce that ensure a diversified consumption, the continuous demand for fruits (on the background of seasonal offer), the high degree of perishability of some fruits that keep their commercial aspect only for a few days, the different consumption destinations (fresh, previous storage, industrialisation, export) asking for the use of specific distribution channels to avoid quantitative and qualitative loss.

All these features need to be taken into account by both producers and intermediaries in the establishment of realistic marketing policies meant to contribute to the revival of the fruit production and marketing sectors. In addition, knowing and properly anticipating the economic environment should be the main goal of any economic agent operating based on market economy principles.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study presents the evolution of Romania's national fruits market starting from the statistics available and using the statistics methods and techniques. Results can be used in the fundamenting of forecasts concerning consumption of the fruits in Romania.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The importance of fruits resides in both their content rich in nutrients and in the fact that fruit culture meets the protection demands of the landscape and of the environment valorising, in general, lands that are less apt for crop production. From this perspective, it is more and more necessary to plant fruit trees in the anti-erosion system, i.e. on slopes with grass-cultivated batters.

According to the data supplied by the FAO, Romania ranks seven among European countries (after Spain, Italy, France, the Russian Federation, Poland, and Portugal) from the point of view of the areas cultivated with fruit trees, sharing 4.4% of the total European lands. From the point of view of fruit productions, Romania ranks eight with a share of

3.2% of the total European fruit production, after such countries as Italy, Spain, France, Greece, Poland, the Russian Federation, and Germany.

Offer on the fruit market is made up of domestic production, initial stock, and imports.

The evolution of fructifying orchards and of fruit productions during 2007-2011 is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.
Evolution of fructifying orchards and of fruit productions during 2007-2011

Specification	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Fructifying orchards area (thousands of ha)	156.0	149.0	145.0	145.0	145.0
Total fruits (thousands of t), of which:	1085.8	1179.2	1323.0	1419.6	1324.9
Plums	372.6	475.3	533.7	624.9	561.3
Apples	475.4	459.0	517.5	552.9	624.9
Pears	62.8	52.6	66.1	60.4	64.4
Peaches	17.0	16.4	17.1	11.2	20.9
Cherries and sour cherries	65.2	67.7	67.9	70.3	79.4
Apricots	27.6	32.1	32.5	23.8	32.6
Walnuts	25.5	32.3	38.3	34.3	33.0
Other fruits	23.2	22.6	27.9	20.4	-
Strawberries	16.5	21.2	22.0	21.4	18.8

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 2012

In 2011, the area covered by fructifying orchards was 145,000 ha, i.e. 7.1% of the area covered by orchards in 2007. Fruit tree plantations consisted of 68,000 ha of plum trees, 56,000 ha of apple trees, 7,000 ha of cherry trees and sour cherry trees, 4,000 ha of pear trees and over 3,000 ha of apricot trees.

After a minimum of 1,085,800 t of fruits in 2007, total fruit productions reached 1,324,900 t in 2011, i.e. an increase of 22%. In plum trees, there was a production of 561,300 t (+31.4%), 64,400 t of pears (+2.5%), 20,900 t of peaches (+22.9%), 79,400 t of cherries and sour cherries (+21.8%), 32,600 t of apricots (+18.1%), 33,000 t of walnuts (+29.4%), and 18,800 t of strawberries (+13.9%).

Fruit demand, as well as the demand of any other foods, is determined by the nutrition patterns of the population and by the physiological consumption needs, while real demand is determined by the population's purchase power.

The physiological consumption need per inhabitant in fruits and grapes is 95 kg/year, of which 80 kg/year of fruits and 15 kg/year of grapes; the structure per fruit species is 30 kg/year of apples, 13 kg/year of plums, 7 kg/year of pears, 6 kg/year of peaches, 8 kg/year of cherries and sour cherries, and 16 kg/year of other fruits.

Apple is the fruit tree species with the largest share of the total fruit production (despite the changes in plantation structure these last years) and of the total fruit consumption in Romania. Apples are fruit that can be stored in optimum conditions for longer periods in special storehouses.

Mean fruit and fruit product consumption per year in Romania during 2007-2011 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Mean fruit and fruit product consumption per year in Romania during 2007-2011

Specification	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Fruit and fruit products (kg)	67.8	66.7	62.3	63.3	70.5

Source: *Anuarul Statistic al României, 2012*

Fruit market is characterised by unbalances between demand and offer because of the seasonal character of fruit production.

Producers and marketers cannot meet the increasing demand for fruits on the fruit market. Balancing demand and offer can be done by the import of fruits.

Completing fruit demand with fruit imports is not a viable solution for Romania's economy because it unbalances foreign payments balance.

Fruit exports oscillated between 2007 and 2011, with a minimum in 2008 (33,500,000 Euros) and a peak in 2011 (70,100,000 Euros).

Fruit imports also oscillated between 2007 and 2011, with a minimum in 2009 (175,700,000 Euros) and a peak in 2008 (245,300,000 Euros).

Romania can produce the necessary fruits for the entire population and for export through a better management of both production and marketing. Romania's fruit culture could become an exceeding sector in the balance between exports and imports.

CONCLUSIONS

The fruit culture sector, though sharing only 2% of Romania's agricultural area, plays an important role in the country's economy because it valorises sandy slopes and small areas around people's houses, because fruits are valuable foods that provide the necessary calories and vitamins for the population, and because they are a valuable raw material for the food industry, being, at the same time, an entertaining activity as well as ensuring wood for the veneer and furniture industry.

Fruit production in 2011 reached 1,324,900 t. The self-sufficiency degree in fruits and fruit products is 81% (the equivalent of fresh fruits). To ensure consumptions availabilities, we appeal to imports because Romanian producers cannot store and condition fruits to ensure constant offer.

In 2011, the share of fruit imports of the fruit amount available for consumption was 24%.

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