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THE CULTURE OF FOOD SECURITY IN THE ROMANIAN PENITENTIARY SYSTEM

DAN VASILE ARDELIAN¹, ELENA BOGAN², ELENA GRIGORE³,
DANA MARIA CONSTANTIN (OPREA)³, FLORINA TATU⁴

Abstract

A special place in the national security strategies is also occupied by the food security/safety, analyzed as a component of the economic security. The National Administration of Penitentiaries (ANP), a public state organization, was receptive to this problem. The receptivity in the Romanian penitentiary system comes from the fact that the institution is a follower of a strict functioning regulation, considering that its observance represents a simple and efficient way of achieving control and self-control. Thus, it respects first of all, the strategies of the HACCP system (*Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point*), the legal framework imposed by the international standard ISO 22000 and the Strategy of food safety and security in Romania (currently being respected the conditions proposed by the approved version for the period 2016–2035). The present study is intended to be a qualitative and suggestive synthesis of the issues related to food security/safety versus food insecurity, food quality and hygiene, and the waste management, as a result of this action in a closed environment, such as that developed by a penitentiary.

Keywords: food, ISO, legislation, person deprived of liberty, penitentiary system, regulations

¹ University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, “Simion Mehedinti” Doctoral School, e-mail: dan-vasile.ardelian@drd.unibuc.ro

² University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Depart. of Human and Economic Geography, e-mail: elena.bogan@yahoo.com

³ University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Depart. of Meteorology-Hydrology, ela_zigzag@hotmail.com, e-mail: danamartines@yahoo.com

⁴ University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geography, Depart. of Geomorphology, Pedology and Geomatics, e-mail: foleaf@yahoo.com

Introduction

Food security and safety must be seen and assimilated as part of both national and global security. At the country level, it is closely linked to the local economic security.

The process of food security and safety generally includes the evolution of some economic and social sectors. These sectors are involved in ensuring the food security of the population regardless of their condition.

This process has been approached as a multidimensional concept and has several aspects in mind. The first aspect concerns the need to ensure a sufficient supply of products to cover the needs and ensure the economic access of the population to food. The second is about the stability of supply and the use of food at the individual level.

The legislation in force ensures the access of each person to food in the necessary quantity. In modern human society, the way they use and care for natural resources has become a natural requirement for the development of life and its well-being.

Improving the food supply for a certain segment of the population is an important socio-economic task.

The food security program upholds the fundamental conditions regarding the human right to life, being constantly reminded that food is the basis of life. For this purpose, the main foods considered vital to life are indicated: *cereals, potatoes, meat, milk, eggs, fish, vegetables and fruits*, foods that are the basis of the diet of a country population.

Among the most well-known documents in the fight against world hunger is the Rome Declaration, which recalls the obligation of each state to ensure: “... *the right of everyone to have access to safe, healthy and nutritious food, in accordance with adequate food and the right not to starve...*” (FAO World Summit on Food Security in Rome, on November 16th – November 18th, 2009).

In 2020, a study conducted by the UN reports that 1.3 million tons of food (6,000 tons per day) are thrown away in our country every year. The same study also indicates that it is an estimated value, because there is a serious lack of statistical data, even if we have a food waste law, which proves to be ineffective.

The accumulation of food waste, in turn, participates in the emission of greenhouse gases, thus, being reached a value of 17.0% of the total emitted gases.

Also, this segment of food security / safety is regulated by various UN and EU strategies, proposals of international and national conventions, being proclaimed as a fundamental right by the International Court of Justice (Neagu, 2015).

Ensuring food production and its safety makes them play a central role in the contemporary societies (Istudor et al., 2014; Andrei et al., 2017; Drăgoi et al., 2017).

Lately, the question "How is it possible to waste so much?" is being heard more and more often, especially in Europe. The way in which the supply of basic and quality food is made to the population, obtained to be desirable from the correct and rational management of internal resources, but also the relations developed with other life segments can prevent nowadays, a serious problem, respectively the food waste.

Methodology

The main objective was to present an analysis of the current legislative situation regarding the elements frequently found in food safety and security culture assessments.

The context in which the food safety or food hygiene strategies are studied is, in fact, used as a scientific method.

The basic method was to analyze the legislation in force, seeking to highlight the dysfunctions that can be challenging for the decisions of the authorities involved in managing the security system.

The methodology regarding the food safety of persons deprived of liberty is clear through the text of the law, even for the evaluation of the quality of the factors that may have a negative impact on those concerned.

The field specialists claim that the installed problems can be solved, if serious support is offered to successful programs, if the relationships developed within the system support both the design, implementation and maintenance, and the ability to critically analyze the identified problems.

For this purpose, the group of ISO 900 and ISO 22000 standards was approved (standards that also include the HACCP principles).

In the case of our country, the legislation is also supported by the Food Safety and Security Strategy (the most recently approved document being the one for the period 2016-2035).

The EU Council *encourages Member States to raise their national ambition and to proactively launch and integrate Agenda 2030 into the national financial planning tools, policies, strategies and frameworks* (www.consilium.europa.eu, 2022).

The Roadmap to an Effective Europe has also become known. This document represents an important framework for the design and implementation of future actions, signaling that resources should not only be *extracted, used and discarded*, but they should be put back in *the loop* in order to be reusable longer. It sets out measures that lead to more efficient use of resources and minimization of the waste (www.ec.europa.eu, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the economic and legal mechanisms in the field of ensuring and maintaining the food security / safety in a prison system. This is possible by issuing legal regulatory documents.

The food security indicator represents a quantitative and/ or qualitative characteristic of the food security status, because it makes it possible to assess the degree of its achievement, based on the adopted criteria.

The best known indicator is the ratio between the actual level of food production and the level of demand.

The food security criterion represents a threshold value either quantitatively or qualitatively of a feature by which the degree of food security is evaluated. In order to ensure the food security, the fact that the food situation is measurable must also be taken into account by comparing the food available to the nutritional requirements expressed in its energy value - caloric content.

According to the FAO, in 2020, the stock of food available in the world was 2,718 kcal per person per day, compared to the value of the 1950s, when this figure was only 2,300 kcal.

The present situation

Simion Mehedinți used to say in his writings: "*...the civilization and culture are fundamentally special notions...one concerns the material world... the other is of an exclusively soul nature...on all stages of the human development, along with a quantum of civilization, one can find a correlative quantum of culture...*".

Thus, culture is an important dimension of the penitentiary environment, but it alone does not support the environment, because the culture is depending on civilization.

The mechanism that ensures the functioning derives from the control over the space, respectively the control over a particular culture.

Taking this into account, in turn, the culture of food security in the penitentiary system is supported primarily by the fact that the institution is coordinated according to a well-established and applied regulation, with limitations clearly highlighted and respected by both the persons deprived of liberty and the employees.

The registration of the activities in the "*nature of things*" in the natural and common ways are performed "*correctly and responsibly*" at all organizational levels.

Any individual, deprived of liberty (the detainee) or free (the employee) understands that all *the situations within a penitentiary make sense and are integrated into an universe whose coordinates are intelligible and coherent, defined, stable and socially recognized symbolic utility, being well anchored in the daily social interaction* (Bruno, 2005).

All these certify that despite their condition as a person serving a custodial sentence, the detainees are still people whose dignity must be respected and whose human condition must be taken into account by the whole world (Robinson, 2015).

Results and discussions

The ANP departments directly involved in the management of this issue apply as much as possible:

- the specific steps of a HACCP type system (even if the recommendations are only with the status of a proposal);

- the specific criteria for the European and international health legislation (on food production, transport, storage and serving of food; hygiene, risk assessment and prevention);

- the directives of the national legislation (including art. 1 of the Law 1347-XIII / 09.10.1997 on production and household waste).

ANP being an organization concentrated in *a rational form* (Zamfir, Vlăsceanu, 1998), resulted from the collaboration of *the human groups that have a common goal* (www.anp.gov.ro).

Inside the penitentiary sections, a rhythm of life is noticed with a non-unitary and fragmented character.

Being a total public institution, with purposes that are found in the legal provisions that regulate its activity, the planning of the menu is seen as a cultural event.

In the Romanian penitentiary system, the regulations regarding the administration of food for persons deprived of liberty involve: checking the sources from which the food comes; the manner and pace at which the supply process is performed; organizing and verifying the departments that deal with the management of the necessary resources in providing food; standardization of menus, taking into account the various health problems of the detainees; specific mass serving procedures etc.

Respecting these procedures and their correlation can ensure the establishment and development of a system regarding food safety and security.

Food for persons deprived of their liberty and employees is provided daily regardless of their daily number in each penitentiary.

Based on the allocation to rights, norms and actual necessary notes made by the shift manager, the menu is organized decadal according to OMJ 2713 norms.

The decadal menu depends entirely on the quantities of food purchased. For a clearer picture, a series of statistical data will be attached to this study regarding the type of food and the quantities used during a year in a single romanian penitentiary (the period analyzed for public procurement May 2020 - June 2021).

The annual quantity of food used in a penitentiary is 155,849 kg, to which we add 1,200 kg of salt, 145,000 pieces of eggs and 1,200 pieces of 10 g packets of butter (table 1, Fig.1).

Table 1. The essential categories of products food used in a romanian penitentiary

food product	quantity - pcs. and kg -
	- pcs.-
eggs	145.000
butter 10 g	1.200
	- kg -
semi-white bread	20.000
salt	1.200
meat products	
pork semicarcase	10.000
sausages Trandafir	6.000
pork by-products	2.500
grease smoked (slanina afumata)	2.500
mutton	150
chicken meat (chicken legs)	3.600
vegetables and fruits	
potatoes	55.000
yellow onion	5.000
carrot	9.000
white cabbage	15.000
garlic	125
apples	17.000
cheese and other products	
salty cheese	4.500
unsalted cheese	1.750
yeast	12
powdered milk	850
food enhancers	1.600
spices	
pepper	33
bay leaves	5
thyme	12
paprika	12
<i>source: e-licitatie.ro, auction, Bistrita Penitentiary, 2021</i>	

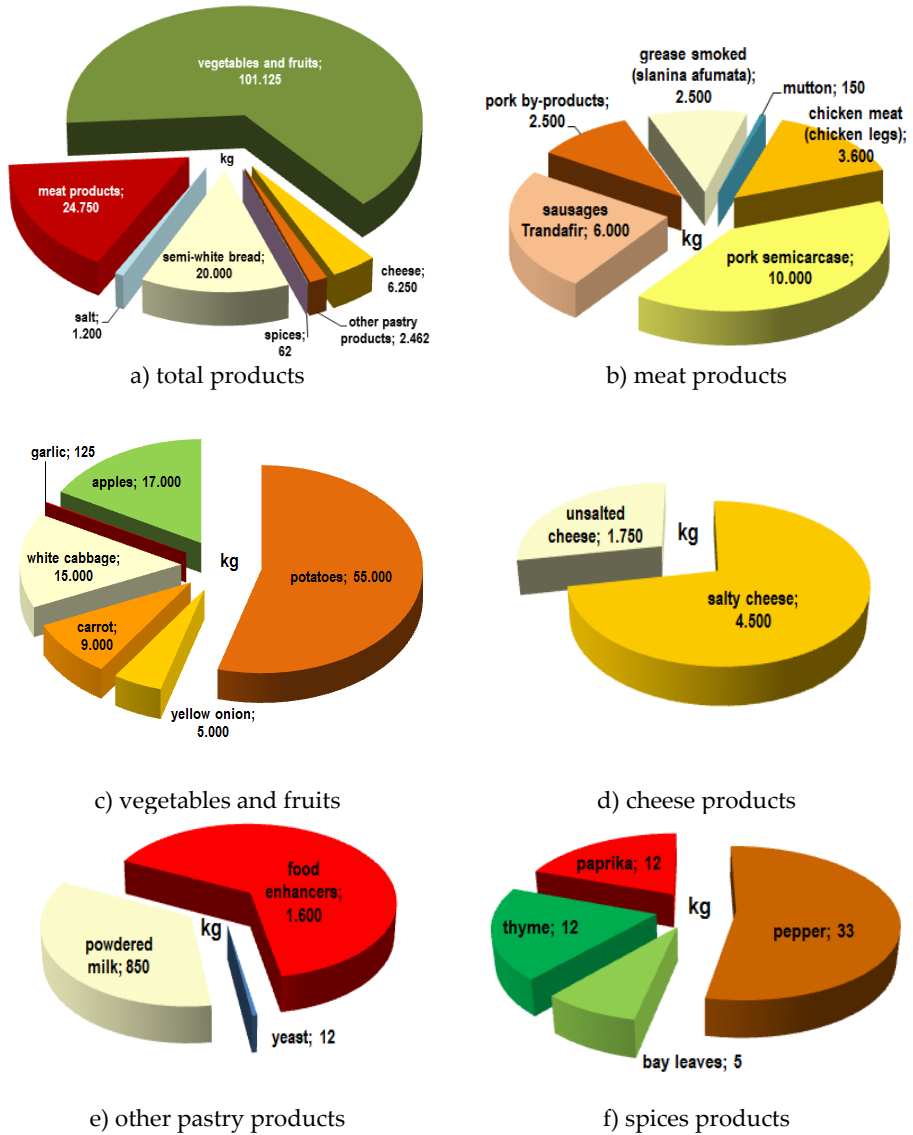


Fig.1. The annual quantity of food products used in a romanian penitentiary - graphical representation -

The quantity used by (table 1):
 - semi-white bread = 20,000 kg;
 - meat products = 24,750 kg (pork products = 21,000 kg; mutton products = 150 kg; chicken products = 3,600 kg);

- vegetables and fruits = 101,125 kg (vegetables products = 84,125 kg; apples products = 17,000 kg);
- cheese = 6,250 kg;
- other pastry products = 2,462 kg;
- spices = 62 kg.

The standard procedures regarding the feeding of the persons deprived of liberty comply with the regulations of the Order 2713 / C / 2001 (*Instructions on the application of peacetime food norms for the staff of the Ministry of Justice, issued by the General Directorate of Penitentiaries*), Laws 23/1969, 523/2003, 143/2004 and 275/2006 art. 35, al. 2.

Summarizing the content of the laws that refer to the feeding of the detainees, it is found that the following regulations are ensured:

- minimum mandatory norms;
- differentiated caloric limit - 2500 calories / day;
- a menu according to the state of health and the regime of the activities carried out by the residents, whether they work or not;
- a number of 3 meals / day; varied and appropriate food qualitatively and quantitatively.

The way the food is provided is checked and accredited daily by the doctor of the penitentiary unit. It takes into account:

- the number of detainees (depending on: the state of health, age, the nature of work performed, the religious beliefs, the veganism, the personalized diets);
- the food supplier;
- the quantity of food required and the collection of products from the warehouse;
- the preparation and distribution specifying the hygiene conditions imposed by the law;
- the designation and supervision of those who distribute the necessary food and containers etc.

In order for all these legally regulated aspects to be successful, the system had to adapt and record remarkable leaps in terms of mentality, as evidenced by the fact that there are fewer and fewer complaints to the higher courts of the detainees, regarding the observance of the right to food and the effective practice related to this segment of life (negligence, fraud, abuse etc.).

Regarding the quality and quantity of food, the ANP reports indicate that it is no longer a direct or indirect means of *torture, an obsessive concern or daily care for persons* deprived of their liberty (www.anp.gov.ro, 2022) and it can be included, at a reasonable level.

The frequent foods on the menu of a penitentiary are generally basic: bread, meat, beans, cabbage, rice, oil, sugar and foods in the category of the fresh vegetables and fruits still raise problems in the national supply system (implicitly also the system which ensures the microclimate conditions for storage - specific conditions of humidity and air temperature for the environment), even if some penitentiaries benefit from these products from their own harvest (currently being functional some own vegetable gardens, while the animal farms have been abolished).

According to the reports of the Chamber of Deputies, between February and March 2015, following the visits made in the Romanian penitentiaries, the commission has also reported problems regarding the feeding system of the persons deprived of liberty.

In general, the reported problems appeared in eight penitentiaries, where there is no doctor to provide medical care and implicitly the tasks that refer to the organization of the menu in order to meet the necessary daily calories and specific food for the people with various medical conditions and how to prepare the food and the way the meal is served.

The whole process of providing food also involves the appearance of waste. Unfortunately, it is also confirmed, in the case of this institution, the lack of the statistical data regarding this aspect, even if the ANP directorate has appointed those responsible for waste management.

The person in charge deals with the organization of the way of collecting the resulting waste, according to the legislation in force and not with the realization of the problems related to statistics.

Thus, separately from the work areas where the food is prepared and meals are served, there have been created areas, properly arranged for the storage of the waste resulted from the daily activities.

Even in the absence of the statistical data on food needs used daily, more than 30.0% is thrown away (the food not consumed for various reasons).

The gradual approach in order to achieve the food safety for the consumption of different food products consists in applying the basic

principles, the legislation and the correct assessment of the risks, associated with the raw material (respectively how to obtain and harvest) and the food quality assurance (respectively the use of ingredients, the food processing, the handling, the storage, the distribution, the cooking and consumption of the food products).

Conclusions

The drastic changes imposed by the legislation regarding the organization and management of the food security have had a beneficial effect on the life in a penitentiary. It was found that it is necessary to constantly improve the legal regulatory framework.

In the Romanian penitentiary system, after the 1990s, there were obvious improvements in terms of quantity and quality of the food offered to the persons deprived of liberty and frequent checks were carried out in the penitentiary administrations so that the food parameters and all the other criteria meet the required standards imposed by law.

Also, the whole system of proper practical activity, even if there are still gaps in certain regions of the country due to the lack of coordinating staff, has actively participated in reducing the negative reactions from those who live daily in this closed living environment. Significant improvements have also appeared in the expectations and perception of the civil society.

The option of feeding the person deprived of liberty currently stems less from the application of the sentence, even if there have been limitations regarding the receipt of food parcels from the family. This shortcoming is compensated by the appearance of shops inside the prison.

These improvements have appeared despite the fact that the Romanian penitentiary system does not benefit from special financing conditions.

Today, solutions are also sought for the problem of the lack of dining halls in those penitentiaries built a long time ago, the meal being served inside the cells. This type of meal often leads to infestation of cells with food residues and parasites, altering the quality of life of the detainee.

The food safety, approached as a multidimensional concept, is a responsibility of all those involved in the food field. From the producer to the consumer, the mentality must be constantly changed.

In order to achieve the ultimate goal of making everyone healthy, the civil society must be receptive to adaptation, it must learn to follow the various procedures and control mechanisms in the implementation process.

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