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88. Competitive Strategy of Food Industry

Anna Berseneva, Liudmyla Vlasenko
National University of Food Technologies

Introduction: Competitiveness measures the capacity to keep and gain market shares in domestic and international markets in a competitive environment. Nevertheless, one

should bear in mind that the trade surplus of one country spells the trade deficit of another. The quest for competitiveness is therefore intrinsic to all private businesses, and on a larger scale, this quest involves entire sectors of activity and countries.

An economic agent may only be qualified as competitive in comparison with other competitors offering the same type of goods or services. If average prices allow covering the production costs, including minimum remuneration for fixed production factors the player in question is deemed to be competitive.

Resources and methods: Businesses are constantly seeking competitive advantages in the marketplace. There are many different ways in which this can be done, but many will focus on a few tried and true methods of gaining on the competition. These methods can generally be classified into four different primary categories:

- Cost Leadership
- Differentiation
- Defensive Strategies
- Alliances

Results

In microeconomic environment (food industry and related network or cluster), with reference to improving the management aspects:

- Carry out systems studies on the economic and policy aspects of food safety and quality.
- Develop managerial tools for success in modern markets which demand high quality.
- Conduct feasibility studies for reengineering agro industrial production to ensure quality and boost competitiveness.
- Develop and implement total quality control systems.
- Develop business tools for cost-effective compliance with regulations and standards.
- Conduct training in quality and food safety culture, including the technical, economic and commercial aspects.
- Carry out market and consumer studies on food quality and safety demand trends.
- Generate and disseminate food safety and quality information, and contribute to awareness-building.

Also in microeconomic environment (the small food industry itself), with reference to development of the technological aspects:

- Promote improved and hygienic practices and technologies in classification, processing, packaging, transport and storage.
- Conduct design, construction and sanitary utilization of equipment and installations
- Conduct development, maximization, validation, analysis and control of processes with prevention-oriented quality assurance approaches.
- Improve and guarantee raw materials quality including the application of Good Agricultural Production Practices.
- Apply combined preservation techniques.
- Improve and guarantee in-process and finished-product materials quality and safety through the application of Good Manufacturing and Handling Practices.
- Develop and apply effective, low-cost, environmentally-friendly preservation technologies and packaging materials.
- Improve non-microbiological quality factors.

Conclusions: The aim of the article is to propose ways on how to be able to evolve from a process directed to devise sound strategies, using the systems approach, to the hands-on process of implementing cost-effective actions, that will assist small food industries and their networks to improve their performance, deliver high quality and safe foods to markets, increase their competitiveness, and contribute effectively to national productivity and development. Therefore, it is convenient to present some experiences related to different implementation modalities that would illustrate how to put forward the approach presented through these lines. The information that follows, coming from different contexts and periods and all except one from real life cases, is intended to give a rapid overview and examples of interventions from the global, macroeconomic international and national levels to the microeconomic level of specific food industries or in general postproduction stakeholders and their networks at local levels. Therefore, cases demanding comprehensive frameworks may be contrasted with very concrete and practical situations and the successful ways in which, through the application of the concepts explained herein, effective actions have been or may be put forward.

References

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