

**Міністерство освіти і науки України**

**Національний університет харчових технологій**

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**80 МІЖНАРОДНА НАУКОВА  
КОНФЕРЕНЦІЯ  
МОЛОДИХ УЧЕНИХ,  
АСПІРАНТІВ І СТУДЕНТІВ**

*“Наукові здобутки молоді –  
вирішенню проблем харчування людства  
у XXI столітті”*

*Частина 4*

*10–11 квітня 2014 р.*

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**Київ НУХТ 2014**

## 43. Commodity as a science and its development in Europe

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**Introduction:** Herbals and pharmacopoeia written by medieval monks in monasteries may be regarded as early roots for commodity science, describing carefully pharmaceutical drugs, their healing and toxic effects and falsifications. Later this early branch of commodity science focused more and more on food. Modern codices, e.g. for food, might be interpreted as successors of these early books of commodity

**Resources and methods:** Commodity Science is placed between natural and social sciences. Scientific research on commodities was first focused on food and raw materials from organic and inorganic environment, and later switched over to technology and economy. During this development technology and sciences of materials and goods separated, the former became settled at technical universities, the latter at economic universities. In the last century commodity science in some universities mainly was reduced to its economic aspects and vanished when it associated with marketing or other microeconomic specialisations.

**Results:** By the development of commerce the description of commodities and their quality became more and more interesting for merchants. One of the oldest books on commodities in Europe dates back to the 14<sup>th</sup>.

In an encyclopaedic phase (18<sup>th</sup> century) commodity sciences' researchers tried to document the complete knowledge of their period. They worked product oriented. With developing technology details and the description of all known inventions was added. Comprehensiveness of commodity knowledge seemed to be a realistic those days. Up to this time numerous techno-economic encyclopaedias were published and culminated during the 18th century witnessing how closely real economy was linked to business activities.

The 19th and beginning 20th century was the most prosperous time for commodity science, accompanied by the progress of natural sciences. Commodity knowledge was largely derived from experiments and material testing. In the course of the Industrial Revolution technology had separated from economics and became an own discipline – namely engineering. Commodity science developed towards a commercial discipline.

Scientific specialisation took place in particular fields like those of raw materials and technology. The new natural sciences and techniques like microscopy were introduced into school education, technology and commodity science became integrated parts in commercial school curricula. As knowledge exploded rapidly, books were no longer encyclopaedic but had the character of study literature. The books for students and studying assigned the commodities of their time to the realms of minerals, plants and animals.

In the course of the 20th and on the turn to the 21st century new topics evolved in commodity science and technology. The rapid development of technology and industry had scattered the field of commodity science and technology on the one hand, but on the other hand had outlined the importance of issues like questions of quality, customer satisfaction and at last environment.

An explosion of the number of kinds and the quantities of produced and exchanged goods, produced by newly emerging techniques, could be observed in shrinking intervals of time. Micro economics and its sub disciplines (marketing and advertising) competed with commodity science, which lost importance in capitalist systems.

In the 70ties consumer research and commodity testing (Warentest) had been among the leading topics of commodity science, human needs and health had been of concern on international meetings.

**Conclusions:** We can observe the development of the Commodity Science and Technology from a relatively small basis of goods (few groups of goods in few quantities) at the beginning of modern time to a tremendous amount of goods of different kinds and quality today.

### **References**

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