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SALES PROMOTION OF SLOVAK FOOD ON THE SLOVAK MARKET

PROMOCJA SPRZEDAŻY SŁOWACKIEJ ŻYWNOŚCI NA SŁOWACKIM RYNKU

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Summary: The share of foreign food on the Slovak market has increased by about 20% in the last five years. In most cases, food comes from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, other EU countries, and beyond. This is most visible in retail chains. The share of Slovak food products on the Slovak food market is 37.7% in 2018. The most Slovak products on the domestic market are in the category of milk, water/mineral water, wine, beer, and spirits. The least represented are those in the category of chocolate and non-chocolate confectionery, oil, and canned products. The largest amount of Slovak food is offered to consumers in retail chains such as COOP Jednota (56%) and CBA (50%), the least in Lidl (16%). The aim of the article is to describe various forms of sales promotion of Slovak food on the domestic market. The methods of analysis and synthesis were applied. We described examples of the sales promotion activities carried out by Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, civic association, local action groups, Centre for Environmental Activities, and retail chains. "Quality mark SK" is the best known label of Slovak food recognized by Slovak consumers. The information activities regarding it have been conducted for 14 years using different forms of communication, especially TV, billboards, newspaper articles. Shopping patriotism in Slovakia is rising, and between the years 2016 and 2017 the number of people buying Slovak products grew by 4%. However, not all the programs, projects and trademarks informing Slovak consumers about the specific properties of Slovak food are familiar to them. This situation may be caused by the lack of financial resources needed for the implementation of these activities by the entities and limited access to consumers. Sales promotion of Slovak food should be continued in Slovakia in the long term, so consumers are aware that buying Slovak food products with special labels support domestic food producers and support the domestic economy.

Keywords: sales promotion, Slovak food, Quality mark SK, retail chains, regional brands.

Streszczenie: Udział zagranicznej żywności na słowackim rynku wzrósł o ok. 20% w ciągu ostatnich 5 lat. W większości przypadków żywność pochodzi z Polski, Czech, Węgier, Austrii i innych krajów UE i spoza UE. Jest to najbardziej widoczne w sieciach handlowych. Udział słowackich produktów spożywczych na słowackim rynku żywności wyniósł w 2018 r. 37,7%.

Najwięcej słowackich produktów na rynku krajowym jest w kategoriach: mleko, wody mineralne, wina, piwa i napoje spirytusowe. Najmniej reprezentowane są słowackie produkty w kategorii wyrobów cukierniczych bez czekolady, olejów, konserw i wyrobów czekoladowych. Najwięcej słowackiej żywności oferowanej jest konsumentom w sieciach handlowych, takich jak COOP Unity (56%) i CBA (50%), najmniej w Lidlu (16%). Celem artykułu było opisanie różnych form promocji sprzedaży słowackiej żywności na rynku krajowym. Zastosowano metody analizy i syntezy. Opisano przykłady działań w zakresie promocji sprzedaży słowackiej żywności realizowanych przez Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Rozwoju Wsi Republiki Słowackiej, stowarzyszenie obywatelskie, lokalne grupy działania, Centrum Działań na rzecz Środowiska i sieci handlowe. „Znak jakości SK” jest najbardziej rozpoznawalnym przez słowackich konsumentów oznaczeniem słowackiej żywności. Działania informacyjne na temat tego znaku są prowadzone na Słowacji od 14 lat z użyciem różnych form komunikacji, zwłaszcza telewizji, billboardów, artykułów prasowych. W latach 2016-2017 liczba osób kupujących słowackie produkty wzrosła o 4%. Jednak nie wszystkie programy, projekty oznaczenia promujące słowacką żywność są znane Słowakom. Sytuacja ta może być spowodowana brakiem zasobów finansowych potrzebnych do realizacji tych działań przez dane podmioty i ograniczonym dostępem do konsumentów. Promocja sprzedaży słowackiej żywności na Słowacji powinna być kontynuowana, aby konsumenci byli świadomi, że kupując słowackie produkty spożywcze, wspierają krajowych producentów żywności i krajową gospodarkę.

Słowa kluczowe: promocja sprzedaży, słowacka żywność, znak jakości SK, sieci handlowe, marki regionalne.

1. Introduction

The food industry in Slovakia is continuously declining, while some sectors have ceased to exist. The number of employees in this sector is decreasing, whilst the negative balance of foreign trade is steadily increasing. Products that are missing in the portfolio of domestic producers or which production costs are lower, are imported from abroad [Debnár 2018]. Negative balance of foreign trade in agricultural commodities reached a negative value of 1.3 billion Euros in 2016. The value of total Slovak exports increased by 3.5% in 2016, while the value of total imports increased by 3.2%. At the same time, the dynamics of agro-food trade showed the opposite trend. Year-on-year, agro-food imports increased by 6.7% while the value of exports increased by only 1.1% [Ministerstvo poľnohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky 2017a].

Small food producers create an important and integral part of the Slovak economy. They are the driving force behind its development, particularly by its flexibility in adopting and using the most progressive technologies, job creation and as the main initiator of the growth of living standards of the population [Mižičková, Ubrežiová 2007]. They also face many problems such as increasing taxes, administrative burdens and the trade policy of retail chains. They are manifested mainly in the monetary or non-monetary performance of the supplier beyond the agreed purchase price, for example a discount on the purchase price, hidden

marketing fees, unilaterally unbalanced contractual relationships or payment for inclusion in the register of suppliers. They are unable to meet the requirements of retail chains related to their production volume. Such practices have a negative impact on agriculture. It also affects Slovak consumers, because quite often leads to discrimination against domestic suppliers, pressure to lower purchase prices and pushing producers for food quality downsizing [Ministerstvo poľnohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky 2018a].

Nowadays the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic has drafted a bill on unfair terms in commercial relations between retail chains and producers of food. The new legislation will eliminate hidden charges, shortening the maturity of invoices, the possibility of submitting anonymous incentives, but also better control or stricter sanctions. The law prevents others companies to make a profit on the trade between retail chains and the manufacturers.

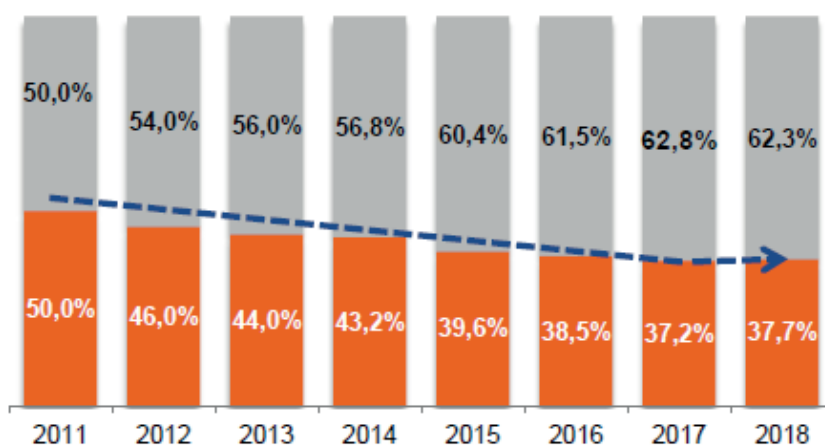
Another reason for the decline in the share of Slovak food on the Slovak food market is the declining competitiveness of the Slovak food producers. According to the previous president of the Food Chamber of Slovakia, it is necessary to invest in innovations, modern packaging and new technologies and there is a need for state support, an improvement of the business environment and a reduction of the administrative and tax burden [Debnár 2017].

Quality and origin from Slovakia are the two most important factors why consumers decide to buy food in Slovakia. The price is third in order. Slovaks most often buy food in hypermarkets, but they also are interested in small shops and marketplaces. Slovaks are increasingly looking for domestic food products to support the local economy. Product price is still an important factor for consumers, especially for low-income population groups but its importance is gradually decreasing with the growing purchasing power of the population [Ministerstvo poľnohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky 2018b].

According to a representative survey of public opinion, which was prepared by the agency A.K.O. for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development SR, 59% of respondents consider Slovak food to be better than foreign and 25% of the same quality. The most common reason is freshness (48%) and tighter control (41%). Consumers perceive the origin of Slovak food to be most important in meat (59%) and dairy products (50%). Food scandals, such as the case of spoiled Brazilian meat, are forcing consumers to be careful. More than a third of respondents (34%) consider the Slovak origin of milk to be important, but for milk products it is up to half (50%). Slovak origin of eggs is considered to be important by 30% of respondents, slightly less (22%) in poultry. Thirty percent of consumers said that the Slovak origin is important for them when purchasing vegetables, while for only 19% of the respondents it applies also to fruit [Ministerstvo poľnohospodárstva a rozvoja vidieka Slovenskej republiky 2017b].

Most food offered in stores in Slovakia comes from abroad, except for milk, mineral water, wine, beer and spirits. The fewest products from Slovakia are in the category of oils, confectionery and canned products.

The Food Chamber of Slovakia has been conducting a survey by the GfK agency from 2011 to monitor the share of domestic food in the Slovak market. Within five years, the share of Slovak food has fallen by 20% (Figure 1). The agency has mapped out 360 representative stores belonging to seven retail chains. It noted 16 categories of food products (wine, beer, spirits, processed products, pasta, oils, milk, natural cheeses, dairy products, nonalcoholic beverages, minerals, canned products, durable pastry, meat products, non-chocolate confectionery, and chocolate confectionery, Table 1). The survey showed that the share of domestic food on the shelves of stores decreased; in 2017 it was 37.2%, 38.5% in 2016, and in 2011 when GfK made this survey for the first time, the share of Slovak products was 50%.



*Orange shows Slovak products and gray, foreign products.

*Kolor pomarańczowy oznacza produkty słowackie, a kolor szary produkty zagraniczne.

Fig. 1. The share of Slovak food products from 2011 to 2018 in the Slovak market








Rys. 1. Udział słowackich produktów spożywczych w latach od 2011 do 2018 na rynku słowackim

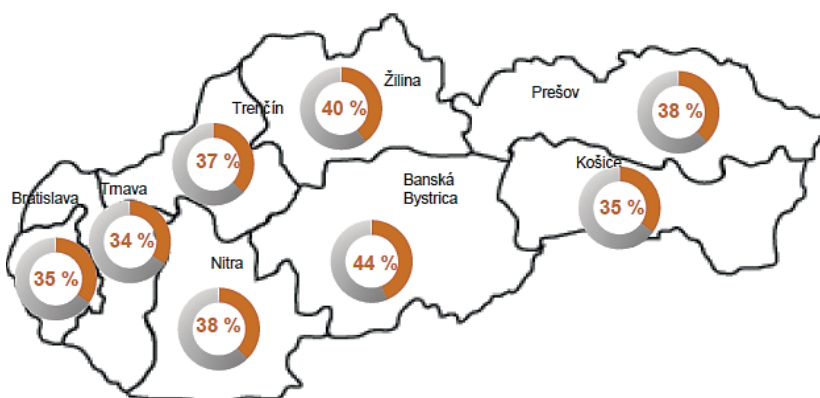
Source/Źródło: <http://www.potravinari.sk/page5916sk.html>.

The share of Slovak food products decreased to 37.7% in 2018. The highest proportion of Slovak products was in the categories: milk, water/mineral water, wine, beer, and spirits. The least represented Slovak products are within the category of chocolate and non-chocolate, oil, and canned products. Most Slovak food is sold in retail chains such as COOP Jednota (56%) and CBA (50%), least in the Lidl chain (16%). The share of Slovak food products in the remaining retail chains is presented in Table 1.

From the Slovakian regions' point of view, the least represented is domestic food in the Bratislava (35%) and Trnava (34%) regions and most in the Banská Bystrica (44%) and Žilina (40%) regions (Figure 2).

Table 1. The share of Slovak food products by categories in the retail chains in Slovakia (in %)**Tabela 1.** Udział słowackich produktów spożywczych według kategorii w danych sieciach handlowych na Słowacji (w %)

							
Milk	87	93	71	48	34	90	74
Water and mineral water and flavored mineral water	60	69	57	58	24	61	49
Beer	55	68	50	46	16	67	55
Wine	49	70	56	49	25	62	52
Spirits	48	69	56	50	24	62	40
Meat products (packed, not frozen)	58	82	57	44	16	74	52
Dairy products – other	50	76	53	41	20	70	45
Dairy products – natural cheeses	47	72	47	43	14	63	34
Pasta	42	74	39	36	11	50	27
Processed products	32	65	40	28	18	51	28
Durable pastry (packaged)	24	52	28	25	10	45	29
Non-alcoholic beverages	27	34	22	25	5	26	17
Confectionery – chocolate	19	24	22	19	5	26	20
Canned products	13	30	15	12	4	27	25
Oils	12	16	13	8	1	12	4
Confectionery – non-chocolate	7	18	9	9	5	18	9
Share of Slovak food products in retail chain	42	56	40	37	16	50	36

Source/Źródło: <http://www.potravinari.sk/page5916sk.html>.

*Orange shows Slovak products and gray, foreign products.

*Kolor pomarańczowy oznacza produkty słowackie, a kolor szary produkty zagraniczne.

Fig. 2. The share of Slovak food in the different regions of the Slovakia**Rys. 2.** Udział słowackich produktów spożywczych w różnych regionach SłowacjiSource/Źródło: <http://www.potravinari.sk/page5916sk.html>.

The aim of the article is to describe the various forms of sales promotion of Slovak food on the domestic market.

2. Methodology

The methods of analysis and synthesis were applied. The analysis method is the process of breaking a concept down into more simple parts, so that its logical structure is displayed [Blackburn 2008]. The research synthesis is defined as the conjunction of a particular set of literature review characteristics. Research syntheses attempts to integrate empirical research for creating generalizations [Cooper, Hedges 1994]. These methods are used to analyse information gained from domestic and foreign scientific and specific sources, e.g. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, The Food Chamber of Slovakia. The following research hypotheses were formulated in the work:

- Foreign food products predominate on the Slovak food market.
- There is a tendency to create various types of programs, competitions, projects, actions promoting and supporting the sale of Slovak food products in Slovakia.

3. Results

3.1. Sales promotion of Slovak food in Slovakia

Sales promotion is part of marketing communication along with advertising, public relations, personal sales and direct marketing. Sales promotion is a value added short-term suggestion to motivate the customer to an immediate response and product trial [Kotler, Keller 2006; Duncan, Ouwersloot 2008; Ailawadi et al. 2009; Kita et al. 2010]. The reason for the increasing importance of sales promotion is to generate additional sales for existing customers and attracting new ones.

Sales promotion is a set of instruments creating additional incentives of an economic and psychological nature, increasing the degree of attractiveness of the product for consumers. Its essence is to create for the customer additional benefits and in such a way encourage him/her to the immediate purchase of the product [Nestorowicz, Pilarczyk 2010]. This part of the article will describe various forms of sales promotion of Slovak food on the domestic market.

National Program for Slovak agricultural products and foodstuffs “Quality Mark SK”

The National Program for Support of Agricultural Products and Food “Quality Mark SK” was created in 2004, after Slovakia joined the EU. The program aims are to inform Slovak consumers about the quality of domestic foods, support the consumption of domestic food and improve their competitiveness on the Slovak

market [Nadányiová 2015]. The program is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and State Veterinary and Food Administration of the Slovak Republic. The “Quality Mark SK” (Figure 3) is granted to producers of agricultural products and foodstuffs. The mark can be also obtained by products that have received one of the three protected designations under the European Union Quality Policy (Protected designation of origin – PDO, Protected Geographical Indication – PGI, Traditional Specialty Guaranteed – TSG) and spirit drinks with Geographical Indication, wine products with Protected Geographical Indication, Protected Designation of Origin and products from organic farming.

The applicant who wishes to receive “Quality Mark SK” may be a natural or legal person who manufactures these products. In the case of products with a protected designation within the EU Quality Policy, the application may also be made by the relevant association of producers, which will include the current list of product manufacturers. From 1.12.2012, any producer from Slovakia can obtain the mark if his/her products are from domestic raw materials, and that quality parameters and food safety have been followed. It is important that the product is produced from at least 75% of domestic raw material and the production process took place in the Slovak Republic.

The expert committee who will submit the proposal to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, decides whether the mark will be awarded. The awarding process to obtain “Quality mark SK” is free of charge. The mark can also be granted several times a year. The mark owner must use the “Quality mark SK” logo in accordance with the manual. It must be placed on packaging,



Fig. 3. Logo of the National Program for Slovak agricultural products and foodstuffs “Quality mark SK”

Rys. 3. Logo Krajowego Programu Słowackich Produktów Rolno-Spożywczych „Znak jakości SK”

Source/Źródło: <http://www.znackakvality.sk>.



Fig. 4. Gold logo of the National Program for Slovak agricultural products and foodstuffs “Quality mark SK”

Rys. 4. Złote logo Krajowego Programu Słowackich Produktów Rolno-Spożywczych „Znak jakości SK”

Source/Źródło: <http://www.znackakvality.sk>.

labels of the awarded products no later than three months after the date of the decision. The trademark holder may also display the logo in its promotional material, also on his/her website and it must always be clear to which product the mark has been awarded [NPQMSK 2018].

Products that have superior quality features, i.e. with their qualitative parameters significantly outperforming similar products on the market, based on professional judgment and the recommendation of the expert committee, will receive “Gold Quality mark SK” (Figure 4). Qualitative parameters may be for example the content of biologically valuable substances such as: antioxidants, vitamins, essential fatty acids, trace elements, reduced energy value, reduced salt content, probiotic character of the product, reduced content of additives (i.e. chemical preservatives, stabilizers, thickeners), processing allowing the preservation of biologically valuable natural ingredients, traditional recipe, production technology and other qualitative characteristics [NPQMSK 2018].

Until 22.06.2018, 1316 products from 287 Slovak producers obtained “Quality mark SK” (“Gold Quality mark SK” gained 121 producers) [NPQMSK 2018]. “Quality mark SK” is the best known label of Slovak food recognized by Slovak consumers [Jarossová 2016]. This may be due to the fact that information activities in this area have been implemented in Slovakia for 14 years using various forms of communication (television, billboards, press conferences of the Ministry of Agriculture, press articles, etc.).

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic project “I Want to Deliver”

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with retail chains launched in February 2017 project called “I Want to Deliver”. The aim of this project is not only to support small and medium-sized regional food producers, but also increase self-sufficiency in food. Local food producers have been given the opportunity to sell their products in retail chains located within a radius of 50 kilometers from their company. Local manufacturers have simplified contract terms, and shortened maturity of invoices.

Companies had to meet the basic conditions for trade, such as packaging, correct labels, EAN code and they had to arrange the logistics. The project allows small and medium-sized producers to increase their sales, new investments and increase employment directly in the regions and to offer consumers more quality homemade products directly from their region. Small and medium-sized food producers will also gain experience with work in the retail network. Up to 11.06.2018, 166 suppliers were involved in the project [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic 2018c].

“Quality from our regions” project

This project is a social responsibility project based on consumer education through media campaigns and consumer competitions. It explains the impact of a larger consumption of Slovak products (food and nonfood) on the Slovak economy. The label of “Quality from our regions” is presented in Figure 5. The trademark owner is the Citizen Association “Quality from our Regions”.

The holder of the “Quality from our regions” label, whose product contains a certain percentage of raw materials of domestic origin, has the possibility to use two variants of the blue mark: that is: “Quality from our regions – 100% work” and “Quality from our regions – XY% raw material”. According to the first variation, the products must be produced, delivered, preserved on the territory of the Slovak Republic in authorized establishments (in accordance with Council Regulation EEC No. 2913/92 of 12 October 1992, Article 24, page 17) meaning that the country of origin of the goods for which several countries have been involved is the country in which, as the last economically justifiable processing in the undertakings designated for it, resulting in a new product or an important level of production [Pravidlá a podmienky... 2018]. In the second variant, according to the criteria set for each commodity for the award of the “Quality from our regions” trademark, except those products whose main ingredient cannot be obtained within the territory of Slovakia. This project supports “Slovak food”, but works on a commercial basis. The brand owner “Quality from our regions” must pay the association annual fees according to the annual turnover per product.

The Citizen Association “Quality from our Regions” is also the initiator of “The National Day of the support of the Slovak Economy”, which has been held on 16 October for the last 3 years. In 2018 the objective is not only to support the purchase of Slovak goods, but also to support Slovak services. Operations involved in this



Fig. 5. Logo of the project “Quality from our regions”

Rys. 5. Logo projektu “Jakość z naszych regionów”

Source/Źródło: <http://www.kvalitaznasichregionov.sk>.



Fig. 6. Label “We offer Slovak”

Rys. 6. Oznaczenie “U nas oferujemy słowackie produkty”

Source/Źródło: <http://www.kvalitaznasichregionov.sk>.

activity for better consumer orientation will be labeled “We offer Slovak” (U nás ponúkame slovenské!) (Figure 6).

This label is intended for trade and HORECA operators. The business operation will get the right to use the “We offer Slovak!” label if its turnover from sales represents at least 50% of Slovak products. HORECA companies can get this label if they use at least 50% of Slovak raw materials or offer at least 50% of Slovakian products. According to Gfk [Webnoviny 2017] shopping patriotism in Slovakia is rising, and between 2016 and 2017 the number of people buying Slovak products grew by four percentage points.

Sales promotion of agricultural products and foodstuffs with a share of 100% raw materials from Slovakia

In 2015, a new trademark “Slovak food” was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic in order to support sales of selected single-component agricultural products and foodstuffs containing 100% of raw material from Slovakia. The logo may be used to designate eleven kinds of food products [Vestník pôdohospodárstva... 2015]: pork, beef, poultry, sheep meat, goat meat, fish, water, honey, fruit, vegetables and potatoes.



Fig. 7. Label of “Slovak food”

Rys. 7. Oznaczenie słowacka żywności

Source/Źródło: www.mpsr.sk/download.php?bulID=423.

Holders of this mark can also use it for foods that have already been awarded the “Quality mark SK” or “Gold Quality mark SK”. Figure 7 shows an example of the designation of “Slovak Food”.

Farm lunch voucher project

The Leitner family from the company “Poctiví Farmári” invented the farmer’s lunch voucher. The lunch voucher is provided by the employer as a benefit and the employee can buy for it only products from local farmers. Consumers cannot use the farmer’s lunch voucher in any restaurant or shop, because the Leitner family choose themselves the restaurants and shops where they pay. The goal of the farmers is to support local, domestic food from smaller producers and farmers. The condition is that the store or restaurant has to take at least part of the raw materials and goods from small farmers from the surrounding area. The farmer’s lunch vouchers (Figure 8) are in denominations from 3.15 Euros. The employer may provide them as a benefit

Fig. 8. The farmer's lunch vouchers
Rys. 8. Farmerski kupon na obiad

Source/Źródlo: Mirka Chabadová.



or as part of a mandatory contribution to the meals [TASR 2015]. Approximately 500 farmers have been involved in the project and the farmer's lunch voucher can be used in more than twenty restaurants as well as in the agricultural markets in the Banská Bystrica region, but also in some business entities in the Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Prešov, Žilina and Košice regions.

Sales promotion of regional products in Slovakia

Labeling of products by regional brands is one of the trends of recent years. Consumers are more sensitive to product quality, especially food, which is available in the retail chains, and while being more aware, they have learned that it is essential to look at product information. The media inform consumers about food frauds, differences in the quality of raw materials used to produce food products at home and in Western Europe, therefore more and more consumers want to buy regional food from their region [Krnáčová 2015].

Regional brands or labelling refer to products and services that are characteristic of the region, reflects regional traditions and culture and guarantees their origin, quality and uniqueness. Brand building is not just a private domain or companies; often it refers to the regions. Labeling of regional products and their marketing has been proven, for example, in the Czech Republic, where 27 regional brands are currently in place [Krnáčová 2014].

Regional product labeling in Slovakia is covered by the National Network of Slovak Local Action Groups (Národná Sieť Slovenských Miestnych Akčných Skupín – NSS MAS). The National Network of Slovak Local Action Groups is a voluntary civic association of legal, property and organizational independence organizations working on the principles of LEADER access and experts working in the field of regional development. NSS MAS is responsible for the labeling of regional products. Each region in Slovakia differs from others by its own individuality. The aim of labeling local products is to support and promote the region, local producers and service providers, traditions, values as well as the use of local raw materials. Slovakia has twelve regional brands:

- the regional product HONT,
- the regional product KARSTICUM,
- the regional product PODPOLANIE,

- the regional product MALODUNAJSKO-GALANTSKO,
- the regional product PONITRIE,
- the regional product KOPANICE,
- the regional product ZÁHORIE,
- the regional product KYSUCE,
- the regional product GEMER-MALOHONT,
- the regional product MALÉ-MARPATY,
- the regional product REGIO-DANUBIANA,
- the regional product Tradície Bielych Karpát/Tradice Bílých Karpat.

The geographical distribution of some of the mentioned regional brands is shown in Figure 9.

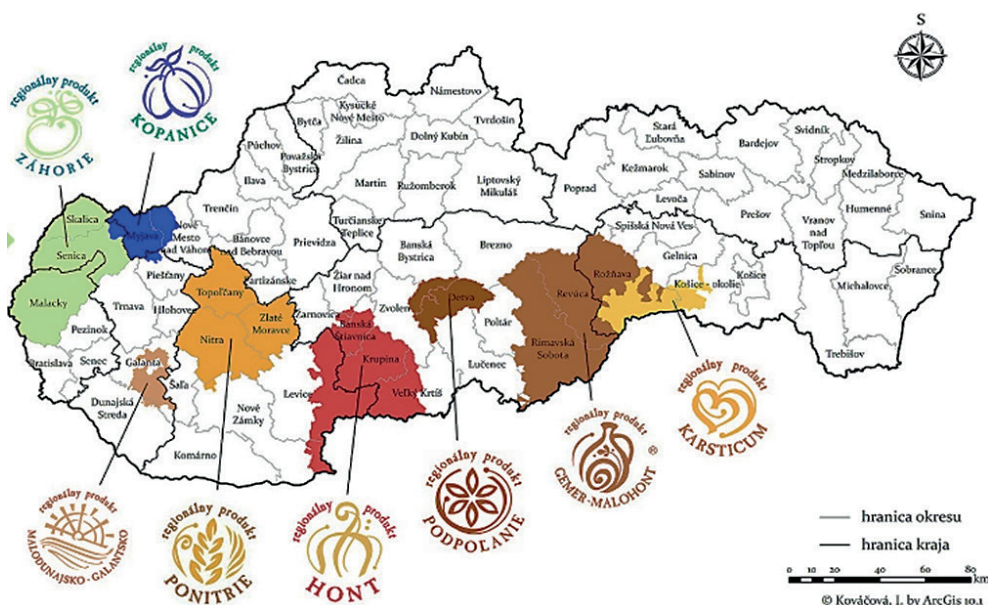


Fig. 9. Geographical distribution of some regional brands

Rys. 9. Geograficzne rozmieszczenie niektórych regionalnych marek

Source/Źródło: <http://www.zahorie.regionalneprodukty.sk/o-regione>.

There are “Brand Guidelines” for each regional brand, which applicants must adhere to if they want to get a mark. The product labeled “regional product” differs from other similar products on the market, which gives him/her a greater chance of succeeding in strong competition. Regional brands support products typical for the region, which are also environmentally friendly. They also support local producers, the local economy, and the local population.

The role of regional brands is to help rural development and thus motivate people to stay in the given regions. Local producers have to face competition in the form of large multinational companies which offer cheaper products. They often have the

problem of selling their products, which are very often of exceptional quality. This is due to the greater distance from cities, combined with a lack of contacts, market knowledge, or marketing communication funds [Štensová 2014].

Regional brands have helped local manufacturers to promote their products. They also have an impact on tourism, as the interest of consumers in regional products is also increasing their interest in the region. This is related to the preservation or renewal of typical crafts, processes, recipes. The introduction of regional brands has also been positively reflected in rural employment and the overall renewal of life. The designations of the goods or services make them more visible [Štensová 2015].

Competition "Slovak organic food of the year" and "Prize of the organic food consumers"

The development of organic foods market constitutes an element of a far more complex phenomenon of ecological consumption and the reinforcement of a new model called green marketing. The dynamic growth in the value of the organic food market is observed in developed economies [Bryła 2016].

Organic farming helps protect the environment, human health and ensure animal welfare. At present more and more consumers are buying organic food, especially from local farmers and producers. Wholesalers and retailers offer organic food but only within a limited range, most of which comes from abroad.

The Center for Environmental Activities (CEA) in Slovakia has been organizing a competition "Slovak organic food of the year ..." since 2004 in order to promote Slovak organic food in Slovakia and the development of organic farming. The reward for the winner is the opportunity to label the award-winning organic food with the logo "Slovak organic food of the year". Each organic food registered in the competition can receive up to two awards: 1) the prize of the jury (Figure 10), 2) consumer prize for the most popular organic food (Figure 11). The aim of the organization is to promote organic food and to increase the number of organic farms



Fig. 10. Label of "Slovak organic food of the year ..."

Rys. 10. Oznaczenie "Słowacka żywność ekologiczna roku ..."

Source/Źródło: <http://www.biopotravinaroka.sk>.



Fig. 11. Logo of the price of the organic food consumers

Rys. 11. Logo nagrody nadawanej przez konsumentów żywności ekologicznej

Source/Źródło: <http://www.biopotravinaroka.sk>.

in Slovakia. Organic food sold in shops should be of Slovak origin, at affordable prices and available close to home.

The producers themselves nominated organic food for the competition. The competition concerns organic food produced in Slovakia that complies with current legislation, was placed on the market until the date specified by the specialized commission, contains at least 90% of raw materials of Slovak origin (excluding



Pic. 1. Example of marketing materials on the shelves with meat products
Zdjęcie 1. Przykład marketingowych materiałów przy półce z produktami mięsnymi

Source/Źródło: Pravda, Robert Hüttner, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/ekonomika/clanok/328197-brusel-zvyhodnil-slovenske-potraviny>.



Pic. 2. Example of marketing materials on the shelves with dairy products
Zdjęcie 2. Przykład marketingowych materiałów przy półce z produktami mlecznymi

Source/Źródło: Pravda, Ľuboš Pilec, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/ekonomika/clanok/328197-brusel-zvyhodnil-slovenske-potraviny>.

foods made from exotic raw materials such as cocoa, figs, dates), and can be bought in the Slovak Republic (at least regionally).

In 2016, six organic foodstuffs were nominated: 1) Pieniny herbal tea BIO from AGROKARPATY Plavnica, 2) Biomirabelkovica – true fruit spirits from Ing. Ján Chrenka (SHR) from Partizánske, 3) children’s gluten-free corn with carrots “BioKids” Jan Cibulka – CIBI from Marcelova, 4) BIOMILA BIO spelt bread flour graham from Rudník, 5) 100% BIO sheep cheese from the Važec ecofarm and Bio BIO beef meat from Ing. Peter Badiar from the Turova farm. The vote was on-line from 1 June to 21 September 2016. Everyone could vote only once. The award “Slovak organic food of the year 2016” was received by BIO beef from the Turova farm and “The prize of the organic food consumers” was given to “100% BIO sheep cheese” from the Važec ecofarm.

When writing about marketing activities designed to support the sale of Slovak products, it is necessary to mention (POP materials – point of purchase materials) and POS materials (point of sale materials). These materials are used in places with self-service, for example supermarkets. POS and POP materials are an indispensable part of sales promotion. They help not only to highlight actions but, above all, to draw attention to the product and improve its memorability for consumers. The customer remembers the product but also its brand. The role of POS/POP materials is therefore to catch the customer’s attention and influence on his/her final decision to buy goods. There are different kinds of POS/POP materials indoor material (located inside buildings), outdoor materials to promote sales that are located outdoors. We can also divide them into short-term ones – leaflets informing about news, competitions, planned promotions, or long-term value materials – including leaflets on how to use the product, catalogs and the like. On Pictures 1 and 2 are examples of POS materials in one of the Slovak supermarkets, which inform customers that they are buying Slovak products. In both cases, the Slovakian flag motif is used for this purpose.

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that the Slovak food market has a larger share of foreign products than Slovak products. Therefore various entities such as government organizations, associations and individuals, carry out various types of programs, competitions, and promotion projects promoting Slovak food with the aim of increasing its sales among Slovak consumers and changing the behaviour of large retail chains towards small producers.

The aim of the article is to describe various forms of sales promotion of Slovak food on the domestic market. The described examples relate to activities carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, civic associations, local action groups, and the Center for Environmental Activities. Activities related to supporting the sales of Slovak food, depending on the selected

forms, methods of implementation and duration of information campaigns, fairly effectively influence consumers.

The “Quality mark SK” is the best known label of Slovak food recognized by Slovak consumers, because information activities in this area are carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic using the various forms of media (television, billboards, press conferences of the Ministry of Agriculture, press articles, etc.) for the past 14 years. Few consumers recognize other labels informing Slovak consumers about the specific properties of their domestic food. This is because this type of activity is implemented only in a given region, the information on this subject is available only on the websites of the organizations, has limited access to consumers or, as in the case of local action groups, their promotional activities related to local products depend on the funds obtained most often under the LEADER program.

Sales promotion of Slovak food should be continued in Slovakia in the long term so consumers will be aware that buying Slovak food products support domestic food producers and the domestic economy.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic is taking a number of actions to support small and medium food producers, but there is a lack of support and actions directed to companies involved in the processing of Slovak raw materials. They are frequently exported abroad, processed there and return to Slovakia, where already as finished products they are sold for a much higher price.

The main factors affecting the purchase of Slovak food among Slovak consumers are quality, origin and price. Price is the most important factor for the less affluent people. Those people who have higher incomes already buy more expensive food and with better quality, but in both cases an increasing percentage of people buying Slovakian products before foreign ones were observed. Slovak consumers are increasingly buying Slovak products, because they trust them more in relation to the quality and safety of products. This is due to the many scandals pertaining to foreign food products and posing a threat to the health and lives of consumers that were sold in Slovakia. Slovak consumers buying Slovak food products want to support small and medium-sized Slovak food producers who are struggling with lower quality products sold mainly in retail chains for competitive prices and coming from abroad.

Slovakia has many delicious foods and meals specific to the regions. Every year there are more traditional and regional food products that have been registered in the European database DOOR under the designation of PDO, PGI and TSG, but up to now there have not been any larger campaigns informing consumers about their specificity, unique properties and designations in Slovakia. Such activities would certainly contribute to even greater sales support of Slovak food and its greater popularity among tourists.

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