

**Achieving Commodity & Service Excellence
in the Age of Digital Convergence**

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The 16th Symposium of IGWT



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& Service Excellence
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International Society of
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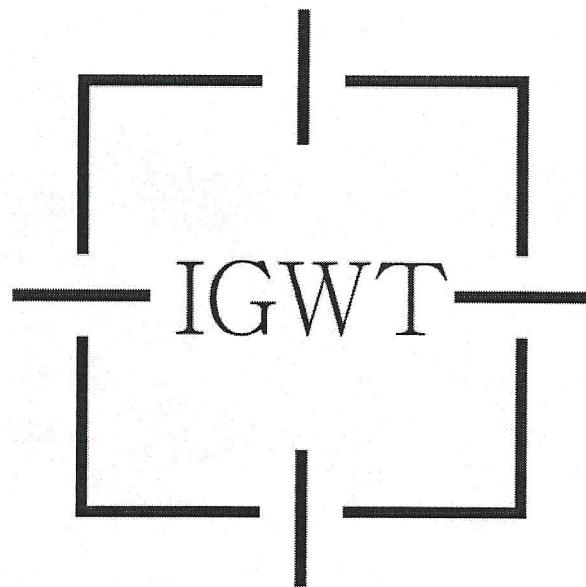
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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TO ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

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The aim of the paper is to describe the perceptions and attitudes to organic products of a particular set of potential consumers in Bulgaria and Romania. Quality analysis according to the method of "focus groups" was used. The results obtained from the four focus groups conducted in Bulgaria and the two focus groups in Romania during the period April-May 2007 were analysed. Within this comparative study the different associations which potential consumers in Bulgaria and Romania have for organic foods come to the fore. The willingness of participants in the focus groups to pay a higher price for organic foods, related to the greater added value due to their ecological method of production and healthy effect is discussed. It was established that the groups of organic foods preferred by the Bulgarian and Romanian participants in the focus groups are one and the same. The insignificant differences are due to the eating habits in the two countries. All respondents, irrespective of their nationality confirm the necessity for a special label for organic products. The reasons for this are: facilitating customer's choice; differentiation from other products (easy recognition and identification); information to consumers; guarantee for the organic origin and quality of the foods; information and promotion of organic foods.

Keywords: Organic Foods, Consumers' Perceptions, Bulgaria, Romania

Introduction

Organic production, as part of sustainable agriculture, is based on methods preserving the environment – it supports and develops ecosystems including biological cycles and soil fertility, utilizes most advantageously the local natural resources. Methods which minimize air, soil and water pollution are implemented in organic agriculture thus shunning the use of synthetic chemical products, genetically modified organisms, etc. [1, 2]. Livestock breeding follows methods close to the natural way of life of the animals, which secures their good health. Often defined by the equivalent terms "biological", "ecological" or "organic", this agricultural production is based on a series of strict rules and prohibitions, supported by appropriate mechanisms of certification and control.

The general tendency for most of the Central and East European countries is their organic production to develop primarily for export purposes. This makes it impossible for these products to adapt to the local market and their prices become too high for these countries. The solution is in the development of the home market of organic agricultural products and foods [3, 4]. The development and success of organic market in the Central and East European countries depends primarily on the perception of this kind of products by consumers. The authors of the present study turn their attention to a comparative study of potential consumers in Bulgaria and Romania.

The aim of the paper is to describe the perceptions and attitudes to organic agricultural products of a particular set of potential consumers in Bulgaria and Romania.

Methods

