



ICA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

"Co-operation and Peace in the Era of Globalisation"

15 - 17 October, Seoul - Korea

How Cooperatives Meet the Challenge of Guaranteeing Safe Food

Pantcho IVANOV, President CCU Bulgaria

17 October 2001

No responsibility of the cooperatives is greater than the one to guarantee safe foods for consumption. And this is naturally so, because their responsibility is directly related to the health and even life of consumers.

Guaranteeing of safe foodstuffs - this is the "Task Number One" to each consumer cooperative in our country.

The purchase of foodstuffs produced or delivered by consumer cooperatives has not only its commercial and economic dimension. First of all, any commodity purchased from cooperatives, shall bear security to the health and life of the cooperative members and to all customers. Only in this case can the consumers see a purchase as a highest form of confidence in respect of cooperatives.

The production of and trade in safe foodstuffs within the system of consumer cooperatives is fully in compliance with the legal requirements and the regulations of the specialized institutions in our country.

For two years now the Bulgarian producers and traders, inclusive the consumer cooperatives, are performing their activities under the strong influence of the Foodstuffs Act adopted by the Parliament in 1999.

This Act settles the order and terms for the production of and trade in /incl. import and export/ foods, control over foodstuffs, as well as the obligation of the subjects in the market, engaged in the production of and trade in foodstuffs.

Under the Foodstuffs Act, each consumer cooperative was obliged to re-register its production units into a special National Register of Food Producing Enterprises.

Together with this requirement, the consumer cooperatives were obliged to constantly maintain their rooms for production and trading, their machinery, equipment and all devices in a good hygienic condition - in full compliance with the established norms and rules. The requirements not to change the approved composition of the foodstuffs are strictly observed and thus, their nutritive value is not disturbed.

The law provides for exclusively severe sanctions for the offenders, including termination and winding-up of their businesses.

The cooperatives in our country are strictly observing all norms, rules and requirements ensuing from the standardization documents.

In the activity of the consumer cooperatives, the "Food Hygiene" system is applied, covering all measures and rules of guaranteeing safety in all stages of the production and transportation of foodstuffs to consumers.

This system comprises also effective control in the cooperative laboratories and in labs of similar producers, as well as the control exercised by the public inspections for specialized control.

We can find a lot of important information for securing safe food in the norms and rules established in the documents issued by the EU institutions, by the World Health Organization, by the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization, etc., which we are obliged to observe.

The Central Cooperative Union has its own specialized center engaged in delivering information and performing all activities related to the quality, measurements and certification of all cooperative activities and goods. In this center, the "Food Hygiene" system we are applying is secured in view of organization, personnel and information. To our cooperative system, this is a very serious guarantee for the safety of all foodstuffs produced and realized by the consumer cooperatives in Bulgaria.