

# **Food Science**

## **Consumer-Oriented Approach and Business Insights**



**Colegiu științific:**

Prof. univ. dr. Bogdan Onete

Prof. univ. dr. Rodica Pamfilie

Prof. univ. dr. Marieta Olaru

Prof. univ. dr. Roxana Sârbu

Prof. univ. dr. Laurențiu Tăchiciu

Prof. univ. dr. Mariana Drăgușin

Conf. univ. dr. Andreea Săseanu

Conf. univ. dr. Cristinel Vasiliu

**Lelia VOINEA**

**Raluca Mariana GROSU**

# **Food Science**

## **Consumer-Oriented Approach and Business Insights**

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[www.editura.ase.ro](http://www.editura.ase.ro)

[editura@ase.ro](mailto:editura@ase.ro)

### **Referenți științifici:**

Prof. univ. dr. Rodica Pamfilie

Prof. univ. dr. Bogdan Onete

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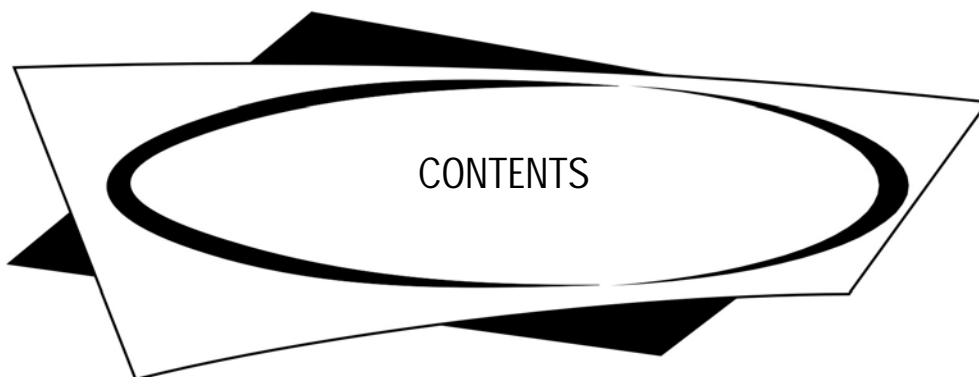
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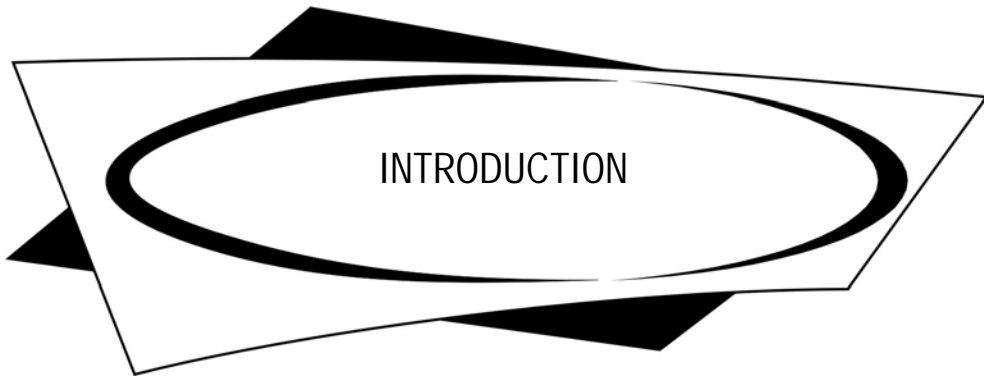
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# INTRODUCTION

The book “Food Science. Consumer-oriented approach and business insights” transposes the reader into the fascinating world of food, providing detailed answers and clarifications for some of the most important questions, curiosities, and even fears related to various issues specific to this area of high importance in our daily life.

The book is designed primarily as a benchmark for the contemporary consumer, highly interested in reorienting his/her eating behaviour according to the principles of a healthy diet; the book offers consumers valuable knowledge in this field and contributes in raising their awareness on different food issues of high importance today. On the other hand, the book may represent an useful guide for entrepreneurs involved in different activities specific to the food industry. In their entrepreneurial steps and in their sustained efforts to reconfigure the food universe, they should focus not only on competition and profit maximization, but rather on ethics and respect for the consumer.

The book begins with a series of conceptual clarifications regarding terms of major interest in the field of nutrition: food, diet, nutrient, nutrition, food security, and food safety. Representing the fundamental relationship between humans and environment, food is an essential element of our daily life, necessary for the proper functioning of our body. In this respect, the quality of food is what matters essentially to prevent diseases and maintain health. Based on this fact, the book highlights the complexity of the concept of “food quality” and provides detailed explanations of its main hypostases: technical quality, nutritional quality, sensory quality, hygienic quality. Understanding the dimensions of food quality becomes a prerequisite not only for consumers, but especially for entrepreneurs acting along the food chain – “from farm to fork”.



Our approach continues with the concept of “energy balance” and the role of the main components of the food composition. Knowing these issues has become an imperative for the modern consumer, who must be aware of the indissoluble link between diet and health (the old aphorism “you are what you eat” is as valid today as it was in the past) and must acquire the specific skills for making healthy food choices. This becomes a must in the consumption society characterized both by the abundance of foods and the strong pressure of the food industry – exercised through mass media, and mainly manifested through an encouraged overconsumption. In this context, consumers seem to have lost the nutritional landmarks submitted from generation to generation within the family education. Nowadays, consumers – especially the young ones – are increasingly confused by this “uproar food”, which predisposes them to many abuses, errors, and nutritional imbalances. In this context, they face eating disorders, which can be one of the contributory factors, along with the genetic, physiological, psychological, or environmental factors, in triggering some serious diseases (so-called civilization diseases).

Because the label is the primary means of informing consumers about the identity, composition, and properties of foods, and also a means to guide consumer choice, the book outlines the latest requirements in food labelling. Although nowadays food labels offer more information about the nutritional value of products, in a variety of formats, the existence of some obstacles in consumers’ understanding of the nutritional information is more than obvious. Therefore, the book presents a set of landmarks for the correct interpretation and use of the nutritional information, both highlighted in the detailed nutritional label, and presented using “Front-of-Package” systems.

The methods for determining the nutritional profile of a food are useful not only for the specialists in the food area, but also for consumers who have made a true passion from this aspect of everyday life.

Lately, the abundance of food, especially in the developed countries, has encouraged overconsumption and the development of poor eating habits (generating the preference for high-fat foods and confectionery, in the detriment of whole grain foods, vegetables, and fruits). In this context, we have considered as being appropriate, both for consumers and producers, to include in the book the topics related to the most important healthy eating patterns and the nutritional profile of the main food groups.

The book ends with a theme regarding innovation and tradition, approached as the main coordinates of the new frame specific to contemporary food business. Analyzing the current food landscape, we can note that the preponderant food offer has its origins in the period of the maximum growth of the

food industry. The development of symbiotic formulae between food science and modern food technologies and their widespread application, resulted in achievements in the global food supply, but also in a nutritional degradation in the modern diet. The application of industrial techniques – refining, hydrogenation, fortification, conservation, widespread use of food additives – along with the genetic modification of agro-food raw materials have led to the achievement of devitalized foods, deprived of their key components (vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber). Thus, many innovations of the food industry are now beginning to be seen with scepticism by consumers. Realizing the serious consequences of the imbalances caused by the overconsumption of ultra processed or genetically modified foods, consumers are increasingly turning towards food choices that guarantee both individual health and environment protection, such as organic products, traditional products, or “Novel Food” products. The book highlights a series of beneficial effects of their consumption and also various opportunities for developing the businesses based on these products in the future.

Through the variety of approached subjects, one of the main aim of the book is to contribute to the understanding of foodstuff from two antagonistic perspectives: as a guarantor of individual health – if the conditions of nutritional balance and safety are fulfilled both in the industrial production and in the household consumption – as well as a trigger of severe chronic pathologies – if these conditions are not respected. The understanding of the dual nature of food products, besides helping consumers to make healthy food choices on the market, it could also drive producers to modify their products, through the improvement of the quality and the nutritional profile, in order to be in accordance with the requirements specific to dietary guidelines, which could bring a further important benefit for consumers’ health and quality of life.

Given the amplitude and the importance of the approached issues, the book “Food Science. Consumer-oriented approach and business insights” can be a valuable reference material mainly for students of economic higher education, for young researchers who want to deepen this area and for professionals involved in the agro-food business field, but also for the informed readers concerned about improving their quality of life through a healthy diet.

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Assoc. Prof. Lelia Voinea, Ph.D.

Assist. Prof. Raluca Mariana Grosu, Ph.D.

Bucharest University of Economic Studies  
Faculty of Business and Tourism