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THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD QUALITY AND FOOD SAFETY POLICIES IN TURKEY

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Food safety and quality has become a top priority with recent food crises (BSE, dioxin foot and mouth disease), urbanization and increasing social conscious during the last decades. Profound changes have taken place in legislation related to environment and consumer safety the worldwide. Food systems in developing countries are not always as well organized and developed as in the industrialized world. Moreover, problems of growing population, urbanization, lack of resources to deal with pre- and post- harvest losses in food, and problems of environmental and food hygiene mean that food systems in developing countries continue to be stressed, adversely affecting quality and safety of food supplies. People in developing countries are therefore exposed to a wide range of potential food quality and safety risks. The recognition of international food standards in international food trade is an important element of the (World Trade Organization) WTO Agreements. This provides a level playing field to developing countries. Prior to these Agreements developing exporting countries had to abide by the regulations of importing countries. Now the situation is somewhat different. Firstly, the trading nations should apply international standards, and secondly, in case of a dispute, countries can use the WTO dispute settling mechanism where scientific evidence will be the main determining factor in settling (Agreement on Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) SPS or (Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade) TBT food regulatory disputes. This paper discusses the special problems of food quality and safety in developing countries as well as their impact on food security and presents ways and means of dealing with these problems. Food policies in the EU integration period are widely discussed.

Key words: Food quality, food safety, food policies, Turkey, EU