



CERTIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR PEANUT CEREAL COMPANIES TO ACCESS THE EUROPEAN MARKET

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Abstract: Producing food with quality and safety standards enables opportunities for access to international markets, contributing to the country's growth. An important prerequisite is the implementation of food safety management certifications that validate the production chain and build trust with trade partners. The exponential growth in peanut production has been noteworthy in recent years, and the European Union (EU) is the world's largest importer of peanuts. Accessing this market is of utmost importance, but it requires efforts to overcome stringent imposed barriers. Thus, the general objective of this article is to identify the necessary food safety management certifications for peanut processing companies to access the European market. It was found that the Brand Reputation through Compliance Global Standards (BRCGS) and Food Safety System Certification (FSSC 22000) programs can be implemented to achieve this goal. It is concluded that, in addition to certifications, specific national standards relevant to the production chain are required for such qualification.

Keywords: Market access. Certification. Peanut export.

CERTIFICAÇÕES NECESSÁRIAS PARA AS CEREALISTAS DE AMENDOIM ACESSAREM O MERCADO EUROPEU

Resumo: Produzir alimentos com qualidade e segurança possibilitam oportunidades de acesso a mercados internacionais, ao qual contribui para o crescimento do país. Um pré-requisito importante é a implantação de certificações de gestão em segurança dos alimentos que validam a cadeia produtiva e passam confiança para os parceiros comerciais. O crescimento exponencial da produção de amendoim tem se destacado nos últimos anos e a União Europeia UE é a maior importadora de amendoim do mundo. Acessar este mercado é de extrema importância, mas é necessário esforços para enfrentar barreiras rígidas impostas. Sendo assim, o objetivo geral deste artigo se pauta em identificar as certificações de gestão de segurança do alimento, necessárias para as cerealistas de amendoim acessarem o mercado europeu. Pode-se constatar que os programas de certificação Brand Reputation through Compliance Global Standards (BRCGS) e Food Safety System Certification (FSSC 22000) podem ser implementados para atingir tal objetivo. Conclui-se que além das certificações, normas específicas nacionais pertinentes a cadeia produtiva, são necessárias para tal habilitação.

Palavras-chave: Acesso a mercados. Certificação. Exportação de amendoim.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil's food production capacity stands out globally and has established itself among other countries, as it contributes to the global population's food supply. Food quality and safety criteria have been refined (COSTA et al., 2019) due to the importance of demonstrating to the world that Brazilian food is safe, of high quality, and possesses socio-environmental sustainability (MAPA, 2022).

Meeting the myriad of standards and regulations imposed by countries, states, and regions is always a challenge for companies aiming to export their food products. Therefore, there has been a pursuit of an international methodology that recognizes food quality. Although voluntary, various international standards have emerged with the effective contribution of the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization (MAPA, 2022).

Among these standards, the implementation of certifications and quality management systems that encompass quality assurance and quality control occur as a result of market demands (PERETTI, ARAÚJO, 2010). Violating regulations can lead to inspection fees, audits, supply chain delays, and a loss of the country's reputation in the export market (MARTINS, 2022).

In 2023, the National Confederation of Industry (CNI) report identified 85 trade barriers imposed on Brazilian exports. Of these, the European Union (EU) presented 18 (CNI, 2024), most of which refer to agricultural products, with four listed as Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures (for not being recognized or authorized for export) (CNI, 2024). The peanut, the food addressed in this research, did not present any specific barriers (RASFF, 2024).

One of Brazil's major trading partners is the EU, ranking second (BOBATO et al., 2020; BRASIL, 2024). It is an economic bloc formed by 27 countries, whose members seek to mutually assist each other in strengthening their economies, facilitating business (MACHADO; MATSUSHITA, 2019), and protecting their markets with technical requirements (COSTA et al., 2019).

The international trade of peanuts to the EU imposes more stringent barriers than those practiced by Brazil and can be considered non-tariff barriers. In particular, the phytosanitary conditions of peanuts, regarding their production, storage, and distribution chain, are susceptible to contamination by mycotoxins (SUASSUNA, 2012). Initially, Brazil's peanut exports were concentrated in the EU, but due to the strict non-tariff barriers imposed for aflatoxin and pesticide limits, the sector repositioned itself in alternative markets (ROSSATO JR., 2022).

EU member countries impose limits according to their consumption. For direct human consumption, the limit is set at 1 µg/kg-1 (one microgram per kilogram) for B1, and a total of 3 µg/kg-1 for (B2+G1+G2), while Brazil allows 20 µg/kg-1 of total aflatoxin (B1+B2+G1+G2). If intended for further processing still within human consumption (physical treatment, sorting, or use as food ingredients), the EU establishes a limit of 4 µg/kg-1 for B1 and a total of 7.5 µg/kg-1 for (B2+G1+G2) (MAPA, 2021).

It is also worth highlighting environmental issues. Over the years, the EU has established new practices to reduce maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides applied to agricultural products. The new rules of Regulation (EU) 2023/24 reduce MRLs for (neonicotinoids: clothianidin and thiamethoxam), which are commonly used in peanut cultivation (IBAMA, 2024). This regulation aims to protect biodiversity and combat the decline of pollinators (CNI, 2024).

Therefore, controlling the production chain is essential, given the importance of producing safe food that meets the requirements stipulated by importing countries.

The certification of the production chain is one of the requirements demanded by both domestic and international markets, always aiming to promote high-quality and safe food (COSTA et al., 2019).



Globally, the Global Food Safety Initiative (GSFI), a company composed of major retailers and multinational manufacturers, led the creation of a standardized way to oversee food safety standards (SPINK, 2023). It recognizes certification programs that meet food safety requirements and issues based on the CODEX Alimentarius.

The certifications recognized by GSFI, focusing on food safety, offer a passport to the global market for certified companies and the owners of certification programs (GSFI, 2024). Currently, there are 14 certification programs recognized by GSFI version 2020, covering all scopes. These certificates operate at different stages of the production chain and with different objectives. While some analyze only specific links in the chain and have very specific goals, others look at the entire chain as a whole.

This article focused on the export of processed peanut kernels, given their growth potential in recent decades and the importance of food safety in this segment. Peanuts are an oilseed planted in all regions of Brazil, but mainly in the Southeast, Northeast, and Midwest (SUASSUNA et al., 2012). The cultivated area has grown significantly, reaching 220.9 thousand hectares in the 2022/23 harvest, with a forecast for the 2023/24 harvest of 255.4 thousand hectares, an increase of almost 103% in the last decade (SAMPAIO et al., 2023; CONAB, 2024). Regarding production, the 2022/23 harvest reached 892.8 thousand tons.

This was possible due to the use of more productive cultivars, mechanization of planting, harvesting, and other technologies that enabled increased productivity, supplying the domestic market with raw and processed products, and exporting the surplus, about 70% of it (COSTA et al., 2019).

Globally, according to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2024), China is the largest producer, with 37.0% of production, followed by India (13.7%). Brazil ranks 11th (1.75%). In terms of consumption, China consumes 37.9%, followed by India (12.0%). Regarding global exports, India exports 21.5%, and Brazil ranks 5th (8.7%). In 2023, Brazilian exports were concentrated in three countries: Russia (28.31%), Algeria (23.59%), and the Netherlands (a country within the EU) (9.56%), accounting for 61% of the total (SAMPAIO, 2024). Finally, the European Union is classified as the largest importer, with 21.5%.

With the growing global demand and increased national production, Brazilian companies have sought certifications to ensure compliance and meet the new demands of international consumer markets. Therefore, this article is based on the hypothesis that the implementation of certifications covering food safety management in the food sector is an important step toward gaining access to new international markets.

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective is to identify the food safety management certifications necessary for peanut processing companies to access the European market.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This qualitative literature review was based on a review of national and international articles on food safety and certification, with a focus on exports. Information on the export of processed peanuts was then obtained.

In order to identify the type of certification, it was necessary to read the legislation in force and collect information from it to first identify the scope of the certification. Once identified as a food safety system, we then pointed out the certification programs according to the GSFI scope for this segment.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Compliance with national food safety standards stipulated by ANVISA and MAPA is essential. The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA) is responsible for registering and licensing peanut grain companies that export to the EU. The country's official controls applied to members of the peanut production and export chain (MAPA Normative Instruction No. 126/2021) are made available and accessed by the European authorities through registration with the CGC/MAPA.

In addition to the relevant legislation, the Protocol for the Control of Aflatoxins in Peanuts for the EU states that the establishment must have an internationally recognized safety management system based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), in order to ensure that the product is safe and meets the established standards (MAPA, 2021). In other words, for this purpose the establishment must implement a specific internationally recognized certification program.

It was found that the Brand Reputation through Compliance Global Standards (BRCGS) and Food Safety System Certification (FSSC 22000) certification programs have international recognition, in this case validated by the GSFI, and cover the scope of the peanut production chain (vegetables): BIII - Handling, Pre-processing of Vegetable Products and CII - Processing of Perishable Vegetable Products. These programs can be adopted by cereal companies to reach the European market.

BRCGS is a global quality standard that follows the following requirements for certification: Senior manager commitment, Food safety plan - HACCP, Food safety and quality management system, Facility standards, Product control, Process control, Personnel, High-risk production zones, Special care and Environmental special care (BRCGS, 2019).

FSSC 22000, on the other hand, is built on the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 22000 standard, since ISO does not cover all the necessary requirements validated by GSFI. In addition, sector-specific Prerequisite Programs (PRPs) and FSSC 22000 scheme documents complement this certification. These procedures are mandatory for FSSC 22000 Food Safety System Certification and reinforce requirements that support its contributions to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (FSSC, 2023).

These certification programs, implemented at cereal companies, enable access to new markets. In view of the level of compliance in this chain due to the intense work of those involved, especially the MAPA, the EU withdrew the requirement for official certification in 2023 due to the high degree of compliance of the product in relation to contamination with aflatoxins. However, the standards established, and certifications mentioned here remain in force.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It can therefore be concluded that the BRCGS and FSSC certification programs meet the criteria for a food safety management system and that specific national standards pertinent to the production chain are necessary for this qualification.

Future studies of a quantitative and qualitative nature could provide more robust information on the competitiveness of producing peanuts to the European standard; compare the quality of peanuts sold on the domestic market with those exported; point out opportunities and challenges; or even analyze the possibility of adapting other chains to the export standards demanded by the European market.

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