

Editorial Preface

Constantin Zopounidis, Technical University of Crete, Chania, Greece

George Baourakis, Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania, Chania, Greece

The dramatic rise in food prices highlighted the risks of the overdependence of many countries, including those in the Middle East and North Africa (Med), on imports for their food security and, consequently, the need to find a balance between dependency on global markets and home production. The EU has opted to restrict agricultural imports from the South Mediterranean in order to preserve the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), fearing possible competition from the other shores of the Mediterranean.

The current issue is dealing with the aforementioned problem and contains some very informative articles which examine the problem from many different perspectives.

The first paper aims to analyze the determinants of food insecurity, examining the relationship of important economic, social and natural factors with an overall food insecurity index that is derived by dividing the food imports value to the sum of total exports and the net remittance inflows. Overall analysis is made by employing panel-data methods using a dataset that covers 18 MENA countries and Turkey for the period of 1990-2014. Empirical results support the evidence of the harmful effect of price increases on food security. Then a more technical study applies the Policy Analysis Matrix (PAM) to assess the competitiveness of cotton production in terms of profitability and to measure the effects of agricultural policies at the national level, which is produced under a set of various subsidies in Turkey. This method is widely used to analyze the impact of policies on production economics, proving to be a very effective method.

The third article presents the problem of the competitiveness of Polish apples. In this paper, the quantity of production and the international trade of apples is analyzed. Major importers and exporters of apples were identified. In order to assess the international competitiveness, ex-post measure has been used, while the study covered the years 2004-2015. The assumed research hypothesis has been verified positively. The indicators of the ex-post competitive position indicate that Polish apples were competitive in the world market in the years 2004-2015. Their position was increasing until the last sub-period mentioned in the (2013-2015), during which, as indicated by some adopted indicators, it started decreasing.

Concerning food diversity, the next paper presents a food diversity measurement tool (Transformed Berry Index) on the 2011 Household Budget Surveys data. The investigation was performed on household purchased based TBI and on actual consumption TBI, in order to highlight the errors that one would make if one fails to take into account the production of goods by the household. There are some important differences in the food diversity of the actual food consumption in comparison to the purchased food quantities, the number of food items being higher in the case of actual consumption. However, food diversity does not seem to be influenced by the residence area (urban vs. rural) in any of the two approaches.

Finally, a study is included which identifies the factors influencing consumers' purchasing behavior for food in times of crisis. An intercept survey was conducted in a randomly selected sample consisting of 553 consumers between January and May 2016 in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki, Greece. Multivariate data analysis was performed to explore the factors influencing consumers' purchasing behavior, in order to identify consumers with similar behavior based on their socio-demographic characteristics and their attitudes towards food consumption in times of crisis.

Constantin Zopounidis
George Baourakis
Editors-in-Chief
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