

QUALITY, SAFETY AND COMPETITIVENESS BY INTEGRATION OF MODERN MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

*Cecilia POP**, *I.M. POP*

University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Iași

ABSTRACT- *The modern management systems, which interfere with competitiveness focus mainly on the processes quality (quality management system), environment (environment management system) and on food safety according to HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) principles. The scientific paper presents some elements concerning these systems implementation, the links between their certification basis references (for instance, ISO9001-ISO22000-ISO14001) and the possibility of their processing within an integrated management system. This integration brings some notable advantages to the companies from the point of view of the implementation and certification efforts, as well as from financial point of view.*

Key words: quality, system, environment, safety, competitiveness

REZUMAT – Noi sisteme de management pentru creșterea competitivității în agricultură. *Sistemele moderne de management cu impact major asupra competitivității vizează, în principal, calitatea proceselor (sistemul de management al calității), mediul (sistemul de management al mediului) și siguranța produselor alimentare (sistemul de management al siguranței alimentare, conform principiilor HACCP). Lucrarea prezintă aspecte referitoare la implementarea acestor sisteme, corespondența dintre referențialele care stau la baza certificării lor (ex: ISO9001-ISO22000-ISO14001) și posibilitatea includerii și tratării lor într-un “sistem de management integrat”. Această integrare prezintă avantaje notabile pentru firme, atât în planul eforturilor de implementare și certificare, cât și în plan financiar.*

Cuvinte cheie: sistem, calitate, mediu, siguranță, competitivitate

* E-mail: cicipp@yaho.com

Within the socio-economic context of the year 2000, the management of the quality is one of the key factors, which could find the instruments able to generate favourable effects, both at economic, social and ecological level.

The quality has become a strategic tool of the global firm management, and an important element of competitiveness. It also represents an essential factor for the civil society and environment.

This change of attitude on approaching quality from the point of view of the three interest levels (economic, social and ecological) exceeds the limits of a company or a country, being found at the level of different local or world structures, too. The European Policy in the field of Quality (EPQ) is a priority in EU, representing the essential part of the development policy of the European industry competitiveness. EPQ determines the global frame necessary to the development of the technical and political conditions, for improving the quality of products and services, the competitiveness of European organizations and human's life quality. This orientation has in view an integrated quality, which appears in different correlations, the most important being the following:

1. Customer – Producer: the economic and trade quality is an important factor for commercial exchanges on the world markets;

2. Citizens – Authorities: the ruling quality is essential to the achievement of general social values, such as man's life safety and citizens' prosperity;

3. Organizations – Environment: the organizational quality must be the result of a good organization of processes and systems, and activities of an organization, under the conditions of optimizing all types of resources (Agape Comşa, Dominte, 2001).

The New European Vision for Quality cultivates the MADE IN EUROPE concept, which will become a synonym of high standards, excellent design, ethics in management, quality partnerships between public and private sectors. This concept will be the modern emblem of European products and services, offered by Europeans to the international commerce, a philosophy of quality, protection and respect of consumer.

The transposition of these requirements to the firm culture and its relations to the external medium represents an essential condition for surviving under pressure of the competition (Drăgulănescu, 2000).

The practice of the most competitive enterprises of the world has demonstrated that the first step for the achievement of efficiency and competitiveness objectives was the implementation of quality management systems (QMS).

The implementation and preservation of QMS according to the standards ISO 9000:2000 are based on eight principles, which are key factors of the continuous improvement of the organization (Teodoru, 2005).

Orientation to the client. All the organizations are aware of the fact that they depend on their customers and the obligations towards them are treated with

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responsibility. Their present and future requirements must be understood. Satisfying the customers must be approached actively and systematically by workshops and analyses of demands. The staff of the organization must be informed about the result of these analyses and the estimate of the customer's satisfaction must be done by projects of corrective and preventive actions, having responsible persons, terms and resources. A very important aspect is the transposition at the internal level of the principle customer-supplier, resulting in harmony between employees and boards, with favourable repercussions on the relations with the external client.

Leadership. The leaders establish the direction and objectives of the organization. They should generate a working environment, proper to the employees' implication into the achievement of the organization objectives. The leader must establish a policy and clear objectives for the evolution of the organization and implement strategies and allot resources for these objectives. He must guide the staff, so that the achievement of the objectives should not be done by corrective means.

Staff involvement. The employees represent the essence of an organization, and their total involvement results in the use of all the abilities to the benefit of the organization.

The management must create the frame necessary to the involvement of the executive level in transposing the quality philosophy into product quality.

The key factor for the staff involvement is motivation. The motivating factors, which contribute to satisfying the staff are: improvement of working conditions and creation of a stimulating climate, transparent and remuneration adequate to the work, solving the problems by agreement, etc. All these elements consider the quality as the personal problem of each employee.

Process-based approach. As any activity using resources to change inputs into outputs (results), the management system of quality must be approached as a process, according to SR EN ISO 9001:2001 (***) Agency of Regional Development of Muntenia, 2003).

For working efficiently, the organization must identify systematically, define, analyse and control the multiple processes found in interaction. The advantages of this approach result from the clearer and more transparent representation of flows from the organization (sometimes, the outputs from a process represent inputs for the next process).

Systematic approach of management. Identification and comprehension of the correlated processes as a whole (system) represent one of the main means of improving the efficiency of an organization.

Continuous improvement. It should be a permanent objective of the organization. The necessity of continuous improvement is one of the requirements of the standard SR EN ISO 9001:2001. Once with the implementation of QMS, the organization must prove that it has accepted this principle, by using indicators

typical of the measurement of results relevant to the transposition of the quality concept and achievement of quality objectives.

Taking fundamental decisions. Efficient decisions are based on the analysis of data and information. This principle is found in the standard ISO 6001, in requirements, such as: objectives of the quality, management analysis, analysis of data and improvement.

Mutually advantageous relations to suppliers. An organization is found in an interdependence relation with its suppliers, that is why a good collaboration between supplier-client makes stronger the capacity of both parts to create benefit and to remain in the position of preferred client-supplier.

The analysis of these principles shows that the implementation of a management system of quality, corresponding to the standard ISO 9001, concerns the whole organization, as well as the parts interested by its good development (manager, employees, clients, suppliers and society). A quality management system, correctly implemented, ensures that all the processes of the organization should be found under control. A very important aspect is that the implementation of QMS, according to ISO 9001, represents the background for the easy and efficient implementation of other management systems, such as environment management system (EMS), management system of food safety, management system of health, etc.

Another trend of the last years is the concern of all types of organizations for demonstrating the environment performances. Within this context, the organizations try to control the impact of their own activities on environment. These concerns are found within the context of strict legislation and of the development of European economic and social policies for encouraging the environment protection and sustainable development.

Organizations wishing to implement the system of environment competitive management can use as reference the standard SR EN ISO 14001 (Environment management systems, Requirements with utilization guide). This international standard, adopted as European standard and taken as Romanian standard, establishes the requirements allowing an organization to implement the policy and objectives of environment, taking into account the legal requirements on environment.

The demonstration of implementing EMS, corresponding to standard ISO 14001, gives the organization the opportunity of ensuring the interested parties about the existence of an adequate environment management system. This standard was structured so that to be compatible with the structure and conception of the elaboration of ISO 9001.

For the operators in the food field, a concern of maximum interest is represented by food safety. Qualitative exigencies are mainly caused by the crises present in the agro-food field (crisis of cattle encephalopathy, mycotoxins, hormones, etc.), which have disturbed the confidence in food quality from the EU

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markets. EU recommends monitoring the food products, since the stage of obtaining raw matter and until the final stage of consumer. This strategy has as aim the protection of consumers by adopting some legislative actions.

One of the key tools for putting into practice this strategy by the firms producing and distributing food products is the system HACCP (*Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points*).

HACCP is a system allowing the identification, assessment and permanent control of risks associated to food products. The practical results obtained by the implementation of this system recommend it as the most efficient solution for ensuring food safety at all the links of food chain.

For the implementation of HACCP, the International Standardization Organization has released a very useful referential for food operators, that is the ISO 22000 standard. It became the European standard in September 2005, being immediately approved by ASRO (November 2005, SR EN ISO 22000, Management systems of food safety; Requirements for any organization of the food chain). The standard has as objective the unitary certification at world level of management systems for food safety (***) SR EN ISO 14001:2005). In the case of this standard, too, we remark the concern of ISO to meet the two standards ISO 9001 - ISO 22000. The compatibility between the two standards gives to organizations the opportunity of implementing an integrated management system, ISO 9001-ISO 22000, at which ISO 14001 can be also added.

The implementation of an Integrated Management System (IMS) represents a good solution, both from the point of view of efforts required by implementation and from the economic and financial point of view.

The implementation of an integrated management system requires the change of people's mentality, the methods of approaching problems in the new ISO context. Because of the compatibility of the above-mentioned standards, the required documentation by these systems can be achieved as integrated (for instance one handbook, which presents both QMS and EMS, etc.), contributing to the reduction of the volume of the documentation in the system. The time affected to the consultancy for systems implementation and certification audit is reduced, with positive effects at the financial level. The implementation one by one of these systems would delay the moment of systemic approach of the firm management, the only approach, which brings value to the firm, at internal and external level. The decomposition of management into standardized components, implemented and certified separately, has no correspondent in the efficiency of the functioning of a firm, because an employee does not work one hour in the quality management system and another in the environment management system, etc. The components of an organism work simultaneously and interdependently. The quality cannot be separated from the attitude to environment, health and safety of consumer.

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The integrated management system is based on QMS, which referential is ISO 9001:2000, the best from the management point of view from all the present ISO standards.

The integrated managerial system is the first step to competitiveness and excellence. It is a living system, which can be improved. It must be permanently adapted to the new requirements of clients, society and other elements.

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