

AN ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL SANITARY VETERINARY AND FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY (ANSVSA)'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2023 SUMMER SEASON IN CONSTANTA COUNTY, ROMANIA

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of the actions undertaken by the ANSVSA inspectors during the 2023 summer season in the areas of tourist interest within Constanta County. Based on the analyzed data concerning the Summer Season Command period and the periods and areas overcrowded with tourists, specifically from June 26, 2023, to September 3, 2023, several conclusions can be drawn: The research highlights the fact that food business operators still require support in order to meet food safety standards and to comply with the legislation in force. These issues have resulted in increased inspections in order to prevent food safety risks, including the prevention of food poisoning. A total of 2,245 units were inspected, leading to the enforcement of 471 penalties for offences, totaling 4,962,200 RON, and over 2 tons of non-compliant food were confiscated. These conclusions provide an overview of the evolution of the activities conducted by food business operators in the South-East Region of Romania, indicating both the challenges to and opportunities for their development and the continued implementation of good hygiene and food safety practices.

Key words: food quality, official inspections, South-East Region, Romania

INTRODUCTION

Most tourists and consumers on the Romanian coast seek to spend their vacation time relaxing, visiting and discovering the local cuisine. ANSVSA (The National Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Authority) [11], together with the county's DSVSA (The Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Directorate) [30] are closely supervising the food establishments/units, with the aim of ensuring the hygiene and safety of the food products and, especially, the consumer's health [3].

The launch of the "2023 Summer Season Command" took place on Monday, June 26, 2023 (ANSVSA, 2023) [12].

From June 26, 2023 to September 3, 2023, inspectors from the county's Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Directorate carried out control/inspection activities aimed at preserving the desired objective, i.e., "0 food poisoning", according to G4 Media (G4 Media, 2023) [10].

The inspection teams carried out activities in the tourist resorts and in the areas of tourist

interest, i.e.: Mamaia Resort divided into 3 sectors, Năvodari, Corbu and Vadu, Mangalia divided into 3 sectors and Costinești divided into 2 sectors.

These teams were organized into five consecutive two-week series. Food establishments with a varied profile were checked/inspected: public food establishments, school camps, restaurants, pizzerias, brasseries, buffets, bistros, fast foods, pastry/confectionery laboratories, snack bars, beach bars, food stores, bars, etc [15].

Regarding the economic situation of Constanta County (CJC, 2023) [5], Constanta County Council claims that the business environment has a share of 78.63%, of which 8.69% is represented by "hotels and restaurants" and 69.94% - other services. Budeanu (2023) [2], in the paper "Modeling the relationship between the tourist flows and the performance of the hotel industry in Romania", notes the fact that economic analysts consider the tourism field as one of the most important economic sectors, with an ever-changing evolution caused by various

factors, being defined as the most profitable industry.

At the end of the control activities carried out, 2,127 units operating during the summer season were identified in the resorts Mamaia North, Center and South, Năvodari, Mangalia, Costinești, Eforie North and South, Techirghiol, Vama Veche, 2 Mai, Neptun, Venus, Olimp and in areas of tourist interest Corbu and Vadu.

Ene and Matei (2006) [6] emphasized the fact that Romania encountered difficulties in the agri-food sector during the pre-accession to the European Union period. These conflicts were related to the correlation of the EU requirements with the control activities, the training of employees from the relevant public institutions, the implementation of certain surveillance and control programs, the insufficient education of the population, which led to difficulties in achieving the food security and safety national objective [1].

The development of the economy in the South-East Region of Romania is closely related to the economic operators in the food field. The challenges and opportunities to which they are exposed can award a bonus to the coast and the region compared to the current economy and bring advantages to the economic agents in the field and benefits for the consumers and tourists. Stanciu and Sarbu (2015) [29], in the study "Resilience in the Romanian Food Industry. Preliminary Research" highlighted the fact that there are critical food safety incidents in the agri-food chain, giving cause for concern at the level of the final consumers, authorities, and companies in the food sector. The paper led to the conclusion that it is necessary to supervise the economic operators, to advise them and to implement sanctioning or additional measures, if necessary.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper uses information from the press releases issued by the National Veterinary Sanitary and Food Safety Authority/ANSVSA, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, scientific articles published in the Clarivate, SCOPUS,

Google Scholar, Research Gate databases. Information was extracted from the website of the Constanta County Council, the National Institute of Statistics and from scientific literature. The research was based on official documents and information provided by ANSVSA and their further processing, through graphics and interpretation, conducted by the authors. In the data gathering process, the legislative basis of ANSVSA was selected. The scientific literature reviewed was necessary in order to validate the obtained data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From Fig. 1, one can notice the fact that between June 26, 2023, and September 3, 2023, 2,245 food establishments were checked/inspected. About a quarter of them (471) did not comply with the national and European legislation in force, which is why they were penalized/sanctioned.

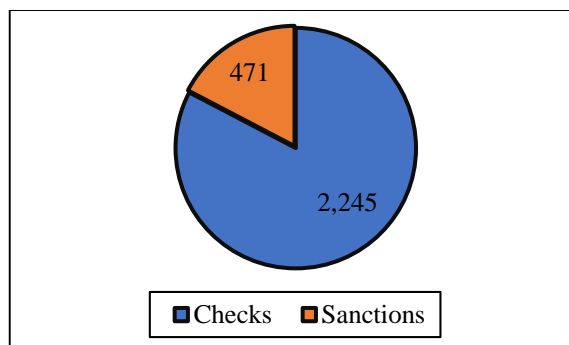


Fig. 1. Analysis of the 2023 Summer Season ANSVSA Activity

Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023) [16].

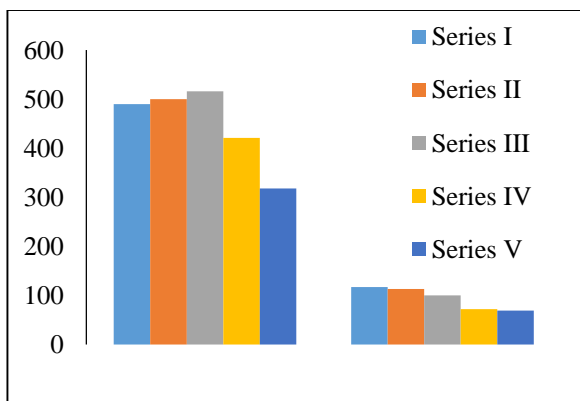


Fig. 2. Inspection activities, by series, during the 2023 Command period

Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023)[17].

Figure 2 highlights 490 inspections of public food establishments, pastry/confectionery laboratories, food stores, etc., and 117 fines.

In series no. III, the inspection activities were intensified, and the number of inspections reached 516, given the fact that the number of tourists and consumers also increased, since Navy Day is celebrated in the middle of August. Starting from series no. IV, both the inspections and the adopted measures were on a downward trend, due to the temporary activity of veterinary sanitary and food safety-registered units. Due to a lack of customers or other incidents, such as the weather, they decided to stop their activity for the 2023 season.

Figure 3 highlights the total amount of fines from the 2023 Summer Season Command period [17], respectively 4,962,200 lei.

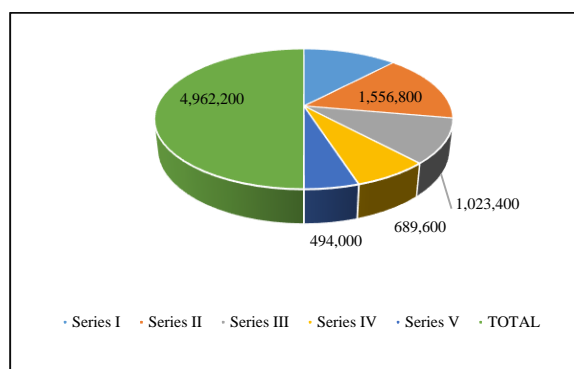


Fig. 3. Fines imposed (26.06.2023 to 03.09.2023)
 Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023) [27].

During series no. I, fines were imposed in the amount of 1,198,400 lei, during series no. III the value reached 1,023,400 lei, and in series no. IV - 494,000 lei.

These measures were enforced according to H.G./General Decision 984/2005 and O.G./General Order 2/2001 by the specialists in the field for various deficiencies found during the control activities [27, 28].

The main deficiencies noticed by ANSVSA inspectors were:

- Improper hygiene of the premises, utensils, machinery or work equipment
- Improper storage of food products
- Improper labeling of food products
- Failure to demonstrate products' traceability
- Marketing of expired food products

- Handling the products in violation of the veterinary and sanitary rules in force
- Marketing of food products in non- approved or not sanitary and veterinary- registered premises.

Figure 4 shows the fact that additional measures were also taken, such as the confiscation or seizure of non-compliant food products [19, 21]. The total amount of confiscated products was over 2 tons. The measure was imposed for fish products or fish without identification elements, ice cream, pork, chicken or beef, eggs, seafood [22, 23].

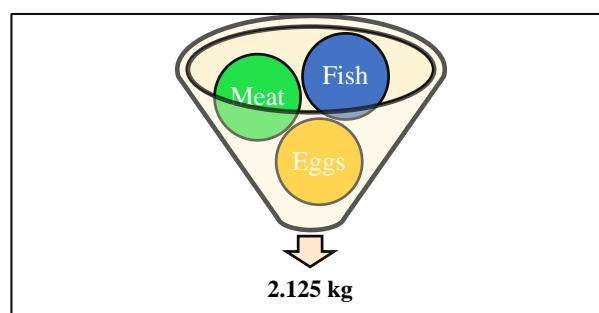


Fig. 4. Food products confiscated in 2023.
 Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023) [10].

During series no. III, a luxury resort in Costinești stood out with expired food products or food products stored in poor conditions [19]. In this case, 593 kg of fish and meat were seized, a penalty of 72,000 lei was imposed and an activity prohibition order was issued (ANSVSA, 2023) [20].

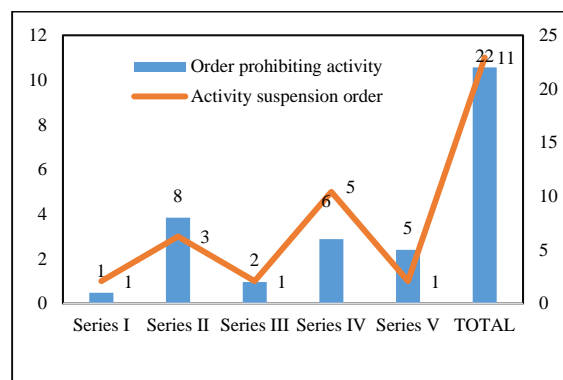


Fig. 5. Additional measures (26.06.2023-03.09.2023)
 Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023) [16,17, 18].

In series no. I, 2 Orders were issued, 1 Activity Prohibition Order (OIA/Ordonanță de interzicerea activității) and 1 Activity Suspension Order (OSA/Ordonanță de

suspendare a activităţii) [13, 14]. 8 OIAs and 3 OSAs were issued in series no. 2, in the middle of the Command period, 2 OIAs and 1 OSA were imposed, in series no. IV - 6 OIAs and 5 OSAs, and in the last series, 5 OIAs and 1 OSA were issued. The total number of Orders issued during the 2023 Summer Season Command period was 22 OIAs and 11 OSAs, according to Figure 5.

These drastic measures were taken for serious violations against the legislation in force encountered during the control activities [7, 8, 9].

Table 1. Balance Sheet of 2021-2022-2023 Summer Season Commands

Year	Checks	Sanctions	Seizures	Value of fines
2021	1,284	225	133.08	1,877,200
2022	1,996	394	2,116.74	4,075,800
2023	2,245	471	2,125	4,962,200
TOTAL	5,525	1,090	4,374.82	10,915,200

Source: Drafted by the authors, based on ANSVSA's press releases (2023) [24, 25].

Public food establishments were forced to close during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can also be noticed in Table 1. Both the control activities carried out, and the measures taken in the year 2021 are far fewer than those in the year 2023.

Figure 6 shows the major differences year by year regarding the number of establishments inspected, the number of measures implemented, the value of the fines and the quantities of the confiscated products.

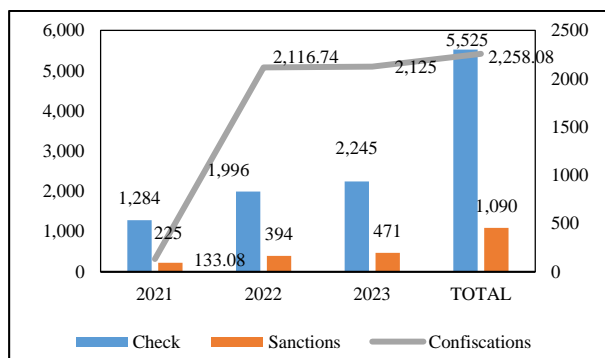


Fig. 6. Balance Sheet 2021-2022-2023 Commands
 Source: Authors, based on ANSVSA (2023) [24, 25, 26].

This is primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted the global supply

chains and closed tourism sector facilities, according to the National Institute of Statistics (INSSE, 2023) [11].

CONCLUSIONS

This paper demonstrates that the objectives of ANSVSA and DSVSA Constanta have been achieved. There were no cases of food poisoning [4], even though 471 fines were imposed, over 2 tons of non-compliant food products were confiscated, and 22 Activity Prohibition Orders, respectively 11 Activity Suspension Orders were issued.

Tourism and trade on the Romanian coast have been disrupted since the COVID-19 pandemic. In the year 2021, 1,284 establishments were inspected, and in the year 2023, the control activities reached 2,245. The total number of inspections carried out during the 2021-2022-2023 Summer Season Commands period was 5,525, and the value of fines - 10,915,200 lei.

The temporary opening of certain food establishments is generating an upward trend in the control activities in the South-East Region during the summer period. The large number of inspections is primarily caused by the number of existing units within the analyzed radius; however, it increases when deficiencies are identified. The deficiencies encountered are mostly similar and are caused by a lack of knowledge of the current veterinary, sanitary and food safety legislation or even by negligence.

Veterinary sanitary inspectors advise economic agents year after year before the opening of the summer season. The measures taken by them prove the fact that not all operators in the food sector are aware of the risks to which tourists, respectively consumers, are exposed. Nevertheless, one can conclude that the training and counseling carried out by DSVSA Constanta established the basis for the implementation of good hygiene and food safety practices by the economic agents, given the fact that in the last three years there have been no cases of food poisoning.

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