Food qualities and their institutions in France

François CASABIANCA
INRA – SAD Corte
Quality / Qualities

► Beauty lies in the eye of the viewer...

► Quality = A judgment in a situation of uncertainty / no “total” quality

► Quality = A matter of trust

► The qualification process: who qualifies, on which basis, is he credible?
Two distinct notions:

- There are 2 basic notions underlying usage of the term “quality”. It is crucial to distinguish:
  - no defaults / standard production, mass market: "generic” quality
  - excellence, distinction / added value: "specific” quality

- 3 intertwined levels, appeared successively:
  - absence of fraud and deception
  - expected properties
  - characteristics in demand
Contents

- Generic quality and its institutions
- Specific quality and its institutions
- Joint framework for the two dimensions of quality
  - For each quality, its own governance.
  - State + Inter Professional associations + private sector
1 – “Generic” quality

Definition: standard level of exigencies required to ensure the consumers’ health, security and information.

Basis of food legislation:
Food safety, control of consumer deception

Extended on 2 fronts:
- food and public health / rules on labelling
- “proper” functioning of supply chains & markets / standardization
The institutions of generic quality

- 3 Ministries / edict a body of rules
  Consumption Code
  Rural Code
  Health Code

- Inter Professional Agency / in charge of risk assessment, management, and surveillance
  Monitoring plans (Industries)
  National Agency in charge of Food, Environment and Labour Safety (ANSES ex AFSSA)

- Public Programme (Min. Health) / to mobilize society: Consumers’ information and education
  National Program on Nutrition and Health
Expertise : ANSES

► Monitoring of epidemiological risks
  Nation-wide data collection
  Assessment of dangers linked to population exposure

► Official notices
  A scientific and technical support to public authorities, based on formal requests.

► Advisory reports
  Specialized expert committees
  Exploration of emergent risks (crises)
Consumption

► Rules of labelling

► Nutritional qualities
  Foods / balance / meals
  Categories / education

► Which consumers’ needs ?
  Price ? Marks ? Labelling ?
  Guaranteed without X and enriched in Y...
Standardization

► Certify products, services and enterprises.

► Standards: ISO 9000, ISO 14000

► Quality insurance, HACCP
  Quality circles / introspection / and framework for behaviours

Possibly misleading: “guides of Good Practices”
2 – “Specific” qualities

► Definition: differentiation strategy aimed at underlining the product’s own characteristics as compared to the common products available on the market.

- For example, special quality linked to a variety, a breed or a place of production

► Public policies based on

- Voluntary approaches
- Rules defined through supply chain dialogue
- Controls by third party
The institutions of specific quality

- **Expert advisory bodies:**
  - National Food Council
  - National Consumption Council

- **INAO: National Institute for Origin and Quality (M. Agric):**
  - 5 national Committees: to examine the applications for official quality signs
  - 1 national Council on Approvals and Controls
Quality signs management: INAO

- Each committee is responsible for
  - instruction of the applications
  - revisions of the rules
  - set the main control points

- A paritory membership by
  - representatives from supply chains which already received the quality signs
  - qualified persons and representatives from Ministries

- Democratic decisions
  - voting by 2/3
  - proposal sent for the Minister’s signature
Superior quality

► The LABEL ROUGE (red label)
► Specifications
  / quality control management approach
► Notion of “comparable product”
Quality linked to origin

- A protected geographical name
  An intellectual property (WTO)
  - a link to “terroir” AOP
  - an anchorage within the territory IGP

- Local resources, place-based
  know-how maintained by local actors
Societal qualities

► Cannot be found in the end-product

► **Organic agriculture**
A production process without synthetic chemical compounds
Low-input production

► “Fair trade”
An alternative project
The consumer as a citizen
Rural development

- Qualities stimulate the links between members of a supply chain in a given territory: Creation of inter-professions recognized by the State

- The identification of products stimulates local dynamics of rural organization: Product’s Defense and Management body

- Para-statal institutions are collaborating in land planning: Regional and Provincial Chambers of agriculture
3 – Joint frameworks for both dimensions of quality

One major device, the **Fraud repression service**

- A national Department within **Ministry of Budget**. Regional directions in charge of verifications everywhere in France.

- A capacity for **police**
  Inspection, seizure, fines, complaints at Commercial Court
Tracability and controls: The certification bodies

- Attach information flows to physical flows
  A now-on generalized requirement

- Architecture of controls
  - self-controls
  - internal controls
  - external controls: by approved certification bodies (private institutions)

- Responsibilities over sanctions
  Corrective actions / costs
  / a market of control
The approval of certification bodies: COFRAC

- **Approval** by para-public association
- **Conformity w. EN 45011 (ISO 17020) standard**
  - Independence
  - Impartiality
  - Competence
  - Objectivity
- **Internal Certification Committees**: the controller is controlled
- **Supervision of activity by the General Food Directorate (MINAGRI)**
Conclusion 1: The two notions of quality

- Several qualities = several public policy tools

- For each notion of quality, the corresponding institutions, procedures and forums.

- Similarly, the legal basis and regulations are dedicated.
Conclusion 2: a public – private partnership

- Qualities require that all stakeholders be engaged at the same time and in one same direction.

- Publics authorities organize a joint mobilization of professional actors from the supply chains and from the territories.

- The State remains guarantor of the procedures, in which it makes sure private actors play their role.