

## Situational Overview

The state of the consumer market in Georgia is desperate. Most of foodstuffs in the market are either overdue or it is impossible to read the use-by-date on their stickers/labels if any. The foodstuffs have no Georgian or full Georgian labeling (*Attn. violation of requirements of the Article 6, the Law "On Protection of Consumers' Rights"*). The basic foodstuffs are stored / preserved and sold by violating the established terms for realization. The foodstuffs in the market, including perishable foodstuffs, are being sold in unsanitary conditions in an open air (*Attn. violation of requirements of the "Sanitary Code of Georgia"*). The following perishable products such as: meat, meat foods, dairy produce, etc. are sold without keeping adapted sanitary norms. We should mention the fact that the products inadmissible to be stored or realized together are sold from the same counter, e.g. one can observe foodstuff and detergents, bread and fish, etc. stored together on the counter (*Attn. violation of requirements of the legal act "The Rule for Selling Various Kinds of Foodstuffs and Nonfoods" Registration No. 199, 23.01.97*).

Upon the monitoring results conducted by the organization in 2004 and in 2005 was detected several facts of above mentioned violations.

We can provide below an "impressive" statistics: only 13% of the foodstuffs in the market have certificate of conformance, 13% of the foodstuffs are stored and sold in accordance to adapted terms of realization, only 20% have Georgian labeling, 27% of the foodstuffs are overdue or have no clear indication of the use-by-date on the labels. It should be mentioned that only two kinds from eight foodstuffs purchased by the organization in the consumer market and subjected to the laboratory analysis were edible.

The situation states critical even at the stores, and so called "Super Markets" in Tbilisi. Despite, that the conditions of realization and keeping products are more or less protected, more than 70% of foodstuffs have not Georgian labeling. Unfortunately, there are lots of facts of selling the outdated eatables full with preservatives. At the moment, there is no relevant technique to conduct research on preservatives. That's why only 5 preservatives are prohibited in Georgia. It is not known also, if the imported foodstuffs in Georgian market are genetically modified or not. It should be noted, that there is no relevant normative act which can regulate the limit of GMO products.

The producers and sellers not only violate the conditions of transportation and realization, but also violate the rights of all consumers to get complete information about the products. We should take into account that Georgia since 1999 is the member of the WTO, and it strives to take its place in the European an international market in general. At the same time, non-stable

Russian market can not be permanent market for Georgia, although, it is really unrealistic to enter into European market with Soviet times standards, still used in Georgia.

For more information: while becoming the member of WTO, Georgia took specific commitment in various fields, as well as in the field of standardization but, unfortunately, Georgian government did not implement the process of moving on voluntary standards. The old-fashioned Soviet standards, for example, GOSTs (government standards), which Georgia inherited after gained the independence in 1991, are still in use. Most of these old-fashioned Soviet standards were abolished by Russia and other former Soviet countries and international standards (ISO's standards) have been introduced.

Moreover, there is no legislature regulating the withdrawal of dangerous for health foodstuffs from the consumer market. The draft law "On Withdrawal and Destroy of Unreliable Foodstuff" has not been adapted yet by the Georgian Parliament. The working process on its preparation has been started in 1997.

On this background the facts of mass poisoning of the population have taken place regularly. (In Zugdidi, Gori, Poti, in Tbilisi). Indicated above facts clearly describes the picture of the present, but we are concerned by vital statistics in future. As it is stated in numerous international researches "We are what we eat", but the question is who will we be after tens of yours?!

In fact, the Georgian market is full with dangerous for health and life foodstuffs both imported and produced domestically. The lack of legal awareness of population and corruption at high levels create favorable conditions for such situation. Due to inefficiency of respective governmental structures an ordinary consumer stays completely unprotected. Not to mention how these factors delay the development of fair and conscientious business in the country creates non-competitive conditions for entrepreneurs as well as a high level of smuggling and consumer product tampering itself harms extremely considerable and prestigious foreign business companies.

The present situation requires urgent actions to be performed at all levels in the country striving towards the market economy and rule of law. The civil society should play an important role to achieve full democratization via assisting the ongoing state reforms.