

PACKAGING BRIDGE

In recent years, the government of Turkey has continuously enacted laws requiring new rules, measurements and values in all stages: "food production – preparation- packing – presentation- sales and after-sales monitoring". It is obvious that these legal updates, which are based on the norms of European Union, will compel us to take further steps.

Republic of Turkey Ministry of Food Agriculture and Livestock has enacted many new practices in many items in relation to the matters and materials contacting the food from cheese and olive to baby food. Many new changes such as the salt rate and grain size, cheese blight, the sugar and fruit rate that the fruit juices contain, the formulas of the baby food, qualities and technologies of the food packing wait for us.

The market conditions, our commercial traditions, consumption habits established in the long term are now face to face with a great wind of change. The Government has implemented this process by taking steps to adapt the people to the new process. As a result of the habits of centuries, it is - of course - difficult to adopt this wind of change even if the change is slow.

The first cause of this reaction is that it brings additional costs to everyone from production to consumption, mainly it is about economy. In the past we, both purchasers and sellers, were happy with that "cheap food" solution, until we realized the risks of those products in terms of health. The price increase in raw materials led the *Packmans* to find "illegal" ways to produce the food with the same cheapness. The meat was provided from the animals which died of various causes (not slaughtered halal) as well as horses, donkeys and pig not from the livestock. Even after these did not decrease the prices adequately, they started to use filling materials such as soya bean, potato and bread crumbs. Indeed, the *Packman* dug his own grave with those methods. We were accustomed to the *Packmans* who pass through our street. They were an important motive of our lives. Bagel seller, fisher, grilled meatball seller, cooked rice seller, grilled sheep's intestines sellers... All were influenced by those norms. They were obliged to find a "shop" to sell.

Later on, it was the turn of under the counter contract manufacturers. They were also the victim of the standards. It can be said that it became a good implementation. They did not have place beside the companies have spent effort and capital for years to become a brand. However, the European Union standards have no limits. They increasingly develop the standards. Every increase, of course, escalates the costs as well as requires new investments.

Considering the happenings, it can be said that many people suffered from the EU norms; many business shut down, killed the Packman sector, changed our habits, and briefly disturbed us.

Let's look at what we have acquired as a result of these norms. The streets are now under a serious health control. We all remember surprise entry of Uğur Dündar (Journalist who produced critique reviews on TV) to the bakeries and pastry shops, which were invaded by insects and mice. We have not encountered with such views for a long time in Turkey. We concerned about the products when we consumed since we did not know what they contained. However now, all food manufacturers have to employ a *Food Engineer*. When we purchase something from the grocery and greengrocer,

what we expect was just freshness of the food. However, nobody steals a glance at the vegetables with sand, mud or insects. We purchase prewashed food at the open-air markets.

The wording “no cherrypick, sister” is bygone nowadays. We purchase elegantly and appetizingly packed products in the markets after touching, smelling and selecting. First we become satisfied. What makes the grocery weaker against the supermarket is this presentation.

Meanly, most of those implementations imposed on us through force, laws or penalties are the practices we should have applied years ago. If we would like to have a voice in the *World Market*, we should have the quality-health-presentation standards of the world market as well. These standards will provide us to find more hygienic, healthier, fresher and more delicious foods on the shelves in the domestic market.

Manufacturers, agents, carriers and resellers should obey these higher standards as well as update their technologies and equipment pools. The greatest risks waiting us during this update are the false redirections and faulty or useless investments during system modification.

Turkey's Bazaar needs to learned / experienced / honest *Solution Partners* who know the domestic market conditions and world standards as well as are able to adapt those into the manufacturing systems. This transition processes may lead the investors who have to obey the rules immediately get flurried and fall into the hands of the misleading partners.

The investors should work on the EU adaptation process with an accurate strategy and transformation calendar.

As APACK, we have been prudent enough to prepare our technology and knowledge to adapt the EU norms even the world market within about 10 years. We have already been ready for the EU market for years; even we have taken part in this market for years. In other words, we are waiting for you to our *Packaging Bridge*.

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