



Association For Consumer Rights (Malta)

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Resolution for ACR AGM 2017

Title of Resolution

Optimising the benefits of consuming local produce
Awareness amongst consumers about benefits of consuming local produce

Name of individual submitting the resolution

Jeanette Borg ACR Executive Committee

Background Information

Rural Development Plan for Malta 2014 – 2020 -- SWOT ANALYSIS
<https://eufunds.gov.mt/en/EU%20Funds%20Programmes/European%20Agricultural%20Fund/Pages/Rural%20Development%20Programme%20for%20Malta%202007-2013/The-Rural-Development-Programme-for-Malta-2014---2020.aspx>

Justifications, reasons and current situations to be addressed

- Decline in sales of local products
- High carbon footprint in local food chain due to imported produce
- Reduced freshness of products due to preservatives often found in foreign products
- Shorter food chain offering more traceability (if managed properly by local authorities and stakeholders involved)

Proposals/Recommendations

- The need for urgent policies for the preservation of agricultural land
- Policies and practices regarding natural agri-food resources to be considered a priority in order to secure a sustainable the local food production for the future
- Improve knowledge amongst farmers and producers of local food and food products
- Strengthening of law enforcement
- Regular inspections through ‘mystery shoppers’
- Encouraging the production of local food products at source eg. figs, prickly pears, peaches etc
- Liaison with authorities to improve the local food system including testing and enforcement
- Create a fund to be available for farmers and producers to upgrade products through a Maltese platform made up of various stakeholders with the remit to set standards in production, (including use of pesticides), presentation and packaging and selling as well as regular evaluation

- Platforms for consumer to buy directly from farmers with the development of online services for consumers to be able to make informed choices when choosing from where to buy products
- In cases of both local and imported products, to provide a quality mark, labelling information in Maltese and English, indicating clearly source of producer/s, country, expiry dates where necessary and price etc
- Encouraging direct sales from trustworthy farmers complying with all regulations
- Improved knowledge amongst consumers about strengths and weaknesses of food products in the Maltese food industry
- Awareness campaign for the general public addressing various aspects, including nutritional value of local products

Further recommendations

Recently, the *Times of Malta* (Monday 17 April 2017 - see info below)) reported how the tests conducted by the authorities had found that 20 per cent of the locally grown produce inspected had **contained excessive amounts of pesticides**. All tests on imported vegetables were found to be within the limits of the law

An exact breakdown of what was found in the tests has not yet been provided by the **Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority (MCCAA)**, despite requests by this newspaper, with the quantities and types of pesticides remaining unknown. The authority said the tests were conducted on produce sold at the Pitkalija, and at a ‘farmers’ market’.

Farmers at the Ta’ Qali market have however contested that any of their produce was found to be over the legal pesticide limits. They are insisting that they submitted their produce for testing and none of them had faced any penalties or court action

The European Food Safety Authority says residues resulting from the use of products intended to protect plant food may pose a risk to public health. The EU has regulations on the use of pesticides and maximum levels of residues.

Activists campaigning for the reduction of pesticide use worldwide say pesticides have been linked to a wide variety of health hazards, from headaches and nausea to cancer and endocrine disruption. Also, chronic health effects may occur years after minimal exposure to pesticides ingested from food and water.

The National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides was forwarded to this newspaper by Environment Minister Josè Herrera and the Agriculture Parliamentary Secretary following a report on irregular pesticide use.

The document quotes research carried out among Maltese farmers 10 years ago and forms the basis of much of the strategy on dealing with the phenomenon, which needs to be updated and include other newly introduced pesticides. The issue regarding the use of pesticides by local farmers is still under discussion