

STATEMENT

From Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Hristova Chamova, MD, PhD

Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology

Faculty of Public Health, Medical University – Varna

Subject: Dissertation work for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 7. "Health and sport", professional field 7.1. "Medicine", scientific specialty "Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)".

of **Rozalina Stefanova Braykova**, MD, PhD student in full-time education at the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna

Topic of the dissertation: "Control of trade in organically produced agricultural products and food in North-Eastern Bulgaria"

Research supervisor: Prof. Dr. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD

According to Order № P-109-110 from 07.02.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna I have been elected as a member of the Scientific Jury, and according to Protocol № 1 from 13.02.2023 I have been appointed to prepare an opinion on the procedure for acquiring of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" with candidate Dr. Rozalina Stefanova Braykova, MD - PhD student in full-time education at the Department of Hygiene and Epidemiology, Faculty of Public Health, Medical University of Varna.

Procedure details

According to Order № P-109-54/ 31.01.2020 of Deputy Pector of the MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna Prof. Dr. Albena Kerekovska, MD Assist. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Stefanova Braykova, MD is enrolled as PhD student in full-time education in the doctoral program "Hygiene (incl. occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)" in the field of higher education 7. "Healthcare and sports", professional field 7.1. "Medicine", with the topic of the dissertation work "Control of the trade in biologically produced agricultural products and foods in North-

Eastern Bulgaria" and supervisor - Prof. Darina Naydenova Hristova, MD, PhD. Rozalina Braykova successfully passed the doctoral minimum exam.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Rozalina Braykova was credited with the right to protection by Order № P-109-110/ 07.02.2023 of the Rector of the Medical University - Varna.

All administrative documents on the procedure provided for in the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for its implementation and the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Medical University – Varna are presented.

Biographical data and the career development of the PhD student

Dr. Braykova was born in the town of Simitli, region Blagoevgrad. In 1980 she graduated from the language high school "Geo Milev", studying German in Dobrich. In 1986 she acquired a master's degree in Hygiene and Epidemiology at the St. Petersburg State Medical Academy in the city of Petersburg. In 2003 Dr. Braykova acquired a specialty in nutrition and dietetics at the Medical University - Sofia, and in 2010 - a qualification in Health Management at the Medical University - Varna.

Dr. Braykova's work experience began in 1986 at HEI - Dobrich/RIOKOZ - Dobrich, where she worked until 2007 as a resident, head of sector, head of department. Between 2007-2009 she worked as an expert in food control and food establishments, manager at AD Albena, KK Albena. From 2009 to 2011 she held the position of Director in ROKOZ - Dobrich/RZI - Dobrich. From 2011 to 2018 she was the director of ODBH - Dobrich. From 04.08.2019 until now Dr. Braykova is an assistant prof. in the Department of "Hygiene and Epidemiology" of Medical University - Varna.

Structure and content of the dissertation work

The dissertation is presented in a total volume of 251 pages. It contains 3 appendices presenting the questionnaire surveys of the PhD student and 6 appendices presenting results on the demographic and socio-economic profile of the respondents - casual consumers of organic food and results of tested hypotheses. The dissertation work is illustrated with 113 figures and 33 tables. The bibliographic list includes 368 literary sources, of which 34 are in Cyrillic and 334 are in Latin. Of the cited publications, 132 are from the last 5 years. There is a lack of a uniform style of arrangement of the literary sources.

The dissertation work is well balanced and includes: Literature Review (22 pages), Purpose, Tasks, Material and Methods (6 pages), Results and Discussion (143 pages), Conclusions (2 pages), and Recommendations (2 pages).

Relevance of the topic

The topic of organic foods is relevant due to the ever-increasing demand for healthy and biologically pure products, produced through the application of good agricultural practices that protect the environment and care for public health. Scientific researchers study organic foods through the lens of consumers. Consumer demand for organic food is formed not only on the basis of knowledge and ideas about this specific method of food production. To a large extent, people's orientation towards organic products also depends on trust in them. Trust is built, on the one hand, based on legally established characteristics of organically produced foods, and on the other, based on the actions of the competent authorities and information about their results. Carrying out effective and comprehensive control related to the safety and quality of organically produced agricultural products and food ensures the protection of health and the interests of consumers, which turns the issue of control of trade in organically produced agricultural products and food into a socially significant one.

The literature review is targeted, thorough and well structured. Demonstrated ability to critically assess, summarize, systematize and interpret scientific literature and regulatory documents.

The purpose of the dissertation is clearly and precisely defined. The 6 tasks set are well formulated and meet the set goal.

The methodology is complex, described in detail and corresponds to the tasks set. Appropriate research methods have been selected:

documentary - performed in-depth analysis of various sources of information - scientific articles, publications, reports, announcements, registers with databases, e-books, manuals, normative documents related to the topic of this dissertation;

sociological - surveys were conducted to establish the level of awareness and attitudes among consumers of organic food and to establish the level of awareness and attitudes among sellers and producers of organic food;

statistical methods

The results and their **discussion** are the essence of the sixth chapter.

Dr. Braykova divides her own research results into several main lines of research:

1. Analysis of international and national regulatory documents and scientific literature related to organic food production

2. Analysis of the data on official control of trade in organically produced agricultural products and food in Dobrich and Varna regions for the period 2014 - 2019.

3. Results of the application of a questionnaire for researching the awareness and attitudes of consumers of biologically produced agricultural products and foods in the Dobrich region.

4. Results of the application of a questionnaire for the study of the awareness and attitudes of traders, as well as the level of their knowledge, regarding the regulatory requirements, in the trade of organic foods in the Dobrich region.

The presentation of the results of the conducted studies follows the set tasks.

The conclusions drawn are correctly formulated. They meet the set goals and objectives and logically follow the results and statistical analysis. Based on the conclusions drawn, recommendations were formulated to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, Ministry of Health, BFSA (Bulgarian Food Safety Agency), associations of organic producers.

I approve **contributions** that are divided into:

With a theoretical - cognitive character

1. An in-depth review was conducted in developing regulatory documents and scientific publications of OP-related studies with international and national scope.

2. The attitudes, the level of awareness and the sources of information regarding OF have been identified within the framework of a survey conducted among consumers from the Dobrich region.

3. The motives, stimulating factors and barriers facing consumers in their choice of OF have been established.

4. The characteristics of regular and occasional consumers of OF are derived.

5. The reasons for the activity, production and trade of biological products, the sources of information, as well as the need for trainings regarding OF were established within the framework of questionnaire surveys among producers and traders of biological products and food from the Dobrich region .

6. Researched on the level of knowledge regarding the regulatory requirements for the production and sale of OF among producers and distributors of OF in the Dobrich region.

With an original character

1. The results of the official control of the territory of the Dobrich and Varna regions in relation to the use of OF terms and designations for the period 2014-2019, as well as the normative documents regulating this activity, were analyzed.

2. Analyzed and established regularities when outlining the biological profile of users from the Dobrich region in the context of attitudes, frequency, motives, stimulating factors and barriers related to OF consumption.

3. Dependencies related to the sources of information, the ways of recognition and designation of OF by consumers, as well as the institutions related to the control of trade in biological products, have been studied and found.

4. Statistical dependencies between the sources of information, the knowledge regarding the regulatory requirements for the trade in OF and the ability to apply this knowledge by the OF distributors in commercial establishments in the territory of Dobrich region were investigated and revealed.

5. The influence of certain demographic characteristics, such as level of education and the presence of children in the family, has been proven in relation to the sources of information about OF, recognition of OF, their designation and frequency of purchase.

6. A number of hypotheses were tested and confirmed among male and female respondents (consumers and traders), related to: attitudes, sources of information, frequency of purchase, ways of labeling OF, stimulating factors, signaling to the competent authorities in case of suspicion that a given food offered as "organic" is not, assessing the level of knowledge needed to advise customers on their OF questions .

With an applied nature

1. Proposals and recommendations have been formulated to the competent institutions to improve the scope and effectiveness of official control in the trade in biological products.

2. Proposals have been formulated to governmental and non-governmental bodies and organizations to increase awareness and education on the part of producers, traders and consumers of OF, for fruitful cooperation between all participants in the market of biological products.

3. By popularizing the data from our survey, we will contribute to enriching the profile of the organic consumer, increasing trust in organic production and improving communication with institutions related to organic production.

4. The revealed regularities are a good basis for expanding the territorial and demographic potential of the study.

The dissertation work is written in good language, precise in terms of terminology. Technically, the dissertation is designed according to the requirements, and the bibliography is comprehensive. The abstract of thesis faithfully reproduces the content of the dissertation. It is prepared in a volume of 108 standard pages and is composed of eight parts that accurately represent the structure and content, contributions and participations and publications of the dissertation work. In connection with the dissertation work, the doctoral student presented 2 publications in the journals "Journal of Biomedical&Clinical Research" and the International Electronic Scientific and Practical Journal "WayScience", 1 publication - in a Collection of reports from the 14th Scientific Conference "Sustainable science for safe food" EFSA Contact Center Bulgaria.

Three participations in scientific forums are indicated:

1. Braykova R. Normative requirements for organic food in Bulgaria and the European Union - beginning, development and reform. Jubilee scientific conference with international participation "New approaches in public health and health policy", MU-Pleven, FOZ. 26.11-28.11.20

2. Braykova R., Naydenova D., Toneva A., Consumer knowledge about organic foods and their control in Dobrich region 14th Scientific Conference Sustainable Science for Safe Food of the Bulgarian Contact Center of EFSA at the Food Chain Risk Assessment Center, MZHH, 27.10.2021

3. R. Braykova, D. Naydenova, A. Toneva, I. Nikolova. Profile of consumers of organic food in Bulgaria. 10 years „Alumni Club and Friends" - Medical University - Varna, 01-02.04.2022

In conclusion, the dissertation fully covers the requirements of the Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria. The work is presented in a complete and well-formed form.

In the dissertation work of Assist. Prof. Rozalina Braykova her own experience from the study of a significant problem of modern society is presented. The comprehensive and consistent analysis performed provides opportunities to develop innovative approaches to improve and promote public health. I find the topic developed by the autor extremely relevant and timely. The

content of the dissertation is legitimately and thoroughly developed, well illustrated and presented in good professional language.

The mentioned merits of the dissertation give me a reason for positive assessment and to convincingly propose the award of to Assist. Prof. Rozalina Stefanova Braykova educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education 7. "Health and sport", professional field 7.1. "Medicine", in the scientific specialty "Hygiene (including occupational, communal, school, radiation, etc.)".

08.03.2023

Varna

Scientific jury member:



/Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rositsa Hristova Chamova, MD, PhD/