

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE OF WHOLESALE MARKETS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SALE¹

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Abstract

Sustainable agriculture is a strategic approach and development program of agrarian economy leading to the increased agricultural products trade. Regional and world market development more commonly bring the change of current economic strategy for agriculture development and increase the companies' competitiveness. The paper's aim is to point to the elements of competitiveness advantages of wholesale markets which can reflect on the increase in agricultural products trade, and to highlight the need for constructing these facilities in Serbia. The main hypothesis is based on knowing the wholesale markets' place, role and significance for domestic agriculture development with the purpose to increase agricultural products' sale. Modern economy conditions, changeable market conditions and competition point to the economic efficacy of wholesale markets as distribution channels for agricultural products. This paper points out the basic directions of sustainable agriculture development as a recommendation for improving agricultural products' sale through wholesale markets.

Key words: *sustainable agriculture, competitiveness, wholesale market, agricultural products*

Introduction

Due to trade development in agroindustrial sector, market institutions specialized for movement of goods has a special role. Trade and

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sustainable agriculture in this century are characterized by bigger role and significance of these institutions (fairs, wholesale markets, markets), which gained bigger role and importance with the development of new information technologies, technological development, IT “revolution”, unsparing competition, “knowledge” affirmation as a very important resource, and as such they are only a part of the new market circumstances.

In developed market countries, wholesale markets survive and develop within changed market circumstances, as the essential connection between production and consumption in agricultural products’ sale. New economic circumstances give wholesale markets a primary role in supplying big cities and regions, with above all, fruit and vegetables, but also with other products. From the market aspect, wholesale markets also have competitive advantage, in the respect of diverse products offer and demand. Also, the quality and price enable these markets the role of the mediator, where fresh products from familiar traders are sold to familiar buyers, with low prices (market acceptable), at the familiar buying location.

“Wholesale market is a special market institution dealing with wholesale trade by arranging, maintaining and renting out specialized space for display and sale of fruit, vegetables and other agricultural and food products and other consumer goods, as well as providing related services, particularly storing of goods, its finalization, processing, packing and other services connected with handling and transport.” (Law on Trade-Republic of Serbia)

This text analyses political, economic and commercial aspects of wholesale market management for the purpose of making efficient decision, with the main aim to develop sustainable domestic agriculture and to improve strategic positions of the country on domestic and regional market. Text is made to help managers and authorities whose job is food wholesale in order to improve the work of current domestic wholesale markets or to plan construction of the new ones. Characteristics and the role of wholesale markets at the beginning of this century are changing a lot. These changes require answers to the question of what is the optimal way of managing wholesale markets and the way they are organized, from the aspect of efficacy of utilization of open and closed spaces, cooling systems, storage, warehouses, and also the infrastructural spaces they are built on. Infrastructural space includes vicinity of highways,

railways, piers, with large parking spaces, all with the aim to have efficient external traffic and internal transport. The main objective of the paper refers to decision-makers for building a warehouse as a strategic market institution in order to promote trade, to develop sustainable domestic agriculture, to raise business results of goods' sellers, buyers' satisfaction and efficient model of business efficacy of a modern wholesale market.

Wholesale markets in Serbia- current market position working method

The main aim of the paper is focused on the research on the role, significance and the effect of wholesale markets as specialized market institutions in the function of sustainable agriculture's development for the purpose of increasing the trade with agricultural products. Also, the aim of the paper is to indicate the significance of wholesale markets in market developed countries and in our country and to perceive strategies, tactics and directions of development of these market institutions in Serbia. Theoretical framework of this research is based on the literature from the field of management, marketing, trade and other scientific disciplines like sociology, psychology, etc. Theoretical attitudes in the paper are verified in author's own empirical research conducted on "Kvantaškapijaca" in Novi Sad (part of JKPtržnica Novi Sad) using the purposive sampling method. The research's results provided a more trustworthy basis for theoretical analyses and objectification of the role, significance and the effect of wholesale markets as a channel for distribution of agricultural products.

Our company's development plan includes, in accordance with the urban city plan, searching for the best solution for moving this market place to the suitable location which will suit the generally accepted standards with its surface, access road and infrastructure. (www.nstrznica.co.rs)

Research on the business success of goods' sellers (companies) on "Kvantaškapijaca" was carried out by the method of questioning on the 60 sellers sample. When it comes to the success verified in annual business balance the state of the sellers from the survey shows the following:

- 51% of the sellers covered the expenses, but did not make profit
- 39% of the sellers were successful in business and made profit
- 10% of the sellers had business which resulted in loss

The most important business control instruments of the companies in the survey, based on the questionnaire are the following (ranked 1-5; 1- the most significant):

- Sales volume 1.9
- Profit 2.6
- Market involvement 2.7
- Liquidity
- Marketing costs (sales promotion) 2.0

As far as the respondents' attitudes on trade conditions on "Kvantaškapijaca" are concerned 30% of them have positive attitude and 70% have negative attitude on the sales conditions.

When they were asked if the new modern market facility like wholesale market should be built, 85% gave the positive answer, while 15% regard it as unnecessary. The respondents were questioned about the potential location for constructing the wholesale market and the answers were the following:

- At the outskirts of the city, near traffic routes (the highway) 60%
- At or near the "Najlonpijaca" 30%
- At the current location 10%

It was not possible to get more precise and more specific answer about the suitable location for future wholesale market since the decision on construction and location has not been adopted yet. Based on the answers in the survey, it can be concluded that the goods sellers are familiar with the most significant factors that can affect their business efficacy.

The survey on the customers' attitudes about buying conditions on "Kvantaškapijaca", carried out on the sample of 200 respondents, showed the following results:

- Very bad conditions 80%
- Acceptable conditions 20%

The answers on the question whether they would purchase at the new wholesale market:

- Yes, I would 90%
- I don't know, I'm not sure 10%

Research results of purchase motives at the new wholesale market according to the significance are the following:

- Products' freshness 37%
- Products' quality 27%
- Price 25%
- Diversification of offer 9%
- Habits 2%

After the conducted research on the customers' attitudes about constructing the wholesale market, it is necessary to carry out detailed research on the attitudes of customers who have visited "Kvantaskapijaca" as well as the marketplace of the sellers from the survey. Also, the research can be conducted among potential customers who have not visited the marketplace in order to determine the wholesale market's influence on the awareness about the products' existence and the potential customers' interest for the product. The research should determine the level of awareness about the construction of wholesale market and the interest for the products. It can be concluded that the customers' attitudes are very important for the functioning of the wholesale market, but that is not the subject of this paper's research.

A need for researching the significance of wholesale markets in the aspect of selling the products stems from the fact whether the sellers achieved their goals by selling at the wholesale market as well as from the competition of wholesale markets as the channel for distribution with other relevant centers for agricultural products trade.

The vision of Wholesale market Belgrade ("Veletrznice Beograd") is to enable development of local self-government in the Republic of Serbia and to enable maximal competitiveness. Besides that, the aim is to provide the easier connection between producers and sellers. The mission is to create the best conditions for all users, through the offer and demand for fresh food on the platform with modern infrastructure. Another aim is to ensure business stability, by growth and development of companies, through constant rising of the competitiveness of traders working in the system. This kind of development policy would ensure easier placement for the traders, which will lead to better prices with defined food quality and safety policies. (Wholesale market Belgrade)

There are over 500 hundred traders at Belgrade wholesale market. The wholesale market includes 866 marketplaces (on the area of 7ha) on the plateau and 6300m² business and storage place (20 premises, 3 wharves, 73 tents and 52 warehouses). (veletrznica.co.rs, 2017)

Advantages of a wholesale market:

- it enables food procurement for public institutions at stock market prices without inviting tenders which saves money and time significantly.
- it introduces tax discipline into food trade,
- it prevents unloyal competition,
- it provides better conditions for market placement of domestic producers' products,
- it encourages cooperation development and and associations
- it enables finalizing and introduction of marketing standards.
- it creates additional value for fresh food products (calibration and packing). (Vlahovic, 2013)

Apart from market and public function, wholesale markets in our country have a special role in a sociological sense. They are market and public institutions that enable, besides their main function of offering and demanding products, meeting and communication of a large number of people at the familiar shopping place. Their social role grows due to the position and place they are situated in and those are big urban environments, which besides their market function, have the function to enable encounters of a big number of people at the public place. Communication intensity depends on their age and other social roles where people identify and integrate themselves in the urban environment with all its flaws, virtues and significances.

In market developed countries, wholesale markets are one of the most important market institutions for agricultural products movement. In the last years of the last century, especially in this century, significant changes occurred regarding increasing the significance of wholesale markets. As far as our country is concerned, wholesale markets are on a very low development level due to the fact that there is only a wholesale market in Belgrade ("Veletznica Beograd). In other cities this kind of trade is preformed through "Kvantaskapijaca", which actually represent retail, not wholesale. Based on communication knowledge on the functioning of this kind of markets in our country, it can be said that this type of "wholesale trade" is unsustainable and that modern trade facilities have to be constructed as the main pre-condition for domestic agriculture development, development of trade in agroindustry and raising domestic products' competitiveness on the regional and other markets.

A wholesale market lowers total expenses of brokering for the following market subjects primarily:

- producers, importers, exporters, wholesalers, by making them “free” from renting and investing into too big storage capacities, expensive cold storages and conditioned warehouses through offering smaller storage units, with the main service of a great quality with a number of potential following services at acceptable prices.
- wholesalers (for the further products’ movement), big domestic and foreign retailers, retail in neighboring country, caterers, institutional buyers and other subjects, by putting a large assortment of goods at lower prices at their disposal at any moment along with making them free from investing and renting already spent capacities.
- final consumers, by providing them with goods of better quality at lower prices than it is the case now.

It is important to point out that the decision on the wholesale markets’ construction is on the higher level of authorities which have to adopt the strategy and movement direction regarding the decision on construction of these market institutions. Based on the conducted research, it can be concluded that these institutions are pre-condition for domestic agriculture development and they are of vital importance for trade and domestic agriculture development.

Political-legal and institutional aspects of constructing the wholesale market

The main assumption and responsibility for trade development in agro-industry and improvement of agricultural production are held by the government and its institutions. They have to provide the necessary infrastructure and financial and legislative framework for functioning of the public sector and creating conditions for development of the private sector.

The role and significance of wholesale markets grows worldwide with market development. They become central trade spots for agroindustrial products wholesale with modern sophisticated selling methods (Prdić, 2016).

Measures for efficient functioning of agro-industrial market and agricultural produce primarily refer to the following:

- Creating market conditions for providing a diverse offer of agricultural products.
- Providing real market mechanisms in order to create conditions that enable market competitiveness
- Providing standards and criteria for market business
- Providing criteria and standards for quality and quality degrees
- Creating legal and by-law conditions for ensuring people's safety and health and for the control of vegetable and animal products.

The role of the government should be specially mentioned since it creates, in political aspect, economic and other conditions for trade, transport and goods transport, decentralization in the aspect of urban development of cities, infrastructural equipment. It can also offer a solution for the direction in which the agriculture products market will develop. The role of the wholesale market as the main trade broker should be emphasized too. The government's role in developed trade economies is to set the necessary infrastructure and financial and legal framework for functioning of the public sector. Another role is to provide legislative framework for the private sector, which can develop in the aspect of trade within adopted laws.

In order to establish legally defined roles, there is a need to define the role of every wholesale market clearly. This strategy has to be accepted by the national, regional, city and municipal authorities as well as by producers, wholesalers and buyers at every wholesale market, service providers in banking sector, in transport sector and also by the management of a wholesale market.

The role of wholesale market for development of agriculture

Wholesale markets as specialized marked institutions in goods movement are the most efficient place for trade of agricultural products, primarily fruit and vegetables, but also other products depending on the place and role of a wholesale market on the market. They actually represent the market environment where it is possible to achieve the most acceptable price for products via concentration of offer and demand with open competition and transparency. Their significance as market institutions enables the offer of appropriate products, sellers and buyers at one place with the aim to provide real (low) prices at every moment.

Modern wholesale markets which are equipped with modern facilities have all conditions for trade through stock market and because of that they represent the most efficient strategic space for trade in agro-industry and agriculture.

Nowadays, when the awareness about nutrition and about the importance of arable land grows, it is necessary to give specific attention to the problem of financial deficiency within agrarian production. (Vojnovic et al. 2017)

It is known that agricultural products' market as a part of a whole market takes special place due to specificity of agricultural production and that makes market conditions also special. Street markets as special market institutions have a significant role in the domestic agriculture development, especially for the development of small family agricultural holdings as a part of the whole agricultural products' market. (Prdic, 2014)

This concentration of offer and demand represented through wholesalers and buyers, especially through retail trade chains, distributive centers, public institutions and companies, is very important for developing countries. It is actually the most important for developing countries which need to establish modern market approach in agriculture after agricultural combines, state warehouses and distributive centers are no longer exists.

Due to the development of trade, urban infrastructure and competitive market, wholesale market's location and development strategies are directed to the places of main roads at outskirts of cities for the sake of more efficient transport, preventing traffic congestions issues, pollution, and noise and also for the purpose of creating conditions for competitive advantage over other distributive centers (Kuzman et al., 2017).

Wholesale markets worldwide have the role and the task of a very important commercial and logistic mediator on the fruit and vegetable market. Importance of mediation of every wholesale market stems from the structure of sales and storage capacities offer on every wholesale market and its positions in the channels of relevant goods groups' marketing. Therefore, every wholesale market in the world creates its own gravity cores, which are their clients who see the existence of a wholesale market as beneficial for themselves. (Lovreta, 2008)

The World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM) has a specific role and it is significant for the development of wholesale markets. It was founded in 1958 for the following purposes:

- to enable international promotion of wholesale markets
- to raise the efficacy and effectiveness of wholesale markets' functioning
- to make the role of wholesale markets bigger within the whole food sector.

Rapidly growing worldwide, wholesale markets will keep playing the vital role in channeling the wide food spectrum to urban consumers, despite the fact that new techniques are being adopted, like for instance supplying supermarkets with products directly by farmers. Investments into infrastructure of wholesale markets are undoubtedly going to rise during oncoming years. However, wholesale markets will not represent financial burden to local and national authorities. If they are managed properly and professionally, wholesale markets can make powerful stimuli to modernization of food market as a whole. (INFOAM,2014)

Considering the fact that previous research dealt with comparative advantages of some countries or group of countries in regard to their position in world trade, the author introduces a new approach which follows comparative advantages between two countries, as well as competitors on the same market (Kuzman et al., 2016).

Total volume on products market is 26 million tons per year, which is approximately 40% of fruit and vegetables supply in Europe (24 million tons per year), 10% of fish and fish products supply in Europe (1 million tons per year) and 2% of meat and meat products supply in Europe (1 million tons per year). (WUWM, 2016)

System of trade information gives daily, updated information about the state in various agriculture sectors in Serbia and it can provide relevant information about market potentials and competition. In the online survey,1361 site visitors answered the question if STIPS (System of trade information in Serbian agriculture) helps them in making decisions in their business and the answers are the following: (Employer) Yes, it helps me a lot 45%, It helps me 34%, It doesn't help 21% (STIPS)

By analyzing the set goals and the role that world wholesale markets union assigns to agriculture development, it can be concluded that their

primary aim is the necessity of the modern wholesale market construction, primarily in developing countries and transition countries, but also in a large number of developed countries in present and future.

Main elements for efficient management of wholesale market

The most important elements for efficient management refer to the legislations, suitable capital structure, efficiency in decision making, establishing domestic and foreign associations of wholesale markets and retail markets, creating trust in a wholesale market among buyers. Another important element is the influence of political structures on management and finances; besides political, it also includes the influence of other groups, institutions and individuals interested in development of a wholesale market as the most efficient instrument of agricultural products wholesale.

Competitive advantage– over competition has been won by the offer of a higher value for a buyer or with lower prices or by giving more benefits that justify higher prices (Kotler et al. 2007).

The most important elements for efficient management of wholesale markets are:

1. appropriate capital control
2. necessary powers and authorizations
3. efficient agreement with market users
4. accordance with market rules, contracts and agreements
5. economic sustainability
6. efficient relations with wholesale market users, service providers government agencies and other markets
7. operational and management efficacy
8. efficient structure of decision making
9. trained and disciplined staff
10. trust in wholesale market- integrity of wholesaler
11. politics and finances

Leading principles in marketing management of wholesale markets are based on the following criteria:

1. Financial sustainability on the market means trust and trust in its use as well as accepting fees, taxes and rules made by a wholesaler, agricultural producers, retailers and other buyers and users

2. Operational efficacy which includes:
 - financial handling with delivery, loading and unloading of products
 - discipline on the market, in inland traffic, storing and exposing the products which can be achieved with valid contracts on rental and with widely accepted and implemented market rules and regulations.
 - traffic control and parking
 - personal safety
 - safety of products
 - cleanliness and hygiene
 - Efficient service providing, like services of loading and unloading, movement of products, telephone, fax, e-mail services, internal communication, storage and cold storage.
3. Pleasant and safe trade and working environment in which private trade can be profitable. Such environment should have toilet, food drink and other services like bank, accountants, entrance for suppliers (for example packing of material, seeds, and fertilizers for agricultural producers), parking, food and accommodation for transporters.
4. A wholesale market should be in accordance with general market and social needs by providing the following:
 - regular supply with fruit, vegetables and other food products of specified quality and quantity
 - transparency of prices through free competition among traders
 - obeyed standards and prices
 - package that corresponds market or possibly consumers' needs
5. Wholesale market management should have correct relation with market users including wholesalers, other market operators, agricultural producers, sellers and buyers and other service providers.

Modern business conditions impose clear and precise criteria regarding agreed obligations about rental, with clearly defined laws and obligations, whose main aim is to secure discipline in market operations for the sake of eliminating misunderstandings and legal disputes. Many world

wholesale markets use experience of others as rules and principles of International retail and wholesale markets association and World organization for food within the United Nations.

Proactive company tends to have strategic initiative to control place and time of an action on the market. In order to achieve the competitive advantage on the market, it is essential to allocate main sources to strategic directions of company's development. (Milosavljevic, 2010)

So, the efficacy of wholesale market as a competitive company to other aspects of trade can be viewed as an efficient wholesale market construction model in all bigger cities which would replace current "kvantaškapijaca" and make this form of trade successful. (Prdic, 2016)

Recommendations and directions for development of wholesale markets those are significant for agriculture development

Development of domestic wholesale markets in future as a strategic instrument of trade has to be based on already adopted existence mission in accordance with proclaimed values. Wholesale markets' vision and strategically determined values have to be in accordance with strategic vision of domestic agriculture, based on the sustainable competitive advantage strategy. Besides the strategy based on the competitive advantage and the strategy of regional leader, business strategy of domestic wholesale markets development is also development strategy based on the application of e-business and internet. IT technology, especially internet development, makes it possible to make a huge strategic step in that direction, because operative and easily-accessible data bases can be created, which enables a constant education of employees and management and it helps them to acquire special knowledge about wholesale market managing.

The availability of all relevant information on global market is very important for future success of domestic wholesale markets.

Strategic significance of wholesale market for agriculture development has to be a part of a real trade strategy and it has to be a long-term strategic goal for agriculture development. In the future, domestic wholesale markets need to "enter" complex research on their own identity to determine values on which they function and to see how leading world

wholesale markets operate and to discover a possibility for new development and affirmation.

Achieving agrarian competitiveness requires that macroeconomic management change basic elements of agriculture strategies in the direction of creating agricultural systems, whose growth is guided by knowledge and innovations, and in the direction of agriculture products' chain development (Mihajlovic et al., 2016).

Benchmarking against best identified practices, if suitably adopted and adapted, can generate a company considerable profit of performance within a very short time (Maire et al., 2005).

The Target costs are defined as the difference between the anticipated price and required return. In practice, target profit often is driven by medium term corporate profit plans, which reflect the returns demanded by the financial markets (Woods et al., 2012).

Recommendations for wholesale markets development and management in future are to adopt the concept in which knowledge based management is one of important competitive advantages. Managers of future modern wholesale markets have to be responsible, open for communication and able to adopt new knowledge and world experiences in wholesale market management. Also, it is important that they can actively apply all acquired knowledge and experience.

SWOT analysis of market potentials of wholesale markets External aspect of SWOT analysis

Opportunities

- Efficient and effective distribution channels of agricultural products
- Specialized market institutions at which the interests of producers, buyers, sellers and wholesale market are accomplished in the most efficient way.
- They enable development of domestic agriculture and create chances for a state help to development of agriculture holdings, due to marketplace efficacy in the aspect of good price and products' quality.
- Buyers' interests for wholesale markets and market development
- Adapting to new market circumstances and consumers' needs

- Constructing of new modern trade center creates conditions for sale increasing
- Strategy of competitive advantage of wholesale markets in respect to competitive companies
- Development strategy of a wholesale market as city- public and infrastructural center
- Creating market position of “ so called brend street market”
- Constant research of consumers’ needs, attitude and perceptions
- Marketing-- communication strategy with sellers, buyers and interested public.

Threats

- Selling of goods out of market and trade transactions
- A large number of distributive centers that trade with agricultural products
- Not adapting and implementing the strategy of development of a wholesale market as a primary distributive chain in agricultural products sale
- Changing the market environment and consumers’ needs and attitudes
- Inadequate service quality
- Regulated system of legislation , legal and ownership relations

Internal aspects of SWOT analysis

Strengths

- Adopting national strategy for wholesale market construction in all bigger city trade centers
- Helping domestic agriculture and directing the product sale on the wholesale market
- Strategic approach to the significance of a wholesale market and managing wholesale markets are based on competence and knowledge
- Quality of the offer at traditional market institution
- Direct trade, interest seller, buyer
- Selling traditional domestic products
- Researching consumers’ attitudes
- Improving the service quality
- Adapting to market changes, on domestic, regional markets and the market of developed countries

Weaknesses

- Not adapting the strategy of development of a wholesale market.
- Undefined market relation in the aspect of obeying legal, market-financial and tax solution
- Lack of a clear vision and strategy of relations of wholesale markets and retail markets of agriculture products
- Stronger competition and a lack of development strategies
- Infrastructural equipment, market position of wholesale markets
- Influence of political factors
- Inadequate marketing-communication strategy

Conclusion

Strategic significance of wholesale markets for agriculture development represents a clear vision and a thought-out way to the future, which represents certain strategic development and increasing incomes of domestic products sellers in today's economic conditions. By constructing the wholesale market, our country, which is mostly agricultural should create necessary conditions for more dominant position on the regional market that would enable bigger sale and better perspective for further development.

Based on the theoretical and practical research for the needs of this paper, it has been confirmed that it is necessary to adopt the strategy for the construction of the wholesale market for the purpose of increasing the trade and sale of agricultural products. It should be especially emphasized that the construction of these facilities is urgent, based on the world experiences on the agriculture and trade development. Also, domestic sellers see a wholesale market as an organized, well-equipped and unique site for meeting of sellers and buyers, where the company's (seller's) success and satisfied buyer is seen as the final result.

Conducted research enabled achieving the main aim of the paper, so this paper points out the significance of strategic approach to wholesale markets in market developed countries and in our countries. The paper also indicates the possibility of application of this facility on domestic market and determines assumptions and directions for the implementation of the concept of wholesale market development on domestic market. Regarding the main aim of the paper, strategic significance of wholesale markets for agriculture development and increasing business results on the one side, and empirical research of companies (sellers) on domestic

market on the other side. It is necessary to anticipate and identify all obstacles and remove doubts about strategic significance of wholesale markets for agriculture development as well as improving interests of companies (sellers) and buyers.

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