
EDITORIAL



The main demands of today's consumers are safety and authenticity.

Consumers are increasingly interested in the origin and elaboration techniques of their food and prefer fresh products, free of additives or preservatives. Other determinant criteria for choosing certain foods are their nutritional and sensorial quality, their user friendliness as well as their price.

The nutritional quality of products undergoes constant changes throughout the production line. Its general tendency however is to deteriorate. The processes must thus be chosen carefully in order to maintain the highest possible quality level. At the same time, the environment must be considered and the production cost lowered. The implementation of concepts responding to this minimal processing approach pursues exactly these objectives.

The progress in the health sector has shed new light on the benefits or harmfulness of a certain number of food compounds. The success of functional foods is a good illustration of these tendencies. Other primary factors are traceability and authenticity – either in the sense of biological authenticity (GMO, natural substances) or of registered designation of origin (AOC).

Analytical chemistry was one of the disciplines that made possible this rapid progress of knowledge. The key elements for improving the performance and competitiveness of a food production company are the choice of raw materials, the optimisation of food process technologies and the implementation of reliable and rapid analytics as a process management tool.

Industrial companies want chemical, physical and microbiological analytics to be a reliable, rapid, specific and inexpensive decision aid that must allow trace detection. If possible, these analyses should be implemented 'in-line'. This is one aspect of the development potential of food analytics.

However, analytics must also evolve so that it can offer reliable information on the bio-availability of a certain substance. Once this criterion becomes measurable, it will be implemented in every development of new production processes and every optimisation of existing processes. In this respect, analytics will be a key element of process development.

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