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*The Effectiveness of Food Control Systems in
Algeria – A Case Study of the Algerian
Organization for Consumer Protection and
Guidance (APOCE)*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to present and analyze the Algerian State's guidelines for the adoption of food safety systems. through institutional and legal frameworks, demonstrating the importance of non-governmental action in protecting consumers and guiding them towards safe products that do not harm their health in the near or long term And here we provide a model of these organizations, the Algerian Organization for the Protection and Guidance of Consumers and its surroundings (APOPE), Operating in accordance with a variety of financial possibilities and legal frameworks, monitoring the national market and conveying citizens' concerns and complaints in general; As part of our assessment of its work, we offer the importance of the role it plays and a number of proposals and recommendations on ways to activate its activities in ensuring national food safety by relying on awareness, sensitization and reporting of all available means of communication.

Keywords: Food safety- food security- Consumer protection- Awareness- Sensitization- Guidance

INTRODUCTION:

The issue of protecting the health of citizens in any country is one of the significant concerns, necessitating a robust system for controlling the food traded within the state, whether locally produced or imported. Regulatory bodies ensure that these foods comply with health and safety standards for human consumption, following a set of national and international criteria.

The current global food system is characterized by rapid production, storage, and distribution, complicating the work of food control systems. These systems must keep pace with advancements in food technology and operate within the framework of internationally defined risk analysis.

Here, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supporting governmental food control activities becomes evident. These organizations are committed to protecting consumers from any threats to their health and food security, working within appropriate legal and political frameworks with qualified human resources and necessary material resources (equipment, laboratories, financial assets).

One notable example of an NGO in the field of food safety in Algeria is the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection and Guidance (APOCE). This study presents APOCE as a model of food control systems in Algeria, examining its capabilities, policies, legal framework, communication methods, and information systems that ensure effective, rapid, and genuine control. Finally, recommendations and suggestions are provided on how to enhance its work and activities in food safety and security in Algeria.

The following research question is posed: How can the effectiveness of food safety control be achieved through non-governmental control systems in Algeria?

Presentation Outline:

- I. Definition of Food Safety and Methods of Achieving Food Security.
- II. Forms of Food Safety Control Systems.
- III. Food Safety Control System in Algeria (Legal and Regulatory Framework).
- IV. Effectiveness of APOCE's Activities in Achieving Food Safety in Algeria.

2. Definition of Food Safety and Methods of Achieving Food Security:

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines food safety as "all the conditions and measures necessary during the production, processing, storage, distribution, and preparation of food to ensure that it is safe, reliable, and suitable for human consumption." This definition indicates that food safety begins at the agricultural production stage and continues through subsequent stages until consumption.

Initially, the focus was on providing food in sufficient quantities, then shifted to quality and type, balancing quantity and quality. The focus eventually turned to the health dimensions of food, known as food safety, which gained attention following incidents such as mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease, causing widespread global concern, along with avian and swine flu. Food safety is compromised in three common ways (قصوري، 2012، صفحة 66):

- **Food Contamination**: Resulting from the intensive use of toxic pesticides to combat pests, poor packaging, expired products, and the health standards of stored goods.
- **Malnutrition**: Caused by food supply shortages, eating disorders, and chronic diseases. It predominantly affects children and women in rural areas where three-quarters of the world's poor live and depend on agriculture, manifesting in symptoms such as body weakness, rickets, anaemia, and mental retardation.

The United Nations emphasized on World Food Safety Day that "there is no food security without food safety," and stated, "if food is unsafe, it is not food." They also highlighted the necessity for food to meet nutritional needs, helping everyone lead active and healthy lives only when it is safe, referred to as the utilization dimension of food security (United Nations).

A 1996 WHO report on the role of food safety in health and development stated: "It is no longer sufficient for food to be available in adequate quantities or to meet nutritional needs; it must also be safe for consumption and not pose health risks through infection, contamination, or poisoning" (General Authority for Food and Drug Administration).

Food security is a goal every country strives to achieve, and Algeria is no exception. Algeria is diligently working to ensure food security. Therefore, it is essential to address the primary causes of food insecurity (جبارة، 2015، صفحة 24):

- **Reduced Food Availability**: Due to population growth, wars, civil disturbances, population displacement, and climate factors, especially

recently.

- Poor Environmental Management: Leading to deteriorating production conditions.
- Market Imbalances: At the levels of storage, transportation, or processing.

A study by researcher **Nadia Belourghi** on the role of agricultural policies in achieving food security in Algeria assessed agricultural production trends in plant and animal sectors, Algeria's overall agricultural trade movement, and its trade balance development. The study also examined the self-sufficiency ratio and the food gap for essential widely consumed goods, concluding the following (نادية، 2023-2022):

- Significant Diversification in Plant and Animal Production: Increased plant production due to investments in hard wheat, soft wheat, barley, and legumes, particularly in semi-arid areas of Algeria. Increased land allocated for grain cultivation and state incentives for grain producers since 2008, despite which Algeria has not achieved self-sufficiency in wheat, grains, and sugar.
- Escalating Imports of Essential Consumer Goods: Such as wheat and dairy products, indicating increased import quantities or price levels, currency fluctuations, raising the food import bill, and highlighting the weakness of Algeria's agricultural production to meet basic needs.
- Large Food Gap: Evident from rising imports of widely consumed foodstuffs.
- Increase in Vegetable and Industrial Crop Production: Achieving self-sufficiency in industrial tomatoes and potatoes, though vegetable production remains weather-dependent, relying on rainfall for irrigation.
- Incomplete Poultry and Red Meat Sector: Suffering from lack of organization, absence of strategies for surplus storage and use, and price deficiencies to support producers' sustainability.

Algeria's food and agricultural industries have grown since the 1970s, thanks to national companies in grains, dairy, water, beverages, and currently sugar, fats, canned goods, and meats, experiencing significant growth over the past 15 years (2000-2015). Key growing sectors include:

- ✓ Milling: Processing hard and soft wheat into semolina and flour.
- ✓ Oils: Extracted mechanically or by other methods.
- ✓ Dairy and Derivatives: Packaging and processing dairy products.
- ✓ Sugar: Derived from sugar cane, sugar beet, or dates into white sugar.

- ✓ Beverages: Including juices and mineral waters.
- ✓ Canning: Including tomatoes and fruit or grain pastes.
- ✓ Processed Foods: Such as pasta, couscous, sweets, biscuits, and bread.
- ✓ Canned Vegetables, Fruits, and Fish:

All these sectors have seen increased production since the mid-1990s, following Algeria's transition from a socialist to a more liberal and open economy. However, they remain below the desired outcomes despite Algeria's current agricultural, financial, and human resource potential (قرون، 2018، الصفحات 161-162).

These industries still need research and development and better management practices guiding the market or sector, as consumers prefer imported goods to local ones. Imports bring challenges related to ensuring food safety, compliance with international and national standards, and ongoing control to avoid health risks for consumers in the short or long term.

3. Forms of Food Safety Control Systems:

National food control systems play a pivotal role in protecting consumer health and ensuring fair practices in food trade. According to the Codex Alimentarius principles and guidelines for national food control systems, countries have the flexibility to determine the best design for their food control system in addition to implementing specific control measures. National circumstances, such as the appropriate level of public health protection, legal and institutional frameworks, and the availability of support services like analytical resources, influence the design of these systems. Consequently, no two systems are identical. Regardless of the national food control system's design, measuring its effectiveness is crucial to ensure proper resource utilization, consumer health protection, and maintaining high efficiency to enhance the system, open new markets, improve trade relationships, and build stakeholder trust locally.

The food safety control process includes the following systems:

- A. Routine control activities for food products: These consist of local control procedures, import control, and export control.
- B. Monitoring, surveillance, and response functions: These consist of a program for monitoring specific hazards in the food chain, surveillance of foodborne diseases (public health), and managing food safety incidents, including emergencies.

This dimension covers the main control functions that competent authorities

must exercise to ensure food safety along the food chain, including optimal risk control related to food safety, emerging risks, and food emergencies. This section covers both traditional control methods, such as inspections and other supervision of food business operators during production, import for local consumption, or export, and other information-gathering methods that contribute to a better understanding of the food chain. This includes data collection programs on food products, referred to here as the monitoring program, and foodborne disease programs referred to here as surveillance programs. It also includes programs aimed at managing food safety emergencies, which should benefit from all previously collected control and information mechanisms. One challenge in this dimension is distinguishing between various complementary activities that can be performed by the same units (e.g., inspecting a specific category of food sector operators and food hazard monitoring programs primarily related to the products these operators produce) (FAO and WHO, 2021).

4. Food Safety Control System in Algeria (Legal and Regulatory Framework):

While criminal policy was the first resort for most legislators in the early 20th century to confront economic crimes, including non-compliance with food product standards, the widespread and sophisticated methods of these crimes in the latter half of the 20th century led to a consensus among legal scholars and national legislative bodies worldwide on the inadequacy of criminal policy alone to address non-compliance with consumer product standards, particularly food products. This has resulted in a shift towards administrative policy due to its effectiveness in prevention and deterrence through field administrative control exercised by administrative bodies tasked with consumer protection across all food production, import, packaging, and marketing locations. This allows for early and final detection of non-compliance with food products through direct and laboratory examination of samples.

Secondly, administrative sanctions of a managerial and preventive nature are applied to violators of applicable administrative laws and regulations aimed at preserving public order from the dangers of non-compliant food products.

In this context, it is noted that the Algerian legislator adopted the global policy in this field in the latter half of the 20th century when enacting Law No. 89-02, which includes general consumer protection rules. This law provides for preventive legal rules granting broad powers to the central administration in charge of consumer protection (represented by the Ministry of Commerce and

its various general directorates) and decentralized entities (primarily wilayas and municipalities). These powers include using public administrative law tools to monitor and inspect food production, import, transportation, and display conditions for consumption and to impose administrative sanctions on violators of administrative laws and regulations issued in this field. Additionally, the law includes deterrent legal rules with criminal provisions to add rigor to the law's provisions.

However, after 20 years of its enactment, the draft preliminary consumer protection and anti-fraud law issued by the Ministry of Commerce in February 2005 highlighted that economic transformations, international conditions, and Algeria's methodology for entering regional and international economic spaces necessitated a complete reworking of Law No. 89-2002. The reworking was based on evaluating the implementation of this law, which revealed that some of its provisions were outdated compared to international standards and that some of its other provisions were ambiguous or insufficient. This prompted the Algerian legislator to repeal it and issue the new Law No. 09-03 on consumer protection and anti-fraud, alongside a series of complementary laws, decrees, and decisions, such as Law No. 04-04 on standardization, Ordinance No. 03-04 on general rules applicable to import and export operations, Executive Decree No. 05-118 on food ionization, Executive Decree No. 05-484 on foodstuff labeling and display, and the joint ministerial decision specifying the list of authorized additives in foodstuffs, as well as the joint ministerial decision on temperature levels and methods of refrigeration and freezing of foodstuffs, among others. With this issuance, the Algerian legislator marked a qualitative leap in the early 21st century in the legislative system for consumer protection, characterized by the following:

- A. Legal nature: This includes the affirmation of personal and financial consumer rights enshrined in international and regional agreements, such as:
 - 1. The right to safety, defined by the UN General Assembly in its decision dated April 9, 1985, No. 39/248, as the right to protection against harmful goods and services to life or health.
 - 2. The right to a clean environment, which means the right to obtain products free from any harmful environmental effects.
 - 3. The right to representation, meaning the right to select representatives within consumer protection associations to advocate for and defend consumer rights before official state entities.
 - 4. The right to quality, which means the right to obtain goods and

services characterized by design quality and performance accuracy.

5. The right to a fair price, which means the right to pay fair prices for the goods and services obtained.
 6. The right to compensation, which means the right to demand compensation for damage resulting from consuming defective or spoiled products.
- B. International nature: This includes compliance with the conditions for partnership with the European Union and the requirements for joining the World Trade Organization, which necessitate the actual implementation of agreements related to removing technical barriers to trade and agreements related to applying health measures for humans, plants, and animals within the framework of free movement of goods, in addition to adopting international principles in this field, such as the precautionary principle.
- C. Preventive nature: This includes administrative field control and various preventive administrative measures taken during this control.
- D. Deterrent nature: This includes stipulating fines for administrative reconciliation and criminal sanctions involving imprisonment and financial penalties to add rigor to this law's provisions, especially measures related to protecting consumer health and safety.
- E. Scientific nature: This includes formulating the system's rules in a scientific manner, using physical terms such as "food ionization," chemical terms such as "calcium carbonate, titanium dioxide, iron hydroxide," or biological terms such as "toxicological properties," making the legal rule in this system a scientific rule established by scientific research in laboratories and codified by the Algerian legislator.
- F. Horizontal nature: This includes linking the system's rules to various traditional legal branches, such as civil law, where the consumer is a party in a contractual relationship with the economic operator and benefits indirectly from the rules of this law aimed at protecting him, like the rule of interpreting doubt in favor of the debtor stipulated in Article 112 of this law, which gives the judge the authority to interpret doubt in favor of the debtor as a party to the contractual relationship, not as a weaker party in the economic equation. Consequently, the consumer may find himself in the position of the debtor and benefit from this rule as a debtor, not a consumer. It also includes international public law, which provides this system with internationally established principles in consumer protection, such as the precautionary principle, or criminal law, which adds rigor and severity to the system's rules through the

imposition of imprisonment or financial penalties for violations of the above system's provisions, or administrative law, which provides this system with public authority tools such as issuing decisions or directly enforcing them. Therefore, it can be said that the consumer protection legislative system in Algeria is diverse and not independent. However, upon closer examination, it is clear that it is a standalone system that can be considered a new branch of public law, evidenced by the predominance of imperative rules and the state's sovereign intervention to ensure maximum consumer protection from various risks and violations committed by economic operators.

The public authorities in the state are responsible for implementing this system's provisions, ensuring compliance with the general legislation guarantees, including:

- Field administrative control, allowing quality control and anti-fraud bodies to inspect and investigate various non-compliance forms threatening food product safety at all stages of consumption.
- Administrative sanctions, allowing quality control and anti-fraud bodies to take preventive administrative measures, such as withdrawing or destroying the product or imposing fines to protect food product safety from imminent non-compliance risks.
- Criminal sanctions, giving judicial authorities the right to impose imprisonment, fines, and preventive criminal measures against violators of food product non-compliance laws intended for consumption (باية، 2015، الصفحات 17-23).

On the same level and according to the provisions of Article 04 of Law No. 203/09, every participant in the process of making food products available for consumption must comply with the mandatory safety standards for these products and ensure they do not harm consumer health. This is stipulated in Article 04 of Executive Decree No. 172/15 dated June 25, 2015, which defines the conditions and procedures applicable in the field of microbiological characteristics of food products.

Furthermore, food products must not contain microorganisms, their toxins, or metabolic by-products in quantities that pose an unacceptable risk to consumer health, as per the provisions of Article 05 of Executive Decree No. 4172/15. Food safety is defined as the complete absence or presence at acceptable levels without risk in a food product of contaminants, adulterated substances, natural toxins, or any other substance that can make the product acutely or chronically

harmful to health.

Those involved in the process of making food products available for consumption must also ensure compliance with microbiological standards as stipulated in Article 08 of Executive Decree No. 172/2, which prohibits the consumption of food products containing unacceptable levels of contaminants.

It is forbidden to place food products for consumption that contain contaminants in quantities unacceptable from a human or animal health perspective concerning their toxicity. A contaminant is defined as any substance unintentionally added to food, but present as residues from production processes, including treatments applied to crops, livestock, veterinary medicine practices, industry, processing, preparation, handling, packaging, transportation, distribution, or storage. Environmental contamination is also included, but the term "contaminant" does not apply to residues of insects, rodent hair, or other foreign materials.

For instance, certain specifications for types of milk intended for consumption require that they do not contain a specific number of microorganisms adapted to a temperature of 30 degrees Celsius.

Additionally, every participant in the process of making food products available for consumption must comply with hygiene and sanitary conditions during the process, as stipulated by Executive Decree No. 17-104 dated April 11, 2017, published in Official Gazette No. 24 dated April 16, 2017. They must ensure compliance with hygiene and sanitary conditions for employees, protection of raw materials from contamination, cleanliness of manufacturing, processing, storage facilities, proper ventilation, and lighting, and prevention of biological, chemical, or physical damage to these materials.

Appropriate refrigeration equipment must be available, considering the proper temperatures and preservation methods, as per the joint ministerial decision dated November 21, 1999, concerning refrigeration, freezing, or intensive freezing of food products.

Only ingredients that pose no health risk to the consumer may be used in the products mentioned in Article 02 of Executive Decree No. 04/91. Food products that have come into contact with non-food products may only be placed in contact with food products with explicit permission from the Minister in charge of quality.

Article 08 of Law No. 03/09 permits producers to incorporate food additives

into food products according to authorized conditions and standards. Implementing this provision, Executive Decree No. 214/12 dated May 15, 2012, defines the conditions and procedures for using food additives in food products for human consumption. Article 03 of this decree defines a food additive as any substance not usually consumed as food itself or used as a typical ingredient in food, with or without nutritional value, added intentionally to food for technological or organoleptic purposes at any stage of production, processing, preparation, handling, packaging, transportation, or storage, and that directly or indirectly affects its characteristics, becoming a component of the food product.

The use of food additives must meet the following conditions:

- Preserve the nutritional value of the food.
- Considered an essential component in dietary foods.
- Improve preservation or stabilize the food or its organoleptic characteristics without altering the food's nature or quality in a manner that misleads the consumer. The use of food additives must not conceal the effects of using substandard raw materials or inappropriate technological methods, in accordance with the provisions of Article 05 of Executive Decree No. 214-12 dated May 15, 2012, published in Official Gazette No. 30 dated May 16, 2012.

The Consumer Protection and Fraud Suppression Law No. 03/09 stipulates the mandatory hygiene and safety of food products, making it the first obligation that participants must adhere to and respect its conditions. Any participant who knowingly commits one of the acts stipulated in Articles 04 to 08 of the same law is guilty of violating the mandatory hygiene and safety of food products.

Penalties for Violating Food Safety Obligations:

According to Article 71 of Law No. 03/09, a fine ranging from two hundred thousand Algerian Dinars (200,000 DZD) to five hundred thousand Algerian Dinars (500,000 DZD) will be imposed on anyone who violates the mandatory food safety obligations stipulated in Articles 04 and 05 of this law.

In addition to the penalties stipulated in Articles 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, and 78 of this law, products, tools, and any other means used to commit the violations mentioned in this law will be confiscated, according to Article 82 of the same law.

According to Article 72 of Law No. 03/09, a fine ranging from fifty thousand

Algerian Dinars (50,000 DZD) to one million Algerian Dinars (1,000,000 DZD) will be imposed on anyone who violates the mandatory hygiene and sanitary conditions stipulated in Articles 06 and 07 of this law.

Every participant must comply with the mandatory product safety regarding its characteristics, composition, packaging, collection, maintenance conditions, and the product's impact on other products when expected to be used with them. This includes the product's presentation, labeling, potential use instructions, disposal instructions, and any guidance or information from the producer.

Consumer groups exposed to significant risks, especially children, must be protected, ensuring that the products made available for consumption are guaranteed safe for the expected legitimate use and do not harm consumer health, safety, and interests under normal or other foreseeable conditions of use.

Producers, importers, and service providers must provide consumers with all necessary information to avoid potential risks associated with consuming or using the goods or services offered throughout their normal or reasonably expected lifespan. This is in accordance with the provisions of Article 10 of Executive Decree No. 203/12 dated May 06, 2012, related to the rules applied in the field of product safety (بوشحان و قوارطة، 2020، الصفحات 24-28).

At the governmental oversight level, the primary body responsible for continuous monitoring is the Ministry of Commerce, through its control agents tasked with overseeing all matters related to food safety and fraud suppression. They register warnings, violations, closures, financial penalties, and confiscate non-compliant goods. For instance, the ministry reported significant economic control activities during Ramadan 2024, including (Algerian Ministry of Trade):

- Number of interventions: 70,691
- Number of observed violations: 13,953
- Number of official reports for judicial follow-up: 13,165
- Value of unbilled amounts: 551.46 million DZD
- Quantity of seized goods: 170.77 tons and 28,706 liters
- Value of seized goods: 37.11 million DZD
- Number of proposals for administrative closure: 468 commercial premises
- Number of samples taken for microbiological and physico-chemical analyses: 453 samples

- Violations related to price and tariff information: 5,294
- Violations of mandatory hygiene and sanitary conditions: 3,323
- Violations related to invoicing: 865
- Violations of mandatory self-control: 638
- Possession and sale of unfit food products: 567
- Obstruction of control: 372
- Failure to register in the commercial register: 316
- Violations of mandatory consumer information: 220
- Violations of mandatory product safety: 293
- Violations of food safety: 201
- Engaging in commercial activity outside the scope of the commercial register: 103
- Issuing non-compliant invoices: 55
- Failure to update commercial register details: 77
- Other violations: 1,629
- Number of interventions: 9,955
- Number of registered offenses: 2
- Number of official reports for judicial follow-up: 2
- Quantity of seized products: 75.95 tons of animal and poultry feed products.

5. Effectiveness of the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection and Guidance (APOCE) in Ensuring Food Safety in Algeria:

APOCE is a non-governmental and independent Algerian organization concerned with Algerian consumer affairs. It is apolitical and non-profit, offering its services free of charge throughout the country, registered under number 35/2015. Currently active in all provinces of the Algerian Republic, APOCE has 58 provincial offices, 4 regional offices, and a national office in Algiers.

APOCE began as a local association in Algiers in 2011, focusing on defending the eight consumer rights established by the UN General Assembly and adopted by Algerian legislation. Its primary goals included promoting consumer awareness in Algiers and throughout Algeria, under the motto "No right is lost when demanded." After three years of fieldwork, the association received numerous complaints and suggestions from across the country, which exceeded its local jurisdiction, leading to the founding of a national organization covering the entire country. The founding assembly was held on May 22, 2014, and it was officially approved on August 6, 2015, by the Ministry of Interior

and Local Authorities as a national association with social and environmental purposes headquartered in Algiers.

The organization is concerned with the affairs of Algerian consumers, aiming to promote a rational consumer culture, defend their material and moral rights, enable them to contribute to a genuine and comprehensive renaissance project, and handle their complaints by verifying and following them up with the relevant authorities. Additionally, it protects consumers from all types of fraud, counterfeiting, and deceit. The Algerian organization Rashad for the Consumer and its environment operates on a set of values, including citizenship, participation, proximity to the consumer, integration between civil society organizations for comprehensive development, and intervention by representing the consumer and establishing their rights before judicial authorities, known as defense.

The organizational structure of the organization's Algiers branch consists of the General Assembly, the Executive Office, advisory bodies, regional branches, and provincial offices. It also includes the Scientific Council and permanent and temporary committees.

First: The General Assembly

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body within the organization, exercising the following functions:

- Approving the financial and administrative reports after discussing them.
- Deciding on issues related to the organization's activities.
- Discussing and adopting the general program and work plan for the upcoming phase.
- Electing the members of the Executive Office by voting or by endorsement (majority).
- Approving the internal regulations and the terms of reference.

The General Assembly meets regularly every year and may hold extraordinary sessions whenever necessary, according to the provisions of the organization's bylaws. The president of the organization, after consulting the members of the Executive Office, determines the time and place of the General Assembly meeting at least fifteen (15) days before it convenes. Decisions and resolutions of both regular and extraordinary General Assemblies are made by open voting according to Article 19 of the bylaws, considering the proxies.

Second: The Executive Office

According to the association's law and the organization's bylaws, the Executive Office is the executive body of the organization. It meets regularly once a month and can be convened extraordinarily whenever necessary. The president of the organization chairs the Executive Office meetings, ensuring proper conduct, organizing discussions, managing the list of speakers, and setting the time allotted for each intervention and each topic. In the president's absence, the vice-president assumes all the president's powers.

The Executive Office is tasked with:

- Monitoring and supervising the work of committees and other offices.
- Working to achieve the organization's goals and following up on its decisions.
- Ensuring the implementation of the organization's programs as outlined in the bylaws or decided by various internal bodies or legally stipulated.
- Seeking financial resources and sources of self-funding for the organization.
- Organizing activities and events or assigning specialized bodies to do so.
- Protecting the moral and personal interests of all members.
- Addressing any transgressions that arise from specific parties and reminding all members of the organization's goals and directives.
- Taking necessary actions to create committees and branches and performing the required procedures for that.

The Executive Office relies on five permanent committees for managing the organization's affairs:

- ✓ Health and Nutrition Committee
- ✓ Legal Committee
- ✓ Consumer Culture Committee
- ✓ Communication and Public Relations Committee
- ✓ Market and Public Services Monitoring Committee.

These committees are appointed according to the provisions of Articles 23 and 29 of the bylaws. The organization has a committee dedicated to ensuring and maintaining discipline across all its structures. The Executive Office may establish other permanent committees as necessary, depending on the developments in the organization's field of work.

The Scientific Council:

The Scientific Council includes all members with the necessary competencies, skills, and expertise to provide scientific opinions on issues presented to it. It focuses on:

- Sensitive issues requiring a high level of expertise.
- Resolving scientific disputes in the advisory committees' conflicting opinions.
- Drafting statements issued by the organization on matters of public concern.

Regional Branches:

The organization has regional branches corresponding to the number of provinces and delegated provinces, as well as regional offices: the Central Office, the Eastern Office, the Western Office, and the Southern Office. Each regional office is responsible for:

- Coordinating between provincial offices within its jurisdiction, as determined by the Executive Office.
- Acting as a delegate for the Executive Office and being referred to by provincial offices for significant organizational matters.

Fundamental Principles of the Organization:

1. Respect for the Principle of Freedom: Each member of the offices and executive bodies has the right to express an alternative opinion during discussions on all issues under consideration.
2. Adoption of Democracy: Democracy and participation are fundamental principles in all decisions made by the organization, according to the bylaws. Tasks are distributed among members by mutual agreement, with elections being used when necessary.
3. Respect for the Principle of Independence: The organization operates according to its bylaws and is not affiliated with any other entity, whether political, union-based, or ethnic. Specialization of members in certain tasks does not prevent any member from participating in, following up, or evaluating activities outside their scope within the limits set by the authorized bodies.
4. Commitment to Coordination: To ensure better coordination for collective work and credibility for community work, no member may commit to an issue concerning the organization without consulting the president or obtaining the majority approval of the Executive Office members. All office members must respect the principles of notification,

clarity, and transparency in all matters concerning them.

Goals of the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection and Guidance:

The primary goals of the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection and Guidance are as follows:

1. Raise consumer awareness.
2. Defend the material and moral interests of consumers.
3. Promote the quality of consumer goods and services.
4. Reduce instances of fraud and deception in products and services.
5. Ensure a healthy and safe environment for consumers and those under their care.

Since its establishment, the organization has undertaken numerous activities to raise consumer awareness of their rights, encapsulated in the organization's brochure titled "Know Your Rights," which includes:

- The right to safety and security.
- The right to knowledge.
- The right to meet basic needs.
- The right to education.
- The right to choose.
- The right to compensation.
- The right to a clean environment.
- The right to be heard.

To this end, the organization has provided several contact numbers for consumer service, along with its website and official Facebook page. It has also distributed various brochures, such as those addressing the risks of childhood obesity due to excessive consumption of sugars and ready-made foods. In 2023, the organization launched the "My Choice" initiative, a label representing a survey of consumer preferences for national products deemed compliant, beneficial, and good for consumption. The label includes samples of those products.

Additionally, the organization announced the establishment of a physio-chemical and microbial water analysis laboratory under the name **REZGHILAB APOCE**, detailing the types of analyses it offers. The organization has closely followed the diversity of mineral water products in Algeria.

On March 15, 2021, the organization launched a new application named "*Ashki*" (Report) which allows users to report various commercial violations, including unjustified price increases, misleading advertising, and corruption suspicions. The application protects whistleblowers, ensures the confidentiality of their information, and precisely locates the reported violation.

6. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we emphasize the efforts made by the Algerian state in ensuring food safety for citizens, with the cooperation of the only non-governmental organization in Algeria, the Algerian Organization for Consumer Protection and Guidance. Given the diversity and multitude of food activities in Algeria, it is essential to have more active bodies in this field to cover as many markets, factories, and food institutions as possible. Therefore, we recommend the following:

1. Adopting a system of incentives and tax exemptions for food establishments that adhere to the highest food safety standards, as well as for individuals and organizations active in reporting violations and risks to national food security.
2. Regulating the legal frameworks for monitoring bodies, especially non-governmental ones, and valuing their activities through an incentive system.
3. Establishing a digital platform dedicated to food safety, containing all relevant information, laws, and institutions engaged in food safety, with activated hotlines for reporting dangers and violations threatening citizens' health.
4. Establishing modern-equipped food analysis laboratories in all provinces to facilitate proving violations committed by food manufacturers.
5. Providing necessary legal protection for organizations active in monitoring food safety from all pressures, attempts to bribe, and defame by food establishments that do not adhere to food safety, especially for widely consumed products (such as coffee, processed meats, canned goods, sweets, cakes, etc.).

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