

From Quality to Excellence – an example from the food industry

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The food industry is adapting its quality assurance systems to the requirements of various global standards, such as FSSC 22000, IFC and BRC. This is especially true of manufacturers bringing products into major retail chains, where certificates are an obligatory precondition for further sales negotiations. The basic cell that is usually in place and around which specific control processes are established is a system of quality management in line with the requirements of the ISO 9001 standard. The high technical demands of these standards and the frequency of the required verifications and validations usually bring to the fore merely the technical aspects of quality control in a given organisation. Quality managers often do not have the time or knowledge to develop broader dimensions of quality management. In the Atlantic Grupa, which produces and distributes products of well-established brands such as Argeta, Cockta, Donat, Barcaffè, Cedevita, Smoki and more, in recent years we have tested out in practice certain new models, such as the EFQM model and the model of sustainable development under the GRI standards, for which our assessment was that they open up the path to excellence and enable us to more easily fulfil the Group's vision. That vision is guiding us towards a better focus on the end consumer, and envisages an expansion of sales to the more advanced European markets.

From both one and the other model we have in practice learned many new things, and in doing so we encountered the dilemma as to which one we should stick to as a development tool. We realised that both excellence and sustainable development are guiding the organisation towards achieving good commercial performance, for the benefit of each individual and of environmental concern at the same time. Both models envisage transparent and structured financial and non-financial reporting to the stakeholders. At the same time the two models are notably different, since the EFQM model "expects" the organisation to show balanced development in all factors of success, while the GRI standards enable each organisation to function selectively, based on the recognition and management of the most important influences on the economy, the environment and society.