

# Food handlers' perception of minimally processed products

**M. Barros<sup>1</sup> and A. Rocha<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Faculdade de Ciências da Nutrição e Alimentação da Universidade do Porto. Rua Dr. Roberto Frias  
4200 465 Porto. Portugal. manuelaobarros@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Faculdade de Ciências da Nutrição e Alimentação da Universidade do Porto. Rua Dr. Roberto Frias  
4200 465 Porto. Portugal. adarocho@fcna.up.pt

Consumers increasing concern about food and health associated with reduced time to prepare meals has been determining the search for convenient products, with fresh like quality, namely fruits and vegetables [1]. The use of minimally processed products (MPP) allows foodservice units to offer a greater variety of menus, reducing costs and minimizing cross contamination. At the same time their inclusion in menus reduces the problem of seasonality; and enables standardization of menus, saving time and labour force [2,3]. Nowadays there are still few food units adopting MPP, because these products are viewed as being more expensive than conventional ones and are frequently regarded by employees, as are less natural and easily perishable, but above all, they realize that the use of these products entails a renovation of the entire production of meals, including a reduction in the number of employees in the activities of pre-preparation [3,4].

The main goal of this study was to identify and analyze the level of awareness of foodservice operators, in respect of MPP. It is a cross-sectional study with an analytical component. The study was conducted by applying a multiple choice questionnaire to food handlers.

The majority of the institutions included in this study were hospitals, located in the North of Portugal, which cooked and served between 100 and 400 meals per day. Approximately 90% of the institutions had less than 10 employees working at the food service. 182 food handlers (180 women and 2 men), were interviewed, aged 20-58 years. The educational level was on average low, more than half of handlers had an education level less than or equal to the 2nd cycle of basic education. Regarding to employment status, the food handlers were officials of the Institute and most performs functions of kitchen helper. All food handlers responded that their food service unit used the MPP, pointing the less time spent on preparation, the less waste produce and the variety offered as the main advantages for using them. In spite of recognizing these advantages most of them prefer the traditional ones, highlighting the reasons for this choice freshness, sensory quality and the fact that more operators are needed to prepare them.

A promotion and a demystification of this category of products is necessary to food service managers and employees, since they present an excellent alternative to fresh equivalents.

## References:

[1] Moretti, C.L. (2001), *Processamento Mínimo*, Revista Cultivar, pp. 32-33.

[2] Ragaert, P.W.V. (2004), *Consumer perception and choice of minimally processed vegetables and packaged fruits*, Food Quality and Preference, pp. 259-70.

[3] Cardello, H.G.S (2007), *Consumer perceptions of foods processed by innovative and emerging technologies: A conjoint analytic study*, Innovative Food Science and Emerging Technologies, pp. 73-8.

[4] Ribeiro, C. (2002), *Análise de perdas em Unidades de Alimentação e Nutrição Industriais*. Florianópolis: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.