

Chapter 10

Importance of Biotechnology in the Development of Functional Foods in Emerging Countries: The Case of Chile

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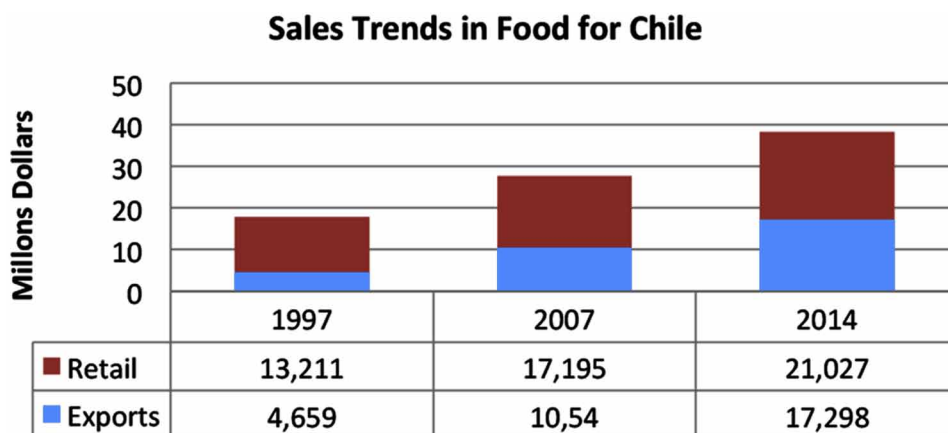
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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to highlight the qualities of functional foods, in relation to those called traditional foods and, from this perspective, the contribution that the use of techniques based on biotechnology can provide to increase the quality of foods, while seeking to reduce diseases derived from a bad or insufficient nutrition in the population. To that end, a brief overview has been prepared on the diverse categories of healthy foods, before delving deeper into the definitions of functional foods. This paper addresses the existing relation and impact of using biotechnology for processing them and, at the same time, it provides a short description of the potential market for functional foods in Chile.

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Figure 1. Sales trends in food for Chile



INTRODUCTION

Chile is an emerging country that has historically based its economy on mining and food. This last sector has had a more sustained growth over time. According to the Central Bank of Chile, in 2014, food accounted for 18% of the GDP, constituting 25% of the total exports of the country. It has more than 1,500 export products, accounting for more than 800,000 jobs and, as shown in Figure 1, an evolution in sales which went from USD \$17,870,000 in 1997 to \$38,325,000 in 2014. It is worth noting that Chile is positioned within the top ten exporters of food in the world.

For many years, Chile's economic development strategy has focused on areas with greatest potential in natural resources, such as mining and the food industry, among other things due to its climatic advantages and geopolitical situation. However, in recent decades, other areas with high growth potential, investment opportunities and international competitiveness have identified, such as the generation of renewable energy, global services and biotechnology (CIEChile, 2013).

Chile, beyond basing its economy on natural resources, began to glimpse more explicit efforts to promote the use of biotechnology since 2003 (Government of Chile), when the "National Commission for the Development of Biotechnology" stated that the purpose of their biotechnology policy was: "...promoting the development and application of biotechnology, especially in the productive sectors based on natural resources, in order to increase the welfare and quality of life for all Chileans and thereby contribute to the generation of wealth in the country, ensuring the protection of health and environmental sustainability". This statement reaffirms

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