

A novel quality denomination for beef: strategies, limits and differences between stakeholders

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Beef production is undergoing a difficult situation in Spain due to the rising prices of feeds and energy, and the decreasing demand of red meat, among other factors. One of the strategies pursued by the industry to face this situation is the differentiation of meat by its quality. In this study we perform a prospective analysis of a novel beef quality label produced by the endangered breed ‘Serrana de Teruel’. A Delphi method was used to identify the main ideas and opinions of different stakeholders (producers, processors and distributors, consumers and government) in terms of (1) most relevant production factors, (2) quality attributes of the new meat, (3) opinions on the perception of quality by consumers and (4) best strategies of marketing. The most important factors for each of these areas were: the utilization of pastures and conservation of landscape, the ageing of the meat, the figure of the butcher as a guarantee of quality for consumers, and the establishment of a commercial brand, respectively. However, the concept of quality is often understood differently by the different actors along the meat chain and by the consumers, leading to failure to transfer information effectively between them. In this study, a Kruskal-Wallis test allowed to identify significant differences among the opinions of the different stakeholders’, which referred to the need to reduce costs through extensification of production, the role of pastures and landscape as extrinsic attributes of the meat, the access to grazing infrastructures, the importance of technical management (duration of fattening, carcass conformation and castration), the importance of quality certification and GM-free feeding systems for consumers, and the relevance of a new commercial brand. These aspects should be considered to improve the communication between stakeholders along the chain.