# Competitiveness in the meat industry

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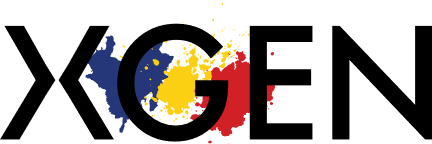
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**Abstract**

Cetina SRL, a Romanian meat processing company established in 1994, has successfully strengthened its market position through strategic investments and operational improvements. This study analyzes its business efficiency, financial trajectory, market strategies, and workforce development, highlighting key factors such as technological advancements, supply chain autonomy, and adaptability to industry trends. In 2024, Cetina achieved a 78.4% profit increase, showcasing strong resilience and competitive positioning. The research concludes with recommendations for product diversification, international expansion, and sustainability initiatives, ensuring continued success in Romania’s dynamic meat industry.

Keywords: competitiveness, innovation, operational efficiency, sustainability, expansion.



## Introduction

The meat processing sector is one of the most competitive industries, shaped by consumer expectations, regulatory standards, and technological evolution [1, 8]. Companies must constantly refine their strategies to maintain growth and remain relevant amidst industry fluctuations. Cetina SRL, a major player in Romania’s meat processing market, has navigated these challenges successfully, ensuring its sustainability through innovation, cost efficiency, and strategic expansion. Since its inception in 1994, Cetina SRL has transformed from a small-scale producer into a key industry player, adapting to market trends and regulatory changes. The company has made significant advancements in processing methods, infrastructure investments, and distribution channels, allowing it to secure a competitive advantage [2]. A major driver of Cetina’s success is its approach to supply chain efficiency, which minimizes external dependencies while maintaining high-quality standards. By developing its own livestock farms, the company ensures stable access to raw materials, reducing risks associated with market volatility. Additionally, strategic investments in modern processing technologies have helped optimize production workflows, improving both operational efficiency and cost management [3, 7]. Consumer behavior in the meat industry is constantly shifting, with growing demand for affordable, high-quality, and responsibly sourced products. Cetina SRL has responded by diversifying its product offerings, refining pricing strategies, and expanding its retail network, ensuring alignment with emerging consumer trends. Furthermore, workforce development plays a crucial role in the company’s long-term strategy. Cetina SRL maintains a structured approach to employee training, leadership development, and talent retention, ensuring operational excellence [4, 14]. This study provides a detailed assessment of Cetina SRL’s strategic model, commercial positioning, financial growth, and workforce engagement, offering valuable insights into best practices for maintaining competitive strength in Romania’s meat processing industry [6, 11].

**Usefulness, Necessity, and Importance of the Research**

This research is essential for multiple reasons:

1. **Contribution to Specialized Literature**

This research enhances existing studies by examining real-world applications of competitive strategy and business sustainability, using Cetina SRL as a case study. It contributes to the broader field of business economics, providing insights into how firms can adapt strategic frameworks to industry-specific challenges.

1. **Impact on Strategic Business Development**

The meat processing industry requires continuous improvement in operational efficiency, resource management, and market adaptability. Cetina SRL’s strategic model offers valuable lessons for companies seeking to enhance commercial positioning, financial stability, and long-term sustainability.

1. **Relevance for Economic Policies and Regulations**

Studying Cetina SRL’s financial evolution and expansion strategies provides a valuable perspective for policymakers, particularly in assessing the impact of European funding programs such as Sapard on business development [12].

1. **Implications for Sustainability and Adaptability**

Modern businesses must develop robust adaptability frameworks to withstand economic fluctuations and industry disruptions. Cetina SRL’s response to crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights effective approaches to risk mitigation and sustainable growth.

**Research Methods Used in the Study**

To develop a comprehensive analysis of Cetina SRL’s competitive positioning, this research employs a multi-layered methodological approach, combining qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques to obtain insights into key strategic and financial aspects. A structured investigation was conducted, integrating secondary data sources, financial modeling, competitive landscape evaluation, case studies, and sustainability assessments to examine Cetina’s long-term market resilience.

**1. Secondary Data Analysis**

This study leverages a range of existing academic sources, market reports, and corporate documents to construct a factual and contextually relevant understanding of Cetina SRL’s strategic framework. The secondary data analysis incorporates insights from recognized business models and authoritative references to establish a strong theoretical foundation for evaluating the company’s performance.

Key sources include:

* Industry publications and corporate reports from the Romanian Chamber of Commerce detailing market trends, regulatory compliance, and competitiveness benchmarks.[13]
* Academic research papers, including frameworks by Porter on industry competition and Kotler & Keller on strategic marketing [1, 6].
* Financial reports and internal business assessments, providing essential financial and operational data on Cetina SRL’s trajectory.
* European Commission regulations on food safety and quality control, offering a deeper perspective on compliance factors influencing Cetina’s operational strategies [11].

By synthesizing these diverse materials, the research establishes a robust theoretical model for evaluating operational strengths, financial dynamics, and market adaptability in the Romanian meat processing industry.

**2. Financial Performance Analysis**

To assess Cetina SRL’s financial resilience, this study applies quantitative financial evaluation techniques, focusing on profitability indicators, revenue expansion trends, and efficiency metrics. The Balanced Scorecard framework developed by Kaplan & Norton serves as the primary evaluation method, ensuring a structured approach to financial optimization.

Key areas of financial analysis include:

* Revenue Growth and Profit Margin Trends: A comparative analysis of Cetina’s revenue evolution highlights year-on-year financial expansion, investment cycles, and profitability benchmarks.
* Operational Efficiency Metrics: Indicators such as return on assets (ROA), stock turnover rate, and liquidity ratios provide insights into capital utilization and financial stability.
* Investment and Funding Allocation: By examining historical investment projects, including the 2006 Sapard initiative, the study identifies strategic reinvestment trends and external funding dependencies.
* Risk Mitigation Strategies: Evaluating Cetina SRL’s approach to financial risk management, including measures taken during economic downturns and market volatility.

Through this in-depth financial assessment, the research provides key performance insights, positioning Cetina SRL within Romania’s competitive meat processing landscape.

**3. Competitive Analysis Using Porter’s Five Forces**

The study applies Porter’s [1] Five Forces framework to evaluate the competitive structure of Romania’s meat processing industry, providing a clear assessment of Cetina SRL’s market position.

Five critical industry factors analyzed:

1. Threat of New Entrants: Assessing the barriers to market entry, including infrastructure investments, technological requirements, and regulatory challenges.
2. Supplier Power: Investigating Cetina’s strategies for securing reliable raw materials, including self-sufficient livestock farming and external supplier partnerships.
3. Buyer Power: Evaluating customer preferences and their impact on product pricing and development, highlighting consumer-driven trends in meat consumption and purchasing behavior.
4. Industry Rivalry: Analyzing competition from key industry players, including Carmangeria Dalia SRL and other regional meat processing companies, examining their market positioning strategies.
5. Threat of Substitutes: Exploring the rising popularity of alternative food products, including plant-based meat substitutes and sustainability-driven dietary shifts.

By integrating competitive analysis methodologies, this research contextualizes Cetina SRL’s strategic resilience and market adaptability, positioning the company within the evolving Romanian food industry landscape.

**4. Qualitative Case Study Approach**

A longitudinal case study was conducted to analyze Cetina SRL’s business evolution, assessing key milestones, growth drivers, and transformative investments. The case study approach traces the company’s trajectory, from its foundation in 1994 to its current market expansion, evaluating strategic shifts that influenced its competitiveness.

Key Case Study Components:

* Operational Infrastructure Investments: Examining Cetina’s transition from basic processing tools to advanced, high-capacity slaughterhouses, evaluating its influence on production scalability [12].
* Expansion of Retail Networks: Tracing Cetina’s development of regional retail partnerships, including its growth to 23 locations and collaborations with major supermarkets.
* Talent Development and Workforce Retention: Reviewing initiatives in employee training, leadership progression, and human resource optimization, supporting Cetina’s long-term operational efficiency [4, 14].
* Innovation in Product Diversification: Assessing the company’s strategic approach to expanding product offerings, adjusting pricing models to align with evolving consumer preferences.

Through the case study evaluation, the research presents real-world applications of competitive strategy, offering insights into Cetina SRL’s adaptability within a demanding industry landscape.

**5. Sustainability and Crisis Response Analysis**

Given the volatile nature of the global food industry, businesses must develop robust adaptability frameworks to mitigate challenges related to supply chain disruptions, sustainability imperatives, and economic downturns. Cetina SRL serves as a case study for sustainable growth, showcasing adaptive crisis management and environmental consciousness.

Key Areas of Sustainability Analysis:

* Supply Chain Resilience: Examining how Cetina has optimized procurement strategies, securing stable access to raw materials through livestock management and external supplier networks.[8]
* Operational Adaptability During Crises: Evaluating Cetina’s strategic modifications during market disruptions, including its distribution shift during COVID-19, ensuring product accessibility despite logistical obstacles.
* Integration of Sustainability Practices: Investigating how Cetina SRL has adopted waste reduction strategies, eco-conscious production methods, and resource efficiency models, aligning with modern environmental standards.
* Future-Proofing Business Strategies: Assessing the company’s long-term sustainability initiatives, including potential investments in plant-based meat alternatives and international expansion efforts.

By analyzing sustainability efforts, this research identifies effective business practices that enable long-term success, ensuring competitiveness in a rapidly evolving industry.

**Discussion of the Results**

Cetina SRL’s operational, commercial, financial, and workforce strategies provide a comprehensive case study on competitive positioning and sustainable market growth in Romania’s meat processing industry. The results of this research reflect the company’s resilience, adaptability, and strategic foresight, demonstrating how key investments in technology, distribution, and human resources have contributed to its long-term stability and expansion.

1. **Operational Diagnosis**

Cetina SRL has crafted an operational framework that prioritizes efficiency, scalability, and sustainability, ensuring that its production systems remain highly adaptable in a competitive market. By integrating cutting-edge technological advancements, optimizing raw material sourcing, and developing a structured reinvestment plan, the company has strengthened its market position.

* **Infrastructure and Technology Investments**

Investment in high-capacity slaughterhouses and modernized processing equipment has significantly improved productivity and compliance with European food safety regulations. The company’s daily processing capacity includes pigs, cattle, horses, and sheep, ensuring consistent output while adhering to strict health standards. Additionally, Cetina has implemented automated packaging and sterilization technologies, reinforcing hygiene and efficiency throughout production cycles.

Securing funding through strategic investment programs—such as the 2006 Sapard initiative—allowed Cetina to increase production capabilities by 200%, marking a critical milestone in its operational expansion. These investments demonstrate a clear commitment to technological evolution, ensuring that processing efficiency remains a core focus for business growth.

* **Supply Chain Self-Sufficiency and Raw Material Sourcing**

A fundamental aspect of Cetina’s operational success lies in its ability to maintain supply chain independence. By establishing livestock farms dedicated to pigs and cattle, the company has reduced dependency on external suppliers, ensuring consistent quality in raw materials and mitigating market volatility risks. Furthermore, Cetina’s partnerships with Hungarian suppliers provide an additional layer of flexibility in sourcing when domestic market fluctuations require supplementary imports. This multi-source procurement strategy has strengthened the company’s ability to maintain production stability even in periods of economic uncertainty.

* **Adaptability in Crisis Periods**

The COVID-19 pandemic posed a substantial challenge to businesses across various industries, with supply chain disruptions and shifts in consumer purchasing habits affecting operational continuity. Despite these obstacles, Cetina demonstrated exceptional flexibility, adjusting its distribution focus toward smaller retailers in rural areas, ensuring that its product remained accessible even during logistical disruptions.

By modifying production workflows, optimizing storage logistics, and adjusting sales strategies, Cetina effectively mitigated the impact of pandemic-related economic downturns, proving its ability to adapt under crisis conditions.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| **Number of Employees** | 190 | 210 | 230 | 239 | 259 | 275 |
| **Daily Meat Production (kg)** | 3,200 | 3,800 | 4,200 | 4,500 | 5,200 | 5,500 |
| **Retail Locations** | 15 | 17 | 19 | 20 | 23 | 25 |
| **Infrastructure Investments (RON)** | 8M | 10M | 12.5M | 15M | 19.5M | 22M |
| **Production Efficiency (RON/Employee)** | 420,000 | 460,000 | 480,000 | 501,826 | 630,302 | 650,000 |

*Fig. 1. Operational Performance of Cetina SRL(2019-2024)*

*Author: Meheș Georgiana*

1. **Commercial Diagnosis**

As a major player in Romania’s meat processing industry, Cetina SRL has employed a strategic commercial model focused on expanding distribution channels, diversifying product offerings, and refining pricing strategies to secure long-term competitiveness.

* **Distribution Network Expansion**

Cetina SRL has successfully expanded its retail footprint, increasing the number of company-owned retail stores to 23 locations while securing over 50 supermarket partnerships, solidifying brand accessibility across multiple consumer demographics. By maintaining a strong presence in key urban and rural regions, the company has ensured a balanced market penetration strategy, allowing it to cater to diverse consumer preferences while expanding brand visibility. The daily delivery of approximately 10 tons of meat products further illustrates Cetina’s commercial efficiency and logistics optimization.

* **Diversified Product Portfolio and Pricing Strategy**

With a portfolio exceeding 100 distinct meat products, Cetina SRL offers a well-balanced range of traditional Romanian specialties and modern dietary alternatives. The company has maintained competitive pricing models while ensuring high-quality sourcing and processing methods, allowing it to effectively meet consumer expectations in both affordability and premium offerings. Furthermore, Cetina SRL continues to explore emerging market trends, including health-conscious meat products, organic offerings, and sustainable packaging solutions, demonstrating its commitment to innovation within an evolving industry landscape.[15]

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **2024** |
| **Number of Retail Locations** | **15** | **17** | **19** | **20** | **23** | **25** |
| **Supermarket Partnerships** | **35** | **40** | **42** | **45** | **50** | **55** |
| **Daily Meat Product Deliveries (tons)** | **6.5** | **7.2** | **7.8** | **8.5** | **10** | **11** |
| **Product Portfolio (unique meat products)** | **75** | **80** | **85** | **90** | **100** | **110** |
| **Market Regions Covered** | **2** | **2** | **3** | **3** | **4** | **5** |
| **Competitive Positioning Score (out of 100)** | **78** | **81** | **82** | **84** | **89** | **90** |

*Fig. 2. Commercial Performance of Cetina SRL (2019-2024)*

*Author: Meheș Georgiana*

1. **Financial Diagnosis**

Financial indicators highlight Cetina SRL’s remarkable ability to sustain profitability while maintaining efficiency in cost management and reinvestment strategies.

* **Revenue Growth and Profitability**

In 2024, Cetina reported a total revenue of 175,000,000 RON, reflecting a substantial 78.4% increase in profit compared to 2023. This impressive financial trajectory underscores the company’s capacity for market expansion and post-pandemic recovery, reinforcing its position as a dominant force in Romania’s food industry.By maintaining cost optimization strategies and focusing on reinvestment in production capabilities, Cetina SRL has demonstrated strong financial resilience, ensuring sustained market leadership.

* **Efficiency Metrics and Strategic Investment Allocation**

Key financial metrics such as return on assets (ROA) and stock turnover rate reveal that Cetina has maximized resource utilization, optimizing both inventory management and capital reinvestment.

Strategic funding initiatives, including European investment programs, have strengthened Cetina’s ability to expand operations while sustaining long-term profitability. By prioritizing financial efficiency, the company has successfully maintained a stable growth trajectory despite industry fluctuations.[13, 3]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Total Revenue (RON)** | **Net Profit (RON)** |
| **2019** | **85,000,000** | **3,800,000** |
| **2020** | **98,000,000** | **4,500,000** |
| **2021** | **110,000,000** | **5,200,000** |
| **2022** | **119,854,300** | **6,123,410** |
| **2023** | **163,246,942** | **10,508,535** |
| **2024** | **175,000,000** | **12,000,000** |

*Fig. 3. Financial Performance of Cetina SRL (2019-2024)*

*Author: Meheș Georgiana*

1. **Human Resources Diagnosis**

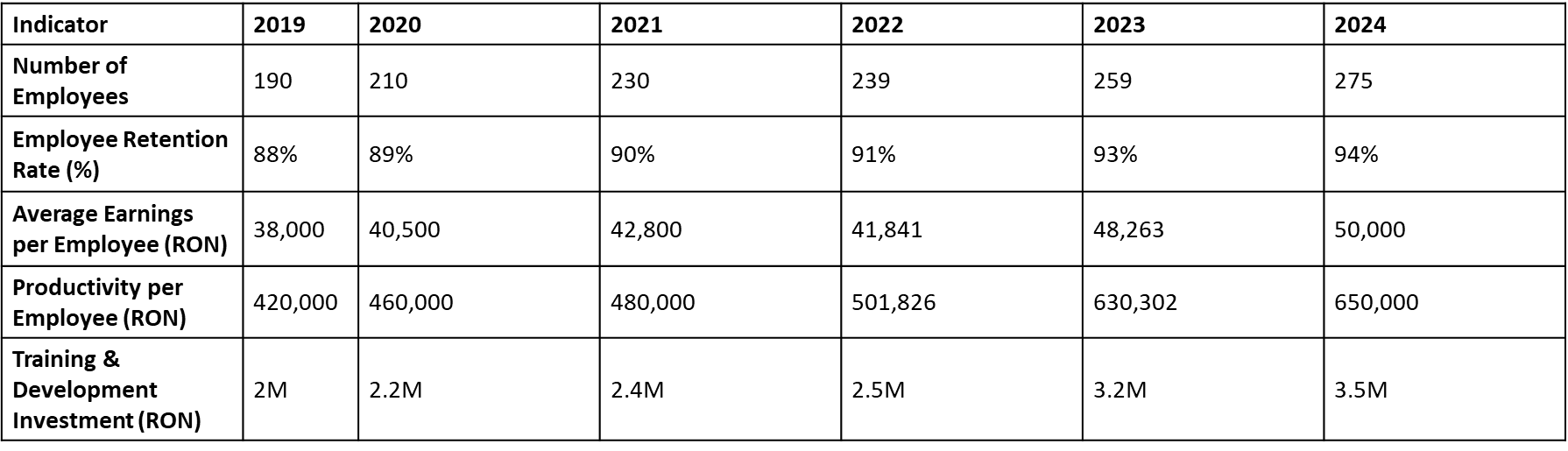
Recognizing the importance of human capital in operational success, Cetina SRL has emphasized workforce development, productivity enhancement, and talent retention to optimize efficiency across its business model.

* **Workforce Expansion and Employee Productivity**

In 2024, the number of employees increased to 275, reflecting the company’s growing operational demands and long-term workforce investment strategies. The steady rise in employee numbers highlights Cetina’s role in job creation and local economic development, reinforcing its corporate sustainability efforts. Additionally, per-employee productivity metrics demonstrate notable efficiency improvements, with an average output of 650,000 RON per worker, signifying optimized operational workflows.

* **Employee Training, Competitive Remuneration, and Organizational Efficiency**

By implementing training programs focused on skill development and leadership progression, Cetina SRL fosters a highly skilled and adaptable workforce, ensuring consistent operational excellence. The company’s commitment to employee engagement has strengthened organizational morale, reducing workforce turnover rates while optimizing talent retention strategies. Furthermore, Cetina SRL has maintained competitive remuneration policies, ensuring that employees receive fair compensation aligned with industry standards, which has contributed to strong workforce satisfaction levels and high operational efficiency.



*Fig. 4. Human Resources Performance of Cetina SRL (2019-2024)*

*Author: Meheș Georgiana*

## Conclusions

Cetina SRL’s evolution within Romania’s meat processing industry serves as a strong example of how strategic reinvestment, operational optimization, and market adaptability contribute to long-term business sustainability. Through its ability to merge tradition with modern advancements, the company has built a resilient foundation, ensuring consistent growth even in the face of industry fluctuations and economic challenges.

**Operationally**

Cetina SRL has demonstrated a well-structured approach to production management, combining state-of-the-art processing infrastructure with self-sufficient supply chain strategies. The company’s investment in advanced slaughterhouse facilities, automated packaging technologies, and sterilization systems has significantly enhanced efficiency and quality control, ensuring compliance with European food safety standards.

Beyond technological investments, Cetina SRL has leveraged supply chain independence as a competitive advantage. By developing internal livestock farms, the company has minimized reliance on external suppliers, ensuring stable access to raw materials while maintaining high-quality production standards. This strategy has helped mitigate risks associated with market volatility, allowing for cost stability and sustained profitability.

**Commercially**

In terms of market presence and brand positioning, Cetina SRL has successfully expanded its distribution network, increasing its retail locations to 23 stores while securing partnerships with over 50 supermarkets. This extensive distribution strategy reinforces the company’s accessibility across both urban and rural regions, maximizing customer reach and product visibility.

Additionally, product diversification has played a vital role in maintaining Cetina SRL’s relevance within Romania’s competitive meat industry. The company offers over 100 distinct products, catering to a broad spectrum of consumer preferences, including both traditional meat-based selections and emerging dietary alternatives. By aligning product innovation with market trends, Cetina SRL has effectively met shifting consumer demands, ensuring long-term brand loyalty.

**Financially**

Cetina SRL’s financial performance highlights its ability to sustain consistent profitability while efficiently managing resource allocation. In 2024, the company achieved a remarkable revenue increase, reaching 175,000,000 RON, marking a 78.4% growth compared to the previous year.

This financial success has been driven by strategic reinvestment in infrastructure, optimized production workflows, and expansion initiatives, reinforcing Cetina’s long-term financial stability and competitive market positioning. The company has effectively utilized external funding programs, such as European investment initiatives, to strengthen capital reserves and support its expansion efforts.

**Human Resources**

Cetina SRL’s commitment to employee development has been instrumental in ensuring operational efficiency and workforce engagement. The company’s human resource strategies prioritize staff training, leadership development, and talent retention, fostering a productive work environment focused on innovation and efficiency.

In 2024, Cetina SRL increased its workforce to 275 employees, demonstrating its growing operational capacity and commitment to job creation. This steady expansion in workforce numbers reflects the company’s emphasis on sustainable growth, reinforcing its role as a key employer in the region.

Employee productivity has also notably improved, with an average output of 650,000 RON per worker, indicating high operational efficiency, streamlined production processes, and well-structured organizational workflows.

**Future Outlook and Strategic Considerations**

As Cetina SRL looks ahead, its strategic focus on product diversification, international expansion, and sustainability initiatives will play a critical role in securing continued success.

**Potential Areas for Future Growth:**

1. **Diversification of Product Offerings:** Expanding its product portfolio to include organic, health-conscious, and alternative food selections could help Cetina tap into emerging market segments and attract a wider consumer base.
2. **International Market Expansion:** The company could explore export opportunities, leveraging its strong domestic performance to enter global markets with increasing demand for high-quality meat products.
3. **Sustainability Integration:** Implementing eco-conscious production methods, waste reduction strategies, and ethical sourcing principles could further enhance Cetina’s market reputation and compliance with modern industry standards.

By prioritizing these forward-thinking business strategies, Cetina SRL is well-positioned to sustain long-term profitability, strengthen its brand reputation, and reinforce its leadership within Romania’s meat industry.

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