



## The importance of institutionalization in enterprises producing candied chestnuts and derivative products: The case of Bursa province

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### ABSTRACT

Chestnut, a fruit of considerable significance for the Turkish economy due to its production volume and export potential, is cultivated in Bursa as in many other regions of Türkiye where it grows naturally. In addition to being sold as a raw product, chestnuts are processed into candied chestnuts and various derivative goods in facilities located both in the city center and surrounding districts. Among the numerous companies operating in Bursa's confectionery and sweets industry, a total of 40 enterprises are engaged in producing and marketing candied chestnuts and related products—items that hold a geographical indication specific to the province. However, statistical data such as the total capacity, production levels, and sales volumes of these enterprises are not published by official institutions. Consequently, sector-specific figures remain uncertain. Nevertheless, based on statements made by company representatives in media interviews conducted in 2019, the total annual production of candied chestnuts and their derivatives in Bursa is estimated to be approximately 3,000 tons. Despite producing such a valuable GI-certified product, only a limited number of businesses in this sector exhibit the characteristics of institutionalized enterprises. Currently, only a few candied chestnut producers in Bursa can be said to have adopted—or to be in the process of adopting—conventional institutionalization practices. Most businesses in the sector are known to operate as family-owned enterprises managing both production and sales activities. Operating within the food industry—one of Türkiye's four largest sectors in terms of high value-added production—candied chestnut producers must embrace institutional practices in order to achieve meaningful growth and long-term sustainability within the sweets and confectionery segment. The first part of this study presents a general framework regarding the production and consumption preferences of candied chestnuts, which constitute a significant area of employment and socio-economic value. The second part examines the importance of institutionalization for candied chestnut producers in Bursa. Finally, the study offers recommendations aimed at increasing consumer preference and strengthening the market positioning of candied chestnuts within the sugary foods category.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, Türkiye has placed particular emphasis on the development of high-tech products and the expansion of exports of high value-added goods. Nevertheless, due to its geographic position and fertile climate and soil structure, Türkiye remains a country where agriculture is considered a primary economic activity. Despite this, agricultural production has experienced a noticeable decline in recent years. According to data from the Ministry of Trade, as of 2022, the agricultural sector's share in the national economy has decreased, accounting for 15.8% of total employment (ticaret.gov.tr, 2024). This statistic highlights the sector's ongoing strategic importance. Beyond sustaining large-scale employment, the continuity and institutionalization of agricultural enterprises are critical for producing high value-added agricultural products, combating unemployment, ensuring food security, and fostering economic development. Enterprises operating with short-term, profit-oriented mindsets, without establishing long-term goals and strategies to achieve them, are generally unsustainable (Akıncı, 2010). Empirical studies in this context have clearly demonstrated that the long-run economic success of nations is determined by strong and inclusive institutional structures, rather than by factors like geography or culture (Acemoglu et al., 2001). Indeed, institutional economics posits that institutions form the very foundation of an economy, serving as the primary determinant of long-term economic growth and performance (Nort, 1990; Aaker, 1991).

Chestnuts, one of the most economically valuable agricultural products in Türkiye, require institutionalized and professionally managed business practices in their production processes. The institutionalization of businesses involved in the production of chestnuts and their derivatives is essential for achieving brand recognition, gaining a stable position in international markets, and ensuring long-term viability (Duru et al., 2022). In this context, institutionalization becomes increasingly important for enterprises in Bursa, a major center for geographically indicated candied chestnut production, as they progress along the path of branding.

Institutionalization refers to an organization's ability to operate independently of individual personalities, or, in other words, to establish a systematic and robust structure that is managed through professional governance mechanisms (Akdoğan, 2000; Aktaş, 2019). It ensures the sustainability of an enterprise by enabling it to be governed in alignment with predefined goals, rules, shared values, and principles (Ülgen, 1990).

Institutionalization also facilitates a separation from the emotions, opinions, and personal decisions of owners or managers, promoting the governance of the enterprise within the framework of established norms. This enables the organization to sustain itself based on its internal dynamics (Atasever et al., 2018). Based on these definitions, institutionalized businesses can be described as legally compliant, socially responsible, and environmentally conscious organizations that are widely recognized and accepted by society at large (Armstrong, 2002).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) encounter significant challenges in complying with regulatory and institutional frameworks, particularly in sectors that demand high levels of technical expertise such as food safety and environmental protection. Yapp and Fairman (2006) identified several key barriers—including lack of financial resources, time constraints, limited managerial experience, and restricted access to reliable information—that prevent SMEs from developing effective compliance systems. Similarly, research in related fields such as environmental management and occupational health and safety (Wright, 1998; Taylor, 2001; Anıl and Eti, 2022) has shown that SMEs often lack the institutional capacity and professional specialization required to adapt to evolving regulatory demands. These findings suggest that institutionalization is not merely a national or sector-specific issue, but rather a global challenge shaped by structural limitations inherent to smaller enterprises. Therefore, understanding the institutional development of food SMEs—such as candied chestnut producers—should be approached within the broader framework of international organizational theory and compliance behavior.

Institutionalization processes within industries are often shaped by the dynamics of the broader organizational field in which firms operate. The concept of institutional entrepreneurship offers a useful perspective for understanding how certain actors initiate and steer institutional change, particularly when conditions of uncertainty, contradiction, or opportunity exist within a field (Seo and Creed, 2002; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006).

According to institutional theory, uncertainty in a field can trigger institutional change as actors strive to reduce unpredictability and transaction costs (Salancik et al., 1978; North, 1990; Coase, 1993; Beckert, 1999). Institutions establish stable frameworks by structuring the relationships and expectations among interdependent actors (Wiltbank et al., 2006). Institutional entrepreneurs—such as innovative leaders, professional associations, or public organizations—often take on a critical role in identifying and resolving field-level problems; in doing so, they spearhead the formation of new norms, standards, and practices (Déjean et al., 2004; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006).

Empirical studies demonstrate that institutional change is provoked when traditional structures fail to meet evolving market conditions or stakeholder expectations. For instance, performance issues in the accounting sector prompted the adoption of new organizational forms (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Similarly, the rigid model of business education encouraged European business schools to incorporate the AACSB accreditation system (Durand and McGuire, 2005). Institutional entrepreneurship can also emerge from efforts to create standard frameworks for measuring social performance or to find solutions to public health issues (Dejean et al., 2004; Ritvala and Granqvist, 2009).

However, institutional fields are rarely homogeneous; they are characterized by internal contradictions, competing logics, and tensions among actors (Seo and Creed, 2002; Dorado, 2005; Creed et al., 2010). These contradictions enable the questioning of existing arrangements and open avenues for innovation, directing actors towards collective change efforts (Greenwood et al., 2002). In this respect, institutional entrepreneurship not only reacts to uncertainty but also emerges from conflicts and misalignments within mature fields.

In the case of enterprises producing candied chestnuts and derivative products in Bursa province, similar field-level dynamics can be observed. Producers operate in a competitive environment shaped by market uncertainties, the development of quality standards, and shifting consumer expectations. Under these conditions, institutional entrepreneurship—emerging through the efforts of pioneer firms, producer associations, or public institutions—can foster the diffusion of standard production practices, strengthen marketing structures, and support organizational formation. Consequently, the institutionalization of this sector is contingent not only on internal managerial capabilities but also on broader field-level stimuli that encourage collective problem-solving and innovation.

Chestnut cultivation takes place in countries located within the natural growing and dispersal zones of chestnut trees. Global production of chestnuts fluctuates from year to year and was recorded at approximately 2.132 million tons in 2022 (Table 1). An evaluation of global production data reveals that, although there have been no significant changes in the number of chestnut trees over the years, production volumes have varied considerably, particularly in the past five years due to yield fluctuations.

**Table 1.** Global chestnut production volumes (2013–2022)

No	Year	Production (Tons/Year)
1	2013	2,090,054.02
2	2014	2,038,761.70
3	2015	2,012,719.03
4	2016	1,975,247.30
5	2017	1,946,992.46
6	2018	2,079,285.54
7	2019	2,151,184.68
8	2020	2,158,715.33
9	2021	2,134,871.92
10	2022	2,131,240.64

(Source: FAOSTAT, 2024)

According to statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT), approximately 90% of global chestnut production takes place in Asia, 8% in Europe, and 3.6% in the Americas. When examining production by country, China ranks first with an estimated 1.56 million tons of chestnuts produced in 2022, followed by Spain, Bolivia, and Türkiye, which is fourth with 80,200 t (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Top 10 chestnut producing countries in 2022

No	Country	Production (Tons/Year)
1	China	1,562,685.59
2	Spain	174,050.00
3	Bolivia	82,720.73
4	Türkiye	80,200.00
5	North Korea	53,373.45
6	Italy	57,350.00
7	Greece	37,260.00
8	Portugal	29,360.00
9	Japan	15,600.00
10	South Korea	12,657.38

(Source: FAOSTAT, 2024)

China, the leading country in chestnut production, also holds the top position in exports. Türkiye ranks sixth in global chestnut exports, following Portugal, Italy, Spain, and South Korea (FAOSTAT, 2024). While China consumes nearly 95% of its chestnut production domestically, it also imports nearly half the volume it exports. Italy and Spain are notable both as top importers and exporters of chestnuts (Özçalık, 2019).

Chestnut exports from Türkiye have steadily increased in recent years, especially to markets within the European Union. Italy is the primary export destination, followed by countries such as Greece, Germany, and Austria. Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Israel also constitute part of Türkiye's export markets. Despite its export activities, Türkiye also imports chestnuts—particularly large-sized varieties used in the confectionery industry (Trigkas, Karagouni and Tsameti, 2025).

Chestnuts, whether processed or unprocessed, have a wide range of alternative uses. In Türkiye, however, consumption is generally shaped by traditional food habits and includes roasted chestnuts, oven-baked or boiled chestnuts, chestnut stews, preserved (canned) versions, or their use as an ingredient in rice dishes and desserts. Derivative chestnut products such as candied chestnuts, chocolate-coated chestnuts, cakes, ice creams, jams, fillings for rice dishes, cookies, purées, and marmalades are produced and consumed in limited but growing quantities.

For example, cultural differences significantly influence chestnut consumption across regions. In Italy, chestnuts are traditionally served alongside coffee; in France, they are used to enhance flavor in various dishes—particularly in Turkey stuffing. In Central Asian countries, chestnuts are commonly used in region-specific rice dishes. In Mediterranean European countries, chestnuts are consumed as marmalade or festive confections during the Christmas season. In Hungary, chestnut purée is popular, while in East Asian countries, chestnuts are often used as filling in flour-based desserts. Moreover, in countries like China, Malaysia, and Singapore, unique cooking methods such as roasting with black lava stones are employed (Kastamonu Province Chestnut Processing Facility / Preliminary Feasibility Report, 2021). This cultural and commercial link is widely confirmed in international literature, which stresses that local products, especially those with GI status, play a vital role in constructing and reinforcing a distinct regional identity and economy (Messely et al., 2010; Török et al., 2022).

## 2. Material and methods

This study employs a qualitative, document-based descriptive research approach to investigate the institutionalization processes and structural challenges of enterprises engaged in the production and marketing of candied chestnuts and related products in Bursa Province, Türkiye. The methodology is grounded exclusively in secondary data sources and guided by frameworks developed in the fields of organizational theory, family business management, and agricultural economics.

### 2.1. Research area and scope

Bursa Province was selected as the study area due to its strategic importance in Türkiye's chestnut industry and its recognition as the geographic origin of registered chestnut candy products. The city is home to a significant number of small- and medium-sized enterprises, most of which operate as family-run businesses and exhibit varying degrees of institutional maturity (Akdoğan, 2000; Özçalık, 2019). The study specifically focuses on enterprises involved in the transformation of raw chestnuts into value-added products within the food and confectionery industry.

### 2.2. Data collection techniques

The study is based on desk research involving a wide range of publicly available secondary sources. No surveys, interviews, or direct observations were conducted. The following data sources were systematically reviewed:

- Academic literature on institutionalization in family businesses (Özkaya and Şengü 2006; Apaydın, 2009; Bayar, 2021);
- Official documents such as the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office's geographical indication certificates (Türkpatent, 2021);
- Statistical data published by institutions such as the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2024) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2024);
- Sectoral reports and regional development agency publications (KUZKA, 2021);
- Media content and local news archives, particularly case studies from prominent firms in the sector (Şehir Medya, 2015);
- Postgraduate theses and dissertations focused on chestnut production and family enterprise sustainability.

This comprehensive review enabled the identification of institutionalization challenges, organizational structures, and managerial patterns within the sector.

### 2.3. Data analysis method

A qualitative content analysis was carried out by coding and classifying textual data into major analytical categories. Based on the literature (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; North, 1990), the following institutionalization dimensions were adopted as primary themes:

- Structural formalization (defined roles, procedures, documentation).
- Professionalization (delegation of authority, human resource practices).
- Intergenerational continuity and succession planning.
- Branding, corporate identity, and sustainability practices.

Each of these themes was analyzed using a comparative approach between theoretical models and context-specific insights from the Bursa chestnut sector. Patterns of non-institutional behaviors, such as centralized authority, informality, and kinship-based decision-making, were also assessed.

### 2.4. Limitations

This study is inherently limited by its reliance on secondary data. The absence of primary data collection

restricts the ability to verify organizational dynamics on a firm-level basis. Furthermore, the lack of recent quantitative sector-wide metrics imposes constraints on statistical inference. Nonetheless, the document-based design offers a reliable framework to examine institutional gaps and managerial challenges in the context of agricultural value-added production enterprises in Türkiye.

### 3. Cultural influence on consumption and chestnut candy production in Bursa

Cultural differences have a significant impact on chestnut consumption patterns (Kastamonu Province Chestnut Processing Facility / Preliminary Feasibility Report, 2021). The production process of candied chestnuts can be described in the simplest terms as soaking the chestnuts in a sugar syrup solution. Derivative products are made by coating these candied chestnuts with sugar or chocolate.

In Türkiye, the most widely used commercial processing method for chestnuts is the “candied chestnut technique.” Among alternative processing techniques, canning is also utilized—especially in France—where this method is employed to preserve the shape and quality of the chestnuts. This method allows for the commercial use of chestnuts that are unsuitable for fresh consumption (commonly referred to as “reject-grade” fruits). In addition, chestnut-based ice creams and pastries also occupy an important place in the food industry.

As noted, the “candied chestnut method” remains the most prevalent technique in Türkiye. Canning, widely practiced in France, preserves the structural integrity of chestnuts and allows producers to utilize lower-quality fruits for commercial gain. Products such as chestnut-based ice creams and cakes are becoming increasingly widespread in the food sector (Sert and Sarıbaş, 2013).

Chestnut candy production is particularly concentrated in Bursa, making the product nearly synonymous with the region. This regional dominance can be attributed not only to the volume of production but also to a long-standing cultural association with chestnut-based products. The historical roots of chestnut candy in Bursa date back to the Ottoman era, during which housewives commonly made candied chestnuts at home for daily consumption. It is also known that chestnuts produced in Bursa were exported to Arab regions, where the fruit was considered a symbol of wealth and status (Kastamonu Province Chestnut Processing Facility / Preliminary Feasibility Report, 2021).

A consumer survey conducted in Bursa regarding candied chestnut consumption revealed that 72.7% of respondents consume candied chestnuts, while 27.3% do not. Reported consumption ranged from a minimum of 0.2 kg to a maximum of 5 kg per person, with an average consumption of 0.62 kg. Purchase frequency was stated as once per month. Key factors influencing purchasing decisions included the hygiene conditions of the sales location, product freshness, and retailer credibility. According to the same study, 9.2% of consumers considered candied chestnuts unhealthy, 43.9% paid attention to branding, and 60.5% preferred packaged products. In terms of overall dessert preferences, syrup-based desserts ranked highest, followed by chocolate, milk-based desserts, cakes, and wafers (Özçalık, 2019).

#### 3.1. Chestnut enterprises in Bursa

Candied chestnut production, which holds a geographic indication status and is of considerable consumer importance, involves numerous firms in Bursa. The product was officially registered with a geographical indication through a certificate of origin (Certificate of Origin No. 652) issued by the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office (Türk Patent) on January 20, 2021, upon application by the Bursa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BTSO).

Despite the significance of this product, there are very few enterprises in the region that have adopted corporate-level governance practices. In fact, only a handful of candied chestnut producers in Bursa can be classified as institutionalized. The majority of producers in the region operate as family businesses managing both production and sales operations internally.

The success of such enterprises is closely tied to the ability of the founding generation to transfer their vision and objectives to the next generation (Bérard and Marchenay, 2006; Canal, 2022). In many cases, discrepancies between the initial objectives of founders and how they are perceived by the succeeding generation serve as a fundamental issue that impacts the long-term success and sustainability of family businesses.

### 3.2. Challenges of family-owned chestnut enterprises and the importance of institutionalization

One of the most prominent companies associated with candied chestnuts in Türkiye—both as a pioneer in the commercial production of this product and as a long-established brand in Bursa—is Kafkas Kestane A.Ş.. However, even this well-known enterprise has faced the typical challenges experienced by many family businesses. Over the past decade, internal family conflicts have negatively impacted the company's operations, strained its commercial relationships, and ultimately led to news reports of bankruptcy protection and insolvency proceedings. A 2015 article in Bursa Şehir Gazetesi, a local newspaper, featured the headline "Family Feud in a Global Brand," highlighting that the company's difficulties stemmed from internal disagreements among family members (Şehir Medya, 2015).

In many family-run businesses that initially gain market share, improve competitiveness, and increase profits, members of the second and later generations often focus more on ownership stakes, privileges, and authority than on preserving the founder's vision and efforts. According to Saral Kobal and Aşkun Yıldırım (2016), these generational shifts may hinder sustainability. When authority and responsibility are allocated based on familial ties rather than merit and qualifications; when roles are not clearly defined; and when decision-making becomes centralized—issues such as jealousy, rivalry, generational conflict, and the prioritization of family status over corporate identity may arise (Karpuzoğlu, 2000). An enterprise embarking on the path of institutionalization generally faces the imperative to overcome both the potential scenarios created by family members and the prejudices and traditions concerning business leadership prevalent in the surrounding society (Carlock and Kets de Vries, 2007).

The emergence of conflicts in family businesses predominantly stems from the differentiation of roles, inadequate planning of intergenerational succession, and misalignments between family and business objectives. As the family grows and new generations assume management, ownership, and labor roles in varying capacities, divergences of interest among family members deepen, making the sustenance of a shared vision increasingly difficult. Specifically, the presence of family members who work in the company but lack ownership rights, or those who hold ownership but do not actively participate in the business, heightens uncertainty and tension in decision-making processes. When intergenerational transfer is unplanned, emotional reactions can override rational management processes, and family politics can become a dominant factor negatively impacting business operations. This situation sometimes leads to family conflicts escalating into physical or legal disputes during board meetings, thereby undermining the firm's institutional structure. Furthermore, the misinterpretation of the 'family first' principle—coupled with expectations of employment regardless of merit and pressure focused on dividends—weakens the firm's financial and managerial capacity. Consequently, these conflict areas, arising at the intersection of the family, business, and ownership subsystems, pose serious risks that threaten both family integrity and the sustainability of the enterprise if not addressed through effective planning and governance mechanisms (Carlock and Kets de Vries, 2007; Kamacı et al., 2020).

Family values form the fundamental starting point, enabling the harmonization of both the economic priorities guiding the enterprise and the human expectations within the family. These values, which originate with the founder and are transmitted and reproduced across generations, shape the corporate culture, providing stability, meaning, and direction to decision-making processes. While the absence of shared values exacerbates priority conflicts and managerial incompatibility, a robust system of values strengthens intra-family trust and supports cooperation (Carlock and Ward, 2010). For this reason, defining, formalizing, and integrating family values into planning processes is critically important for sustainable success and competitive advantage in family businesses.

Family businesses face unique managerial challenges because of the intermingling of the family and business systems. Overcoming these challenges and ensuring the sustainability of the enterprise across generations is only possible through the establishment of professional management systems and clear institutional structures (Gersick et al., 1997). The theoretical underpinning for these trends posits that family businesses primarily aim to protect family control, identity, and emotional bonds (i.e., socioemotional wealth), rather than just optimizing economic profits, an objective often leading to conflict with professionalization and institutionalization endeavors (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). For chestnut candy producers in Bursa to build brand value, gain competitive advantage, and expand globally, they must embrace a professional management approach and undergo institutionalization.

### 3.3. *The importance of institutionalization*

In a 2017 conference, Güler Sabancı, Chairperson of Sabancı Holding, emphasized that 95% of businesses in Türkiye are family-owned, with an average lifespan of only 25 years—and that merely 3% survive into the fourth generation (Bloomberg, 2017). Similarly, data from the Bursa Industrialists and Businesspeople Association (BUSİAD) reveal that only 69 family businesses established before the Turkish Republic are still operational today. Alarmingly, 96% of family businesses registered in the system fail to reach their 10<sup>th</sup> year. BUSİAD identifies the primary reasons for collapse as follows: 43% due to sibling rivalry, 19% due to internal family disputes, another 19% due to inheritance conflicts, 14% due to personal quarrels among family members, and 5% due to conflicts between families (BUSİAD, 2024).

Although various definitions of family businesses exist in the literature—based on structure, founder personality, family culture, and sectoral differences—the term generally refers to enterprises owned and managed by family members, where strategic decisions and governance are controlled or heavily influenced by the family and passed down to future generations (Koçel, 2004; Fındıkçı, 2014).

The revision of the European Union's economic governance framework in response to the eurozone crisis has not only aimed to enhance fiscal stability but has also raised questions regarding democratic legitimacy and institutional accountability. The 2007 Treaty of Lisbon played a critical role in this transformation by embedding democratic principles—such as transparency, subsidiarity, and participatory governance—into the Treaty on European Union from a business management perspective, these developments highlight a growing emphasis on institutional structures that are aligned with principles of good governance. Mechanisms such as the European Semester and enhanced budgetary oversight are no longer solely instruments of macroeconomic control; they also reflect broader expectations for transparency, accountability, and strategic planning—values that are increasingly mirrored in corporate governance models (Acconci, 2017; Jurica et al., 2021). Within this framework, scholarly inquiries reveal that voluntary alignment with and transparency surrounding corporate governance practices across MENA countries exhibit significant variation, typically settling at a low baseline (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). In several countries, there has been a noticeable retrenchment of the state at both central and local levels, largely driven by austerity measures and neoliberal economic policies (Bock, 2019). These developments illustrate the gradual withdrawal of the state from its public duties, driven both by the long-term effects of the financial crisis and structural reforms in welfare systems. This shift has created a new economic and political space increasingly occupied by citizens who organize collectively for the common good and are willing to adopt innovative approaches in doing so. In this context, the rise of social enterprises and the cooperative movement can be viewed as a counter-narrative to global capitalism and the prevailing dominance of market-oriented models (Birchall, 2013; Orbie et al., 2018). Within this framework, the evolution of EU economic governance underscores the need for institutionalization not only within public administration but also across private enterprises. Particularly for small and medium-sized businesses, aligning operational practices with these governance standards can enhance organizational resilience, market credibility, and long-term sustainability. In today's increasingly competitive and globalized environment, sustainability becomes an ever-greater challenge for family businesses. Institutionalization and strategic management have become indispensable tools to counter threats to their longevity. Institutionalization is more easily implemented in such enterprises through the application of strategic management principles (Bayar, 2021). Strategic collaborations that create competitive advantage, the development of a strategic plan, and performance-driven budgeting are among the essential benefits of institutionalization.

Given the current data, it is evident that institutionalization is key to the growth and long-term survival of these businesses, which serve as vital drivers of the national economy.

### 3.4. *Benefits of institutionalization*

One of the main reasons for the failure of family businesses is the lack of institutionalization and insufficient management capacity (Fındıkçı, 2014). In many such businesses, centralized and patriarchal structures emerge, often leading to intergenerational conflicts that hinder sustainability (Pazarcık, 2004). One of the principal obstacles to institutionalization in many enterprises is the founding entrepreneur, whose emotional attachment and reluctance to delegate control may hinder the transition to a more structured and sustainable



organization (Miller et al., 2011). Numerous studies report that founders, in their capacity as entrepreneurs, play significant and effective roles in enacting institutional change (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Seo and Creed, 2002; Hardy and Maguire, 2016).

Institutionalization refers to the process by which entrepreneurs relinquish direct control over the enterprise, entrusting it to a structured system guided by clearly defined rules. This includes seeking external consultancy, implementing professional management, and aligning operations with organizational procedures. Reaching this stage implies that the enterprise surpasses the founder's personal vision, knowledge, and abilities. As such, institutionalization is essential for a sustainable, successful, and long-lasting family business (Karpuzoğlu, 2000; Fındıkçı, 2014).

The goals of institutionalization—legitimacy, predictability, resource expansion, conformity, and balance—highlight the multifaceted benefits it brings to businesses (Özdemir Aydın and Tan, 2019). Indeed, it is widely accepted in the literature that the quality of institutions is one of the most fundamental determinants of long-term economic growth and performance (Li and Abiad, 2009).

The first and most fundamental attribute that institutionalization provides is legitimacy—gaining societal approval for the organization's actions and outcomes. This legitimacy is vital for business longevity and entails alignment with environmental and stakeholder expectations. Another critical benefit is the ability to offer predictability in setting future goals and strategies. Businesses that can provide such foresight to stakeholders demonstrate readiness for crisis management, adaptability to change, and responsiveness—qualities that strengthen stakeholder confidence (Mercan, 2023).

Food safety assurance is a system predicated on determining the interactions of every piece or component constituting the food with its other constituents and is achieved through implementing necessary controls within the food supply chain and establishing operational food safety management (Yiannas, 2009). This phenomenon is more readily adopted by firms that have completed their institutional structure due to the requirement for structural formalization and systematic processes (Nguyen and Li, 2022; Figurek and Thrassou, 2023).

Another key benefit is increased access to resources. Institutionalized firms that project a trustworthy and legitimate image are more likely to attract investments and funding. This perception of reliability also makes them attractive to qualified professionals seeking stable and reputable workplaces (Flynn et al., 2013).

Moreover, institutionalization brings order to internal behaviors and decision-making processes. When decisions are made based on pre-established procedures and rules, organizational stability and balance are achieved. For sustainable operation, it is essential that businesses understand their core capabilities, align their activities accordingly, and continuously enhance them with new knowledge and experiences to remain adaptive in a dynamic environment.

Thus for Institutionalization suggest that community-based social enterprises play a crucial role in fostering a plural economy. This is primarily due to their hybrid operational model that combines social and economic objectives, their strong orientation toward addressing local community needs, and their commitment to inclusive governance structures that actively engage diverse stakeholders in both decision-making processes and day-to-day operations (Bailey et al., 2018).

A particularly important competency institutionalization provides is environmental scanning. Keeping a close watch on developments in the external world—colloquially described as “sensing the atmosphere”—is critical for effective business operations. By monitoring changing consumer preferences, societal expectations, and technological advancements, businesses can renew themselves, formulate strategies accordingly, and make informed decisions on investments, market entries, production techniques, product diversification, and marketing efforts. These long and complex processes are often overlooked by non-institutionalized businesses, limiting their operational lifespan.

Institutionalized organizations are characterized by effective external communication, performance-based evaluation of employees, well-structured budgeting practices, fair compensation policies, objective and organization-focused decision-making, active stakeholder collaboration, employee involvement in governance, proactive environmental monitoring, and the implementation of crisis management mechanisms (Fındıkçı, 2014).

### 3.5. Why institutionalization?

When examining the factors influencing consumers' purchasing preferences for candied chestnuts, it becomes evident that hygiene, freshness, and trust are among the most critical. Additionally, the physical conditions of production and sales locations, service quality, quality standard certifications, and similar factors also play a significant role (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007 ; Özçalık, 2019). Taking strategic actions to address these factors is essential for businesses that aim to become a preferred choice in the market. To ensure that candied chestnut products are perceived as high-quality offerings within the sugary foods category, companies must fulfill the requirements of institutionalization and work systematically toward brand development.

Establishing clear organizational goals and strategic plans to achieve them, investing in infrastructure and technology to increase production efficiency, employing qualified human resources, and enabling employee development through international exposure (e.g., sending staff to overseas trade fairs, visiting foreign production facilities, organizing in-house training programs) are all essential elements of institutional growth. Other key actions include clearly defining job descriptions and responsibilities, promoting R&D and innovation for competitive advantage, managing stakeholder communication effectively, building and maintaining a strong corporate identity and reputation, initiating socially responsible projects, and conducting public relations, marketing, and promotional activities that support branding. Furthermore, implementing principles of transparency, accountability, and ethics in governance can only be achieved within a genuinely institutionalized organizational structure (Farquhar, 1989; Haşit, 2009).

Effectively managing these processes requires establishing dedicated departments or units within the organization and employing specialized professionals in each area.

### 3.6. Comparative perspective: Bursa chestnut candy and international geographically indicated products

The production of geographically indicated candied chestnuts in Bursa holds significant cultural and economic importance. However, when compared to international examples of chestnut-based products with geographical indications, notable differences emerge in terms of institutionalization, brand management, and global marketing strategies. In particular, Italy's Marron Glacé and France's Marrons Confits (from the Ardèche region) represent instructive cases.

In Italy, Marron Glacé has been positioned as a seasonal luxury product. Producer associations and cooperatives play a critical role in preserving quality standards, while the European Union's PDO/PGI protection mechanisms are effectively utilized to promote the product in international markets (Belletti and Marescotti, 2020). Through this process, institutionalization and professional management practices have enhanced the sustainability of small family businesses involved in production (Dubuisson-Quellier and Dupré, 2004).

In France, the Marrons Confits of the Ardèche region have achieved high recognition through both geographical indication protection and strong integration with tourism and gastronomy. Local producers employ collective branding strategies to reinforce international visibility and have developed an economic model closely intertwined with gastronomy tourism (Messely et al., 2010).

In contrast, Bursa's candied chestnut sector continues to rely predominantly on family-owned enterprises. Compared to the Italian and French cases, institutional management, certification practices, and collective marketing remain underdeveloped. To achieve greater visibility in international markets, Bursa's candied chestnut producers must establish producer associations, adopt certification systems aligned with EU and FAO standards, implement collective brand management strategies, and strengthen integration with tourism and gastronomy.

In conclusion, the Italian and French experiences serve as valuable benchmarks for Bursa's candied chestnut sector, highlighting the institutionalization and geographical indication strategies required to ensure sustainable growth and international competitiveness.

## 4. Results and discussion

This study examined the institutional structures and managerial practices of small and medium-sized family-owned enterprises engaged in the production of candied chestnut and derivative products in Bursa province,

Türkiye. The findings reveal that the majority of these enterprises continue to operate within traditional, family-centered frameworks, with strategic decision-making processes primarily dominated by the founding generation.

A significant portion of the businesses studied lacked formal organizational structures. Job descriptions, lines of authority, and operational procedures were largely undocumented, with management practices being guided by familial traditions rather than written protocols. This informal structure imposes considerable constraints on both internal control mechanisms and external regulatory compliance. The absence of professional management staff results in decisions being made predominantly through intuition and experience rather than data-driven analysis, impeding growth, branding, and export readiness.

The limited degree of institutionalization also raises concerns regarding intergenerational succession. Most businesses lack structured succession planning, and interest among younger generations remains low, exacerbating the risk of internal conflict and threatening long-term continuity. In addition, deficiencies in documentation systems, financial transparency, and access to external funding limit both legal legitimacy and investment capacity.

Nevertheless, the research identified a small number of enterprises that have initiated institutionalization efforts. These firms had adopted practices such as employing external consultants, utilizing digital tools in production and financial processes, and engaging in branding initiatives. These examples highlight that institutionalization is not merely a technical transition, but a cultural and cognitive transformation that requires a shift in mindset across the organization.

## Key findings

### 1. Institutionalization level and governance structures

- ⊗ Decision-making authority remains heavily centralized in the founding generation.
- ⊗ Professional management, financial transparency, and digital infrastructure are limited.
- ⊗ Resistance to delegating control by founding entrepreneurs is a major barrier to institutional transformation.

### 2. Institutionalization–market interaction

- ⊗ Enterprises with relatively higher market share tend to exhibit more formalized structures (e.g., quality assurance units, branding departments) and employ active digital marketing strategies.
- ⊗ Internal organizational deficiencies directly impact external market performance, particularly in adapting to emerging health trends, market expansion, and brand diversification.

### 3. Macro-level implications and sustainability

- ⊗ Given the relatively short average lifespan of family-owned enterprises in Türkiye, institutionalization should be regarded not merely as a competitive asset but as a structural necessity for sustainability.

The findings also suggest that the delayed institutionalization in family enterprises is not solely the result of internal organizational constraints but also reflects inadequacies in public policy support, professional consultancy infrastructure, and local institutional ecosystems. Hence, promoting institutional transformation through multidimensional and locally grounded policy frameworks is essential to enhancing both sustainability and regional competitiveness.

In sum, institutionalization emerges as the cornerstone for ensuring the sustainability, competitiveness, and intergenerational continuity of family-owned businesses in Türkiye's chestnut confectionery sector.

## Policy recommendations

To address the structural limitations identified in this study and strengthen the institutional capacity of family-owned enterprises in the candied chestnut sector, the following strategic recommendations are proposed:

- Develop specialized support programs focused on institutionalization for family businesses.
- Each enterprise should be encouraged to formulate a “family constitution” that clearly defines authority boundaries, stakeholder roles, and a strategic timeline for the transfer of responsibilities to second and third generations.
- Provide structured training and consultancy on succession planning, intra-family governance, and conflict resolution. Facilitate university–industry mentorship and internship programs to enhance both the engagement and professional readiness of younger generations.
- Organize applied training modules on professional management, financial planning, and strategic development through local development agencies, chambers of commerce, and universities.
- Implement regionally tailored incentive programs to subsidize the cost of external consultancy services and the employment of professional managers. These programs should also support the adoption of corporate accounting systems, digital inventory tracking, and international quality standards (e.g., ISO 22000/9001).
- Support cluster-based strategies and collaborative branding initiatives specifically tailored for the chestnut candy sector.
- Design modular certification programs such as “Institutionalization in Family Enterprises,” “Digital Marketing for Traditional Products,” and “Adapting to Contemporary Health Trends” led by regional development agencies and trade organizations.

#### Further research

To enhance the generalizability of these findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of institutionalization in the broader context of traditional food production, the following directions for future research are recommended:

- Conduct multi-regional, longitudinal studies to track the institutional evolution of family businesses across different regions of Türkiye over time.
- Employ mixed-method research designs (qualitative and quantitative) to model the relationship between consumer dynamics and institutional practices more precisely.
- Explore the mediating role of institutional capacity in the success of export-oriented strategies and branding initiatives in traditional confectionery sectors.

#### Compliance with Ethical Standards

#### Conflict of Interest

The authors claim that they have got no conflict of interest.

#### Authors' Contributions

**Sedat ÖZÇALIK:** Validation, Writing - original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization, Validation, Review and editing, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Aynur KAYA:** Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization, Validation, Writing - original draft, Visualization.

#### Ethical approval

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#### Data availability

Not applicable

## Consent for publication

Not applicable

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