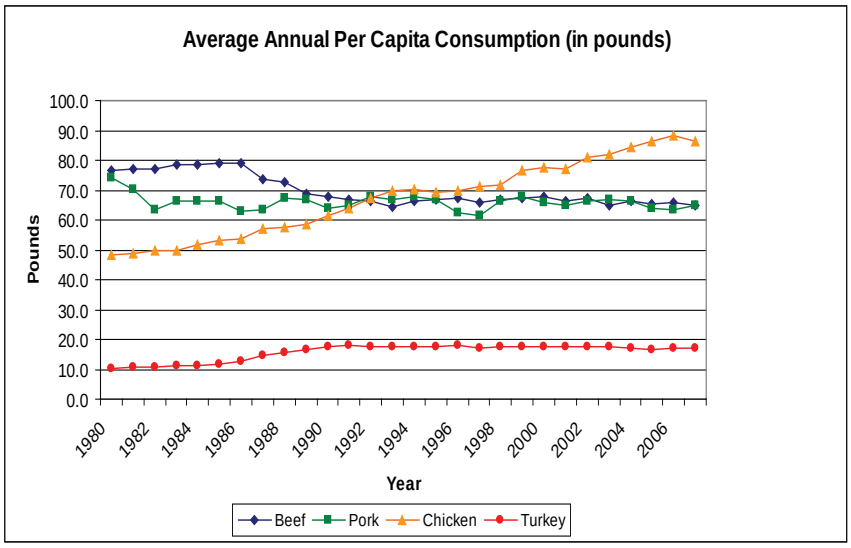
AMERICAN MEAT INSTITUTE

FACT SHEET

U.S. Meat and Poultry Production & Consumption: An Overview

The meat and poultry industry is the largest segment of United States agriculture. Total meat and poultry production in 2007 reached more than 91.5 billion pounds. Annual sales for 2006, the last year for which statistics are available, are estimated at more than $143 billion among the meat packing, meat processing and poultry processing industries. Americans consumed 233.9 pounds of meat and poultry per person in 2006. And Americans are not the only people benefiting from the most bountiful supply of agricultural commodities on earth. Meat and poultry production and consumption statistics illustrate the impressive size and scope of the industry.



Production

Meat production starts with raw materials from farms and feedlots in nearly all 50 states. The national livestock population – cattle, sheep, and hogs – on farms January 1, 2005, was 167.8 million.

Livestock are situated on farms and feedlots across the country, with some states having a higher livestock population than others. Texas, Kansas and Nebraska had the highest number of cattle on the farm in 2008; Texas, California and Wyoming had the highest number of sheep. Iowa, North Carolina and Minnesota had the highest number of hogs in 2008.

In 2007, the U.S. produced 48.8 billion pounds of red meat. Red meat includes beef, veal, lamb, mutton and pork. American meat packers produced 26.5 billion pounds of beef, 155 million pounds of veal, 189 million pounds of lamb and mutton and 21 billion pounds of pork

Poultry production in the U.S. in 2007 totaled 42.7 billion pounds, with chicken production totaling 36.6 billion pounds and turkey production totaling 5.96 billion pounds.

Meat and poultry industry sales topped $143 billion in 2006, the most current year for which there is data. Red meat slaughter and processing industry sales totaled $96.7 billion. Sales for the poultry industry totaled $46.1 billion in 2006.

The value of exported livestock, meat, poultry and related products totaled $17.188 billion in 2007. Related meat products include animal byproducts like tallow, lard, oils and greases, casings, hides and skins, and wool and mohair.

Major U.S. export markets include Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay and Costa Rica for fresh or frozen beef; Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay for processed or canned beef; Canada and the European Union for fresh or frozen pork; and Canada, the European Union, Denmark Poland and Mexico for processed or canned pork.

In 2007, the U.S. exported about 2.7 million metric tons of chicken and 226,300 metric tons of turkey products to major foreign markets such as the Russian Federation, Mexico, China, and Canada. The Russian Federation imported the most U.S. chicken in 2007, purchasing 852,600 metric tons. Mexico imported the bulk of U.S. turkey in 2007, purchasing 126,500 metric tons.

Consumption

Meat and poultry consumption is best measured on a retail weight basis, which refers to the weight of the meat purchased at retail stores. In 2007, per capita

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consumption of red meat, poultry and fish (boneless equivalent) was 200.4 pounds. A little more than half (55 percent) of all meat consumed are red meat products—beef, veal, lamb, mutton and pork. Poultry comprises 36.7 percent of meat consumption and fish comprises 8.2 percent.

Pork consumption has remained fairly stable over the last two decades, USDA data show. Annual per capita pork consumption reached a high of 60.5 pounds in 1971 and a low of 42.9 pounds in 1975. In 2007, per capita consumption was 50.5 pounds.

Beef consumption has trended downward since the 1970s. Per capita consumption of beef reached an all-time high of 94.3 pounds in 1976 when beef supplies were at record levels because of the liquidation of the nation's beef herd. Beef consumption has continued to decline in the 1980s and 1990s, but over the past ten years has remained at an average of 66 pounds per capita. In 2007, per capita beef consumption was 65 pounds. Americans consumed 33.2 pounds of hamburger and 31.9 pounds of other beef cuts per capita in 2007.

Veal and lamb consumption in the U.S. is small relative to other products. Americans consumed .5 pounds per capita of veal and 1.1 pounds per capita of lamb and mutton in 2007.

Per capita consumption of chicken and turkey has increased dramatically since the 1970s, according to USDA data. Chicken consumption rose from 40.2 pounds per person in 1970 to 86.5 pounds per person in 2007. Turkey consumption climbed from 8.1 pounds per person in 1970 to 17.3 pounds per person in 2007.

Consumer Expenditures

Over the past 10 years, per capita expenditures for beef rose from $187.02 in 1997 to $270.42 in 2007. Pork expenditures also increased from $112.78 in 1997 to $145 in 2007.

Consumers increased their spending on chicken products from more than $109 per capita in 1997 to $139.45 in 2007. Expenditures on turkey products have also risen from $18.52 in 1997 to $19.92 in 2007.

Consumers spent an average of $2.30 per pound on hamburger last year and $4.16 per pound for choice beef cuts. Choice beef cuts can include loins, ribeyes, chuck and flank steaks.

In 2007, meat and poultry expenditures accounted for 1.7 percent of disposable income per capita, and for 29.7 percent of total food expenditures. This figure has remained relatively steady in recent years.

Helpful Links

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Economic Research Service
http://www.ers.usda.gov

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