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CONSUMPTION OF MEAT per person in the United States rose during 1966 despite sharply higher prices. Retail prices during the first 10 months averaged nearly 10 percent above the similar period in 1965, with all classes of meat being higher. Nevertheless, the per capita consumption of "red" meat and poultry rose about 4 pounds to nearly 212 pounds. This was only about 1 pound below the record high in 1964.

Allowing for year-to-year and cyclical fluctuations, consumption of meat in the United States has shown an upward trend during the past several years. Poultry consumption has nearly tripled since the Thirties. Consumption of beef has more than doubled in the same period. Since the mid-Forties, however, a downward trend has been shown in pork consumption. Changes during the past year were generally consistent with these longer-term trends.

Meat Consumption Per Capita Continues to Rise

Year	Red meat					Poultry	All meat
	Beef	Veal	Lamb and mutton	Pork	Total		
1955	82	9	5	67	163	26	189
1956	85	10	5	67	167	30	197
1957	85	9	4	61	159	31	190
1958	81	7	4	60	152	34	186
1959	81	6	5	67	160	35	195
1960	85	6	5	65	161	34	195
1961	88	6	5	62	161	38	199
1962	89	6	5	64	164	37	201
1963	95	5	5	66	171	37	207
1964	100	5	4	65	175	38	213
1965 ^b	99	5	4	59	167	41	208
1966 ^c	102	5	4	57	168	44	212

^aFigures rounded. ^bPreliminary. ^cEstimated.
SOURCE: USDA.

Poultry accounted for much of the increase in meat consumption in 1966 because large supplies were available and red meats were relatively high priced. Consumption of poultry rose to a record of about 44 pounds per capita—up nearly 3 pounds from 1965. Consumption of broilers accounted for most of the increase although turkey consumption was also higher—a record 7.9 pounds per person compared with 7.4 pounds a year earlier.

Beef consumption also rose to a record level during 1966, reflecting sharp increases in both domestic production and imports from the preceding year and also the continued very strong consumer demand for beef. Domestic production of beef increased about 4 percent from 1965, and imports averaged nearly 32 percent higher in the first three quarters of 1966 than in the comparable year-earlier period. Calf slaughter was down again during 1966 because of a smaller calf crop and the continued trend toward feedlot fattening. As a result, veal consumption continued its downward trend.

Pork production declined sharply during the first half of 1966, and although higher prices led to a sharp increase in output in the second half, production for the entire year still fell short of the previous year's level. With the further increase in population, consumption declined a little over 1 pound per person to 57 pounds, the lowest since the Thirties.

Production of lamb and mutton also declined slightly, but larger imports boosted total supplies. Consumption per person rose about 8 percent to 4 pounds.

For 1967, little change is indicated from last year's total consumption, but within the major categories beef consumption is expected to decline while increases are expected for pork and poultry. A smaller beginning-of-year inventory of cattle and an expected reduction in slaughter, as producers increase breeding herds, suggests a rather sharp cutback in domestic beef production. Beef imports are likely to increase further in 1967 but not enough to offset the anticipated decline in domestic production. The decrease is likely to be most evident for processed beef products, but as the year progresses fresh beef consumption is also likely to fall off.

Poultry, however, is expected to be in plentiful supply again this year, and consumption likely will increase to a new record. Production of poultry has been stimulated by increased demand and the resulting higher prices. The rapid expansion which began during the latter half of 1965 and continued through 1966 may extend well into this year. Broiler marketings in the first quarter are expected to continue above a year earlier, following the larger chick hatchings in recent months. Turkey supplies also are likely to show a further increase. The larger supplies of poultry meats have already resulted in lower prices and this may tend to limit further expansion as the year progresses, but any turn-about in production would probably be late in the year.

Pork consumption also may be larger than last year's low level. Hogs on farms as of December 1 (the bulk of which will be marketed during the first half of 1967) numbered about 9 percent above a year earlier. Although a survey of farmers indicates a reduced rate of expansion during the second half of 1967, pork supplies are likely to continue to be more plentiful than a year earlier.

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