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Evaluation of Present and Emerging Poultry Product Concepts For Consumers of Delmarva Produced Poultry

by

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Introduction

The evolving tastes and preferences of consumers have had a considerable impact on the broiler industry. The continuing movement away from red meat to poultry has resulted in more poultry than beef being eaten in the United States during 1987 (*Nation's Restaurant News*). In order for the poultry industry to maintain a favorable image in the eye of the consumer, the issues associated with consumer wants, desires, and purchasing decisions have to be sampled and evaluated on a regular basis.

The red meat industry saw its position in the market erode because of cost and failure or inability to address the health issues that have concerned consumers in recent years. The meat industry has also been slow to introduce value-added products. The evaluation of the perceived

health and safety of poultry products and consumers' satisfaction with the new value-added poultry are areas of potential concern to the broiler industry.

There are three issues that pose a potential enhancement or problem to the broiler industry. The first is the utility placed by consumers on the new value-added poultry products. The acceptance of these products will mean increased profits to the industry and a loss of reputation and consumer confidence if the products do not meet expectations.

The second issue involves the use of growth regulators, hormones, and antibiotics in the production of broilers. While these products offer more growth and less fat, a desirable feature with both producers and consumers, there are segments of the population that have voiced

opposition to the use of these products on the basis of the unknown, long-term health effects on consumers.

Third, the broiler industry received some unwanted publicity with the airing of CBS's 60 Minutes on salmonella contaminated poultry products that were making it to the consumer. Such food-borne diseases can be eliminated through irradiation, electron beams, etc.; however, there are consumers who feel that these particular cures are unacceptable.

A particular marketing strategy associated with each of these three issues has to start with the consideration of the consumer. Producer groups cannot afford to fall back on the idea that they are too far removed from the consumer. The willingness to shop around, compare values and make store product and brand substitutions determines the competitive intensity of poultry products compared to other meat products.

Objectives

The overall objective is to investigate and analyze how effectively current and emerging poultry value-added products, production, and preservation techniques can fulfill the needs of consumers within Delaware and the Northeast region.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine consumer attitudes toward and satisfaction with the current variety and forms of poultry value-added products available in retail food stores within Delaware and the Northeast region.
2. To determine consumer attitudes toward and acceptance of the use of antibiotics, growth regulators, hormones and biotechnology in the production of poultry.
3. To determine the effect of public awareness of poultry disease on consumer attitudes toward and acceptance of various disease reduction techniques and preservation practices of poultry products (i.e., irradiation, electron beams, chemicals, UHT pasteurization, packaging, etc.).

Results

We expect to conduct a mail consumer survey in 1990 and have preliminary results available by the end of that year.