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Per Capita Food Consumption Highlights for 1981

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Per capita food consumption fell 7 pounds last year to 1,400 pounds, as Americans ate, on the average, less of both animal and crop products. Animal product usage dropped 5 pounds to 582 pounds in 1981, and crop product consumption declined 2 pounds to 818 pounds. Declines in pork, eggs, and whole milk were primarily responsible for the lower animal product consumption, while declining vegetable and potato consumption was greater than increases in other crop products.

Meat, Poultry, and Eggs

Total red meat consumption fell 2.5 pounds per person in 1981 to 145.2 pounds. A year earlier it had increased 2.8 pounds. The decline stemmed from a sharp 3.3-pound drop in 1981 per capita pork usage, which more than offset a 0.7-pound increase in beef consumption.

The drop in pork consumption reflected a 4.5-percent decline in 1981 production. Hog producers experienced financial losses in 1979 and 1980, and reduced their breed-

ing inventories in 1980. This led to the 1981 production decline which forced farm prices for hogs and retail pork prices up. The 1981 Consumer Price Index (CPI) for pork rose 9.3 percent.

The per capita beef consumption increase in 1981 was the first rise since 1976—the peak of the last cattle cycle's liquidation phase—when production and consumption of beef reached historical highs of nearly 26 billion pounds nationally and 94.4 pounds per person. Production declined in

Table 1. Per Capita Consumption, Selected Items,¹ Selected Years, 1960-81

Food item	1960	1970	1979	1980	1981 ²
All items	1400.1	1397.0	1415.1	1406.9	1399.8
Animal products	614.2	614.2	589.9	587.4	582.2
Crop products	785.9	782.8	825.2	819.5	817.6
Total red meat (excluding game and offal)	134.0	151.6	144.9	147.7	145.2
Beef	64.2	84.0	78.0	76.5	77.2
Pork	60.3	62.3	63.8	68.3	65.0
Lamb and mutton	4.3	2.9	1.3	1.4	1.4
Veal	5.2	2.4	1.7	1.5	1.6
Fishery products	10.3	11.8	13.0	12.8	13.0
Chicken	27.8	40.4	50.6	50.1	51.7
Turkey	6.2	8.0	9.9	10.5	10.7
Eggs	42.6	39.1	35.2	34.6	33.6
All dairy products	653.4	560.7	547.7	544.3	541.5
Fluid whole milk	263.9	213.3	150.1	143.5	137.9
Total cheese	8.3	11.5	17.2	17.6	18.2
Butter	7.5	5.3	4.5	4.5	4.3
Ice cream	18.3	17.6	17.1	17.3	17.2
Fats and oils—total fat food content (including butter)	45.1	52.6	55.8	55.8	56.9
Animal fats	18.1	14.1	11.0	11.0	10.8
Vegetable oils	27.0	38.5	44.8	44.8	46.1
Total fruit	139.4	134.5	136.2	141.2	142.3
Processed	50.3	55.6	55.5	55.4	55.0
Fresh	89.1	78.9	80.8	85.7	87.3
Total vegetables	146.6	152.1	160.8	159.2	154.3
Fresh (commercial)	96.2	91.4	96.4	99.0	97.1
Processed	50.4	60.7	64.4	60.2	57.2
Wheat flour	118.2	110.8	117.2	116.9	116.6
Rice	6.1	6.7	9.4	9.4	11.0
Sugar	97.6	101.7	89.3	83.7	79.4
Corn sweeteners	10.2	18.4	43.3	48.9	55.0
Coffee	11.6	10.4	8.5	7.8	7.7
Soft drinks (gallons)	13.6	23.7	36.8	37.8	38.0
Spirits	1.9	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5
Beer	22.0	25.2	30.5	30.9	31.1
Wine	1.3	1.7	2.5	2.8	2.7

¹Alcoholic beverages are in gallons of beverage volume for the drinking age population.

²Preliminary.

1977-79, but rose in 1980 and 1981 as earlier decisions to hold back heifers for breeding resulted in more available cattle for slaughter in 1981. The increased beef supply, along with plentiful poultry supplies and slow economic growth, helped to moderate retail beef prices, which were up only 0.8 percent in 1981.

Poultry production reached record levels in 1981 and consumption rose 3 percent to 62.8 pounds. Americans ate, on the average, 51.7 pounds of chicken and 10.7 pounds of turkey. Reduced supplies of red meats and sluggish growth in income stimulated the poultry consumption rate.

Egg consumption fell 3 percent from 1980's level to 265 eggs per person, an all-time low. This was caused by a reduction in 1981 domestic supplies because of higher feed costs, and a 54-percent rise in exports. The 1981 consumption decline for eggs continued a 30-year trend—down 32 percent since 1950 due to Americans' changing lifestyles and breakfast habits.

Dairy

Per capita consumption of all dairy products on a milk-equivalent basis decreased slightly to 542 pounds in 1981. Total milk production rose 3.2 percent in 1981 as the number of milk cows increased by 1 percent and milk output per cow increased about 2 percent. Milk used for fluid items, such as whole milk, cream, and yogurt, declined about 1 percent to 50.2 billion pounds in 1981, while milk used in manufactured dairy products increased 6.1 percent to 77.8 billion pounds, a record level.

The increased use of milk for manufacturing in 1981 was reflected in record cheese production of 4.2 billion pounds, which helped increase per capita cheese consumption in 1981 to a record 18.2 pounds. Commercial disappearance of cheese increased 4.5 percent in 1981 to 4 billion pounds, and USDA donated 151 million pounds of cheese to needy persons.

The trend in cheese consumption has been one of increased use since 1960. Consumption of American-type

cheese increased from 5.4 pounds per person in 1960 to 10.1 pounds in 1981. Per capita usage of Colby and Monterey Jack has increased about 158 percent since 1970. Consumption of other cheeses increased from 2.9 pounds to 8.1 pounds in this period. The explosive growth in this category stems from large gains in consumption of Swiss (up about 68 percent since 1960) and Italian types (up 350 percent).

Consumption of other manufactured dairy products was stable in 1981. Evaporated and condensed whole milk usage was up slightly to 4.1 pounds per person, while ice cream, butter, and nonfat dry milk consumption fell to 17.2, 4.3, and 2.7 pounds per person, respectively.

Americans consumed 246 pounds of fluid milk items per person in 1981, down from 250 pounds in 1980. Consumption of plain whole milk declined by 5.6 pounds to 137.9 pounds per person, reflecting continued competition from lowfat milks, soft drinks, and fruit juices. Per capita sales of most fluid milk items were weak with skim milk, flavored milk, buttermilk, and yogurt declining. Per capita lowfat milk sales, however, increased 3.3 percent in 1981 to 74 pounds.

Fats and Oils

Total fats and oils consumption (fat content basis) rose 1.1 pounds in 1981 to 56.9 pounds per capita, a record high. More salad and cooking oils and shortening were eaten, while consumption of margarine and butter was down in 1981.

Because of lower butter consumption, per capita consumption of animal fats fell from 11 pounds to 10.8 pounds. Vegetable oil consumption continued its upward trend in 1981 with per capita usage rising to 46.1 pounds, a historical high.

The major vegetable oil used in 1981 was soybean oil, which accounted for 80 percent of all oil used in the manufacture of salad and cooking oils. Soybean oil also accounted for 64 and 84 percent, respectively, of all fats and oils used in the production of shortening and margarine in 1981. Corn oil is the second most widely used oil in margarine production and salad and cooking oils. In recent years, coconut and palm oil have

been more widely used in shortening manufacture.

Fruits

Per capita consumption of fresh fruits rose 1.6 pounds to 87.3 pounds. Noncitrus fruit consumption increased to 62.7 pounds per person, its highest level since 1953. Per capita apple and banana usage reached 20-year highs at 20 and 21.5 pounds, respectively. The increase in noncitrus fruit consumption is attributed to consumer health concerns, more promotional activity, and the reduced supply of citrus fruits and consequent higher retail fresh citrus prices. Cold winter weather in Florida damaged the citrus crop, and fresh citrus usage fell 12.5 percent to 24.6 pounds per person.

Consumption of processed fruits was up slightly in 1981. Small declines in canned fruit and frozen fruit juices were offset by a 2.5-pound (15 percent) increase in canned juice consumption. Apple juice led the increase in canned juices with a 35-percent increase. The freeze in Florida reduced supplies of frozen orange juice concentrate and consumption of this item fell slightly despite higher orange juice imports.

Vegetables

Fresh vegetable consumption, excluding potatoes, fell 1.9 pounds in 1981 to 97.1 pounds per person. Consumption decreased for practically all vegetables except cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, and spinach. Fresh tomato consumption fell as supplies were reduced by poor winter weather and less harvested acreage. Retail fresh tomato prices were up 16 percent. Fresh potato usage declined to 47.1 pounds per capita in 1981 due to poor 1980 fall potato production.

Processed vegetable consumption was down 5 percent in 1981 to 57.2 pounds per person as per capita consumption of canned vegetables fell to 45.9 pounds, and per capita frozen vegetable usage rose 0.9 pound to 11.3 pounds. Most categories of canned vegetables were down in 1981, while all frozen items were up or unchanged. Frozen potato product usage increased 1.3 pounds per person to 18.2 pounds.