



AgEcon SEARCH
RESEARCH IN AGRICULTURAL & APPLIED ECONOMICS

The World's Largest Open Access Agricultural & Applied Economics Digital Library

This document is discoverable and free to researchers across the globe due to the work of AgEcon Search.

Help ensure our sustainability.

Give to AgEcon Search

AgEcon Search

<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu>

aesearch@umn.edu

*Papers downloaded from **AgEcon Search** may be used for non-commercial purposes and personal study only. No other use, including posting to another Internet site, is permitted without permission from the copyright owner (not AgEcon Search), or as allowed under the provisions of Fair Use, U.S. Copyright Act, Title 17 U.S.C.*

Per Capita Food Consumption Highlights

Richard Prescott
(202) 447-6860

Food consumption in 1980 continued at previous levels for overall food groups, but some marked changes occurred among individual items. Several longer term trends, especially for meats, cheese, fluid milk, and sweeteners, continued into 1980. Consumer tastes and preferences, income levels, and relative price trends are largely responsible for longer term changes in food consumption, whereas year-to-year changes are usually caused by production factors.

Meats

Red meat consumption (excluding edible offal and game) for 1980 was 150.1 pounds per person, up 3 pounds from 1979. This increase came despite 1980 beef consumption of 78.1 pounds, which was 13 pounds below the 20-year trend and nearly 18 pounds below the 1976 peak. Beef production is cyclical, and in those years when producers rebuild their herds, such as 1979-81, prices generally rise and production falls. Pork is subject to a somewhat shorter cycle, but similar biological and economic factors affect pork production. Producers, responding to high pork prices in 1978, increased output substantially in 1979 and 1980. This resulted in record 1980 per capita consumption of 69.1 pounds, 9 pounds above the nearly flat 20-year trend. Americans ate 1.5 and 1.4 pounds of veal and lamb per person in 1980. Consumption of these meats has traditionally been quite small and has been declining steadily over the past 20 years. Chicken consumption was 51.2 pounds per person, down slightly from 1979 levels, but about 2 pounds above the 20-year trend.

Relative prices are one of the factors that have contributed to the changing mix of meat consumption since 1960. Chicken prices have risen at only about two-thirds the rate of other meats. Consumer's desire to reduce fat intake has also encouraged shifts in consumption to leaner red meats and to chicken. The breeding of leaner hogs is an example of how the pork industry has responded to changing consumer preferences.

Despite more rapid increases in fish prices, consumption has increased continually over the past 20 years, particularly for fresh and frozen fish and shellfish.

Dairy Products

Americans drank an average of 241.4 pounds per person of all types of fluid milk in 1980, compared with 245.5 pounds in 1979. This continued a 20-year gradual decline. The significant shifts in consumer preference from whole milk to nonfat and low-fat milk experienced since 1960 continued in 1980 as

whole milk consumption fell to 144 pounds per person. Competition from other beverages—particularly consumption of citrus juices, which has nearly doubled since 1960, and soft drinks, which nearly tripled—has contributed to the decline in fluid milk consumption. The amount of cheese eaten has risen at a trend rate of 4.3 percent per

Per Capita Consumption, Selected Foods

Food Item	1960	1970	1979	1980 ¹
				Pounds
Total red meat (excluding game and offal)	134.1	151.4	147.1	150.1
Beef	64.3	84.1	79.6	78.1
Pork	60.3	62.0	64.6	69.1
Lamb and mutton	4.3	2.9	1.3	1.4
Veal	5.2	2.4	1.6	1.5
Fishery products	10.3	11.8	13.3	13.2
Chicken	27.8	40.5	51.5	51.2
Turkey	6.2	8.0	10.1	10.6
Eggs	42.4	39.5	36.0	35.4
Fluid whole milk	263.9	213.3	150.4	143.5
Total cheese	8.3	11.5	17.6	17.9
Butter	7.5	5.3	4.6	4.6
Ice cream	18.5	17.7	17.5	17.7
Fats and oils - total fat food content (including butter)	45.3	52.6	55.5	55.6
Total fruit	140.3	134.9	142.3	143.7
Processed	50.3	55.5	57.9	57.8
Fresh	90.0	79.4	84.4	85.9
Total vegetables	146.4	151.9	163.1	164.5
Fresh (commercial)	96.0	91.2	98.4	105.9
Processed	50.4	60.7	64.7	58.6
Wheat flour	118	111	120	120.0
Sugar ²	97.4	101.8	91.1	85.6
Corn sweeteners ²	10.2	18.4	44.4	49.5
Coffee	11.6	10.4	8.5	8.0
Soft drinks	13.6 ³	24.1 ³	37.5 ³	NA

¹Preliminary. All data as of July 1981. NA = Not available.

²Includes use in ice cream, processed fruit, and soft drinks.

³Gallons.

year since 1960, while consumption of butter, ice cream, and other dairy products has been relatively flat.

Fats and Oils

Total per capita consumption of fats and oils was 55.6 pounds in 1980 on a fat-content basis. On a product basis, lard, shortening, and margarine were stable at 2.6, 18.3, and 11.4 pounds, respectively, while salad and cooking oils rose to 21.6 pounds. Total fats and oils intake has remained relatively constant over the past 20 years, but the mix has shifted—lard consumption is down by two-thirds over the period, while vegetable oils used in cooking, salad oils and dressings, mayonnaise, and baked goods have approximately doubled in use.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit consumption in 1980, at 143.7 pounds per person, continued the upward trend that began in the late sixties after a

decade of decline. Fresh fruit, which has been increasing in popularity since the mid 1970's, and fruit juices, which have risen since the late 1960's, account for most of the increase since 1970.

Americans ate 164.5 pounds of vegetables in 1980, not including home produce, up slightly from 1979 levels, continuing the gradual trend increase of the past two decades. Wheat flour consumption held steady at 120 pounds per person, while rice fell slightly from the record-high 1979 level to 9.5 pounds per person in 1980.

Sweeteners

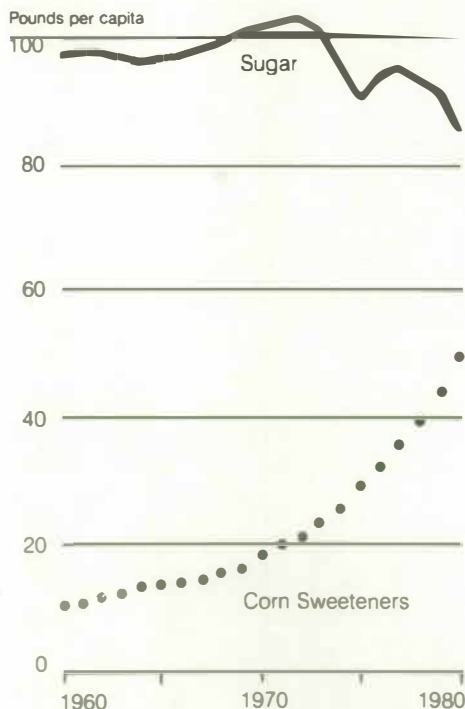
Measured on a wet or commercial basis, total sweetener consumption was 141.1 pounds per person in 1980, a slight decrease from 1979 levels. Cane and beet sugar continued to decline in importance as corn sirups were used in more products. Since 1960, corn sweetener use has increased

fivefold, while cane and beet sugar use has gradually declined. The lower prices of corn sweeteners and large cyclical swings in world sugar production and prices have contributed to the rise in popularity of corn sweeteners. In addition, the introduction of high-fructose corn sweeteners in recent years has accelerated the displacement of cane and beet sugars, particularly in soft drinks.

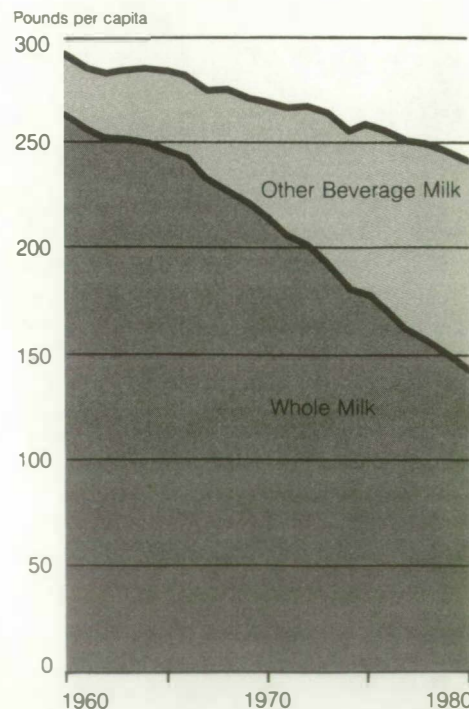
Beverages

Soft drink consumption has grown rapidly from 13.6 gallons per person in 1960 to 37.5 gallons in 1979, the most recent year for which data are available. Tea and cocoa consumption were unchanged in 1980 at 0.7 and 2.6 pounds per person, respectively. While trends in tea and cocoa have been relatively flat over the past two decades, Americans have been reducing coffee intake continuously. Consumption of coffee in 1980 was 8 pounds per capita. ■

Consumption of Selected Sweeteners



Beverage Milk Consumption



Consumption of Selected Meats

