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Per Capita Food Consumption

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Based on preliminary data, it appears that overall food consumption per capita declined 0.4 percent in 1979. Pork and poultry consumption increased slightly, offsetting a decline for beef. Per capita consumption of crops declined 0.6 percent. Changes in food consumption patterns were caused by economic conditions, weather variations, diet changes, and cyclical changes in beef and pork production.

Less Beef, More Pork and Poultry

Beef production was high from 1975 to 1978 due to the liquidation phase of the cattle cycle. However, in 1979, production was down sharply as the cattle industry began herd rebuilding. Consequently, per capita consumption of beef dropped 10.5 percent, from 88.9 pounds (retail weight) in 1978 to 79.6 pounds in 1979.

The decline in beef production was partly offset by a cyclical increase in pork production. A large hog inventory in 1978 caused a significant upswing in slaughter during 1979. Large supplies and lower prices for pork caused per capita consumption of pork to rise about 14 percent, from 56.9 pounds (retail weight) in 1978 to about 65.0 pounds in 1979. Most of the increase in pork production and consumption occurred during the last half of the year.

The strong beef market also strengthened the demand for poultry products as per capita consumption for the year increased 8.6 percent, from 57.1 to 62 pounds. Fish consumption moved up 2 percent in 1979.

Dairy Products

In 1979, consumption of cheese and low-fat milk increased, but a decline for whole milk reflected major shifts in dietary patterns that began several years ago.

Cheese consumption was nearly 18 pounds per capita in 1979, a record high. In the past 10 years, cheese consumption has increased 64 percent. In 1979, increases in cheese consumption included: American, 3 percent; Swiss, 7 percent; and miscellaneous varieties, 10 percent. Cheese is being used more frequently as a main dish and source of protein. In addition, it is included in many fast food items, such as pizzas and burgers, and the rise in fast food outlets has brought a parallel increase in cheese consumption.

Total per capita consumption of fluid milk and cream declined 0.6 percent from 285.9 to 284.2 pounds. Fluid whole milk consumption was down almost 4 percent, from 180 to 173 pounds; fluid cream down about 2 percent; and fluid low-fat up 5.4 percent, from 100.2 to 105.6 pounds.

Ice cream and other frozen dessert consumption declined 1.8 percent in 1979 from 27.5 to 27 pounds per person. Ice cream consumption has remained around 17.5 to 18 pounds per capita with a peak in 1975 of 18.7 pounds.

Butter consumption remained the same in 1979, 4.5 pounds per person. Consumption of butter has been steady at 4.4 to 4.5 pounds in the past 4 years. Total per capita consumption of fats and oils increased 3.6 percent in 1979, due mainly to a rise in margarine and shortening consumption.

Per Capita Consumption, Selected Foods

Food Item	1969 1978 1979 ¹		
	Percent		
Beef and veal.....	84.7	91.4	81.3
Pork.....	60.6	56.9	65.0
Fish.....	11.2	13.4	13.7
Poultry (chicken and turkey).....	46.7	57.1	62.0
Eggs.....	39.3	35.2	35.8
Fluid milk and cream.....	301.0	285.9	284.2
Cheese.....	11.0	17.3	18.1
Condensed and evaporated milk....	7.8	4.2	4.4
Fats and oils—total fat content...	51.9	55.6	57.6
Fresh fruit.....	79.5	83.9	83.2
Processed fruit.....	55.8	55.9	56.0
Fresh vegetables....	98.7	100.3	104.5
Canned vegetables....	53.7	54.1	55.0
Frozen vegetables....	9.1	10.8	11.1
Wheat flour.....	112.0	115.0	112.0
Coffee.....	11.9	10.5	11.5
Sugar.....	101.0	93.1	91.3

¹Preliminary.

Fruit and Juice

Per capita fresh fruit consumption declined from 83.9 to 83.2 pounds in 1979. The decline was led by a 5.7-percent drop in fresh citrus consumption, from 26.5 to 25 pounds. Because of the December-January freeze in California and Texas, fewer oranges were available for sale on the fresh market. Most oranges harvested from these States went to processing plants, thus increasing supplies of frozen concentrated orange juice. However, more Florida citrus fruits were sold on the fresh market than usual.

Per capita consumption of frozen concentrated orange juice increased 10 percent in 1979, following a 1978 decline, and chilled citrus juice consumption rose 3 percent.

Apple consumption held steady at about 17 pounds per person in 1979, while other noncitrus fruit increased nearly 2 percent, from 40.4 to 41.1 pounds. Bananas and peaches also contributed to the increase.

Canned fruit consumption held near 19 pounds per person in 1979. Canned fruit juice consumption repeated the record high of more than 17 pounds per person reached last year.

Cereal and Bakery Products

Per capita consumption of wheat flour, including that used by commercial bakeries, dropped 2.7 percent, from 115 to 112 pounds. Per capita consumption of sugar (raw basis) declined 1.9 percent, from 93.1 to 91.3 pounds. Per capita sugar consumption in 1979 was the lowest since 1975 when consumption fell to 90 pounds as a result of record high prices. Per capita cocoa consumption totaled 3.2 pounds in 1979, slightly less than in 1978.

Although actual product statistics are unavailable, cereal and bakery product consumption—based on the use of raw materials for these items—has been declining. Corn, oats, and barley consumption remained stable at 94.4 pounds, 7.0 pounds, and 1.9 pounds, respectively.

Coffee and Tea

Per capita coffee consumption increased 9.5 percent in 1979, from 10.5 to 11.5 pounds (green bean equivalent). Tea consumption remained at 0.74 pounds per person.