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CONSUMPTION OF MEAT per person in the United States continued to increase in 1963 exceeding the year earlier level for the fifth consecutive year. The total of "red" and poultry meats during the year is estimated at about 207 pounds per person—more than 6 pounds above 1962, a gain of nearly 3 per cent.

Most of the increase came in beef: consumption averaged a record 95 pounds per person—up from 89 pounds in 1962. Domestic beef production was up about 8 per cent, with the "top grades" accounting for most of the increase. Beef imports were also substantially above the 1962 level. On the average, individuals consumed an additional pound of pork but their consumption of veal and lamb and mutton declined by a like amount. Poultry meat consumption rose only slightly in 1963.

Record Per Capita Meat Consumption

Year	Red meat				Poultry	All meat	
	Beef	Veal	Lamb and mutton	Pork			
				(pounds) ^c			
1955	82	9	5	67	163	26	189
1956	85	10	5	67	167	30	196
1957	85	9	4	61	159	31	190
1958	81	7	4	60	152	34	186
1959	81	6	5	68	160	35	195
1960	85	6	5	65	161	34	196
1961	88	6	5	62	161	38	199
1962	89	6	5	64	164	37	201
1963 ^a	95	5	5	65	170	37	207
1964 ^b	97	5	5	64	170	38	208

^a Preliminary. ^b Forecast. ^c Figures rounded.
SOURCE: USDA, Livestock and Meat Situation.

Livestock production was higher in 1963 than is indicated by consumption figures. While beef consumption rose to record levels during the year, farmers increased their inventory of cattle and calves by about 3 million head. Further substantial increases in beef consumption will occur within the next few years when cattlemen market more of their cattle and add fewer to inventory.

The outlook for beef consumption this year, of course, depends heavily on the grazing conditions in the plains and western states. If serious drought were to cover most of this area, substantial liquidation of cattle herds would bring a sharp rise in beef supply, especially the lower grades of beef. Even if good weather permits a continuation of the current build-up in cattle numbers, Government estimates indicate the supply of beef for consumption in 1964 will be up 3 to 4 per cent from year earlier.

Red meat consumption per person this year probably will be about the same as the high level in 1963. The increase in beef production and consumption is expected to just about offset anticipated declines in supplies of pork, veal and lamb and mutton. Production of pork will likely be smaller in 1964 because of a decline in farrowings of

pigs in the last half of 1963 and an anticipated smaller pig crop in the first half of this year. Because of population growth, per capita consumption of pork will be down somewhat more than the decline in production. Veal, lamb and mutton consumption per person is expected to continue to diminish, as it has during much of the postwar period.

Trends in consumption of livestock products during the past several years have changed considerably, reflecting shifts in people's needs and desires and in their ability to fulfill them. Generally, the postwar upward trend in beef consumption and the downward trend in pork consumption reflect altered consumer preferences rather than relative price changes. Per capita consumption of pork trended downward at a rate of about 1 per cent per year from 1947 through 1962, even though the retail price of pork declined even faster during this period—at an average rate of about 2 per cent per year. On the other hand, per capita consumption of beef showed a strong tendency to increase during 1947-62, even though the retail price of beef was trending upward. Between 1953 and 1962, per capita consumption of beef increased at an average rate of about 1 per cent per year while the price of beef at retail increased at an average rate of about 2 per cent per year.

Several factors have been advanced as explanations for these diverse trends—the trend toward higher personal incomes, farm to urban migration, development of home freezers and diet considerations, to mention a few. Probably one of the more important factors in the decline in pork consumption has been the gain in poultry consumption in response to lower retail prices. Per capita consumption of poultry increased from about 22 pounds per person in 1947 to about 37 pounds in 1963. This was accompanied by a decline of about 30 per cent in the retail price of poultry.

Many observers are of the opinion that the downward trend in per capita consumption of pork may be leveling out. For one thing, further downward adjustments in poultry prices are not likely to be as large as in the past. Also, the trend in the spread of beef and pork prices at retail may be reaching a point where the price advantage of pork will tend to offset some of the apparent consumer preference for beef as the consumption of meat continues to rise.

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