Frequency of Consumption of Meat and Meat Products in Timis County

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Abstract
The research was conducted as an ad hoc survey of a sample of 140 people, from which 86 from urban area and 54 from rural area. Regarding the consumption of meat or meat products approximately 37.04% surveyed from rural area eat meat or meat products daily, while in urban area 23.26% of the respondents consume daily meat and meat products.

Keywords: consumption, meat, meat products, Timiș County

1. Introduction*

After the year 1990, meat production reflected the changes in animal figures, more exactly the decreasing trend in all domestic animal species: animal farmers adapted their animal figures to the self-consumption needs and to the rather limited demands from the markets [1,2].

According to international standards, meat production in Romania is less competitive than that of other competing countries. Meat animal management systems are mainly extensive except for swine, poultry, and fish. This means large intervals of finishing, with low daily mean weight gains, and with high specific consumptions. Thus, the costs of producing meat are high, making this activity even less competing and unprofitable, making meat a secondary product particularly in cattle and sheep, species that are reared mainly for milk. Moreover, animal producers lack information concerning the meat market [3,4].

In the slaughtering and processing sectors, the technology is obsolescent because of the low level of investments. There has been, lately, a trend to improve and to change slaughtering and meat processing technologies: modern slaughter houses and meat product factories with ultimate technology.

Most of the meat is marketed on the free farmer market, and this could jeopardise public health because of the precarious hygiene. Then there are also small shops that do not ensure all the facilities necessary to maintain this type of products fresh, as well as supermarkets based mainly on imported commodities. It is the retailers who establish meat quality and quantity, particularly in pork. Domestic industry cannot meet all these demands and this results in an increase of the imports and a decrease of the exports of Romanian meat [2,5].

The impediments of increasing Romanian meat exports are: inefficiency of the processing industry, poor development of the market infrastructure, poor quality of the meat production, non-alignment to the European standards. The only advantageous position of Romania is live sheep exports (1,500 heads) and poultry exports.

At farm level, the opportunities for an efficient activity should be searched in ensuring a valuable genetic material, in improving the management conditions, in feeding, in maintaining animals with high gains and low costs. We need to support animal farmers to increase the size of their farms.

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As for the processing, we need to improve the competitiveness of the products and food safety conditions. The implementation of the EUROP carcass classification system allows equitable payment based on carcass quality and results in increases of the production quality.

To develop the meat sector, we need investments in the following:
- slaughterhouses;
- cutting equipment;
- modern freezing equipment;
- packaging, labelling, promoting;
- modern control of animals before slaughter, modern slaughtering, modern processing, modern marketing;
- employee training;
- improving of IT and communications.

In Romania, there are few small and medium viable meat animal farms: we need to support subsistence farms with potential to become self-sustained commercial units. Producers lack information about the meat market (prices, offer, and demand). We need to improve the processing sector to meet the demands in accordance with the European Union standards and regulations, to ensure consumer safety, and to produce highly processed meat products.

Slaughtering and processing at small scale results in high costs and does not meet hygiene and quality standards. The main constraints limiting competitiveness of the Romanian meat sector are:

- at production level:
  - production is fragmented into small-size farms;
  - animal maintenance and management conditions are poor;
  - the genetic material has low production performances;
  - low quality fodder results in low daily gains, high specific consumptions and, implicitly, high production costs.
- at processing level:
  - over-sized capacity;
  - old, non-performing, energy consumer technologies;
  - large share of self-consumption limiting market development;
- at marketing level [6,2]:
  - retail is fragmented, resulting in high delivery costs;
  - hypermarkets rely mainly on imported commodities.

As for the cold cuts market in Romania, because of the lack of proper hygiene and food safety conditions asked by the European Union, hundreds of Romanian meat processors had to quit the sector: there are still some 500 operators. This reduction of the number of meat processors resulted in a dramatic change in attitude: meat processors have started to be concerned about how to consolidate their positions on the market, about how to enlarge their processing capacity, and about acquiring performing processing equipment. Nowadays, the first 5 Romanian meat processors control about 40% of the meat products on the retail market. The main distribution channel on the cold meats retail market is represented by food shops, with a share of 46.9% of the products volume and 45.5% of the revenues. The development of the super- and hyper-market networks resulted in a takeover of 4.7% of the volume of meat products and of 4.3% of the value of the sold meat products. The most convenient way of marketing cold cuts and meat products is wholesale, preferred by 81.9% of the consumers, followed by tinned meat products (7.5%) and void packaged meat products (5.0%).

2. Materials and methods

The present scientific approach relies on a survey that consisted of the following: establishing the goal and objectives of the research; establishing the population surveyed; determining the size of the sample; designing and editing the questionnaire; collecting information from the field; gathering, processing and interpreting data; editing the final report. Gathering, processing and interpreting data resulted in tables and graphs accompanied by comments concerning each situation apart.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 shows the frequency of meat and meat products consumption in the Timiş County, Romania, on a weekly basis, in percentages.
In the rural area, 37.04% of the respondents eat meat and/or meat products on a daily basis, 25.92% eat meat and/or meat products twice a week, 11.12% eat meat and/or meat products thrice a week, 7.41% eat meat and/or meat products four times a week, and 14.81% eat meat and/or meat products five times a week. Therefore, we are allowed to draw the conclusion that, in the rural area, meat and/or meat products are foods frequently consumed by the population since over 70% of the respondents eat meat and/or meat products more than three times a week.

In the urban area, 62.79% of the respondents eat meat and/or meat products four times a week, 23.26% eat meat and/or meat products on a daily basis, 9.30% eat meat and/or meat products twice a week, and 4.65% never eat meat or meat products. In the urban area, meat and/or meat products are eaten four times and over four times a week by 85% of the respondents. But there are also, in the urban area, people that, for various reasons, never eat meat or meat products. Thus, analysing the consumption of meat and meat products depending on the area of origin, we can draw the conclusion that these food products are very consumed during the week because they are a food category highly appreciated by the consumers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Absolute simple frequencies</th>
<th>Relative simple frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 times</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>5 times</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 times</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Frequency of meat and/or meat products consumption in the rural area
4. Conclusions

In the rural area, meat and meat products are the foods most demanded: they are eaten twice or thrice a week.
In the urban area, meat and meat products consumption occurs four times a week.
In the urban area, meat and meat products consumption occurs four times a week, but there are also people that do not eat any meat at all for various reasons (health, fashion, etc.).
No matter the area of origin – rural or urban – meat and meat products are considered basic foods by most respondents.

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