

20 year trends in red meat production, composition and consumption: influences of consumer demand, health policy and the Heart Foundation Tick



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Background

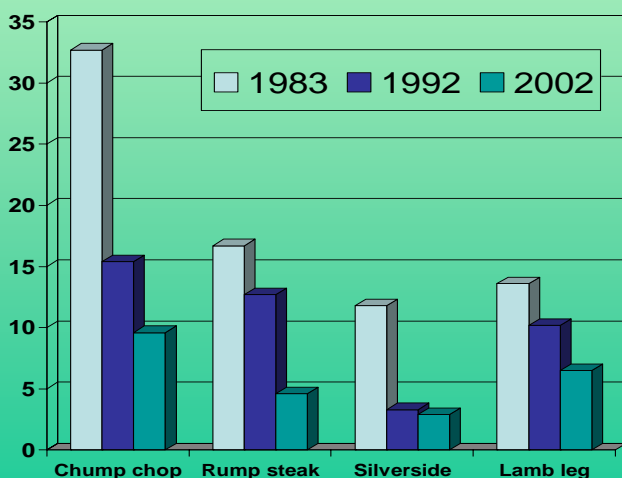
In the 1970s, public health messages began recommending reduction of total and saturated fat to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Recommendations included trimming fat off meat, moderating meat consumption and promoting lower fat cooking methods¹. In the 1980s it was recognised that education alone was not sufficient to achieve behaviour change, and strategies to work with the food industry to develop supportive environments was needed. Over the last 20 years the red meat industry responded to these demands with changes in production, retailing and marketing to transform offerings to today's predominantly lean meat supply. This paper reports changes in consumer attitudes, production practices and meat composition over this time.

Results

1. Production and retail trends

The main determinant of the fat content of meat is the amount of fat trimmed. New lean cuts for lamb and beef introduced in the 1980s led to significant reductions in the fat content of retail cuts (Figure 1) and butchers used the Heart Foundation Tick to promote the leaner cuts of meat.

Fig 1. Fat content of untrimmed red meat (g/100g) in 1983² 1992³ and 2002⁴



2. Consumer attitudes and trimming practices

Consumers are adopting public health messages, with 81% of consumers making an effort to prepare more low fat meals than 5 years ago (Roy Morgan, *Meat Habits in Australia*, MLA 2007). There is also an increasing adoption of meat trimming by consumers (Table 1).

Table 1. Fat trimming practices (% adults trimming meat)

Year	Source	%
1980	NHF Risk Factor Prevalence Survey 1	42
1989	NHF Risk Factor Prevalence Survey 3	49
1995	National Nutrition Survey	63
2005	MLA CATI Survey	84
2007	MLA CATI survey	90

The most recent MLA survey found 62% were trimming fat before cooking, 13% after cooking and 15% both before and after.

3. Trends in consumption

There has been a continuous decline in apparent consumption of red meat in Australia of almost 50% from 1958 to 2008, and median serve sizes have also declined (around 95g for men; 65g for women in 1995). The 1995 National Nutrition Survey estimated average consumption of 88g cooked red meat for males and 45g for females. Red meat now contributes less than 10% of the dietary fat and saturated fat in the Australian diet, but remains a nutrient dense food providing in one serve more than 25% RDI for protein, niacin, B6, B12, iron, zinc and phosphorus, and is also a source of long chain omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.

Conclusions

Messages from the Heart Foundation have been a catalyst for transformations to today's predominantly lean red meat supply.

References

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