

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in March 2001 in the parish of Hanover.

The study was done at a time when there was much national debate about the consumption of red meat and the Government's importation policy concerning meat products in response to the World Trade Organization's rules and guidelines.

The study therefore seeks to ascertain the attitude and practices of consumers to the consumption of Red Meat and the impact of this reduction in consumption on the economic viability two other major players in the industry - small livestock farmers and butchers in the parish of Hanover.

The study was conducted among 173 consumers in Hanover: 66 from Green Island in Western Hanover, 60 from Lucea in Central Hanover and 47 from Hopewell in Eastern Hanover. All butchers currently operating in the parish (36) were interviewed and 40 farmers of small livestock were drawn from Houghton Grove and Cacoon Castle – two major cattle rearing areas in the parish.

The method used was a cross sectional analytic survey. Three questionnaires were developed and used to gather the data. A focus group interview was held with a group of persons from Dias, a community in Central Hanover. Through this interview the results of the study was consolidated. The focus group interview added further legitimacy to the findings, and further

insights were gained as to the way people were thinking concerning the issues. Basically, the responses from the focus group interview corroborates with the findings from the study.

The results of the study revealed that 53.2%, 38.2% and 46.2% of consumers were eating less beef, pork and mutton respectively over the past year. Over 23% (23.6%) of the respondents say that they do not eat red meat.

Twenty-six percent of consumers revealed that their consumption of red meat has decreased very much over the past 5 years.

Of the 41 respondents who said that they did not eat red meat, most of them (61%) said that they were adopting a healthier lifestyle, while 17% said that they were not eating red meat because they had high blood pressure. 12.2% said they were following the doctor's advice, 7.3% have changed their diet while 2.5% gave religion as their reasons.

Most persons interviewed (59%) said they were consuming more chicken than a year ago, while 43.4% said that they were consuming more fish.

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents say they were consuming a combination of fish/ chicken parts, and health food substitutes.

Seventy four percent (74%) of consumers were spending over \$500.00 per week on meat and meat products per week while, 68.2% were spending under \$200 per week on meat substitutes.

The majority of butchers (41.7%) felt that people were eating more foreign meat as the major reason the reduction in sales of local red meat. Twenty two percent (22.2%) of them felt that people were being influenced by doctors, while 16.7% felt that consumers were eating more chicken.

All the farmers interviewed said that they were adversely affected by the reduction in red meat consumption by consumers in Hanover:

Sixty seven point five percent (67.5%) said that their purchasing power has been cut.

Twelve point five percent (12.5%) said that they are rearing less cattle.

Ten percent (10.0%) said that they had to seek alternative employment.

Ten percent (10.0%) said that they have discontinued or are no longer interested in rearing cattle.

As regards suggestions for improving the local meat industry, the majority of butchers, (50%) felt that Government should stop the importation of foreign meat, while 16% would recommend that Government cut down on the importation of foreign meat.

Most farmers (42.5%) agreed that Government should cut down on the importation of meat, while 35% felt that Government should stop the importation of foreign meat altogether. Fifteen percent (15.0%) wants government to provide more technical assistance, such as markets, and central slaughtering facilities.

There were two major limitations of the study:

- i. The population which made up the Lucea respondents were in the older age group. This could bias their consumption pattern of red meat.
- ii. A more direct question should have been directed at butchers to ascertain how the reduction in red meat consumption has affected their livelihood.