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Factors Influencing Retail Pork Marketing

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SUMMARY

Retailers' opinions were studied regarding common practices and problems in buying and merchandising fresh pork, and what consumer's attitudes were toward fresh pork.

One hundred retail meat personnel were interviewed during the spring and summer of 1969. The sample was designed to be approximately representative of the various geographic areas of the state and of the different types of stores found within each area.

The attitudes of retailers generally were favorable toward pork. The most advantageous aspect of pork merchandising, as seen by more than 90 percent of the retailers interviewed, was the higher profit margin of pork compared to beef and poultry. Most retailers were of the opinion that fresh pork items could be used as feature items with only a slight effect on the sales of other meat department items. Due to this and the higher margin on pork items, most retailers felt that an increase in the volume of pork sold would lead to an increase in gross profits.

Several retailers indicated that the present low demand for pork relative to beef tended to offset many of the advantages in merchandising pork. Several respondents indicated that attempts were being initiated to improve the demand for pork because of the favorable profit margin.

The most common promotion methods used were newspaper advertisement and case display. Only 29 percent had used any point of sale material with fresh pork. Many retailers were critical of the pork industry for failing to provide adequate promotional and advertising material on fresh pork. Sixty-eight percent felt that point of sale material was not available to them. Most retailers expressed the opinion that such promotional material, if made available, could help increase the demand for pork.

More than half of the retailers felt that health beliefs and medical advice were the major reasons for the decline in fresh pork sales relative to the sales of beef. Diets and lack of promotion were also listed by more than a third of the respondents.

In discussing practices used in buying, 41 percent of the retailers stated that they bought at least some extra trimmed meat type pork. Of those buying extra trim pork, 80 percent felt that they were able to obtain a uniform supply of pork and were well satisfied. Only slightly more than half of those buying regular trimmed pork were satisfied with the type of product they were receiving.

The most serious product problem as seen by the retailers was excess fat or inconsistent trim.

The most serious problems mentioned in merchandising pork were the *perishability of pork*, the *low demand for fresh pork items*, and the *lack of promotion by the industry.*

Forty-six percent of the retailers thought that customers were concerned about the health aspect involved in eating pork. Forty-six percent felt that consumers viewed pork as an "every day" family meal item.

More than one-third of the respondents felt that consumers considered many pork cuts to be economy items.

Several respondents expressed the personal opinion that consumers needed to be educated away from many misconceptions they have of pork.

IMPLICATIONS

Many retail organizations are realizing the potential of pork in their operations and want to improve the demand for fresh pork items. The pork industry should begin to provide the retailer with promotional and educational material to strengthen his desire to see fresh pork sales increase.

Members of the industry must realize the importance of the retailer in selling their product, and encourage him to be their best salesman. Many retailers feel that the pork industry has lagged far behind the other meat industries in promotion and advertising. The pork industry must first try to sell its own product, before others can be expected to help them in this task.

This research brought out attitudes which the retailer believes his customers have toward pork. Whether or not the retailer is correct, if he feels this is the consumers' opinion of pork, it is bound to affect the amount of effort he spends in merchandising pork.

Many of these attitudes stem from the unpleasant "image of fattiness" which pork has acquired over the years. Before the consumption of pork can be increased materially, the pork industry must undertake an educational campaign to correct the many misconceptions consumers and retailers have about pork.

Although pork quality has improved greatly, excess fat is still seen as a serious problem by both retailers and consumers. Continued product improve- is needed, along with educational advertising, which will let people know that the product has improved.

The customer must be made aware that pork no longer has to be like the product they have associated with obesity, unhealthfulness, heart disease, and other problems. This job of education is very important to the pork industry because customer beliefs and wants are the most important factors affecting the total demand for pork.

Factors Influencing Retail Pork Marketing

C. C. PENNER, W. C. STRINGER AND H. D. NAUMANN

INTRODUCTION

Demand for pork reached a high in 1947 and has declined relative to beef and poultry since. Per capita consumption of pork in 1947 was 69.8 pounds. By 1967, this figure had decreased to 64.2 pounds. During this same period, the total consumption of meat increased.

Although the 5.6 pounds decrease does not look big, it represents the loss of sales for approximately 10 million hogs annually (1).

Prior to 1953, Americans consumed more pork than beef, but these positions have been reversed decisively. This shift in preferences has come about as a result of changes in the attitudes of the consumer, which have been encouraged by advertising and changes in the way of living in this country.

Pork has often been associated with health problems—obesity, trichinosis, high cholesterol content, and heart disorders. This has probably come about because for many years there were no significant advances in the meatiness of pork, although its main competitors, beef and poultry, were being greatly improved. Even though pork was improved in subsequent years, the image of pork as a fat, unhealthy meat was deeply entrenched in the minds of consumers. This image has become very detrimental to the sales of pork during a period when many Americans are becoming increasingly conscious of diets and health. All of this has also come at a time when competition has been greatly increased by the beef and poultry industries because of improvements in production efficiency, promotional methods, and marketing techniques.

The pork industry has been slow in developing a consumer oriented marketing policy. In the 1950s, after the consumption of beef had already surpassed that of pork, the industry's first attempts at reversing this trend around product improvement. The industry felt that since consumers were demanding the leaner types of meat, the development of a lean meat type hog would solve the problems stemming from the image of pork. Although the product quality has been improving yearly, the total demand for pork has shown only a small increase.

Before pork can become more competitive, it is necessary to identify the consumers attitudes and opinions toward pork and the best ways to affect favorable changes in these attitudes. Most previous research dealing with attitudes and practices involved in buying pork has centered on surveys of the *buying public.* An important group in the pork marketing channel which has been neglected in most surveys is the *retail* meat department managers and their supervisors.

The retailers perform a very important function in the sale of pork. They are the only people who can represent the pork industry in personal contact with the consumers. The retail meat department manager is in a position to greatly influence the demand for pork through promotion, merchandising, and other marketing techniques. He is also in a position which should enable him to have an understanding of consumer attitudes and opinions toward pork. A broad based survey of retailers will be of value to the pork industry as a measure of the success of past promotional effort, and as a guide for planning pork marketing in the future.

This study was designed to determine factors influencing the retail marketing of pork. It reports the methods most commonly used in buying and merchandising pork, and some of the problems encountered in these efforts at the retail level. The attitudes of retail people toward merchandising pork and the consumer attitudes toward pork as seen by retailers are also covered.

OBJECTIVES

The major objectives of this survey were:

1. *To survey the attitudes of meat merchandisers and meat department managers toward marketing fresh pork.*
2. *To determine the methods most commonly used in buying and merchandising fresh pork at the retail level.*
3. *To survey consumer attitudes toward pork as experienced by the retailer.*

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While improvement in leanness and meatiness of pork probably is an important step toward strengthening public acceptance and demand for pork, other factors seem associated with recent decline in demand. In recent years, several studies have been conducted with consumers to determine these factors and find out what consumers' attitudes and opinions are about pork.

Several conclusions have been reached. A recent study published for the Pork Producers Council shows that it was not unusual for the same person to be both favorable and negative toward pork. The taste of pork was viewed favorably, but it was regarded with high anxiety.

Consumers show concern about the healthfulness of the meat in several respects—digestability, cholesterol, calorie content, and fear of trichinosis. Many of these concerns may be perpetuated by a lot of folklore and "old wives tales" that still surround pork. These images have left their mark on pork as reflected by fears concerning the cooking time for pork, and the belief that it shouldn't be eaten too often (2).

Research by Starch *et al.* (1961) indicates that pork is ranked lower in terms of preference for family and special meals and that it does not enjoy frequent serving (3-4). The more recent survey published by the Pork Producers Council has suggested that this may be more because of the "anxiety creating" aspects of pork such as fattiness and the image of unhealthiness, rather than anything inherent in the pork product (2).

With the exception of ham, the great majority of respondents in a United States Department of Agriculture survey did not feel that pork products would be good to serve in a guest situation (5). In this same study respondents indicated that they felt pork was an item of seasonal nature and was preferred in cooler weather. The more recent study proposes that for some people this may be a carryover from the days of poor refrigeration (2). To others, the image of fatness leads them to feel that it would be too rich to serve in warmer weather.

Two surveys have questioned respondents on the waste or fatness often referred to in pork. In the first study conducted by Roper *et al.* (1956), 13 percent of the respondents listed fattiness as a definite disadvantage of pork (6). In the second study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture during 1967, 60 percent of the respondents felt that there was too much waste involved in buying pork (5).

The nutritional and health aspect is seemingly of great importance to the consumer in relation to pork. Roper *et al.* (1956) asked respondents what meats were less nourishing than others. Although 44 percent felt that all meats were equal, 23 percent felt that pork was a less nourishing meat. When these 23 percent were asked why they felt pork was less nourishing, the following reasons were given: has too much fat, 17 percent; lacks protein, minerals, and iron, 9 percent; hard to digest, 9 percent; and lower in food value than beef, 8 percent (6).

In a recent study by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, people were asked which meats would not be good for people watching their weight. Of the people who responded to this question, 63 percent felt that pork would not be good; however, only 17 percent of the respondents felt that this was an important consideration in buying meat (5).

Although the image of pork has been mentioned by many as a negative factor associated with pork, no study has looked specifically at this area in total. Several studies have touched briefly on the "fat image" and the "unhealthy image" of pork; however, many other factors probably are involved in the consumers' total image of pork.

A study conducted by Roper *et al.* (1956) deals with an interesting part of this concept. After so many years the reliability of these results may be question-able but they are interesting in that they explain some of the image problems that the pork industry has faced. The survey gave respondents a list of 14 descriptive terms related to people. They were asked to choose 3 or 4 terms which they would more than likely associate with beef and pork. Fifty-five percent of the respondents associated beef with athletes, 34 percent with healthy people, 32 percent with factory workers, 29 percent with Americans, and 27 percent with rich people. For pork, 30 percent of the people associated it with poor people, 29 percent with fat people, 29 percent with large families, 25 percent with factory workers, and 20 percent with foreigners (6).

To date, little research has been conducted to determine what attitudes and opinions retail people have about pork. A recent study prepared for the Pork Producers Council deals with the attitudes of food chain meat buyers, and hotel, restaurant, and institutional food managers toward pork. The study was conducted in an interview situation with 32 meat buyers and 32 managers from the hotel, restaurant, and institutional trade.

Three basic conclusions were made about the attitudes of trade people toward pork: (1) Both groups reflected attitudes seen among customers; (2) pork is good, but several reservations seem to stand in the way of complete acceptance, and (3) consumer acceptance and demand were considered higher for beef than for pork by nearly all of the people interviewed.

The explanations for these conclusions were mainly attributed to the criticisms of unhealthiness, fattiness, and perishability. The more positive side of pork for the grocery trade was the higher margin on pork which was recognized by the majority. However, volume x unit profit was seen as the important factor by most, which tended to favor beef.

A call for promotion of pork by the industry was made by several people interviewed in both the food chain and hotel, restaurant, and institutional fields. The majority felt that consumers needed to be educated away from their misconceptions about pork, and toward an understanding of the virtues of the product. They felt that what the consumers believe and want bears directly on their business (2).

METHODS

During the spring and summer of 1969, one hundred retail meat personnel were interviewed with a schedule containing 32 questions. This survey was conducted with meat buyers and meat department managers within Missouri. Interviews were conducted by the same researcher so that the various questions could be given to all respondents in a similar manner.

The schedule was developed and pretested in a pilot study conducted with central Missouri meat department managers and several St. Louis area meat merchandisers. Also included in the pilot study were eight questionnaires returned by mail from meat merchandisers located outside of Missouri. These people were associated with retail food chains primarily in the southern and western parts of the country.

Most questions in this schedule were objective, but all comments were recorded to obtain a more accurate understanding of the reasoning behind answers. Several subjective, open ended questions also were used in an attempt to identify opinions and attitudes that have not been studied previously. A copy of the schedule is in Appendix 1.

An attempt was made to obtain a broad sample of retailers which would be representative of the various geographical areas of the state and of the different types of stores found in each area. Meat merchandisers of the various chains and buying organizations were asked to list several typical stores whose meat department manager would be willing to participate in this study. Other meat department managers from stores in smaller towns were interviewed after their stores were selected at random from the telephone book. Since the meat merchandisers representing some of these stores were not interviewed, the sample of meat *merchandisers* is not necessarily representative of the sample of meat department *managers.*

TABLE 1--NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS BY AREA

Area	Number=100	%
South Missouri	25	25
Mid-Missouri	21	21
North Missouri	18	18
St. Louis	19	19
Kansas City	17	17

TABLE 2--DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY AND LOCATION

Respondents	Number=100	%
Merchandisers	18	18
South Missouri Managers	19	19
North Missouri Managers	18	18
Mid-Missouri Managers	20	20
St. Louis Managers	14	14
Kansas City Managers	11	11

TABLE 3--TYPES OF STORES INCLUDED IN THE SURVEY

Type	Number=100	%
Chain stores	41	41
Independent stores	59	59

Of the store personnel interviewed, 41 percent were a part of a chain organization which did its own meat procurement. Fifty-nine percent of the stores were individually owned, but all were members of some type of buying group or organization which provided assistance to the meat department manager.

This study was conducted during a period of rapidly rising meat prices. It was felt that this might cause a discrepancy in answers to certain questions, depending on the time when the interview was obtained. On questions to which the answers could be greatly affected by fluctuating price, the retailers were asked to answer in terms of the "normal situation" or historical performance. It was hoped that this would allow the study to reflect the true attitudes and opinions toward pork without the influence of an unusual price increase.

RETAILERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD PORK

General Observations

Most of the retail people interviewed showed attitudes toward pork that seemed to be positive. However, their knowledge of certain unfavorable consumer attitudes, as shown in their buying preferences, had some effect on the opinions they expressed.

Many retail organizations and meat department managers have realized the potential of pork in their operation. Some admitted that beef had been over promoted in the past and now it is evident that more pork promotion is needed. In this survey of retail people the majority felt that both fresh and cured pork items were reasonable fast moving. Practically all respondents commented that bacon was the fastest moving of all pork items. In relation to other pork items several indicated that the turnover rate was related to factors such as season of the year, and the price level of pork and other meat items.

Results and Discussion

The most advantageous aspect of pork merchandising as seen by the respondents was the profit margin. When asked to rank all fresh meat items in terms of profit margin per item, a large majority ranked fresh pork first (Table 4). Many of these respondents did express the opinion, however, that under present retail conditions, the product of volume and margin was more important than profit margin alone. This is in agreement with a previous study conducted for the Pork Producers Council (2).

Several retailers expressed optimism toward pork and felt that with present rising beef prices, pork volume might increase substantially. Many also indicated that their organizations were beginning to place increasing emphasis on pork because of its profit potential.

In relation to the use of pork as a promotional or sale item, most of those surveyed only saw pork as a "fair" item in terms of "traffic pull," which normally was not nearly as good as a beef item. *Items featured, price,* and *season of the year* were the factors most often mentioned as affecting the "traffic pull" of a sale. Spare ribs, pork steaks, and other barbecue cuts were most frequently listed as good summer sale items, while chops and hams seemed more popular in the cooler months.

TABLE 4--PROFIT MARGIN COMPARISON OF FRESH MEAT ITEMS

Rank	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Pork Highest	17	94	75	91	92	92
Pork and Beef Equal	---	---	2	2	2	2
Pork Second	1	6	5	7	6	6

Practically all of the retailers were aware of the decrease in sales of regularly priced items in the meat department when other items were featured at a special price. However, the large majority of respondents felt that a sale on a pork item would have no more than a slight effect on the normal sales of beef items (Table 5).

Many commented that they ordered exactly the same amount of beef each week, regardless of what pork item was on sale. All agreed, however, that a sale on a beef item normally had a noticeable effect on the sale of pork. The general feeling among retailers seemed to be that if they could sell more pork, they could increase the total gross profit of the meat department with little or no effect on the normal sales of beef (Table 6).

TABLE 5--ESTIMATED DECREASE IN BEEF TONNAGE DURING A FRESH PORK SALE

Decrease	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Very Slight Decrease	7	39	51	62	58	58
Slight Decrease	7	39	24	29	31	31
Notable Effect	3	17	4	5	7	7
No Response	1	5	3	4	4	4

TABLE 6--EFFECT ON TOTAL GROSS PROFIT OF MEAT DEPARTMENT WITH AN INCREASE IN PORK SALES

Effect	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Increase in Gross Profit	18	100	79	96	97	97
Little Effect on Gross Profit	---	---	3	4	3	3

Most retailers consider the desirability of the product as the most important factor in choosing a source of supply (Table 7).

The factors these retailers considered in judging product desirability were: trim, quality, and freshness. Those who indicated that obtaining a suitable product was their first consideration generally indicated that a slightly higher price was often justified.

When asked to compare the intensity of pork promotion to beef promotion, 67 percent of the meat *merchandisers* felt that pork received less intense promotion, while 65 percent of the meat department *managers* felt that pork promotion was equal to or stronger than that for beef (Table 8).

The respondents were asked to consider all aspects of promotion such as: special sales, advertising, promotion, case space, and displays. Apparently, each group answered the question on the basis of the factors which they dealt with most closely; the meat merchandisers on the basis of sale items, advertising, and promotion and the meat department managers on the basis of case space and displays. On this assumption it would appear that pork receives case space and display equal to beef, but is used less often for sales and receives less advertising and promotion.

TABLE 7--FACTORS CONSIDERED MOST IMPORTANT IN CHOOSING A SUPPLIER FOR FRESH PORK

Factors	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Product Quality and Trim	16	89	56	68	72	72
Price	2	11	13	16	15	15
Price and Quality Equal	---	---	9	11	9	9
Freshness	---	---	4	5	4	4

TABLE 8--OPINION ON INTENSITY OF FRESH PORK PROMOTION IN RELATION TO BEEF PROMOTION

Intensity	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Stronger	1	6	11	13	12	12
Equal	5	27	43	52	48	48
Less Intensive	12	67	28	35	40	40

The majority of respondents said that pork was used for a major special once each month on the average (Table 9). Several added that this may vary considerably depending on the season or price of the item. The answers ranged greatly between localities and types of stores, from weekly to quarterly.

Since little work has been conducted to find out what types of promotional activities are being used for pork, an open ended question related to promotional activities was asked. In response to the question, "What do you do to promote fresh pork?," the majority of meat merchandisers and meat department managers indicated that display, price specials, and newspaper advertising were their primary means of promotion (Table 10).

Various methods of display and merchandising were listed by a large number of meat department managers. Only 29 percent stated that they had ever used point of sale material to any great extent with fresh pork. Upon further questioning, most point of sale material turned out to be handmade price signs which were made up in the stores. Most meat departments managers in smaller stores and independent stores stated that little display material was available from present sources.

TABLE 9--FREQUENCY OF MAJOR SPECIALS FEATURING A FRESH PORK ITEM

Frequency	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Monthly	12	67	41	50	53	53
Bi-Weekly	1	6	22	27	23	23
Weekly	2	11	12	15	14	14
Other	3	16	7	8	10	10

TABLE 10--METHODS USED TO PROMOTE FRESH PORK

Method	Combined Sample N=100	%
Price	61	61
Newspaper Advertisement	72	72
Merchandising (Display)	73	73
Special Promotional Sales	20	20
Point of Sale Material	29	29
Recipes	10	10
Other	4	4

Only about one-third of the retail people felt that point of sale material was readily available to them (Table 11). Most respondents were optimistic in their opinions toward the usefulness of point of sale material and recipes (Tables 12 and 13). Eighty-nine percent of the responses from both meat merchandisers and meat department managers indicated that they felt consumer response to point of sale material ranged from very good to at least some response. Several indicated that point of sale material would be valuable because pork was often somewhat of an impulse or a change of pace item in which case an in-store reminder could boost sales.

TABLE 11--OPINION ON AVAILABILITY TO RETAILERS OF FRESH PORK POINT-OF-SALE MATERIAL

Availability	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Adequate Material is Available	5	28	27	33	32	32
Very Little Material Available	13	72	55	67	68	68

TABLE 12--OPINION ON EFFECT OF POINT OF SALE MATERIAL IN INCREASING THE DEMAND FOR FRESH PORK ITEMS

Effect	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Very Good	9	50	34	41	43	43
Some Response	7	39	36	44	43	43
Low Response	2	11	9	11	11	11
No Response	---	---	3	4	3	3

TABLE 13--EFFECT RETAILERS FEEL THAT THE AVAILABILITY OF RECIPES WOULD HAVE ON THE DEMAND FOR FRESH PORK

Effect	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Demand Increased	12	67	55	67	67	67
Demand Unaffected	5	27	26	32	31	31
No Response	1	6	1	1	2	2

The majority of retailers also felt that recipes, of the right type, could be helpful in stimulating the demand for pork (Table 13). Practically all of the responses were qualified by indicating that recipes should be for items which the normal housewife would want to prepare. A common complaint was that far too many past recipes had been for exotic and impractical items and, as a result they were of little help. The general consensus was that some general cooking instructions would be well accepted by the younger housewife, who often lacks knowledge about the availability and preparation of pork cuts.

Eightly-nine percent of meat merchandisers and 74 percent of meat department managers felt that a well handled promotional campaign, including recipes and point of sale material, could be successful in increasing the sales of pork (Table 14). Many added that this type of campaign must be well planned and handled in the right way to be of value. Several suggested that the simultaneous use of television and newspaper advertising could increase interest and effectiveness of such a program.

TABLE 14--EFFECT OF RECIPE AND POINT OF SALE PROMOTION IN INCREASING THE SALE OF FRESH PORK

Effect	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Very Successful	5	28	15	18	20	20
Successful	11	61	46	56	57	57
Not Successful	2	11	12	15	14	14
Do Not Use	---	---	9	11	9	9

An open ended question was posed to determine what retail people felt were the major reasons for the decline in the sale of fresh pork in relation to beef. Although the range of answers was quite wide, practically all respondents had thought about this and gave definite opinions without hesitation (Table 15).

The responses given most frequently by meat department managers were health related. A large number felt that medical advice and the trend toward the consumption of leaner meat as a result of diets were major factors in the reduced consumption of fresh pork. Most felt that medical advice had been especially important in the reduction in fresh pork consumption by many older people. A number of respondents also expressed the opinion that many people simply preferred the taste of beef, and that now they have the money to buy it.

A number of meat department managers also felt that many pork items were economy items and, as a result, pork did not carry the degree of prestige that beef does. Although a small percentage of respondents actually mentioned the "image of pork" as a factor in the declining consumption, it seems to be the overriding factor behind all of the responses given.

TABLE 15--RETAILERS' OPINIONS ON MAJOR REASONS FOR THE DECLINE OF FRESH PORK SALES RELATIVE TO BEEF

Reasons	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Health Reasons or Medical Advice	4	22	47	57	51	51
Diets	7	39	27	33	34	34
Lack of Prestige	4	22	17	21	21	21
Lack of Promotion & Merchandising	14	78	17	21	31	31
Preference of Beef	4	22	39	48	43	43
Product Problems & Image of Pork	6	33	9	11	15	15
Need for Education	4	22	4	5	8	8
Seasonal Item	---	---	8	10	8	8
Others	1	6	7	9	8	8

Although several meat *merchandisers* mentioned diets as an important factor, only three listed health or medical advice as a major reason for the declining sales of fresh pork items. This group tended to be more critical of the pork industry for a lack of promotion of their product, and criticized them for being too slow in trying to improve the image of their product.

The merchandisers were also willing to accept some of the blame for the decreased sales of pork. Several felt that some of their people were not merchandising pork to its fullest advantage. They also commented that the retail trade in the past had concentrated heavily on the promotion of beef to increase volume. In recent years with people increasingly preferring beef, many retailers have "followed the path of least resistance" by spending the most effort on the item that sells best.

The response to this question showed little difference in opinion that could be attributed to geographic location or difference in the type of store.

The importance of dieting and weight watching was seen as a more important problem in the suburban areas surrounding the three metropolitan areas of the state than in the rural areas or ethnic areas of the cities.

Retailers in all areas of the state felt that the health aspect was a major reason for the decline in the sale of pork, but there were differences in the reasons for this concern. Suburban meat department managers were of the opinion that consumers were concerned about the health aspect of fresh pork mainly because of bad publicity and the customers' lack of knowledge which caused them to be uncertain about pork. Most meat merchandisers in rural areas and smaller towns felt that concern toward the health aspects of eating pork was confined mainly to people who had been advised by a doctor not to eat pork.

PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS IN PORK BUYING AND MERCHANDISING

General Observations

Several questions relating to the practices retail people use in buying pork were posed to respondents in this survey. Although the comments and responses were generally about the same in all areas of the state and in the different types of stores, the response to some questions did show significant differences of opinion between areas. Retailers in areas of the state where pork is better accepted by consumers tend to be less troubled with problems other retailers experience in buying and merchandising fresh pork.

Results and Discussion

When asked if they could obtain a consistent, high quality, well trimmed supply of fresh pork, 22 percent of the meat merchandisers and 38 percent of the meat department managers replied that they could not (Table 16). Among those answering they could, many qualified their answer by saying that they often had to switch from packer to packer to find a suitable supply. Comments also indicated that several people felt that they could get a satisfactory supply from only one packer.

TABLE 16--ABILITY TO OBTAIN A CONSISTENT, HIGH QUALITY, WELL TRIMMED SUPPLY OF PORK

Response	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Satisfied with Supply	14	78	51	62	65	65
Dissatisfied with Supply	4	22	31	38	35	35

Of those who were not satisfied with their supply, most listed poor trim or excess fat and inconsistency in quality as their reasons.

Fifty-five percent of the meat department managers in Kansas City and Springfield were not satisfied with their supply, while in the southeast area of the state none of the managers felt that they had any serious supply problems.

Forty-one percent of the respondents stated that they were buying at least some specially trimmed or selected pork (Table 17).

A cross comparison was made of the respondents who were dissatisfied with their supply of pork and those who purchase a special trimmed pork. Only 20 percent of those buying "special trim" were dissatisfied with their supply; whereas, 46 percent of those buying "regular trim" felt that they could obtain a uniform, well-trimmed supply of fresh pork (Table 18).

TABLE 17--NUMBER OF RETAILERS USING AT LEAST SOME EXTRA TRIM OR SPECIALLY SELECTED PORK

Product Type	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Extra Trim	8	44	33	40	41	41
Regular Trim	10	56	49	60	59	59

TABLE 18--TRIM vs. REGULAR PORK IN RELATION TO SATISFACTION WITH SUPPLY

Response	Combined Sample	
Special Trim or Meat Type	N=41	%
Satisfied with supply	33	80
Dissatisfied with supply	8	20
Regular Trim	N=59	%
Satisfied with supply	32	54
Dissatisfied with supply	27	46

When retailers were asked to list what was wrong with the supply of pork they were receiving, 39 percent felt that there were no serious problems. However, all other respondents saw the lack of uniformity of various factors as a problem. Fifty-two percent listed excess fat or the lack of consistency of trim; 14 percent listed inconsistent quality; 13 percent, the fact that freshness was not consistent; and 12 percent listed variation in the size of the rib eye (Table 19).

Several respondents stated that this lack of consistency made it very difficult to display pork attractively in the case, and also caused consumers to choose certain packages over others which led to problems in product rotation.

Although the comments of the retailers indicated they thought that trim and quality were important factors in the consumers' choice of pork, only 25 percent had attempted any type of promotional program featuring specially trimmed or meat type pork (Table 20). Of those who had attempted this type program, 84 percent felt that it had been highly successful in helping to increase sales of pork. Twelve percent felt that it had been moderately successful and only 4 percent felt that it was not successful (Table 21).

TABLE 19--PRODUCT PROBLEMS OF PORK AS IT IS RECEIVED FROM THE PACKER

Problems	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Excess Fat or Inconsistent Trim	7	39	45	55	52	52
Inconsistent Color	3	17	7	9	10	10
Inconsistent Size	2	11	10	12	12	12
Inconsistent Quality	3	17	11	13	14	14
Inconsistent Freshness	3	17	10	12	13	13
Watery	---	---	7	9	7	7
No Serious Problems	9	50	25	30	39	39

TABLE 20--NUMBER USING ADVERTISING TO PROMOTE A TRIMMED MEAT TYPE PORK

Response	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Promote Trimmed Pork	7	39	18	22	25	25
Do Not Promote Trimmed Pork	11	61	64	78	75	75

TABLE 21--SUCCESS OF LEAN MEAT TYPE PORK PROMOTION PROGRAMS

Success	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
High	5	72	16	89	21	84
Moderate	1	14	2	11	3	12
Low	1	14	---	---	1	4

A large number of retailers thought that their customers would be willing to pay more for well trimmed, high quality pork. However, most retailers have been unable to do this because of their need to remain competive. The majority of retailers reporting a high degree of success with a trimmed pork promotion program met competition in price (Table 22).

Some retailers indicated that fresh pork was more difficult to promote because there was no brand identity involved. However, only 25 percent of the respondents had attempted any type of private labeling (Table 23).

TABLE 22--SUCCESS WITH TRIMMED PORK PROMOTION PROGRAMS IN RELATION TO PRICE DIFFERENCE PER POUND

	Combined Sample	
Highly Successful	N=19	%
No Price Difference	15	79
More Than 4¢/Pound	4	21
Moderately Successful	N=6	%
No Price Difference	4	67
More Than 4¢/Pound	2	33
Not Successful	N=2	%
No Price Difference	---	---
More Than 4¢/Pound	2	100

TABLE 23--NUMBER USING PRIVATE LABELING ON FRESH PORK ITEMS

	Meat Merchandisers		Meat Department Managers		Combined Sample	
Labeling	N=18	%	N=82	%	N=100	%
Use Private Brand	3	17	22	27	25	25
Do Not Use Private Brand	15	83	60	73	75	75

Those using a private label felt that this had helped them to build an image for the brand name through promotion and advertising. Many indicated that their customers had developed confidence in the branded pork that would not have come about otherwise. Practically all respondents who had used private labeling were associated with a chain or buying organization that had experienced good results in the private labeling of beef before they initiated the program with fresh pork.

Although the economics of today's retail operation would tend to encourage the use of larger package sizes in the meat departments, most retailers stated that they offered various package sizes on several pork items to accomodate different family sizes (Table 24). Comments indicated that in most stores only the faster moving items are displayed in a wide range of package sizes.

When asked what the major problems were in merchandising pork, both the merchandisers and meat department managers felt that the low demand for pork was the most serious problem. The problem which received the second largest number of responses was the keeping ability of pork (Table 25).

Most comments tended to indicate that the problem of freshness and keeping quality was increased by the low demand for pork, especially in the early part of the week when store traffic is low. Several retailers reported a problem of not being able to sell all cuts at an even rate. Several retailers commented that they had difficulty in selling the end cuts and trim as rapidly as the other fresh pork cuts.

TABLE 24--RETAILERS OFFERING DIFFERENT PACKAGE SIZES OF FRESH PORK ITEMS TO ACCOMMODATE VARIOUS FAMILY SIZES

Response	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Full Range of Package Sizes	15	83	73	89	88	88
Only Larger Package Sizes	3	17	9	11	12	12

TABLE 25--PROBLEMS RETAILERS SAW IN MERCHANDISING FRESH PORK

Problems	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Keeping Quality	6	33	19	23	25	25
Low Demand	5	28	21	26	26	26
No Serious Problems	1	6	31	38	32	32
Selling Trim & End Cuts	1	6	10	12	11	11
Lack of Promotion	4	22	10	12	14	14
Color of Pork	2	11	6	7	8	8
Product Problems	3	17	6	7	9	9

CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD FRESH PORK AS SEEN BY THE RETAILER

General Observations

From the comments of retailers in this survey, attitudes of consumers, as indicated by their purchasing habits, are important factors influencing the retailer in merchandising pork. The retailer is in a position which enables him to understand consumer attitudes, both through personal contact and the observation of purchasing habits. Retailers must be able to interpret the customer attitudes and preferences in order to maintain a successful operation.

Although the responses to most questions on this topic tended to show a homogeneous response from the different locations and types of stores, one noticeable difference did occur. Retailers from cities in the western section of the state indicated that their customers had more unfavorable opinions of pork than those in other parts of the state. Responses also seemed to show that customers in suburban stores saw fresh pork more as a change of pace or an impulse purchase, whereas customers of stores in close proximity to urban areas, ethnic settlements, and in rural areas were more inclined to view pork as a normal meat item or a "shopping list" item.

Results and Discussion

In this survey 44 percent of the merchandisers and 67 percent of the meat department managers felt that their customers would be willing to pay more for very lean, high quality pork (Table 26).

TABLE 26--NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS FEELING THAT CONSUMERS WOULD PAY MORE FOR A VERY LEAN, HIGH QUALITY PORK

Opinion	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Would Pay More	8	44	55	67	63	63
Would Not Pay More	10	56	27	33	37	37

Several respondents felt that the consumer was becoming more educated and more accustomed to viewing purchases in terms of actual cost per serving rather than the price per pound. In other words they feel that the customer is aware that a lean, high quality product is worth a certain extra price. Other retailers indicated that they felt the most important considerations of the consumer in the purchase of pork was eye appeal. They felt that many consumers would buy a package of pork if it looked good to them, and that price was not as important as it was thought to be in the past.

Several of the retailers who did not feel that their customers would pay more for a good product commented that they were located in an area where the people were very price conscious, and tended to shop for "specials."

The retailers were optimistic in their opinions about the attitudes of consumers toward the promotion of fresh pork. Forty-five percent of the respondents felt that consumers' reactions to point of sale promotion for fresh pork would be *very good.* Forty-three percent felt that consumers would show at least *some response* to this type of material. Only 11 percent felt that their customers would not be affected by this type of promotion (Table 27).

Sixty-seven percent of the retailers felt that pork recipes would be well accepted by consumers and could help stimulate the demand for pork (Table 28).

TABLE 27--HOW RETAILERS THOUGHT CONSUMERS WOULD RESPOND TO POINT-OF-SALE ADVERTISING OF FRESH PORK

Effect	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Very Good	9	50	34	41	43	43
Some Response	7	39	36	44	43	43
Low Response	2	11	9	11	11	11
No Response	---	---	3	4	3	3

TABLE 28--RETAILERS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION WHETHER AVAILABILITY OF RECIPES TO CONSUMERS WOULD STIMULATE DEMAND FOR FRESH PORK

Opinion	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Yes	12	67	55	67	67	67
No	5	27	26	32	31	31
No Response	1	6	1	1	2	2

Comments indicated that retailers thought consumers, especially younger housewives, were not well aware of what pork cuts were available and the proper preparation methods. The general opinion seemed to be that younger housewives would appreciate general cooking instructions, while the more seasoned homemaker would be more interested in recipes for new ideas.

Several of the retailers based their views on consumer response to recipes that had been offered in the past. Fifty-two percent of the respondents had experienced good consumer response to recipe offers for meat items (not necessarily pork) in the past. Only 12 percent of the retailers indicated that recipe offers they had made were poorly accepted (Table 29).

When asked if some type of fresh pork grading system would benefit customers and give them more confidence in the product, 64 percent of the respondents said they thought that it would (Table 30).

TABLE 29--RETAILERS' OPINIONS OF HOW CONSUMERS WOULD RESPOND TO RECIPE OFFERS

Opinion	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Very Good	9	50	15	18	24	24
Good	3	17	25	30	28	28
Some Response	4	22	8	10	12	12
Have Not Used	2	11	34	41	36	36

TABLE 30--RESPONDENTS' OPINIONS ON WHETHER CONSUMERS WOULD BENEFIT FROM A GRADING SYSTEM FOR FRESH PORK CUTS

Opinion	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Would Benefit Consumers	13	72	51	62	64	64
Would Not Benefit Consumers	5	28	31	38	36	36

When asked what factors such a system should be based on, the factors listed most frequently were trim or lean-to-fat ratio, uniformity, and color. Of those respondents who did not feel that consumers would benefit from such a grading system, most stated that pork was normally bought on the basis of eye appeal or absence of excess fat, and that the benefits would not be worth the additional cost.

In an attempt to determine what consumer attitudes existed toward pork, retailers were asked, "What does your customer feel about fresh pork in relation to other meat department items?" Responses varied, but several factors were listed repeatedly.

Approximately half of the respondents felt that customers viewed pork as an item which would be used mainly for family "every day" meals. Twenty-eight percent felt that customers viewed it as an item with less prestige than beef, and which would not normally be served to guests. Consumers consider at least some pork cuts to be economy items, which are often used to help cut the food budget, in the opinion of 37 percent of the retailers.

Slightly more than one-third of the respondents felt that customers were wary or unsure of pork from the standpoint of health. Eighteen percent indicated that consumers preferred beef and that they considered pork more of a change of pace item which was purchased to supplement normal beef items.

Fifteen percent felt that the consumer lacked knowledge about pork and its preparation (Table 31). When asked specifically if customer complaints about tenderness were common, 89 percent of respondents said they were not. Occasional complaints had been experienced by 6 percent of the respondents, but most felt that this was probably due to the method of cooking. Frequent complaints were experienced by 5 percent of the retailers about the lack of tenderness in certain fresh pork cuts. All of the retailers who had experienced this problem of frequent complaints associated it with pork chops that were from extra trim meat type loins (Table 32).

TABLE 31--CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS TOWARD PORK AS SEEN BY THE RETAILER

Attitudes	Combined Sample N=100	%
Worry about Health Aspects	46	46
Normal Family Meal Item	46	46
Economy Item	37	37
Lacks Prestige	28	28
Change of Pace Item	18	18
Preference of Beef	18	18
Lack of Knowledge	20	20
Liked as Well as Beef	15	15
Seasonal Item	10	10
Impulse Item	5	5
Quick and Easy to Fix	5	5
Fat Image	10	10
Barbecue Item	9	9
Others	6	6

TABLE 32--FREQUENCY OF COMPLAINTS RETAILERS RECEIVE ABOUT LACK OF TENDERNESS IN FRESH PORK ITEMS

Frequency	Meat Merchandisers N=18	%	Meat Department Managers N=82	%	Combined Sample N=100	%
Frequent Complaints	---	---	5	6	5	5
Occasional Complaints	1	6	5	6	6	6
Very Rarely Have Complaints	17	94	72	88	89	89

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APPENDIX I

Name ______________________________

Firm ______________________________

Position ______________________________

1. Do you consider pork a reasonably fast moving item in your stores?

Fresh	Cured
Yes_____ No_____	Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

2. How would you rank fresh pork with other meat departments items (beef, poultry) in terms of profit margin?

Comments:

3. What do you feel the major reasons are for the decline in the sale of fresh pork in relation to beef?

Comments:

4. What deciding factors do you use in choosing a packer to supply you with fresh pork and in what order would you place them?

Comments:

5. Do you buy a special trim or specially selected fresh pork?

Yes_____ No _____

Comments:

6. What basis do you use in pricing pork?

Cost + markup_____quality_____ std. price_____other_______

Comments:

7. Are you able to obtain a consistent high quality, well-trimmed supply of fresh pork?

Yes_____ No _____

Comments:

8. Do you feel that your customers would be willing to pay more for very lean high quality pork?

Yes_____ No _____

Comments:

9. Have you tried advertising a well trimmed meat type pork?

Yes_____ No_____(If no, omit next 3 questions)

Comments:

10. How would you describe the success of this program?

High_____ Moderate _____ Low_____

Comments:

11. What was the average difference in price to the consumer between regular pork and extra trimmed pork?

cents/lb. ________

Comments:

12. What were the major problems you encountered in this effort? List.

Comments:

13. What do you do to promote fresh pork? (What types of promotion?)

Comments:

14. Have you attempted to do any private labeling of fresh pork?

Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

15. What is the intensity of your fresh pork promotions related to beef promotion?

Stronger ______ Equal ______ Less Intense ______

Comments:

16. How often is pork used for major specials?

Monthly _____ Bi-weekly _____ Weekly _____ Seldom _____ Other _______

Comments:

17. What is your policy regarding the use of pork for specials or as a leader?

Comments:

18. Do you have any idea how fresh pork promotions affect the sales of other items in the meat department (beef and poultry?)

Yes_____ No_____

How would you describe this effect?

19. Do you feel that an increase in the sale of pork would increase the total gross profit of the meat department?

Yes_____ No_____

Comments:

20. What types of promotions do you normally use with fresh pork?

Point of Sale _____ Price _____ Media _____ Recipe _____

Comments:

21. Is point of sale material readily available?

Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

22. Do you use pork promotion material in your store?

Point of Sale--Yes _____ No _____ Recipes--Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

23. What do you feel is the effect of point of sale advertising for fresh pork?

Very Good _____ Some Response _____ Low _____

Comments:

24. Do you feel that the availability of recipes would increase the sale of pork?

Yes _____ No _____

Comments:

25. Are recipes well accepted and picked up by shoppers?

    Very good____ Good____ Some response____ Do not use____

    Comments:

26. How would you rate the success of recipe and point of sale promotions of fresh pork in terms of increased sales?

    Very successful____ Successful____ Not successful____

    Comments:

27. Do you offer various package sizes on all fresh pork items to accommodate different family sizes?

    Yes____ No____

    Comments: (What sizes, what items).

28. Do you feel a fresh pork grading system for buying pork cuts would be of benefit to:

    You in buying--Yes____ No____ To the consumer--Yes____ No____

    Comments: (What should it be based on?)

29. What's wrong with fresh pork as you get it from the packer? List.

    Comments: (Also: marbling, pale soft, watery, size of ribeye)

30. What are your biggest problems with selling pork?

31. Do you have customer complaints about tenderness?

    Yes____ No____

32. What do you think the customer feels about fresh pork in relation to beef or chicken?