

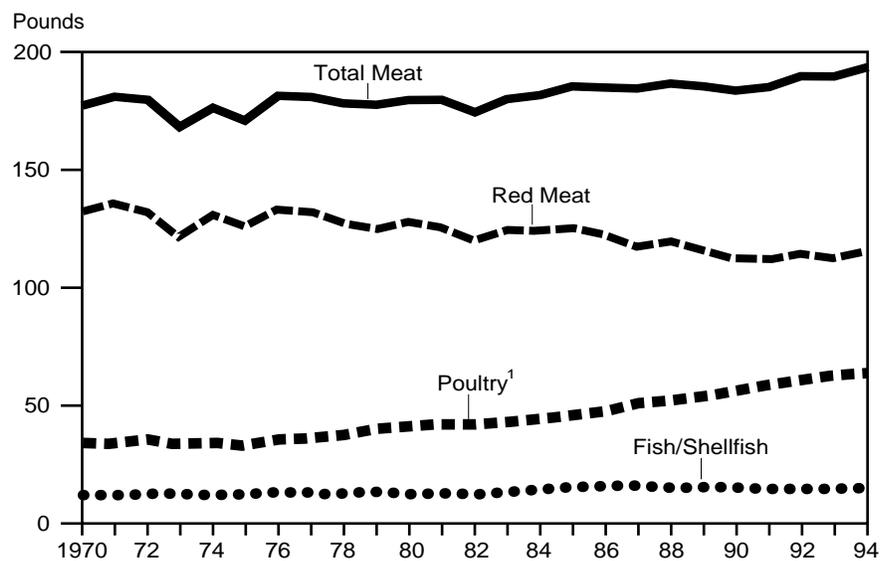
# 1. U.S. Agriculture—Linking Consumers and Producers

## ■ What Do Americans Eat?

Americans are slowly, with fits and starts, shifting their eating patterns toward more healthful diets. They are eating more low-fat and nonfat products, and leaner cuts of meat. However, this trend has been undermined by a growing preference for high-fat convenience foods, fast foods, and snacks. More Americans eat out, eat on the run, and eat more often than ever before. In the process, some have unwittingly increased their consumption of added fats, oils, and sugars.

A considerable gap still remains between public health recommendations and consumer practices. Between 1977-78 and 1989-91, according to USDA surveys, the average intake of fat declined from 40 percent of total energy (calories) to 34 percent, still well above the 30-percent maximum recommended. Average carbohydrate

Figure 1-1.  
Per capita consumption of meat, poultry, and fish, boneless, trimmed equivalent



<sup>1</sup>Includes skin, neck meat and giblets

Table 1-1.

## Major foods: U.S. per capita consumption

| <i>Food</i>                                      | <i>1970</i> | <i>1980</i>    | <i>1993</i> |
|--|-------------|----------------|-------------|
|  |             | <i>Pounds</i>  |             |
| Red meat <sup>1</sup>                            | 131.7       | 126.4          | 112.1       |
| Chicken and turkey <sup>1</sup>                  | 33.8        | 40.8           | 62.6        |
| Fish and shellfish <sup>1</sup>                  | 11.7        | 12.4           | 14.9        |
| Eggs   | 39.5        | 34.8           | 30.3        |
| Cheese <sup>2</sup>                              | 11.4        | 17.5           | 26.3        |
| Ice cream  | 17.8        | 17.5           | 16.1        |
| Fluid cream products                             | 5.2         | 5.6            | 8.0         |
| All dairy products <sup>3</sup>                  | 563.8       | 543.2          | 574.1       |
| Fats and oils                                    | 52.6        | 57.2           | 65.0        |
| Animal   | 14.1        | 12.3           | 10.1        |
| Vegetable  | 38.5        | 44.8           | 54.9        |
| Peanuts and tree nuts <sup>4</sup>               | 7.2         | 6.6            | 8.3         |
| Fruits and vegetables <sup>5</sup>               | 565.6       | 594.6          | 674.6       |
| Fruits   | 230.0       | 258.1          | 278.0       |
| Vegetables                                       | 335.6       | 336.6          | 396.6       |
| Caloric sweeteners <sup>6</sup>                  | 122.3       | 123.0          | 144.4       |
| Refined sugar (sucrose)                          | 101.8       | 83.6           | 64.3        |
| Corn Sweeteners                                  | 19.1        | 38.2           | 78.7        |
| Other  | 1.5         | 1.2            | 1.4         |
| Flour and cereal products <sup>7</sup>           | 135.3       | 144.6          | 193.1       |
| Wheat flour                                      | 110.9       | 116.9          | 139.4       |
| Rice   | 6.7         | 9.4            | 17.5        |
| Corn products                                    | 11.1        | 12.9           | 22.1        |
| Oat products                                     | 4.4         | 3.7            | 8.6         |
| Rye and barley                                   | 2.2         | 1.8            | 1.5         |
| Cocoa (chocolate liquor equivalent) <sup>8</sup> | 3.1         | 2.7            | 4.6         |
|  |             | <i>Gallons</i> |             |
| Beverage milks                                   | 31.3        | 27.6           | 24.9        |
| Whole  | 25.5        | 17.0           | 9.4         |
| Lowfat and skim                                  | 5.8         | 10.5           | 15.5        |
| Coffee   | 33.4        | 26.7           | 26.0        |
| Tea  | 6.8         | 7.3            | 7.1         |
| Soft drinks                                      | 24.3        | 35.1           | 46.6        |
| Fruit juices                                     | NA          | 7.2            | 8.4         |
| Bottled water                                    | NA          | 2.4            | 9.2         |
| Beer   | 18.5        | 24.3           | 22.6        |
| Wine   | 1.3         | 2.1            | 1.7         |
| Distilled spirits                                | 1.8         | 2.0            | 1.3         |

NA = Not available.

<sup>1</sup>Boneless, trimmed equivalent. <sup>2</sup>Excludes full-skim American, cottage, pot, and baker's cheese. <sup>3</sup>Milk equivalent, milkfat basis. <sup>4</sup>Shelled basis <sup>5</sup>Farmgate weight. <sup>6</sup>Dry basis. <sup>7</sup>Consumption of items at the processing level (excludes quantities used in alcoholic beverages and corn sweeteners). <sup>8</sup>What remains after cocoa beans have been roasted and hulled.

intake increased between the two survey periods from 43 percent of total calories to 49 percent, still well below the 55- to 60-percent minimum recommended by a variety of sources, including the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association.

While Americans are eating more grains, especially in mixtures, they still are not eating the amounts of high-fiber foods—including whole-grain products, legumes, vegetables, and fruit—recommended in the latest dietary guidelines. And, Americans are eating more foods that contain large amounts of refined sugars.

Increasing supplies of beef and declining retail beef prices spurred a 1-pound increase in per capita consumption of beef in 1994, the first increase in 10 years, but long-term consumption trends for beef and for total red meat remain down. Red meat accounted for 59 percent of the total meat supply in 1994, compared with 70 percent in 1980 and 74 percent in 1970. By 1994, chicken and turkey accounted for 33 percent of the total meat consumed, up from 23 percent in 1980 and 19 percent in 1970. In 1994, per capita consumption averaged 17 pounds less red meat, 30 pounds more poultry, and 3 pounds more fish and shellfish than in 1970. Retail cuts of beef and pork and many processed meat products are significantly leaner than a decade ago. Despite a trend toward use of leaner meats, per capita consumption of total meat reached an all-time high in 1994 and is expected to rise again in 1995.

U.S. per capita egg consumption has declined steadily since an all-time high of 403 eggs in 1945. Between 1970 and 1994, total annual per capita egg consumption decreased from 309 to 238 eggs, while consumption of processed eggs rose from 33 to 61 eggs. Egg product use changed little during the 1960's and climbed only slowly during the 1970's. Since 1983, however, it has jumped 73 percent, reflecting

Figure 1-2.  
Per capita consumption of eggs

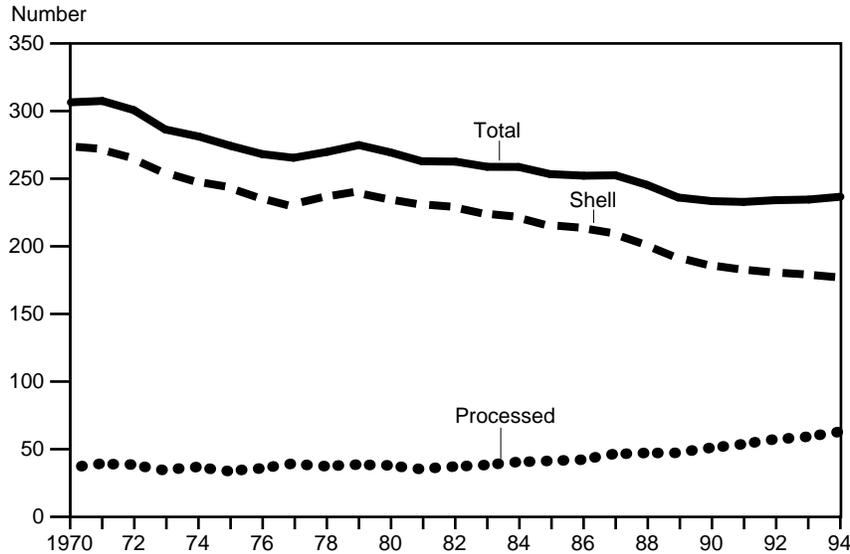


Figure 1-3.

Per capita consumption of plain fluid milk

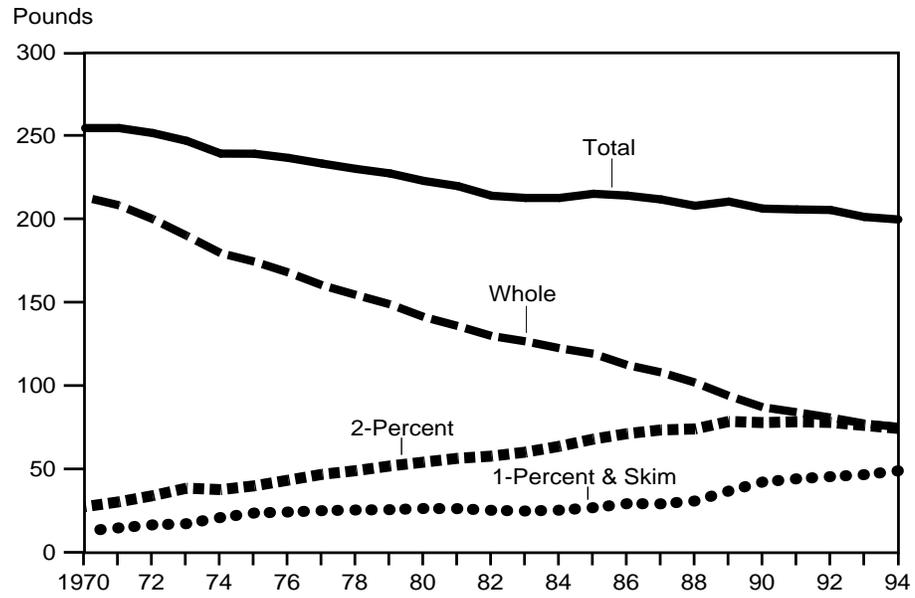
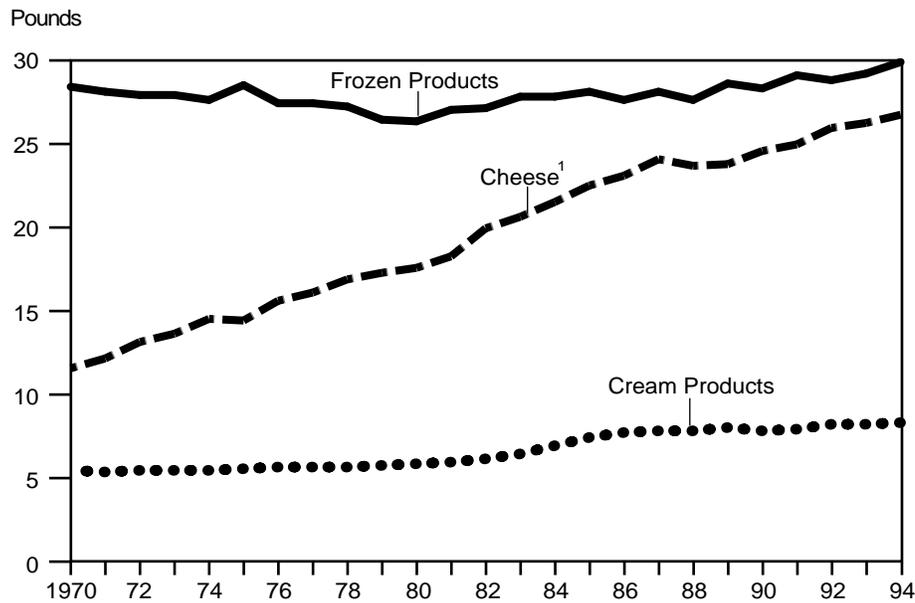


Figure 1-4.

Per capita consumption of selected dairy products



<sup>1</sup>Excludes full-skim American and cottage, pot, and baker's cheese

expanded use of eggs as manufacturing ingredients in a number of food products (such as pasta and sweet baked goods) and increased use in fast food outlets and other food service establishments. As with red meat, some people correlate the decline in shell egg use with concern about cholesterol. The home-cooked egg-and-bacon breakfast has given way to ready-to-eat, “instant” grain-based products and processed egg products.

The beverage milk trend is toward lower fat milk. Between 1980 and 1994, Americans cut their average annual consumption of fluid whole milk by nearly half, increased use of low-fat milk by two-fifths, and more than doubled consumption of skim milk. But the Nation failed to cut its overall use of milkfat because of growing demand for cheese. Per capita use of cheese has increased 53 percent since 1980 to 27 pounds in 1994.

Americans consumed 12 pounds more fats and oils per person (on a fat-content basis) in 1993 than in 1970. A 43-percent increase in use of vegetable fats and oils (mainly salad and cooking oils and shortening) more than offset a 28-percent decrease in use of animal fats (lard and butter). In 1993, animal fat constituted 16 percent of total fat consumption from added fats and oils, compared with 27 percent in 1970. The switch to vegetable fats and oils reflects increased consumer emphasis on unsaturated fats and oils. The increase in total fats and oils probably results from the greatly expanded consumption of fried foods in food service outlets and the increased use of salad oils on salads consumed both at home and away from home.

In 1993, Americans consumed, on average, 675 pounds (farmgate weight) of commercially produced fruits (excluding wine grapes) and vegetables, 13 percent more than in 1980 and 19 percent more than in 1970. Since 1980, vegetables accounted for most of the increase. Consumers bought more fresh produce, frozen and dried fruit and vegetables, fruit juices, and canned tomato products, and less canned fruit and canned vegetables other than tomatoes.

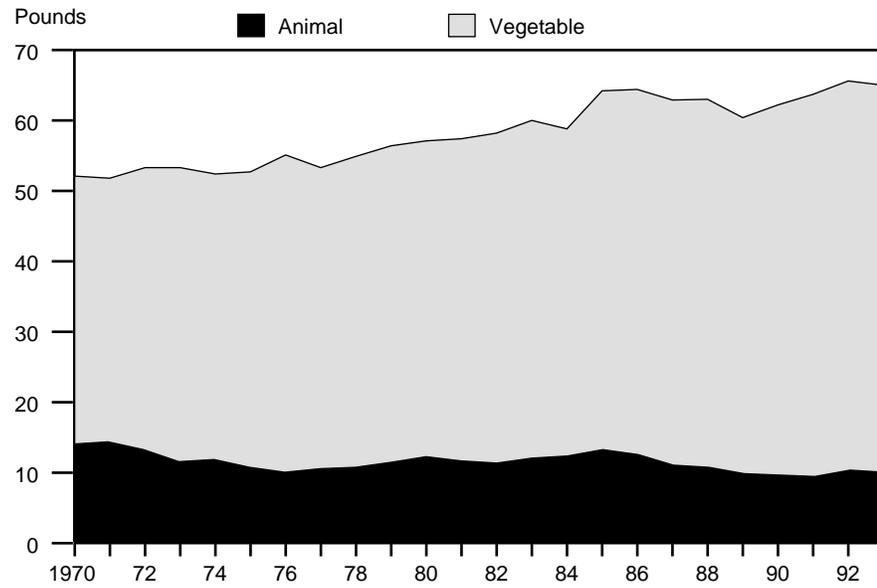
Consumption of grain products has risen in recent years but remains well below consumption levels in the early part of the century. In 1993, per capita use of flour and cereal products was 193 pounds per year, 49 pounds above the 1980 level but more than 100 pounds below the 1909 level. The recent expansion in supplies reflects ample grain stocks and strong consumer demand. Much of this growth was product-driven, as (1) consumers gained appreciation for variety bread, (2) fast-food sales of hamburgers and other products made with buns expanded rapidly, and (3) in-store bakeries and baking spurred sales.

Americans have become conspicuous consumers of sugar and sweet-tasting foods and beverages. Total per capita use of caloric sweeteners—comprised mainly of sucrose (table sugar made from cane and beets) and corn sweeteners (notably high-fructose corn syrup, called HFCS)—rose 20 percent between 1980 and 1994. In 1994, Americans consumed, on average, a record 148 pounds of caloric sweeteners (dry-weight basis), compared with 123 pounds in 1980 and 122 pounds in 1970. That is more than one-third of a pound of added sugars a day for each American.

A striking change in the availability of specific sugars has occurred in the past decade. Sucrose accounted for 44 percent of the total caloric sweetener supply in 1994, on a dry-weight basis, compared with 68 percent in 1980. By 1994, corn sweeteners accounted for 55 percent of the total caloric sweeteners consumed, up from 31

Figure 1-5.

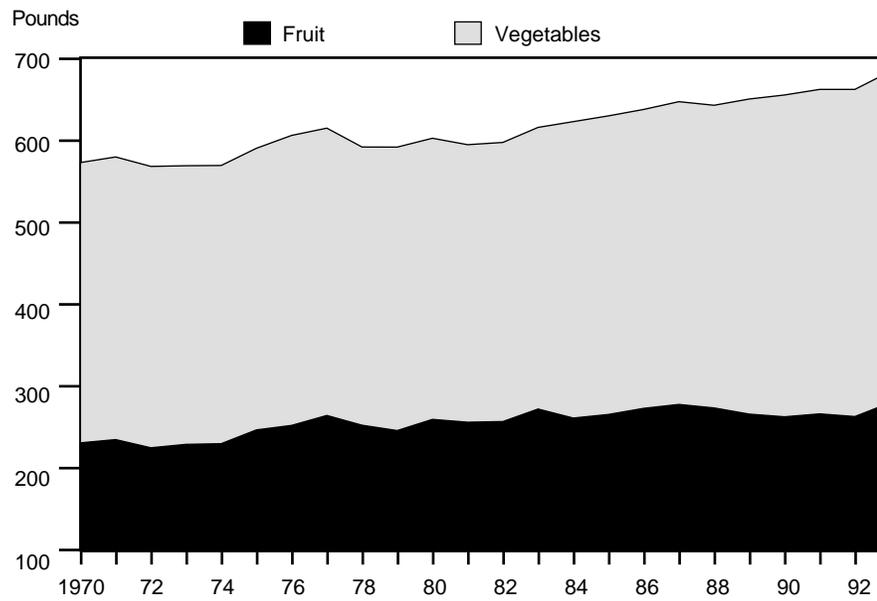
Per capita consumption of food fats and oils<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Fat content basis. Includes butter, margarine, direct use of lard and edible tallow, shortening, salad and cooking oils, and other fats.

Figure 1-6.

Per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Farm-weight equivalent.

percent in 1980. All other caloric sweeteners, including honey, maple syrup, and molasses, maintained a 1-percent share. In 1993, beverages accounted for 72 percent of total HFCS deliveries for domestic food and beverage use. Corn sweeteners became economical as a result of abundant corn supplies and low corn prices. Moreover, sales of byproducts—corn oil and corn gluten feed and meal—made corn sweetener production even less expensive. At the same time, Federal sugar programs maintained high support prices and import quotas on sucrose. Total corn sweetener use surpassed cane and beet sugar use for the first time in 1985.

USDA's Economic Research Service annually calculates the amount of food available for human consumption in the United States. The U.S. food supply historical series measures national aggregate consumption of several hundred foods. It is the only source of time series data on food and nutrient availability in the country.