Meat Exports — A Processor’s Viewpoint

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Export markets have had great importance to the meat processor throughout our history. In the days before the Industrial Revolution and refrigeration, salted pork and beef were among the major American agricultural trade items.

In recent years, the export of variety meats has been of vital importance, particularly to the slaughter house segment of the industry. During the first half of 1982, 52.4% of the total export tonnage of red and variety meat was variety meats. For a slaughterer, successful export sales of variety meats is critical for maintaining a profitable operation. Exports of red meats were somewhat neglected, particularly in the post-World War II years. Often, export sales of red meats were by-products of variety meats sales.

In the 1970’s, as the growth in the increased per capita consumption of red meat slowed, the meat and livestock industry started to explore the possibilities of increasing their involvement in the promotion of U.S. red meats in the world market. From this beginning, the U.S. Meat Export Federation was organized in 1976.

The MEF primary objective is to represent the industry in the identification and development of overseas markets for U.S. red meat products. Through cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agricultural Foreign Agriculture Service, a goal of increasing U.S. beef and pork meats exports by 260% by 1986 over the base year of 1981 was established.

International Meat Marketing Discussion

A. W. Kotula, USDA: How can we sell value-added products, like sausage, to Russia or the E.C.?

H. T. Sanden: This whole area of exporting value-added products needs further exploration. Due to the various ethnic tastes, we probably couldn’t produce their type of sausage at present. So many of the particular products consumed in the E.C. are not produced or marketed here that it would be difficult to gear up for a specific specialty item.

J. Regenstein, Cornell University: Are we on a collision course with the EEC on poultry subsidies? Don’t they realize that we don’t have anywhere to go?

Sanden: At present, we subsidize the EEC $340 to $380 per ton to export poultry to the Middle East. However, part of this amount is in differences in exchange rates and also in freight rates. Yes, we are on a collision course, but we have always been a residual poultry exporter, with only 2½% of our poultry being exported in a good year.

Question: Do the countries of the E.C. which hold rigid requirements to the U.S. on exports enforce these same requirements on their own countries’ plants?

W. I. Leary: Representatives of USDA have visited many countries in Europe. On the use of wood, for example, it has been removed from plants in European countries. With the exception of Denmark and Holland, our sanitation is better than the countries to which we export. But that doesn’t stop those countries from requesting stronger sanitation from us.