

Consumer Impact On Food, Agriculture

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by Herrell DeGraff, Pres., American Meat Institute

PART II

Voice of the Consumer

I am sure there is no one who can speak with the voice of all food shoppers. And it is certain that no real homemaker would be likely to use the words that I now shall use, nor organize her thoughts in this manner. But if I could, out of my own observations and experience, put some words in the mouth of an admittedly fictitious homemaker, she would sound about as follows:

As a consumer I want a food supply that knows no season.

Strawberries in January? Sure.

I don't know that Nature intended a hen to lay eggs only in the spring, and only for reproducing the species. I want fresh eggs 365 days of the year.

I don't know that Nature intended a cow to give milk only to start her calf. I don't know anything about Nature. For all I know, food originates in the supermarket.

I want food that knows no geography. I want Texas grapefruit, Central American bananas, California lettuce, Mexican tomatoes, and Michigan apples—and all at the same time. And all available in whatever store I shop in any far corner of the country.

I want food that requires no work. I am a working woman, you know. If I don't have an outside job, I have kids and other responsibilities. Why should I struggle with an ingredient food

supply? I want my food canned, frozen, pickled, bottled, precooked and packaged so I can get dinner in 20 minutes.

Moreover, I want it to make me look like a good cook.

Even my ingredients—even my flour, I want in a two-pound bag, or better yet, a one-pound shaker. And I still want it cheap.

But mostly I don't want flour—I want idiot biscuits (that's the kind where the dough is already mixed and in a tube, so any idiot can make them without mistake). But you had better not let me think that you think I am an idiot. Instead you must make me think I am creative when I open the package!

And when you sell me that brownie mix, you'd better put in a foil pan to bake them in, because we didn't get any cooking pans for wedding presents.

Yes, I am the most spoiled and most demanding food purchaser who ever breathed the atmosphere of this old globe. And you who produce food, who process it, and merchandise it, have made me this way.

You have made me this way by courting my favor, by seducing me with your blandishments, by knocking yourself out with your competition for my dollar.

Nor am I going to change—because I don't have to! You still want my business. Maybe I need you as much as you need me. But I have more alternatives than you have.

I don't have to buy eggs—maybe we will have cereal for breakfast. I don't have to take potatoes—maybe we will have rice. I don't even have to buy meat—maybe we will have pizza.

Moreover, I really don't have to spend so much on food. Maybe we'll eat more simply for a

while and save money for a night on the town.


One food competes with other foods—but all food competes with an endless array of non-food claims on all consumers' money. So I don't worry as a consumer that I will have to change my demanding ways.

Take those processors. They had better give me taste, color, texture, enticing new products, more convenient new packages—and whatever else will attract my interest. They are the ones who have to find out what I want! How do I know what I want until I see it?

And then there is the retailer. His only job is to please me. He has a lot of shelf space. He makes a living by piling on those shelves the things I will buy and take home. He has to attract me into his store—in competition with plenty of other stores not much different than his. If I don't go into his store he can't sell me. And if I don't go back, he has had it also—because he cannot live on selling me just once.

So what does he do? He writes specifications which his suppli-

ers have to observe. They want to know and his knowledge, of my to sell to him. His specifications buying habits have taught him I call for products that his experi- (Continued on Page 27)



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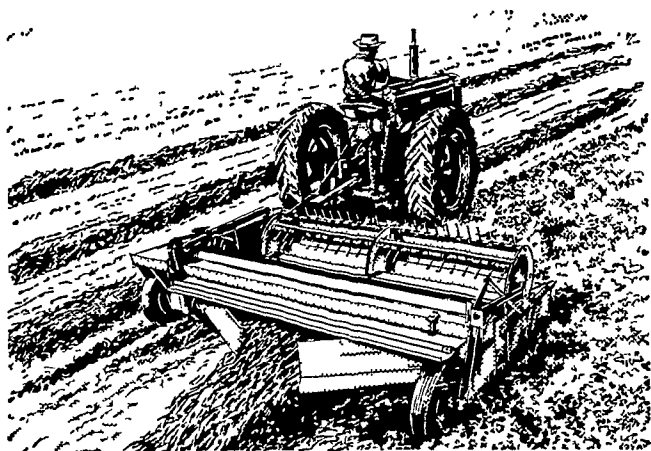
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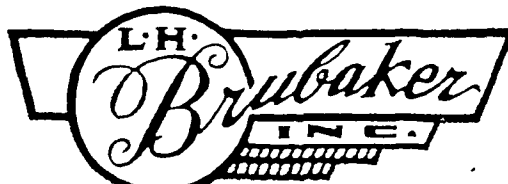
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