

Image Of Egg Industry Varies

The image of the poultry and egg industry can be compared to the tale of the three blind men each feeling a part of an elephant, says Dr. L. A. Wilhelm, president of Poultry and Egg National Board. The industry impression is quite different to the three categories of people most concerned with eggs — the consumer, the retailer and the producer.

Mrs. Average Consumer. a 26-year-old housewife with two plus children who thinks "breakfast" when she thinks eggs, realizes eggs are nutritious and good for people of all ages but buys only 1½ dozen shell eggs each week. She fries 75 percent of the shell eggs and uses 4 or 5 eggs a week "in cooking." She does not relate eggs with economy and uses about the same number regardless of price. She has two big complaints. She'd like a see-through carton and an end to occasional broken eggs.

The retailer also has mixed feelings about eggs. He realizes they have excellent turnover and can be a profit and traffic builder. But this same retailer complains about lack of service from the distributor and unimaginative packaging.

To the retailer, eggs are at various times a headache, a staple item, a profit builder and a source of frustration, particularly in his attempts to promote sales through distributor supplied point-of-purchase materials.

Most of the "bad image" of the egg industry, according to Dr. Wilhelm, exists in the minds of industry members — the distributors and producers.

They do most of the worrying about cholesterol, salmonella and residues, consumer problems which exist but not on the scale the industry believes. Industry members are also overly concerned because egg consumption has declined since the all-time high of 1941-1947. Wilhelm contends this was to be expected when wartime rationing of red meat stopped.

The industry sees an iron-clad relationship between price and consumption that doesn't exist and doesn't realize the real reason why many smaller producers are going out of business.

"Bigness is no guarantee to success," he says. "Many egg producers go into bankruptcy because they lie to themselves about the cost of production and seldom include all production costs in their total cost." He further cites as the worst offense to the image of the industry, the "poor mouthing" carried on by active members of the industry.

He'd like to hear.

"This is a wonderful business! I produce the most necessary product in the world — food. And I produce the most complete and nutritious of foods — EGGS! This wonderful business puts bread (and cake) on my table, pays the taxes, has enabled me to accumulate probably more of this world's goods than I am entitled to, permitted a wonderful family life, friends, and business — and puts money in the church collection plate. Thank God for the egg and the egg industry!"

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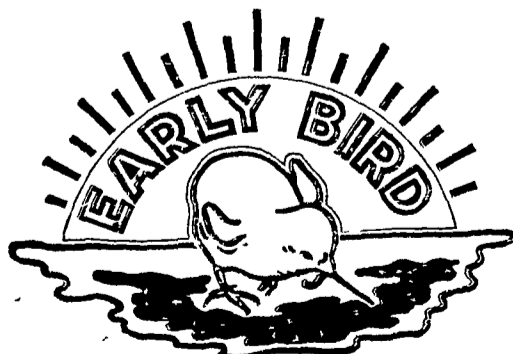
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