

Red meat production predicted up 3 to 5%

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Total production of red meat and poultry during the first half of 1980, is expected to be up three to five percent from the first half of 1979, led by a large increase in pork production.

These large supplies of meat likely will keep first half 1980 retail pork and poultry prices well below year-earlier levels but beef

prices may be slightly higher than a year ago.

The December 1, 1979 inventory of hogs and pigs on farms was estimated at 67 million head, up 11 percent from a year earlier and the largest December 1 inventory since 1970. The inventory of heavy hogs that will reach market weight during the first quarter of 1980 was up 19 percent and the inventory of hogs that

will reach market weight in the second quarter was up seven percent.

Commercial hog slaughter is therefore likely to be near record levels through the first half of 1980.

Hog slaughter during the second half of 1980 will be drawn largely from the December-May pig crop. Producers indicated on December 1, 1979 that farrowings for this period would be unchanged from a year ago.

If these intentions are realized, hog slaughter during the second half of 1980 would be near 1979 levels. But hog producers will be reevaluating their production plans in response to changes in feed costs and hog prices. Developments in the grain market will be a big factor in hog production plans.

Although beef production may be down two to four percent during the first half of 1980, poultry production will likely continue above year-earlier levels. Broiler production may be up two to four percent from the first half of 1979 and large increases in turkey production are expected, perhaps 20 to 25 percent.

The large supplies of pork and other meats will keep downward pressure on hog

prices during the first half of the year.

Prices are expected to average in the upper \$30's during the first quarter and the mid-\$30's during the second quarter.

This would be well below year-earlier prices of \$52 and \$43 in the first and second quarter of 1979, respectively.

Cattle price gains in the first half will be moderated by large meat supplies. Prices for steers at Omaha may average in the upper \$60's or low \$70's during the first half.

On January 4, 1980 the United States announced a suspension of grain shipments to Soviet Union in excess of the eight million tons per year that we are committed to sell under the five-year agreement that expires in 1981.

However, actions have been taken to ensure that America's farmers will face essentially the same set of supply-demand conditions for grains as if the sales to the Soviet Union had gone forward.

Information available at press time did not indicate any basic changes in the supply and price forecasts for meats. Any impact on the livestock and meat industry, resulting from these actions, will be incorporated into future analyses.

USDA to pick up chickens

NEW YORK, N.Y. — The United States Department of Agriculture is planning to take action to help poultry farmers pull out of a slump in market created by President Carter's January 4 suspension of trade with the Soviet Union.

The USDA's program will provide more chicken to hospitals, nursing homes and other institutions, and will hopefully lower the price-depressing supplies of poultry currently on the market.

The solution to the problem created when export contracts could not be fulfilled will have two parts. First, USDA will invite bids for a supply of whole frozen chicken, at least equivalent to the amount which had been packaged for shipment to the Soviet Union.

This action is being taken under the authority of Section 32 of Public Law 320, which provides that perishable commodities that cannot be sold by producers at reasonable prices may be purchased by the government for use in food assistance programs.

"By making these purchases, we hope to improve the market demand and eliminate excess supplies

caused by the trade suspension. President Carter has said that actions will be taken, not to guarantee profits for exporters, but to prevent catastrophic losses by producers. We think that by making additional purchases of poultry above what we normally would have purchased for our programs, we can help maintain reasonable prices for poultry products," said Carol Tucker Foreman, assistant secretary of agriculture for food and consumer services.

Second, the department will increase its regular purchase of poultry, under Section 6 of the National School Lunch Act, to help absorb the extra supply which may have been generated to fill the Soviet contract. Chicken will be purchased in frozen, cut-up or cooked, breaded form for use in the school lunch program.

Foreman said, "chicken has been one of the most popular commodities in our school and other feeding programs. We are confident that the poultry will be well used, and that the poultry industry will be protected from devastating losses."

Poultry Federation

sets two meeting dates

LANCASTER — Dates have been set for two important Pennsylvania Poultry Federation meetings.

The State Poultry Federation Fund Raising Banquet will be held at the Host Farm, Lancaster.

Affair will begin at 6 p.m. April 10, 1980. In past years it has been one of the most successful fund raising events in Pennsylvania agriculture.

The Annual Poultry Conference of the State Federation will be held at the Host Corral, Lancaster.

That all-day session will run on June 26.

For further information or tickets to these events contact John D. Hoffman, Executive Director of the Poultry Federation.

Hoffman can be reached at 500 N. Progress Avenue, Harrisburg, PA 17109. Telephone number at the Federation office is 717/652-7530.

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