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Heart disease

Continued from Page E4
fort have been documented. And no one has the answer.

But those studies are, for the large part, ignored by the government and by others in the anti-meat movement. And consumers certainly hear very little about them.

Heart disease is not the only disease linked to red meat consumption.

Cancer has been thrown in for good measure and it scares just about everybody.

The theory is alive and well and enjoying government promotion that as dietary intake of animal fat increases there is a corresponding increase in cancer, specifically breast and colon.

Once again, that's debatable. There are too many studies contradicting, that theory to consider it an open-and shut case.

For example, people in both the Netherlands and Finland have been found to consume 100 gm. of animal fat per day. In the Netherlands that accounts for 65 per cent of the total fat intake and in Finland 88 per cent. But the Netherlands has twice the incidence of breast and colon cancer as Finland.

In another study, higher economic classes in Cali, Columbia, have four times the incidence of colon cancer than the lower classes even though the higher classes consume less animal fat than do the lower.

Even the so-called rising incidence of heart disease and cancer, often employed as a scare tactic in the movement against beef consumption, deserves a second look.

A decrease in deaths from infectious diseases and from malnutrition must be taken into consideration as must an increase in life expectancy (which amounts to 20

years since the turn of the century).

Then, one must realize that cancer and heart disease are degenerative by nature, that the probability they will strike increases with age. So is the problem disease? Or the inevitability of death?

Actually, deaths from cardiovascular disease and cancer (except lung) have decreased on an age-adjusted basis during the last 30 years — coinciding, by the way, with an increase in per capita beef consumption.

Now, here's the clincher, the final straw: polyunsaturated fats.

The government loves them as do others involved in the anti-beef movement. But beware — polyunsaturates may actually prove hazardous to your health.

In a study of people who survived heart attacks, those allowed to eat anything they wanted had a significantly higher survival rate than those put on a polyunsaturated fat diet.

Another study indicated that cancer patients seemed to lose natural defenses against the disease when placed on diets high in polyunsaturates.

Studies indicate polyunsaturates, the darlings through recent dietary drama, recommended by the government as animal fat replacements could, in fact, be harmful to health.

They are characterized by chemically altered bonds called trans-fatty acids; evidence exists that these trans-fatty acids affect the functions of cell membranes, apparently allowing cancer-causing agents to more easily permeate cell walls.

The alarming thing here is that persons following current government dietary

recommendations, substituting vegetable fats for animal fats, many actually be subjecting themselves to an unusually high dose of a cancer-related agent.

Funny thing, not many articles in popular magazines discuss trans-fatty acids. No vegetable oil ads mention them. Government dietary recommendations ignore them. But they do exist and consumers need to be aware of them.

Polyunsaturates, like the rest of the red meat controversy, demand more study. And until more study brings in more conclusive evidence one could question the intelligence of recommending a national diet change.

This leads to one question. Why? Why the scare tactics? The propaganda? Why is the government urging a change in diet?

No one knows for sure. But with so much at stake, it is unfortunate that no clear-cut conclusions have been reached in the dietary debate. It is sad that so much effort is being expended to connect cancer and heart disease with diet and red meats, while perhaps real causes are going undetected.

Some scientists indicate it may become more difficult to get government funding for research unless they support the popular theories. and money to research polyunsaturates is hard to come by — from a government supposedly concerned with a nation's health.

But to arbitrarily change a diet by eliminating a nutritious food is hardly the sort of thing one would expect from a responsible government. And in this age of consumer awareness it is amazing that the government is getting away with it.

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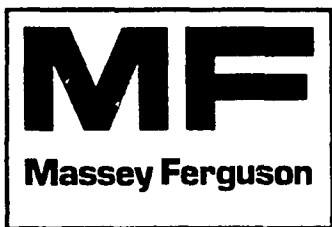


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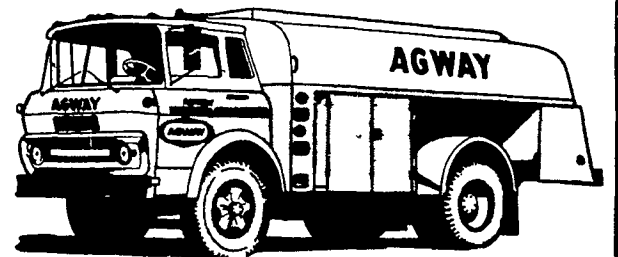
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