

MEAT RABBIT PRODUCTION IN SPAIN

RAFEL O., RAMON J., GOMEZ E.A.

I.R.T.A. Unitat de Cunicultura, 08140 Caldes de Montbui, BARCELONA, Spain.

Abstract - Spanish meat rabbit production was 99.881 Tm. in 1994, with an irregular geographic distribution. This figure represents 2.6% of total livestock production (behind pig, poultry, cattle and sheep). Animals are slaughtered around two kilos liveweight. Price is fixed by several Bourses. Last years, average price has decreased from 306 pesetas in 1990 to 257 pesetas in 1994 in the most significant Bourse (Bellpuig). Spain was a deficitary country until 1994, and was importer from several countries. In 1994 balance trade was positive, 1449 Tm. were imported, and 1372 Tm. were exported. Consumption of rabbit meat per capita was around 2.8 Kg in 1993. Market studies noticed differences between analysed segments.

Spain together with Portugal compound the Iberian peninsula. The Mediterranean sea is its East Coast and the West Coast is the Atlantic ocean.

First documents about the existence of rabbit in this country come from Phoenician (Rougeot, 1981), who baptised this peninsula as 'Rabbitland'.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Available Official data has been compiled to made this paper. Main source of information was the statistical data coming from the Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA) [Ministry of Agriculture, Fish and Food]. Productive data are expressed as metric tons (Tm.) [1 Tm. = 1000 Kg] and the economical data are in the Spanish money : peseta (Pts.) [1 \$ USA = 120 Pts.].

PRODUCTION

The evolution of the meat rabbit production in Spain is showed on Table 1. In 1994, production was 99.881 Tm. In the last 15 years, this production increased around 2000 Tm. every year. From 1970 to 1994 the production augmented 29.3%. Geographic distribution of this production is not regular (Table 2). Five of seventeen Autonomic Countries concentrated more than 71% of total meat rabbit Spanish production.

In 1994, meat rabbit production supposed 2.62 % of global livestock production, behind pork, poultry, beef and lamb (Table 3).

MARKET CONDITIONS

How is the price established ?

Rational meat rabbit production is commercialised throughout slaughterhouses, wholesalers and hypermarkets or retailers (butchers') who sale to the potential consumer. Price is eventually fixed by different Bourses (Valencia, Zaragoza, Madrid, Silleda, Reus, Bellpuig). Commercial liveweight in Spain is around 2 Kg. When the raiser sale their animals, the price is function of the liveweight at slaughter. Final price is adjusted by incentive (and discount) payments related with the dressing percentage and the liveweight interval.

(MAPA 1992 and 1995a)

Table 2 : Geographic distribution of Spanish production in 1993

	Country	Tm.%
	Catalunya	26875 27.40
	Galiza	11598 11.83
	Aragón	11359 11.58
	Navarra	10935 11.15
	C. Valenciana	9329 9.51

(MAPA, 1994)

Table 3.- Livestock production in 1994.

	Tm.	%
Pork	2.107.933	55
Poultry	873.804	30
Beef	478.530	13
Lamb	224.398	6
Rabbit	99.881	2,6
Other	23.058	0.6
Total	3.807.604	

(MAPA, 1995a)

Table 4 : Average liveweight rabbit price (pts) by Bourse from 1990 to 1994

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<i>Bellpuig</i>	306	300	260	240	257
<i>Madrid</i>	300	285	239	221	230
<i>Reus</i>	305	294	257	234	251
<i>Silleda</i>	284	281	238	218	226
<i>Valencia</i>	306	298	259	235	249
<i>Ebro</i>	305	300	255	228	241

Table 5 : Average of liveweight rabbit price from 1990 to 1994 in the Bourse of Bellpuig by month

Month	Pesetas
<i>January</i>	267
<i>February</i>	257
<i>Mars</i>	268
<i>April</i>	275
<i>May</i>	239
<i>June</i>	227
<i>July</i>	237
<i>August</i>	269
<i>September</i>	311
<i>October</i>	316
<i>November</i>	308
<i>December</i>	297

Table 6.- Prices obtained by raisers (Bellpuig) and paid by consumers.

Year	1992	1993	1994
<i>Bourse of Bellpuig (pts.)</i>	260	240	257
<i>Consumer (pts.)</i>	743	678	795
<i>Price rate</i>	2.88	2.84	2.8

Table 7 : Evolution of average price of different livestock meat in Spain (pts).

	1992	1993	1994
<i>Poultry</i>	335	346	348
<i>Rabbit</i>	743	678	716
<i>Pork</i>	1019	899	911
<i>Beef</i>	1423	1495	1566

(D.G. Consum i Disciplina del Mercat, 1995)

Table 8 : Foreign trade balance.

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
<i>Imports</i>	1482	1349	1079	896	1259	2690	1372
<i>Exports</i>	876	967	407	616	550	371	1449
<i>Balance</i>	606	382	672	913	709	2319	-77

(Agencia Tributaria, 1995)

Table 9 : Estimated meat rabbit consumption per capita

Year	Kg/i.
<i>1987</i>	3,34
<i>1988</i>	2,99
<i>1989</i>	2,44
<i>1990</i>	2,17
<i>1991</i>	2,27
<i>1992</i>	2,55
<i>1993</i>	2,80

(MAPA 1995b)

Evolution of price in the different Bourses along the last five years is showed on Table 4. Current prices in 1990 and 1991 were exceptionally high, around 300 pts. Next years, a new phase started with a more adjusted and rocking situation. Bourse of Bellpuig, sited in Catalonia, is the most influential, because of this country has the highest meat rabbit production in Spain. Price is weekly established on a meeting with raisers and slaughterhouses representatives. The lowest price of the year appears in summer. After, the price regains and reaches its maximum in October and November (Table 5).

The price paid by the consumer :

Each link of the marketing chain increases the initial price received by the farmers. From the producer (paid by the slaughterhouse) to the sale on the butchery to the consumer the price is multiplied average by 2.8 on the zone influenced by the Bourse of Bellpuig (Table 6). This rate increases when the price decreases (summer), and contrariwise in autumn and winter.

Behind poultry, rabbit is the cheapest meat on the Spanish market (Table 7).

Foreign trade:

Foreign trade of rabbit meat has as main characteristic to be strongly linked to relationship between the national price and the expectations on the nearest markets. Usually, import-export transactions do not serve to regulate the internal market. These operations are more related with the profit of wholesalers than with producers or consumers. Evolution of imports and exports is showed on Table 8, made out of the data from the Agencia Tributaria (Tributary Bureau). No patterns are observed. In 1993, differences on prices between France and Spain caused the importation of 2230 Tm. (total imports were 2690 Tm.). However, the next year (1994) the

Table 10 : Meat rabbit consumption in function of different characteristics.

Age	1988	1989	1990	1992	1993
younger than 30		1,8	1,75	1,55	1,7
30 - 44		2,2	2,179	2,13	2,54
45 - 59		2,4	2,432	2,82	2,36
older than 59		2,8	2,813	3,33	3,8
<i>Social Class</i>					
lower	2,61	2,39	2,43	2,87	2,84
lower-middle	3,07	2,59	2,24	2,70	2,93
middle	3,18	2,04	1,82	2,07	2,49
middle-upper	2,26	1,64	1,34	1,45	1,72
<i>Region</i>					
Andalusia	1,49	1,72	1,17	1,18	1,26
Canaries Islands	0,77	0,81	0,87	1,01	0,77
Center-South	2,26	1,54	1,41	2,01	1,86
Castilla-León	2,51	1,71	2,06	2,29	3,35
East	4,40	3,22	3,18	3,94	3,94
North-East	3,73	2,93	2,85	3,22	3,29
North	2,26	2,06	1,64	2,02	2,46
<i>Habitants</i>					
>2000	4,06	3,42	4,54	4,62	4,07
2 - 10000	2,42	2,67	2,57	2,61	3,43
10 - 100000	3,09	2,12	2,12	2,64	2,41
100 - 500000	2,37	1,67	1,52	1,94	2,29
<500000	2,16	1,53	1,35	1,84	2,07
<i>Family members</i>					
1		2,21	2,48	3,30	3,62
2		2,48	2,50	2,92	3,90
3		2,48	2,37	2,21	2,97
4		2,45	2,18	2,42	2,69
5		2,22	2,01	2,30	2,01
≥6		1,58	1,68	2,59	1,98

(MAPA 1995b)

situation was the opposite. This year was the first time with positive balance trade: 1449 Tm. were exported (59.4% to Portugal). China, in 1988, was the first exporter in Spain with 1036 Tm., but in the present time no significant trade is maintained. In 1994, the foreign trade was mainly made with members of the European Community (France and Portugal) and this would be named Intracommunity trade.

MEAT RABBIT CONSUMPTION

In Spain, meat consumption *per capita* was in 1993 around 67 Kg. Consumption of rabbit meat was around 2.8 Kg, a market quota upper than 4% (Table 9).

Market studies from different points of view allow the knowledge about the meat rabbit consumers and also to search new potential consumers. This meat is consumed more than 95% at home. Consumption in Hostelry or Institutions is not very usual. Differences on the consumed quantity of rabbit meat is also dependent on the housewife age, on the social class, on the geographic situation, on the size of the town and also on the number of members in the family (Table 10).

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