

PROMOTION OF RABBIT MEAT CONSUMPTION IN SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades, per capita consumption of the rabbit meat has undergone a continuous decline in Spain. For this reason, several actions have been carried out aimed to promote rabbit meat consumption. These actions have been carried out mainly by the Spanish Rabbit Meat Marketing Board (*Organización Interprofesional para impulsar el Sector Cunícola*, INTERCUN). This paper analyses the effectiveness of these promotional actions to recover the consumption of rabbit meat. The activities aimed at promoting rabbit meat consumption were organised in three campaigns: July 2008 to June 2009, July 2009 to June 2010, and July 2010 to June 2011. There have been two promotional activities. The first were actions intended to promote consumption of rabbit meat among the people by doctors, dieticians, nurses and other professionals who prescribe diets to their patients. The second activity of the campaign has been oriented to the general public, in order to increase the rabbit meat consumption in a more immediate way. This part of the campaign has included celebrities on television, supported with publication of recipes, advertorials and news in mass circulation magazines. The promotional activities carried out by INTERCUN have been effective in halting the decline in production and consumption of rabbit meat because after 2010 the total amount of rabbit meat produced has been increased and the per capita consumption has slowed its pace of decline. INTERCUN considers that, in the future, it will be necessary to intervene in two ways. First by carrying out short-term promotional activities on the segment of active consumers, and secondly, through medium and long-term actions directed to younger consumers. Moreover, it will be convenient to carry out actions aimed to promote the rabbit meat consumption among schoolchildren.

Key words: Rabbit meat, consumption, promotion, Spanish rabbit meat marketing board.

INTRODUCTION

Spain is one of the most important countries where the rabbit meat has traditionally been consumed in significant quantities (Lebas, 1996). In fact, Spain occupies second place among the rabbit meat producing countries in the European Union, after Italy, with a production amounting to some 66,200 tonnes per year in 2010 (FAO, 2011). In Spain, average annual per capita rabbit meat consumption remained above 2 kg up to the end of the 1990's (García, 1998). However, in recent years, the per capita consumption of this meat at home has undergone a continuous decline and has fallen under 1.5 kg (Rodríguez Serrano, 2005), something that impairs the development of this sub-sector. For this reason, several actions have been carried out aimed at promoting rabbit meat consumption. The objective of this work is to describe the main promotion activities aimed at increasing rabbit meat consumption carried out in Spain by the Spanish Rabbit Meat Marketing Board (*Organización*

Interprofesional para impulsar el Sector Cunícola, INTERCUN), and to analyse its effectiveness in slowing the fall in the rabbit meat consumption.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Analysis of the rabbit meat consumption in Spain

To analyze the evolution of rabbit meat consumption in Spain, several statistics from the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture (Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente) have been analysed. These statistics, involving the period from 2004 onwards, were: total amount of rabbit meat obtained in slaughterhouses in Spain from 2004 and 2011, total rabbit meat consumption in Spain from January 2007 to September 2011, and per capita rabbit meat consumption at home in Spain from 2008 to 2009. Tendencies of the data were represented by regression lines, fitted using Microsoft Excel assuming a second-order polynomial regression model.

Actions for the promotion of the rabbit meat consumption

Information regarding the actions carried out in Spain to promote the rabbit meat consumption was gathered from INTERCUN (*Organización Interprofesional para impulsar el Sector Cunícola*), that acts as the Spanish Rabbit Meat Marketing Board. Part of this information came from the website of INTERCUN, while the rest came from several internal working documents of this organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 shows the evolution of the total amount of rabbit meat obtained in slaughterhouses in Spain from January 2004 to November 2011. It can be seen that the amount of rabbit meat harvested was gradually reduced between the beginning of 2004 and October 2010. However, from this month onward the total production of rabbit meat has gradually recovered. In fact, it can be seen that the amount of rabbit meat produced in 2011 approached again to the amount of meat produced in the first years of the decade, after the downturn experienced between 2008 and 2010.

Figure 2 shows the evolution of the total amount of rabbit meat consumed in Spain from January 2007 to September 2011. In the same vein of the meat harvested in slaughterhouses, it can be seen that the amount of rabbit meat consumed was gradually reduced from the beginning of 2007 and September 2010. However, from this month onward the total consumption of rabbit meat has gradually recovered.

Figure 3 shows the evolution of the per capita rabbit meat consumption at home in Spain from 2008 to 2009. It can be seen that the per capita consumption was gradually reduced in this period. However, also it can be seen that the slope of the fall between 2009 and 2010 is less than the one of the period 2008-2009. This suggests that per capita consumption of rabbit meat is stabilising today.

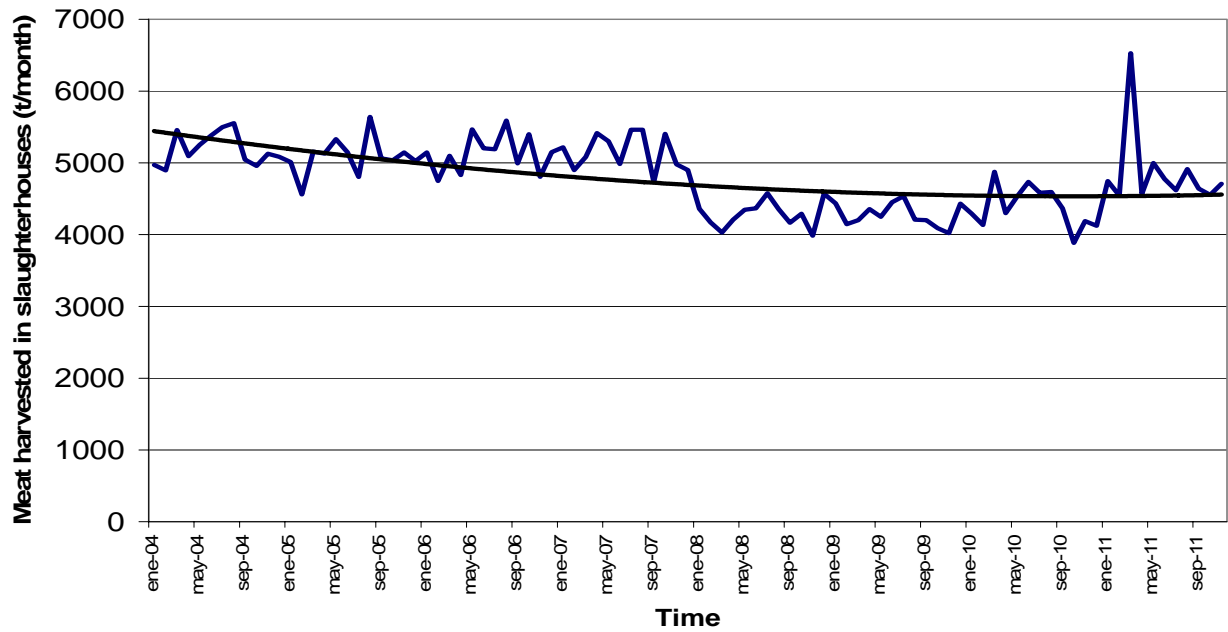


Figure 1: Evolution of the rabbit meat harvested in slaughterhouses in Spain from January 2004 to November 2011 (Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente, 2012a).

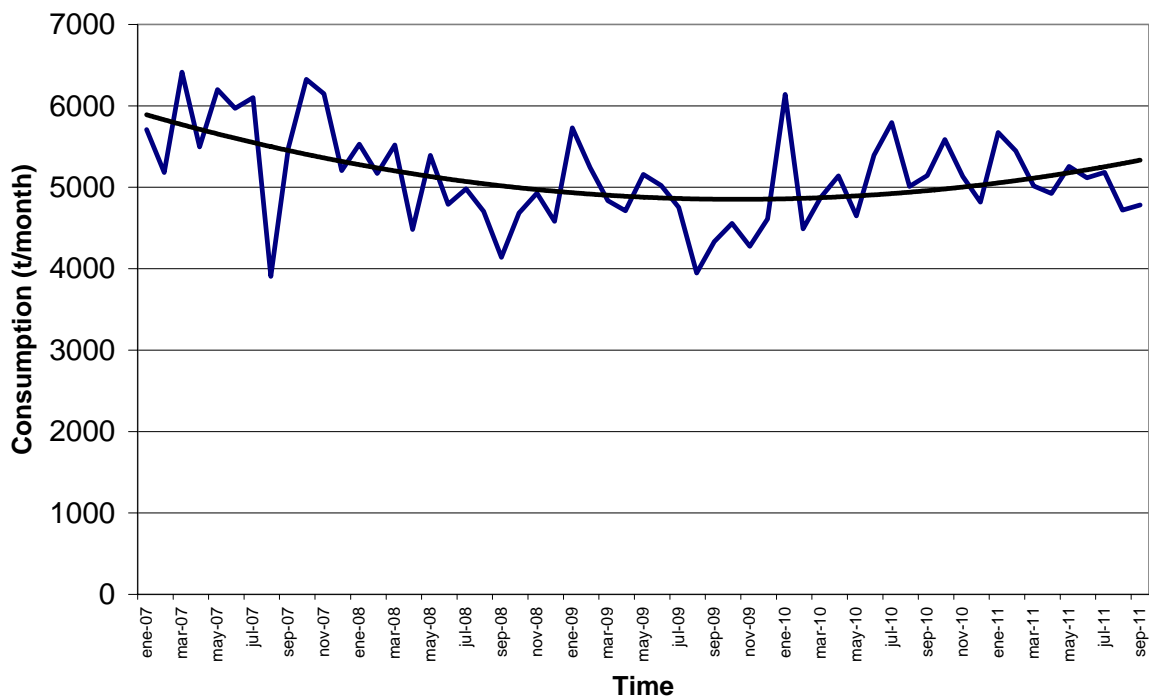


Figure 2: Evolution of the rabbit meat consumption in Spain from January 2007 to September 2011 (Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente, 2012b).

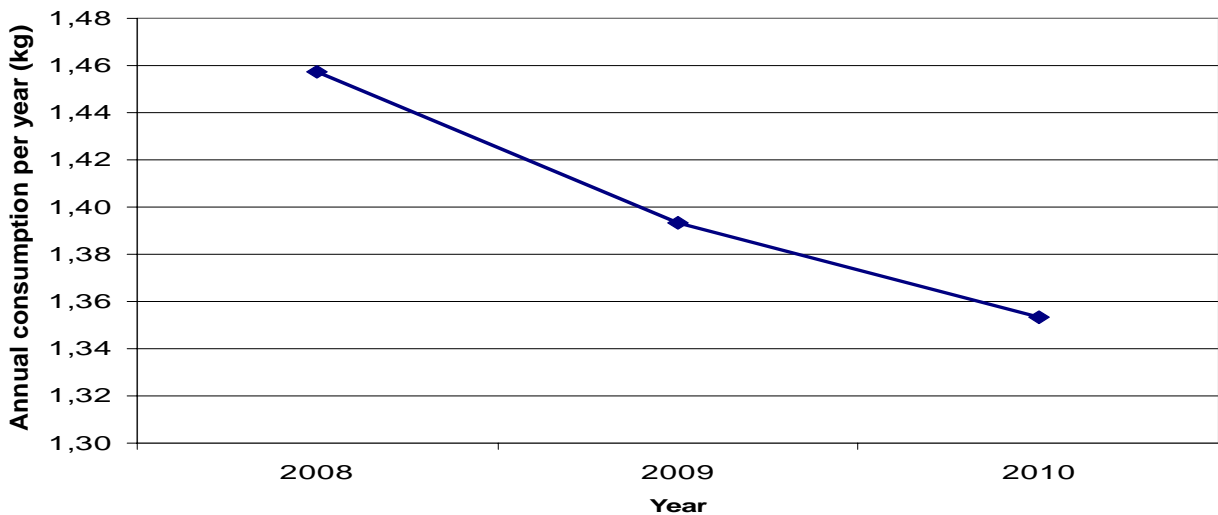


Figure 3: Evolution of the per capita rabbit meat consumption at home in Spain from 2008 to 2010 (Ministerio de Agricultura, Alimentación y Medio Ambiente, 2012b).

In view of the reduction in the rabbit meat consumption that has been previously evidenced, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture recognised INTERCUN (*Organización Interprofesional para impulsar el Sector Cunícola*), in 2000, that acts as a Rabbit Meat Marketing Board. INTERCUN represents 87% of the rabbit meat producers and 70% of the processing-marketing companies in Spain. Among the goals of INTERCUN are building media to inform consumers and to promote the consumption of rabbit meat as an excellent food, healthy and essential in the Mediterranean diet. This marketing board has carried out several activities aimed at promoting the rabbit meat consumption, organised in three campaigns (July 2008 to June 2009, July 2009 to June 2010, and July 2010 to June 2011). Clearly, these promotional activities have been effective in halting the decline in production and consumption of rabbit meat observed in 2010 (Fig. 1 to 3).

During 2011 it has acted in two different ways: promotions for prescribers and consumer-oriented actions. The first is intended to promote the consumption of rabbit meat among the people by doctors, dieticians, nurses and other professionals who prescribe diets to their patients. The second of the campaign has been oriented to the general public, in order to increase the rabbit meat consumption in a more immediate way. This part of the campaign has included celebrities on television, supported with publication of recipes, advertorials and news in mass circulation magazines.

After the actions aimed at promoting the rabbit meat consumption that have been analysed, INTERCUN considers that it is necessary to intervene in two ways. On the one hand, it is necessary to carry out short-term promotional activities on the segment of active consumers, which is the population stratum over 55 years that live in areas of higher consumption. On the other hand, medium and long-term actions should be directed to younger consumers, i.e. the 25 to 40 year population stratum, with special emphasis on the housewives of the large centres of population. Moreover, it will be important to study the possibility of carrying out actions aimed to promote the rabbit meat consumption among schoolchildren. However, due to its price, it is unlikely that this meat is included in the menus of the school canteens.

CONCLUSIONS

Rabbit meat consumption decreased progressively in Spain until 2010, and has stabilised since then. This recovery was due to the actions to promote the consumption of this meat made by the Spanish Rabbit Meat

Marketing Board (Organización Interprofesional para impulsar el Sector Cunícola, INTERCUN). Its effectiveness demonstrates the necessity to continue actions of this type.

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