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FACTORS INFLUENCING RABBIT MEAT CONSUMPTION AMONG STUDENTS IN TIZI-OUZOU UNIVERSITY, ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to analyze the factors that affect the consumption of rabbit meat in the student community at the University of Tizi-Ouzou in Algeria. Data were collected by questionnaires in a random sample of 1,300 students. In this communication, preliminary results will be presented. The data collected, after tabulation of the questionnaires, was coded and recorded in a database designed with Microsoft Excel® 2013 software. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and proportions) were calculated. The first image that comes to the mind of surveyed students when they hear the word "rabbit" is companion animal and cuteness perception. However, 51% of those students consume rabbit meat, which is a substantial rate for young subjects under 25 years old. It's the scarce availability in the market and the high cost that are the main obstacles to rabbit meat consumption in the study region. Other reasons invoked are: consumers don't know the characteristics of this meat, cultural reasons, don't know how to cook it, emotional considerations, family traditions, lack of information on this meat, is not part of our habits. No reason related to religion was mentioned. The fact that it's the insufficient availability and the high prices that are the major obstacles are good news for the actors of the sector.

Key words: Rabbit meat, Consumption, Students, Tizi-Ouzou

INTRODUCTION

The rabbit meat production sector is increasingly developing in Algeria. It is supported by the public authorities (Mouhous et al., 2019) and has led to the creation of hundreds of jobs and contributed to the diversification of animal protein sources.

This renewed interest in rabbit meat production was also enhanced by academic research. At the University of Tizi-Ouzou, a pioneer in the field, several doctoral theses (e.g. Zerrouki-Daoudi, 2006; Kadi, 2012; Cherfaoui-Yami, 2015;...) and scientific works have been carried out on the topic of rabbit breeding. The most of these works were about reproduction and especially about feeding. However, studies and information on the marketing and consumption of rabbit meat in Algeria are scarce. To our knowledge, the only works that have dealt with this topic are those of Gacem and Lebas (2000), Kadi et al. (2008) and Mezali et al. (2015).

In this study, we propose to investigate the factors that affect the consumption of rabbit meat in the student community of the University of Tizi-Ouzou.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Questionnaire and survey procedures

The survey was conducted among students of the Mouloud Mammeri University in Tizi-Ouzou (Algeria). The choice of this environment was motivated by the fact that the students of this university come from different regions of Kabylie (Tizi-Ouzou) but also from different parts of Algeria. Located in the centre of the country, Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou (www.ummtto.dz), created

in 1977, is one of the largest universities in the country and counts more than 60,000 students spread over 9 faculties and 30 departments.

The research method used was a survey questionnaire. Students to be surveyed were randomly selected in the campuses of the different faculties of the university and participation was voluntary. In addition, the survey was conducted anonymously. The questionnaire was structured under several sections and consists of 78 questions. These are of two types: open or closed. A preliminary survey was first carried out to test the questionnaire. The survey concerned 1300 students and lasted just over two months.

Statistical Analysis

After the questionnaires are filled and collected from the field, data were pooled, checked, coded and entered into a database using Microsoft Excel 2013 software. The Excel spreadsheet generated contains, in rows, the interviewed persons and, in columns, the variables represented by the different questions. The file was then analysed using *StatBox 6.4* software. The first part of the statistical analysis, which will be presented in this study, concerned the descriptive statistics calculated for each of the parameters (means, standard deviations and proportions).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1,250 questionnaires were completed, resulting in a response rate of 96%. Of this total, 60% were female. The respondents reside in seven different regions of the country with an expected dominance (nearly 70%) of the Tizi-Ouzou region.

To the question what comes to mind when you hear the word "rabbit", 74% answered "companion animal" while 17% answered "diet meat" and 4% "wild animal". In France, Gomant (2018) reports that 30% of the non-consumers of rabbit meat (20%) consider rabbit as a pet. In addition, this image of the rabbit as a family pet is recurrent as reported by Possidónio et al. (2019).

Thirty percent say that they raise rabbits, which is linked to the fact that the majority (64%) live in the countryside where rabbits are still part of the backyard (Djellal et al., 2006). Moreover, 78% of those who declare raising rabbits use traditional ways, left on the ground, and 82% do not use rabbit pellet feed.

Paradoxically for students, more than half of the respondents (58%) have no idea about the quality of rabbit meat and two thirds (75%) have no idea about the price of this meat on the market. In addition, almost a third (35%) do not know that rabbits can be raised in wire cages. However, more than half (53%) have a positive attitude about rabbit meat, compared to 14% who have a negative attitude, the rest (33%) say they are "neutral".

Half of the surveyed students (51%) report consuming rabbit meat versus 49% who do not. This rate is substantial and unexpected, in the case of young subjects who are under 25 years of age. In addition, it is interesting to note that it is mainly the scarce availability of this meat on the market as well as its high price that discourages its consumption (figure 1). These two reasons cumulatively account for 82% of the non-consumption of this meat. Also, the "classic" reasons as reported throughout the world (Hoffman et al., 2004; González-Redondo et al., 2012; Szendrő, 2016; Mailu et al., 2017) are evoked such as the rabbit carcass resembles a cat, rabbit screams like a human baby, particular taste of this meat, emotional reasons,...etc. Therefore, as reported by Petracci et al. (2018) and Escribá-Pérez et al. (2019) for the Anglo-Saxon countries, the pet status but also the perception of the "cuteness" of the rabbit, especially among young people, are the motifs and reasons that often recur in the discussion with non-consumers. However, the religious motives have never been cited at any time as a reason for not consuming rabbit meat. Among the other reasons cited for non-consuming rabbit meat: Consumers

don't know its characteristics, cultural reasons, don't know how to cook it, emotional considerations, family traditions, lack of information on this meat and is not part of our habits.

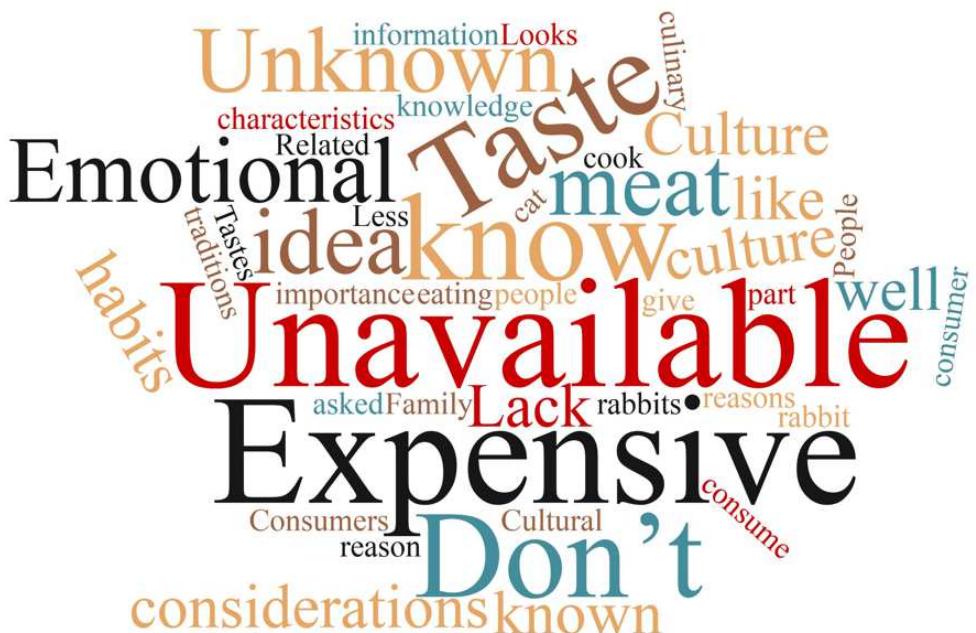


Figure 1: Word cloud of the keywords frequencies of the respondents' comments on the reasons for not consuming rabbit's meat, using the online software <http://www.nuagesdemots.fr/>

The profile of consumers is rather dominated by girls (58%). The very large majority (92%) consume this meat at home and only 8% cite the restaurant. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of respondents come from rural areas where rabbits are raised almost in a traditional and family ways in backyards (Djellal et al., 2006; Saidj et al., 2013) and where restaurants are almost non-existent. It should be noted that Kadi et al. (2008), in a survey on the marketing of this meat in the same region, reported that 10.8% of restaurants and especially 30.4% of hotels offer rabbit on their menu.

CONCLUSIONS

More than half of the people surveyed consume rabbit meat, which is a substantial rate for young subjects under 25 years old. In addition, it is important to note that it is the scarce availability of this meat on the market and its high price that seem to be the main obstacles to its consumption. It is therefore likely to develop with better market supply, which is encouraging for the various actors in the sector.

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