Poultry meat is the most consumed type of meat in Croatia. Yearly consumption of poultry meat amounts to 19.3 kg pro capite. Consumers prefer price-worthy and tasty meat, which is beneficial to their health. This research into the meat market and consumers’ preferences was based on a representative sample of 100 examinees, all residing in the region of Slavonia and Baranja. Among the poultry meat, the majority of examinees most often buy chicken meat (86%), and the rest of them prefer turkey meat (14%). Quality (65%) and price (30%) are the most important factors that influence consumers when buying poultry meat. Almost all consumers prefer to buy poultry meat in its main parts, mostly because of reasonable prices. Even 92% of them decide to buy the most valuable carcass parts (breasts, drumsticks and thighs). In the investigated area of the Osijek-Baranja County, poultry meat is consumed once a week by 86% of examinees.

Key words: Market, Poultry Meat, Consumers, Consumption

Introduction

Poultry production in Croatia has a long tradition, dating back to 15th century. Today, poultry is produced intensively on modern farms, and in small agricultural farms, which apply semi-intensive and free-range rearing systems. According to Croatian statistical records, there were about 11 millions of poultry produced in 2004. In the Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Croatia (2004) there are no data on division of poultry into specific types and categories. However, it is estimated that in a total population of poultry, chickens take up 93%, followed by geese (3%) and then by turkeys and ducks, taking up 2% each. Other poultry, such as pearl hens, quails, pheasants and pigeons are only an irrelevant part in poultry population (Mužić et al., 2001). Consumption of poultry meat in many developed countries, as well as in Croatia is constantly increasing. Chicken meat is considered to be a dietetic product. It is marked by a high content of valuable protein, and low content of fat, whose profile of fatty acids can be successfully modified as desired (Kralik et al., 2002). Over the last years, it has been noticed that consumers prefer meat that is tasty and, above all, good for their health. In 2003, yearly consumption of fresh meat in Croatia was 51.2 kg pro capite. The most consumed meat was poultry (19.3 kg), followed by pork (18.1 kg), and beef (8.6 kg). Consumption of other types of meat is not relevant. In order to obtain an insight into consumers’ preferences with respect to poultry meat, a poll was taken on a representative sample.

Material and methods

Official statistical records, as well as previously published papers on related topics were used to ana-
lyze number of poultry, production and market of poultry meat. In order to carry out this research, a poll was taken among residents of the Osijek-Baranja County on their poultry meat consumption preferences. A total of 100 people were involved in the poll, which was based on a questionnaire. All people taking the poll were introduced with the questionnaire content and procedure. A total of 100 people were involved in the poll, out of whom 45% were men and 55% were women. The poll was based on filling out questionnaires. They answered 11 questions, all of which referred to purchase and consumption of poultry meat, as well as to their preferences regarding a specific type of poultry meat. More than two-thirds of all examinees belonged to the most active age group, between 20 and 50 years of age. Age structure of examinees was presented in Figure 1.

Educational profile of examinees was the following: 4% were with a primary education or less than a primary education, 66% had a high school education, and 30% of examinees had an obtained university or college diploma. Results obtained in the poll were statistically analyzed in MS Office - Excel 2003.

### Results and conclusions

According to statistical records on poultry production and market of poultry meat. In order to carry out this research, a poll was taken among residents of the Osijek-Baranja County on their poultry meat consumption preferences. A total of 100 people were involved in the poll, which was based on a questionnaire. All people taking the poll were introduced with the questionnaire content and procedure. A total of 100 people were involved in the poll, out of whom 45% were men and 55% were women. The poll was based on filling out questionnaires. They answered 11 questions, all of which referred to purchase and consumption of poultry meat, as well as to their preferences regarding a specific type of poultry meat. More than two-thirds of all examinees belonged to the most active age group, between 20 and 50 years of age. Age structure of examinees was presented in Figure 1.

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### Table 1. Data on poultry produced in Croatia and slaughtered in abattoirs.

| Year | Total '000 heads | Poultry slaughtered in abattoirs '000 | Net weight, tons |
|------|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1995 | 12024            | 18504                                | 30705            |
| 2000 | 11256            | 20470                                | 34398            |
| 2004 | 11185            | 23375*                               | 38944*           |

*Data of 2003*
asked which type of meat they buy mostly among poultry meat, even 86% of consumers selected chicken meat, and only 14% chose turkey meat. None of the examinees buy duck or goose meat (Figure 2). This fact is in accordance with data on relatively small number of produced geese and ducks in Croatia. When buying poultry meat, 66% of consumers pay attention to whether meat was controlled by a veterinary inspection, while 24% find this information irrelevant. If there is a possibility to choose between meat of domestic or foreign production, 77% of examinees will opt for domestic brand products, 20% will decide to buy imported meat, and the rest of 3% will not pay attention to the origin of meat they buy.

On the question referring to factors that influence consumers’ choice when buying meat, the following answers were obtained: quality does matter to 65% of examinees, 30% decide on the basis of low prices and only 5% select meat because of attractive packaging (Figure 3).

A notion of quality is associated with carcass appearance, commercial brand and product declaration. Free-range broilers are a better marketable product than broilers produced conventionally. In retail supply, almost 92% of consumers buy the most valuable parts, i.e. first class meat, such as breasts, drumsticks and thighs. This is to be justified by reasonable prices of such meat, as well as by consumers’ personal preferences. Nutritional ingredients in breasts differ from those in drumsticks and thighs (Giordani et al., 1993). Breasts contain more proteins, K, Mg, SFA and omega-3 FA than meat of drumsticks and thighs. However, dark meat is richer in fat, contains more Na, Zn and Fe, and more omega-6 FA. In comparison with dark meat, the ratio of n-6/n-3 is more favorable in white meat (Leskanich and Noble, 1997, Kralik et al., 2001).

Regarding frequency of poultry meat consumption, 7% of examinees consume poultry meat every day, 86% once a week, 7% once a month. Based on the obtained research results, it can be concluded that consumers in Croatia prefer broiler meat, paying attention to quality, commercial brand and veterinary control when buying that meat.

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