Consumer Trends: Consumers Eating Less Red Meat

CHICAGO (PRNewswire) — Many consumers continue to forge ahead with healthy eating habits as part of new year resolutions. Indeed, despite prevalent health trends encouraging consumers to eat less red meat, and 90% of consumers eating some kind of red meat at least once a month, new research from Mintel [1] reveals some 39% of beef and other red meat consumers ate less in 2013 than they did in 2012.

Furthermore, a quarter (25%) of pork consumers claimed to have eaten less pork in 2013 than they did in 2012. In contrast, only 10% of beef and other red meat eaters are eating more, and only 13% of pork consumers are eating more.

"Health trends motivating consumers to cut fat and cholesterol intake are by far the most dominant factors affecting the red meat market," says Patty Johnson, global food analyst at Mintel [2]. "While some consumers are turning away from red meat, in favor of healthier alternatives, there are still a staggering amount of Americans who partake on a regular basis. For many of those who are cutting back they are very well trading up to a higher quality meat product."

Indeed, 16% of those Americans who say they are consuming less red meat are eating less but higher quality red meat. According to Patty Johnson, this creates an opportunity to market higher quality meats to consumers.

While innovation in this category has been low for several years, packaging may be an area for meat manufacturers to innovate, particularly to appeal to women. More than one-third (35%) of women would like to see more resealable packaging, 26% say they want individual sized portions and 23% would like to see recipe options on the package.

While health concerns are the top reason consumers are cutting back on red meat, the price of it is certainly another matter of contention. More than half (58%) of consumers say they have noticed the price of red meat increasing in the past 12 months and 36% say it is too expensive to buy as often as they would like.

"The red meat category is facing a difficult future, as both health trends and price are working to discourage consumer demand for red meat products. The industry also has done little to innovate since the recession and therefore has offered consumers little to get excited about. This presents an opportunity for the industry to try to invigorate the market with new products, improved quality and improved functionality," concludes Patty Johnson.

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