

## Food price comparisons bear out need for shopping skills

If you are one of the consumers who gasp every time you purchase foods, you may be interested in some comparative figures from other countries. The U.S. Department of Agriculture attaches compare food costs every month in 16 world capital cities.

Their survey tells us that the boneless sirloin steak that cost \$3.02 a pound in Washington

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D.C. on November 1, cost \$15.87 in Tokyo and 92 cents in Brazilia. Of the countries regularly surveyed, only Canada and West Germany reported food price index de-

clines from August to September. The index for the United States remained the same during the period. It rose in the remaining 13 countries. The attaches found beef

prices were up in over half the cities surveyed. They jumped 44 percent in Buenos Aires, but dropped 7 per cent in London. Pork prices rose in 10 of the surveyed countries while poultry and egg prices dropped in many capitals. Butter prices rose in 10 of the 16 capitals. Cheese and milk prices remained somewhat stable. In almost all countries, prices for apples, potatoes and

onions fell as domestic supplies were generally abundant.

Many factors, as well as supply and demand, affect food prices. We encourage you to be a wise consumer, comparing costs and values as you shop. Use the unit pricing information you find available in all major stores to determine which is the best buy for you. Next month we will be offering a lesson on "Unit Pricing" to assist homemakers in understanding the information available. Extension also has a correspondence course starting this week, "You, the Food Shopper," available to those wishing to sharpen their shopping skills at home.

amount of shortening required. If you are the proud owner of one of the cookbooks, please add 1½-cups shortening to the recipe. (The recipe is one I shared with the CowBelles, and somewhere in typing the grehmlins mixed up the info. I usually use half shortening, half butter or margarine.)

### Debbie Hoeft tells of Hungarian IFYE

Debbie Hoeft, International 4-H Youth Exchange who spent five months in Hungary, enjoyed three very busy days in Morrow County reporting on her experiences and observations there. She reported to assemblies at each of the elementary schools, Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, and the 4-H Council. In addition, she spent one morning with the Junior High Home Ec classes at Heppner, teaching the students how to make the traditional "Hungarian

Goulash."

As one of the first Americans allowed to live and work in the Soviet controlled country, Debbie had many observations to share on the culture and history of the country. She found the citizens had more freedom than she had antici-

ipated. Debbie is an enthusiastic supporter of the IFYE program, and recommends all 4-H'ers consider International exchange as one of their goals.

We thank Jim and Monica Swanson, Ione, for sharing their home with Debbie during her visit to the county.

## Russet potato diversion program now underway; 'starch' outlet is added

A program to pay growers to divert russet potatoes to livestock feed, will begin Jan. 15. Acting Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman has announced.

The Department's Food Safety and Quality Service (FSQS) initiated the program to offset price-depressing

effects of the fall crop potato surplus. The agency will pay growers to invest up to 9 million hundredweight of russet potatoes from consumer marketing channels into livestock feed, or—as an added outlet not mentioned in a Dec. 27 announcement—to starch. There are several processing

plants that convert potatoes into starch in the russet-growing area.

Payments for diverting potatoes will be \$2 per hundredweight for the first 30 days—Jan. 15 through Feb. 13—and \$1.75 for the second 30 days of the program operation—Feb. 14 through March

15. Potatoes must be of U.S. No. 2 processing grade or better for payments to be made.

The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) will administer the program. Interested growers should contact their local county ASCS office for program details.

## Cattlemen denounce reports of higher prices and shortages

"Recent reports of beef shortages and soaring prices for hamburger in 1979 is ridiculous and simply not justified by the facts," stated Bill Ross, Jordan Valley, President of the 3,000-member Oregon Cattlemen's Association. Ross was speaking during a press conference in Portland last week, called by the cattle association. Ross' comment was in response to nationally quoted statements by meat processors and some administration officials to the effect that decreasing beef supplies would bring sharp price increases, particularly to ground beef, where \$2 per pound hamburger was predicted.

Ross stated that "in the best judgement of agricultural economists, both in the private and public sector, which we have been in contact with, it is our opinion that retail prices of beef will increase approximately 10 to 12 per cent during 1979. In regard to hamburger prices we see a possible increase of between 10 to 14 per cent during the coming year. During the past year, overall beef prices showed about an 18 per cent increase over 1977. The major cause for these increases is due to a low supply of finished cattle and a continued strong consumer demand."

"The current cyclical decrease in beef output means that production in 1979 may be down about 5 per cent from 1978," said President Ross. "However, substantial increases in pork and poultry production mean that 1979 meat supplies actually will be larger than last year. And, on a per capita basis, total meat supplies should at least equal 1978."

"Therefore, it is ridiculous to be talking about so-called shortages. Per capita beef supplies last year have been the third largest in history, and, in 1979, will be only 6 or 7 pounds less. What is happening is that we are now returning to more normal supplies and abnormally low prices in relation to other items we buy. As a matter of fact, the government's latest beef price index showed that beef prices still were running behind the index of all food prices."

"Obviously, cattlemen hope that—after four years of financial losses because of escalating costs and burdensome supplies—they will experience some additional increase in cattle prices this year," Ross said. "Higher average prices will provide the incentive to rebuild herds and bring a supply increase again in future years."

"Meanwhile, the meat supply situation is such that we see no basis whatsoever for scare-type speculation that

hamburger prices may average 40 to 50 cents per pound higher in 1979."

"Right now, and for months to come, supplies of fed cattle which provide the choice roasts and steaks which people prefer are and will be large. Furthermore, even though non-fed cattle production is declining cyclically, consumers will not experience hamburger shortages. Fed cattle always have provided, and will provide, a substantial share of our ground beef."

Ross also spoke for the industry in regards to increased beef imports which were announced last week by President Carter. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association President said that, "President Carter and his administration again has failed to assure cattlemen that it will not continue to tamper with the cattle market. It is anticipated that another 200-300 million pounds of imported beef would be allowed into the United States which would mean nearly 1 billion, 570 million pounds of foreign beef for 1979."

Ross said that the administration's import policies would have little or no effect with beef prices at the retail level. However, it definitely has a negative action for the cattle industry, for it tends to perpetuate the feeling of uncertainty among producers.

"Without more assurance that there will not be further intervention in the market, cattlemen will be more reluctant to rebuild their herds, and the net long-term result can be smaller beef supplies and higher prices for consumers than otherwise would be the case. While last week's announcement might seem to serve the political interests of the Administration's so-called inflation fighters, it actually will not contribute to their efforts in the short term, and it certainly is not productive from a long-term standpoint," stated Ross.

"While the increase over 1978 is not large," Ross said, "a lower level of imports would have sent a more positive signal to cattlemen and would have provided a better stimulus to cow herd stabilization. Also, a definite commitment not to tamper further with the market during 1979 would have been in the best interest of consumers as well as cattlemen in that it would have restored more confidence in the future."

"As it is now, the Administration appears to care little about the future of the domestic livestock industry. And blame for some of the prospective longer term decrease in beef supplies must be laid at the steps of the White House."

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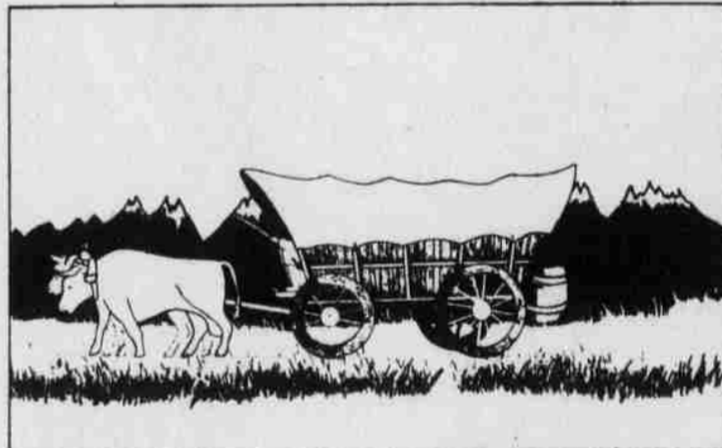
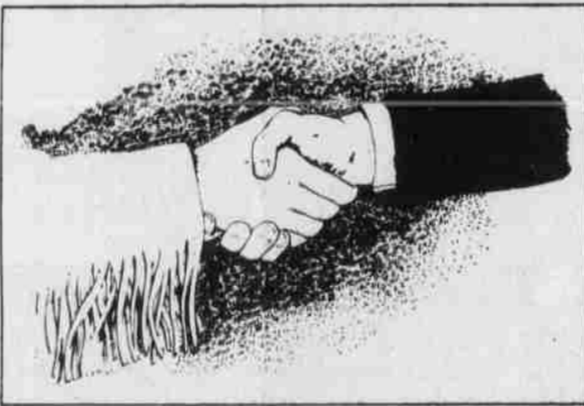
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