**A LONG-TERM VIEW OF EGG CONSUMPTION PATTERNS**

Per capita egg consumption for 1983 is estimated to be 261 eggs. This represents a decrease of three eggs from the 1982 figure. The overall decline since 1945 has totaled 141 eggs per person or approximately 3.7 eggs per person per year (figure 1). This reduction in egg consumption represents the production of over 125 million hens!

![Graph showing U.S. per capita egg consumption from 1940 to 1983.](image)

This trend has alarmed the poultry industry for years and significant promotional and educational efforts have been taken to attempt to turn it around. So far, these efforts appear to have had minimal effects.

One could argue that not enough funds were spent relative to the size of the task. Programs may have been misdirected as to their target audience. Advertising and educational efforts may have been out of balance.
Regardless of how one interprets these statistics, the annual rate of decline is now surpassing the rate of population growth and this can mean only one thing--less total numbers will be needed annually until eating habits of the American public are altered.

One has to wonder, are eggs being eaten less because people don't like them, because their doctor tells them to cut down, or are they afraid of what they've read about eggs, diet, and health problems? Or, are eggs too closely associated with a dying institution--breakfast?

Historically, eggs have been thought of as only a breakfast food item except for baking uses. With changing lifestyles, we now see our society skipping breakfast altogether, stopping by for a snack breakfast at a fast food shop, or shifting to foods that require less kitchen preparation.

These trends will continue to adversely affect the egg industry until we've:

1. Educated our youth that a nutritious breakfast is essential.
2. Promoted eggs more thoroughly to the fast food market.
3. Developed more convenient egg products for quick breakfasts at home.
4. Successfully convinced the consumer to use eggs as lunch and dinner entrees.

Now that the industry has successfully passed the one dollar per dozen price barrier we need to continue to drive home the bargain that eggs still represent--even to the two dollar level. Where else can the consumer get a comparable bargain on the price of a lunch or dinner main course? Eggs need to be in the American dinner diet at least once per week from a cost and variety standpoint.

The areas discussed require extensive, well thought-out promotional and educational campaigns. Emphasis, though, needs to be on both. Short range solutions through promotion do not solve the basic problem. Educational and research efforts offer a longer lasting benefit to the industry.

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