

The horsemeat market in France: first overview and research perspectives

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In France, before the 20th century, horses were used for the army, transport and agriculture. Therefore, horsemeat came from aged or injured adult horses (dark red meat) and was mainly consumed by poor people or in crisis periods. Since the 20th century, France has become both producer and consumer of horsemeat. However, draft foals bred for this market (producing light red meat) are 80% exported, mainly to Italy. Whereas France imports reformed horses to satisfy 80% of the national consumption that remains oriented towards dark red meat (adult horses). This imported meat raises the question of its quality and traceability. Moreover, horsemeat consumption is decreasing in France (-46% in the 10 last years) despite the sustainable characteristics of this product: its high quality (more iron, zinc, better fats, good taste) could reduce the total amount of consumed meat, its production in extensive conditions respects animal well-being, horses emit less methane than cattle, it enables the maintenance of mountain grassland areas and of nine endangered local heavy horse breeds... Nevertheless, one can notice horsemeat consumption peaks consequently to sanitary crisis as the one of the "mad cow", or when horse meat was found into beef lasagna", which suggest a consumption potential to exploit. In this context, this poster will first present the specific characteristics of the French horsemeat market. First data will be collected in the beginning of 2019 through a literature review, the analysis of databases on food consumption and first exploratory surveys among consumers and non-consumers of horsemeat. The long-term aim of this project is to obtain a typology of horsemeat eaters, potential eaters, and refractory eaters. Our goal is to understand people representations, consumption motivations, but also barriers that limit this consumption, in order to find potential new markets for this production and to better adapt its promotion.