

Red meat – the journey from farm to fork

Farming

1

OVER 26 million cattle, sheep and pigs are produced each year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for human consumption and farmers' top priority is the health and welfare of the animals they rear and the quality of the meat they produce.

Around three-quarters* of land is used for agricultural purposes and over 400,000** people work on farms, which means agriculture plays a major role in the British economy. Farmers in the UK understand and appreciate that, in order for their crops and animals to grow, they need healthy soil, fresh water and clean air. Safeguarding the environment goes hand in hand with food production, and farmers work hard to conserve and enhance their surroundings and the natural environment, in order to farm successfully and efficiently.

The growing importance to shoppers of where their food comes from and the availability of locally produced and seasonal food will inevitably produce business opportunities for farmers. It will also help to reduce farming's carbon footprint. In addition, eating seasonally can encourage consumers to have a varied diet throughout the year.



* 69% in England, 75% in Northern Ireland, 87% in Wales.
** 300,000 in England, 47,979 in Northern Ireland and 59,600 in Wales.



Livestock market

2

ANIMALS are usually sent to market when they reach slaughter weight, are no longer suitable for breeding or to be sold for finishing or breeding. In the UK, the animals are protected by government legislation and EU regulations to ensure they are treated humanely.

Some farmers transport their animals directly to the abattoir for slaughter or sell through virtual online auctions.



Processing

3

ABATTOIRS are legally required to ensure that the animals have been well treated throughout the process. Humane slaughter is ensured by protecting animals from avoidable excitement, pain or suffering. Staff must be trained and the facilities provide adequate ventilation, light and shelter to protect from adverse weather conditions.



Food retailers

4

RED meat can be bought prepared and packaged ready for cooking, as part of a ready meal or from a restaurant or takeaway. To check that red meat has been produced to high standards, look for the food assurance scheme logos on packaging.



The consumer

5



RED meat dishes are easy to prepare and cook at home and are tasty, enjoyable and contain many important nutrients.

Quality Assurance

Food assurance schemes certify the production of red meat and meat products to comprehensive standards throughout the food chain, including animal welfare, safety and traceability and, in some, eating quality. Red Tractor, Protected Geographical Indication and Farm Quality Assurance are schemes which cover red meat produced in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.