

## Latin America

# Argentina grows in pork

*As a national campaign doubles the level of pigmeat consumption, a major integrator in Argentina adds more sows*

by Luis Carlos Reich

Argentina has one of the highest rates of *per capita* average annual meat consumption of any country in the world — and the amount of pigmeat included in this total is increasing.

Of course, beef still leads on the quantity consumed. Its annual average of about 72.5kg per person compares with some 26.3kg for poultry products. Only about 8.2kg of pork was eaten per person/year in 2007. Nevertheless it must be pointed out that this level of pork consumption is double the amount recorded in previous years. The significant increase achieved during the past year has been due to a combined and thorough effort made by the Argentine administration and pig producers.

The Argentine government is trying by

all means possible to divert part of the very high local consumption of cattle products to alternative meats, in order to have an additional availability to export beef. With producers, therefore, it has embarked on an aggressive advertising campaign to promote pork as one step towards this objective.

The campaign can already be seen to have yielded excellent results. There is more to come. According to a forecast quoted by an official of the Argentine Association of Pork Producers, an extra 4.5kg or more of pigmeat could be added to the average diet of Argentines in the next 18 months. The form of consumption also needs to be noted. During the decade of the 1990s it was normal for processed pork products such as ham and salami to represent over 90% of the total pigmeat uptake in Argentina. Now the situation is almost completely reversed, with fresh

pork comprising at least two-thirds of all the meat consumed.

With more pork arriving on the Argentine menu it is not surprising that pig numbers have been rising recently. Official data for 2006 show 3 million pigs slaughtered for consumption nationwide. In 2007 this increased to some 3.5 million. The producer association contributes an estimate that the breeding inventory has grown by approximately 15% since the start of 2007 and now stands at around 200 000 sows. Moreover, association representatives say they expect to see another 50 000 sows added nationally in the near future.

Industry investment to bring about the growth worked out at the equivalent of US\$35 million in 2006, but then soared in 2007 to US\$50 million. Due to these efforts, pork is becoming more competitive in price against other meats, especially beef. This



## ▶▶ Argentina

factor, more than any other, generated the amazing consumption increase for the product during 2007. Availability also has improved. Today you can find pork on sale not only in supermarkets or wholesale suppliers, but also at the butcher's shop, something that was not common only a few years ago.



Argentina exports pork, too. Just 204 tons of meat and by-products were exported last year. Mainly these exports went to Hong Kong, Germany and bordering South American countries. Their value of US\$3.5 million was 6% higher than in the previous year.

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## Biggest player starts more sows

Take note of the name Frigorífico Paladini. This family company is Argentina's biggest pork producer as well as a significant processor of pigmeat products. In recent months it has further extended its Argentine operations by adding another module of 5000 sows and a further 5000-sow extension is already in the planning stage.

Broad figures for Paladini in 2008 would suggest it now has 10 000 commercial sows in production, plus a 1500-sow multiplier herd. Expansion has been the recent aim because the company wants to produce all the pigs needed by its 25 000 tons/year processing activities. Traditionally, only about half the requirement was sourced from its own units. It is also experiencing a rise in demand for fresh pork, which has until now accounted for little more than 5% of output.

The latest addition on its production side is shown here (see page 12) in photos obtained with the help of turn-key provider Agpro Inc, which designed and supplied all the ventilation systems (manufactured by Hired-Hand in the USA) as well as various building materials. The new unit pictured under construction and with its first pigs is basically for 4800 sows, reports Juan Ayala of Agpro. Details of the multi-site installation are state-of-the-art, from the use of tunnel ventilation and evaporative cooling in all buildings at the sow herd to the decision to equip the finishing site with automatic sorters so pigs can be pre-sorted for market and for feeding plans.

The sow site has 2 gestation houses, one farrowing house and a boar stud for artificial insemination.

Paladini managers follow Isoweian principles by taking the weaned pigs to a separate nursery. Each of the 2 nursery-site houses has 12 rooms. The pigs leave here for a finishing unit where there are 8 buildings. These are set up as a quad layout with 4 rooms of 1250 pigs under one roof. The finishing places also are in tunnel-ventilated houses. In addition to their auto-sorters they have automated feeding systems.

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