

Milestone report

Consumer Acceptance of Beef Heart in Mince

Project code: V.RMH.0009

Prepared by: David Jenkinson
DIJ Strategy Pty Ltd

Date published: 18th October 2023

PUBLISHED BY
Meat & Livestock Australia Limited
PO Box 1961
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

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Abstract

The inclusion of beef heart into mince would transform a currently low value component into a much higher value, representing some \$60M of incremental value to the Australian Red Meat Industry. This could be done without compromising the taste, smell, and texture of beef mince, so would be un-noticeable to consumers. However, consumer perceptions and attitudes play a crucial role, making the classification of beef heart from 'offal' to 'muscle meat' advantageous in not needing to declare the change.

Qualitative consumer research was undertaken to assess perceptions towards beef heart, the role beef mince plays in consumers' lives, their reaction to the inclusion of heart in beef mince and the potential for alternate rationales to reassure and justify the change.

Currently, consumers lack familiarity with beef heart, most often associating it with being offal and hence perceiving it to have poor taste and texture. Consequently, many see the inclusion of beef heart into mince as a potential compromise to the product's quality.

Interestingly, consumers exhibit a willingness to accept that various formulated meat products, such as sausages, likely contain less-than-desirable components. In these cases, they often humorously accept it as the way it has always been, and whilst not ideal, is not something to concern oneself with.

Beef mince holds a critical role in the weekly meal planning of Australian families, serving as the foundation for early and mid-week dinners. It is cherished for its versatility, ease of preparation, and the ability to cater to the diverse tastes and preferences of family members. Consequently, consumers find it challenging to envision their weekly routines without beef mince.

If beef heart was included in beef mince without informing consumers, they would continue to enjoy beef mince, unaware of the change. Subsequent revelation of its inclusion would leave consumers initially shocked, but likely to reluctantly accept and quickly move on. A small subset of consumers, particularly those with a deep-seated aversion to offal, claim they would seek butchers who could grind mince for them, to avoid eating mince with heart.

Moving consumers beyond a superficial understanding of beef heart, is important in shifting consumer perceptions. Those who undertake their own investigation into beef heart via google searches discover that it is a lean muscle with similar properties to other cuts used in beef mince. This newfound knowledge reassures consumers that the inclusion of beef heart will not significantly alter the taste or quality of the product and provides them with a compelling justification, primarily centred around being less wasteful in our food practices.

On the other hand, there's a potential downside to informing consumers about the inclusion of beef heart in mince before its implementation. This pre-emptive disclosure runs the risk of causing some consumers to convince themselves that it would taste worse, even though, in reality, any differences are imperceptible. Nevertheless, the inertia and deep-seated trust that consumers have in beef mince may ultimately help overcome these initial barriers.

Understanding these diverse consumer attitudes and preferences is essential for developing an effective strategy for introducing beef heart into beef mince without undermining its market position.

The report emphasises the need to carefully consider the introduction of such changes to a product deeply ingrained in consumers' lives while addressing their concerns and reservations effectively.

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1. Project description

The 'Red Meat Industry' is seeking a potential reclassification by FSANZ (Food Standards Australia New Zealand) of the status of beef heart from 'offal' to 'muscle meat.' This reclassification would enable the incorporation of beef heart into beef mince without explicitly mentioning it on front-of-pack labelling. The primary objective of this change is to benefit the red meat industry by transforming an existing low-value item into something more valuable.

It has been reasoned that heart would make up only up to 3% of the overall volume of beef mince, based upon the weights of the muscle vs. heart components coming from a carcass. The project team are confident that at these levels, the inclusion of heart would not be detectable by even the most discerning of consumers and even for the most unflavoured of beef mince based meals. Previous assessment in a preceding project (MLA P.PSH.1388) explored the blending of alternate offal's, for the purpose of nutritional enhancement, concluded that heart could be added at up to 30% without a detrimental impact on product qualities.

*“An AgResearch in-house Focus tasting panel was conducted to evaluate four beef mince formulations as patties: liver added at 15% and 20% and **heart added at 20% and 30%.** Patties were grilled in an oven pre-heated to 180 C and cooked for 20 minutes were cut into 6 portions and served to each assessor individually. Participants ranked the patties in order of preference and provided comments on each product. Panellists preferred the mince formulated with heart than liver. **Both levels of heart addition in mince had similar sensory acceptability by participants. They were not able to detect the presence of heart at either level in the patties. The texture of patties with heart addition was found to be like patties with mince only, ...”***

Source: MLA P.PSH.1388 – Nutritional Valorisation of Mince Beef

2. Project objectives

This research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer perspectives and attitudes regarding the inclusion of beef heart in beef mince, enabling the 'Red Meat Industry' to make informed decisions on how to introduce this change and communicate it effectively to consumers.

1. **Consumer Acceptance:** Understand how consumers react to the idea of including beef heart in mince and identify the underlying reasons for their reactions.
2. **Consumer Segmentation:** Investigate whether consumer attitudes toward beef heart differ across various consumer segments, such as age, region, or dietary preferences.
3. **Impact on Existing Attitudes:** Assess how the potential change aligns with consumers' existing attitudes and perceptions about beef mince and the role it plays in their lives.
4. **Persuasive Rationales:** Identify which rationales are most persuasive to consumers, providing reassurance and justification for the proposed change.
5. **Addressing Challenges:** Determine the inherent challenges in implementing the change, specifically whether a transparent product launch, informing consumers about the inclusion of beef heart, is more advantageous compared to a non-disclosure approach.

3. Methodology

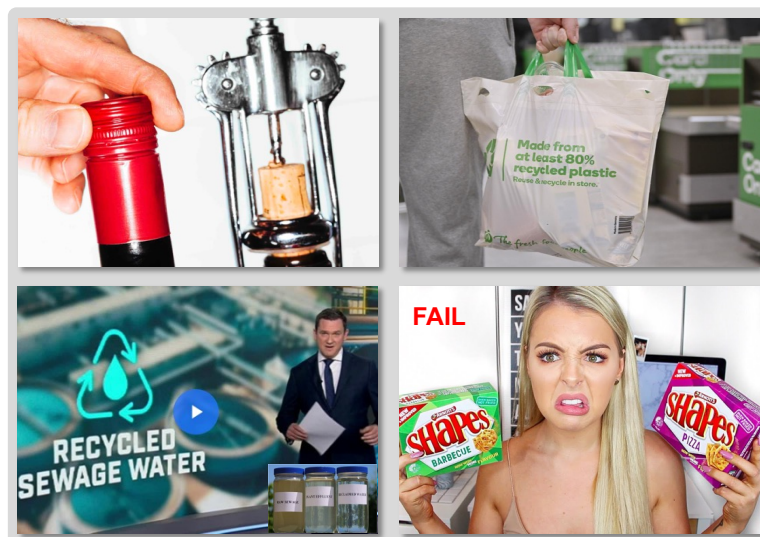
1. **Research Approach:** The research utilizes a qualitative approach due to the emotive nature of consumer reactions to the idea of consuming offal. Qualitative Research Groups were selected as the most suitable method for addressing the key questions.
2. **Sample Selection:** Respondents consisted of Main Grocery Buyers of Families – this represents approximately 80% of beef mince purchasing volume.
3. **Sample Size:** Six research groups were conducted, with 7-8 respondents in each group, providing a robust sample size to draw meaningful insights.
4. **Regional Variation:** Research groups were conducted in three major Australian cities: Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. Two groups were held in each city to understand potential regional variations in consumer attitudes and reactions.
5. **Segmentation by Age and Experience:** To capture alternate attitudes and experiences, the research groups were divided into older and younger families. Older consumers are more likely to have had prior exposure to different types of offal, while younger consumers often lack such experiences.
6. **Exclusion Criteria:** Consumers practicing a 'foreign food culture' at home were excluded from the research. This exclusion was made because these consumers typically have a positive attitude toward eating offal and likely would be receptive to the idea of including beef heart in mince. This group represents around 20% of Australian households.

By conducting the research in this manner, a comprehensive understanding of consumer perspectives, attitudes, and potential regional and age-related variations can be obtained, which helps inform the decision-making process for introducing beef heart into beef mince.

4. Results

4.1 Consumer resistance to change – learnings from other categories.

Reviewing how other categories have approached making undesired changes to their offerings, the strategies they have pursued and their successes and failures, highlights the following:



1. **Reassure Product Performance:** The first key to addressing consumer resistance is to reassure that the product will continue to perform to the same standard they expect. This includes delivering the same taste, texture, smell, and overall quality. It is essential to maintain the product's consistency, ensuring that it doesn't compromise on the attributes that consumers value.
2. **Provide a Positive Reason for Change:** When introducing an undesired change, it is crucial to provide a clear and positive reason for why the change is happening. This justification should explain not only the benefits for the producer but also how consumers will benefit. By emphasizing the advantages, such as increased sustainability, improved nutritional value, or cost-effectiveness, you can help consumers understand why the change is necessary and how it aligns with their interests.
3. **Leverage Social Endorsement:** Utilizing social endorsement can be a powerful tool for overcoming emotive issues, especially the "yuck factor." If respected figures, influencers, or experts within the field endorse the change, it can help alleviate consumer concerns. Consumer trust and confidence can increase when they see others embracing the change and validating its merits.

In summary, addressing consumer resistance to change involves demonstrating that product performance has been maintained, offering compelling justifications as to why the change is taking place, and potentially using social endorsement to gain consumer acceptance. By addressing these key aspects, the transition to the new product, such as incorporating beef heart into beef mince, can be smoother and more readily accepted by consumers.

4.2 Consumer context – Challenges of early / mid-week dinner.

Feeding one's family early in the week presents several pressing challenges, driven by the demands of a typical working day and the desire to provide nutritious, satisfying, and cost-effective meals for the family:

- **Working Day Rush:** Early-week evenings are typically a whirlwind, especially when parents are working, and children have after-school activities. Time is at a premium.
- **Food Shopping Expenses:** The increasing costs of food shopping make it a substantial part of the weekly budget.
- **Picky or Fickle Kids:** Dealing with children who have varying food preferences and can be picky eaters is a constant challenge. It's like trying to hit a moving target to satisfy everyone's tastes.
- **Healthy Eating:** Ensuring that the family consumes nutritious food, even on busy weekdays, is a priority for parents. They aim to do the right thing nutritionally.

It's important to note that the approach to meal occasions later in the week may differ significantly, with many families resorting to take-out or spending more time preparing a special meal.

The implications of these challenges include:

- **Aiming for Efficiency:** Families aim to prepare dinner within a reasonable timeframe, ideally within 20-30 minutes, to accommodate their busy schedules.
- **Nutritional Considerations:** Providing a healthy meal is essential, with a focus on including protein and vegetables in the family's diet.

- ❑ **Family-Friendly Meals:** The meal must be 'liked' by all family members, including picky eaters (this is far more important than being 'loved').
- ❑ **Fail-Safe Preparation:** The meal should be easy to prepare, even for the less capable cooks and when under time constraints, without the risk of a poor outcome.
- ❑ **Budget Conscious:** Given the rising cost of food, families look for value for money in their meal choices.
- ❑ **Variety:** Keeping meals interesting by introducing variety is important, as families try to avoid having the same dish week after week.

A minority of families address these challenges by preparing meals in advance, often on Sunday nights, as part of bulk cooking sessions. This strategy allows them to streamline the process of putting dinner on the table during busy early-week evenings. However, for the vast majority, it is a daily battle to get the evening dinner on the table.

4.3 Approach to shopping for early / mid-week occasions.

Shopping Occasion:

1. **Sunday Shop:** Families prefer to do their main grocery shopping on Sundays. This allows them to start the week with a fully stocked fridge and pantry. They are conscious of the fact that the cost of groceries is increasing, so they aim to plan and budget efficiently.
2. **Weekday Flexibility:** While they like to be well-prepared at the beginning of the week, later in the week, they tend to pop into the shops to grab what they need to make up a meal with ingredient that needs eating.

Approach to Shopping:

1. **Meal Planning:** Families typically have a few meals in mind that they intend to prepare during the week. They shop for the main ingredients required for these planned meals.
2. **Embrace Specials:** They adapt their purchases based on what's on special or what catches their eye in the store. This flexibility allows them to make the most of discounts and promotions.
3. **Using Available Ingredients:** They try to use up ingredients they already have in the fridge and pantry to minimize waste.
4. **Fresh Produce Top-Up:** Families are aware that fruits and vegetables have a limited shelf life (usually 3 to 4 days), so they might make top-up shops during the week to ensure they have fresh produce for their meals.
5. **Beef Mince as a Default Choice:** Beef mince is a staple in their shopping list and makes it into the shopping cart every week.

Purchasing Inertia: Beef mince has a strong purchasing inertia among families, meaning they buy it routinely without much thought or consideration because of its versatility and family-friendliness.

Consistency in Meat Choice: Beef mince stands out along with chicken thighs / breasts amongst meats, consistently purchased by families due to their convenience and basis for a broad range of meal options.

Bulk Purchases: Many families opt for larger packs of beef mince, around 1.5 kilograms. This larger quantity allows them to use beef mince for multiple meals throughout the week.

4.4 Beef Mince is highly favoured by families for several reasons.

1. **Ease of Cooking:** It is easy to cook with. One simply puts it straight into the pan and start breaking it up with a wooden spoon. This simplicity reduces the risk of making cooking errors.
2. **Forgiving Nature:** Beef mince is forgiving when it comes to cooking. Whether slightly overcooked or undercooked, it remains tasty. This is in contrast to other meats like chicken, which are perceived to be harmful if not cooked properly.
3. **Popularity and Versatility:** Beef mince serves as the basis for many family-favourite dishes. Families commonly use it to make tacos, Bolognese, meatloaf, burgers, meatballs, lasagne, and more.
4. **Flavour and Health:** It offers strong, bold flavours that appeal to both adults and children alike.
5. **Healthy:** Not only is red meat thought to be a good source of protein and iron, but beef mince is particularly good for 'hiding the vegies', making it a healthy choice.
6. **Good Value:** While food prices have been on the rise, beef mince is still seen as good value. Beef mince also goes a long way - adding other ingredients like vegetables or pulses to create substantial dishes, such as Bolognese sauce.

Beef mince uniquely fulfills a wide range of needs for families, making it a staple that satisfies multiple requirements.

The strong loyalty toward beef mince is evident. Many families rely on it and would find it challenging to manage their weekly meals without this versatile and reliable choice.

4.5 The mince format is well-suited to beef vs. other types of meat.

1. **Preferred Mince:** When consumers refer to "mince," they are generally referring to "beef mince." It is the default choice for most households.
2. **Chicken Mince:** Chicken mince is often described as "sludgy" and is primarily used for making meatballs. It doesn't have the versatility and broad appeal that beef mince offers.
3. **Lamb Mince:** While lamb mince can be used in some dishes like koftas, it lacks the versatility of beef mince, limiting its applications.
4. **Pork Mince:** Pork mince is recognized for its good value, and it is gaining popularity due to particular recipe ideas, though remains well short of beef mince.
5. **Turkey Mince:** Although some consumers find turkey mince works well for certain recipes, it is considered expensive, limiting its regular use.
6. **Plant-Based Mince:** Many have tried plant-based minces, but they often fall short in terms of flavour and texture and do not satisfy like beef mince does. All respondents had moved on from plant-based options, reserving them for occasional use with specific recipes.

Beef mince stands out as the ideal mince type, offering the ideal format for a wide range of everyday beef dishes. It consistently meets consumers' preferences and needs, which is why it remains a staple in many households.

4.6 Beef mince is trusted for its consistency and performance.

Consumers have a high level of trust and confidence in beef mince, making it their preferred choice for various meals. They consistently find that beef mince delivers to their expectations and performs well, meeting their culinary needs.

- **Reliable Performance:** Consumers express that beef mince consistently performs to their expectations, and they are always satisfied with the end result of their dishes. Consumers have not encountered any reasons to question its quality or query its reliability.
- **Quality Considerations:** Amongst those for whom leaner mince is preferred, lower quality mince is thought to contain excess water and higher levels of fat. Consumers trust that supermarket mince is of good quality, though some opt for mince from a butcher, which they believe to be fresher.
- **Variety of Choices:** Consumers appreciate the variety of options available when it comes to beef mince. They make choices based on their preferences for fat content and typically associate "star ratings" with quality levels.
- **Specialized Uses:** Some consumers buy different versions of beef mince for specific purposes. For example, they might choose mince with a higher fat content for making burgers.

The level of trust and consistency in beef mince is exceptional. Consumers have a strong belief in beef mince, making it a dependable choice as the basis for various meals. The consistency and reliability of beef mince are key factors contributing to its enduring popularity among consumers.

4.7 Perceptions of 'formulated meats' in products like sausages.

Consumers generally hold mixed perceptions regarding what ingredients are used in products like sausages, pies, and chicken nuggets. Their beliefs and attitudes about these products can be summarized as follows:

- **Ignorance Is Bliss:** Many consumers prefer not to think about or inquire into the exact ingredients used in these products. There's a sense of "best not to know," and they don't want to dwell on the details of the components.
- **Awareness of Less Desirable Parts:** Some consumers humorously acknowledge that these products might contain less desirable or unconventional parts of the animal, such as "lips and arseholes." This acknowledgment is often light-hearted and doesn't translate into significant concern.
- **Not a Health Issue:** Consumers generally do not perceive the ingredients in these products as a significant health issue. They haven't heard of any major health problems related to them, and they believe there are good regulations in place.
- **Concerns About Health:** While not a major health concern, some consumers do express that these products might not be as healthy as they'd like. They may limit their consumption, particularly for their children.
- **Lack of Inspection:** Many consumers do not closely inspect the ingredients or content of these products. The "what you don't know can't hurt you" attitude prevails.

- **Options and Solutions:** For those who are concerned (a minority), they opt to buy higher-quality or more expensive versions of these products. They rely on labels and ingredient panels to assess the meat content, and products with a higher percentage of meat are considered acceptable.

The majority of consumers do not view the contents of these products as a significant concern. Different quality levels fulfil different roles – lower quality one's for family lunches and Bunnings / School events, whereas the better one's are for home meals. Instead, it's often a subject of amusement and shared jokes. For those who do have concerns, they have the option to purchase higher-quality or organic versions of these products.

4.8 What consumers believe goes into beef mince.

When it comes to what consumers believe beef mince is made from, their perspectives can be summarized as follows:

- **Lack of Detailed Knowledge:** Many consumers admit that they've never really thought about or don't know the specifics of what beef mince is made from. It's a product they use regularly, but they've never delved into its composition.
- **Assumption of Lower Quality Cuts:** Some consumers believe beef mince is made from the lower quality cuts of meat that might not be suitable for other purposes.
- **Minimal Attention to Labels:** There is a general lack of attention to labels on the packaging for beef mince – only a few could be certain as to whether there was an ingredient panel at all.

Consumers' approach to selecting beef mince generally revolves around visual and freshness factors:

- **Visual Inspection:** Consumers do not believe there is any issues, or variation, in terms of how mince looks – they all appear uniform and do not contain visible gristle, fatty bits, or other irregularities. Only seeing blood pooled in the bottom is an indication of mince that isn't particularly fresh.
- **Freshness Check:** Many consumers pay attention to the use-by date, ensuring that the beef mince has at least a few days of shelf life left – last until later in the week.
- **Preference for Higher Quality:** Some consumers believe that purchasing 5-star or organic beef mince guarantees the best quality. These products are often seen as superior.
- **Custom Butcher Options:** Some consumers prefer buying meat from a butcher where they can choose their own cuts and have them minced to their specifications.

Consumers, in general, have not been concerned about the exact composition of beef mince. It's considered a straightforward product, and their selection criteria primarily revolve around visual inspection, freshness, and perceived quality, rather than an in-depth understanding of the meat's composition.

4.9 Consumer reaction to mince containing beef heart.

When consumers were presented with the idea of beef mince containing beef heart, their reactions varied, reflecting different levels of comfort with the notion of consuming offal:

1. **Ambivalence:** Some consumers expressed ambivalence or indifference to the idea. They didn't consider it a significant issue and suggested that they wouldn't be surprised if beef heart was already included in mince. For them, it was not a major concern.
2. **Unease:** Another group of consumers admitted to feeling somewhat uneasy about the idea. They were not entirely comfortable with the concept of beef heart in mince and expected it might compromise the taste and texture. However, their unease wasn't strong enough to be a deal-breaker.
3. **Disturbance and Concern:** There was a segment of consumers who were disturbed / concerned by the idea of including offal, specifically beef heart, in beef mince. They expressed a strong preference for having a choice and found the idea of offal to be a significant turn-off.

Consumer perceptions of "offal" vary widely, influencing how they view the inclusion of beef heart in mince. Some are more accepting and open to the idea, while others strongly oppose it.

Many consumers reasoned that, much like with sausages, it might be best not to know precisely what's in beef mince. This suggests that ignorance can sometimes be bliss when it comes to food ingredients.

These reactions highlight the importance of addressing consumers' varying comfort levels and preconceived notions about offal when introducing changes to beef mince's composition.

4.10 What consumers learnt from their online search.

Respondents had many questions and queries in response to the proposed inclusion of beef heart in 'their' mince. Thus, they were allowed, in the research group to use their phones to quickly explore the points most pertinent to themselves. Thus, it was as much interesting to know what they searched for, as to what they found out. This reasonably reflects what they might do in the real world, if confronted with the proposed change.

Search Queries:

1. **Does beef mince have heart in it?** (many suspected mince might already contain heart).
2. **Taste of Beef heart?**
3. **What is beef heart like?**

Findings:

- ☐ Consumers discovered that some organic butchers already include heart in their beef mince, charging a significant premium for them.
- ☐ They found that beef heart has a slightly gamey flavour and offers a more intense beef taste compared to other cuts. However, the taste is not fundamentally different.

- Information from the search highlighted the potential health benefits of beef heart, as it is very lean and contains higher levels of iron, selenium, and CoQ10.

Reactions:

- For many consumers, the search results reinforced their belief that beef heart might already be present in the mince they purchase. It led them to conclude that it's not worth worrying about and that its inclusion in mince is no big deal. They believe it won't significantly impact the taste and can even make the mince healthier.
- While some became more accepting of the idea after learning about the potential health benefits, others still remained uncertain about why they would want beef heart in their mince / why the need for change.

The more consumers know about beef heart, the more their perceptions shift away from it being 'offal-like'.

Allowing consumers to discover this information for themselves can be highly advantageous, as it challenges their superficial beliefs and increases acceptance of the change. This suggests that providing educational resources and information can help address concerns and misperceptions.

Whilst a definitive health claim cannot be made, recognising that heart is healthier than regular beef, is positive and motivating to consumers.

4.11 Consumer response to alternate rationales.

Consumers had varied responses to alternate rationales for including beef heart in mince, with some providing reassurance, others providing justification for the change, whilst other rationales were not relevant or motivating.

Reassurance:

- Some consumers were reassured by the rationale that **beef heart is essentially a muscle and thus shares properties with other cuts used in mince**. This reframed the concept and made them feel that it wouldn't significantly alter the taste or quality of the mince.
- The fact that **beef heart only makes up 3% of each batch** was considered a reassuring point. In consumer taste tests, it was noted that no one could detect any difference.
- Highlighting the similarity between beef heart and other cuts used in mince, both in taste and texture, resonated with consumers.

Justification:

- Many consumers viewed **including beef heart because it helps us all be less wasteful**, as a positive step, especially younger families who were concerned about sustainability.
- With rising everyday food prices, the idea of **maintaining current prices through the inclusion of a lower value component like beef heart** was encouraging.
- However, some remained cynical, suggesting that supermarkets might pocket the savings.

Not Relevant:

- Some consumers noted that few admire US food culture, so the fact that **beef heart has been part of all beef mince in the US for over 40 years** was not seen as motivating.

Reassuring consumers with information about the nature of beef heart and its minimal presence in mince can help them accept the change.

Highlighting the sustainability aspect, particularly to younger families, was seen as a strong justification.

Understanding the specific concerns and preferences of different consumer segments is crucial for addressing resistance to change.

4.12 Key considerations in how to introduce beef heart in mince.

There are a number of factors that should be considered when it comes to how best to make the change to incorporate beef heart into mince, in the Australian market.

1. **Diverse Consumer Views:** Recognize that consumer attitudes toward beef heart and offal in general are diverse. Some consumers may be ambivalent, while others may feel uneasy or disturbed by the idea. Understanding these varying perspectives is crucial in framing the introduction effectively.
2. **Core Role of Beef Mince:** Acknowledge that beef mince plays a fundamental role in consumers' lives. It is the default choice for the weekly shop and serves as the foundation for many popular family meals. Consumers rely on it for its ease of preparation, it being good value, reliable, and possessing reasonably healthy attributes.
3. **Impact of Knowledge:** Understand that consumers' level of knowledge about the inclusion of beef heart can significantly impact their reactions. It's essential to consider different scenarios:
 - **Knowing Nothing:** Consumers who remain unaware of beef heart's inclusion.
 - **Superficial Knowledge:** Consumers who have limited understanding of heart have generally negative associations.
 - **Full Understanding:** Consumers who are fully informed, are reassured about heart's similarity to other cuts, and appreciate the justification for its inclusion.

The introduction of beef heart should aim to address and alleviate concerns based on the diverse attitudes of consumers.

Providing reassurance and justification for the inclusion of beef heart can help consumers accept the change more positively.

4.13 Contrasting options for the inclusion of beef heart in mince.

Option 1: Just Make the Change, Without Informing Consumers

Argument For:

- ☐ Consumers won't notice any change to their beef mince, as it will continue to perform as it always has.
- ☐ Many consumers are content just not knowing as long as there's no compromise in taste, texture, or safety.

Issue Against:

- ☐ Once consumers find out about the change, many may feel disappointed, and a few from the "Disturbed" group may feel betrayed.
- ☐ Not all consumers will try to undertake their own search about Beef Heart, thus remaining 'put off' by the idea.

Implications:

- ☐ It's essential to be ready to present a full rationale for the change.
- ☐ Reassurance: Explain that beef heart is a muscle, just like other cuts, and at such a small proportion, it wouldn't be noticeable.
- ☐ Justification: Emphasize the sustainability aspect, stating that including beef heart is a small step toward helping is less wasteful.

Option 2: Be Fully Transparent & Upfront About the Change (On-Pack Call-Out)*Argument For:*

- ☐ Consumers believe they have a "right to know" about significant changes in the product.
- ☐ Transparency allows consumers to seek reassurance by trying the product, though expect to be offered a choice.

Issue Against:

- ☐ Consumer pre-conceptions can shape their experiences, potentially leading to negative biases.
- ☐ Many consumers are unlikely to make the effort to find out more about the change, possibly leaving them with a lesser opinion of beef mince.

Implications:

- ☐ Once consumers know about the change, ensure they fully understand the rationale behind it.
- ☐ Provide product sampling opportunities, such as in-store, to reassure consumers that the product delivers as expected.

Overall Consideration: The choice between these two options hinges on the trade-off between transparency and potential negative perceptions. Both approaches will require addressing consumers' concerns and providing reassurance and justification to help them accept the change.

5. Summary

Beef mince holds a cherished place in the hearts of consumers and serves as a versatile, reliable, and universally loved option for family dinners, particularly during the early and mid-week rush.

Consumers place unwavering trust in the consistent good quality and performance of beef mince. They have never had cause to question what goes into this staple and are often more amused than concerned by the contents of other formulated meat products.

However, the mention of beef heart triggers a varied and polarizing response. The prevailing perception of beef heart is as offal, and thus associated with expectations of distinct taste and texture, leading to contrasting reactions among consumers.

Consumers who possess only a superficial understanding of beef hearts inclusion in mince find themselves in a difficult position. They are better off either not knowing about this change or having a comprehensive understanding of the rationale behind it.

Some consumers would take it upon themselves to conduct their own online research, primarily through Google searches, to explore beef heart and what's currently in mince. In doing so, they discover that beef heart has minimal taste differences compared to regular meat, boasts health benefits, and is already available in beef mince from premium organic butchers, typically at a premium price.

The revelation that beef heart is a muscle similar to other meat cuts and constitutes only a small proportion of beef mince assures consumers that its inclusion will not significantly impact taste or quality. Furthermore, the notion of being less wasteful by utilizing more of the animal resonates positively with consumers and provides justification.

Understanding these consumer perspectives is crucial for effectively introducing beef heart into beef mince without undermining its position in the market. It is essential to address the varying attitudes and perceptions surrounding this change to ensure a successful transition.

6. Recommendations

1. **Consider the Long-Term Perspective:** Understand that beef mince is deeply entrenched in consumers' lives and is a staple in their weekly routines. Disrupting usage patterns should be approached with caution.
2. **Recognize the Contrast in Consumer Attitudes:** Be aware that consumers have diverse reactions to the idea of beef heart inclusion, largely based on their comfort level with offal.
3. **Combat Superficial Understanding:** Acknowledge that consumers with only a superficial understanding of beef hearts inclusion may be hesitant or resistant to the change. Therefore, consider providing comprehensive information to bridge the knowledge gap.

Approach 1 - Making the Change without Informing Consumers:

☐ **Pros:**

- Minimal disruption: Consumers are content with their beef mince and will likely not notice any change in the product and how it performs.
- Potential for acceptance: If consumers do find out, they would likely reluctantly accept the change, reflecting that they haven't noticed significant difference in taste or quality.
- **Cons:**
 - Disappointment: Consumers who discover the change without prior notice might feel disappointed or betrayed.
 - Lack of understanding: Consumers may remain uninformed about the rationale behind the change.
- **Strategy:**
 - Ensure there is a plan in place to address consumers concerns and provide reassurance. Be ready to justify the change by reassuring as to the minimal change in product performance and emphasizing the sustainability benefit of less wastage.

Approach 2 - Being Fully Transparent and Upfront:

- **Pros:**
 - Honesty and transparency: Consumers often believe they have a right to know, and being upfront can create a sense of trust and credibility.
 - Reassurance through comparison: Consumers can assess the product themselves and compare it with the old version, which may alleviate concerns.
- **Cons:**
 - Negative perceptions: Some consumers might perceive the product negatively and expect it to taste worse, even if there is no significant difference.
 - Potential to reduce perceived quality: Transparency may lead some consumers to believe that the product is of lower quality.
- **Strategy:**
 - Ensure that consumers have access to sufficient information to understand the rationale behind the change and the benefits it brings. Consider offering product sampling or demonstrations to alleviate concerns and misconceptions.

Ultimately, the choice between these two approaches should align with the relationship the red meat industry seeks to have with consumers and the specific market conditions. Whichever approach one chooses, the key is to provide consumers with the information they need to be reassured as to the minimal change in beef mince's performance and emphasizing the sustainability benefits of this change.

7. References

MLA P.PSH.1388 – Nutritional Valorisation of Mince Beef

Project code: P.PSH.1388 Published by Meat and Livestock Australia Limited, Locked Bag 1961, North Sydney NSW 2059.

8. Appendix

RATIONALES & CONSUMER RESPONSES

Reassurance

Beef Heart is actually a muscle, with similar properties to other cuts used in mince – so does not alter taste, etc.

It makes sense – pumping blood.

Helps reframe as being a muscle, though still think of it as an 'organ'.

Beef Heart makes up only 3% of each batch – in consumer taste tests, no one could tell any difference

Good that it's only at this level

Its similarity to beef, would be hard to notice a difference.

Justification

We are wasteful in not eating more of the whole animal – putting heart in beef mince is a good first step

Positive step – we should be trying to do more / be more sustainable.

Particularly resonated younger families

Being a lower value component, including beef heart will help keep the price at current levels for longer

With everyday food prices going up, this is encouraging.

Cynical - supermarkets would pocket

Not Relevant

In the US, beef heart has been a part of all beef mince for over 40 years

Few admire US food culture / not a something we look up to.

Does show it's not such a big deal

=> Knowing beef heart is a muscle and only makes up 3% of the mince – **reassures** that the taste is not impacted

=> Consumers feel better knowing we're being less wasteful – provides a **positive reason** as to why doing it