



The Eating Habits of Pakistanis:

Rising Consumption of White Meat between 2015 -2018

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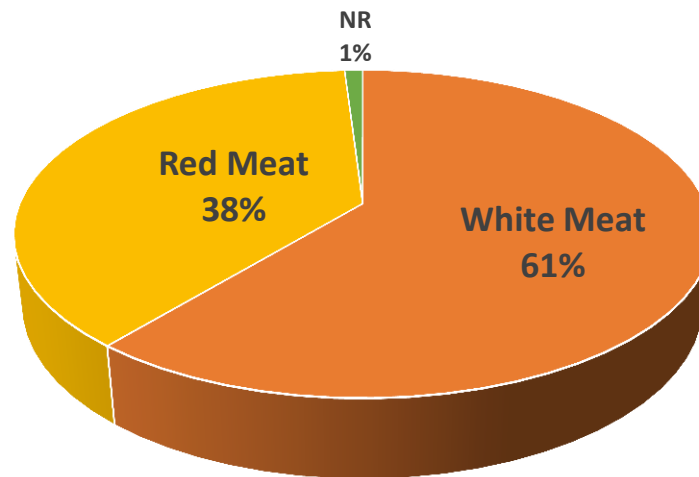
Abstract: *The following paper will endeavour to interpret the findings of two surveys carried out by Gallup Pakistan. The surveys in question are related to the eating habits and food preferences of Pakistanis. The first survey was conducted by Gallup Pakistan – in 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2016 – with the aim of determining the choice of meat Pakistanis prefer. The survey, which had a nationally representative sample ranging from 1000-2500 males and females of age 18 years and above and an error margin of 2-3% at 95% confidence level, asked respondents ‘What type of meat is mostly used in your household?’ In 2005, 59% of the respondents answered with “Red Meat (Mutton, Beef)” while 41% answered with “White Meat (Chicken, fish)”. These were figures that changed over the years with people who answered with white meat increasing to 61% by 2016, and people who answered with red meat decreased to 38% (1% of the respondents did not respond to the answer in 2016). The second survey was conducted by Gallup Pakistan in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2017. A nationally representative sample of men and women from across the four provinces was asked: ‘Some people say that their eating habits have been affected by inflation. How much has inflation affected the way of eating in your household?’ In 2017, 25% of the respondents claimed that their eating habit had been affected by inflation “a lot”, 45% claimed “somewhat”, 19% claimed “very little”, and 11% claimed “Not at all”.*

The eating habits of a country’s citizens can lead to deeper insights into many changing socio-economic factors such as changes in income or the growth of certain industries. This article shall focus on the changes in animal protein consumption in Pakistani households over the past decade or so, and link those dietary changes to different causal factors.

In 2016, Gallup Pakistan conducted a survey asking respondents, “What type of meat is mostly used in [their] household?” 61% of the respondents answered with “White Meat (Chicken, fish)” while 38% responded with “Red Meat (Mutton, Beef)”.

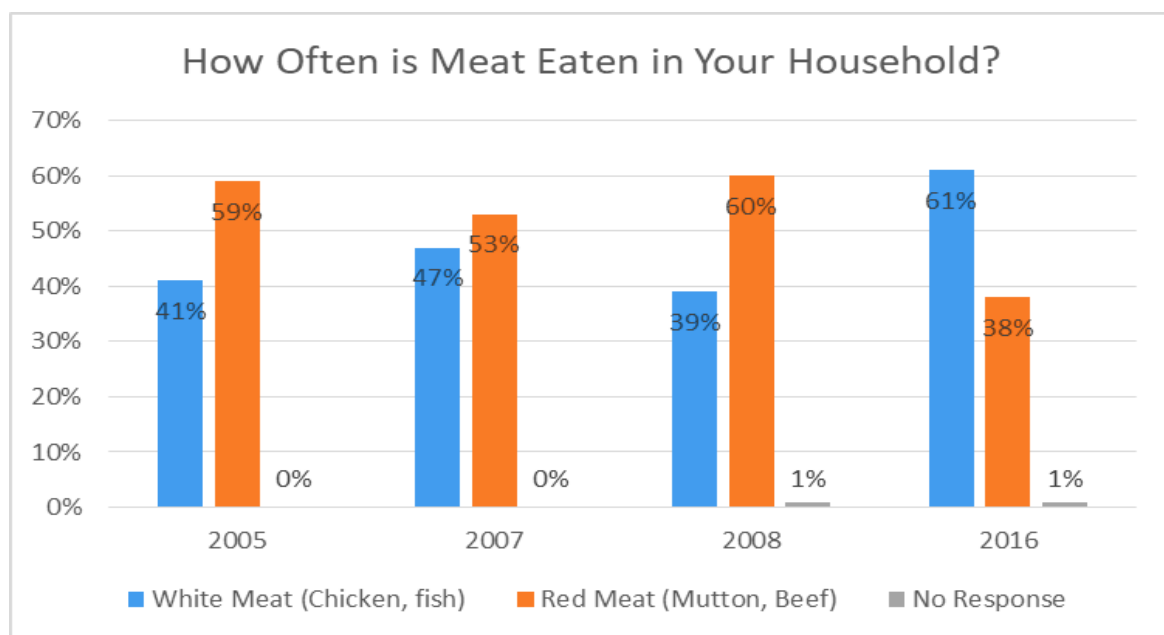
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What Type of Meat is Mostly Used in Your Household?



Source: Gallup & Gilani / National Survey, 2016

A comparative study of the results of similar questions posed over the years 2005, 2007, 2008, and 2016 reveals that there appears to be an increasing trend concerning the consumption of white meat while there is a decrease in the consumption of red meat. The following table aims to visually present the comparative data obtained over the years.

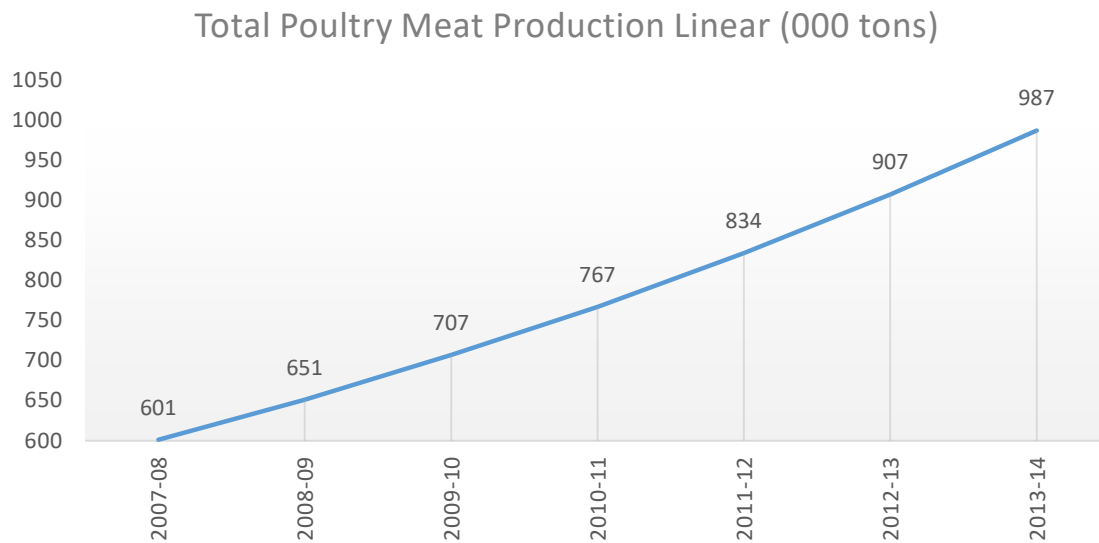


Source: Gallup & Gilani / National Surveys, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013 & 2016

The increasing consumption of white meat in Pakistani households can be explained by the rapid growth of the poultry industry. The strong base of the industry in Pakistan means that the cheapest source of animal protein in the country are poultry products, thus households

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may increasingly prefer white meat over red meat. The year 2008, is an exception to the trend with red meat consumption drastically overtaking white meat consumption. A major reason for this is the outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) type H5N1 (also known as bird flu), in 2008, which led to the decrease of poultry consumption during that particular year. The trend line shows the growth of poultry meat production through the years. From the years 2000-2010 the poultry industry went through a 126% growth in total meat production (Hussain et al. 692) which can be linked to the growth of households that prefer white meat over red meat.



Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Building on to that, the past two decades have seen the poultry industry's market share grow while simultaneously observing the decline in the share of the mutton industry. "In 2010 the market share of poultry meat had increased to 25%, whereas beef and mutton had reduced to 55% and 20% respectively" (Hussain et al. 696). The following graph shows this trend.

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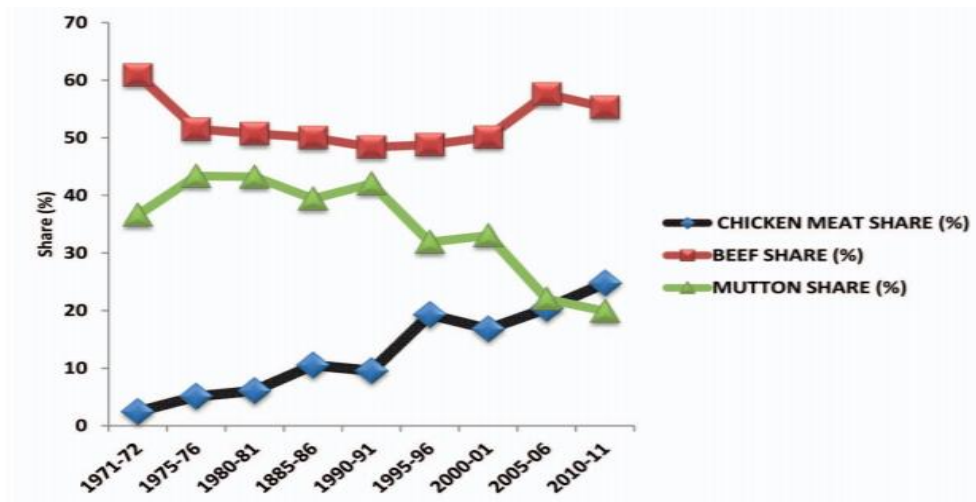
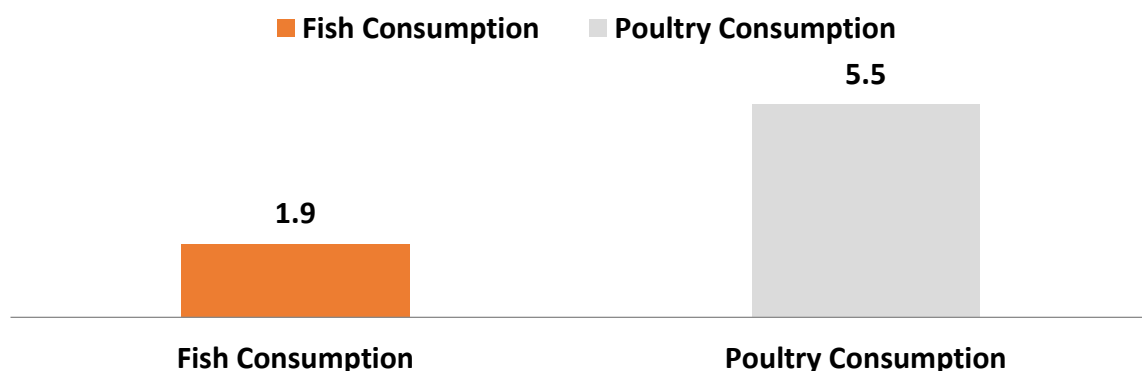


Figure 5 A comparison between the shares of different meat sources in overall meat production of the country (1971-2010) Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

The growth in the poultry industry in particular can explain the rise in the consumption of white meat as even though fish also comes under the classification of “white meat” according to the United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation the per capita consumption of fish in Pakistan was “rather low (1.9 kg in 2013)” (“Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profiles”). In contrast, the per capita poultry consumption in 2013 was 5.5 kg (Memon 26). The following chart depicts this data.

Per Capita Consumption of Fish and Poultry in 2013 (kg)



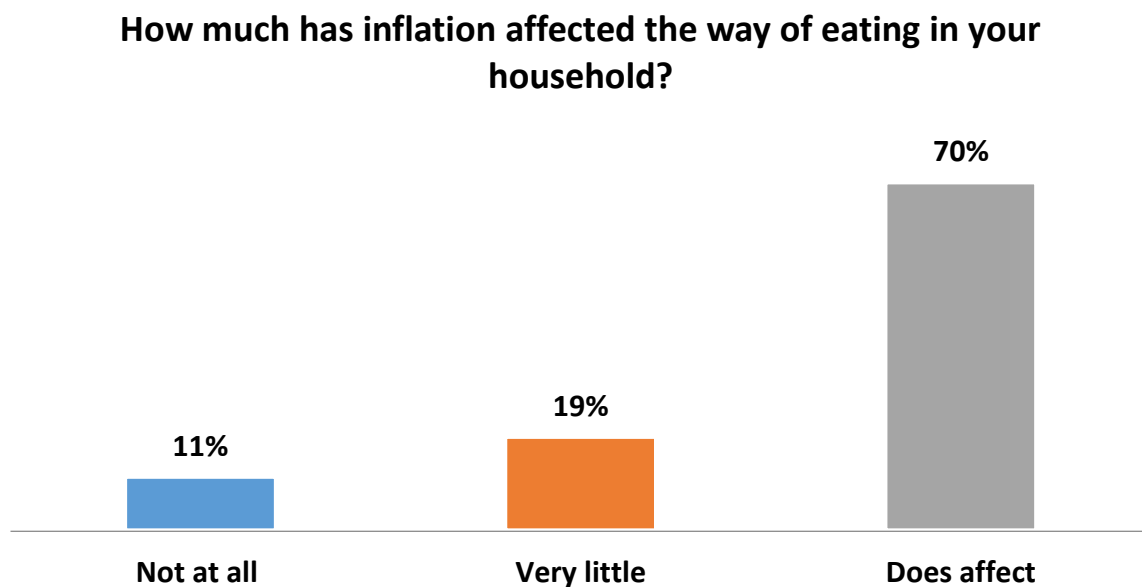
The growth of the poultry industry goes hand in hand with the growth of the frozen goods industry.

Over the past few years various businesses that provide consumers with packaged and frozen food items have popped up all over Pakistan. These businesses, such as K&N’s or Menu, mostly provide customers with products that contain chicken meat. Therefore, with the boom of such businesses, chicken consumption has also increased. According to a 2012 article that

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appeared in the DAWN Newspaper, “Frozen meat products specifically poultry account for 47 per cent of the market (of which chicken burgers and nuggets account for a staggering 60 per cent of all consumer purchases)” (“Rising frozen food demand”).

The preference of white meat over red meat could also be attributed to the findings of a survey conducted by Gallup in 2016. The survey asked its respondents the question: ***“Some people say that their eating habits have been affected by inflation. How much has inflation affected the way of eating in your household?”*** 25% of the respondents in 2016 replied with “a lot” while 45% responded with “somewhat”. Thus, cumulatively 70% of the respondents believed that inflation did impact the eating habits of their households. The results of the 2016 survey can be seen in the following pie chart.

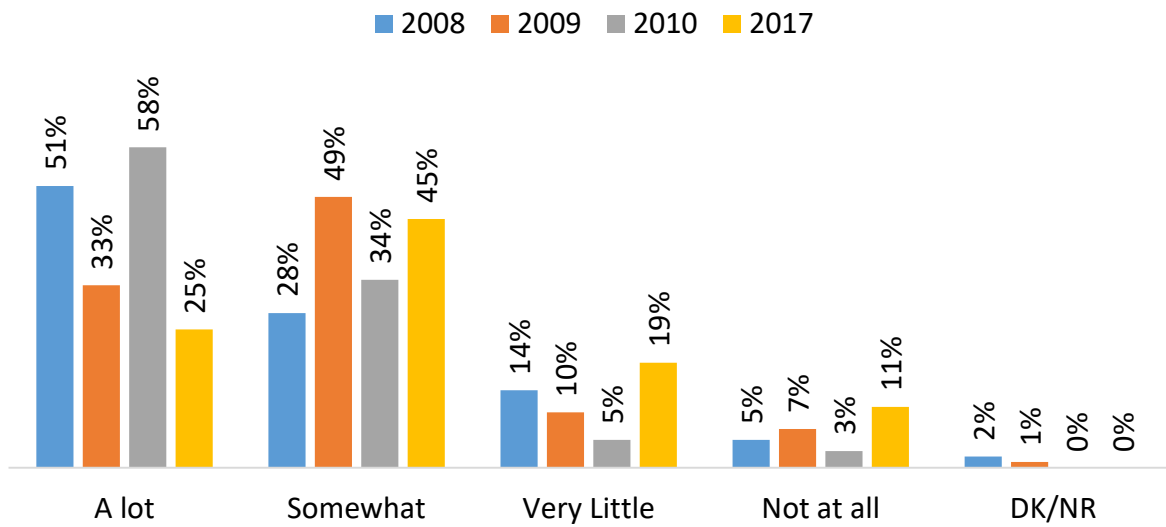


Source: Gallup & Gilani / National Survey, 2016

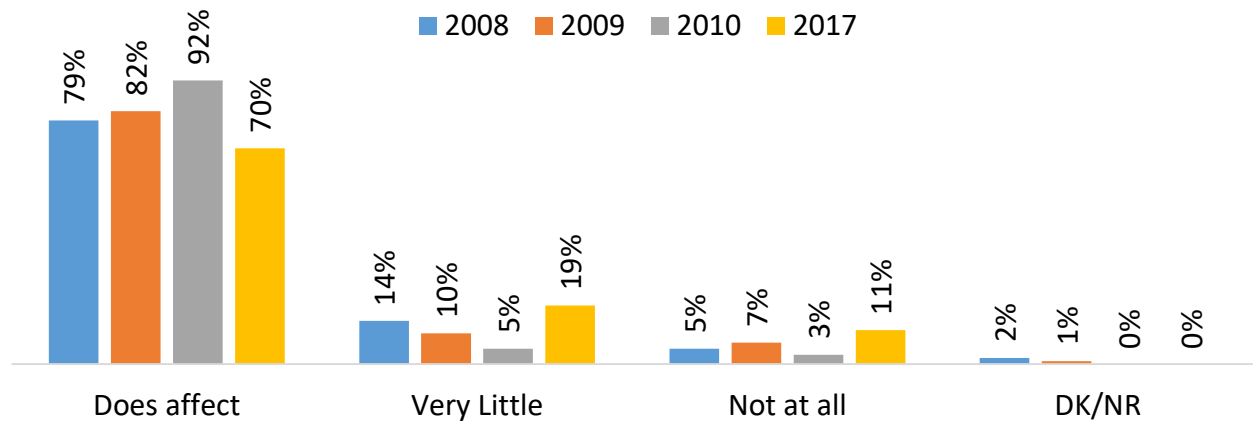
Comparative data of the results of similar surveys carried out in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2017 shows that the extent to which people believed that inflation affected their food choices varied over the years, perhaps in relation with the actual inflation rate over the years. However, despite the variance in the trend, a sizable portion of the population believes that inflation affects the eating habits of people “somewhat” or “a lot” as opposed to “very little” and “not at all”. The following charts gives a visual representation of the comparative data obtained from the various surveys over the years as well as a trend line showing the variations in the proportion of people who believed that inflation does affect their food choices.

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Is your food affected by inflation?

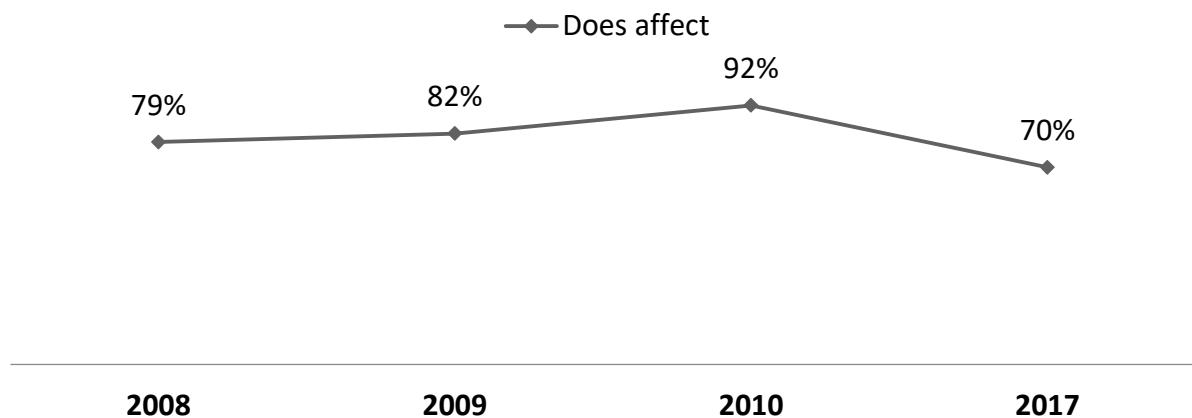


Is your food affected by inflation?(Cumulative)



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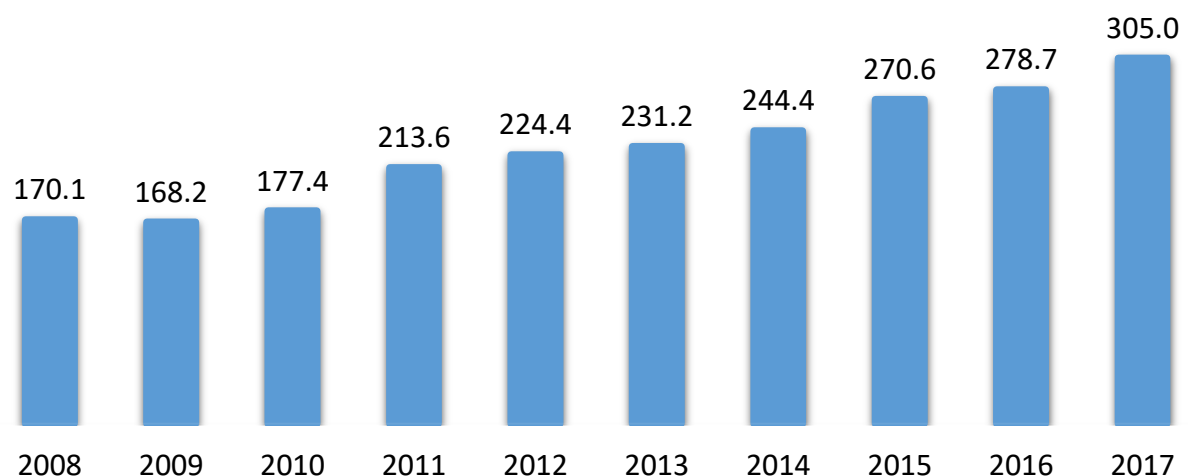
Proportion of People Who Think Inflation Affects Their Food Choices



Source: Gallup & Gilani / National Surveys, 2008, 2009, 2010 & 2017

Keeping people's perception of inflation in mind one can assume that the increasing consumption of white meat as opposed to red meat might be due the fact that poultry is cheaper than red meat like mutton or beef. Therefore, the population of an inflation afflicted country like Pakistan might prefer the cheaper alternative i.e. white meat. Moreover, these perceptions can be linked to the changes in per capita income over the years that, in turn, affect the buying patterns of consumers. The following graph shows the variation in Pakistan's GDP over the last decade according to World Bank's data.

Pakistan's GDP (In \$ Billions)



Source: World Bank

The rise in GDP over the previous years, particularly from 2016 to 2017, might explain why fewer people believe that inflation affects food choices, as rising inflation is also met with

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rising incomes. This could explain why meat consumption is still high but most people would prefer cheaper meat alternatives such as white meat.

Conclusion: Therefore, looking at the results of the two aforementioned surveys one can conclude that the increased consumption of white meat in Pakistani households can be due to both the growth of the poultry industry, as well as the increasing food prices due to inflation which results in white meat such as chicken being a cheaper source of animal protein. An agro-based economy such as that of Pakistan where the majority of its citizens view red meat as a luxury food item it is of little surprise that white meat is increasingly consumed more.

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