

*From the Editor*

# What is meat?

International perspectives

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Around the world, meat goes by many names. Meat. Carne. Fleisch. 肉 (Rou). Viande. Meat also comes in many forms—fresh, cured, dried, and pickled. It can be the skeletal muscle of mammals like a nice, juicy steak. Or it can be organs like a plate of tripe. Meat might come from animals kept on a farm or in a pond, or it might come from animals in the wild that are harvested by hunters. As difficult as it was for AMSA to define meat and various meat terms, answering the question “what is meat?” becomes even more complicated with differences in language, culture, and customs from around the world. However, just as clear definitions of meat will hopefully increase our ability to address issues about meat within the United States, a better understanding of how different global communities view meat should also improve our ability to work together across our borders. Included in this section are eight international perspectives answering the question “what is meat?” Different authors approached this question in different ways—some relying on governmental regulations, some on cultural and historical context, and some by commissioning surveys of consumers to better define the term.

From Argentina, Enrique Pavan, Gabriela M. Grigioni, Patricia Aguirre, and Marcela Leal (2017) discuss the concept that within their country, the definition of meat is expanding. Meat (carne) used to imply beef, but as the pork and poultry industries continue to grow, that definition changing. In Australia, Robyn Warner, Evan Bittner, and Hollis Ashman (2017) commissioned a study to determine what consumers and health professionals considered meat. It is interesting to see how those two groups don't always agree on what is meat, suggesting that recommendations from health professionals to consumers might not be as clear as they wish them to be. Rui Liu, Lujuan Xing, Guanghong Zhou, and Wangang Zhang (2017) from China make the point that, in their country, meat and organs are considered two different items, defined by two different words. Furthermore, within meat, there are divisions based on how it is presented to the consumer—at a fresh, hot market; in a supermarket; or frozen. In their article, Ralf Lautenschlaeger and Matthias Upmann (2017), from Germany, discuss how meat is viewed both within their borders and in the European Union. They note that the official definition accepted by the European Union views meat as skeletal muscle and offal but from mammals and not from poultry or aquatic species. Samuel Ohene-Adjei and Nikki Asuming Bediako (2017) discuss the wide variety of species used as sources of meat in Ghana, and the concept that for the people of Ghana, some meats are more truly meat than others. Through the use of focus groups, they have determined that in meal preparation, meat from mammals can stand alone while that from invertebrates (crab, mol-

lusks) is considered only a supplemental protein source to be combined with meat. The historical and cultural significance of processed meats is evident in the article from Italy written by Antonella Dalle Zotte, Alberto Brugiapaglia, and Marco Cullere (2017). They provide some excellent examples of the diverse fare one should be expect when visiting that country, but they also explain the quite flexible attitude of Italians in terms of what is considered meat. In South Africa, the distinct ethnic groups that make up the population of that country inform the various definitions of meat, explain Sara Erasmus and Louwrens Hoffman (2017). The importance of “bush meat” for ethnic groups with South Africa is explored. In Uruguay, Santiago Luzardo, Gustavo Brito, Marcia del Campo, and Fabio Montossi (2017) say that the focus on exports for that country influence the prevailing definition of meat. Special attention is paid to the pastoral system of agriculture in Uruguay that provides attractive products for export to other nations.

While these eight countries do not provide an exhaustive picture of what meat is, several similarities can be noted. First, meat is from animals. This was overwhelmingly true regardless of the country involved. We might not all agree on which animals specifically produce meat, but we seem to agree that plants are not meat. Secondly, it is clear that eating meat has great cultural significance in many part of the world. Certain meats are important in religious and holiday celebrations. The meats we eat are part of what defines our national or ethnic identity. Therefore, despite our differences, enjoyment of meat is one tie that binds us all.

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