New Release

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*For immediate use*

**Record spending on fresh red meat signals robust Christmas market in Great Britain**

Consumer spending on fresh red meat in Great Britain surged to a record £656.2 million in the four weeks leading up to Christmas 2023, marking a significant 9.6% increase compared to the previous year, according to data from Nielsen.

This remarkable growth defied the challenges of price inflation, indicating a notable shift in household spending towards red meat products.

“The fresh red meat market in Great Britain experienced a gradual growth trend in the lead-up to Christmas, with a substantial surge in sales during the final week, accounting for approximately 35% of total sales over the four-week period,” notes Abby Tong, category specialist at QMS.

While price inflation played a central role in this marked growth in spend, increased volume sales also contributed, with a 2% year-on-year increase, reversing the decline seen at Christmas 2022.

Sausages, lamb, and beef were the top contributors to the overall volume increase, with lamb notably rebounding from a sales slump in 2022 with a year-on-year volume growth of 12%.

“It’s great to see lamb recovering from the impacts of price inflation and the perception that it is an expensive protein which had been dampening sales,” says Abby. “The outstanding performer within the fresh lamb category was the lamb leg.”

Beef continued to dominate the fresh red meat category, with volume sales increasing by 2.1% year on year. Sales growth was primarily driven by beef roasting joints, with burgers and meatballs contributing a small share. In contrast, fresh pork experienced a decline in volume sales, dropping by 4.2% as past price increases still resulted in significant year-on-year price inflation. Domestic pork production has also fallen sharply this year, limiting availability.

Festive centrepieces such as beef roasting joints and lamb leg roasts saw substantial increases in volume, up 11.7% and 18.7%, respectively. Traditional favourites like 'Pigs in Blankets' experienced a surge in volume attributed to increased pack sizes and reduced average prices per kilo.

“Beef roasting joints and lamb leg roasts average prices were 3-4% lower than the previous year, which may, in part, explain the volume rises,” adds Abby. “Gammon joints were significantly cheaper than beef roasts and lamb legs, but volumes sold over the holidays were down 1.8% on the previous year, so price is not the only factor.”

Source: Nielsen, MNDH fresh meat, GB total coverage incl. discounters, 4 weeks to 23rd December 2023

**Red meat is Scots’ Christmas treat**

Spend on fresh red meat in Scotland also demonstrated robust growth, with an 8.5% year-on-year increase in the four weeks leading up to Christmas. The volume of red meat purchased also experienced a healthy rise, increasing by 2.6%, although it remained 0.9% behind the 2021 level.

“Beef and sausages played crucial roles in driving the overall volume increase,” notes Abby. “While lamb recorded a more modest increase of 0.5%.”

“Fresh beef volume sales in Scotland were up 3.7% on 2022 figures while continuing significant year-on-year price inflation meant that fresh pork volume sales were down 3.4%.”

Across Scotland, beef roasting joints were the centrepiece of many Christmas tables with volume sales soaring by an impressive 12%. Lamb legs also experienced growth, as sales increased by 8.4%, while gammon joints gained volume growth of 4.3%. However, in contrast to GB as a whole, 'Pigs in Blankets' lost volume, down 3.6% in Scotland.

“A distinctive aspect of the Scottish market was the importance of beef steaks during Christmas. A volume share of 6.4% of total red meat sales equalled that of beef roasts and was a higher share than in GB as a whole, where roasts were still preferred to steaks. The volume of beef steaks sold increased by 2.3% year-on-year in Scotland.”

"The red meat market demonstrated healthy resilience at Christmas,” concludes Abby. “Despite having to navigate budget constraints in the face on ongoing price inflation, shoppers clearly still wanted to treat themselves and their families to high quality, nutritious and tasty red meat products. The Scottish market showed a keen eye on both traditional favourites and unique regional choices."

Source: Nielsen, MNDH fresh meat, GB total coverage excl. discounters and Scotland excl. discounters, 4 weeks to 23rd December 2023

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Words count 666

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.