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MEAT AND MEAT PRODUCTS-ROLE IN HUMAN HEALTH

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Along with rapid grow of population increase the need for highly nutritious foods such as meat. Due to its nutrition content meat is essential for proper growth and development. Meat contains proteins (containing essential amino acids), fatty acids (especially some PUFA e.g. docosahexanoic acid-DHA), vitamins (B vitamin complex, vitamins A and D), minerals (iron, zinc, and other mineral substances). However, some hazards from meat may endanger consumer's health. Biological agents (*Salmonella* spp., *Campylobacter* spp., *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*) are the most important from health point of view considering that food-borne pathogens are responsible for the millions of illness outbreaks worldwide. Some substances formed during lipid oxidation are toxic and cancerogenic. Moreover, consumption of red meat, especially processed meat products is associated with civilization diseases including coronary heart diseases, diabetes mellitus and several types of cancer. Even so, some studies showed that fresh meat per se is not carcinogenic and that, the risk of cancer is mainly associated with cooking methods and amount of carcinogens (e.g. heterocyclic aromatic amines-HAAs; polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons-PAHs) produced during meat processing and preparation. Despite the negative image, processed meat is wildly consumed. Thus, meat industry tends to develop strategies to replace some meat constituents causing health concerns and incorporate different natural and bioactive substances such as natural antioxidants, plant extracts, probiotic cultures, fibers into meat products to make functional foods with enhanced the nutritional and health benefits.

Keywords: red meat, meat products, civilization diseases, functional foods

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