NIQ
Perspectives
Protein

August 18, 2025

"With nearly 60% of consumers actively trying to boost their daily protein intake, fresh beef's rising prices are pushing value-conscious shoppers to look elsewhere.[2] We're already seeing gains in chicken, pork, and frozen meat—and if beef inflation holds, those alternatives will keep winning. Retailers need to lean into smart pricing and promotions to stay relevant in the protein race."

Chris Costagli

Vice President, Thought Leadership, F&B Insights Lead, NielsenIQ

Here's what industry experts are saying:

"Due to reduced domestic cattle numbers and record-high beef prices, the percentage of imported beef in the U.S. supply has risen significantly in the past few years. This is especially true for imports used for ground beef as U.S. cow slaughter numbers have declined. The Trump administration has increased tariffs on imported beef, and this will serve to further raise the price of beef at the food store." [3]

Colin Carter

Professor of Agricultural & Resource Economics, UC Davis

"It might be at least two to three years before we would see any significant change on the supply side that would ultimately lead to some moderation in beef prices." [3]

Derrell Peel

Professor of Agricultural Economics, Oklahoma State University

NielsenIQ

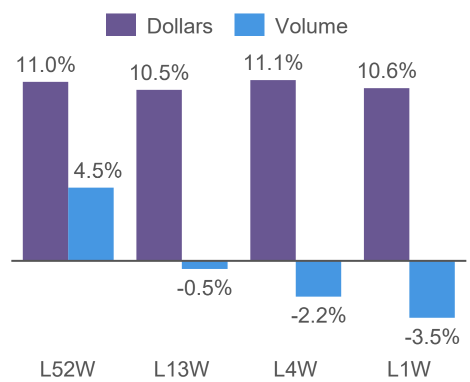
Fresh beef inflation opens the door for alternatives

Implications for the Fresh Meat Industry

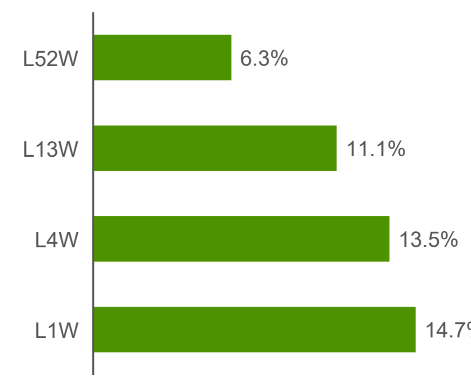
Fresh beef inflation creates an advantage for others

Fresh beef prices have jumped +13.5% in the past month, driving category dollar growth—but it's fueled by price, not volume. As consumers pull back, deeper volume declines are likely. Retailers face mounting pressure to keep fresh beef shoppers engaged, opening the door for other meat categories and plant-based alternatives to step in and capture share.

FRESH BEEF SALES % CHANGE[1]



FRESH BEEF VOLUME PRICE % CHANGE[1]

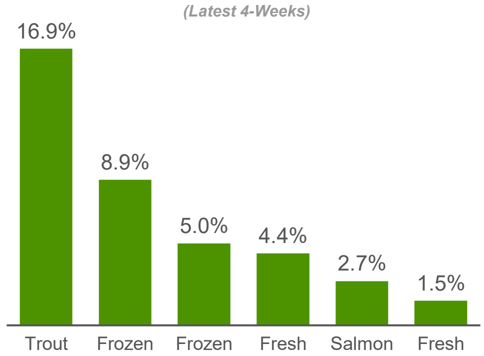


Smart pricing is key as shoppers trade away from fresh beef

Inflation is driving prices up across the protein industry, with fresh beef leading the surge. As shoppers seek affordability, seafood, frozen meat, and fresh chicken are gaining ground. Retailers must price alternative proteins competitively with conventional meat to capture share of wallet from value-conscious consumers.

MEAT & SEAFOOD VOLUME GROWTH RATES[1]

(Latest 4-Weeks)



MEAT & SEAFOOD VOLUME PRICE % CHANGE[1]

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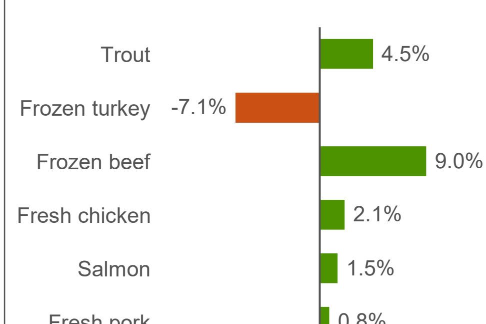
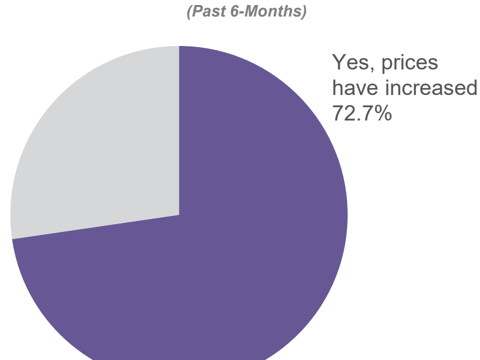


As consumers cut back on meat, smart promotions can keep them engaged

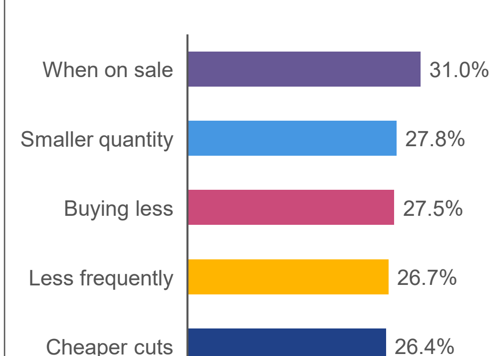
38% of consumers have noticed rising fresh meat prices, prompting 82% to shift their shopping habits. Many are stretching meals with vegetables, beans, and pasta or going meatless, while nearly a third delay purchases and buy in bulk when deals hit—making smart promotions essential to keep shoppers engaged.

HAVE YOU NOTICED AN INCREASE IN FRESH MEAT PRICES[2]

(Past 6-Months)



HOW THE PRICE OF FRESH MEAT IS AFFECTING SHOPPING HABITS[2]



Industry Analysts Source: [1]NIQ, Retail Measurement Services Including Fresh, Total US Full View, Periods Ending 8/9/25; [2]NIQ, BASES Quick Question, Protein Across The Store Survey, August 2025, n=1,020; [3]Newsweek, *Beef Prices Soar to All-Time High.* By Hugh Cameron, published August 13, 2025. Available at: https://www.newsweek.com/beef-prices-all-time-high-tariffs-2112771

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