

## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON POULTRY MEAT CONSUMPTION IN ROMANIA: THE CASE OF THE NORTH-WEST REGION

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### Abstract

*The study investigates the consumption of poultry meat in the North-West Development Region of Romania in the recent period, with the objective of identifying consumption habits, food preferences, and factors influencing consumer behaviour. The research combined the analysis of the specialized literature with the application of a structured questionnaire, to which 380 people from the six counties of the region responded. The results highlight a high prevalence of poultry meat consumption, integrated daily or several times a week into the diet of the majority of respondents. Chicken is the predominant type consumed, and supermarkets and local stores are the main acquisition channels. The analysis also shows differences in consumption behaviour between urban and rural areas, as well as a significant level of monthly spending allocated to poultry products. The conclusions of the study emphasize the importance of the poultry sector at the regional level and the need for in-depth analyses of local eating behaviours, useful for guiding economic and agri-food strategies.*

**Keywords:** poultry meat, consumption trends, Romania, North-West Region

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#### INTRODUCTION

Poultry meat consumption has recorded a steady increase worldwide in recent decades, a trend supported by low production costs, favorable nutritional profile and accessibility for various socio-economic categories. (Cărăuș Stanciu, 2020; Dodu et al., 2025)

According to the FAO Food Outlook, poultry meat is forecast to remain the fastest-growing segment in global meat consumption, driven by improved feed conversion efficiency and the expansion of intensive farming systems. (FAO, 2023)

The world's leading poultry producers are the United States, Brazil, China and Russia, and together they account for approximately 54% of global production. (Popescu et al., 2024)

At the European level, the OECD-FAO 2024–2033 indicates that poultry meat will consolidate its dominant role in the population's diet, surpassing pork in several European Union member states, amid changing food preferences and price competitiveness (OECD, FAO, 2024). Meat consumption is mainly influenced by the type of food and the price level. (Pânzaru, Medelete, 2021)

Romania is aligning with these European trends, with poultry meat representing one of the most important food product categories in household consumption. Official data show a long-term upward trend, reflected both in the per capita availableit isper capita, as well as in the structure of food expenses.

Market studies show that meat-based preparations, both poultry and mammals, are consumed more frequently, as many of them no longer require complex preparation steps in advance, being easy to purchase from large commercial chains and available in a ready-to-eat form. (Marin. et al., 2024)

The Romanian poultry sector has become increasingly integrated into European value chains. Thus, the modernization of production capacities in regions with a high density of poultry farms is highlighted (Popescu A, 2015) An important factor in the modernization, but also the establishment of high-performance poultry farms, was their financing within rural development programs. The poultry meat sector is constantly evolving, mostly in industrial specialized units with current technological endowment, where superior technologies are used and production performance is high (Irimia et al, 2023, Popescu A. 2015)

Although the national analysis is well represented in the literature, regional disparities in poultry consumption are insufficiently documented. The North-West region presents distinct socio-economic particularities: a pronounced urban-rural mix, high economic dynamism in counties such as Cluj and Bihor, and the persistence of traditional food patterns in rural areas. This heterogeneity makes the region a relevant case study for understanding regional variations in poultry consumption.

In addition, the period 2019–2024 was marked by a series of external shocks (COVID-19 pandemic, accelerated food price increases, changes in purchasing behavior), which justify the need for an updated assessment of consumption and the factors that determine it. The analysis of these elements is necessary not only to describe a phenomenon but also to provide empirical data useful for the development of public policies, for agri-food sector strategies, and for understanding consumer preferences in the region.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

In the process of documenting and analyzing the specialized literature, it was found that, although there is a lot of research dedicated to poultry meat consumption at the national level, studies with a regional focus are limited, and no comprehensive analysis published recently was identified for the North-West Development Region. This absence of regional research is notable, considering the significant potential of the region in terms of poultry meat production and consumption.

Such analysis allows capturing the relationships between consumption, spending, food preferences, and access to modern commercial networks or local producers.

To achieve this objective, a structured questionnaire was applied across the entire region, an instrument designed based on the theoretical framework and analysis models used in the international literature on the subject.

This questionnaire was applied between July and September 2025 and aimed to analyze the consumption habits and food preferences of residents of the North-West Development Region (Cluj, Bihor, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Maramureș, Bistrița-Năsăud) regarding poultry meat.

The research generated a relevant volume of data, totaling 380 valid responses, which provide a solid basis for statistical analysis. The geographical distribution of respondents reflected population density and level of

urbanization, with the most numerous responses coming from Bihor and Cluj counties, two important centers of regional development and modern food consumption.

It was structured into six distinct sections, each targeting a specific component of consumer behavior:

- filtering questions regarding meat consumption;
- consumption habits specific to poultry meat;
- factors influencing the purchasing decision;
- attitudes and perceptions towards this type of meat;
- recent changes in consumer behavior;
- socio-demographic variables necessary for consumer profile segmentation.

The questionnaire was applied online and physically, recording a total of 380 valid responses, distributed in all six counties of the region, with a predominant share in the counties of Bihor and Cluj, where the urban population density and access to modern retail networks are higher. Data collection aimed to ensure socio-demographic diversity so that the results would allow the identification of a relevant typology of the regional poultry consumer and the analysis of the relationships between the investigated variables. This approach subsequently facilitated the statistical processing.

Therefore, the study contributes to completing existing knowledge by providing an empirical analysis specific to the North-West Region and responds to a real need to deepen consumer behavior in a territory characterized by socio-economic diversity and high agri-food potential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Studies show that the average annual consumption of poultry meat recorded the most pronounced increase in the period 2007–2022, an evolution explained by the relatively low price of this type of meat, its white meat character suitable for all age groups, its frequent presence in various diets, and its high digestibility which makes it easy to tolerate. (Chiurciu et al, 2024)

Poultry meat maintains its dominant position in the structure of food consumption in Romania, with the annual level estimated at approximately 29 kg per capita, according to the most recent reports of the National Institute of

Statistics. This quantity places Romania above the European Union average and reflects the population's stable preference for white meat, appreciated for its economic accessibility and the ease with which it can be prepared. (Infoaliment, 2025)

The North-West region is characterized by a high concentration of poultry farms, constant increases in production volume over the last five years, and accelerated development of the agri-food sector. These elements suggest the existence of robust consumption and specific regional market dynamics, different from those recorded at the national level.

The questionnaire applied in the study aims to analyze the consumption habits and food preferences of residents of the North-West Development Region (Cluj, Bihor, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Maramureș, Bistrița-Năsăud) regarding poultry meat.

The North-West Region includes the counties of Bihor, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj,



Source : North-West Map

Maramureș, Satu Mare, and Sălaj. It is located in the northwestern part of the country and has a population of approximately 2.6 million inhabitants. The geography of the region is diverse, with the Apuseni Mountains and part of the Eastern Carpathians, which offer mountainous landscapes and opportunities for tourism. In addition, the region includes hills and plains, offering a variety of ecosystems and agricultural areas. (Map of Romania, 2025)

In the following, we will briefly present the results of the research, analyzing the questionnaire applied within it.

Figure 1. Map of Romania, North-West region

Table 1

#### Filtering questions regarding meat consumption

Eat meat of any type 1. Answer	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	367	96.6%
No (poultry only)	13	3.4%
Total	380	100%
Do you eat poultry? 2 Answer	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	363	95.5%
Not	17	4.5%
Total	380	100%
3 Main reason	No. of respondents	Percentage (%) of the 17 respondents
Religious reasons	0	0%
Health reasons	0	0%
Ethical reasons	0	0%
Personal preference (don't like the taste/texture)	14	82.4%
Another reason	3	17.6%
Total	17	100%

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

The data presented (table 1) highlights the fact that almost all respondents consume meat, regardless of its type. Specifically, 98.42% of participants declare that they include meat in their diet, while only 1.58% consume exclusively poultry meat, avoiding other types such as pork or beef. This result indicates that, in the North-

West region, meat remains a staple food in the structure of food consumption.

Regarding the specific consumption of poultry meat, the proportion of respondents who consume it is even higher: 99.21% state that they include poultry meat in their diet, confirming the clear preference for this category. Only 0.79%

declare that they do not consume poultry meat, which denotes a marginal share of those who avoid this type of product.

The reasons for non-consumption are also very clearly outlined. All three respondents who avoid poultry indicate that personal preference related to taste or texture is the main reason, with

no religious, ethical, or medical justifications reported. This suggests that the absence of consumption is not associated with imposed restrictions or health concerns but is exclusively related to individual subjective factors.

**Table 2**

Consumption frequency	No. of respondents	%
Daily	90	23.68
4-6 times	60	15.79
2-3 times	143	37.63
1 times	49	12.89
monthly	21	5.53
rare	17	4.47
Total	380	100

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

At the analysis of the frequency of poultry consumption provides an essential perspective on the dietary behavior of the population in the North-West Region. The frequency of consumption is a direct indicator of the level of integration of this product into the daily diet, being influenced by factors such as individual

The results highlight a high level of integration of poultry meat into the respondents' diet. The largest share is held by people who consume poultry meat 2–3 times a week (37.63%), followed by those who consume it daily (23.68%) and 4–6 times a week (15.79%). Cumulatively, these three categories account for over 77% of the sample, which indicates frequent and relatively constant consumption. Occasional consumption – once a week (12.89%), monthly

preferences, access to poultry products, socio-economic structure, and the role of poultry in the daily diet. In the context where poultry is perceived as an accessible, versatile, and easy-to-prepare option, it is expected that the level of consumption will be high among the investigated population.

(5.53%) or rarely (4.47%) – is represented by a minority, suggesting that giving up poultry meat or sporadic consumption are rather marginal behaviors among the investigated population. At the Romanian level, studies show that a large part of the population consumes poultry meat, and over two-thirds of buyers purchase this type of meat at least once a week. (Arghiroiu et al, 2024)

**Table 3**

Types of poultry consumed	Total No.	%
Chicken	316	83.16
Turkey	32	8.42
Rate	17	4.47
Goose	12	3.16
Other	3	0.79
Total	380	100.00

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

Regarding the type of poultry meat, the responses highlight the distribution of

preferences regarding the types of poultry meat consumed among the 380 respondents. The predominance of chicken consumption, reported

by 83.16% of the participants, confirms the status of this product as the main food option in the white meat category, an aspect frequently mentioned in the specialized literature due to its economic accessibility and ease of preparation. The other types of poultry meat are consumed in significantly lower proportions: turkey is preferred by 8.42% of the respondents, while duck (4.47%) and goose (3.16%) are chosen occasionally, possibly due to higher costs or limited availability on the market. The category "other types" accumulates only 0.79%, indicating a low diversification of consumption at regional level. This distribution highlights the consistent orientation of consumers towards standardized and easily accessible poultry products, especially chicken, which remains the dominant food in the structure of poultry meat consumption.

Regarding the source of poultry meat purchase, the responses highlight the fact that modern retail represents the main poultry meat purchase channel in the North-West region, as supermarkets (33.68%) and hypermarkets (16.32%) account for almost half of the respondents' preferences. (Table 4) This orientation confirms the high accessibility of these networks, the variety of the offer and the

frequency of purchases made in the urban environment.

Local stores, in turn, represent an important source (25.26%), which suggests the continued relevance of proximity retailers, especially for consumers who seek freshness or prefer quick purchases.

Purchases from one's own household (11.05%) and directly from the farm (7.63%) reflect the region's anchoring in a significant rural context and a preference for products perceived as natural or coming from short supply chains. In contrast, the agri-food market is mentioned by a lower percentage (6.05%), indicating a decrease in the traditional role of this channel in relation to modern retail and direct options from producers.

Overall, the data suggests the coexistence of two behavioral models: a dominant one, oriented towards modern retail, and a traditional one, based on own production or direct purchase from farms, specific to certain categories of consumers from rural or semi-urban areas.

Some studies show similar behavior, so that most respondents choose to purchase products in supermarkets or local stores. (MOISE et al, 2024)

**Table 4**

**Poultry meat procurement source**

Source Acquisition (as usual source)	Number	Percentage (%)
Hypermarket	62	16.32
Supermarket	128	33.68
Local store	96	25.26
Market	23	6.05
Farm	29	7.63
Household	42	11.05
Total	380	100

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

The distribution of monthly expenses indicates that most respondents invest considerable amounts in the purchase of poultry meat. The two upper categories: 250–300 lei (37.63%) and over 300 lei (35.53%) account for over 73% of the total sample, which suggests a constant and sustained demand for this type of food product, as well as a frequent integration of poultry meat into the daily diet.

Average expenses (151–200 lei) are represented by 15.53% of respondents, and low values (<150 lei) amount to less than 12% of the total, which confirms a high level of consumption, probably correlated with the previously identified increased frequency (daily consumption or several times a week).

Overall, the data highlights an intense consumption structure, characteristic of a

product perceived as accessible, versatile and preferred among the population in the region.

**Table 5****Monthly expenses for purchasing poultry meat**

Monthly expenses	No.	Percentage (%)
<100 lei	6	1.58
101-150 lei	37	9.74
151-200 lei	59	15.53
250-300 lei	143	37.63
>300	135	35.53
Total	380	100

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

Regarding the distribution of respondents, there is an adequate coverage of all counties in the North-West Development Region, but with different weights, reflecting both the demographic size of the counties and the degree of accessibility of the questionnaire. (Table 6) Bihor County has the highest weight (32.37%), followed by Cluj County (25.53%), which can be explained by the population density, the high level of urbanization and the presence of university centers that facilitate participation in

surveys. Bistrița-Năsăud (12.89%) and Satu Mare (12.11%) counties are represented in a balanced proportion, corresponding to their population size. Maramureș (11.32%) and Sălaj (5.79%) counties have lower weights, but their contribution maintains the regional diversity necessary for the analysis. The general distribution confirms that the sample used is representative of the region and allows valid conclusions to be drawn regarding the consumption behavior of the population in the North-West.

**Table 6****County of origin of respondents**

County of residence	No.	%
Bihar	123	32.37
Bistrita Nasaud	49	12.89
Cluj	97	25.53
Maramures	43	11.32
Satu Mare	46	12.11
Salaj	22	5.79
Total	380	100

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

Another important aspect for the analysis is the urban/rural environment of origin of the respondents. (Table 7)

The data highlights a preponderance of respondents from urban areas, representing 60% of the total sample (228 out of 380 participants). This distribution suggests a higher involvement of the urban population in completing the questionnaire, an aspect generally associated with easier access to

digital tools and with greater willingness to participate in opinion surveys.

At county level, Bihor and Cluj concentrate the highest shares of respondents, both in urban areas and in total, reflecting the demographic structure and the high degree of urbanization in these counties, as well as their economic and social dynamism. In Bistrița-Năsăud, Maramureș and Sălaj counties, the share of respondents from rural areas is comparatively higher, which may indicate regional particularities regarding the involvement of rural communities or the accessibility of the collection instrument.

Table 7

The background of the respondents

County of residence	urban	rural	Total	% urban of total
Bihar	88	35	123	23.16
Bistrita Nasaud	17	32	49	4.47
Cluj	64	33	97	16.84
Maramures	21	22	43	5.53
Satu Mare	31	15	46	8.16
Salaj	7	15	22	1.84
Total	228	152	380	60.00

Source: own processing based on the applied questionnaires

The urban-rural structure of the sample allows for the comparative analysis of consumption behaviors depending on the environment of residence, a relevant aspect

### CONCLUSIONS

The analysis highlighted the fact that in the North-West Region, poultry consumption is strongly consolidated in the food structure, being present in almost all respondents and integrated with a high frequency in the daily diet. Chicken is distinctly the preferred type of meat, which confirms the consumers' orientation towards affordable, versatile and easy-to-prepare products. The results showed that the purchase of poultry meat is carried out predominantly through modern retail, but a traditional model based on local stores, own households and direct purchases from farms is also maintained, an aspect that reflects the socio-economic diversity of the region. The high level of monthly expenses for this type of product indicates a constant consumption and a strong integration of poultry meat into the food behavior of households. The geographical distribution of respondents, with higher shares in Bihor and Cluj counties, allowed for the creation of a representative image of the region, revealing specific differences between urban and rural environments. The study thus contributes to a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the North-West Region and provides a useful empirical basis for the development of poultry sector strategies and for the substantiation of decisions at the level of regional agri-food policies.

considering the differences in access to the market, to agri-food products and in the consumption styles specific to each environment.

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