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Nutritionists' perception of the use of hormones and antibiotics in broiler chicken production and their health risks

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Brazilian poultry farming has been consolidating itself as one of the most important in the world, increasing its production and export every year. These results achieved by poultry farming were due to advances in the areas of genetics, environment, nutrition, health and animal welfare, which made it possible to increase bird productivity. However, consumers are unaware of advances in the poultry production chain, considering that the rapid growth and weight gain of chicken are associated with the use of hormones, making the activity the target of criticism from professionals from the most varied areas, who believe that industrial broiler meat may present a health risk as it contains hormones and antibiotics. Thus, the objective was to evaluate the perception of nutritionists working in the city of Sobral - CE regarding the use of hormones and antibiotics in the production of broiler chickens and their risks to human health. To collect data, closed questionnaires containing 11 multiple-choice questions were applied through the Google Forms platform, obtaining 44 responses from Nutritionists who work in Sobral. 25 questionnaires were also administered during a Nutrition event that took place at a Sobral's Hospital. It was found that Nutritionists working in Sobral are mostly female (79.7%), have a postgraduate degree (85.5%), and worked in the area for 1 to 5 years (63.8%). Of these professionals, around 50.7% consider chicken meat to be a great source of animal protein and that its daily consumption does not pose any risks to human health, however, 49.3% consider the daily consumption of this meat to be dangerous. Professionals were asked their opinions on the use of hormones in broiler chicken feed. 36.2% responded that hormones are not used in the production of broiler chickens. However, 58% believe that hormones are used in poultry feed, which is a concern for health due to the residues left in the meat. Furthermore, 5.8% believe that chickens receive hormones in their diet, but that there are no risks to this practice for the end consumer. 75.4% of professionals consider that the use of growth-promoting antibiotics is worrying, as it can cause the development of bacterial resistance. The majority of Nutritionists (98.6%) consider free-range chicken meat to be healthier compared to farmed chicken meat and stated that they recommend its consumption. Only 7.2% of those interviewed have already participated in courses or conferences that addressed topics that clarified their doubts related to the topic addressed in the research. Thus, it can be concluded that the myth of the use of hormones in the production of broiler chickens persists in the conception of most human nutrition professionals. Likewise, concern about the use of growth-promoting antibiotics is also visible, leading them to consider free-range chicken meat to be healthier than industrial chicken meat, highlighting the need for information campaigns for health professionals in general.

Keywords: health professionals, industrial poultry farming, survey research

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