



Innovate, sell, expand – efficient production and innovative sales concepts for the butchers' trade

Frankfurt am Main, 12 02 2025. Due to a shortage of skilled staff and strict bureaucratic constraints, the butchers' trade is currently facing a variety of business challenges. As the sector's leading international trade fair, IFFA – Technology for Meat and Alternative Proteins – presents future-orientated solutions aimed, inter alia, at greater production efficiency and innovative sales concepts.

The shortage of qualified employees is a major problem for most companies in the butchers' trade. Confirming this, Dr. Reinhard von Stoutz, Managing Director of the German Butchers' Association, says, "Our latest investment survey revealed that an above-average number of companies would like to invest in new staff." In this context, there is naturally also great interest in solutions that cut personnel costs. Another result of the DFV survey: company owners also plan to make major investments in the fields of production, vehicle fleets and slaughtering technology.

The 24/7 principle alleviates staff shortages.

24/7 solutions, which are being used by master butchers' businesses, particularly those in rural areas, are helping to alleviate this difficult situation through the introduction of digital smart stores that generally operate without staff and are open around the clock. Meat and sausages, as well as complete ranges of foodstuffs, are kept in vending machines or chilled cabinets that customers can access directly. Shopfitters offer hybrid concepts for existing business premises, which combine the advantages of staffed and unstaffed smart shops, or sales containers that create new outlets in locations such as villages, railway stations, universities or retirement homes. According to the DFV, seven percent of respondents are willing to invest money in solutions of this kind. Karsten Schmidt from Rheinböllen in Germany's Hunsrück region runs an unstaffed 36 square metre sales pavilion at a shopping centre. He explains: "Anyone who wants to shop there must firstly register online and obtain a QR code that not only enables them to access the store but also acts as a means of payment." Four cameras monitoring the interior provide protection against theft and vandalism. Markus Leggedör in Weener, East Friesland, opened a 50 square metre digital shopping facility in his existing shop nine months ago. When he closes his butcher's shop on Saturday afternoons, he packs any remaining products from the display counter and puts them in the smart store. According to the master butcher, the results have been good: "The Smart Store has exceeded our calculated expectations by 50 percent. It's not just a great alternative to the service counter – it's a genuine addition."



Vending machines help to alleviate staff shortages in butcher shops.
Source: iStock.

Sustainability in the natural cycle.

Ecological, economic and social awareness has an important role to play for many butchers. By purchasing meat and animals for slaughter directly from farmers, many of whom are local, they become part of a natural cycle with short transportation distances. In-house, humane slaughtering as a prerequisite for animal welfare and the best meat quality gives the trade a further ecological advantage. Additionally, this avoids environmental pollution and CO₂ emissions with the subsequent production stages, such as cutting, meat processing and sales, all taking place under one roof. The fact that most of the meat is sold over the counter rounds off the advantages in terms of sustainability because sourcing locally not only means short distances for employees and customers but also avoids the use of superfluous, sometimes environmentally harmful packaging. Thanks to their labour-intensive production and distribution systems, the butchers' trade also offers future-proof jobs and thus ensures social sustainability. In view of their diverse entrepreneurial tasks, many butchers are not aware of their advantages in terms of sustainability and that their work should be emphasised more when it comes to marketing and communication.

Regionality and animal welfare in focus.

For Sabine, Julia and Lena Schmitz from the eponymous country butcher's shop in the German town of Bitburg, sustainability is synonymous with regionality. As the three women say, "We have so many great local products that we source almost everything from around here. That's why there's nothing in our counter that doesn't come from us." They have been using their tried-and-tested sources for many years, purchasing their pork, poultry and beef from selected farms in the region. Like their customers, all producers prioritise animal welfare, use their own feed and deliver their livestock personally to a small family abattoir. In return, the farmers receive fixed prices that are higher than market prices. Even the marketing agency that Sabine, Julia and Lena Schmitz rely on is based in a neighbouring village. The advantage: in addition to faster communication when necessary, the advertising experts are fully aware of the value of the Eifel region and are able to convey it credibly. As a trained chef, Lena Schmitz combines international classics with local produce for daily specials and party services. One

example is her modified vitello tonnato with a regional touch: instead of veal loin and tuna sauce, she uses chicken breast and a proprietary trout sauce as the basic components.

Electrical self-sufficiency.

Thomas Eisele from Ostrach in Upper Swabia captures the sun: he is a pioneer in renewable energies and electricity storage. The master butcher has three photovoltaic systems generating a total of 115 kWp (= kilowatt peak, the peak output that photovoltaic modules can achieve under standardised conditions), a combined heat and power plant and two electricity storage units with a capacity of 214 kWh and an output of 90 kW. Almost incidentally, Eisele's car runs on electricity, increasing the storage capacity to 304 kWh. He also has several charging points that can be used by the public. If there is insufficient sunlight and the storage system is empty, the cogeneration plant kicks in as a buffer, which means that Eisele can even bridge a power outage. At night, the master butcher uses the energy generated to power his refrigerated vehicles, which are used during the day at weekly markets in the region, as well as his energy-intensive production machines. This sophisticated system makes him virtually self-sufficient in terms of energy. His verdict: "Everything works exactly as planned. Thanks to the increased storage capacity, we haven't needed any electricity from the grid. It is simply there as an emergency backup."

IFFA with the latest trends for the butchers' trade.

Showcasing the latest technology for businesses of all sizes, IFFA is a meeting place for both the butchers' trade and the industry. At the fair, almost all major exhibitors have experts for the trade who can advise on subjects such as slaughtering, processing, packaging, marketing, sales, storage technology, industrial hygiene and IT. In times of a shortage of skilled labour and changing purchasing habits, IFFA is a great source of practical solutions and new ideas, e.g., new robotic solutions that save time, increase sales and reduce the workload of employees. A good example of this is slicing and packaging robots at the service counter that can be controlled via a tablet, and which automatically cut, slice and pack products. The use of artificial intelligence in butcher's shops is also becoming increasingly important. What opportunities and risks are likely to arise from this development, and how can AI help to simplify production processes, optimise office workflows and improve marketing? IFFA is the ideal platform to discuss these trends and see a wide range of machines in operation. And, with the marketplace and the competitions, the German Butchers' Association and GILDE will once again present a varied programme of events in Hall 12.0.

Messe Frankfurt supports the dynamic growth of the food industry with four trade fairs on three continents. The sector gets together at events in Argentina, Thailand, the USA and Germany. Further information at www.food-technologies.messefrankfurt.com.

IFFA

Technology for Meat and Alternative Proteins

The next IFFA will be held from 3 to 8 May 2025.

Information and photographs for the press:

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