

# Food Imports & Production in Jamaica: Implications for Public Health

F Henry  
University of Technology, Jamaica

## FOOD SECURITY IN JAM

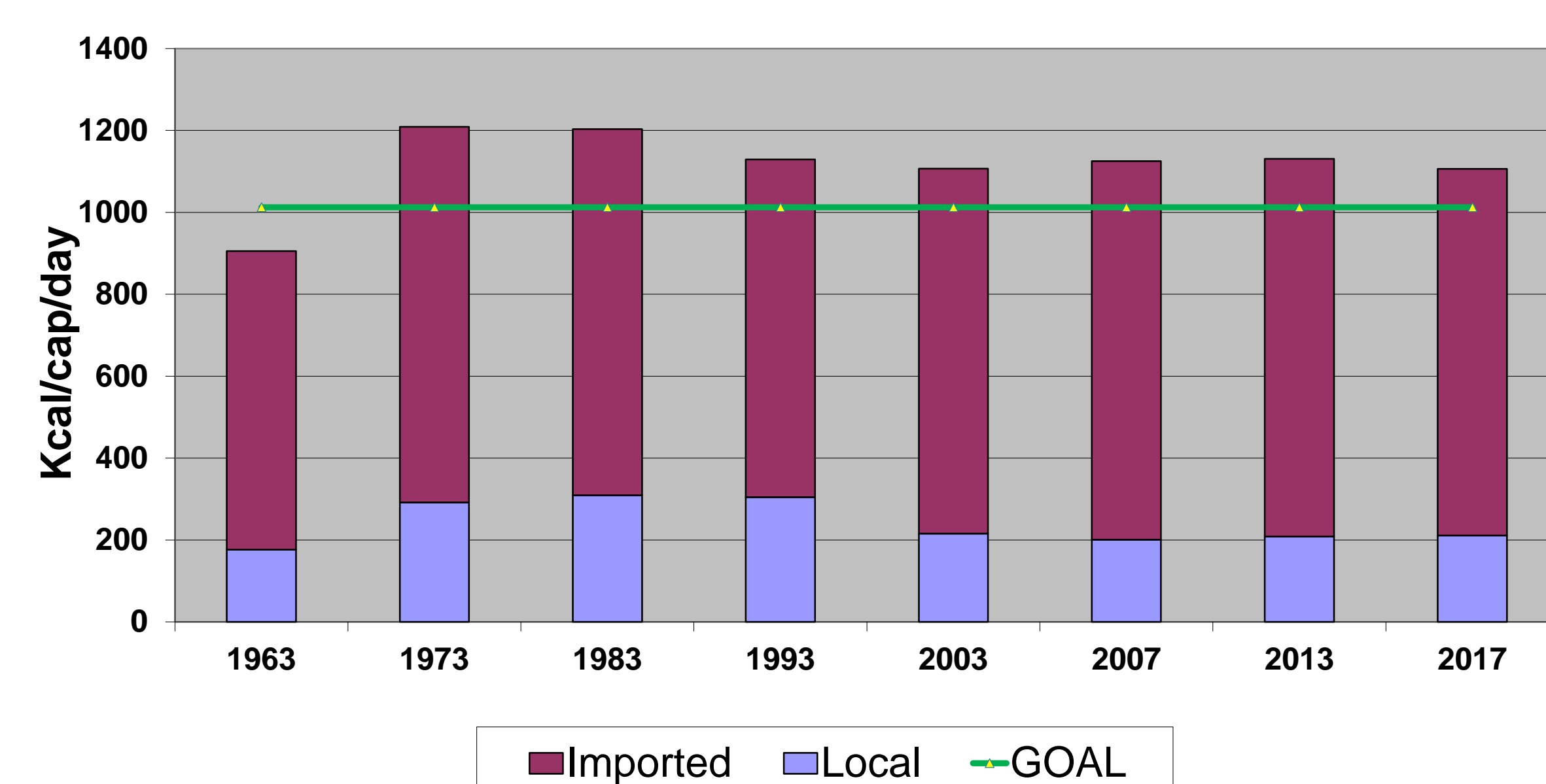
Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

IS JAMAICA FOOD SECURE? In terms of energy intake, per capita, per day – YES. But when this energy intake is broken down by food groups – NO.

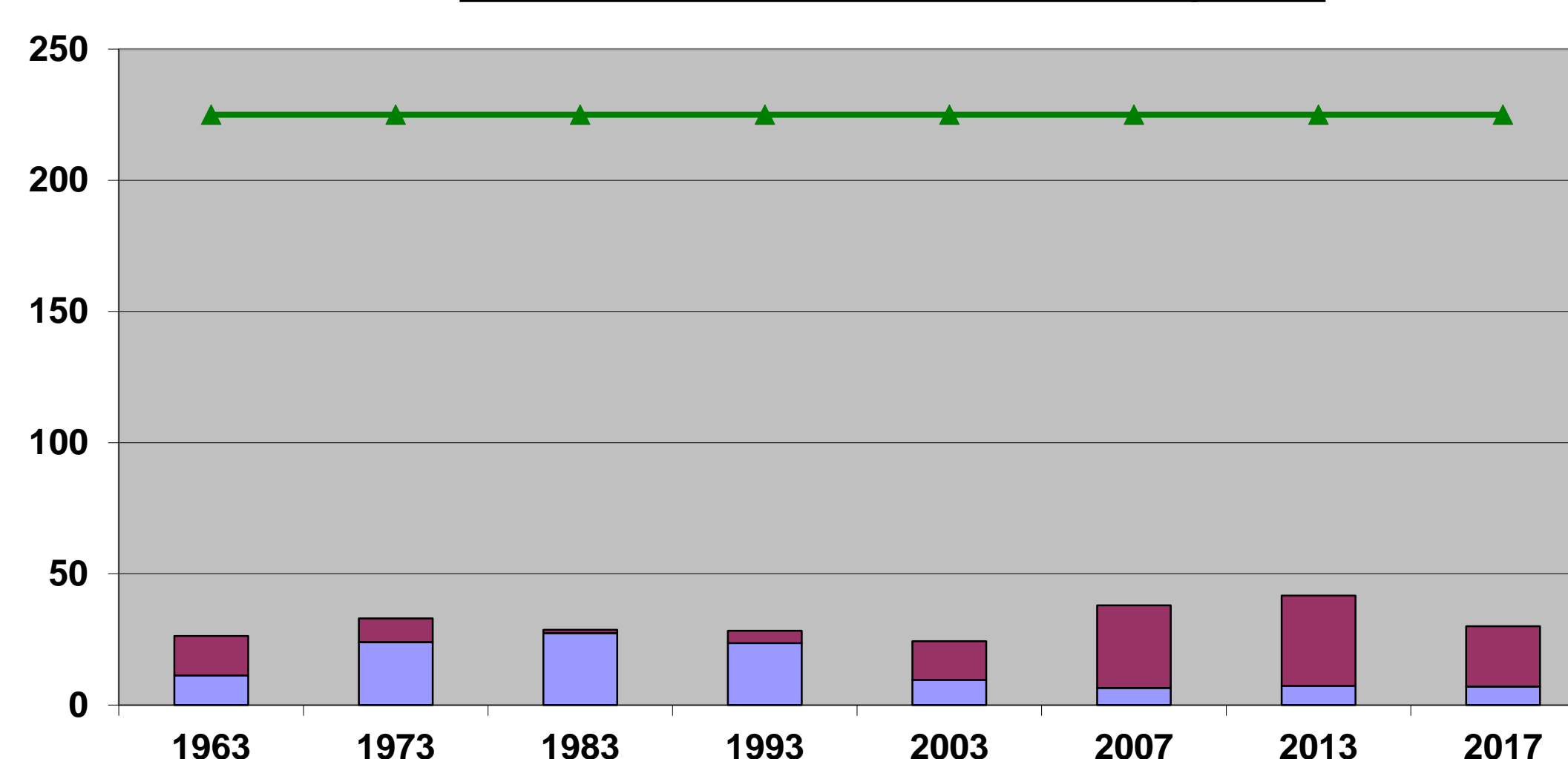
*“...Food Security in the Caribbean is also related to obesity, stroke and heart attacks...”*

Thus, countries agreed in 2011 to a “25 by 25” target: to reduce premature death from 4 main non-communicable diseases – (cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, cancers, and diabetes) by 25% from 2010 levels by the year 2025.

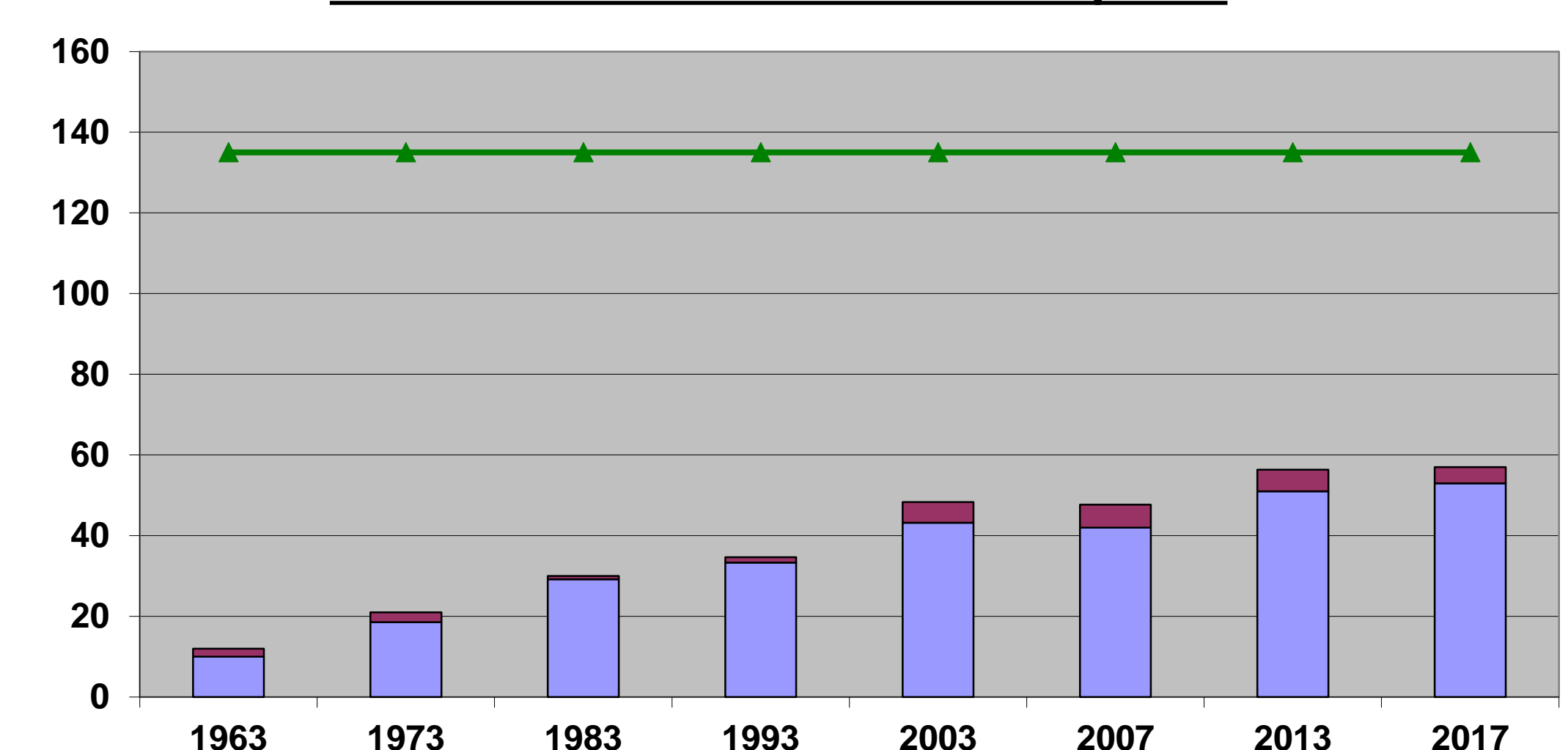
Trends in STAPLES consumption



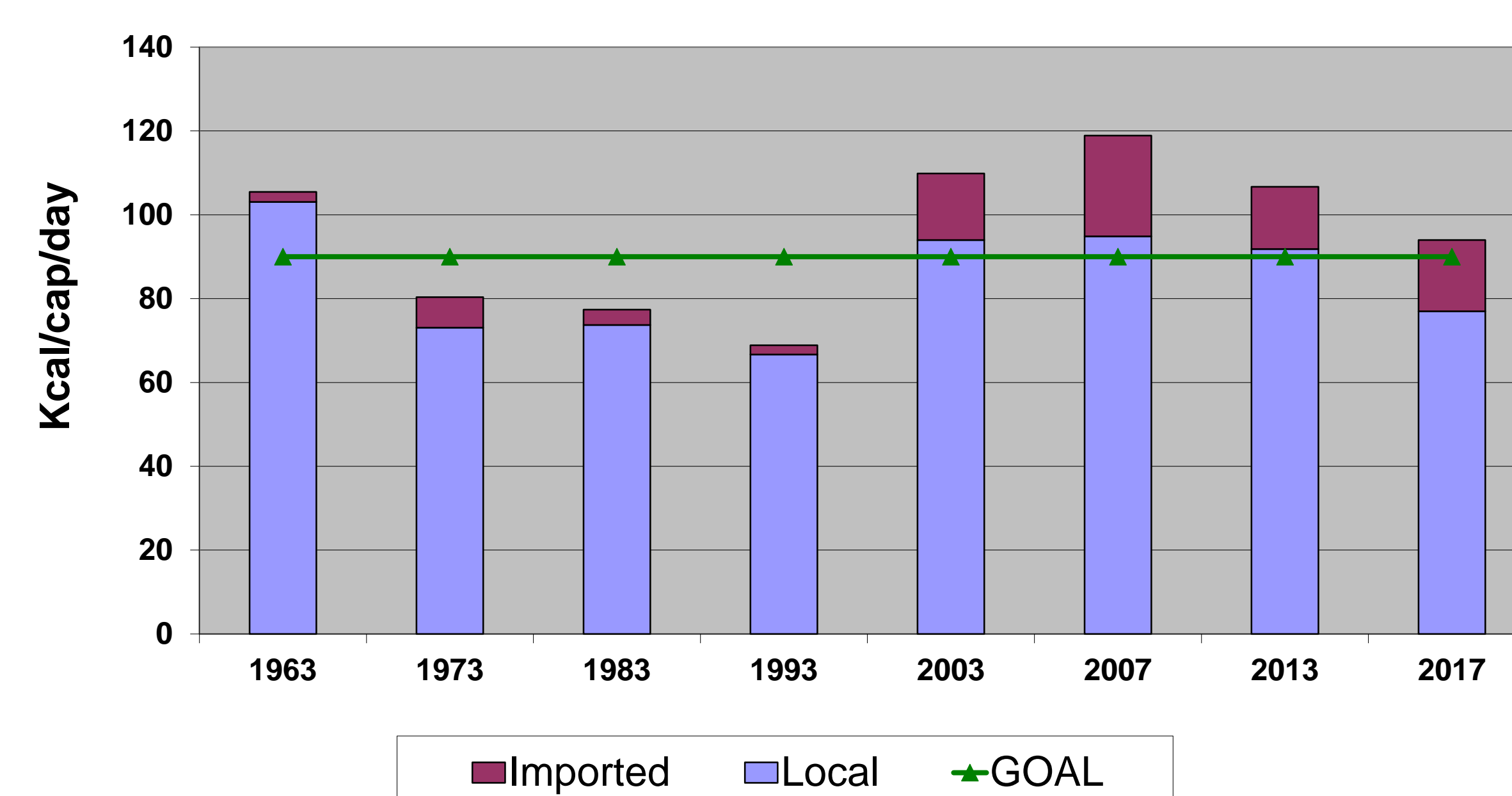
Trends in LEGUMES consumption



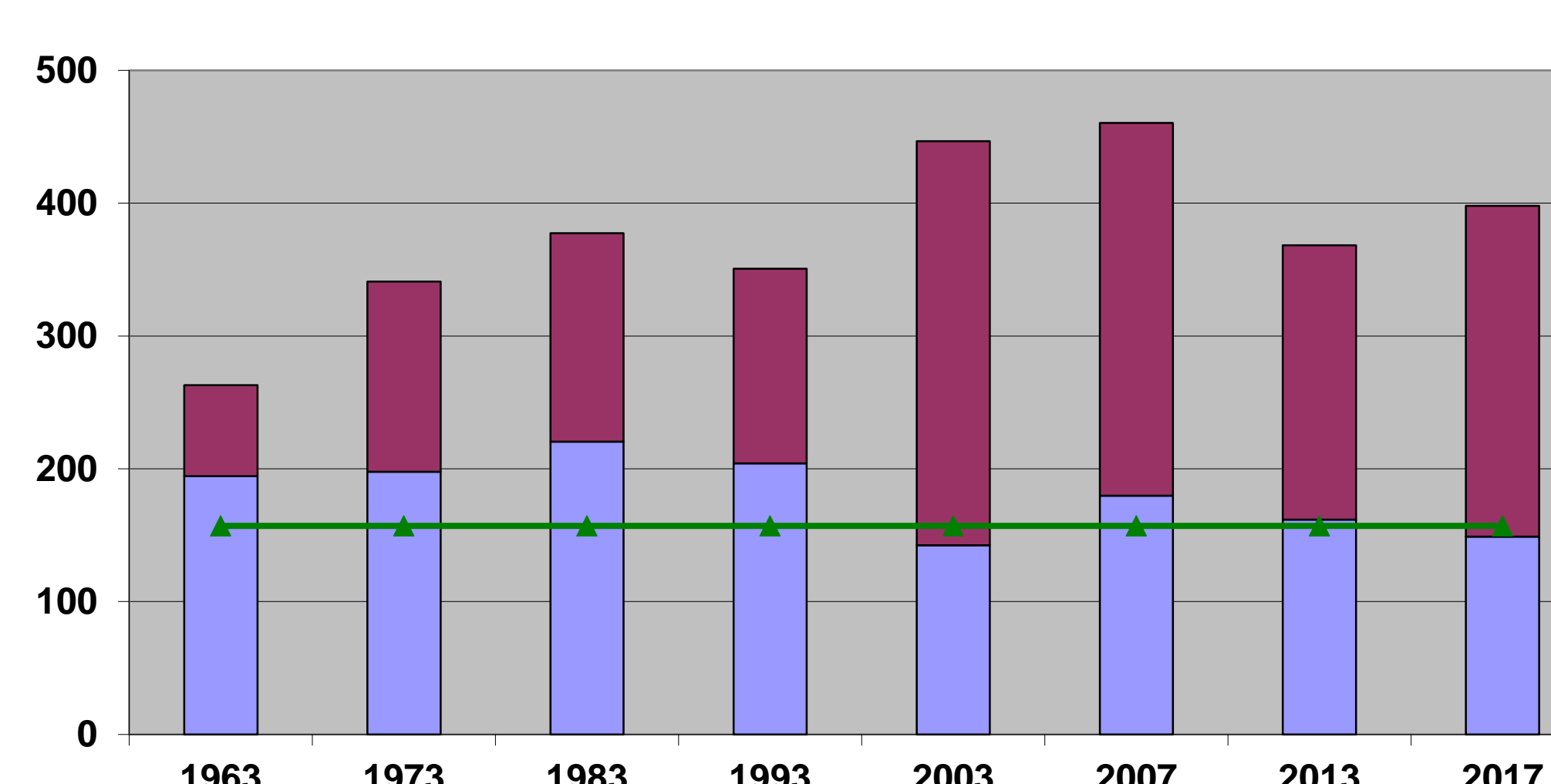
Trends in VEGETABLE consumption



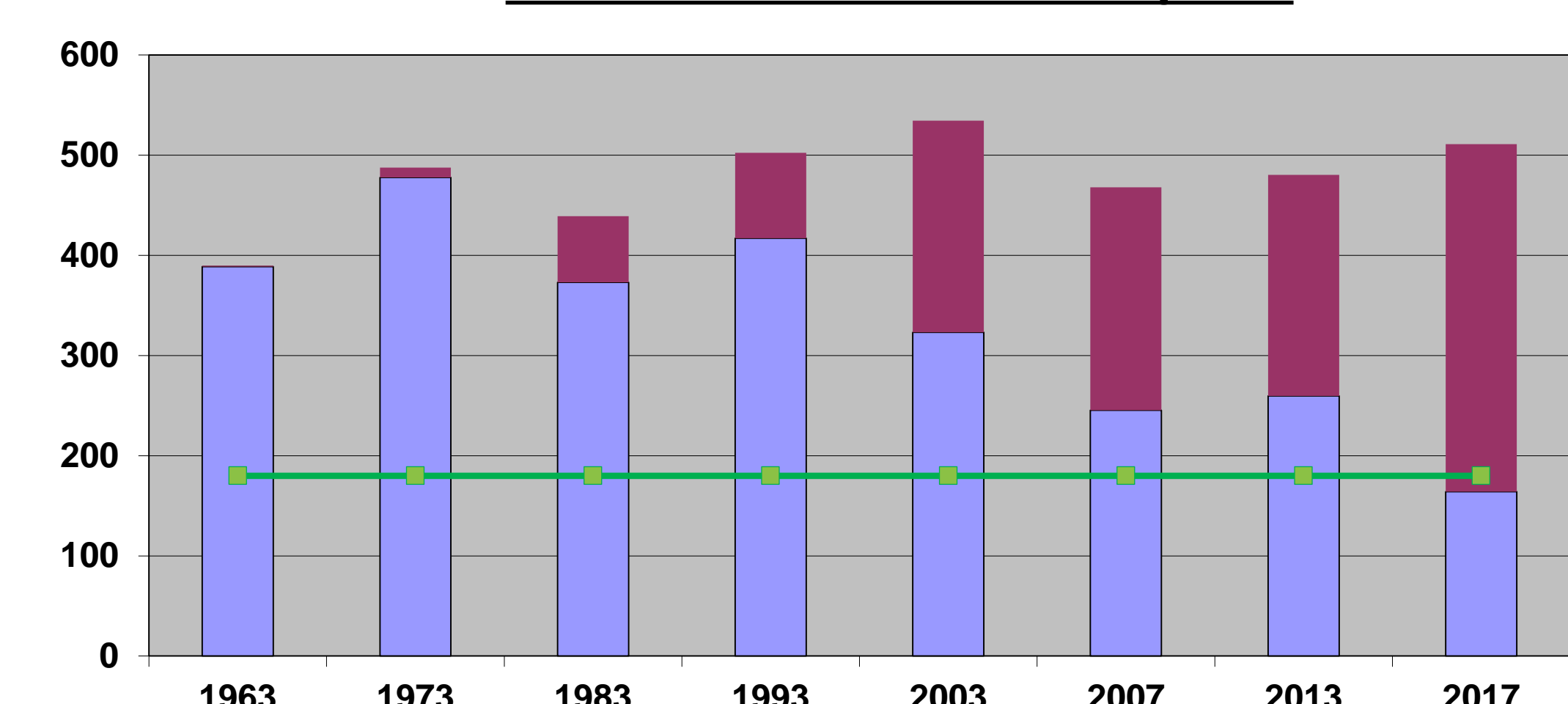
Trends in FRUIT consumption



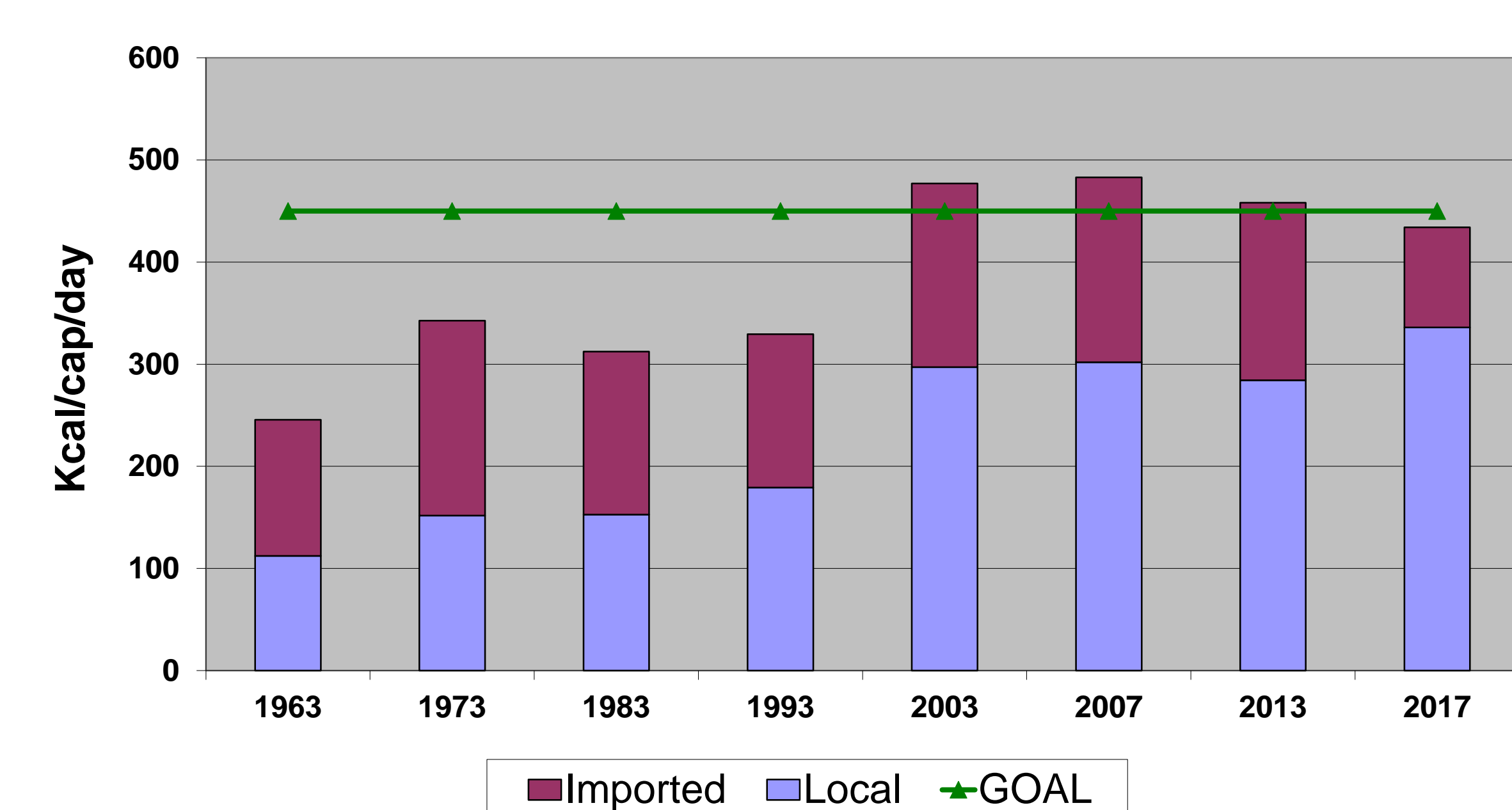
Trends in FAT & OIL consumption



Trends in SUGAR consumption



Trends in FOODS FROM ANIMAL consumption



## FOOD IMPORTS

- Food imports cost USD\$336 per person in SKN in 2019, as compared to USD\$736 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines or USD\$996 in Barbados.
- Imports are dominant in the health-retarding food groups such as sugar, food from animals, and fats and oils, but not in health-promoting food groups such as vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- The supply of both sugars and fats and oils (import and local sources) was more than double the health goal.
- Foods that are more than minimally processed account for 64% of the food imports. More importantly, the dangerous health-retarding ultra-processed foods contributed 20% of the food import bill.
- There is a decline in local food production over several decades.

## KEY QUESTIONS

1. Can Jamaica meet the CARICOM Heads “25 by 25” target?
2. What are the local substitutes for the “unnecessary” imports?
3. What are the replacements for the ultra-processed food imports?

