



Poultry Bulletin

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION



ISSUE 23

DECEMBER 2024 / JANUARY 2025

R60

THE FESTIVE ISSUE

HO HO HO! HEARTY WISHES FOR A HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON!



THE SCIENCE
OF CATCH DAY

THE HERITAGE CHICKENS
THAT CAPTURED A NICHE

KICKING
BACK WITH
CHRIS
SCHUTTE

*An industry
legend bows out*

WHAT THE 3 FRENCH HENS
TOLD THE PARTRIDGE
IN THE PEAR TREE



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Chicken milestones & egg highlights





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WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON? When we talk to poultry farmers they always remind us that the chickens don't care if the schools are out and the beach is calling – the work continues round the clock when you provide the nation's most popular protein... So, to those of you who nod your head at this, we'd like to thank you on behalf of every South African who will braai chicken or fry eggs over the summer holiday. We love your work.

Planning this festive issue we took time to reflect on a year that delivered its fair share of changes and challenges. It was with not without some surprise that we piled up a lekker pile of good-news stories that show that this industry is healthy and doing the right things for a positive future.

Not everyone can take a vacation now, but even if you have to work right through, we wish you a blessed festive season, and that it will be possible to spend some meaningful time with your loved ones.

Enjoy the issue!

Melinda
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HOLDING GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT

OUR MEMBERS NEED NO EXPLANATION of the challenges facing poultry farmers, but those, combined with the unique opportunities of this sector form a complex picture which SAPA sees as a priority to convey to the new government of national unity.

We have had a busy few months on this journey, from a Department of Agriculture briefing session where Minister John Steenhuisen undertook to support the industry, to a follow-up meeting where we provided the facts to empower his department.

Our different corners of the industry give each of us a slightly different perspective on our role as the providers of the country's most affordable animal protein, but having the opportunity to give an overview has reminded me that we also have a responsibility to ensure that the poultry masterplan stays on track.

Last month it was five years since the masterplan was signed to stabilise and grow the poultry sector. The industry achieved all the targets that were set, ensuring that our part of the bargain was kept:

By 2023 the industry had invested R2.1 billion in building, upgrading and expanding production facilities, creating 1 888 jobs. Twenty new black contract growers were established, gaining a material foothold in the industry. These black farmers contributed 19 million broilers to national production, and 1 638 jobs. Of the 920 000 South Africans employed in agriculture 53 000 work in the broiler industry and 66 000 in support industries, comprising 13% of total agri employment. Compare this to the country's unemployment rate that went from 25.5% to 33.5% in these five years, and the role played by this sector to provide jobs is significant.

The same goes when you consider this industry's influence on the gross value of agriculture in 2023: poultry meat was in the number one position, valued at R65.77 billion and representing almost 15% of all agricultural production. The gross value has increased by 38% since 2018.

The combined efforts of the industry have paid off with growth in production levels and in per capita consumption of chicken, which stands at over 10kg more per person per year than any other meat.

Chicken imports have declined since 2019, thanks to trade measures, although by 2023 imports still equalled

21.7% of production.

On the flipside, our highly efficient producers are hampered in their efforts to export poultry due to the lack of state capacity to facilitate the required processes. There is a huge opportunity to export to the EU, UK and the Middle East, which is one area where we hope we can rely on Minister Steenhuisen to speed the processes along.

The other issues that we will continue to discuss with Minister Steenhuisen and his department include VAT-free chicken, compensation for HPAI culling, vaccination against HPAI and the Competition Commission's baseless investigation into the industry. As with the masterplan process, this industry is happy to do its part, and we trust that we can expect the same from government. 📌

Izaak Breitenbach
GM, Broiler Organisation



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LETTERS

We want to hear from you. Send your letters to editor@poultrybulletin.co.za



Congratulations to our cover star on winning a Forty under 40 Award for Agriculture and Agro-Processing

Growth is in the air at MokokaShabangu Farming and Poultry

COVER STAR REACHES OUT

THANK YOU FOR THE LINK to the magazine with my cover story. It was such an awesome start to the week, after a superb weekend in which I won the Forty Under 40 Award for the category Agriculture and Agro-Processing!

Thank you so much for the cover and feature! This greatly contributes to both my personal and business growth, and I truly appreciate the opportunity

afforded to me and my business, and the platform created to inspire other broiler farmers in the country. Thank you for taking an interest in me and my story.

Looking forward to doing more meaningful and greater things together for the betterment and interest of the poultry industry.

Phiwokuhle "Phiwe" Shabangu
MokokaShabangu Farming and Poultry



WORDS FROM A WINNER

THANK YOU FOR MY PRIZE! Who better than a former Rainbow employee to win a copy of *The Rainbow Story*. I was with Rainbow for 40 years, and working for the company was a pleasure under the leadership of Stanley Charles Methven, or SCM as he was known. Working under him you got to be accurate in whatever you did. He would call me from Monaco to make changes to the planning reports and organisation charts so I could have them ready for him on his return.

Besides my duties as production planning manager for the group I attended to his guests whenever required to do so.

He was a great leader who had vision for the future. He really was first among the best.

Raj Moodley



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CONTAINING THE COST-PRICE SQUEEZE

By **John Hudson**

AGRICULTURE IS A GAME of fine margins and input prices tend to increase more rapidly than the price the commodity sells for. This creates a cost-price squeeze as a farm's profit margins are squeezed between fast-growing input costs and producer prices that fluctuate or escalate at a slower rate.

I participated in a panel discussion on this topic at Nampo Cape not long ago and the panel concluded that, while there are certain cost elements beyond the producer's control, such as feed and fuel prices, vaccinations and antibiotics, there are various ways they can optimise their operations to drive business efficiency and profitability. In the poultry industry the importance of biosecurity, reducing mortalities and improving feed-conversion efficiency have long been key focus areas. Access to the latest technology and climate-controlled production houses are all part of the precision farming journey.

The primary purpose of optimisation should be sustained profitability rather than to simply increase yield. There is no point increasing inputs for a high yield while profits remain low. In dealing with margin squeeze many producers go up in size to achieve economies of scale. But scale on its own is not the silver bullet. If your core business is not efficient then growing for the sake of it merely turns a minor problem into a bigger one.

In our experience, the most effective way of optimising operations is to drive efficiency to produce more with less. Two effective ways are by using cutting-edge technology and precision farming in driving productivity gains. Environmental control systems, health-monitoring technologies and data analytics play an increasingly important role in poultry production and offer numerous benefits in mitigating risk, driving business efficiency and achieving sustainability.

Farmers are becoming more tech-savvy and are starting to see the benefits of innovation. Sadly, however, many don't view sustainable farming as an efficiency mechanism that also reduces business and climate risk. Many still see it as a compliance cost as opposed to a benefit, which is unfortunate as carbon taxes and emissions increasingly



become a factor. We've seen sustainable practices be a game changer for clients. The installation of renewable energy, for example, results not only in a reliable supply of energy, but also pegs the cost. The high cost of technology adoption can be a barrier but needs to be evaluated from a risk and a financial sustainability perspective.

As a bank we consider an application for finance from a "total risk" perspective. We don't only consider an applicant's assets and liabilities, we also need to be confident that their business risks, including production and price fluctuations, the impact of extreme weather, exchange-rate volatility, access to markets and global market disruptions are being managed. These factors impact the applicant's ability to repay their debt and to navigate the good with the bad.

As responsible lenders, we at Nedbank drive positive change through our lending and to support clients on their growth journey. After all, without farmers, there is no agricultural sector, so their sustainability and profitability should be everyone's concern. 🌱

John Hudson is the head of agriculture at Nedbank Commercial Banking

NEWS IN BRIEF

Developments on exports, good news for Gauteng egg farmers, and *Salmonella* scrutinised

Compiled by **Charmain Lines**

EGG MASTERPLAN'S FIRST PROJECT HATCHES



With the new grading equipment 600 000 eggs can be graded per day



Dignitaries and farmers attended the opening to celebrate the new facility



Agriculture MEC Vuyiswa Ramokgopa welcomed guests at Shumbaset




THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EGG DEPOTS and/or pack stations in malls and shopping outlets, especially in townships and rural areas, is one of the pillars of the egg masterplan. At the end of September, the much-anticipated first such facility opened its doors on the Gauteng West Rand.

The brainchild of four egg farmers in the area, Shumbaset aggregation egg-packing station provides sorting, grading, packaging and distribution services that comply with the legislated grading and packaging regulations. This gives the participating farmers access to the formal egg market.

Shumbaset was jointly funded and developed by SAPA, the Gauteng

Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (GDARDE) and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) under the auspices of the egg masterplan. The packing station's state-of-the-art grading machine can grade up to 72 000 eggs per hour (600 000 eggs per day).

Despite not being at full working capacity yet, Shumbaset has already created 48 full-time on-site jobs; several more will be created on the participating farms as the new facility's throughput increases. Through its strong logistics arm, the packing station already supplies several well-known formal retail stores in Gauteng. 

ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE UK MARKET



IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2025, THE LOCAL industry will take an important step forward on the chicken export journey when officials from the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) visit South Africa for an audit.

Candice da Silva, export manager at CBH, notes that the audit was initially planned for November 2024 but was postponed. "Our Export Industry Workgroup is working very closely with the National Department of Agriculture (NDOA) on preparations for the UK audit and we are 100% ready. It is very exciting! This is the closest the industry has ever been to getting access to the UK market."

The exact scope of the audit is yet to

be confirmed but NDOA processes will be the focus. In addition, broiler farms, abattoirs and processing plants will be visited, as well as the laboratories that will do the quality-control tests. South Africa's residue plan, which awaits approval, will form part of the audit discussions.

"The approval of our authorities is the first step," notes Da Silva. "However, the way we have applied will allow us to export based on a 'split system', which means full national control is not needed and whichever producer can meet the requirements and registrations will be able to export." While the current application focuses on heat-treated (cooked) products, raw meat remains a possibility. 📧

NEW BLOOD AT ASTRAL



THE ASTRAL BOARD has announced the appointment of current COO Gary Arnold as the new chief executive officer, to take over from Chris Schutte who is retiring at the end of January 2025 (see "In conversation with Chris Schutte" on page 34). Arnold has been at Astral for 28 years, working closely alongside Schutte as part of the senior management team. Says board chairman Theuns Eloff, "Gary has extensive experience and an in-depth understanding of our integrated business model and has been integral in executing the Group's strategy. We are confident that under his leadership Astral will continue to maintain its position as South Africa's leading integrated poultry producer." Arnold will take up his new role on 1 February 2025. Congratulations! 📧

SALMONELLA ON THE AGENDA

QUANTUM FOODS and AssureCloud, a leading food-safety, environmental, veterinary and occupational-hygiene laboratory group in Southern Africa, co-hosted a broiler grower day in Cape Town on 23 October. The event brought together a variety of industry stakeholders to discuss the latest developments and

best practices guiding *Salmonella* prevention and management in the poultry industry. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), an estimated 600 million cases of foodborne illnesses occur annually. *Salmonella* is a leading cause, with poultry eggs and meat primary sources of the pathogen. 📧



At the AssureCloud Broiler Grower Day event: from top left, Kobus Wandrag, Daniel Hall and Mogammad Patel. Bottom from left: Nita Ramlutchman, Michelle Tsamba and Michele Maartens, all from the AssureCloud team

Photographs: Shutterstock

BIRD-FLU WATCH

Wrapping up a year of global vigilance about this poultry killer

Compiled by **Charmain Lines**

H5N1 SHOWS UP IN PIGS



Photographs: Shutterstock, Mahmudul Ratu; Leiterberger Photography

DURING OCTOBER, the first known case of the H5N1 virus in pigs was recorded in the state of Oregon in the US. The infected animal had not shown any symptoms, but was one of five pigs that were proactively tested because of the presence of H5N1 in other animals on the non-

commercial farm.

Genomic sequencing of the H5N1 virus from the poultry infected on the farm has not indicated any changes that would suggest it is more transmissible to humans. This, according to the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories, indicates that

the risk to the public remains low.

Worryingly though, in May this year the principal deputy director of the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said that pigs "are the perfect vessels through which an even more virulent strain of AI could emerge". [📄](#)

HPAI HITS VACCINATED DUCKS IN FRANCE



BY 1 OCTOBER 2024, close to 48 million ducks in France had received at least one dose of the HPAI vaccine under the state-funded vaccination programme that started a year ago, and few outbreaks of the disease were reported. That all changed in the third week of that month when routine testing found infections in two commercial flocks in the northwest of France. The infected ducks had shown no symptoms.

In addition to losing their entire

flocks – 7 500 ducks on the one farm and 30 200 on the other were culled – the movement restrictions that have come into effect prevent farmers from restocking previously depleted flocks. One of the directly impacted farmers was due to receive a new batch of ducks to produce foie gras for the December holiday period.

This development highlights the fact that vaccination is not a silver bullet and that biosecurity even in vaccinated flocks is of the utmost importance. 📌

LIVE-BIRD MARKETS REMAIN AI HOTSPOTS

RESearch using biological data from chickens in a live-bird market in Bangladesh showed that more than 90% of chickens that enter such markets without having been exposed to the H9N2 strain become infected should they remain there for one day.

It also found that the time between a bird being infected and it becoming contagious can be less than five and a half hours, and that one in 10 birds arrive at live markets having already been exposed to the virus.

H9N2 is the most prevalent strain globally and endemic in much of Asia, the Middle East and parts of Africa. While it's low pathogenic it causes significant losses. More importantly, its

circulation with other AI subtypes may lead to reassortment viruses, which is a growing problem.

Researchers are therefore calling for measures that prevent infected birds from being brought to the markets, in addition to existing measures that seek to limit in-market transmissions. 📌



COULD GENETIC ENGINEERING BE THE SOLUTION?



EFFORTS TO PREVENT HPAI have taken a turn for the futuristic with the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) establishing and funding a new animal and veterinary innovation centre with an eye to breeding influenza-resistant chickens.

Based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM), the centre is part of a newly launched FDA programme that aims to address emerging health threats with new technologies and products.

Peter Halfmann, a research associate professor of veterinary medicine at UWM, believes that if researchers can identify the correct genetic targets, it should be possible to create a breed of chickens with broad resistance to AI viruses.

Gene editing is not a new technology but identifying which genes to modify to confer disease resistance is complicated. The centre hopes to have the first live, potentially resistant chicken ready for testing within the next two years.

"Once we've proven that the genetically modified chickens are healthy and resistant to HPAI, the cost to produce them at scale should be similar to breeding other animals," Halfmann says. 📌

MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

The latest poultry industry intel disseminated to members, here collected for easy reference

Compiled by **Michael Acott**



AN EGG-CEPTIONAL CELEBRATION!

EGGs TOOK CENTRE STAGE AT THE 35TH birthday of the Galliova Awards, which was celebrated at a gala lunch in Cape Town in October. The annual celebration of South Africa's best foodie and health media was hosted by SAPA's Egg Organisation at Utopia Dining Elevated, high above the Mother City with expansive views of Table Mountain, the harbour and the Green Point Stadium. Guests were treated to a magnificent seven-course luncheon that included a creative nod to eggs with every beautifully presented plate.

One of the courses was a modern take on the old-school pub favourite steak, egg and chips, with the "egg" crafted from puréed carrot for the yolk and a bechamel sauce for the egg white, presented in a little basket moulded from grated potato and deep-fried (the "chips"). Even the delicious lemon meringue pie that rounded off the lunch came with two "eggs" shaped from lemon curd perched on top of the chewy meringue... truly a feast for the eyes as well as the palate.

But the main attraction was of course the awards, and SAPA Egg Organisation chairman Colin Steenhuisen did the honours, presenting

this year's accolades to the deserving winners in each category.

The highly anticipated Galliova Food Writer of the Year was awarded to Christi Nortier, while the 2024 Food Stylist of the Year award went to Herman Lensing.

Lydia van der Merwe was announced as this year's Galliova

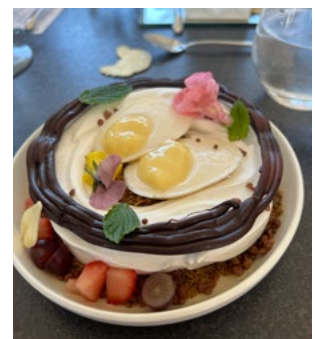
Health Writer of the Year, and Vickie de Beer was awarded the title of Galliova Egg Champion for 2024.

This year's Galliova Chicken Champion winner was Johané Neilson, and Sam Linsell was named 2024 Galliova Digital Content Creator of the Year.

The newest awards category, now only in its second year, is that of the



Each of the seven courses celebrated the glory of the egg in a creative way



Galliova Egg Hero, which this year was won by Sinoyolo Sifo. The Egg Hero honours writers who make eggs the hero while highlighting the affordability of their recipes.

The final award of the day was the prestigious Galliova Champion Award, which went to Sam Linsell. The award goes to someone who is also a category winner, and honours its winner for their overall promotion of locally produced poultry products as well as for excellence in promoting food culture, food writing, visual appeal and food styling.

Celebrity chef and cookbook author Jenny Morris was the MC for the day, and reflected on the Galliova Awards' 35th anniversary.

"To match the theme, the décor today is in shades of jade and emerald, the stone and gemstone that symbolise the 35-year milestone anniversary, and are associated with many delightful beliefs ranging from new beginnings

to good luck and wellbeing," she said. "The Galliova Awards is a gathering of some of the finest food and health writers who do a sterling job promoting South Africa's food culture."

Marthinus Stander, Broiler and SAPA Board member and CEO of Rainbow, thanked the judges, who spent many hours poring over the entries received. This year's judges were Marco Torsius, Jake Mkwene, Prof Marthinette Stretch, Dr Monique Piderit, Zola Nene, Barbara Joubert and Margie Els-Burger.

Stander also thanked the food and health media who have entered the awards over the past 35 years, recognising their work in promoting the local food culture and South African poultry products.

A special welcome was extended to past Galliova Award winners who were in attendance as well as Ina Paarman, who won a Galliova Award in 1995 and sat on the judging panel in 2014.



Winners! Johané Neilson, Herman Lensing, Christi Nortier and Sam Linsell



Izaak Breitenbach and Louisa Nel



Achat Brinkhuis chats to Aziz Sulliman

Marco Torsius paid tribute to three late Galliova judges, namely Peter Veldsman, Dorah Sitole and Lesego Semanya, acknowledging the roles they variously played in the history of the awards.

Finally, Graham Cornelissen of BVA Auditing & Assurance was thanked for his contribution to this year's awards. He attended the online judging session to review the scores and confirm that the evaluation criteria had been applied consistently and in accordance with the guidelines provided for all award categories, ensuring a fair and equitable scoring and judging process.

The Galliova Awards honour excellence in local food and health writing as well as the overall promotion of South African food. The awards are traditionally held the week after World Egg Day, which is marked annually around the globe on the second Friday of October. 🇷🇵



Colin Steenhuisen with Egg Champion winner Sam Tinsell



Ina Paarman and Marthinus Stander

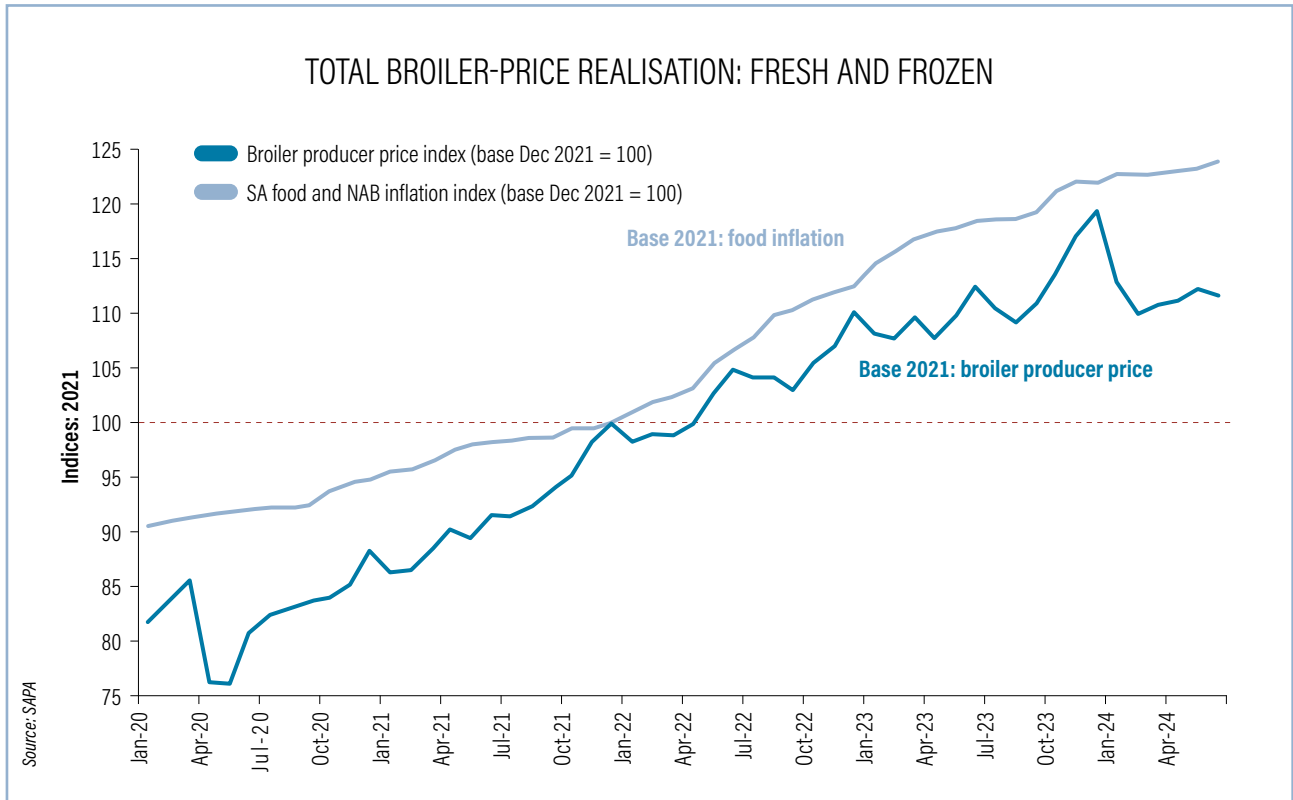


Colin Steenhuisen and Dr Abongile Balarane



Chris Mason and judge Prof Marthinette Stretch

GOOD NEWS AT LAST FOR SA POULTRY



THIS YEAR HAS SEEN POSITIVE developments in multiple factors affecting South Africa's poultry industry.

These are celebrated in commentary in SAPA's key-market signals report for the quarter to June 2024.

"In servicing the poultry industry, we are almost never able to report several pieces of positive market news in a single quarter, but over the past few months the rand has strengthened; electricity supply has improved; fuel prices have dropped; food-price inflation is cooling; the winter months remained HPAI-free; imports are still constrained by avian influenza in other

countries; El Niño is giving way to La Niña; interest rates look set to start dropping; grain prices have tempered a little; and the Government of National Unity may actually shake up service delivery in a number of important sectors. Even the rumoured shortage of potatoes has been debunked by Potatoes SA.

"Of course, it's not all roses out there – but it makes a change to have some good news to report," readers were told.

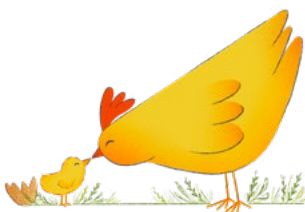
The report noted that high feed prices had put poultry producers under enormous pressure in 2022 because feed costs could not be recovered in chicken sales. Feed prices had dropped from mid-2023. In the first half of 2024,

the year-on-year increases of both feed and broiler producer prices had tracked downwards, with producer prices "remaining (just) in positive territory".

Broiler producer prices had dropped sharply in the first quarter of 2024 because of oversupply as production recovered after the 2023 bird-flu outbreaks. Prices improved slightly in the second quarter.

It also noted that chicken price increases had been consistently below the food-inflation rate for the past five years.

Chicken meat had contributed less to food-price inflation than dairy products, eggs, cereals, oils, vegetables and fish, the report said. 📄



Cull-trade sales top a million again

SOUTH AFRICA'S CULL TRADE – the sale of live chickens from poultry farms – has risen above a million birds per quarter for the first time since the end of 2022.

The chickens are intended for the informal market, and the cull trade is a feature of the South African poultry business. Older birds are sold live off farms to traders who distribute them in townships across the country.

Since the country's first bird-flu outbreak in 2017, the cull trade has been regulated because of the risks when live birds are transported.

The number of birds traded fell dramatically last year following the country's worst outbreak of bird flu. Cull trade sales reached 1.8 million in the last quarter of 2022, but dropped to 454 000 a year later.

Sales have recovered this year, from 562 000 birds in the first quarter to 935 000 in the second quarter and then 1.2 million in the third quarter. ▶

RECONCILIATION OF TRADER STATISTICS

Province	Chickens at start	Chickens bought	Chickens sold	Chickens remaining	Number of deaths
Eastern Cape	0	315 146	312 132	3	3 011
Free State	50	20 207	20 186	0	71
Gauteng	600	373 576	364 764	4 002	5 410
KwaZulu-Natal	112 400	317 369	429 391	0	378
Limpopo	0	26 525	26 280	55	190
Mpumalanga	0	6 574	6 413	0	161
North West	0	38 615	38 489	0	126
Northern Cape	0	0	0	0	0
Western Cape	869	32 553	28 732	4 453	237
Total	113 919	1 130 565	1 226 387	8 513	9 584

Source: SAPA



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A national flock of 167 million chickens

SOUTH AFRICA HAD 167 MILLION chickens on 973 broiler and egg farms in the quarter to September this year, according to SAPA's latest provincial distribution report.

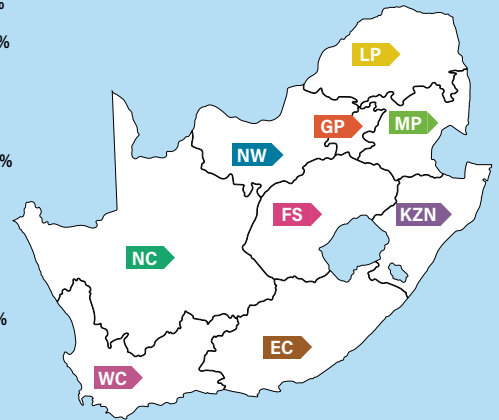
The report is compiled from information provided during SAPA's regular bird-flu surveys. The total flock comprises 137 million broiler chickens and 30.3 million layer birds.

North West province dominates, with the most birds (36.6 million) and the most broiler chickens (33.1 million). Mpumalanga is second, with 29.6 million birds, of which 27.2 million are broiler chickens. The most egg-industry birds are in Gauteng (7.4 million).

Most of the farms on SAPA's database are the 685 classified as large commercial farmers – with more than 40 000 broiler chickens or more than 50 000 egg layers. There are also 231 small commercial farmers. While 57 subsistence farmers take part in SAPA's statistical surveys, this is not an accurate representation of the total number in South Africa.

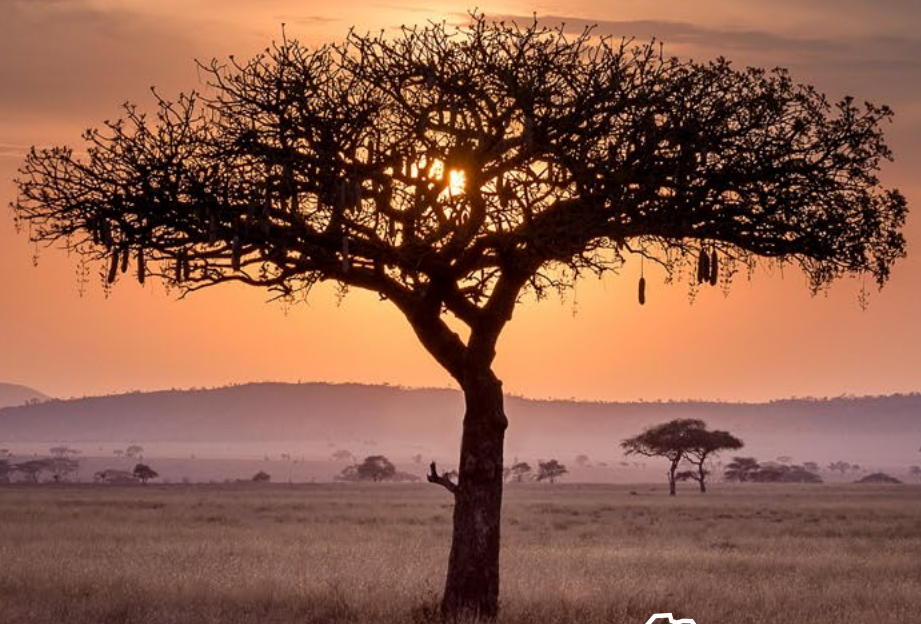
PROVINCIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE NATIONAL CHICKEN FLOCK

- NC** Northern Cape: 0.2%
- WC** Western Cape: 13.7%
- EC** Eastern Cape: 5.5%
- NW** North West: 21.9%
- KZN** KwaZulu-Natal: 8.7%
- LP** Limpopo: 4.2%
- GP** Gauteng: 14.0%
- FS** Free State: 11.0%
- MP** Mpumalanga: 17.7%



Source: SAPA

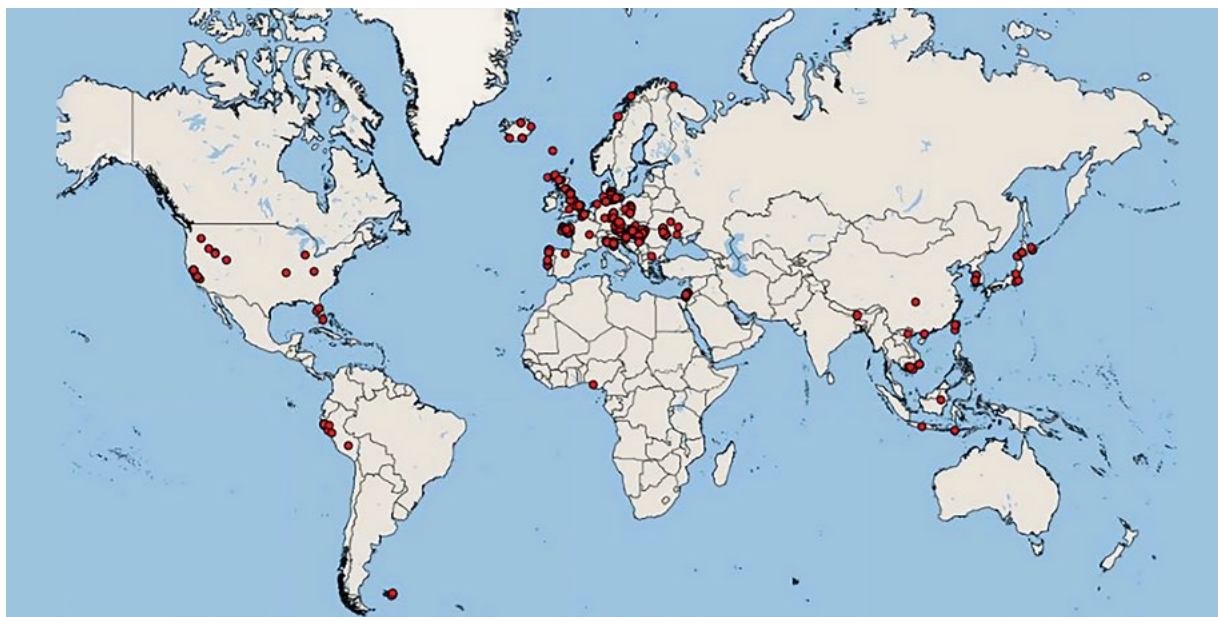
Feeding growth in Africa.



VACCINATION SUCCESS RAISES TRADE ISSUES



GLOBAL MAP SHOWING REPORTED CASES OF HPAI (AUGUST - OCTOBER 2024)



Source: SAPA, FAO

VACCINATION AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA has been largely successful, but it is expensive and is proving a barrier to the export of poultry meat.

The international experience and thinking on vaccination are set out in SAPA's avian influenza quarterly report to September 2024.

France is the big testing ground, as it is the only country to have embarked on a large-scale vaccination campaign, so far limited to ducks. China, Vietnam and Indonesia have started vaccination programmes, as have some countries in South America.

Europe and the United States are not yet ready for the vaccination of commercial chicken flocks.

France has vaccinated more than 30 million ducks since October 2023,

with some birds receiving two and even three vaccinations. The programme has been extended for another year.

"The vaccination and monitoring protocol was very strict and very expensive – the state paid 85% of the costs of monitoring in vaccinated flocks," the report states.

"The programme appears to have been very successful with only 10 outbreaks reported during 2023 and 2024. The trial took place at a time when outbreaks generally were decreasing so the impact is not entirely clear." Subsequently, more issues occurred (also read "Bird-Flu Watch", page 13).

China claims its vaccination programmes have had a high level of success. Experiences in South America

vary "but it appears that vaccination has limited the spread of HPAI into commercial poultry flocks," SAPA says.

However, vaccinations have raised trade issues. Various countries, including the US and Japan, placed trade restrictions on imports from France. A recent international meeting focused on the surveillance required to ensure that vaccinated flocks do not become infected after vaccination without being detected.

"This is important to allow the sale (possibly also the export) of poultry and poultry products from vaccinated flocks and countries."

The report said countries that do not export poultry products and have limited state resources are giving vaccination "serious consideration".

Rising production shows industry recovery

CHICKEN PRODUCTION INCREASED steadily in the first seven months of the year as the industry recovered from the ravages of the 2023 bird-flu outbreaks.

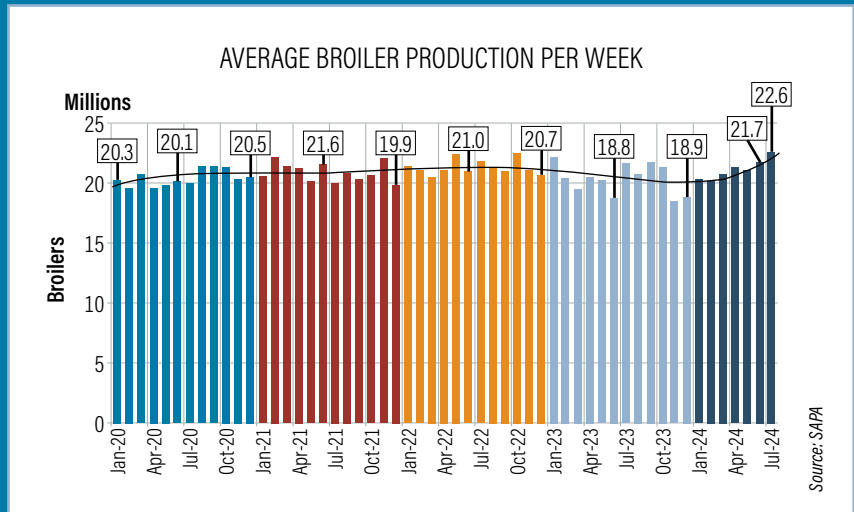
Broiler production increased from 18.9 million birds per week in December 2023 to 22.6 million birds per week in July. The increase is detailed in SAPA's broiler industry production report for July 2024.

After dropping by 4.4% in 2023, production rose by 3.8% from January to July. Monthly production was 3.9% higher than June, and 4.4% above July 2023.

Total chicken consumption, including imports, rose to 194 620 tons in July, bringing the seven-month total to just over a million tons.

Imports of chicken meat in the seven months to July totalled 242 633 tons. This equated 23% of domestic

production and accounted for 19.1% of domestic chicken consumption in that period, SAPA said.



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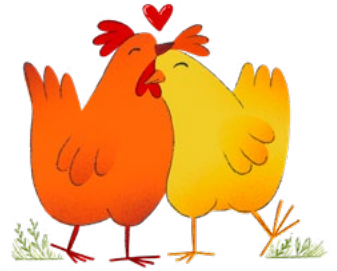
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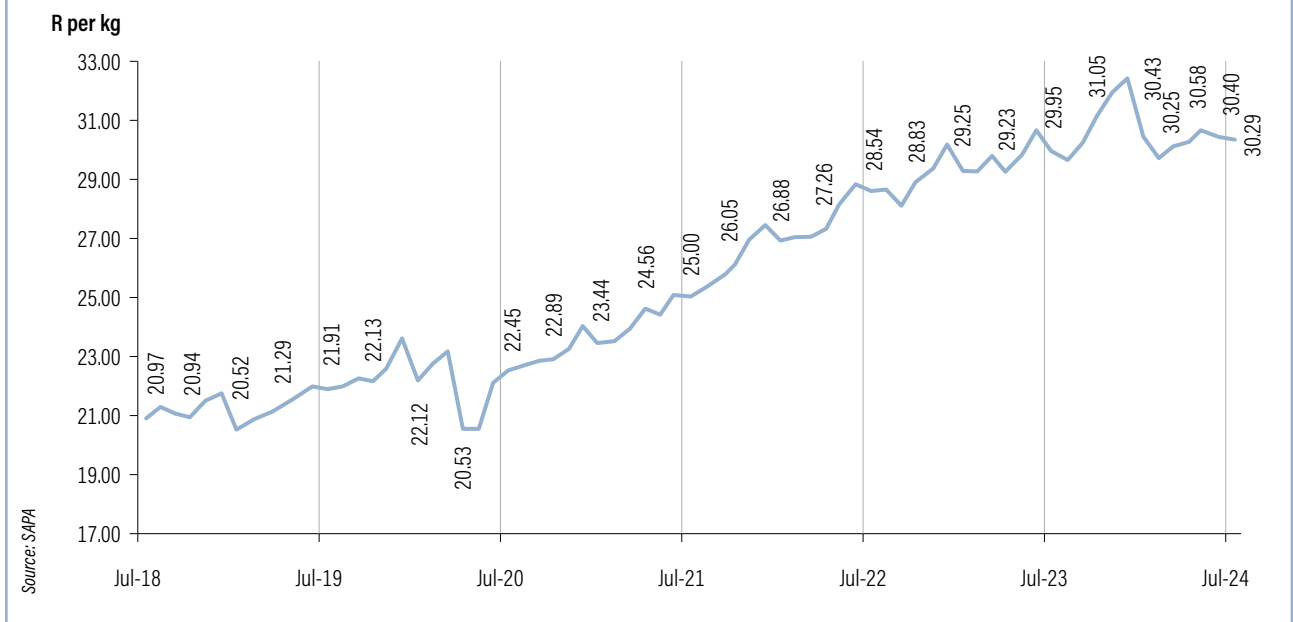
Product Recommendation	Disinfection after proper cleaning	Foot Dips	Terminal Disinfection / Fogging	Spraying over birds & Drinking water treatment	Vehicle Disinfections
FP Glut	✓	✓	✓		
FP Ultra	✓	✓	✓		
San 31			✓		✓
Glut San	✓	✓	✓		
Megacide	✓	✓	✓		
San Quat		✓	✓		✓
Virukill	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

** All the above-mentioned products were tested for virucidal efficacy against Avian Influenza virus

SLOW RISE IN PRODUCER PRICES



TOTAL BROILER-PRICE REALISATION: FRESH AND FROZEN



PRODUCER PRICES FOR CHICKEN dropped sharply at the start of 2024 and remained at lower levels for the first seven months of this year.

SAPA's broiler industry production price report for July 2024 showed that the average producer price, including both fresh and frozen chicken, reached R31.65/kg in July after dropping to R31.30/kg in February from a high of R33.98/kg in December 2023.

However, the average for the first seven months of the year was R31.72/kg, a few cents ahead of the

R31.70/kg average price for the whole of 2023.

Frozen chicken (86% of production) averaged R30.29/kg at producer level in July, 10c/kg lower than the previous month but 34c/kg higher than in July 2023.

Fresh chicken (14% of production) averaged R40.03/kg in July, 25c/kg higher than June and 9c/kg above the previous year.

Individually quick frozen (IQF) portions averaged R30.13/kg in July, 22c/kg below June but 71c/kg higher than July 2023.

IQF comprised 44.5% of production

volume in the second quarter of this year. This was the largest of the frozen products that dominated chicken production. Others included frozen cuts (15.1%), frozen sundries/bones (13.6%) and frozen value-added (5.6%).

The largest fresh-chicken component was fresh cuts (7.1%), followed by fresh whole (5.4%) and fresh value-added (1.8%).

Most sales (41.7%) went to retail, followed by wholesale (39.1%) and food service (15.6%). Exports accounted for 1.1% of production in the second quarter, with institutions accounting for a further 1%. 



High input costs drive small farmers out of business

A SAPA SURVEY HAS REVEALED that a significant number of small-scale poultry farmers stopped operations in the first half of this year.

Of the 699 farmers interviewed, 283 had stopped farming. Most of the closures were temporary, and farmers intend to resume operations, according to the survey of subsistence and small-scale farmers on SAPA's database.

Subsistence broiler farmers are those with fewer than 1 500 birds per cycle, while small commercial farmers have up to 40 000 birds per cycle. In the egg industry, a subsistence farmer has up to 500 hens, while a small commercial farmer has up to 50 000 birds.

The reasons given included high feed costs, hot weather, the impact of

avian influenza and the cost of replacing stock, and problems with electricity and water supplies. Another difficulty

for small-scale farmers is the long distances they must travel to buy eggs, chicks and feed. 📄

SURVEY RESULTS FOR 1H2024

Interview responses	2023		1H2024			
	Farmers interviewed:	Farmers interviewed:	* No. of complete questionnaires	No. of farmers who resumed farming	No. of unreachable farmers	No. of farmers who stopped farming
Broiler farmers	373	374	272	25	117	102
Egg farmers	153	286	114	6	66	172
Contract growers	18	19	17	1	5	2
Hatcheries	10	11	5	2	8	6
Abattoirs	10	9	8	0	3	1
TOTAL	564	699	416	34	199	283

* Includes number of farmers who resumed farming

Source: SAPA



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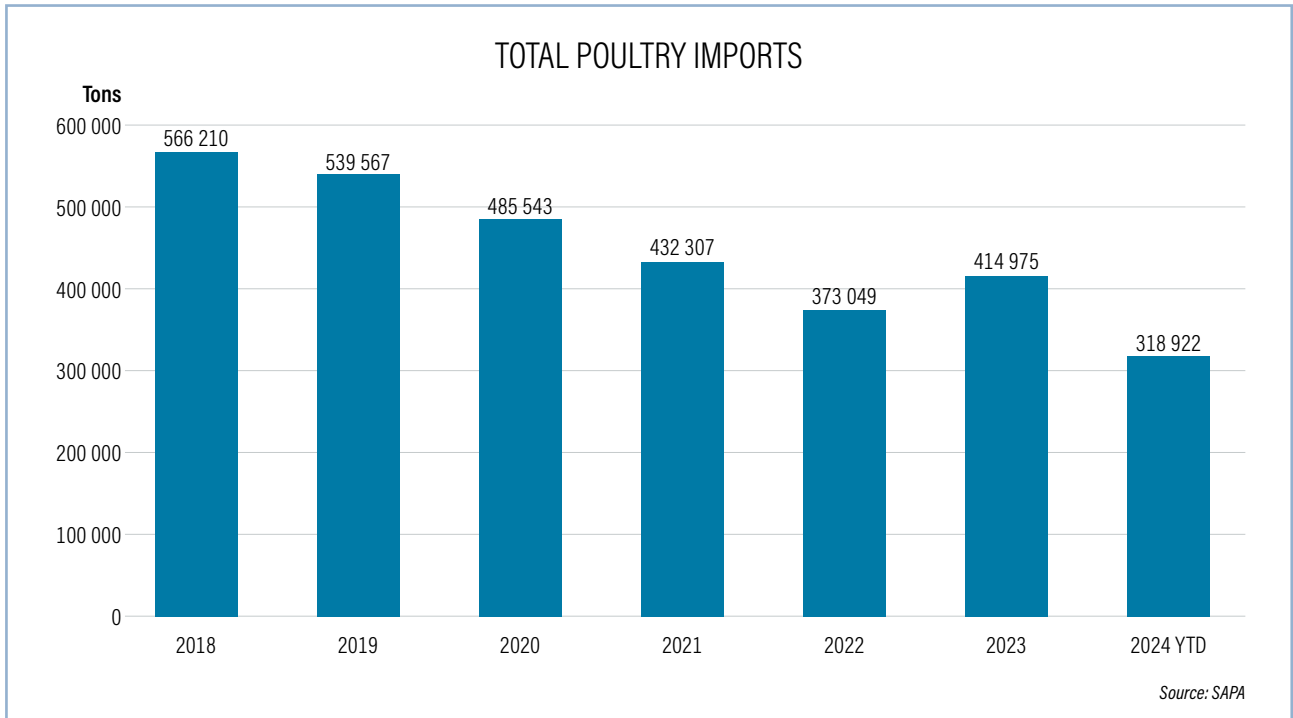
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CHICKEN IMPORTS RISE AND DROP IN 2024



AFTER A MID-YEAR SPIKE, chicken imports declined in the third quarter of 2024, and the total for the first nine months is slightly below the same period in the previous year.

Chicken imports have dropped steadily since the 2018 peak, when the South African poultry industry faced an incoming deluge, particularly of frozen bone-in portions such as leg quarters.

That decline reversed in 2023, which saw the first increase in poultry imports in five years. SAPA's imports reports for September 2024 show that another annual increase may not happen.

Chicken imports were down to 29 500 tons in September, nearly 5 000 tons lower than August.

Totals dropped in both August (-2%) and September (-14%). The high-volume categories of mechanically deboned meat (MDM) and offal declined by 7% and 31% respectively in September. These two categories accounted for 89% of all chicken imports that month.

Also notable was a further drop in imports of bone-in portions. The volume was down to 1 678 tons, 37% lower than the previous month and way below the 13 628 tons imported in September 2021. Bone-in portions, which were once a substantial imports category, comprised just under 6% of September's chicken imports.

While bone-in imports may hit a

record low this year, offal volumes are going the other way. Offal import volumes have increased substantially over the past five years, doubling from 43 000 tons in 2017 to 86 000 tons in 2023. They are heading even higher in 2024.

Brazil is by far the biggest supplier of South Africa's chicken imports – 82% in September, far ahead of the European Union (13%) and Argentina (2.5%). Brazil is also the only supplier country so far free of bird flu, while the US and Europe have been hit hard. 📌

A LEGACY OF GOODNESS

IN NELSON MANDELA BAY

Since its establishment in 1948, Sovereign has become one of South Africa's leading poultry producers, dedicated to delivering high-quality products and pioneering innovation in the industry. With its operations deeply rooted in the Eastern Cape, Sovereign has not only established itself as a significant economic player in Kariega but has also left a lasting impact on its community.

A Commitment to Quality and Innovation

At the core of Sovereign is a commitment to quality. Their fully integrated production process, from farm to fork, ensures that every product maintains the highest standards of safety, nutritional value, and taste. According to Blaine Nell, Group Commercial Manager, "Sovereign's quality is superior. Our packaging is unique and eye-catching, making us stand out. When people experience our product, they keep coming back because of its quality and our fantastic customer service."

Innovation is a cornerstone of Sovereign's strategy, driving their ability to stay ahead of the curve. Blaine Nell highlights this, stating, "Sovereign is the most innovative poultry integrator in South Africa, if not in the world. Our innovation allows us to offer unique solutions to our customers, even in the global market, where we compete with some of the largest producers."



Living Up to the Promise of "Goodness"

Sovereign's slogan, "Full of Goodness," is more than just a tagline; it's a philosophy that permeates everything they do. From their high-quality products to their nurturing workplace culture, Sovereign delivers on its promise of goodness to its customers, employees, and the broader community. Johannes Thompson, a Shift Leader at the factory, emphasises this, saying, "Full of goodness—that's what we represent. We produce quality products and do epic business with all our customers." The company's dedication to its staff is evident in the training and development opportunities provided to employees, helping them grow both personally and professionally. As Logan Hancocks, a Product Development Technologist, puts it, "At Sovereign, there is always a solution. We're constantly learning and finding innovative ways to overcome challenges. It's an environment that fosters growth and resilience."



A Vision for the Future

Sovereign continues to set its sights on expansion and innovation. The staff's passion and commitment drive the company towards its goal of becoming the number one poultry integrator in South Africa and establishing a strong global presence. "I want Sovereign to be the number one South African player in the world," says Blaine Nell, expressing the ambitions shared by many within the company.

Sovereign stands as a beacon of quality, innovation, and community impact in the Nelson Mandela Bay area. Through their commitment to excellence and their dedication to uplifting both their employees and the community, they truly embody their promise of delivering "goodness" in every aspect of their business.



SovereignTM
FULL OF GOODNESS

Maize gets more expensive

SOUTH AFRICAN MAIZE PRICES are rising following a poor harvest, but sunflower oilcake and soya meal should be cheaper in January.

This is the forecast in SAPA's feed ingredient report for September 2024, with an outlook to January 2025.

The report notes that, while the United States is heading for a record maize harvest and Brazil will have a bumper crop, South Africa's harvest was insufficient for local needs, and imports are taking place.

Positive factors are that the oil price has been dropping, and the rand is strengthening.

The feed-ingredient forecast for January 2025 is for higher maize prices – R4 344 per ton in Randfontein and R4 494/t in Pietermaritzburg, more than 18% above January 2024.

The forecast for sunflower oilcake is R6 450/t at both centres, down 5.1% annually. Soya meal is expected to sell for R8 850/t in Randfontein (+0.1%) and R8 915 in Pietermaritzburg (-1.4%).

FORECASTED FEED INGREDIENT PRICES: JANUARY 2025

Feed ingredient	Randfontein		Pietermaritzburg	
	Price (R/ton)	y/y** % change	Price (R/ton)	y/y** % change
Yellow maize	4 344	18.9	4 494	18.2
Sunflower oilcake	6 450	-5.1	6 450	-5.1
Soya meal	8 850	0.1	8 915	-1.4

** January 2025 compared to January 2024

Source: SAPA



The South African Poultry Association wishes all of our our members, associate members, partners and suppliers a blessed festive season. Thank you for your support during 2024!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

South Africa's seventh administration, fondly called the **GNU**, brought new faces into our orbit this year.

Three departments that impact our industry have new ministers.

John Steenhuizen is our new minister of Agriculture, Trade, Industry and Competition is headed by Parks Tau, and Mzwanele Nyhontsho takes over Land Reform and Rural Development.

New faces herald new hopes for the future, and SAPA anticipates beneficial collaboration with the new team. There are certainly many questions that need answering.

Also read "From the Boardroom" (page 5).



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RAINBOW LISTS ON THE JSE

In June Rainbow listed on the stock exchange on a day of great celebration after unbundling from RCL, with a debut-day valuation of R3.2bn. The 890.3 million shares traded at R3.60 apiece on Day 1 and after the expected early volatility the share price has settled. Six months down the line CEO **Marthinus Stander** says the company is on track with strategy as planned, with a dedicated focus on basics within the science of growing chickens.

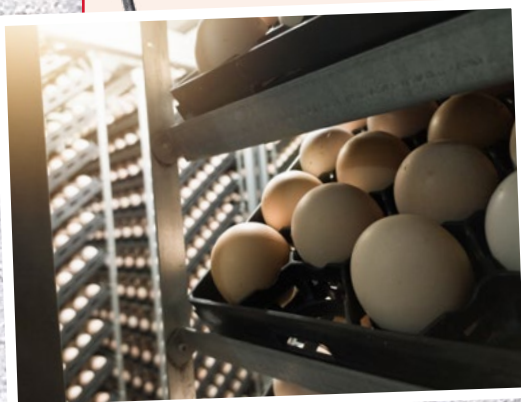
“As we wrap up the year and look ahead at 2025, we have some concerns, such as high input costs, but mostly we’re hopeful about positive developments. We’re hoping for good rains for the summer crops. We feel excited about the possibility that chicken may be included in the zero-VAT basket, which will benefit the cash-strapped consumer, but also increase consumption, which will help to create jobs. We’re enthused about the positive sentiment around the Government of National Unity and feel hopeful about a growing economy, and about the possibility that we’ll start seeing improvement in infrastructure, such as the railway. Finally, we hope there is some more relief for the consumer in terms of interest rate cuts, and stable fuel prices,” says Stander.



GLOBAL PRAISE FOR HPAI RESPONSE

While poultry producers the world over now have to factor in regular outbreaks of devastating avian influenza, the Dutch financial institution Rabobank gave South Africa a feather in its cap for the way the local industry handled the last outbreak. A massive 25% of our breeding stock and 30% of our layer hens were decimated, but despite the carnage the chicken shortage that was predicted never materialised, thanks to the fast action of

South African broiler producers. Independently from each other (so as not to raise Competition Commission concerns) a score of producers imported a total of 280 million fertilised eggs so that they could restock layers and fulfill broiler orders. As a result consumers never had to go without chicken, although there was a period of egg shortage. Hats off to our producers, and let’s hope that government will make work to deal with the issues that still prevent vaccination of our flocks.



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SAPA'S FIRST GOLF DAY

In May we got everyone together at Pezula Nature Retreat in Knysna for the annual SAPA AGM, followed by a day of fabulous golf. SAPA's first ever golf day was a huge success. The weather looked ominous on arrival, but by morning the clouds had cleared, umbrellas were tossed, and a marvellous round was had by all. After the 19th hole, we trooped into the banquet hall for a grand dinner, followed by a rather raucous round of speeches, prizes, and an auction of some wild and wonderful donated items.

A grand total of R204 000 was raised, shared equally between two local worthy causes, Knysna NSRI and George Round Table. A new tradition is born!



MANDELA DAY KINDNESS

For the fourth year in a row, SAPA members honoured Nelson Mandela's memory by donating both chicken and eggs to Chefs with Compassion, helping them surpass their target of delivering 67 000 litres of soup to vulnerable and marginalised communities on Mandela Day.

This year CwC managed to distribute 106 895 litres of soup, providing 427 000 people with a warm cup of soup on Madiba's birthday. Country Bird Holdings, Rainbow, Astral Foods and Toplay all donated generously, adding a much needed boost of protein to the delicious soup. Nothing better than showing compassion and generosity as an industry!

GRAND OPENING

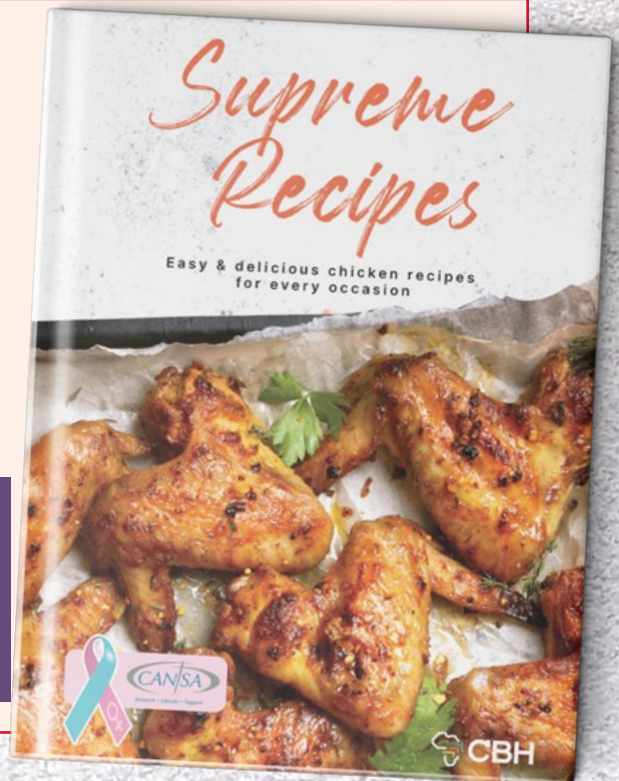
A contract with Astral led to what we consider to be the transformation story of the year, with the official opening of entrepreneur **Phiwokuhle Shabangu**'s new broiler facility near Bronkhorstspuit in Gauteng. Shabangu signed an agreement to rear broilers for Astral's Festive brand, which enabled MokokaShabangu Farming and Poultry to secure the financing for 10 brand-new state-of-the-art houses. Construction started in March and in October, the first day-old chicks were delivered. Shabangu will be raising 450 000 broilers per cycle for Astral.



CBH GETS A KEY

Reaching the much anticipated 21st birthday is a milestone that signals maturity and the start of a new journey into adulthood. CBH celebrated this special birthday in 2024 without fanfare, and by doing what it does best... carrying on with the business of becoming Africa's leading fully integrated poultry producer through its three pillars of "Breed, Feed and Food", providing genetic stock, feed and broilers. To commemorate 21 years in the industry, while at the same time giving back, the company produced a cookbook in partnership with CANSA, with all proceeds going to that organisation. A collection of favourite chicken recipes contributed by CBH staffers, *Supreme Recipes* is available for sale at R100 a copy. 📖

We are giving away 10 copies of the *Supreme Recipes* cookbook. To enter, answer the following question in an email to editor@poultrybulletin.co.za and include your full name, contact details and address. Closing date is 10 January 2025.
QUESTION: How old is CBH?



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IN CONVERSATION WITH **CHRIS SCHUTTE**



He is an industry legend, having led the country's biggest poultry company for 16 years, but now Astral CEO Chris Schutte is passing the baton. One of the longest-serving CEOs of a JSE-listed company, he will retire at the end of January 2025 to shift his focus to family matters after an extensive career in which poultry was his priority. He spoke to

Melinda Shaw



Astral's investments have delivered some of the most technologically advanced facilities in South Africa, such as the Meadow Feeds feed mill in Standerton and the Festive processing plant in Olifantsfontein (below)



“A SHIP IS SAFE INSIDE THE HARBOUR, but that is not what ships are built for. A ship is constructed to navigate stormy seas. Playing it safe means hiding from the world.” This is the philosophical view of Chris Schutte, the skipper who, with his senior management team, steered Astral out of one of the worst storms in the company’s 24-year history.

Even the largest poultry producer was not immune to the ravages that the South African poultry industry experienced in the past two years. In early 2023 Astral was in dire straits, having faced down a torrent of loadshedding, water shortages at key processing plants and record raw-material costs for feed production, later compounded by an uncontrollable avian influenza outbreak in the local

poultry industry. It was Schutte’s first time at the head of a loss-making business, and he admits that having to look his shareholders in the eye was very uncomfortable indeed.

“We burnt close on R2 billion rand in cash, a massive cost that had nothing to do with expanding the business, investing in efficiencies or growth. The loadshedding saga plunged us into unknown levels of debt,” he recalls. A large integrated producer on the scale of Astral has so many moving parts that a downward slide has to be managed with extreme care, and quickly, and Schutte tackled the challenge with all hands on deck. Experiencing the worst year in the company’s history could easily have destabilised the team, so as leader his first job was to keep calm and motivate ▶



his people. He formulated a turnaround plan that he called "Project 3R – reset, refocus and restart" and from 16 June 2023 set the business back to focusing on a profitable path after the massive impact of loadshedding.

It has taken a little over a year but Schutte and his team have cleared the debt and delivered on all of the goals of their turnaround plan – in some instances even exceeding them, to the point that 2024 shaped up to report the third-best profit in Astral's history.

"In a crisis the instinct is to get angry and riled up and find culprits to blame, but I have learnt to remain calm and think things through; to wait a

little... then the solution will come. The team wants to see a calm leader who is objective and who can focus on the job at hand."

Weathering storms of all kinds

'In a crisis the instinct is to get angry, but I have learnt to remain calm and think things through... then the solution will come'

benefits from this pragmatic approach, and as the survivor of five heart attacks and several open-heart surgeries, as well as a serious motorcycle accident on the eve of his 60th birthday, Schutte

certainly practices what he preaches.

He likes to relay the story of the heart attack that tried – and failed – to cut short an important business trip.

Schutte was one of the poultry representatives who attended the negotiations around the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in France in 2015, along with the then minister of trade and industry Rob Davies. On the last day, while out with the minister and some of his fellow delegates, he had

a heart attack in the street, but says he was too embarrassed to tell the others. Deciding that it would be best to get home to South Africa as fast as possible where his own doctor could



Relaxing with colleagues at the AVI Africa poultry conference in 2023



Schutte suffered serious injuries in 2020 when he had an accident shortly after this photo was taken



Motorcycles are another passion of Schutte, here with his wife, Reinette

attend him, he called his secretary and asked her to move his flight.

"I went back to the hotel, took a cold shower and packed my things, then lay on the bed to rest until the taxi came." As he waited, Minister Davies called, requesting his presence at a international press conference that he had organised for the next day. "I told him I was on my way home to South Africa, but he would not hear of it, and because I wasn't going to disclose my condition, I had no choice but to cancel my flight, unpack my suit and steam it to get rid of the wrinkles..."

He made it through the press conference the next day, and flew out that evening to be met in South Africa by an ambulance and taken straight to the ICU at Unitas Hospital.

A MODEST BACKGROUND

When he was appointed as CEO of Astral in 2009, Schutte had been steadily climbing through the ranks for 25 years, learning the business one step at a time. His first job, fresh from a four-year stint in the air force, had been as a shed worker on an egg

farm in Muldersdrift and just before his appointment as CEO he was the national group MD for Meadow Feeds.

As a "Karookind" growing up on a military base in Oudtshoorn, Schutte came from a modest background without the means to pay for university after school, and so when he matriculated in 1978, he had enlisted in the air force.

Without the privilege of a further education, he knew from the start that he'd have to work harder than those

who had studied further. "Life is a DIY project and you have to do it all yourself. Yes, I had to get up earlier and go to bed later, sometimes I had to miss a party or a boys' trip when I needed to focus on areas where I had a shortage of skills or knowledge, but that developed the self-discipline that propelled my career to CEO of the biggest poultry company in the country."

He is a firm believer in the power of teamwork, and in surrounding himself with the best people he can

Schutte's top tips for poultry leaders

- 1** You have to have an appetite for risk and be prepared to absorb the influence of external factors.
- 2** Invite your people on a journey with you, because there is very little that you can do yourself.
- 3** Filter your company goals through to all levels of your organisation so that everyone in the team is with you.



find and then investing in them. "I always promote from within the group, and that has allowed me to build the best team in the business, with team leaders who truly take ownership. As CEO I believe you need to invite people on a journey with you, rather than expect them to follow you because you are the boss."

He's not big on chasing "dreams"; instead he says, "Just go out and work hard. Don't wait for perfection, rather keep improving day by day. You have to keep moving, even if you move slowly; don't ever be caught standing still."

Of course, it helps if you have a real affinity for your business, and Schutte keeps coming back to why he so enjoys the poultry space. As a businessman it is hugely rewarding to work with a product that is universally loved, a best cost leader, and still constantly evolving, allowing the improvement of efficiencies on an ongoing basis.

"Poultry is a product for everyone in South Africa – it's the preferred meat and by far the best-value proposition animal protein. It has the smallest carbon footprint from a sustainability

point of view, and the constant genetic improvement of what the bird offers you far outstrips the timeline of any other meat protein, whether beef, pork, lamb or mutton.

"Our industry is also by far the biggest consumer of maize and soya in the country. We take the basic foodstuff that is maize and add extra value to it, creating a huge number of jobs. And we do it in the right geographical locations; not in the cities but in the jobs-poor countryside, which fits in with the government's long-term objectives," he says.

It is a source of wonder that during his years in the industry, he has seen feed conversion rates improve so much so that to produce a 1.75kg bird at 41 days used 2.2kg of feed per kilogram live weight gain back when he started. The modern broiler now reaches 1.85kg live weight at 31 days of age and only uses 1.35kg of feed per kilogram of live weight gain. "This is all due to genetic improvement and selective breeding, thanks to the geneticists at Aviagen supplying our breeding stock. We need less and less raw material. And Aviagen is



A golf enthusiast, Schutte made the most of SAPA's first-ever golf day in 2024



Schutte is enjoying the fruits of many years of hard work and self-discipline, which he credits with propelling him to the top of his field



Production at the Festive plant. 'Our industry creates jobs in the countryside where employment is most needed'

WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Schutte's Top 3

"I don't have to look outside of South Africa to name three icons of business. The resilience of South African managers at all levels and in all industries are inspirational. We are the best in the world – generalists who are popular in other countries for our work ethic, our agility and our resilience."

- Michael Katz – "At the age of 80 still actively at the head of one of Africa's most recognised legal firms."
- Whitey Basson and Pieter Engelbrecht – "What they have achieved with Shoprite, a world-class operation, is an enormous success story."
- Shaun Summers – "Returning in his 70s to take up the challenge of rebuilding PicknPay... I have no doubt he will succeed." 📱

projecting a continuous improvement going forward," he says, pooh-poohing the recurring myth that producers inject birds with steroids or growth hormones. "At any point in time we care for 40 million birds... I'd like to see anyone come try to inject 40 million birds with steroids! It is simply untrue, and our operations have always been transparent for inspection to prove it."

'The general public doesn't have the vaguest idea about the complexity of putting a chicken on the plate'

Schutte is used to dispelling these myths, which he says come with the territory of introducing yourself to people as a chicken farmer. "You never get the chance to explain the process, and the general public doesn't have the vaguest idea about the complexity of putting a chicken on the plate."

As an example, Astral has a target weight of 1.85kg for a mature broiler although when supplying certain

markets, such as quick-service restaurants (QSRs) that require a smaller bird, slaughter takes place earlier, to ensure portion sizes as per QSR requirements. The average daily weight gain (ADG) of the growing broilers is one of the factors that is measured closely so that feeding schedules can be managed precisely. Along with the improvements in feed conversion, this leads to target weight being reached earlier year by year by year, and this increased efficiency means that over time the output of every shed can be pushed up, allowing Astral to utilise its assets better.

Schutte, with wife Reinette and AFMA chair Anina Hunter, who presented him with a lifetime achievement award



Serves: 6
Preparation time: 45 min
Cooking time: 60 min



Classic Chicken Chakalaka and Pap

Chakalaka adds a punch to braai chicken and pap.

INGREDIENTS:

Chicken

1 x chicken braai pack (16 pieces)
salt and pepper
250ml BBQ sauce



Chakalaka:

20ml canola oil
1 onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 thumb ginger, grated
1 red chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
1 red peppers, finely chopped



Pap:

2l water
15ml salt
700ml maize meal
400ml cream
50g butter
2 carrots, grated
30ml curry powder
30ml brown sugar
1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
1 x 400g tin red kidney beans
salt and pepper

Method:

CHICKEN

Generously season the chicken pieces with salt and pepper.

Braai the pieces over a high heat to add colour and crispiness; then move them over to a lower heat.

Baste the chicken pieces with the BBQ sauce regularly, turning often, until cooked through. This takes approximately 40 minutes.

Reduce the heat and leave until the pap starts to pull away from the sides. Use spoon to shape. Serve the chicken with the pap, kale salsa and your zingy carrot salad on the side.



PAP

Bring the water and salt to the boil.

Slowly add the maize meal, whisking continuously.

Put the lid on the pot and turn the heat down once the water and meal have been combined and there are no lumps.

Allow the pap to cook for 10 – 15 minutes. Stir in the cream and butter, and season to taste.

CHAKALAKA

Heat the oil over medium heat.

Add the onion, garlic, ginger and chilli. Sauté until soft.

Add the red peppers and carrots, and cook for a further two minutes.

Add the curry powder and brown sugar, and cook for another minute.

Add the tomatoes and beans, and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat and simmer until reduced.

Add salt and pepper.

Serve the chicken pieces with pap on the side, and top with the spicy chakalaka.



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THE SCIENCE OF BROILER CATCH DAY

The value-chain link between broiler house and processing plant is an astonishing exercise in precision planning, logistics and communication

By **Charmain Lines**

AS WITH EVERY PART OF THE MODERN broiler operation, a sophisticated process kicks in at the end of the rearing cycle when mature broilers are collected for processing.

“The catching process and processing schedule is aligned with the capacity of the relevant processing plant,” explains Basson Viljoen, Astral’s chief operating officer of agriculture for the central region. A series of tasks administered by the relevant farm-services teams and the broiler farms are planned in accordance with this schedule. These tasks include the withdrawal of feed at least six hours before the birds are caught so that their crops are empty upon arrival at the processing plant. Water remains available to the birds until the catching process begins.

Some producers prefer to outsource the catching process while others use in-house farm-services teams. In Astral’s case, for instance, the Festive, Goldi and Mountain Valley operations employ their own teams while County Fair uses an external catching contractor.

As with most other aspects of commercial chicken production, the numbers in the catching operations are staggering. Viljoen notes that one Festive catcher catches about 25 500 live birds per week and it takes 28 minutes to load a truck with 11 250 birds.

Large integrated producers use automated catching

Illustration: Ellen Heydemrych







systems, and strict international regulations are in place to ensure that the load in each drawer that fits into the module loaded onto the truck doesn't exceed 50kg. This usually translates into 25 birds, each weighing up to 2kg, per drawer.

The empty modules are offloaded from the trucks by forklift and packed in a staggered fishbone formation on either side of the center aisle of the chicken house. Once the modules are in place, the catchers move in with carefully controlled methods and actions to ensure that the birds remain as calm as possible. Live birds are caught in three-metre sections at



Blue light is employed to facilitate a calm atmosphere during the catching process

Smaller producers whose houses are not designed to allow forklift access, use a crate system

a time and placed into the drawers, which are then loaded into the modules. Forklifts drive the modules out of the house and load them onto the waiting trucks. At the other end of the journey the modules are offloaded onto a conveyer at the processing plant from where an automated process releases the drawers from the modules.

Smaller producers, whose houses were not designed to accommodate forklift access, use a crate system. This is a more labour-intensive and time-consuming process and entails catchers placing the birds into crates and then carrying the filled crates out of the house and stacking them on the trucks outside.

The pace of the catching activity on the farm is meticulously monitored and coordinated to ensure that the optimal



The pace of the catching activity on a farm is coordinated to ensure that the line speed at the processing plant is maintained

line speed at the processing plant is maintained.

Festive's Olifantsfontein processing plant, for instance, processes 410 000 birds per day in two shifts and in order to maintain the required live-bird quantities per shift, the operation employs three catching teams that work three shifts in a 24-hour period. Each team has 38 members. "Fleet controllers that oversee the live-bird fleet are based at the processing plant and liaise with the catching coordinator to manage an efficient process," explains Viljoen.

The coordinator will communicate with other broiler-producing farms in the planned schedule, should

the schedule change. This level of teamwork and coordination is necessary to keep the supply chain running, managing a constant stream of full and empty live-bird trucks moving to and from processing plants.

While perfect efficiency is the goal, planning keeps reality in mind. Producers need enough live-bird trucks to meet their plants' requirement, and as with the catching teams, they might own their own fleet of trucks or fully outsource the service, or use a mix of both.

At the processing plant, the live-bird trucks that arrive from the farms park in a covered area with an automated



ventilation system. Their dwell time at the plant is limited to 45 minutes. The time a loaded truck spends on the road is carefully monitored and factored into the equation. In case of a delay, such as a minor plant breakdown, live-bird trucks would be instructed to “roam”, in which case they keep driving to ensure sufficient air flow for the birds. If an outage takes too long to fix, trucks are diverted back to the farms and the broilers are placed back into the broiler houses. In terms of bird welfare regulations, live birds cannot be in

transit for longer than 24 hours.

WELFARE MATTERS

The integrated producers adhere to strict animal-welfare regulations in all aspects of their operations, and catching and transporting of live birds is no exception. The industry regulates itself through the SAPA Code of Practice and is audited by third parties, including quick-service restaurant customers such as KFC and McDonald’s. The SPCA also visits farms and processing plants to make

sure that birds are treated humanely.

The third-party audits extend to both the competency of the catching teams and the catching process. Staff turnover in the teams is high as the job is physically taxing, but the team supervisors tend to stay for years and years, lending stability to these teams. Viljoen explains that pools of experienced catchers tend to develop in areas with many chicken farms and processing plants, so that even if staff turnover is high, there is a steady supply of people who have done the job before. This, in addition to regular training, ensures that the catchers know how to handle the birds.

To further enhance animal welfare, the forklifts used are specifically manufactured for the poultry industry and operate extremely quietly to reduce stress on the live birds. When catching is done at night, forklifts are equipped with blue lights, which ensures visibility to the catchers while keeping the birds calm – chickens cannot see blue light and experience it as darkness.

All in, catch day is another phase in the production process where the meticulous attention to detail, down to the very last action, is a credit to the industry’s professionalism. 🇷🇺



Once loaded, the modules are moved onto the trucks by forklift



Producers might use their own fleet of live-bird trucks, or fully outsource the service

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KEEPING IT COOL IN THE COOP

Moving into the summer months is often accompanied by periods of extreme heat and high humidity. Such environmental conditions can be detrimental to flock health and performance, with increases in mortality and decreased egg production and/or quality often evident.

Typically, a hen's thermoneutral zone is between 18 and 25 °C, and within this range, sensible heat loss (radiation, conduction and convection) is enough to maintain the hen's body temperature of 41 °C. Heat stress is experienced by the hen when she cannot maintain her body temperature through sensible heat loss. The heat stress experienced varies, depending on how far out of her thermoneutral zone she is.

At temperatures above 25 °C, evaporation of water from the respiratory tract becomes the main source of cooling for the hen and as the temperature increases further, they will begin to pant.

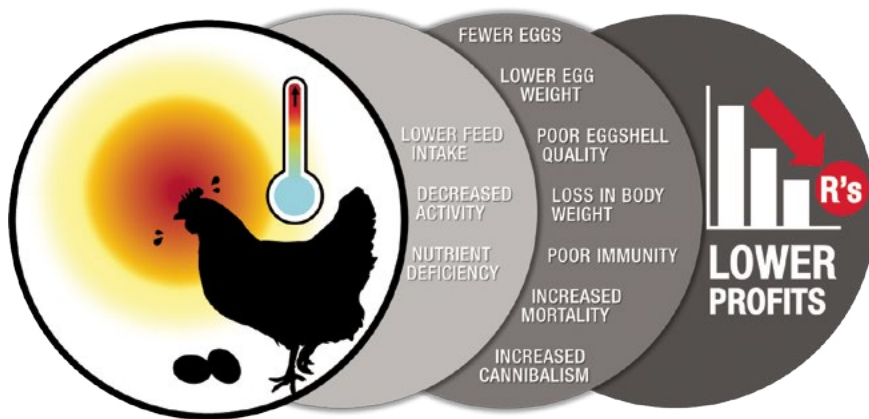
Panting will lead to an increased loss of CO₂ gas from the lungs, causing blood pH to rise and reducing the activity of an enzyme called carbonic anhydrase. This will lead to reduced calcium and carbonate secretion by the shell gland and consequently, the eggs will have thin, weak shells. This is an expensive process for both the farmer and the hen, as it is energy-expensive and will result in decreased production as well as a decrease in sellable eggs.

Typical effects of heat stress are summarised below:

- Decreased egg production and quality
- Decreased shell quality
- Loss in body weight
- Increased mortality
- Increased cannibalism

The management of heat-stressed flocks is crucial to ensure minimal losses. Common management practices to reduce the effects of heat stress include careful management of drinker systems, ventilation and cooling systems, and lighting and feeding programmes.

As with all livestock, water is the most essential nutrient for maintenance and production. Laying hens will usually consume twice as much water as they do feed, but this can increase to as much as eight times higher in periods of extreme temperatures. As such, the management of drinker lines is the first step to minimising the effects of heat stress.



Ensuring that water is readily available is the first step to mitigating heat stress. Adequate space and flow rate (70 ml/minute/nipple) is essential for drinker lines and in the case of drinkers, space is the most limiting factor. Additional drinkers may be necessary to accommodate the extra water requirements.

Flushing of water lines or replenishing of drinkers will also help to improve water intakes, as water below 25 °C will result in higher intakes and also aid in cooling the hens' core body temperature. Some water additives, such as vitamin C, can also help to reduce the negative effects of heat stress.

The next step is to ensure adequate ventilation and cooling. Air movement in the house will help cool the birds and as such, a minimum air velocity of 1.8-2.0 metres per second should be targeted. Stir fans are a good way to increase air speed in open-sided houses. Foggers and misters can also help bring house temperatures down, as well as sprinklers on the roof to cool the inside of the roof.

Changes to lighting and feed programmes are an effective method of reducing production losses. Reducing light intensity during the hottest periods of the day will reduce bird activity and subsequently, reduce heat generation and energy expenditure.

Adjusting the feeding schedule to offer feed in the coolest parts of the day is the best way to ensure adequate intakes. The early hours of the morning and evening are usually the coolest and as such, will be the most optimal time to improve feed intake. Midnight feeding, for roughly two hours, is also recommended to improve feed intake.

Other nutritional solutions include moving to a more nutrient-dense diet, the use of easily digestible raw materials, such as oil rather than starch (reduced heat increment), and the inclusion of additional raw materials, such as sodium bicarbonate, vitamin C and organic trace minerals, that can aid in minimising the negative effects of heat stress.

Heat stress can result in many physiological and physical effects in poultry, including reduced health and performance. The key to minimising these effects is predicting when these periods are likely to occur and making the appropriate management and nutritional changes to reduce the possible negative impacts.

Kyle Westergaard –
Technical Manager
at Epol, Rustenburg





ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NEWCASTLE DISEASE

South Africa banned imports from Brazil earlier this year, and that country itself suspended exports, due to an outbreak of Newcastle disease. **Diane McCarthy** gets the lowdown on this disease

IN JULY THIS YEAR, the Brazilian government voluntarily suspended chicken exports to 44 countries, due to an outbreak of Newcastle disease. The outbreak was detected by chance in a commercial flock from the southern state of Rio Grande Do Sul. Brazil is the largest chicken-meat exporter on the planet, so any interruption in its supply chain is felt around the globe.

Within a few weeks after the suspension, the authorities sounded the all-clear and exports resumed.

Being more used to the devastation wrought by avian influenza, it seemed unusual that this outbreak was almost a nonevent.

Was this a health crisis? Was there a

threat? Should we be concerned?

The answer to all three questions is no.

Although related to avian influenza, Newcastle disease behaves quite differently. The virus doesn't mutate as dramatically as AI, and therefore is far more easily controlled.


Vaccines developed many years ago are still highly effective today. "Some of the vaccines we use here in South Africa have been around for 20 years or more," says Dr Shahn Bisschop, CEO of poultry veterinary practice Avimune. "Modern field viruses do differ from the available vaccine strains, but nowhere near as dramatically as with avian influenza. Where you have 15 or



Photograph: Shutterstock


Newcastle disease can decimate a flock, but is easy to vaccinate against





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16 different H types which effectively represent completely distinct immunological entities, Newcastle only really has one strain. It is therefore much easier to vaccinate against. And we have done so very successfully here for the last two to three decades.”

An outbreak of Newcastle disease can be devastating in an unvaccinated flock. Mortality is swift and high, wiping out a flock with ease. But, unlike H1N1, the virus is not easily transmitted between generations of birds,

so if the parent is infected it is unlikely to infect the chicks. For commercial operations, economic recovery is possible after an outbreak.

Newcastle presents little danger to humans. It is a zoonotic disease, so a live infected bird can transmit the disease to humans, but the reaction is fairly mild, usually in the form of an eye infection. There are no reported cases of any adverse effects from consumption of chickens infected with Newcastle disease, so there is scant risk to human

health from imported product with Newcastle disease.

Named after an outbreak of an unknown, highly contagious viral disease among a flock of poultry in Newcastle, England in 1926, the disease was first officially diagnosed in South Africa in 1945, although it was more than likely present in the country far earlier. It reappeared with regularity over the next two decades, kept in check by the development of a vaccine, and an extensive control campaign. By the '70s, a time of rapid industrial expansion in South Africa, commercial broiler operations had become a fixture, creating large concentrations of susceptible poultry. In September of 1970, Newcastle disease struck in the north of the country and within three months it had spread widely. Massive losses occurred, causing severe economic hardship within the industry. The disease was declared endemic, crippling any chance of export. Mass immunisation of all commercial flocks followed and, though there have been numerous outbreaks subsequently, these days it's usually the unvaccinated flocks from small poultry operations and backyard chickens that are most seriously infected.

This is where the challenge lies. The best way to eradicate the disease is through vaccination and strict biosecurity controls. These measures are very difficult for backyard farmers to adhere to, and Newcastle disease remains a great threat to these flocks. Vaccination, although only a few cents per dose, is unaffordable for many and biosecurity is impossible to enforce as many chickens are raised outdoors and roam freely.

As Dr Bisschop points out, the battle in South Africa can be won. “Newcastle is completely under control here; we've had no cases in the past five years. If commercial flocks are well-immunised, the problem is much smaller overall, and this reduces the risk to small-scale flocks.”



Dr Shahn Bisschop

Vaccination is inexpensive but still remains unaffordable for many backyard farmers



Newcastle was diagnosed in SA for the first time in the '40s, though it had probably been present long before



Photographs: Shutterstock



THREE FRENCH HENS ON A CHRISTMAS ADVENTURE

Words: **Lycett Winter**

Illustrations: **Jason Bronkhorst**

Turns out if one's true love gives all of the presents that the Christmas carol calls for, it makes for total and utter chaos...

IT WAS THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS, and with the strains of "my true love gave to me" still ringing in their ears, three French hens blinked as their cage was unwrapped and the light flooded in. Then they blinked again, amazed at the opulence of the chateau's grand ballroom. Madame la Claque stared open-beaked at the dazzling tree, bedecked with glittering ornaments and twinkling lights.

As they stepped out of the cage, her elder daughter, Marguerite, marvelled at the magnificence of the room – the marble! The crystal! The art! The gilt! The statues! The tapestries! Younger sister Josephine marvelled at Marguerite: "Zat hen is rapidly running out of exclamation marks."

After much oohing and aahing over the hens, the humans involved in the gifting ritual pushed off, leaving the family to explore the other presents under the tree. The first turned out to be a smaller tree. "Zat is odd," clucked Marguerite. "Why would zey leave a pear tree in its garden-centre wrapper and not go plant it *immediatment*?"

"Maybe it is art," Josephine suggested. "You know, zey call it a 'pear' but in fact zere is only one of zem, so it is ironic, *non*?" But, as it turned out, the other half of the pair

was a partridge, who was tired of blending into the foliage.

"I say!" he called from his perch. "I'm glad they finally sent some maids up! Fetch me a drink, would you, and

When ten lords a-leaping were added to the mix, no-one's eggs were safe in the commotion

give my tree a good watering!"

"I beg your pardon?" Madame la Claque hissed icily. "We are not your 'maids'!"

"Look, I've been sitting up here for days, parched!" the partridge cried. "Those two turtle doves who arrived yesterday have been no help – they've holed up in their nesting box, billing and cooing. I always said it was a rotten idea to crossbreed turtles and doves in the first place!"

"I sink you are a very rude pheasant!" Madame snapped.

"A pheasant?!" he roared. "I'm a partridge, madam! That's about as un-pheasant as you can get! We pluck pheasants for breakfast!"

"*Oui*," retorted Josephine. "You certainly do seem like an un-pheasant plucker..."

Marguerite, always the peacemaker,

decided she rather fancied a cup of tea herself and went off to find the kitchen, while the partridge harrumphed himself to sleep.

The fourth day of Christmas brought a new challenge when four calling birds were unboxed. The budgie did an annoying repertoire of ringtones, the parrot kept up a nonstop rattle of Bingo calls, the raven recited Edgar Allan Poe in a really grating voice,

and the fourth introduced himself as a mynah and kept yelling indecent suggestions at the ladies.

Mortified, Marguerite hurried past clutching her rosary, but Josephine



seemed intrigued by the cheeky chappie's persistence. "I wonder what 'is nest-building skills are like?" she mused. Madame was scandalised.

"Oh, *non, ma petite* – you'll get into terrible trouble. You can't date a minor!" Josephine's protestations that the mynah wasn't a minor went unheard.

All three approved of the five golden rings that arrived on day five. They were nice and quiet, for a start. "What a lovely gift zey would make for ze church," Marguerite sighed.

"What a lovely gift zey'd make for me!" countered Josephine.

"*Ahors*, you do not want rings," her

Mama said sadly. "Your papa, may 'e rest in peace, gave me many rings over ze years. I lost them all, scratching in ze dirt. When you 'ave chicken feet, you can eat, or wear fine jewellery. Not both."

Things took a turn for the worse a day later when six geese a-laying were unwrapped, followed the next day by seven swans a-swimming. The hens hated the noise, the mess, and the water everywhere. Worse – the waterbirds thought swimming made them so special, and they looked down their beaks at what they sneeringly called "the barnyard poultry".

Josephine started a stealthy campaign

of dropping spiky tree ornaments into their nests, and only her lack of access to live scorpions prevented it escalating into all-out war.

Next came eight maids a-milking, along with the cows they were a-milking, and Marguerite flipped out. "I cannot take zeir noise, or zeir smell!" she cried. "And ze cows are even worse!" She lapsed into hysterics when the next two days added nine ladies dancing and ten lords a-leaping to the mix. Nobody's eggs were safe in the commotion.

"Zat leaping lord crushed my only egg!" Marguerite squawked in outrage.

"Disgusting oaf!" said Mama.


"How dare you insult my egg!" Marguerite bristled.

"I said oaf, not *oeuf!*"

"*Eau!*"

The noise ramped up even more the next day with the arrival of 11 pipers piping. When the wailing got too much, Josephine led all the assembled poultry in guerrilla attacks against their instruments in the dead of night. With lightning-fast pecks, they punctured any bags their beaks could find in the dark. Most were even attached to bagpipes, but Josephine had more enthusiasm than aim, and many a piper was carried out clutching himself and screaming...

But when 12 drummers showed up to form a trance drum circle the next morning, the hens decided they'd had enough. What they'd thought could be a lovely new home was turning out to be a deranged experiment by a present-giving maniac. They fled the chateau in a midnight flit, after leaving a farewell deposit on the windscreen of the drummers' van, and lived the rest of their lives in disguise with a group of militant underground pheasants who were devoted to overthrowing the partridge hegemony.

But that's another story... 



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HERITAGE CHICKENS CAPTURE A NICHE

The farm buys its maize and soy from the Amish and Mennonite farmers in the area



Mike Charles is a poultry farmer who was born and raised in the US state of Pennsylvania. His dream was to produce the most beautiful chickens he could find, a quest that led him to France. This is the story of LaBelle Patrimoine





Mike Charles and Jeff Webb



The breed's name means 'A Beautiful Heritage' in French

AS A SIXTH-GENERATION poultry farmer, Mike Charles was born and raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. From a young age, growing up around local farmers, he had a dream to start his own chicken farm. When it came time to do it, he did so with aesthetic considerations, investigating the various breed options as he wanted a bird of beauty.

In this journey, Charles turned to France, where he learned about the La Belle Rouge, a heritage-growing practice known around the world. He sourced an exclusive new breed that is naturally slow-growing and that is also vigorous and active, climbing on hay bales and perches, and foraging each morning.

Charles branded his new breed of chicken LaBelle Patrimoine which is French for "A Beautiful Heritage".

"Growing up here I appreciated the hard work of the farmer – the early mornings and the late nights when you just have to do what you have to do," says Charles. "My dad had a butcher shop where he would work with the local community and the Amish and Mennonite farmers, and I got to know each of them. In 2004, I decided I wanted to help these farmers with whom I had relationships to market their product."

Charles Brothers was founded in 2004 and they embarked on the

LaBelle Patrimoine birds take almost double the time that commercially reared chickens do to reach maturity



quest for handsome chickens. "We did that by importing some chickens from France, from the LaBelle Rouge programme. The birds we bred from this stock really are the most beautiful chickens we've ever seen. It's a slow-growing bird. It takes almost twice as long to become fully grown as the regular chickens we are used to here in the United States."

Jeff Webb, the grow-out manager at the farm, explains: "You're allowing the



LaBelle Patrimoine scored big by signing elite supermarket chain Whole Foods Market as a client

Award winning!

LaBelle Patrimoine was named 2020 Whole Foods Market Supplier of the Year and 2023 Whole Foods Market Supplier All Star.

natural genetics of the bird to dictate how fast it grows. We cannot make this bird grow faster or slower... It's going to do what it's going to do."

On the farm they provide enrichments and structures for the flock. "It encourages the birds to utilise their muscles, to jump up and to perch on things and scratch, and do what chickens naturally do."

Charles says that his favourite pastime around the LaBelle Patrimoine bird is to watch them early in the morning when they go outside. "It's great to see how chickens actually do go outside and graze in the pasture and forage for bugs and seeds. It is really satisfying to just watch them in their

natural environment!"

No antibiotics are used in the rearing process, and the marketing for LaBelle Patrimoine can truly claim to bring something different to the table with their pasture-grazing chickens. They are fully aware that they serve a niche market and Charles likes the fact that this kind of farming is only possible for those small operators with barns that may be outdated and not efficient on the kind of scale that the larger producers would even look at.

"We've chosen this breed because it is unique, it tastes better, it is slow growing, it is healthier, but also because it makes sense for the smaller family farm. We started out just trying

to have a good-looking chicken, never dreaming that it would end up in Whole Foods Market!"

Theo Weening is a partner at the US Sustainable Meats Group, and has led the meat procurement for Whole Foods Market, the American supermarket chain known for its high-quality natural and organic foods.

"We started trying to find a true heritage breed with the real genetics," says Weening. "I did quite a bit of

This kind of farming is only possible for small operators with barns that may be outdated and not efficient on the scale that large producers would even look at

research and talked to quite a few people and Mike Charles' name came up a few times. So we connected and he was telling me what he was doing, what he had. We started testing it and taking a look at the farms, visited to look at the birds.

"You know, there is a whole story in the way this chicken walks around, strutting – it strikes you as happy and strong... it's convincing as a superior chicken, completely different to any other chicken we ever tried."

Says Jeff Webb, "If you compare our bird to a conventional broiler, ours provides more tender meat that retains its juices better. You don't have to do much to this bird when you cook it. The flavour is great."

Most farmers don't have the luxury

The success of this one chicken producer filters down to benefit the economy of the whole area



'I never dreamt that as a small farmer I'd have the chance to reach my market through Whole Foods'





Charles says he chose this slow-growing breed because it makes sense for the smaller family farm



of time to raise this type of bird, and Webb says he takes pride in the fact that they allow for a slow process. Mike Charles agrees: "There is a place for the large commercial farms in our country, but there is also a whole other community of people out there who don't have the means to be that large. For me as a small farmer to have this opportunity to reach my market through a chain as large as Whole Foods is one that I certainly never dreamt of having. And if we can get some of our neighbours to come along for the ride, that is special."

Charles's success has had a transformative effect on the whole town. The Amish farmers in the area not only buy the chickens, the farm also buys maize and soya from them, and the feed mill is situated nearby. A whole community is deriving the benefits of one dedicated chicken farmer.

"I'd like to create the legacy of integrity," says Charles. "Knowing that our chickens are grown as promised, but also what we say we're going to do, we do. It's not about making money, it's about the long run, being the best thing for everybody." 📺



Watch the video of LaBelle Patrimoine by scanning the QR code with your smartphone:



LAND O'LAKES
VENTURE 37

**CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
CONCEPT NOTE**

**INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY IN THE PRODUCTION AND SUPPLY OF
HATCHING EGGS AND DAY-OLD-CHICKS IN THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO**

Issuance Date: 18 November 2024
Closing Date: 17 January 2025

Land O'Lakes Venture37 (Venture37), through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) financed Sustainable Transformation of Enterprises in the Poultry Sector (STEPS) project, invites qualified, experienced, resourced, and interested poultry firms to submit concept notes to facilitate their scoping viability study and subsequent business plan to invest in poultry parent stock and related infrastructure to supply the Lesotho poultry industry with Hatching Eggs (HE) and Day Old Chicks (DOC). The STEPS project will select one or more qualifying firm to conduct a scoping and viability study, providing up to 50% cost-share to a maximum pre-determined ceiling.

The poultry industry in Lesotho plays an outsized role in the population's nutrition, livelihoods and food security. The demand for foods of animal origin, dominated by poultry products, continues to expand with population growth, increasing average incomes, and adoption of protein rich diets. While investments in poultry egg and meat production continues to grow, the industry faces several challenges. One such key barrier to growth is availability of quality and affordable Hatching Eggs, Day Old Chicks, and Point of Lay Pullets.

A concerted public-private effort is underway to fully realize the sectors potential and address the increasing demand for poultry product. This includes development of supportive policies and initiatives aimed at boosting partnerships, adoption of efficient technologies and investments in poultry production, processing, and consumption.

Firms must demonstrate relevant experience in parent stock flock management, supply of hatching eggs and day-old-chicks; proven, consistent and reliable access to parent stock; capacity to potentially commit relevant investment impactful at national level; ability to cost-share cost of scoping viability and business study.

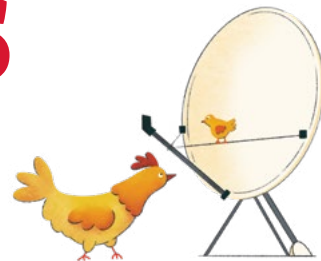
To receive a full copy of the request, including application instructions, interested parties should email STEPS at steps@landolakes.com. Final concepts must be received by or before January 17, 2025, as instructed in the full scope of work.

NOTE: Land O'Lakes Venture37 and partners reserve the right to accept or reject/cancel or reissue this RFP without assigning any reason. Only shortlisted proposals will be contacted.

ON THE WIRES

More vitamins for eggs, France's blushing hens, and more global poultry news

Compiled by **Charmain Lines**



WHAT A HEN'S BLUSH CAN TELL US



A SMALL STUDY RECENTLY completed in France has shown that layer hens blush when they are fearful or excited, and fluff their head feathers when they feel comfortable and at ease. At least, that is what the researchers have deduced from the film footage they recorded of 18 Sussex laying hens over three weeks.

Using a computer program, over 18 000 pictures were analysed to measure the amount of blushing – or redness in the face – displayed by the hens. According to the results, the position of facial feathers and the colour of the exposed faces of the hens changed under different conditions and corresponded with how they behaved in these conditions.

“Notably, hens exhibited less redness in calm situations compared to rewarding situations, while they appeared reddest in fear-related situations,” the authors of the study wrote in the paper published in PLoS ONE. They regard their discovery as “a potential way to assess a hen’s wellbeing” and say that it introduces the idea of using redness as a welfare marker.

As important as welfare monitoring is, it’s difficult to assess, partly because poultry are prey animals that have evolved to instinctively hide pain. 📷

¡OLÉ! FOR EGGS IN SPAIN

EGG PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION are hitting new highs in Spain.

Already the third largest egg producer in the European Union, Spain produced 1.16 billion dozen eggs in 2023, an increase of 13.54% on the year before. Egg farmers grew their income by 30%.

While the country’s overall food consumption has been falling, that

of eggs has been rising. Demand increased by 8.7% in 2023, with each Spaniard now eating an average of three eggs a week at home and spending, on average, 28 euros per year on buying them.

The number of layer farms in Spain increased by 9.4% last year to a total of 1 809 and the national flock grew by 1.7% to 47.7 million birds. 📷



Photographs: Shutterstock; Yoesoep Adji

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SUNNY SIDE UP... AND UP




THE DIET OF LAYER HENS IS ROUTINELY supplemented with vitamin D to boost eggshell production and the hens' bone health. And now a new US study is investigating whether giving layers more vitamin D could also help people.

Vitamin D is essential to human health and is naturally produced in our bodies through exposure to sunshine. However, by avoiding the sun to reduce the risk of skin cancer, we have reduced our ability to naturally produce vitamin D. Consequently, we have to get more of it from the food we eat (or through supplements).

"Eggs are already a highly nutrient-dense food, and they are the most cost-effective method to provide essential protein and other nutrients to our diets," says Mike Peria, a professor of poultry nutrition and management at Virginia Tech University in

the US. With that as a starting point, Peria's team is now looking into how much extra vitamin D can safely be given to a laying hen, and how much of that the hen will transfer to the egg.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, one two-egg omelette provides 22% of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin D. Enriched eggs would increase the number. 




HEALTHIER CHICKS IMPROVE THE INDUSTRY IN AFRICA

THERE ARE NUMEROUS INITIATIVES in Africa designed to help the poultry industry grow. Among them is PREVENT (Promoting and Enabling Vaccination Efficiency, Now and Tomorrow), which is a partnership between Ceva Santé Animale and the not-for-profit livestock health product development and access partnership GALVMED.

PREVENT was launched in 2021 as a five-year programme to help small-scale poultry producers in Africa become more productive and efficient by vaccinating day-old chicks (DOCs) in midsize hatcheries in Africa.

With one year to go, PREVENT is hitting all its targets: 31 hatcheries in 11 countries have been equipped to vaccinate DOCs, over 98 million chicks have been vaccinated and some 100 000 poultry farmers are already benefitting. PREVENT has also been responsible for the registration of 20 vaccines in 13 countries.

To help ensure that their investment in healthy DOCs yield the best returns, PREVENT is working with over 200 field technicians to support poultry farmers with advice on biosecurity and good management practices. 



PISTACHIO CAKE



IMPRESS YOUR HOLIDAY GUESTS WITH THIS SIMPLE, YET SUMPTUOUS CAKE

YOU WILL NEED

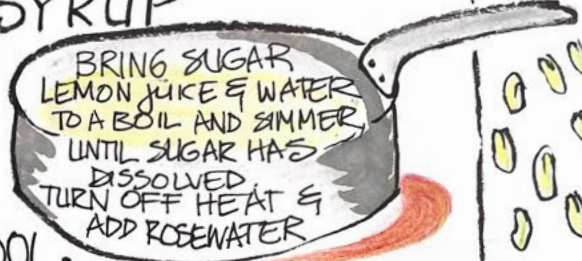
- 500 G SUGAR
- 150 ML WATER
- 1 T. LEMON JUICE / 2 T. ROSEWATER

CAKE

- 5 EGGS, SEPARATED.
- 200 G. CASTER SUGAR
- 200 G. FINE GROUND $\frac{1}{2}$
- 50 G. ROUGH CHOPPED PISTACHIOS.

LEMON SYRUP

FIRST; MAKE THE SYRUP



COOL, & CHILL IN THE FRIDGE

NOW, THE CAKE: SET OVEN TO 180°C. GREASE & FLOUR A 23 CM. CAKE TIN

- 1 BEAT EGG YOLKS IN A BOWL WITH CASTER SUGAR UNTIL PALE
 - 2 ADD GROUND PISTACHIOS & MIX UNTIL WELL COMBINED
 - 3 IN ANOTHER BOWL, WHISK WHITES UNTIL STIFF
 - 4 FOLD WHITES GENTLY INTO CAKE MIXTURE
 - 5 POUR INTO CAKE TIN & SPRINKLE OVER CHOPPED PISTACHIOS
 - 6 BAKE FOR 40 MINS UNTIL LIGHTLY BROWNED
 - 7 TURN CAKE OUT ONTO A DEEP PLATTER
 - 8 PRICK LIBERALLY WITH A FORK
 - 9 POUR LEMON SYRUP OVER HOT CAKE
- SERVE AT ROOM TEMPERATURE WITH THICK YOGHURT, RICOTTA OR CREME FRAICHE



d.m.c



BERGVLEI
CHICKS

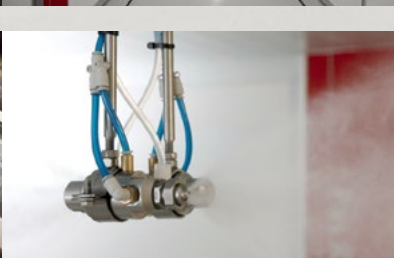
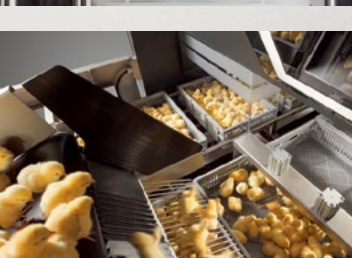
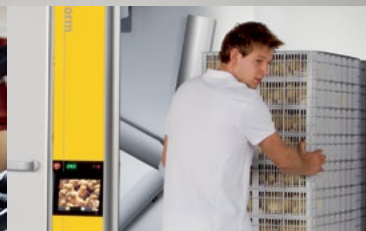


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