

Poultry Bulletin



ISSUE 19

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R60

THE PROGRESS ISSUE

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION

BLOW OUT THOSE CANDLES... IT IS OUR THIRD BIRTHDAY!



URBAN SPRAWL

*How poultry producers adapt
to agri's big challenge*

WALKIES

THE DELICACY WITH
MASS APPEAL

DAD, WHERE DO BROILERS COME FROM?

The science and secrets of breeding

CHICKEN IN NAIJA:

*'Farming can
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THEY SAY YOU SHOULD be careful what you wish for, and when it comes to the theme of this issue, that is certainly true. We humans love progress and how it improves our lives, from health innovations to better communication tools.

We also applaud the progress that sees our cover star, Quantum Foods' Adel van der Merwe, take up her role as the first-ever woman CEO of a large poultry company in South Africa. We look forward to seeing the impact she'll no doubt have.

But progress has its flip side too, and when we look at the plight of poultry producers who find themselves in the path of unstoppable urban development, the future can look darn bleak (p32).

We wonder where progress is in the decision by ITAC to award rebates on chicken imports, sanctioning the import of 43 000 tons of chicken per month at reduced rates, ostensibly to prevent chicken shortages. This feels like a vote of no confidence in an industry that pulled out all the stops after the devastation of avian flu to guarantee that there would not be any shortages, which, of course, there weren't. So many farmers lost all their chickens, and their livelihood, and rather than favour importers, we had hoped that by now government would have progressed the disaster fund that it promised last November.

We can only hope that this avalanche of unnecessary Brazilian chicken will not be a nail in more farmers' coffins.

If you notice something different about this issue, it is because our design boffins waved their magic wand in time for our third birthday, and we have a newer, fresher look as a result. Let us know what you think of our birthday suit!

Enjoy the issue!
Melinda

@melshaw001
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A QUESTIONABLE INVESTIGATION

WITH THIS EDITION'S focus on progress, we are reminded of the saying "one step forward, two steps back". This is certainly a familiar feeling for many poultry producers. After a period of particular hardship with HPAI sowing a path of destruction, killing almost a quarter of the country's chickens, SAPA and its members were taken aback by the announcement that the Competition Commission would investigate the poultry industry's structure.

The CC has indicated that it believes that the industry is dominated by a few large vertically integrated companies, and that there are market features within the industry that impede or distort competition.

It is indeed so that the South African industry is highly concentrated and integrated, which is not a result of nefarious practices, but a symptom of a mature industry.

South Africa's poultry industry is not dissimilar to its counterparts in Europe, the United States and Brazil. In Brazil, for instance, two companies, BRF and JBS, dominate poultry production and account for around 70% of all poultry for export and half of all slaughtering. In the US Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride have a combined market share of almost 50%. Tyson alone produced 47 million chickens per week in 2022.

South Africa's industry has to compete with these huge international companies that export to our country at such volumes that imports are the second biggest "producer" of chicken here.

Poultry companies make paper-thin margins and were in a loss situation in 2023, widely seen as the worst year ever to have been a poultry farmer in South Africa. The integrated companies saw significant losses, and hundreds, if not thousands of smaller producers were simply forced to close their doors. Stats are not available about jobs lost, but it is certain to be significant. When even the country's largest producer shows a financial loss for the first time in its 23-year history, you know the industry is in trouble.

'Poultry farming is a difficult business to get right if you want to scale up to commercial production'



Poultry farming is a difficult business to get right, if you want to scale up to commercial production. You are very much on your own, and best you ensure your own feed sources, water and electricity supply and other inputs so that economies of scale may enable your survival. Not everyone can afford to do that, but the solution is not to punish those who do.

We will cooperate with the CC's investigation to the best of our ability, despite the questionable timing of the process. We believe any scrutiny of the industry will serve to confirm what Wageningen University in the Netherlands has found year after year – that South Africa's producers are globally competitive. 🇷🇺



Izaak Breitenbach
GM, Broiler Organisation

Photograph: Elaine Banister Photography

LETTERS

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



Consumers need vertically integrated producers who can survive ongoing challenges, writes our reader

FARMER QUESTIONS INVESTIGATION

As a chicken farmer who watched my colleagues take huge knocks during the bird-flu outbreak last year, I was speechless at the poor timing of the Competition Commission's launch of an investigation into the poultry industry. As I understand they suspect that the large vertically integrated companies are keeping everything to themselves and forcing the little guys to stay out in the cold.

I have another theory, which has to do with the hostile environment of constant loadshedding, municipalities that can't deliver basic services, and crumbling infrastructure. Throw a disease outbreak such as 2023's avian flu into the mix and only the most resilient businesses have a chance to survive.

This is precisely why consumers need those vertically integrated companies that also produce feed and

breeding stock, to keep South Africa's shops stocked with the meat most of us want. Whenever there is a forecast of a possible chicken or egg shortage or a price increase, you can go deaf so loud are the cries of panic about the "poor consumers". Yet where is the help promised by government for the farmers who produce the millions of chickens needed to supply the daily demand? What happened to the AI emergency fund that you announced in November, Deputy President Paul Mashatile? We are still waiting, and in the meantime so many farmers don't have the funds to restock their farms and face an uncertain future.

But the Competition Commission wants to investigate the industry to see why small farmers can't be successful? Don't look at the industry, would be my advice. Leave the farmers to make food, and start asking the right questions.

Anonymous, via email



HELP ASKED AFTER AI

I am a proud member of SAPA since last year's AVI Africa congress, and am writing to ask for help. I need to be jump-started after avian flu, which wiped my farm.

If anyone can help with 50 to 100 ready-to-lay hens, and also feed, I would be most grateful.

Our farm is in Pretoria and I can come collect.

ML (Solly) Leotlela

072 183 3141

Ed: If you can assist this farmer, please reach out!





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supply. Access to clean and reliable water is increasingly becoming a challenge for farms and agribusinesses. Deteriorating water infrastructure underscored by limited new investments and poorly maintained existing water infrastructure is part of the problem. To address the water challenge, municipalities and water authorities must invest in the maintenance, repair and expansion of the water infrastructure, prioritising the supply to farms for food-security purposes.

Parallel to addressing the finance, electricity and water issues is the need to continue supporting the industry against unfair competition from subsidised or dumped imports. In recent months, imports of chicken meat have surged on the back of temporarily suspended antidumping duties. The outbreak of AI also compelled breeders to import fertilised eggs to rebuild the breeding stock. While rebuilding parent stock is important this should not impact the growth of the domestic market. 📍

Sifiso Ntombela (PhD) is an agricultural economist. He serves as the special advisor to Minister Thoko Didiza in the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development. He is also the elected president of the Agricultural Economics Association of Southern Africa.

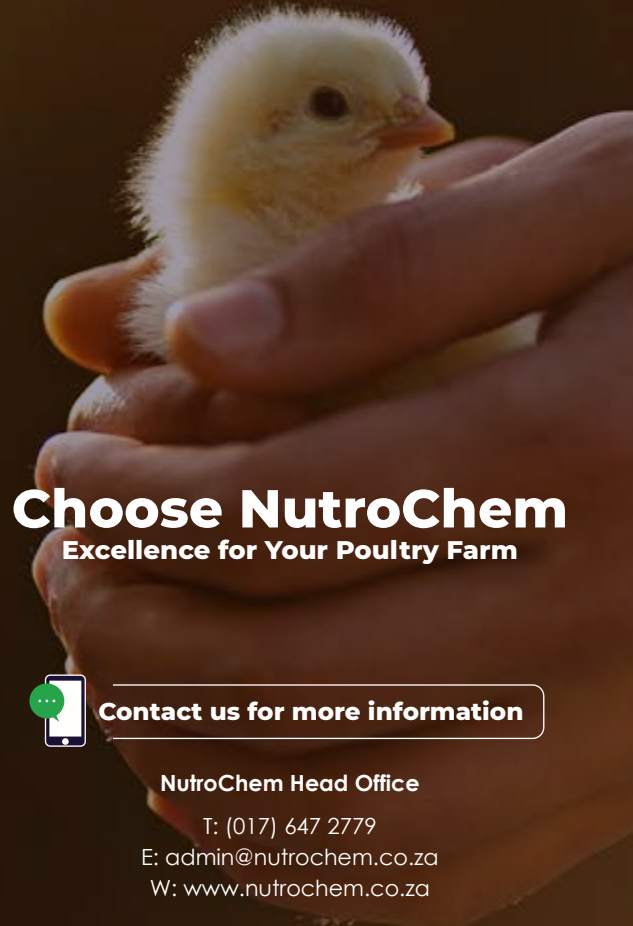


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NEWS IN BRIEF



A new leader at Quantum, telling egg stories and more local news

Compiled by **Charmain Lines**

QUANTUM MAKES HISTORY WITH FIRST WOMAN CEO

THE POULTRY INDUSTRY IS CELEBRATING the appointment of Adel van der Merwe, the cover star of this issue, as the first woman to head up a major poultry company in South Africa.

Van der Merwe took up the position of CEO of Quantum Foods on 1 April this year, following the retirement of Hennie Lourens after a tenure of almost 10 years at the helm of the diversified feeds and poultry business. In the interest of an orderly transition, Lourens will remain an executive director of the company until 31 May this year.

Having been in the animal-feeds and food industry since 2008 when she joined Nova Feeds, Van der Merwe knows the business environment well, and has the experience she needs for her new responsibilities.

She was appointed in her previous position, that of executive: layer farming and eggs, in 2016. Nulaid, the egg-layer division of Quantum Foods, is the largest egg producer in South Africa and the only one with a national footprint. It has been voted the number-one egg brand in South Africa for nine consecutive years.

Armed with a BCom degree in management accounting from Stellenbosch University, Van der Merwe started her career in the corporate finance department of Pioneer Foods in 1995. From there she moved to central procurement where she was involved in



the procurement of raw materials and commodities for the company. In 2008 she joined Nova Feeds, which was a division of Pioneer Foods at the time but was acquired by Quantum in 2019.

As Van der Merwe is also a member of the editorial board of *Poultry Bulletin*, we extend a particularly loud and warm word of congratulations to her. May your time as Quantum Foods CEO be filled with much success and progress. 📷

TELLING THE EGG STORY

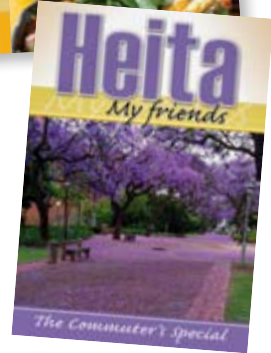


IF YOU ARE A TAXI commuter in Gauteng, be sure to pick up a copy of *Heita My Friends* magazine in the next few months and check out the egg news and tasty recipes inside.

As part of its campaign to make consumers more aware of the power and versatility of eggs, SAPA's Egg Organisation is targeting the magazine's March, April, May, July and October issues this year.

"HPAI completely disrupted our efforts to boost egg consumption by getting South Africans to see it as more than a breakfast food," says Dr Abongile Balarane who heads the Egg Organisation. "A cornerstone of the plan was a programme to supply eggs every Thursday to a few schools around Gauteng. We did this a few times and then bird flu hit us badly."

For now the schools programme remains on hold while the egg industry rebuilds flocks and recoups financial losses. But the word is getting out there through media that include print and online newspapers and magazines, radio and television. 📷



CHICKEN FARMERS IN TRAINING

BEKKER HIGH SCHOOL near Magaliesburg is the only agriculture school in Gauteng with a working farm and all the necessary facilities to teach its learners the theory and practice of chicken, cattle and sheep farming.

The chicken operation includes broilers and layers, the latter in both free-range and cage environments. Learners are therefore exposed to the different facets of meat and egg production. The broiler house has capacity for 3 000 birds per cycle, the free-range set-up is home to 200 layers and the cages can hold just over 1 400 birds. Around 80% of the eggs produced on the farm are used in the school's hostels.

Principal Alex Rademan says that the school dearly wants to expand its chicken section but, as every chicken

and egg farmer know, that requires investment. "Our dream is to become commercially profitable and produce more than what the school requires. Expanding our facilities will also allow us to enroll more pupils." Currently, around 300 Grade 8 and 9 learners do agriculture studies as a subject, and another 100 take agricultural sciences, technology and management practices in Grades 10 to 12.

"Support from established chicken producers in the area would be very welcome," says Rademan. "Talks by experienced farmers are always of great value to our learners, and even more so when they are willing to play a mentoring role for teachers and learners." The school will also be grateful for donations or sponsorships of day-old chicks and feed, and is



offering its facilities for meetings, conferences and, particularly, training events. "We are a school, after all," says Rademan, "and the income generated in this way always comes in handy." 📱

IF YOU CAN HELP, CONTACT:

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principal@bekkerhs.co.za

<https://bekkerhs.co.za>
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ORIGINS OF A CHICKEN



A look inside a laying house at Hillside

That juicy chicken thigh you scooped from the braai and loaded onto your plate has a longer history than most people realise. To get a chicken that is the perfect balance of size and tenderness is the result of a highly complex programme that starts two-and-a-half years earlier.

Melinda Shaw quizzes County Fair on the process

Photographs: supplied



Ross 308 is a popular breed across the world

WHY ROSS 308?

THE ROSS 308 IS A POPULAR broiler breed globally, known for its excellent growth rate, feed-conversion efficiency, and overall performance. Its suitability for South Africa can be attributed to several key factors:

- 1. Rapid growth rate:** Bred for rapid growth, the Ross 308 reaches market weight quickly. This characteristic aligns with the demands of the modern poultry industry, where efficiency in meat production is essential.
- 2. Feed efficiency:** These chickens are known for their efficient conversion of feed into meat, making them cost-effective for producers. This is crucial in ensuring economic sustainability in poultry farming.
- 3. Adaptability:** While the Ross 308 is not specifically native to South Africa, its adaptability to different environments and production systems makes the breed suitable for a variety of climates and management practices.
- 4. Disease resistance:** Poultry breeds like the Ross 308 often undergo selective breeding to enhance resistance to common diseases. This can be particularly important in regions with specific disease challenges.
- 5. Industry standard:** The Ross 308 has become an industry standard in many parts of the world, including South Africa. Its widespread use allows for the availability of technical support, expertise, and a consistent supply of breeding stock.
- 6. Meat quality:** The breed is known for producing high-quality meat with good yield, meeting consumer preferences for quality poultry products.
- 7. Breeding programme expertise:** Aviagen, the company behind the Ross 308, is a well-established and reputable poultry-breeding company internationally. Its expertise in genetic selection and breeding programmes contributes to the success of its breeds in various regions, including South Africa.

It's important to note that while the Ross 308 is a popular choice, there are other broiler breeds and genetic lines used in the poultry industry, and the selection of a particular breed depends on various factors such as market demands, production goals, and local conditions. 📄

ASTRAL'S HILLSIDE BREEDING FARMS near Hermanus in the Western Cape are part of a network of facilities where the science of breeding the perfect broiler for its County Fair brand is constantly being refined.

It all starts with the arrival of great-grandparent (GGP) Ross 308 birds that are bred by poultry-genetics experts Aviagen in Scotland, and brought to South Africa as day-old chicks via air, explains Alewyn Carstens who is the operational manager for broilers at County Fair. The Ross 308 breed is then further refined by Astral's breeding division, Ross Poultry Breeders, for the specific requirements of the South African market. Selective breeding and testing include considerations for temperature, humidity, disease prevalence, and other factors that could impact the performance and health of the birds.

According to Carstens, breeding companies often work closely with local poultry producers to understand the specific challenges and requirements of the region. "Through selective breeding and testing, they aim to develop strains that thrive in the given environment and meet the needs of the local poultry industry." (See "Why Ross 308?" alongside.)

The GGP birds produce the next generation of



It takes four generations of Ross 308 birds and two-and-a-half years to produce the County Fair chicken that consumers buy

grandparent (GP) birds, which are bred to lay the eggs from which the parent-stock broiler breeders hatch. These finally produce the eggs that will hatch to become the broilers that we all know from the County Fair packaging in stores.

BREEDING 101

At a breeding facility both male and female chicks are placed, calculated on a 1:10 male to female ratio, Carstens

explains. Males and females are reared separately before this, as the feeding regimes are different to optimise

Hens start laying at 23 weeks and then start breeding

performance. Hens start laying at 23 weeks and at this point they start breeding with the roosters to produce fertilised eggs.

A hen reaches her peak performance at 28-30 weeks, and can lay up to six eggs per week after which her productivity slowly tapers off from 35 weeks onwards.

In her commercial life of 40 weeks, a hen will lay on average 198 eggs, from which 153 chicks will result, according to Carstens.

“Eggs are collected daily, by hand, from the nesting boxes provided in each house. Some eggs are laid in

THE GROWTH OF HILLSIDE

ASTRAL STARTED THE HILLSIDE breeding project back in the '80s specifically to produce broiler eggs for County Fair in the Western Cape. Phase 1 of the project was built in 1986 and a site alongside on the same property was simultaneously identified for future expansion into what would be known as Hillside 2.

Civil works and an environmental impact study was completed to prepare Hillside 2 for future expansion and the site lay ready for 20 years until it became needed. That time came in 2022 when concerns about urban encroachment near County Fair's other layer farms in the Western Cape drove Astral to provide a safer new home for its broiler breeder flock (also read "Urban sprawl & the threat to farmland" on page 32).

"With encroachment came an increased risk for avian flu and other diseases and therefore we took the strategic decision to move operations to a low-risk environment," says Carstens. At Hillside 2 four new laying houses were constructed with an immediate capacity of 45 000 broiler breeders, as well as the necessary infrastructure for phase 3 of the project, which will eventually bring the farm's capacity up to 130 000 broiler breeders.

Setting up a breeding facility is a very specialised construction process, explains Carstens. "Building on sandy soil presents threats of erosion, so initial work is required to maintain stable ground. Steep slopes further exacerbate these concerns, which also demand careful planning and management.

"Then there are the logistical complexities involved in importing building materials and equipment, which can affect timelines, and on top



A team of over 20 subcontractors worked together to create the best possible home for a breeding flock at Hillside 2

of all of that we had to adapt to local environmental conditions such as heavy rains and strong winds."

It takes a team of combined expertise to build the best possible home for a breeding flock, and over 20 different subcontractors were involved in setting up and kitting out Hillside 2, says Carstens. For a building of this nature, he explains, materials used have to be resistant to corrosion, chemicals and ammonia, it needs to insulate sufficiently to protect against heat,

ingress of wild birds, litter beetles and rodents, and it has to be UV resistant to ensure durability in the long run.

Once the infrastructure was in place, the best possible lighting, feeding, drinking and ventilation equipment was installed by Big Dutchman to control the environment inside the houses.

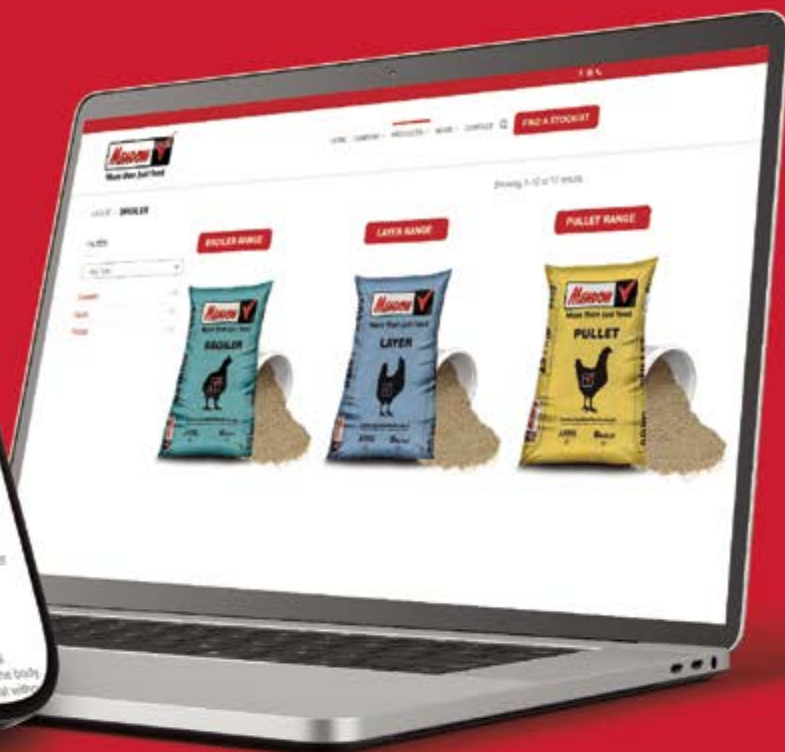
The new houses were officially opened in August 2023, the farm was stocked with point-of-lay birds, and production got underway. 📷



The four laying houses at Hillside 2 have a capacity of 45 000 broiler breeders

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////////////////////////////////////// THE SCIENCE OF BROILERS

the litter on the floor, but we discard floor eggs as we don't want any contaminants in contact with our hatching eggs. Our aim is to produce broiler eggs of a hitherto unmatched quality standard," he says.

From Hillside, Carstens explains, the eggs are transported to County Fair's own hatcheries, and the resulting broiler chicks are then placed at the company's various broiler farms. It takes 32 days to raise these chicks to commercial size, when they are slaughtered and processed.

The laying hens are commercially productive until they reach 62 weeks of age, following which they are directed to the cull trade, and the farm is

The houses are fitted with nesting boxes for the hens to lay the eggs, which are collected manually every day



THE SCIENCE OF BROILERS

restocked with new point-of-lay pullets.

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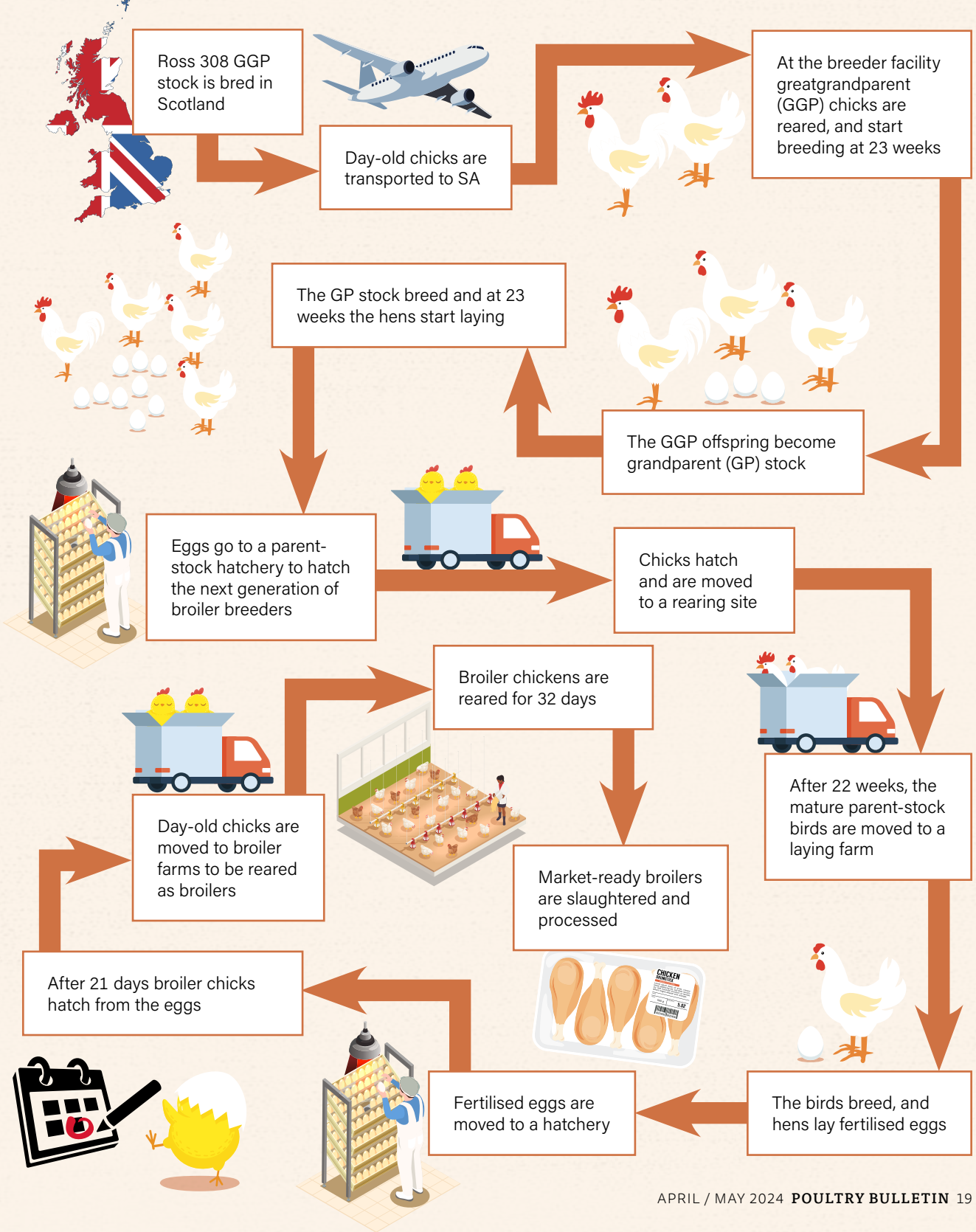
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HOW BROILERS ARE BRED





COLIBACILLOSIS IN BROILERS

WHAT IS COLIBACILLOSIS?

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) occurs ubiquitously and forms part of the normal commensal intestinal tract flora of poultry. However, certain strains can cause a localised or systemic disease known as Colibacillosis. These avian pathogenic *E. coli* (APEC) are commonly known as opportunistic, secondary pathogens. There is increasing evidence that they may be able to act as primary pathogens too.

Colibacillosis is a common disease in broiler production resulting in significant economic losses by reducing on farm production and increasing reject levels at slaughterhouses¹. Of public health significance is the use of antibiotics to treat colibacillosis infections and studies exploring the links between APECs and human extraintestinal pathogenic *E. coli* (ExPECs).

The severity of the disease is influenced by the virulence factors of the particular *E. coli* strain and the susceptibility of the birds themselves. Multiple risk factors can increase susceptibility:

- Primary pathogens; viruses like Infectious Bronchitis, coccidiosis and *Mycoplasma* spp.
- Immunosuppression; caused by stress or diseases such as Infectious Bursal Disease
- Poor chick quality
- Seasonal challenges
- Production and management stress
- Poor nutrition including Mycotoxins
- Poor water quality
- High bacterial load in the environment
- And more!

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE ROUTES OF INFECTION FOR *E. COLI*?



Aerosol and oral infection

Inhalation of dust containing APECs can invade the body via the respiratory tract. This is made more likely following a respiratory infection or when the immune status of the bird is compromised due to environmental stressors and poor air quality.



Local infection

Even very light scratches to the skin of the birds can be enough for APECs to be introduced and allow cellulitis to develop.



Breeder flocks

The yolk sac of broiler chicks may become infected with *E. coli*. This can originate from faecal contamination of the egg surface post-laying, during incubation or from contact with contaminated environments before the chick's navel has fully healed.

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN FLOCKS SUFFERING FROM COLIBACILLOSIS?

Colibacillosis can have several serious manifestations within broiler production, including:

- **Colisepticaemia**
 - Airsacculitis: Resulting from inhalation of dust containing APECs
 - Omphalitis: Young broiler chicks with unhealed navels and infected yolk sacs can be seen. Mortality in affected flocks typically peaks at around 5 days of age
 - Polyserositis: Following systemic spread, signs including perihepatitis and pericarditis can be seen on post-mortem
 - Enteritis, meningitis etc.
- **Increased carcass condemnation rates at processing**
- **Cellulitis:** Subcutaneous bacterial infection commonly seen on the surface of the breast muscle
- **Lameness**
- **Poor growth**
- **Increased mortality**

Colibacillosis outbreaks may need to be treated; increasing antibiotic usage and adding further costs to production.

HOW IS COLIBACILLOSIS DIAGNOSED AND TREATED?

Colibacillosis on broiler farms is usually diagnosed on post-mortem, however a bacterial culture and sensitivity analysis should be performed to rule out other bacterial causes. In the case of colibacillosis, bacterial culture should yield a pure culture of *E. coli*. When found, this condition will likely require antibiotic treatment. MALDI-TOF MS (matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionisation time-of-flight mass spectrometry) can also be used to identify *E. coli*.

Molecular methods, like whole genome sequencing and multi-locus sequence typing, have proven to be useful tools to understanding APECs.²

References:

1. Nojan IK, et al. Colibacillosis. In: Swayne DE, ed. *Diseases of Poultry*, 14th Edition. Wiley-Blackwell; 2020 770. 2. Henrik Christensen, Josef Bachmeier & Magne Bisgaard (2020): New strategies to prevent and control avian pathogenic *Escherichia coli* (APEC). *Avian Pathology*, DOI:10.1080/03079457.2020.1845300. 3. European Medicines Agency, CVMP assessment report for Poulvac[®] *E. coli*. Vaccine to reduce mortality and lesions associated with serotype O78. 2012 Jul 02. P. 8. Report No.: EMA/CVMP/298291/2012. 4. Data on file, Local South African Study. 5. Data on file, Local South African study

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Poulvac[®] *E. coli*, Reg No. G3874 (Act 36/1947), Active ingredients: Avirulent, live, freeze-dried culture of $\geq 1.7 \times 10^7$ CFU per dose of vaccine.

Full product information available from Zoetis South Africa (Pty) Ltd., Co. Reg. No.: 2012/001825/07, 6th Floor, North Wing, 90 Rivonia Road, Sandton, 2196, PostNet Suite 53, Private Bag 9976, Sandton, 2146, South Africa. Tel.: + 27 11 245 3300 or 0860 ZOETIS (0860 963847), www.zoetis.co.za
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PREVENTION AND CONTROL

With current efforts to reduce antibiotic usage on farms; total control programs including proactive prevention methods are becoming increasingly important.²

Total control programs for broilers include:

- Good quality food and water and optimisation of environmental conditions.
- Appropriate vaccination and control programs against primary pathogens.
- Good hygiene management both on farm and at the hatchery.
- Optimal management of breeder flocks to reduce the potential for colibacillosis infections in young chicks.
- Vaccination: The variety of *E. coli* strains and variability of virulence genes means broad protection is often necessary in field conditions and this should be considered when designing an appropriate vaccination program. Autogenous vaccines can be prepared using isolates of strains found on the farm to increase protection against a specific strain, whilst a live vaccine can give broader protection.³

Poulvac® E. coli from Zoetis is the live, attenuated *E. coli* vaccine. It is recommended for mass administration to healthy fowls 1 day of age or older by spray as an aid in the prevention of disease caused by *E. coli*. Local field studies on broiler farms using Poulvac® E. coli have shown reduced condemnations, mortality levels and antibiotic usage whilst improving weight gain and Feed Conversion Ratios (FCRs).^{4,5}



Dr. Susan Rodakis

Technical Manager :
Pigs and Poultry

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References: 1. Love N. Demonstration of the economic benefits of using Poulvac E. coli in a commercial broiler operation. Poster presented at: World Veterinary Poultry Association Congress; September 16-19, 2019; Bangkok, Thailand. 2. Data on file, Study Report No. B510-09-RFT.R, Zoetis Services LLC.

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MEMBERS' NOTICEBOARD

What have SAPA members received in their mailboxes in recent weeks? We take a look and summarise those important notices

Compiled by **Michael Acott**

SAPA WORKING TO EASE VAX REQUIREMENTS

A closer look at the latest report to the SAPA board, by Broiler Organisation GM **Izaak Breitenbach**

SAPA IS HOLDING REGULAR MEETINGS with state officials in an effort to resolve difficulties around the onerous conditions the government has set that will prevent millions of chickens from being vaccinated.

We have also made repeated requests for an HPAI disaster fund for the industry and for compensation for birds culled during bird-flu outbreaks.

The protocols for vaccination published last November set extremely high requirements that farmers must meet before any vaccination permits will be approved.

As the regulations stand at the moment, producers who have 7.8 million broiler breeders will probably qualify to vaccinate, while a significant number of layer producers may likely

not be able to vaccinate due to stringent biosecurity regulations and monitoring protocols that are currently published by DALRRD.

This means that only 30% of our poultry flocks will be vaccinated and no small-scale farmers will be in a position to vaccinate.

Our initial discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) in January were unsuccessful, and further meetings are planned as we try to resolve these important industry issues.


These include our request for a disaster fund to assist poultry farmers who were forced out of business by bird-flu outbreaks.

The government's refusal to pay

compensation for culled birds is likely to end up in court.

The 2023 bird-flu outbreaks resulted in the culling of more than 9.5 million chickens – six million laying hens and 3.5 million broiler breeders.

We have secured antidumping duties against the nine countries we targeted to stop them dumping chicken here, but other trade-related campaigns will continue.

SAPA has asked for the import codes to be reduced from eight digits to seven digits to curtail the declaration of product under the wrong tariff heading, for the ad valorem duty (% based) to be retained and for a reference price (floor price) to be instituted. 



Chicken imports rising again

Last year's increase in poultry imports has continued into 2024. SAPA's imports reports for January show continued upward momentum, including in imports of bone-in chicken portions, which have been declining steadily since the peak in 2018.

This follows a turnaround in 2023, when poultry imports rose for the first time in four years. Imports for the year rose 11% to 415 000 tons at a landed cost of R4.8 billion.

January's figures show continued increases in all categories. Total poultry imports were up 19.7% on December 2023, and category increases were registered in all chicken (+19.9%), MDM (+12.4%), bone-in portions (+11.5%), as

well as offal (+32.2%).


With import tariff rebates already approved for the first three months of 2024, and possibly being repeated from April to June, the rise in import volumes seems likely to continue.

Most of the increase has been in offal and mechanically deboned meat (MDM), a paste used in the manufacture of processed foods such as polony. Import volumes for both rose steadily in 2023, with the year-end totals setting four-year records.

However, there are also indications that bone-in portions are rising again from what have been historic lows. Bone-in portions, notably leg quarters, are the imports that cause most problems for South African poultry

producers, as they compete directly with local packs of individually quick-frozen (IQF) portions.

Bone-in imports dropped precipitously from 287 000 tons in 2018 to 71 000 tons in 2023. Although the 2023 total was 22% below the previous year, bone-in imports registered a 19.5% increase in December, and then a further 11.5% increase was noted in January.

All of SAPA's applications for antidumping duties have concerned bone-in portions, but the rebates will work against these victories. Rebates, an incentive to increase import volumes, will reduce import tariffs on bone-in portions from non-EU countries to 37% from the previous 62%. 

Photograph: Shutterstock

Feeding growth in Africa.





H7 bird flu deadlier than H5



THE NEW H7N6 BIRD FLU STRAIN killed nearly five times as many chickens in South Africa last year as the H5N1 strain that poultry producers have been fighting for years.

The H7 strain, unique to South Africa, broke out in Gauteng at the end of May 2023, and by December 8.3 million chickens in six provinces had died or been culled.

The globally more prevalent H5 strain broke out in the Western Cape in March, and although there were widespread incidents, it caused deaths totalling 1.75 million in chickens in only two provinces, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape, according to SAPA's AI report for the last quarter of 2023.

Infections peaked in August, with only a few outbreaks reported in December.

"Although the spread of the avian influenza virus appears to have slowed down, producers are advised as always to remain on the alert and continue to comply with HPAI protocols," the report said. ▶



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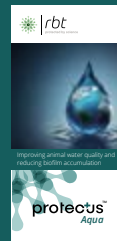
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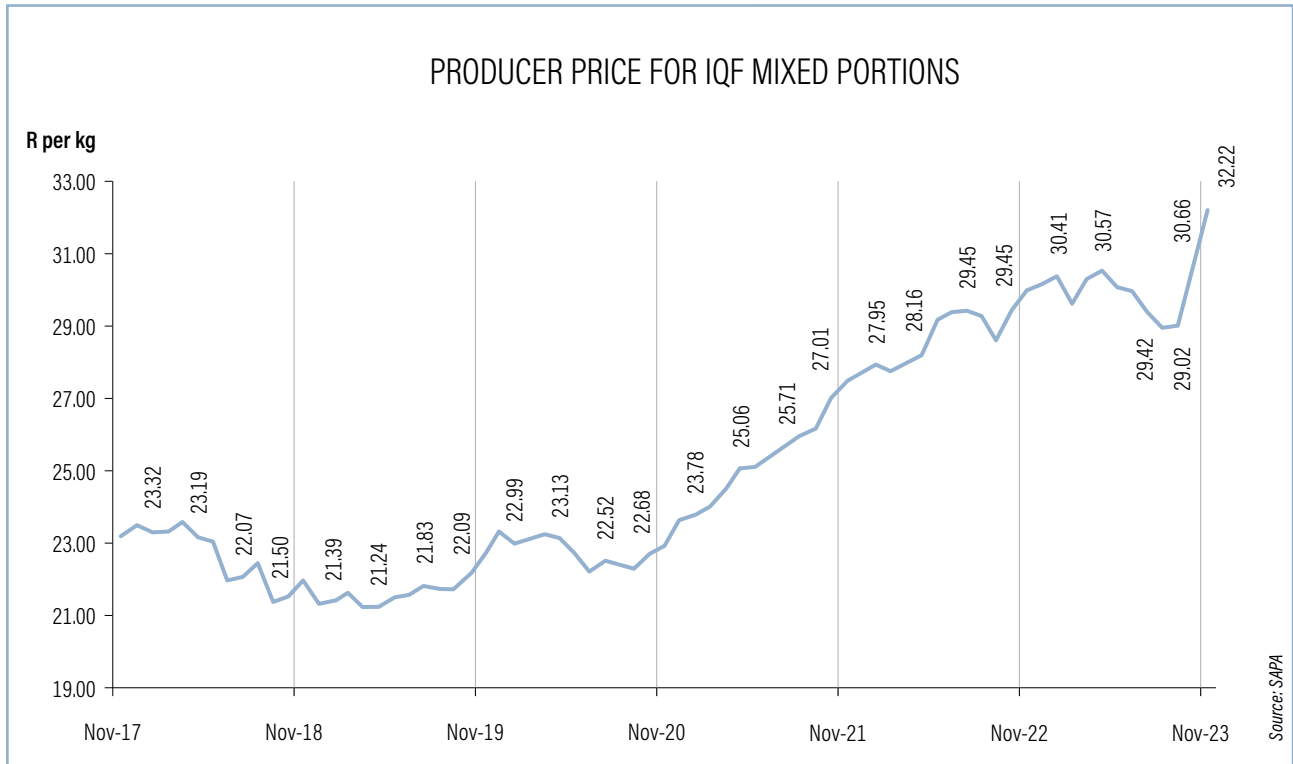
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SMALL PRICE RISES LAST NOVEMBER



THE AVERAGE PRODUCER PRICE for chicken rose 3% in November last year, while the average increase over the first 11 months of 2023 was 7.3%, considerably lower than in the previous two years.

These statistics are contained in SAPA's producer price report for November 2023. The average includes prices for fresh and frozen chicken. Frozen chicken accounted for 85% of production in November, with fresh chicken at 15%.

The average producer price in November was R33.6/kg, a 3% monthly increase and 9.5% higher than in November 2022. Fresh chicken averaged R41.39/kg, up 2.4%

monthly and 8.5% above the previous November. Frozen chicken averaged R31.94/kg, a rise of 2.9% from October and 9.1% higher than November 2022. On an annual basis, both the average price and the percentage increase are lower.

For the 2023 year up to November, chicken prices averaged R31.50/kg, 7.3% above the same period in 2022. The annual increase rate was far lower than in 2021 (11.3%) and 2022 (12.1%).

Prices of individually quick-frozen (IQF) portions, the largest production category, averaged R32.22/kg in November. This figure was 5.1% higher than October and 7.4% above November 2022.

On an annual basis up to November, the average IQF price was R30.11/kg, 4% higher than the previous year.

In the third quarter of 2023, the largest slice of chicken production (40.8%) went to retail purchasers, followed by wholesale (38.8%) and food services (17.3%). Exports accounted for only 0.6% of production.

The producer product mix for the third quarter showed the domination of frozen chicken over fresh. The three largest product categories were IQF portions (44.2%), frozen cuts (16.5%) and frozen sundries (12.8). All of these were higher than the largest fresh product categories of fresh cut (7%) and whole fresh chicken (5.4%).

Production dropped in November

BROILER CHICK PLACEMENT and chicken production declined in November 2023, according to SAPA's broiler production report for that month.

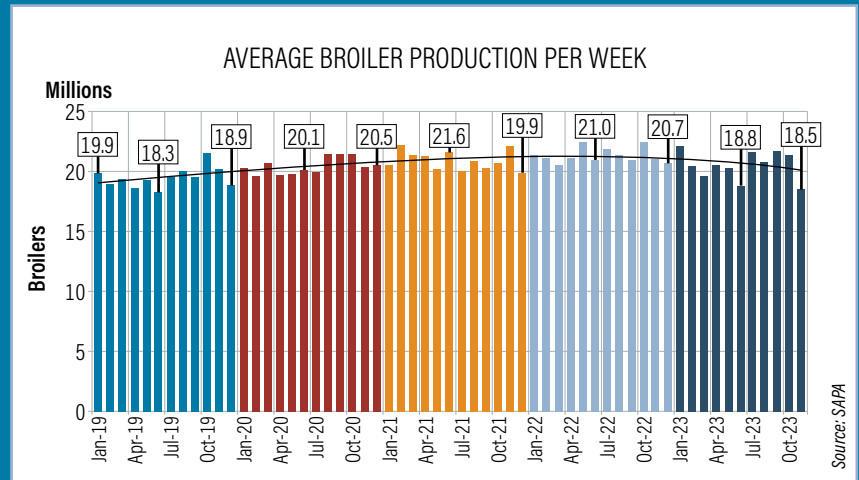
Broiler production in November averaged 18.5 million birds per week, 13.2% lower than the previous month and 12.2% below the November 2022 average of 21 million birds per week.

Over the first 11 months of 2023, production averaged 20.5 million birds per week, a 3.8% decline from the same period in 2022.

While production declined, imports rose. By November chicken imports totalled 367 000 ton, already exceeding the 360 000 ton imported in the full 2022 year.

South Africa's chicken consumption last November, including imports, was 156 000 ton. Imports for that month

comprised 22.7% of local production and 18.9% of total consumption. 📊



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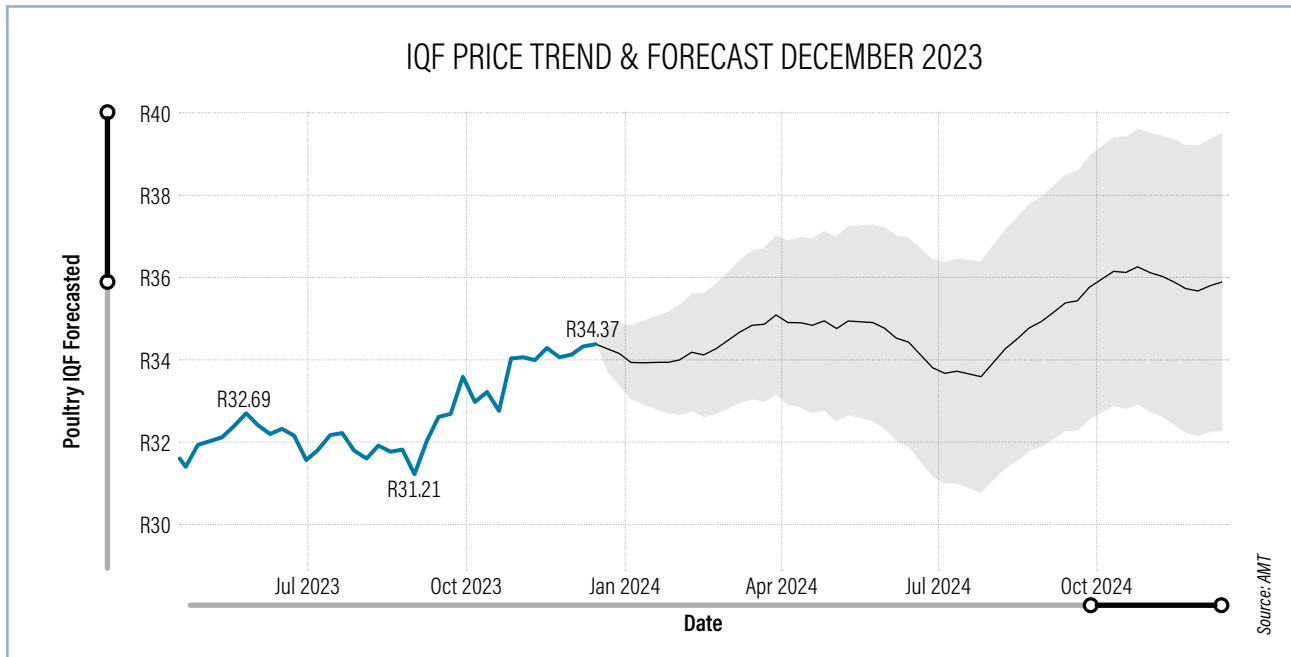
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SLOW RISE IN POULTRY PRICES



POULTRY PRODUCER PRICES rose by less than 1% in the last three months of 2023, according to agricultural trend-analysis company AMT.

AMT's livestock report for the fourth quarter of last year showed that the producer price of frozen chicken averaged R37.64/kg over the three months, an increase of 0.42% over

the previous quarter. Fresh chicken averaged R37.79/kg (+0.72%) and individually quick frozen (IQF) portions R33.82/kg (+0.06%).

Producer prices for the peak demand month of December were slightly higher than the three-month average. Frozen chicken averaged R38.30/kg, fresh chicken R38.68/kg and IQF portions

R34.26/kg, the report showed.

AMT's price forecast graph showed it expected producer prices of frozen and IQF chicken to trend downwards in the first and third quarters of 2024, rising at year end. Fresh chicken prices were expected to rise slowly in the first half of the year, and increase further at year-end. [f](#)

NOTICES

GOLF DAY 2024



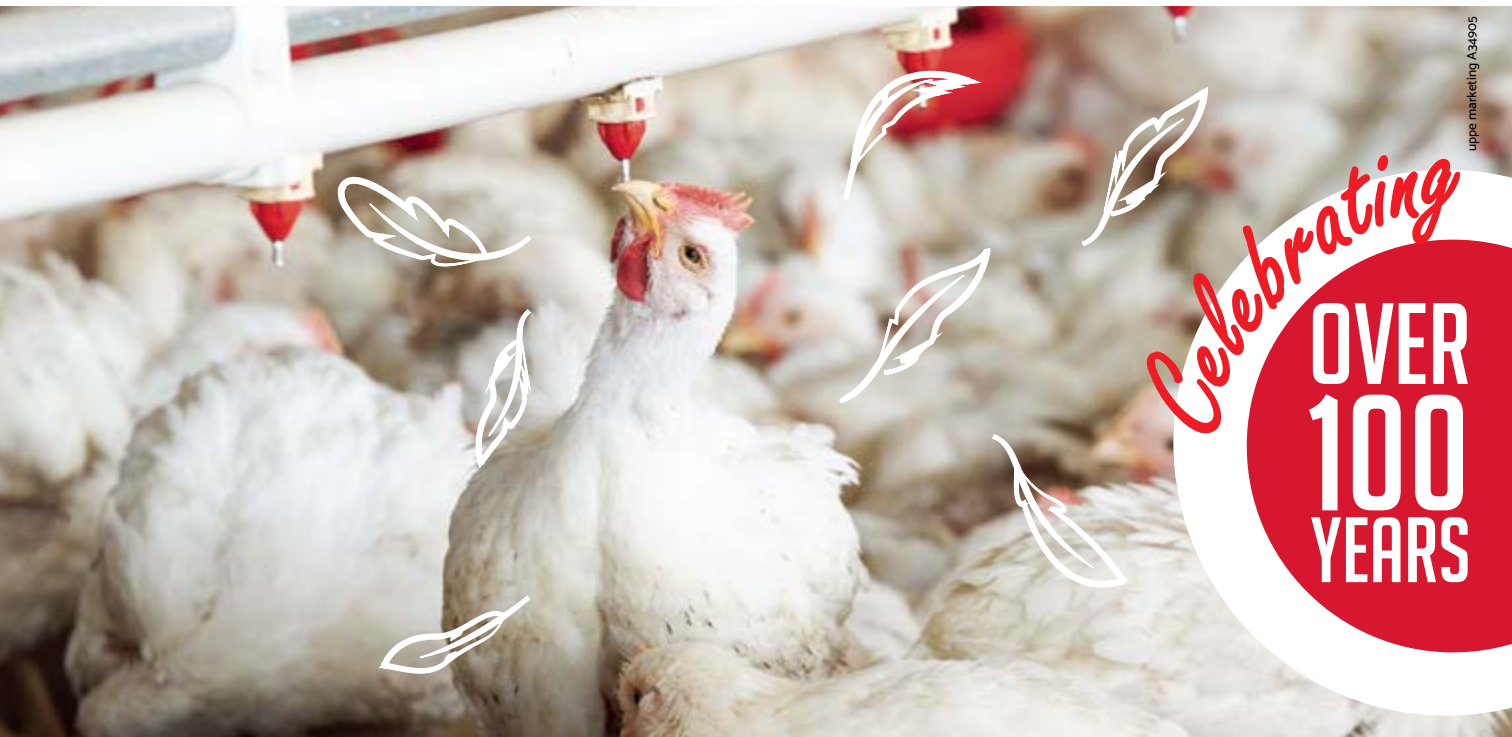
FOLLOWING THE DECISION that the AVI Africa poultry congress will in future only take place every two years, SAPA has announced a new biannual golf day for every alternate year, starting in 2024.

The first SAPA Golf Day will take place in Knysna at the 18-hole Pezula Golf Course on 7 June 2024, and SAPA's annual congress will be held there the day before,

on 6 June, not 7 June as previously stated.

A total of 112 players can be accommodated in 28 fourballs, and there will be four wet (watering) holes. SAPA is accepting sponsorships in a variety of categories. For more info on opportunities, or to book one of the limited spaces to play, contact Louisa at reception@sapoultry.co.za or on 011 795 9920. [f](#)

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OBITUARIES

DR CHRISTO JOUBERT

2/10/1970 - 25/1/2024



SAPA AND *POULTRY BULLETIN* have learnt with sadness of the untimely death of leading agricultural economist Dr Christo Joubert at the age of 53 in Bloemfontein. At the time of his death in January he was a senior lecturer in agricultural economics at the University of the Free State, a position he took up a year ago after serving for 13 years at the National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) as senior manager at the Markets and Economic Research Centre division.

Egg Organisation GM Dr Abongile Balarane, who worked at NAMC with Dr Joubert from 2013 to 2021, recalls his former colleague with great fondness. "I have no words for this tragic loss – a blow to the Joubert family, but also to the South African agricultural fraternity as a whole. A giant has fallen, a true original, with a big heart and such encompassing knowledge of the agriculture sector, and the poultry industry in particular. There are few people in this field who has such a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in South African society, and in our sector.

"In 2015 he became my line manager at the committee overseeing supply and demand in grains and oilseeds, and after I left NAMC to join SAPA we worked together on a study about the sustainability of the egg industry, which investigated whether the industry was ready to transition to cage-free egg production. It is his research findings that we rely on today to explain the dynamics in South Africa, and why we are not ready for that transition.

"He was like a brother to me, a warm-hearted and passionate man; and he will be sorely missed."

We extend our sincere condolences to Dr Joubert's loved ones. 📧

FRANCOIS JACOBBSZ

14/11/1971 - 05/02/2024



THE COUNTRY BIRD HOLDINGS FAMILY mourns the passing of Francois Jacobsz, who leaves behind a legacy of dedication, humour and significant contributions to the poultry industry. For the past two years, Jacobsz served as the general manager of further processing at CBH's Germiston plant, where his leadership and expertise were highly valued.

Joining CBH in 2008 within the inbound logistics space, Jacobsz brought with him over a decade of experience in the poultry industry, having started his career at Agrichicks in Mahikeng in 1995. Known for his commitment, loyalty and infectious sense of humour, Jacobsz endeared himself to colleagues and friends alike. He was an avid cyclist, cherishing his KAP sani2c cycling medal as a testament to his physical achievements.

During his tenure at CBH, Jacobsz achieved significant milestones, including obtaining his MBA at NWU business school on a Supreme Poultry bursary, and overseeing the opening of the Poultry Palace, as the Germiston further-processing plant was fondly dubbed. His leadership and dedication were evident in the successful startup of the plant, and earned him the respect and admiration of all who worked with him.

Jacobsz is survived by his beloved wife, Chantel, children Brendon and Chané, and his extended family, friends and colleagues, who will deeply miss his presence.

Poultry Bulletin extends our heartfelt condolences to his loved ones. 📧



URBAN SPRAWL & THE THREAT TO FARMLAND

Biosecurity demands that chicken farms need relative isolation while still being close enough to the rest of the value chain. But what happens when the farm that was established in a rural area 20 years ago finds itself in the path of progress?

Diane McCarthy investigates

Illustrations: **Thorsten Deckler**





BACK IN 1986 when Marco Torsius established his El Azaar poultry farm on the southern outskirts of Bloemfontein, he was far out of town, well beyond the ring road that surrounds the city.

But over the years the informal settlement has moved closer, and the township is now hard against his border fence, bringing all the risks of contamination into his laying sheds. The threat of disease posed by his close neighbours is now impossible to ignore, and the time has come to make some tough decisions. "The likelihood of picking up avian flu, *E. coli* and salmonella from the backyard chickens and wild birds roaming around close to our fence is huge," says Torsius.

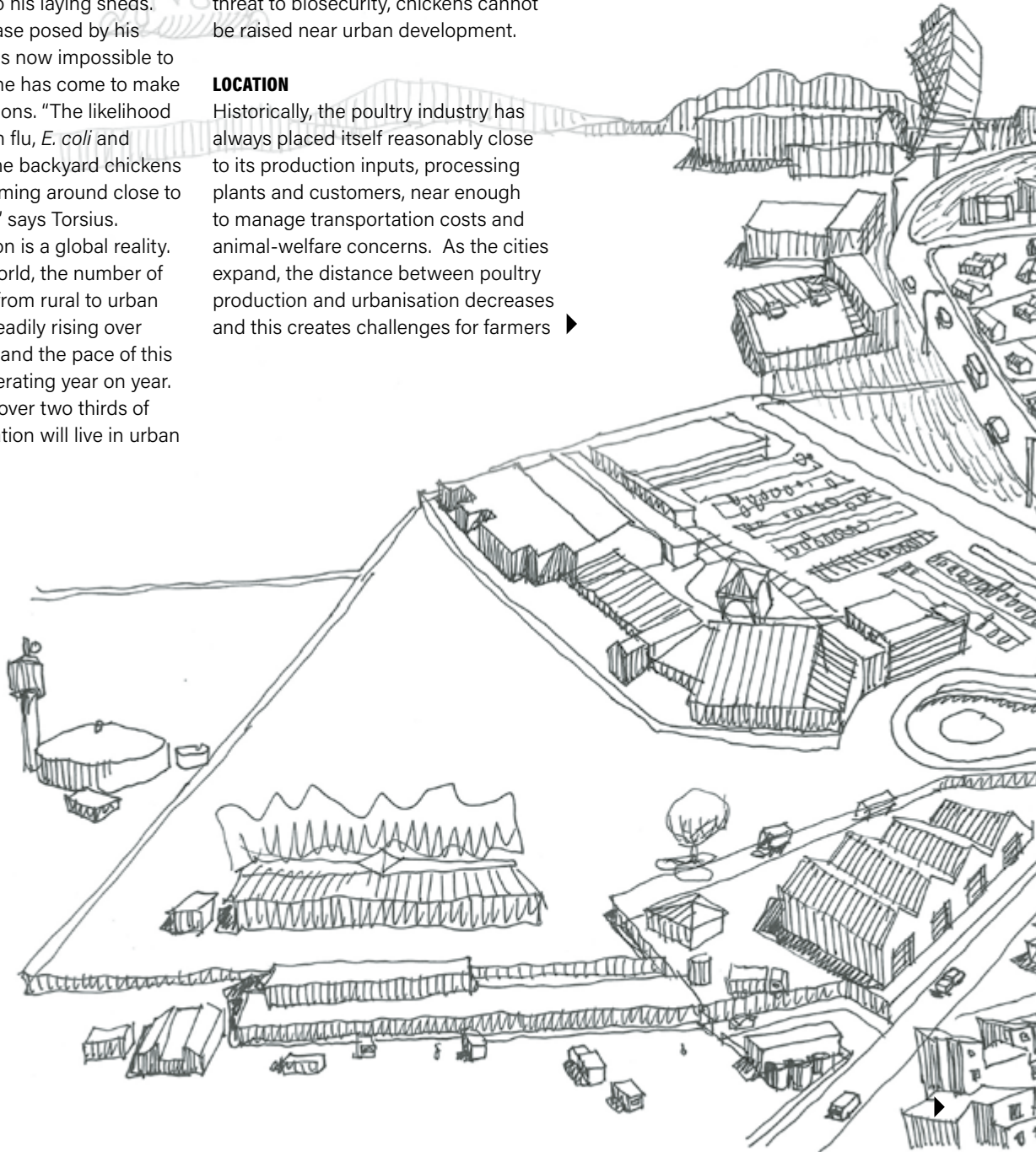
Urban expansion is a global reality. Throughout the world, the number of people migrating from rural to urban areas has been steadily rising over the past 20 years, and the pace of this migration is accelerating year on year. The UN says that over two thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2050.

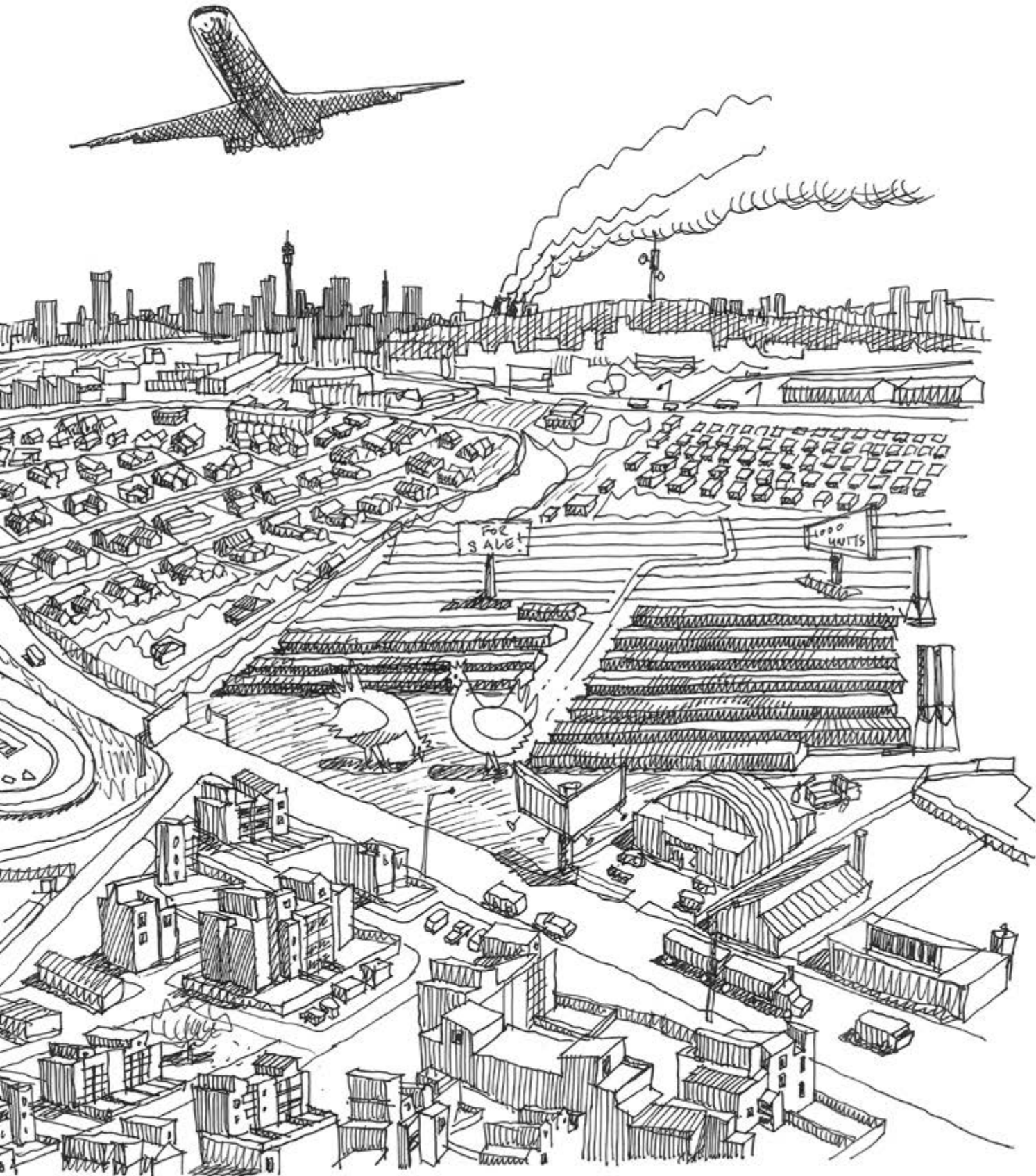
This puts enormous pressure on the rural urban divide, the area where human development meets agricultural land. All types of agriculture are the losers when urban encroachment happens; once agricultural land is developed it is lost forever.

The poultry industry is uniquely threatened by this urban sprawl. Because of the constant and growing threat to biosecurity, chickens cannot be raised near urban development.

LOCATION

Historically, the poultry industry has always placed itself reasonably close to its production inputs, processing plants and customers, near enough to manage transportation costs and animal-welfare concerns. As the cities expand, the distance between poultry production and urbanisation decreases and this creates challenges for farmers ▶







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and production plants. "We were here first" is not an argument that has ever stopped urban encroachment, no matter the implications for rural land.

"The location of the plant in relation to the farms is very closely planned; you don't want the birds to be on the truck for too long and secondly, transport costs money," says Frans van Heerden, managing director of Astral Foods commercial division. "It was all methodically planned like that. When it was built, our County Fair primary processing plant in the Cape was 20km from the closest residential area, but our city boundaries are on the march, and all our plants are more than 20 years old."

Astral is currently dealing with this issue on the northern border of a rapidly expanding Cape Town. Housing estates are coming ever closer to both their processing plant and their farms. Van Heerden explains the implications



of the increased development. "To move a processing plant, such as the County Fair Fisantekraal facility, is complex and will cost over R2 billion, so it's not an option. Moving a farm is already a substantial capital outlay, an estimated R50 to R60 million, but once a plant is in place, it has to stay where it is. We can't spend the amount of money needed to move the plant, so we'd rather use our energy on working with the people who are encroaching."

REGULATIONS

But working with the people is not always straightforward. Developers are quick to point fingers at agro-industry for various issues from water and noise pollution to bad smells. Astral makes sure to comply with all regulations and have the necessary paperwork to prove it, should there be any complaints from their new neighbours. They have entered into an agreement with the developers where development is not allowed to come within a certain

number of meters from the plant. Astral has accepted the situation and has agreed the rules of engagement with the developers. Says Van Heerden. "At least there we had the opportunity to sit with the people and say, we know you're going to come, you're not going to stop; how can we help each other?"

It's not a clear-cut process. With regulated, formal development, once land has been rezoned and earmarked for urbanisation there is a public-engagement process, where environmental assessments and heritage concerns are taken into consideration. Housing estates as well as golf courses and airports, such as the new Winelands airport in Durbanville near the County Fair facility, should all enter into negotiations with existing land users, and standards and practices must be adhered to by both parties. When development is in the public interest, there is great pressure to develop. Existing farms, or plants within



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industrial zones, are able to negotiate with the developers, but there are no hard and fast guidelines. And when the developers have completed the build, the new homeowners, who weren't part of the negotiating process, move in, and it's uncertain whether they remain bound by the negotiated agreement.

Both formal, regulated development and informal development present challenges to be managed. With informal development there is little opportunity for negotiation since zoning is disregarded. This puts businesses in a vulnerable position.

Says Mbusi Dlamini, breed and agricultural director at Rainbow, "In the case of uncontrolled development on rural agricultural land, where people set up housing infrastructure next to you, a business will be caught in the middle. From a zoning perspective you would think the government would say, look, that is agricultural land and

it is dedicated for that, so please keep away, people. However, that's not what happens."

RELOCATION

Rainbow recently relocated eight breeding facilities from Kyalami and Kempton Park in Gauteng to a site in the North West Province.

In informal development, zoning is disregarded. This puts businesses in a vulnerable position

Dlamini counts the cost of the move. "We were forced to convert broiler houses into breeding facilities on a site outside Rustenburg. This involved an expenditure of millions of rands, not only to convert the facilities for their new purpose, but also to relocate staff to their new homes more than 100km away."

The move cost the company R30 million in direct costs, but there are countless additional expenses that need to be factored into the final tally, substantially increasing the actual cost of the relocation.

Marco Torsius is in constant contact with his local Mangaung municipality and has a good relationship with the officials, as they try to find solutions that work for all parties. He accepts that development is inevitable and that his farm may not survive in the long run. But a solution for him has not yet been reached.

"We understand that government needs land for people. This is now the outskirts of town, and the land is needed for township development, so it all makes sense." But with only market value compensation on the table, it is too costly for Torsius to relocate.

"Government offers to buy your property for market value with no



On top of each other: this encroachment of residential developments forced Rainbow to move its Gauteng breeding facilities



Mbusi Dlamini

PROGRESS IN PRACTICE

money for replacement costs. They do not have the budget to offer more." The municipality's response is not easy to swallow, even though he understands their predicament.

SOLUTION

Poultry companies are willing to help find solutions to this growing problem. They want to help the municipalities provide the services that everyone in this country needs. But to do that, they need a seat at the negotiating table at the planning stage.

Development is important, everyone agrees; but so is an affordable supply of protein. The poultry industry does its job well, keeping costs in check to make sure South Africans have affordable meat on the dinner table. To expect companies to absorb the cost of relocation is unreasonable, and they need to be consulted about new

Farmers cannot carry the cost of relocation alone to make way for urban development as it creeps ever closer to farmland



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development so they can plan ahead and ensure their ongoing survival. Rainbow's Mbusi Dlamini explains why they need to be heard: "We understand the situation in South Africa and we also know we are vital to the economy. We grow much needed food. We employ a huge number of people. We create value."

NEW HORIZONS

Marco Torsius saw the change coming a decade ago, when a neighbouring farmer sold his land to the municipality, with the understanding that it was to become a cemetery. In time the informal settlement moved across the ring road, occupying the vacant land once

meant for burial, creeping ever closer to his precious birds.

He's been thinking about his business future. "When you're young and this happens, you have time to start again, but when you get to my age, there's not enough time left to rebuild. You have to ask yourself: do you want to continue?"

And after much thought Torsius has his answer. He is selling up and moving on. He plans to spend more time focusing on his feed company, hoping that the next generation of poultry farmers will set up further out of town and continue to produce enough eggs to feed the people, as he has been doing with so much pride for the last 37 years. 📷

BIOSECURITY RISKS FROM DEVELOPMENT

Obed Lukhele, technical executive of agriculture at Astral Foods, breaks down the biosecurity threats to a poultry facility from urban encroachment.

VERMIN

Informal settlements inevitably introduce vermin. Rodents can multiply if waste is not removed and they will invade farms, bringing with them infectious diseases such as that caused by *Salmonella* bacteria. Backyard chickens that are in direct contact with wild birds will increase the threat of highly contagious diseases such as the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) to nearby commercial poultry flocks.

THEFT

The risk of break-ins into commercial chicken farms may increase. These intrusions are considered biosecurity breaches against the standard practice where farm staff and visitors have to shower, leave behind all their personal belongings including private clothes and then change into clean and dedicated personal protective equipment.

LIGHT

Noise pollution and constant light emanating from both formal and informal encroachments are stressors to the birds. Chickens require controlled lighting for their optimum physiological development and production as well as their welfare. 📷

versed in the economic partnership agreement (EPA) between South Africa and the EU have been invaluable in this process, and give us confidence that our plan will be approved," says Da Silva.

The revised plan was due for submission by 31 March 2024. Once approved, the necessary sample testing will start and the results submitted to the EU. If all is found to be in order and approved, EU legislation will need to be updated to reflect that South Africa had been approved for export. Only then will local producers be permitted to supply customers in the EU.

Da Silva emphasised that the industry is seeking a split-system arrangement, which entails that producers can choose to export or not and how much of their production to earmark for foreign markets. For now,

the local industry is planning to only export fully cooked chicken meat.

"Exporting will be a gamechanger for us, but it is a steep learning curve," she says. "We have to build an understanding of all our potential export markets and then ensure that compliance is built into our supply chain. We also have to work out how to dilute the additional costs of compliance, figure out logistics and packaging and find the right freight forwarders to partner with."

Securing EU approval is a golden key. Compliance with its requirements will automatically give local players access to the UK – which is the real prize – and other markets. The UK is the biggest importer of breast fillets in the European region and supply struggles to keep up with demand that topped 503 000 tons in 2022. 📌

Candice da Silva



GREATER COOPERATION TO OPEN MORE DOORS

DURING FEBRUARY this year, the newly established export industry workgroup had its first meeting to explore how to cooperate in areas that will remove shared obstacles to export.

A primary consideration is making the most of DALRRD's limited resources. "It is unnecessary for five companies to engage DALRRD on the exact same issues," says Da Silva. "It makes far more sense for us to approach the department as an industry in terms of export requirements, having considered everyone's inputs, views and needs beforehand."

Another major area of collaboration concerns sanitary and phytosanitary issues, including HPAI, that could bar the industry from potential export markets.

"Collaboration by all stakeholders, namely the chicken producers, SAPA, AMIE, DTIC, DALRRD, the EU authorities and, finally, potential importing customers, is the key to opening the European market and all future markets," concludes Da Silva. "Teamwork makes the dream work." 📌

THE WORKGROUP MEMBERS ARE:

Astral
CBH
Grain Field Chickens
Rainbow
Sovereign



North West farmer Lerato Nkhumane posted this photo on her social media, saying, "My favourite! They bring back childhood memories of my grandma"

HERE'S AN OLD CHINESE SAYING, "He who eats chicken foot soup every day will always have happiness." That might be overstating matters, but these little delicacies certainly make millions of people around the world, including in our own country, happy enough for chicken feet to be sprinting off store shelves across the globe.

According to SAPA, South Africa is a net importer of chicken feet. Despite the integrated producers producing around 1 176 tons of feet a week*, supply cannot keep up with demand. DALRRD statistics show that in 2023, the country imported 57 308 tons of chicken feet and exported 1 803 tons, mainly to our neighbouring states.

*21 million birds slaughtered per week = 41 million feet x 28g (the average weight of a single walkie)



Walkies around the world

CHICKEN FEET ARE highly sought after in China, Vietnam and Hong Kong.

In Jamaica, they call chicken feet "lady fingers", and often make a soup with it that features pumpkin, carrots, yam, bananas and spices. Jamaican foot soup is slowly cooked over pimento wood for at least two hours.

Known as "phoenix feet" in China, chicken feet are seen as a symbol of luck and good fortune. Chinese people believe that eating a lot of chicken feet can bring one a huge fortune, since the diner will have more than two hands with which to grab money.

In Indonesia, the "the claw" (as locals refer to it), is served in a soup dish called Soto, while soft, peeled, boneless chicken feet is commonly served to babies between 6 and 12 months old. Indonesians also like their chicken feet deep fried, a snack they call *kripik ceker* or chicken-feet crackers. 🍷





Frans van Heerden, Astral's managing director: commercial, says that SA's largest chicken producer supplies two product lines into the walkies market. These are walkie talkies, or heads and feet in the same pack, and so-called "clean" feet. The latter is a higher-grade product that results from an additional processing step in which the epidermis, or outer layer of skin, is removed. "The clean feet look more appetising and command a premium in the market," says Van Heerden. "They are also sold in higher-end retail outlets than walkie talkies."

Walkies your way to better health

CHICKEN FEET MAY NOT (yet) be your favourite snack but they are worth including in your diet for their health benefits.

The protein in chicken feet is roughly 70% collagen, a structural protein in our bodies that is responsible for the health of our skin, tendons, muscles, bones and ligaments.

Studies conducted with collagen show all kinds of extraordinary health benefits: it can reduce wrinkles, remove cellulite, increase the elasticity of your skin, stimulate tissue regeneration to reduce symptoms of arthritis, improve knee pain, and increase bone formation and density in post-menopausal women.

The other nutrients in walkies – copper, magnesium, phosphorus, zinc and calcium – boost the immune system, while their high levels of protein, chondroitin and glucosamine are very good for the digestive system, help to detox the liver and also reduce inflammation.

One of the best ways to enjoy all the health benefits of chicken feet is to make your own chicken-feet bone broth:

Make sure your walkies are perfectly

clean before you start. Cover them with water in a pot and boil for around five minutes. Remove any fatty scum that might have risen to the surface, and drain the water.

Fill the pot about three-quarters full with fresh water, replace the feet and bring to the boil. Turn the temperature down to a simmer and add aromatic vegetables (onions, garlic, carrots and celery), plus bay leaves, thyme and black peppercorns. Also add a glug of apple cider vinegar to the pot to help

extract the nutrients from the bones.

Cover the pot and keep on a low simmer for at least seven hours; overnight is better. Add more water if necessary. When you're done, strain the liquid into a sterilised glass jar, let it cool and then refrigerate. In a few hours the liquid should turn into a jelly.

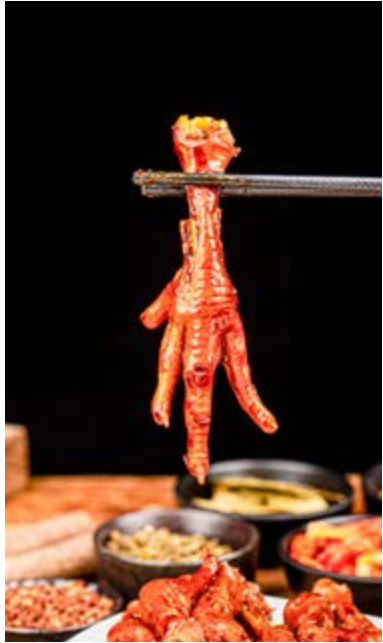
You can dissolve a few spoonfuls in hot water with a bit of salt and pepper and sip it, and/or use the broth as a stock for soups and add it to stews and briedies. [📷](#)



The fact that South Africans love walkies – either because they are a very affordable source of protein (and many other things that are good for you – see “Walkies your way to better health” on the previous page) or because it’s a food they grew up with and still enjoy – is a boon for local chicken producers. “If you can’t sell the feet, they have to be rendered and disposed of, which is not preferred,” says Van Heerden. “In South Africa, this is avoided at all cost; all our feet find a market.”

At 28g each, locally produced chicken feet are too small for the export market, especially China where the preferred standard is 35g, coming from a bigger bird that was slaughtered later than the South African standard.

Merlog Foods, one of the largest meat importers and exporters in South Africa, says that imported chicken feet are clean (epidermis removed) and bigger than what is typically produced locally. The company estimates that



around 4 000 tons of feet are imported per month, mainly from Europe and Brazil, and are generally marketed through butcheries direct to the consumer, street hawkers and ethnic-food outlets.

As nose-to-tail eating grows in popularity in the developed world, along with an increasing appreciation of the health benefits of a wider range of foods, walkies could very well be marching into many more kitchens in the near future. Here at home, they remain a prized part of the chicken value chain and one more example of South Africa’s culture of not wasting any part of the bird. 🍴

What is nose-to-tail eating?

IT IS SIMPLY THE PHILOSOPHY and practice of not wasting any edible part of a slaughtered animal. It is also the way our ancestors ate for nearly two million years. Eating the whole animal, including bone marrow and brains, gave early humans the nutrient-dense food they needed to feed the rapid growth of their own brains.

Only in recent times did consumers in more affluent countries start to turn up their noses at organ meat, cheeks, skin and, yes, chicken feet. Eating only the muscle meat of animals is a fairly recent dietary trend that is largely confined to industrialised nations.

Nose-to-tail eating leaves nothing to waste, maximises nutrition and respects the sources of our food. 🍴

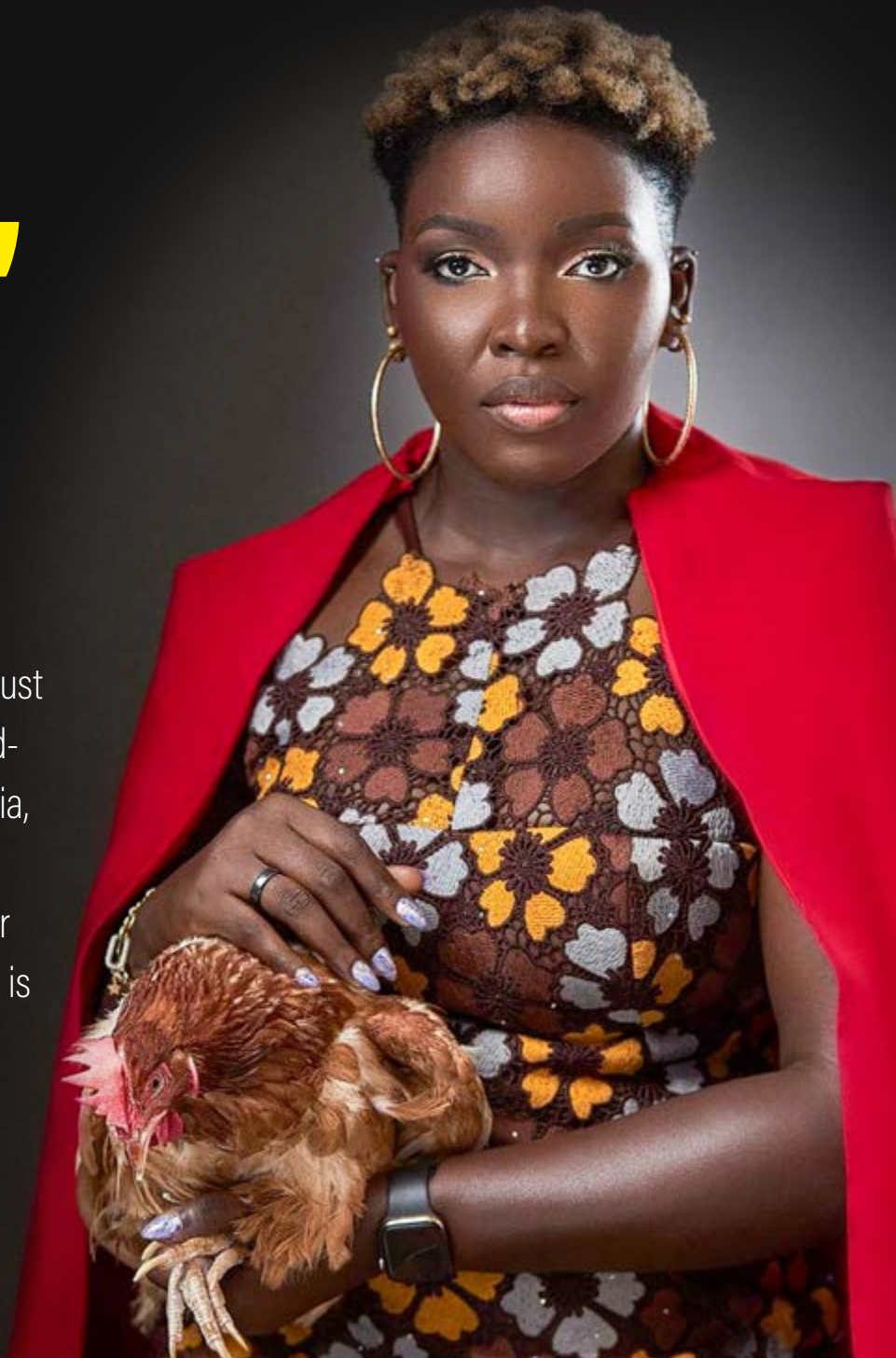




'AGRICULTURE CAN BE A GOLD MINE!'

If you do poultry farming right, you can make a lot of money. Just ask Onyinye Okereke, an award-winning young farmer in Nigeria, who shares her insights on social media and inspires other young people to learn all there is to know about chicken

By **Melinda Shaw**



SOCIAL MEDIA IS A POWERFUL TOOL for farmers to get their story across, and a useful research platform for those starting out to get first-hand advice from farmers who share their experiences and learnings.

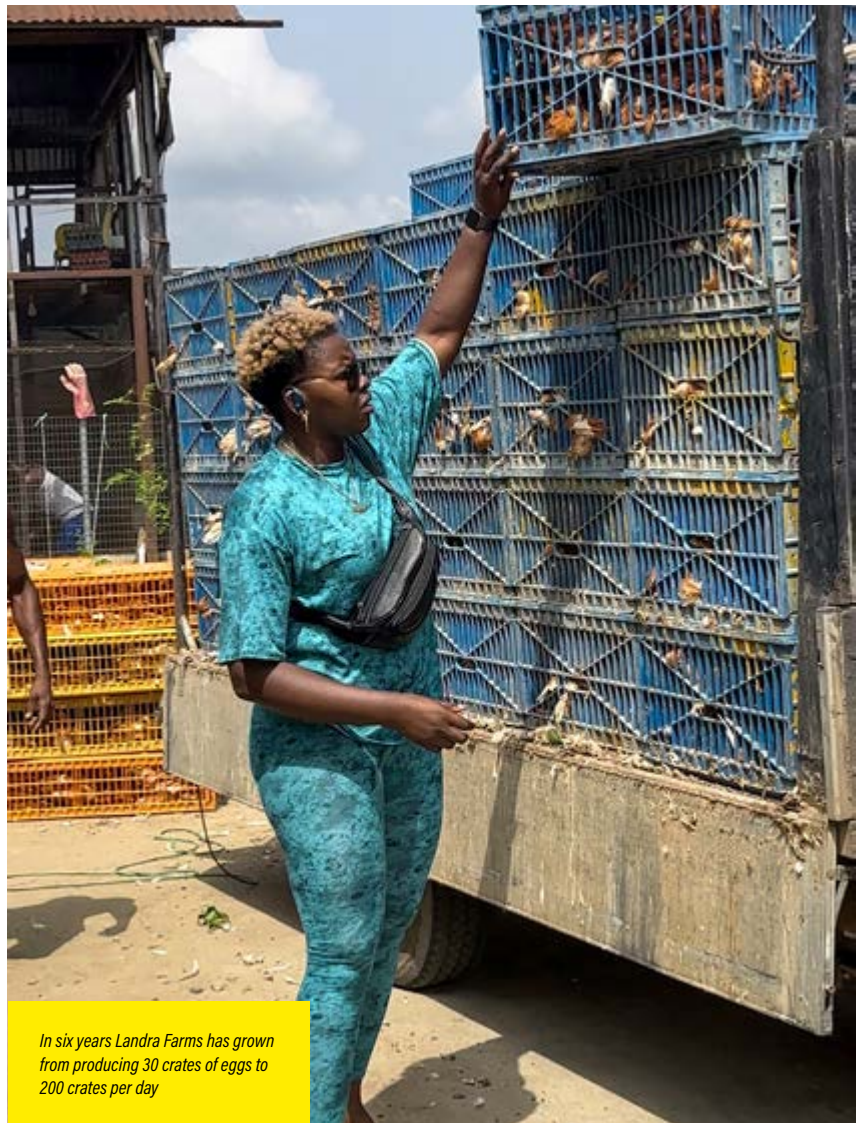
In Port Harcourt, Nigeria, Onyinye Okereke has been sharing her poultry journey with a growing Instagram follower base, and her videos that chronicle the story of Landra Farms garner as many as 45 000 views. This dynamic young woman also has made a name for herself as a fitness influencer, and she juggles all her passions with an infectious sense of enthusiasm.

"I started poultry farming in 2018, after a friend introduced me, and it has really grown with leaps and bounds since then," she says. She had no prior background in poultry farming, and went to neighbouring Benin for the necessary training at the renowned Songhai Centre, which promotes agricultural entrepreneurship among the youth in Africa.

It has not been a journey without its challenges, and Okereke is very grateful for the success she has experienced, when around her she has seen many other businesses fail. From starting with 30 crates of eggs per day, and three workers helping her, Landra Farms now produces an average of 200 crates of eggs with a team of nine full-time workers.

Her customers are wholesalers and retailers and she also supplies a handful of corporates.

"Farming in Nigeria takes a lot of dedication, because it is not easy. The rising cost of feed is an enormous challenge, and we battle to obtain the raw materials to produce our own feed. We are forever experimenting with different sources of feed to enhance our production without dropping quality. Finding consistent labour is also difficult, and in the end, it all comes down to sourcing of the



In six years Landra Farms has grown from producing 30 crates of eggs to 200 crates per day



necessary funds to keep everything going, which is a constant challenge."

She shares the experience of many poultry farmers around the world, facing resistance from consumers and retailers whenever a price increase on poultry products becomes necessary. "People expect farmers to absorb higher input costs and keep the selling price the same, which is so unfair, and so unsustainable for any business," she says.

But price increases are sometimes unavoidable, and she relies on her social media platform to broach the

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As Fitness Farmer on Instagram, Okereke shares her training updates



Okereke relaxes with her dogs, which feature in many of her social-media posts



news of a pending rise in the price.

"You need to have one-on-one conversations with your clients, and really manage the relationships."

Stock theft is another challenge that requires her constant vigilance, and Okereke sees it as a necessary evil to have to monitor the goings on in and around her farm. She has installed CCTV cameras and does random spot searches of the workers as this has sadly proved to be necessary. And being on top of your production volumes is key, she says:

"It is imperative that you have a good record system, so that you can pick up discrepancies sooner rather than later."

Her motto, as her 25 000 Instagram followers know, is "Agribusiness is the new oil" and Okereke fervently believes that agriculture has become as significant as the oil industry in terms of economic importance. "If harnessed properly," she says, "agriculture is a gold mine, because people will always eat, and hence there will always be a demand for food.

"Oil has been a crucial resource

for many industries, and there are parallels with agriculture, which provides essential resources in the form of food and raw materials. Oil has been a key driver of economies due to its energy-related applications, and now agriculture is recognised for its contributions to food security, employment, and the production of raw materials for numerous industries," she says.

The shift in focus toward sustainable and efficient agricultural practices underscores its pivotal role in ▶

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sustaining economies, and this, believes Okereke, echoes the historical importance of oil in economic development.

The Nigerian government can do a lot more to enable the success of poultry farmers, she says. Many more young people could find an entry point into this entrepreneurial way of life if there were more access to grants and security options for farmers. "We need meaningful forms of interventions in the agricultural sector, such as improvements in road infrastructure to make it easier to transport poultry and other farm produce."

For her to grow her business to a capacity of 50 000 to 100 000 laying hens, which is the long-term plan for Landra Farms, she would need capital, and as things stand, there is no easy way to get government assistance to facilitate this. But Okereke's dreams are big, and she hopes to add other forms of livestock to her business – pigs, goats and turkeys. In fact, if she could go back to the start and give herself a tip, it would be to add turkeys and broilers, and not only focus on layers.



"My business would have been so much farther along by now," she says.

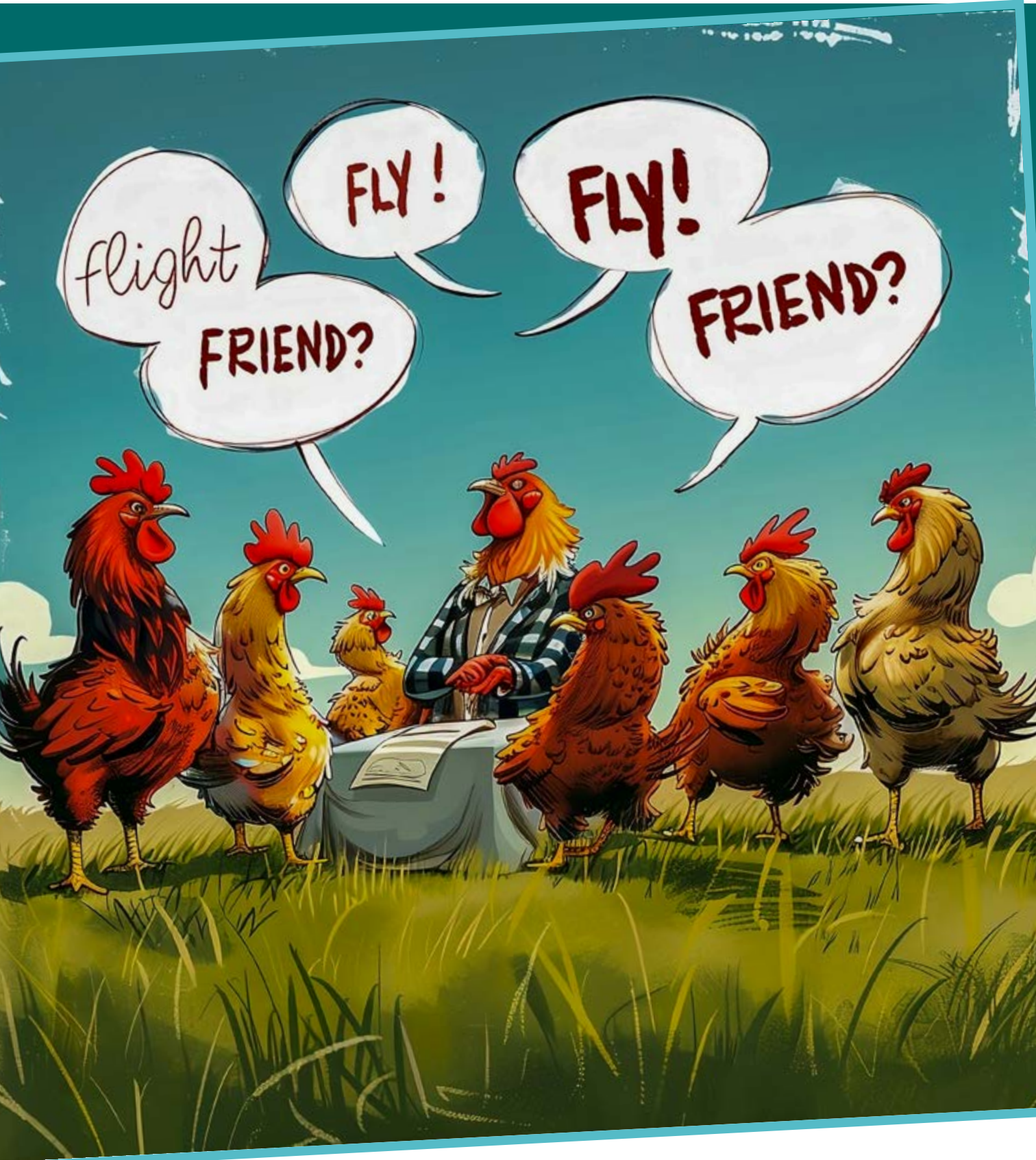
But she is young, and she's not afraid of work, so the future is hopeful. When she is not tending her layers, she can be found on her bicycle or in the gym, keeping fit and creating content that fits with her personal Instagram handle @the_fitness_farmer. As a digital influencer she also does fashion modelling and promotion of brands. Multitasking is second nature at this stage, and she credits her flexible working structure for making it possible to stretch the day to fit in everything that is important to her. Her efforts have been rewarded by winning several awards, including the Award for Recognition of Youths in Agriculture 2021 and the Eloy Award for Agriculture in 2019. Says Okereke, "These awards mean a lot to me as it encourages me to keep pushing and be a source of inspiration to others, and underlines my motto that agriculture is the new oil."

When a consignment of 5 000 point-of-lay hens arrive at the farm on a day when she is short-staffed, she is right there with her workers to help offload the hens into their cages. "When the going gets tough, there is no Madam CEO in this business! I join in with my guys and help them to transfer thousands of birds as efficiently as we can." And in trademark style, the camera is always ready to capture the young farmer getting her hands dirty. "There is money in agriculture if you do it right. Follow my business page @landrafarms for my insights!"



Winning awards has given Onyinye Okereke the confidence to share her experiences with her thousands of social-media followers

CONTACT DETAILS:
 Instagram: @landrafarms;
 @the_fitness_farmer
 Email: vilandra50@gmail.com



THE FOWL PLAN THAT STARTED IT ALL

Words: **Neil McCarthy**

Illustrations: **Jason Bronkhorst**

There's a song that says a chicken ain't nothing but a bird, but that is not giving them the credit they deserve. "History" shows how chickens planned to take over the world

"Chicken!
Nice fried chicken!
Barbecued chicken!
Won't you send it down the line?"

Say!
Everyone's talking 'bout chicken.
Chicken's a popular word.
But anywhere you go, you're bound to find,
A chicken ain't nothing but a bird.

Some folks call it a fowl,
That's the story I heard,
But let 'em call it this, and let 'em call it that,
A chicken ain't nothing but a bird.

You can boil it, roast it, broil it,
Cook it in a pan or a pot,
Eat it with potatoes, rice, or tomatoes,
Chicken's still what you got, boy!

It was a dish for old Caesar,
Also King Henry the Third,
But Columbus was smart, said, "You can't fool me.
A chicken ain't nothing but a bird."

Written by **Emmet "Babe" Wallace**
As recorded by **Cab Calloway**

THE LEGENDARY JAZZ SINGER Cab Calloway would sing this song while leaping around the stage in his signature gymnastic style and wiggle his elbows in his billowing white tail coat as if he himself had become the bird he was so callously putting down with his lyrics. The question I put to you today is: was Cab correct? Is the chicken nothing but a bird?

Think about birds. What's the first thing that comes to mind? Flight. Birds fly. It's almost what defines them. Chickens do not really fly, or only very short distances – does this make them less than other birds?

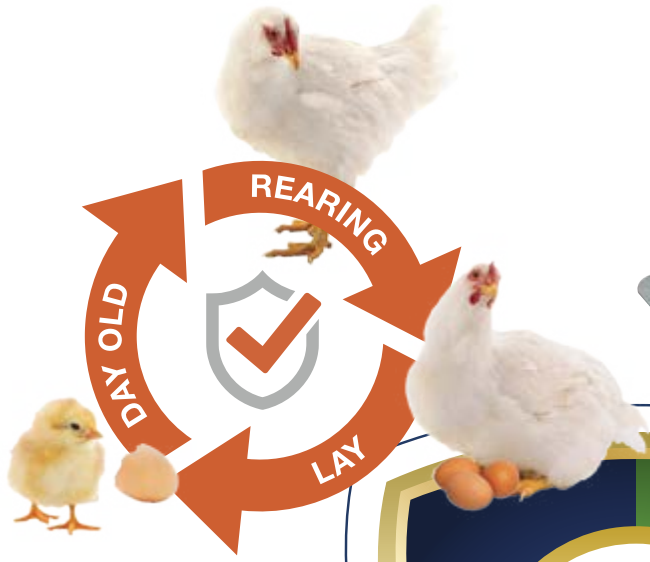
There was another famous flightless bird.

The dodo lived only in Mauritius and it famously didn't fly. It had discovered that it didn't need flying. All the flying things came to Mauritius, but the dodos were already there. There was nowhere else worth flying to. So they stopped flying. It was a fatal move. People arrived in ships and discovered that rather than paying the huge prices at beachside restaurants and resorts in Mauritius all they needed to do was grab a dodo and eat that; and because it had allowed its wings to shrink to the size of teabags the dodo couldn't do a thing about it.

Now there is not one single dodo left and their ▶

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nesting grounds have been turned into gift shops. That's what happens to birds when they turn their backs on flight.

So the early chickens looked at this and thought long and hard; well, as long and as hard as early chickens could think (which was a lot longer and harder than the chickens of today can think). They took a few lessons away from the story of the dodo, the biggest lesson being that there is a downside to being a tasty protein source that can stretch to feeding a family of four; and that is, humans eat you.

There was a strong faction of early chickens that recommended flight, not just taking to the air, but retreating to places in the world where no human could exploit your protein potential.

But a radical faction offered a completely left-field idea. They looked at what humans were doing as a species, how they were on this huge expansion drive and how they were colonising all over the place and inventing things like can openers and then cans to be opened by them and they said, "Guys, this is not looking good for birds.

"It's not looking good for trees and bears and otters and walruses either. But we are not talking about them; let them come up with their own survival strategies.

We need to think out of the box here. Humans are the future. There is not going to be anywhere on this floating ball of rock that will be safe from the humans pretty soon.

"So what we want to do if we really want to make it through this is to become friends with the human. Don't see this as a threat; see it as an opportunity. Show them that we are not going to fly from them, in fact we give up on flight altogether."

And so the chickens hatched a



plan. They walked away from flight as an option. They made themselves as available and as tasty as they possibly could. They offered themselves to the humans as a collaborator in their project to take over the planet. It was

that? Do you??"

So it was probably best that this was largely an unspoken sort of deal.

And it worked. It evolved into the situation we have today where if you look at the numbers in a cold and logical way – which is definitely the way to look at most numbers, though perhaps not the number of years you have left to live, or the number of years it will take to pay off your debt – you will see that chickens

It was your basic 'you look after me and I'll look after you' deal between humans and chickens

never said out loud, mainly because of language differences, but it was your basic "you look after me and I'll look after you" deal between the human and chicken thought-leaders. That's what the chicken representatives would have said if they could have spoken human language.

To which the human leaders might have said, "Don't you dare speak to me like that. Who do you think you are? Have you heard of a bird called the dodo? Do you want to end up like

are the second most successful species on the planet after humans. I know ants and cockroaches are going to raise objections to that, but they are easily squashed.

So when Cab Calloway flaps his arms and crows about how we "ain't nothing but a bird" I want to say to him what's with the dismissive tone, buddy? There is no "nothing but" to this arrangement we got going here. Only the most successful bird on the planet earth, fool! 🐔

ON THE WIRES

Local is lekker in Canada, insights about light, Becks the chicken farmer... it's news from the global world of chicken

Compiled by **Charmain Lines**

CANADIANS CROW FOR LOCAL

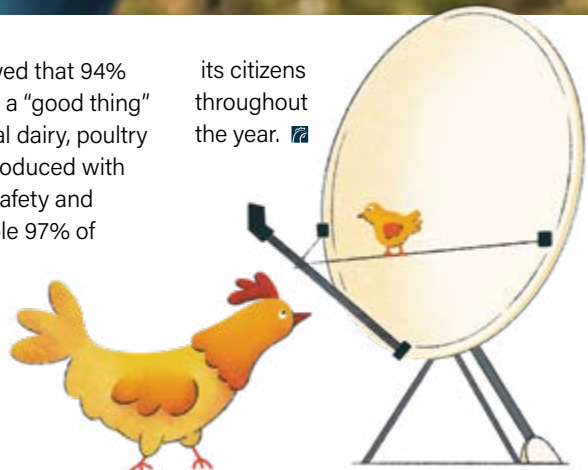


A WHOPPING 90% of Canadians prefer to eat eggs, chicken, turkey and dairy that were produced in Canada. This is according to a recent survey conducted by Abacus Data into Canadians' view on the supply chains and systems that provide their food.

The preference for homegrown produce was strong regardless of demographic factors such as age and gender, and of where in the country people live.

The survey also showed that 94% of Canadians consider it a "good thing" when they hear that local dairy, poultry and egg products are produced with high standards of food safety and animal care. A remarkable 97% of respondents felt it was important that Canada has strong domestic food supply chains that allow it to produce enough food to feed

its citizens throughout the year. 🐔



Photographs: Shutterstock

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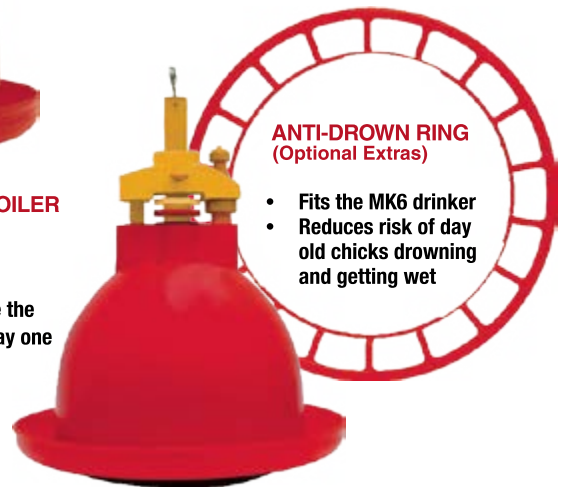


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- Ballast drinker
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LEADERS IN PLASTIC POULTRY TECHNOLOGY

LET THERE BE (GRADIENT) LIGHT



According to the researchers, the benefits of giving chickens access to different light intensities are significant and wide ranging. Birds in gradient lighting houses move around more and show more natural behaviours, such as dust bathing, which is seen as an indicator of welfare. Leg health also improves and the birds' fear responses are reduced.

A more tangible benefit relates to feed-conversion rate, with published studies on gradient lighting showing, on average, a three- to four-point improvement.

There are also safety and energy-saving gains. To achieve gradient lighting, lights are not installed in the ceiling of a chicken house but rather onto the feed line in a direct-current system. This reduces the risk of electrical shocks or fire. Also, because only a small fraction of the floor area is lit, gradient lighting uses up to 80% less electricity than uniform lighting. 📧

THE FACT THAT LIGHT influences chicken behaviour is well established. In a well-lit broiler or layer house, the birds are more active, eat better and lay more eggs. But scientists have long wondered how much light birds really need and, more recently, whether they have preferences.

A light-intensity choice experiment done over a few years at the University of Arkansas first attempted to provide answers. Researchers placed chickens in a corridor where they could move

between areas of high-, low- or medium-intensity light to determine their preference. Turned out the chickens did not prefer a single light intensity – they liked having a choice.

This study and the work done subsequently have resulted in the development of so-called dynamic lighting systems for chicken houses. This typically entails brightly lit feed lines and dimmer lighting away from them, allowing birds to feed in the light and rest in the dark.

BECKHAM IS ONE OF US NOW

DAVID BECKHAM, FORMER SOCCER STAR and now co-owner of the Inter Miami soccer team, has fallen in love with chickens.

He received his own flock as a Christmas gift in December and on Valentine's Day his wife, Victoria, gave him the latest edition of *The Country Smallholder* magazine for the practical advice on hobby farming it dispenses. Apparently, Victoria also gifted him a copy of a book called *Keeping Chickens for Dummies*.

Instagram reports that Beckham has set up a chicken coop at the couple's farmhouse in the Cotswolds in England where they already have a beehive, and that he talks about his "excitement" at finding eggs.

No matter how famous you are, there's no resisting the charm of the chickens! 📧



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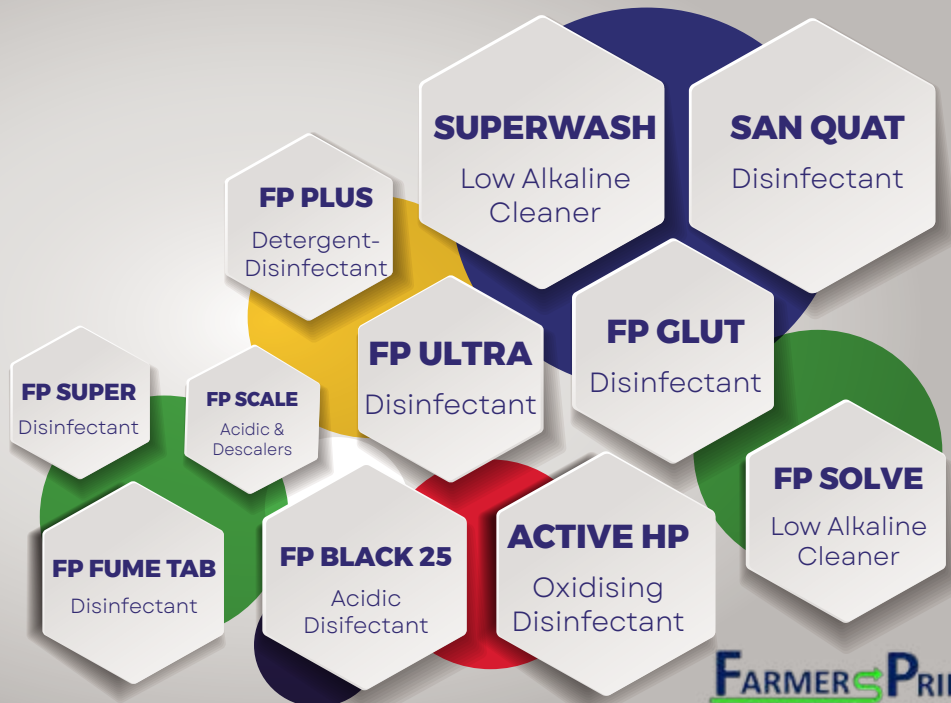
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THE HEATING CHALLENGE



As the weather cools down, ventilation specialist Bernard Green advises on keeping your poultry houses warm in winter



“I usually stop farming during winter because heating is so expensive. Am I missing something that could help?”
 – Respondent, SAPA survey

MINIMISING YOUR HEAT CONSUMPTION in a poultry house comes from a combination of factors. First, we know that hot air rises, so make sure that you have a well-sealed, insulated roof to keep that heat inside the house.

How do you bring the hot air back down to the birds? In closed-environment houses, we pressure control the side wall inlets to direct the cold incoming air along the ceiling to mix with the warm air up there. This not only warms the cold air, but also mixes it with the air inside the house and brings that warm air back down to the birds, thus making efficient use of your heat, and

ventilating the house at the same time.


Naturally ventilated houses pose a different problem. Houses must be ventilated regardless of how cold it may be outside. When you open the curtain to ventilate the house, the cold air enters through the opening and drops straight down to the floor (and your birds). Now you have cold air down at floor level and warm air up in the roof area. This causes the heater to start running.

Circulation fans, strategically placed in the apex of the ceiling, are often used in open houses to help move the heat from the ceiling and get it down to the birds and distributed throughout the house. If using circulation fans, be careful that they don't create any air movement down at bird level.

Remember that circulation fans only circulate the air that is already inside,

and therefore it is still necessary to ventilate the house.

“Fan jet” systems, similar to the plastic tube system used on coal heaters, can be very useful in introducing fresh air and mixing the air and heat in the house.

People often mistakenly think that running fewer heaters will result in the lowest heating cost. My experience has shown the exact opposite to be true. An increased heating capacity, well distributed in a house with a well-sealed, insulated roof along with the use of zone heating and a method to distribute the heat inside the house, will always help to minimise the energy consumption. 

Bernard Green is ventilation technical services manager for Aviagen AsiaPacific. Contact him on bgreen@aviagen.com

Photograph: Shutterstock

CHIMICHURRI CHICKEN



CHICKEN BREASTS, MARINATED IN A FIERY ARGENTINIAN SAUCE USING MAYONNAISE TO LOCK IN THE FLAVOURS ANY MARINADE WILL DO, BUT CHIMICHURRI SAUCE IS A KNOCKOUT!

START PREP A FEW HOURS BEFORE DINNER TIME

4 CHICKEN FILLETS



2 TABLE-SPOONS



CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

- 1/2 CUP OLIVE OIL
- 3 T. RED WINE VINEGAR
- 1 t. DRIED OREGANO
- 3 CLOVES CHOPPED GARLIC
- 1 t. RED PEPPER FLAKES
- SALT & PEPPER



REST FOR 10 MINUTES. ADD 1 CUP FINELY CHOPPED PARSLEY AND SET ASIDE FOR FLAVOURS TO DEVELOP.

- 1: LIGHTLY POUND FILLETS TO OBTAIN UNIFORM THICKNESS.
- 2: IN A BOWL, MIX HALF THE MARINADE WITH THE MAYO.
- 3: SPREAD SPICED MAYO EVENLY OVER CHICKEN. COVER & REFRIGERATE FOR AT LEAST 1 HR. MORE HOURS, MORE FLAVOUR!

PAN FRY FILLETS



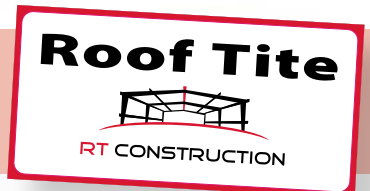
ON MEDIUM HEAT UNTIL DONE ± 5 MINS ON EACH SIDE

REMOVE FROM HEAT & REST FOR 10 MINUTES

SLICE CHICKEN, PLATE UP & DRIBBLE WITH REMAINING SAUCE BEFORE SERVING



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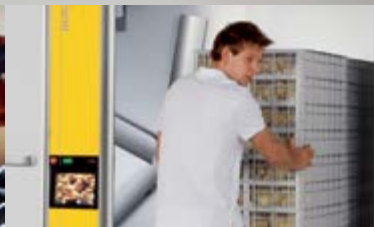


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