

FANRPAN POLICY BRIEF No. 2 THE POULTRY SUB-SECTOR IN MAURITIUS

Overview

The last decades have seen marked changes in food habits of the Mauritian people as disposable incomes of average families have been on a sustained increase. Poultry products are among the products developed and introduced most successfully in Mauritius to meet the change in eating habits of the Mauritian people. The poultry subsector in Mauritius is dominated by the production of broiler meat and table eggs and poultry meat production has managed to meet the demand for animal products over the years in Mauritius. The egg industry is categorised into traditional backyard, small scale commercial, large scale commercial and industrial production. Mauritius is self sufficient in both commodities and the broiler industry sector is growing at a pace that far exceeds the growth of other meat sectors. With the increased globalisation of the poultry industry, Mauritius is faced with some major challenges.

The Role of the Small Poultry Producer in Mauritius

There are now 4 companies operating on an industrial scale, and they produce almost 85 % of the total broiler meat consumed in Mauritius. For their economic survival, small producers will have to increasingly find a niche in the broiler market, which does not bring them into direct competition with industrial producers. The marketing channels that can be explored and strengthened are:

- Production and marketing of fresh broiler meat,

perceived to be superior in quality to the mass-produced meat, and hence could be sold at a higher price,

- Production and marketing of poultry meat specialities, eg meat prepared with special spices and marinades, BBQ preparations etc.
- Production of poultry carcasses in a traditional way, eg the traditional free-range poultry or organic poultry meat. However, specific criteria would have to be laid down for the production and marketing of these carcasses, sold under very specific "label".

The small producers have the potential to set up agro-industrial cluster activities. However, small premises do not have frequently the same standards of quality and/or facilities as provided in the industrial enterprises.

Constraints to Poultry Production in Mauritius

The traditional system is characterized by low, erratic and seasonal patterns of production. Specific problems of environment and food hygiene are potential threats to the poultry subsector. Waste discharges and air emissions from the poultry industry threaten environmental quality, tourism, recreation, property values and economic development. There are increasingly social and political pressures to address the environmental impacts of poultry production. In this regard industrial producers increase lobbying activities to regulate



the number of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)¹ licences that are delivered. A relatively high number of EIA licences have been issued over the past years and several programmes are in place to encourage the keeping of broilers on a small scale. There are already some indications of market saturation and over capacity. This situation increases the vulnerability of some poultry enterprises.

Policy Measures to Support the Poultry Industry

- The poultry industry is protected through Government legislation making poultry a controlled product in Mauritius.
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources through its extension services provides training and support to small farmers.
- The Development Bank of Mauritius provides loans for capital investment in the agricultural industry, including the poultry sector.
- The Government set a poultry breeding centre to supply day old chicks to producers at subsidised prices.
- Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources have always provided diagnostic and veterinary services to producers at highly subsidised prices.
- Poultry vaccines produced by the Veterinary Services are also sold to the public at a subsidised price.

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food Technology and Natural Resources operates a number of feed sale centres making poultry feed more accessible to small producers throughout the country.

Key Policy Recommendations include:

Policy makers should consider the following points:

- Strategies that should be developed and implemented to address known and future environmental problems associated with poultry activities in Mauritius.
- Adoption of improved production practices and enhanced farm management.
- Encouraging private sector participation in the expansion and development of the poultry industry regionally.
- Establishment of strategic alliances at the regional level.
- Enact proper legislation and training development to address specific small producers problems.

Source (s):

Rajkomar, B. and Driver, F.; (2003) **Poultry Sub-sector in Mauritius**, FANRPAN Discussion Paper, *February, 2003*

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¹ Under the provisions in the Environment Protection Act, commercial poultry rearing is an activity that necessitates an Environment Impact Assessment Licence.