



Marketing of poultry products

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Poultry farming is not an implanted concept in the Indian soil. It was an integral part of the Indian farmer and was a mode of his living since primitive stage. But then it was fun for many and basically a backyard activity.

The need and importance of poultry meat and eggs were realized in India during and after the Second World War when there was an acute shortage of food. The year 1961 is recognised to be the hall mark of commercial production when the composition of the fowl population under went major changes by replacing Desi variety with improved ones.

The information available from different sources confirms that the poultry sector had a good foundation laid during 1961-1972. This period accounted for an increase of poultry from 35 million to 97 million and egg production from 2,340 million to 7,740 million. This stage attests for the shift from poultry keeping the poultry farming. In the subsequent period, i.e., from 1972 to 1994 the growth was impressive. Poultry population in 1996 was estimated to be 258.3 million and egg production to the tune of 30,000 million. The transformation

of poultry farming into poultry industry is believed to have occurred during this stage.

What ails poultry development?

During the above stated period, the growth of poultry units, particularly broiler units in Kerala, is a replica of the growth pattern of the country. Subsequently it fell and stated down to a position that the domestic production could cover only around 40 per cent of the local demand. While demand registered a positive growth rate it is paradoxical to observe that the production base declined.

Causes for ailment

A basic issue is that the growth of poultry industry was not spontaneous but sponsored. The support viz., technical as well as financial through multiple agencies and programmes failed in developing a real integrated approach to the poultry farming. This is evident from the fact that when the government and other agencies withdraw their support the units started collapsing. There were also no organized efforts in integrating the units with backward and forward linkages. Besides, the shortage of all inputs and their undue dependence on other states made many units unviable.

A cost comparison revealed that Tamil Nadu unit generally enjoys cost benefits in certain components (cost of DOC and feed) and that helped them to have competitive strength. Cost of Day old chicks and feed accounts for 95 per cent of cost of production! When supply frequency and price oscillations occur for these two factors poultry units in Kerala would normally be extinct.

The poultry units face similar problems experienced in the marketing of agricultural commodities. Smallness of the units and their disorganized nature have made the poultry units to fall into an 'organizational disability trap'. As mentioned earlier, to solve this trap, the solution lies in integrating poultry units vertically with built-in-forward and backward linkages. Organisational linkages will have to be created and stabilized to enable the poultry units to overcome production and marketing constraints.

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Solutions proposed

The democratic planning process initiated in Kerala from 1997-98 will be a boon to agriculture and land based production units. The organisational setup of democratic planning could be easily exploited to involve poultry units to develop a participatory group at different levels with functional specialization.

Individual farmers at panchayat level should be organized which would form the production units. Collection and delivery centres should be established for each panchayat where farmer groups themselves would have to manage these centres. Disposal of output and distribution of inputs will be the major activities of these centres. They can also undertake retail sales at the centres and it should create forward linkage with institutions for off-take of outputs. Such linkages created should be maintained even offering financial support if need arises.

At the block/district level, the panchayat based farmer groups, with the support of local bodies and the Department of Animal Husbandry have to establish hatcheries and feed mills. Feasibility studies have to be made before they are established. The possibilities of having mini slaughter plants and freezing plants also to be studied. The surplus at the panchayat level collection centres should be moved to block/district level centres from where the products should be distributed to places where shortage in supply is found. It is essential that all the farmers' organization at the block/district level must have perfect linkage and communication link of first order. This would help in cost reduction process and ensure profitability and sustainability.

A close and a firm linkage between production-processing and marketing systems should be the major objective of the proposed organisational alignment.



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sive farming may not survive and perform better under adverse environment prevailing in family poultry farming conditions. The ideal birds which can fit well in the backyard rearing, would be those, which can withstand the local conditions and they are mostly local birds. But the production potential of desi birds is far below the improved commercial chicken. Therefore, suitable breeding programmes should be adopted to produce a bird with high production potential, simultaneously retaining the basic characteristics of the local birds to have better acceptability.

There are many breeds and strains of indigenous poultry, which are well adapted to their environment. There is a need for genetic improvement, in order to improve their productivity in the local environment. Breeding is more challenging in family poultry farming. Breeding strategies are not present in most free range poultry operations, mating are not planned and even the choice of the breeding rooster was quite arbitrary.

Poultry of different types and ages allowed to range together often housed together, therefore, it is impossible to assess the types of disease present and the actual risk of disease. The chick mortality is very high

during the first month of age. Much of the poor performance that is being observed under family poultry farming is due to poor feed resource base. Feeding of chicks under family poultry farming is more complex. Since, the availability of feed materials varies greatly under free-range conditions, the quantity and quality of feed required depends on location, season etc. The gap between scavengeable feed and the feed required is to be filled with supplemental feed. Birds under family poultry farming are vulnerable to weather extremes and situation is aggravated by lack of housing for poultry. Night shelter should be provided close to the movers' house in order to maintain losses due to the theft, predation and the inclement weather. Prevention of losses due to natural predators is by means of proper housing and shelter management.

Marketing of poultry products in this system is poorly developed. Most farmers depend on middlemen who buy the poultry products from rural market.

Gramalakshmi, Vanaraja, Gramapriya, Giriraja, Girirani, CARI Gold, Nandanam and Krishna J are the crossbred layers suitable for backyard rearing.

