Poultry industry takes flight

BY RACHEAL NABISUBI

Uganda's poultry industry is on the rise, driven by growing demand, youthful demographics, and increasing investment. Uganda's poultry sector is growing steadily, driven by rising demand for affordable protein and urbanisation.

According to Martin Ndegu, Agricultural Director at Biyinzika Poultry International (BPUL), the sector is vibrant and poised for transformation.

"The poultry industry is very exciting, it's vibrant, it's growing," Ndegu said. "There is growing demand for poultry products in Uganda, consistent with population growth."

We are seeing increased investment in both commercial and smallholder production. However, the sector still faces structural challenges: inconsistent feed quality and high input costs, limited adoption of modern housing and climate control systems, disease risks and biosecurity gaps and fragmented value chains, especially at smallholder level.

"At BPUL we see strong potential for growth and production efficiency, particularly through integration, technology adoption, and improved feed and chick quality," Ndegu says.

Uganda's advantage lies in its raw materials. Maize, the primary ingredient in poultry feed, is produced locally in sufficient quantities. This self-sufficiency, coupled with modern feed manufacturing facilities and climate-controlled poultry houses, is making production more efficient and affordable.

"We are seeing investment in climate-controlled environment houses, which are contributing to efficiency in production and making poultry farming more viable," Ndengu explained.

Despite progress, challenges remain. These include: feed cost volatility (maize, soya), competition from more advanced regional producers (e.g., Kenya), limited cold chain infrastructure and cold chain logistics

And price sensitivity in local markets. Maize quality is inconsistent due to inadequate drying facilities at the farm level. Soya meal and sunflower, both critical ingredients, are produced in insufficient quantities, forcing Uganda to rely on imports that sometimes fall short of quality standards.

"We don't have drying facilities from the farmer's end, and that is always a challenge," Ndengu said, adding that the poultry industry also struggles with soya meal and sunflower, which we have to import.

Domestic Demand vs. Export Potential

Uganda's per capita chicken consumption remains low just 1.6 kilograms per person annually, compared to 7 kilograms in Zimbabwe. Most production currently serves the domestic market, limiting exports. Still, Ndengu sees significant potential for dressed chicken exports within East Africa once local demand.

Most production currently serves the domestic market, limiting export potential. However, Ndengu sees significant opportunities for dressed chicken exports within East Africa once local demand is satisfied.

"Day-old chicks are already being exported to neighboring countries, indicating Uganda's growing capacity," he says.

Adding that: "There is a strong domestic demand for chicken meat and eggs, growth in modern retail and quick-service restaurants, regional export opportunities (e.g., South Sudan, DRC, Rwanda) and increasing demand for high-quality DOCs and feed."

Aligning investments with market demand is essential. Further adding that rising consumer appetite for processed chicken calls for greater capacity, efficiency, and strict quality control.

Competing in regional markets such as Kenya and Tanzania requires cost efficiency, reliable supply chains, and strong feed conversion rates. Producers who emphasize operational efficiency and integration across the value chain are better positioned to remain competitive," he adds.

Innovation and Investment

Uganda's poultry industry is experiencing significant growth, driven by rising demand for affordable protein, a youthful population, and increasing investment. The sector continues to expand, reflecting the needs of a growing urban population.

According to Ndengu, the poultry sector is vibrant and poised for transformation. "The poultry industry is very exciting; it's growing," he notes, highlighting the rising demand for poultry products in line with population growth. Investment is increasing in both commercial and smallholder production.

Despite this progress, the industry faces structural challenges such as inconsistent feed quality, high input costs, limited adoption of modern housing and climate control systems, disease risks, biosecurity gaps, and fragmented value chains at the smallholder level.

Regulation

When it comes to regulation in the poultry industry, the enactment of the Animal Feed Act in 2024 marked a significant milestone. This law Ndengu notes that ensures feed safety and establishes national and international standards, creating a level playing field for producers.

"Once we standardize feed, we can ensure efficiency and viability for farmers while contributing to affordability for consumers," Ndengu elucidates.

Unfortunately, he adds that delays in enforcement have allowed substandard feeds to persist, posing risks to both farmers and consumers. Poor-quality feeds, often contaminated with mycotoxins, hinder growth and limit export opportunities.

Sustainable practices in poultry

Sustainability in Uganda's poultry sector is supported by a combination of government policies and industry practices.

He notes that the Animal Feeds Act strengthens feed quality standards and enforcement, while biosecurity and disease control frameworks help safeguard flocks. At the same time, investment in modern housing and technology, improved access to finance, and robust extension services provide farmers with the tools they need to operate more efficiently. Environmental practices such as proper waste management and efficient water use further reinforce the sector's commitment to sustainability.

Ndengu highlights that sustainability also means producing efficiently, using less feed, reducing losses, and maximizing productivity per bird. Waste disposal is carried out through approved channels, with transparency ensured by internal audits and oversight from regulatory authorities. This approach not only protects the environment but also builds trust with consumers and stakeholders.

"At the household level, poultry farming is becoming an important source of food security and income. Families benefit from affordable protein, reliable earnings, and quicker turnover compared to other agricultural ventures," he notes, adding that this accessibility makes poultry farming an attractive entry point for women and youth, strengthening community resilience and economic stability.

Market opportunities are expanding as demand for processed chicken grows. Hotels, restaurants, and local markets increasingly require consistent, high-quality supply. To meet these expectations, producers must adopt best practices that minimize mortality, optimize feed usage, and maintain strong supplier relationships.

OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, Ndengu is optimistic. With supportive government policies, stronger regulation, and continued investment, Uganda's poultry industry is set to play a vital role in national nutrition and economic growth. He concludes with hope that Biyinzika Poultry will continue contributing to the well-being of Ugandan families by making chicken more affordable and accessible.

According to a recent report by Euromonitor and RaboResearch (2024) titled: "African Poultry Investor Outlook 2030: Capturing Investment Opportunities in a Fast-Changing Market", the opportunity to build a modern pan-African poultry industry remains robust. "The long-term outlook for the African poultry sector is promising, with an anticipated annual growth rate between 3.5% and 4% from 2023 to 2030. However, we have revised our market growth expectations downward by 0.5% year-over-year to account for a gradual pace of recovery across the market," reads the report in part.