

Context

Sierra Leone's Poultry & Maize Markets

At the start of SOBA's work in late 2015, only about 10% of total local egg consumption and less than 25% of local poultry meat consumption was supplied by domestic poultry production. At the time, Sierra Leone imported around 14 million eggs per month. Sierra Leoneans, though, prefer local eggs – these are both fresher and cheaper than imported alternatives.

Sierra Leone's poultry sector is nascent. There are about 190,000 layers at around 100 commercial farms. The three largest farms, Leecon Poultry, Pajah Poultry, and Sierra Akker, stock only around 20,000-30,000 layers each. The majority of the commercial poultry sector is comprised of farms with between 1,000 – 5,000 layers each.

The growth of local poultry production represents an important economic opportunity for local traders and farmers. The majority of poultry feed is comprised of maize. In Sierra Leone, maize that is produced as a cash crop and traded with poultry farms. Maize commercial production is virtually nonexistent. Increased poultry production demands increased local maize production and trade as well as more on farm labor.

Poultry sector growth is primarily inhibited by inconsistent access to inputs, including feed, day-old-chicks, and veterinary services and medicines. Consistent and affordable inputs reduce risks and costs associated with poultry farming and encourage investment.



- Poultry feed accounts for over 70% of total production cost. Consistent feed supply enables bird health and production management required to maximise productivity.
- Feed inputs are sourced and mixed by each farm. High costs are associated with seasonal (maize) procurement and concentrate and limestone sourced by container from Europe – locking up working capital for long periods. Total commercial bird volume doesn't warrant significant investment associated with feed processing facility.
- Maize is the only locally-sourced feed input. It is not produced in enough quantity to meet farm demand, often resulting in emergency maize import from the wider region.
- Poultry farmers, traders, and farmers communicate and trade poorly, employing adversarial trading practices that focus on extracting the most out of each exchange and ultimately discourage production.
- Maize production is limited by poor inputs and bad agricultural practices.



- There is only one day-old-chick producer in country. Production has been poor in quality, dissuading farmers from further use.
- Day-old-chicks are typically imported on an ad hoc basis from The Netherlands. Minimum order size is 10,000 birds – too high for most farms and entrants.



- There is only one veterinarian in Sierra Leone.
- Only those medicines with high turnover are kept in stock.

Poultry farm growth is also limited by poor farm and production management practices. Few farms are informed of best rearing, monitoring, and biosecurity practices. Combined with poor financial and farm controls, this results in exceptionally poor productivity – limiting overall financial return and reinvestment.