

# Poultry Monitoring – Matatiele June 2015

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## Introduction and summary

The KZNPI participants alongside attendees of Isiqalo trainings were visited in order to see how the farmers were implementing the concepts they had learnt during the course and learning sessions.

Of the poultry farmers interviewed, 89% were female. Forty one percent of the farmers are part of SCG's. Seventy six percent of the farmers receive social grants (of which 90% are child grants), making them more dependent on their poultry enterprises as a source of income. The average monthly income the farmers receive is R2206. This makes it challenging for farmers to invest money into their enterprises to improve it and/or expand. It becomes more of a challenge if the farmer has many dependants. Ninety four percent of the poultry farmers visited have a broiler flock, while 47% of the farmers have a multipurpose flock. All of the farmers use maize crush on their broiler flocks while 76% of the farmers use broiler feed (starter and finisher) on their broilers. The frequent use of maize crush is attributed to the affordability of maize crush. The farmers use maize crush during the latter stages of the production cycle, mostly when they have ran out of broiler feed.

Sixty five percent of the farmers are in a bulk-buying group (birds purchased via SaveAct) while the rest bought at street vendors and suppliers in town, local informal, EggVet and family farms. A culture of record keeping needs to be fostered and instilled in farmers since only 41% keep records. In other words, more than half of the poultry farmers do not know whether they made a profit or not, let alone how much.

A segment of weighing birds was included during the monitoring process. This was to create a snapshot of the average weight of the birds. Weighing the flock plays an integral part of record keeping and monitoring the enterprise. However, only one of the farmers has a weighing scale (Tumelo Sauli). All birds weighed were mature and market-ready (over 42 days). The current average weight for broilers is 3.1kg while the average for the multipurpose birds is 3.3kg. However, the birds (both broilers and multipurpose) of the respective farmers were not the same age. The broiler farmers were feeding their mature birds 133g/birds/day on average. The broiler farmers have sold 26% of their stock to date and have consumed an average of 3 per batch.

Forty five percent of the farmers said they experienced challenges related to diseases and 35% said their challenges were market related. The farmers visited, on average, bought 32 birds when stocking. It would be beneficial for the farmers if their respective bird numbers increased; more profits will be made through low input costs per bird.

The brooding period for the farmers is 2-3 weeks; this is an indicator that the farmers are using knowledge acquired during the course and learning sessions. The average mortality of their enterprises is 17%, this can be lower for KZNPI participants for the next cycle because then will they be able to use most of their new poultry expertise. Eighty seven percent of the farmers visited use kraal manure (5.5cm on average) in their chicken houses. This is mostly because in contrast to buying sawdust/shavings, the kraal manure is easily accessible and in most cases, free. Only 7% were using dry grass as floor shavings. Fifty two percent of the farmers have a lighting programme, which is a vital attributor of feed intake.

Twenty six percent of the farmers had stock left over from the previous cycle, around 12kg of maize crush on average. Ninety three percent of the farmers sell their birds live to neighbours (with one farmer considering sending to an abattoir) at an average price of R93/bird. One farmer, Mrs. Zingiswa Mbadu, has incorporated value-adding into her enterprise. She sells live to neighbours at R100, R85 for school 1 which purchases slaughtered birds and R100 for school 2 which orders chicken pieces. Farmers with the multi-purpose flock had an average of 13 birds which were sold at an average price of R95/bird.



Figure 1. Left: feeder made by Tumelo Sauli. Right: Mr. Sauli's drinkers and lamps



Figure 2. Left: Thabiso Diholo's broilers. Right: Mr. Diholo's multi-purpose hen.



Figure 3. Left: Nozipho Mthimkhulu's advertisement. Right: Mrs. Mthimkhulu's flock.



Figure 4. Left: Pulani Minyelela's chicken house. Right: Weighing of Mrs. Minyelela's birds.



Figure 5. Thandazile Nondabula's paraffin lamp. Right: Nonkosinathi Magobola's multipurpose birds

### Summary of information for 25 poultry producers interviewed.

Poultry activities	N=25
Sex	89% Female, 11% Male
Are you in a SCG?	41% Yes, 59% No
Does HH receive social grants?	No grant = 24%, With grant = 76% (90% Child grant, 10% Pension)
Average monthly income	R2206
Main source of income for HH	11% Remittances, 37% Employment, 45% Social grants, 7% Own Enterprise
Do you have a broiler flock?	94%
Do you have a layer flock?	6%
Do you have a multipurpose/ indigenous flock?	47%
Do you use broiler/layer feed?	76%
Do you use maize crush?	94%
Are you in a bulk-buying group?	65%
Your source of feed	59% SaveAct 41% Vendors in town, suppliers in town, local informal, EggVet and family farms
Feed provision (g/bird/day)	133g/day/bird

Current average weight - broilers	3.1kg
Do you keep records?	41%
Source of drinking water?	71% Municipality 18% Rainwater 11% communal tank
Challenges experienced with the enterprise	45% Diseases 35% Market related 20% Other
Initial number of birds (purchased)	32
Days of brooding	2 – 3 weeks
Mortality	17%
Type and depth of floor shavings	87% use kraal manure, around 5.5cm. 7% use dry grass
Lighting programme	52% have a lighting programme
Stock left over at end of cycle	22% had stock left over.
How do you market your birds?	93% sell live birds locally 7% sell to local schools
Price per bird - Broilers	R98
No. of bird sold	26% stock sold
No. of birds consumed in the cycle	3
No. of birds - Multipurpose	13
Current average weight - Multipurpose	3.3kg
Average price per bird - Multipurpose	R95

## Case studies for a selected number of poultry producers

### Poultry Case Study; Mrs. Nolulamile Mazitshana. Lubisini (May 2015)

Nolulamile Mazitshana, is a 52 woman determined to improve her household livelihood status and encourage others to do so through broiler production. She lives in Lubisini, a remote village located in the outskirts of Matatiele. Alongside her budding broiler enterprise is her vegetable garden which she uses for household consumption. Initially, she ventured into broiler production with the aim of consumption smoothing. This was a decision she made when she realised the amount of frozen chicken she purchases per month and the money spent thereof was a considerable part of household expenses. The idea of growing broilers surfaced. She started with 10 – 20 birds per cycle.

At a later stage, she realised that many of community members in her village are facing the same predicament she was in. There are not many broiler producers in the vicinity of the Lubisini village, those that do produce, produce predominately for household consumption. As a result of her eureka moment, she began producing broilers to sell. She sells her birds live to community members at R40 per bird. She explained that her market is resolute for most parts of the year. When people buy her birds, they seldom purchase less than 5 at a time. Some customers buy from Mazitshana to continue rearing the birds until they are ready to slaughter them. “People travel from Ghobho (a village neighbouring Lubisini) to buy my chickens” she explained as she gestured her pride, and rightfully so.



Figure 1. Mrs. Mazitshana and her broilers. Figure 2. Most of the remaining birds in the current cycle.

The only disadvantage with selling live to neighbours, she explained, is the sporadic trends of sales. She finds it difficult in the beginning of a cycle to make profit estimates and estimates of how much feed she will use. Nonetheless, she is beginning to prioritise on record keeping. She purchased 100 chicks through the SaveAct bulk-buying package on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2015. Accompanying the day-old chicks were two 50kg starter crumbles, five 50kg finisher pellets, vaccines, a drinker and a feeder. She commended the bulk-buying process, mentioning benefits ranging from low input costs to the transport costs avoided by having the quality inputs being delivered to her doorstep. She said broiler production is an intricate enterprise and one must try by all means to minimise input costs, buying in bulk, she says, was an attempt to achieve this.

Mrs. Mazitshana uses wood fire (harvested locally) to brood her chickens. In winter months, she broods her birds throughout the cycle. Subsequently, in summer months, she broods her boilers for the first three to four weeks of the cycle. Figure 1 illustrates Mrs Mazitshana with her remaining birds of the current batch, and on her right is a rondavel which she uses to house her broilers. As an alternative to buying floor shavings, she uses dry kraal manure (5cm) as flooring for the chicken house. She uses conventional globes for lighting. She uses water from a local spring (about 100m away) and manually transports it to the homestead.

She also farms traditional chickens; 2 roosters and 5 hens. She does not sell any of the traditional stock however. She keeps the flock mainly for household consumption. She last slaughtered a bird in April 2015. She says that having a poultry enterprise specifically for consumption and one for income generation builds good business practices. She says it becomes a lot easier to plan for expenditure and input costs. Mrs. Mazitshana has maintained a commendable mortality of 3%. To date, she has managed to sell 79 birds, making her R3160 within 2-3 weeks of selling. With 18 birds left, she could make a profit of R1105 by the end of the cycle. As an emerging poultry farmer, in the depths of a resource-poor community, she shows potential. Expansion is the next step for her. She is confident the quick turnovers she is making will allow her to build a chicken house in the near future.

### Case study; Nomthetho Majikijela. Nkau May 2015

#### Introduction

Residing in the village of Nkau, Matatiele, is Mrs. Nomthetho Majikijela, a 52 year old woman with zest for poultry production. She also runs enterprises (mainly for consumption) for commodities such as vegetables, maize and beans. She is taking care of 3 grandchildren and the average income for the household is R3000 – R4000. She has been rearing chickens since 1994. She has been on and off due to financial

stressors. She has been farming traditional chickens for over 20 years and began broiler production about 4 years ago.

Mrs. Majjikijela is a member of Noncedo, a Saving and Credit Group which she says played an integral part in helping her run and expand her poultry enterprises. She bought 30 broilers in the current cycle and is planning on moving to 50 per cycle. In retrospect, she had been buying from informal chick sources, unaware of its repercussions. She plans on buying from reliable sources and to continuously seek expert advice.

She had a high mortality with her broilers in the beginning and realised broiler production is a lot more complex than rearing a traditional flock. Her experience in broiler production has gradually improved her expertise. She says that her experience, coupled with her passion for poultry production, she is bound for success. In recent months, record keeping has taken precedence over other activities in her poultry enterprises. She said she realised it is the most important way she can monitor the feasibility of her enterprises.

She normally uses dry grass, kraal manure or a combination of both for her flooring in her broiler house. She uses a lighting program which calls for keeping lights on for 24hrs for the first 2 weeks. She then after starts steadily decreasing the light hours by two hours a week. By week 6, the birds get 16hrs of light. In an attempt to minimise input costs, she cuts car tyres in half and uses them as feeders. She uses a paraffin stove for brooding her chicks, which is a two week period. She uses her paraffin stove as a brooder and purchases paraffin locally which costs her R65 / 4litre. During the winter months, she continues her brooding system but decreases the temperature after two weeks. She sells her broilers at R130/bird. She says her customers are comfortable with her pricing because her birds are heftier than other broiler producers' in the area. Her average weight of her broilers is 3.8kg. For the current cycle, there has been a mortality of 5 birds and she has sold 10 birds to date. If she is to sell all the remaining birds (with no added expenses), she will make an income of R3250, and a profit of R2150.



Figure 1. Chicken house where she keeps her chicks for 2 weeks (left). Figure 2. Chicken house for birds 2+ weeks.

Figure 1 depicts a newly built chicken house she uses for her broilers at day old to 2 weeks. She built the small house solely for her broiler enterprise. She then moves her two week old birds into the second broiler house shown in figure 2. She mentioned that she will purchase the second batch of broilers when there are a few birds left of batch she is currently selling. This is to ensure the bigger chicken house is ready to accommodate the 2 week olds. Mrs Maijikela described her production regime which mainly targets 3 market opportunities; the festive season, Easter holidays and June/September school holidays. However, she explained that years may vary depending on her situation, financial and otherwise.



Figure 3. Mrs. Majikijela and her broiler flock feeder.



Figure 4. Mrs. Majikijela's broilers with cut tyre as feeder.



Figure 5. Inside the layer house.



Figure 6. Outside the layer house.

Figure 5 illustrates the interior of Mrs. Majikijela's layer house which is yet to be altered to accommodate egg production. She plans on using her old cupboards as nesting cubicles for her hens. She will then add grass. Figure 7 and 8 below shows the 50 week old layers in her kitchen. The layers will move into the layer house when it is ready to accommodate the layers (in about a week).



Figure 7 and 8. Mrs. Majikijela's layer chicks.

She expressed her consideration of buying pullets (point-of-lay) instead of day olds to avoid the risk of high mortality caused diseases since the birds' immune systems susceptible when young. She says that when production starts deteriorating (shell quality and egg numbers) because of age, she will sell her cull hens as

Cornish hens for around R30/bird. She purchased the layers with idea of targeting the local market of eggs and that of Cornish hens (since they do appear as traditional hens and are catchy on the local's eye).

She will be selling her eggs at R1,50 each. With 50 birds, she could be making an income of around R420 a week, given she has a low mortality and she uses the correct layer production practices (40 birds laying an egg a day). This however will depend on how her local market responds.

### Poultry Case Study; Zingiswa Mbadu. Jabulani May 2015

Fourty-five year old Zingiswa Mbadu is an active entrepreneur and community member of Jabulani (a village situated about 20km outside Matatiele). She is a wife and a mother of one. Mrs. Mbadu's husband works in Johannesburg. She receives a government child grant and the monthly income for her household in R3000-R4000. She farms broilers and a traditional flock. In 2013, she was faced with the misfortune of losing her homestead to an accidental fire. Fortunately, no one was injured during the process. Along with her valuables was a flock of 800 birds which perished in the fire. In the past year, Mrs. Mbadu has been trying to source funding from the department of Agriculture to improve and expand her broiler enterprise. "Just a little start-up capital to get the ball rolling", she adds. However, her efforts are yet to come to avail.

She feeds her birds starter crumbles and finisher pellets. A week before marketing the birds (at 5 weeks) she changes her feed to feeding maize crush. She maintains that the maize crush gives the meat a taste of grain fed birds. She reiterated that she is aware that maize slows down muscle/meat production, but she is trying to listen to her customers. She says that she could not and cannot dispute with the preferences of her customers.



Figure 1. Mrs Zingiswa Mbadu

At one point, Mrs. Mbadu was producing 1000 broilers of varied ages concurrently. She was buying 200 hundred day-olds at a time to meet her market demands. The vibrant Mrs. Zingiswa Mbadu has been growing broilers for over a decade. She began small and started expanding as she realised her enterprise was not brisk enough when it came to turnovers. "Broilers are a numbers game", she said, "the more birds you have, you have a better chance of generating higher profits".

She was producing for neighbours and four schools, in her village and neighbouring village. She had two schools which were secure markets. One school purchased slaughtered chickens at R85/bird and the other



school purchased chicken pieces at R100/bird. For neighbours, she sold live broilers but was able to slaughter and cut pieces on request. Mrs. Mbadu's customers (community members) paid R10 more than the schools did for the value-added chickens. This was because the schools were buying in larger quantities, thus were given discounts. At the peak of Mrs. Mbadu's broiler enterprise, she was selling around 200 birds every fortnight. Her average bird weight for her last batch was 2,8kg. She also sells her traditional flock at R150 per bird. She explained that her traditional flock targets a market of people who look for colours of feathers in birds, for custom occasions or just for breeding.

After losing almost all her possessions to the fire, she acquired land about 100m away from where her house was. She began building a new homestead on the new site. Undeterred by the aftermath of the fire, she started farming broilers again. Her last order was 100 day-old chicks from EggVet (in Matatiele). She had an impressive mortality of 4% in her last cycle and sold 96 birds. She made a profit of R4280 for her batch. A crucial element which makes her enterprise rise above others is that she tries to move down the value-chain (closer to the consumer) through value-adding. Taking advantage of this opportunity cost has evidently worked in her favour.

In November 2014, she was given an opportunity and agreed to undergo poultry production training at the KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute in Pietermaritzburg. She explained how the week long training has improved her knowledge in poultry production. "It was an eye-opener", she explained, "I could see myself owning one of the farms being exhibited during the KZNPI seminars." Oozing with energy, she recalled her experiences from theoretical learning to practical experiences. She is also happy the training course gave her something tangible. She plans on using the KZNPI certificate to better her chances of acquiring funding.