



# POULTRY INFORMATION DAY REPORT



agriculture, land reform  
& rural development

Department:  
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**NAMC**

Promoting market access for South African agriculture



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*Excellence in Agricultural Research and Development*



SOUTH AFRICAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION  
SUID AFRIKAANSE PLUIMVEEVERENIGING

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The National Agricultural Marketing Council (NAMC) thanks the presenters, industries, and farmers who participated in the poultry market information day and appreciates the event organisers' significant contribution to this report. Special thanks go to NAMC members Mr Khathutshelo Rambau, Mr Kayaletu Sotsha, Mr Bernard Manganyi, and Ms Corné Dempers.

The NAMC communications team is acknowledged for designing the invitations, programme, and final report.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY




On 7 March 2024, the National Agricultural Marketing Council held its fourth national information day for the 2023/24 financial year. The event focused on discussing Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, with a particular emphasis on the poultry industry. Four speakers shared insights on various topics in South Africa's poultry farming sector. This report summarises the proceedings and aims to keep all participants and interested parties informed about the status of Avian Influenza on poultry production in South Africa.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS



ABBREVIATIONS	EXPLANATION
ADA	Animal Diseases Act
AI	Avian Influenza
ARC	Agricultural Research Council
DALRRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
FWM	Farming with Maphate
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
LPAI	Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
OVR	Onderstepoort Veterinary Research
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAPA	South African Poultry Association

# 1. WELCOME BY PROGRAMME DIRECTOR: **MR THABILE NKUNJANA (NAMC)**



Mr Thabile Nkunjana, NAMC's programme director, thanked all the participants and speakers for attending the poultry information day event. The event aimed to unpack the value chain's potential, obstacles, and opportunities. Mr Nkunjana expressed his belief that the event would provide valuable learning and insights based on the knowledge shared by the speakers, noting that the topic was timely, as it addressed the impact observed from late 2023 to the current year.

## 2. OPENING REMARKS BY THE NAMC: MS NOHLANHLA GWAMANDA (NAMC)



Ms Nonhlanhla Gwamanda, on behalf of the host institution, the NAMC, noted that the organisation, as a state entity, was committed to developing the sector, mainly supporting smallholder farmers. The NAMC collaborated with industries and other state entities, including SAPA, to support farmers, acknowledging their valuable contributions. She expressed appreciation for the support received from all stakeholders in the poultry sector, who had worked together with the NAMC to support farmers nationwide. Ms Gwamanda affirmed that the challenges faced by poultry farmers were well-known, and the NAMC had firsthand experience working with producers, experiencing biosecurity issues and load-shedding as contributing factors. She emphasised her relief at having this conversation, hoping to find a way forward to assist farmers, as the situation was dire, with chickens dying and urgently needing a market.

### 3. SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE: DR ABONGILE BALARANE (SAPA)



Dr Abongile Balarane from SAPA, responsible for the layer industry, noted that, as anticipated, 2023 was another turbulent year for the egg industry. He mentioned that feed prices remained stubbornly high, and the difficulties associated with poor service delivery and load-shedding continued unabated. However, the producers that survived managed to adapt or learnt to live with circumstances beyond their control.

The presentation highlighted the disruption to the supply of fertilised hatching eggs caused by the H7N6 outbreak affecting parent breeder flocks. SAPA supported the issuance of multiple import permits as part of the recovery plan, and the egg sector expedited the import of 2.654 million hatching eggs. The price for all eggs (cage, barn and free-range) rose from R17.73/dozen in 2022 to R22.93/dozen (+29.3 %) in 2023. Average prices for graded and ungraded eggs increased by 29.0 % and 31.3 %, respectively. In 2023, 81.9 % of the eggs were graded, down from 82.6 % in 2022. According to Stats SA, the average retail price for large eggs was R37.68/dozen, an annual increase of 3.7 %, indicating an estimated retail markup of 63 % in 2023. Over the past five years, the average markup on large eggs was 102.6 %. Eggs remained the most affordable source of animal protein compared to beef, pork, and chicken, costing an average of R31.30/kg in 2023.



In 2023, the annual number of day-old pullets hatched decreased by 18.8 % to 19.76 million, averaging 379 100 per week compared to 468 800 per week the previous year. The average weekly case production decreased by 14.0 % to 397 500 cases. Total egg production amounted to 20.71 million cases or 621.4 million dozen eggs. Typically, they produce around 718 million dozen eggs per year from the 27 000 million birds.

The average price for layer feed in 2023 rose by 5.2 % to R6 007 per tonne, following a 19.8 % increase the previous year. In 2023, per capita consumption declined from 148.2 eggs (9.06 kg) to 126.4 eggs (7.73 kg). Trade bans impacted exports due to the presence of HPAI in South Africa. Chicken egg exports totalled 5 128 tonnes, a 42.3 % decrease from 8 879 tonnes in 2022. The export value dropped by 27.3 %, from R365.6 million to R265.6 million. The main destinations were Mozambique (73.0 %), Eswatini (18.2 %), and Botswana (3.4 %), which received 94.6 % of South Africa's exports. The total value of the egg imports soared by 270 %, rising from R112.0 million to R414.7 million. Most of the imports in 2023 were fertilised eggs, with 87.3 % originating from Brazil, 10.7 % from Spain, and the remainder from the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA.

The speaker noted that these fertilised eggs were destined for the broiler and egg industries, and the South African Revenue Service (SARS) tariff codes did not differentiate between the two. Lastly, there were ongoing discussions with the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) regarding the possibility of vaccinating chickens and establishing protocols for proper biosecurity measures.

## 4. OVERVIEW OF TESTING DONE FOR DETECTION OF INFLUENZA A VIRUS AT THE DIAGNOSTIC PCR LABORATORY, ARC-OVR: DR MARCO ROMITO (ARC)



Dr Marco Romito from the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Campus shared a comprehensive overview of Avian Influenza A virus testing in South Africa. With over two decades of expertise in this field, his team utilises a secure diagnostic PCR laboratory with real-time technology. The laboratory's advanced capabilities allow them to detect all Avian Influenza viruses and perform additional testing for specific subtypes, such as H5 and H7, with sequencing available when necessary.

The presentation highlighted a concerning trend – an increase in testing over the past eight years coinciding with outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) viruses in poultry. While ostriches frequently carry the virus, the first HPAI outbreaks in South African poultry occurred in 2017 (H5N8), followed by outbreaks in 2021 and 2022 (H5N1), and most recently in 2023 (both H5N1 and H7N6). Conversely, Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) viruses, such as H6N2, are commonly found in chickens and typically cause mild symptoms or production issues.

Dr Romito shed light on the complexities of Influenza A viruses, explaining that chickens, turkeys, and various birds were highly susceptible to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), causing severe illness due to its

rapid spread. He noted that Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) viruses were generally less detrimental. There were 18 hemagglutinin (H) and 11 neuraminidase (N) subtypes, with wild aquatic birds acting as natural reservoirs. The presentation covered spillover events, where the virus jumped from wild birds to poultry, and a major outbreak likely caused by HPAI occurred in the 19th century. Wild aquatic birds' migrations could contribute to the spread of the virus across continents. He mentioned that other species, like mink and pigs, could be infected, with some viruses developing host-specific lineages, similar to seasonal human flu, and could even contract the virus from humans. Symptoms and differential diagnosis were also discussed. Sudden death is a possibility with HPAI in poultry, accompanied by respiratory distress, diarrhoea, and head swelling. LPAI symptoms may be absent, mild, or contribute to secondary infections. South Africa continues to face challenges with H6N1 infecting poultry flocks, and ostriches are also vulnerable due to their farming practices and exposure to wild birds.

Dr Romito discussed recent developments, including the emergence of the H5N1 Asian lineage in 1996. This lineage caused alarm due to its rapid spread and ability to infect birds previously considered resistant. It even gave rise to a particularly troublesome lineage responsible for significant global outbreaks. These viruses can combine with other subtypes to form stable variants. South Africa has experienced outbreaks with the H5N8 and H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4 lineages. Fortunately, there have been no indications of human infections from these outbreaks. Vaccination was mentioned as a potential tool, although it does not necessarily prevent infection. Strict regulations govern the use of this approach due to concerns about ongoing circulation and the potential for new variant formation. The presentation concluded with acknowledgements and a question-and-answer session. Biosecurity measures like access control and proper vaccination were crucial for safeguarding small farms from viruses. While the question regarding annual farmer vaccinations was not directly addressed, biosecurity remained the focus for preventative measures. Physical workshops for farmers were offered, but contacting the organisation was recommended for details on future sessions.

## 5. CONTROLLED POULTRY DISEASES IN SOUTH AFRICA: DR GRIETJIE DE KLERK (DALRRD)



Dr De Klerk from DALRRD presented on controlled poultry diseases in South Africa, highlighting the Animal Disease Act 35 of 1984 (ADA). She noted that the government was responsible for controlling diseases with specific measures, and any instances had to be reported to the nearest state veterinarian or animal health technician. Article 11 of the ADA requires animal owners, including poultry farmers, to prevent disease spread to neighbouring farms and inform neighbours of outbreaks to enable necessary precautions.

She emphasised that various poultry diseases could exhibit similar symptoms, such as sudden death, illness, loss of appetite, reduced egg production, poor growth, and rapid spread among chickens in the area. If farmers suspect these diseases, they should consult the nearest state veterinarian or animal health technician for investigation, as provincial state veterinary services support all farmers.

Dr De Klerk presented further on Avian Influenza (AI), a highly contagious global disease with potential for severe illness. AI is commonly found in areas with food and water sources, large poultry populations, and high human activity. She noted that South Africa experienced its first Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in ostriches in the Eastern Cape Province in 2004 (H5N2). On 19 June 2017, a broiler breeder facility in Mpumalanga province detected the first HPAI outbreak (H5N8). In 2023, the recent HP H7N6 outbreak occurred, marking the first instance of HP H7 and H7 in chickens, with suspected mechanical transmission

between farms through trucks, people, equipment, and two wild birds testing positive.

She further noted that Avian Influenza could be prevented by implementing biosecurity measures to restrict contact between wild birds and poultry, refraining from introducing sick chickens into the flock, avoiding interacting with chickens after handling any other birds, and not selling unwell chickens to others. Instead, she emphasised reporting any suspicions. According to the ADA, all exposed poultry must be isolated and culled by the responsible person under an officer's supervision. She mentioned that while vaccination may not entirely prevent the disease, it could reduce symptom severity and overall impact. However, this could increase the risk of disease transmission through the movement of seemingly healthy chickens. The costs of vaccination, enhanced biosecurity, and increased surveillance must be carefully considered. While the Southern African Development Community (SADC) decided against vaccination, South Africa received permission to conduct an experiment to evaluate vaccination effects and success. She noted that all fowls, domesticated ostriches, and racing pigeons in the Republic should be immunised. Infected animals should be isolated and either culled or dealt with as determined by the director.

## 6. CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL-SCALE BROILER FARMERS: MS MAPHATE RAKOMA (FWM)



Ms Rosina Rakoma from Farming with Maphate delivered a presentation on the challenges small-scale broiler farmers faced in South Africa. The presentation covered the introduction, stating that small-scale broiler farming had challenges that could impact livelihoods. These farmers face issues such as limited access to quality inputs, a lack of government and institutional support, market access barriers, and disease outbreaks. Smallholder farmers often have limited access to quality feed, veterinary services, and high-quality livestock. Consequently, the chickens' health is compromised, leading to more frequent illnesses and decreased productivity. The presentation also emphasised the lack of support and resources, with many small-scale farmers needing the necessary educational tools and training to improve their farming practices and business management. Access to affordable credit, grants, and subsidies could significantly alleviate the financial burden faced by these farmers. Additionally, providing technological expertise and support could enhance their efficiency and productivity.

She further stated that smallholder farmers lacked market access due to limited insights into demand and pricing trends, hindering informed business decisions. Transporting perishable goods to market facilities also poses significant challenges, leading to substantial losses for small-scale broiler farmers. Direct connections with buyers and distributors can secure competitive prices and consistent sales. The speaker noted that disease outbreaks had prevented her from selling, as most stock breeders supply commercial farmers,

significantly impacting her business. Finally, she called for targeted initiatives and stakeholder collaboration to address these issues.

## 7. CLOSING REMARKS: MR BERNARD MANGANYI (NAMC)



The concluding remarks began by conveying gratitude to all parties engaged in the information session. Acknowledgement was extended to the attendees, organisers, the Communication and Smallholder Market Access Unit, and the speakers.

Mr Manganyi then offered specific appreciation to each presenter. The chairperson, Mr Thabile Nkunjana from the NAMC, was recognised for guiding the discussions. Ms Nonhlanhla Gwamanda from the NAMC was lauded for sharing insightful perspectives into the NAMC's work and stakeholder engagement focus. Dr Abongile Balarane from SAPA was commended for the informative update on avian influenza, covering the economic ramifications, price fluctuations, ongoing vaccination discussions, and recovery projections. Attendee engagement was underscored, mainly their enquiries regarding vaccination eligibility criteria, communication strategies, and support service needs.

Dr Marco Romito from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) was praised for sharing details on testing protocols and underscoring the importance of biosecurity, access control, and vaccination. The attendees' aspiration for additional face-to-face knowledge-sharing forums was also acknowledged. Dr Grietjie De Klerk from the DALRRD was commended for elucidating control measures for poultry ailments, encompassing disease definitions, pertinent regulations, and the implications of vaccination. The audience's enthusiasm for



vaccine development was noted, and the speaker reaffirmed the intricate process involved.

Miss Maphate Rosina Rakoma of Farming with Maphate was thanked for highlighting the challenges small-scale broiler farmers faced, including limited access to quality resources and education, compliance and certification obstacles, and disruptions to market entry. A call to action was made for targeted support and stakeholder collaboration to address these challenges.

The closing statement emphasised the need to move beyond specialisation and adopt a 'One Health' methodology considering the interconnectedness between environmental, animal, human, and food source safety. This approach was presented as a more effective way to address future outbreaks.

The speaker concluded by expressing gratitude for everyone's contributions and knowledge. They hoped this gained knowledge would empower participants to make informed decisions about their poultry operations. The National Agricultural Marketing Council reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the poultry industry. Finally, participants were encouraged to seek further assistance, and well-wishes were extended for a productive week ahead.

# 8. APPENDIX: OFFICIAL PROGRAMME





## POULTRY INFORMATION DAY PROGRAM

THURSDAY 07 MARCH 2024 09:00 – 13:00 JOIN VIA MS TEAMS

Register here: <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/3c1e136-ba39-4c0-aaf0-ccb0-0a56eae57c55?m=72ac-81d9-861b-01c9f0d0c717>

**MIR THABILE NKUNJANA (SENIOR ECONOMIST, ACTING MANAGER, TRADE UNIT, MARKETS ECONOMIC RESEARCH CENTER)**

<b>09:00 – 09:10</b>	<b>OPENING AND WELCOME</b> Mr Thabile Nkunjana - NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING COUNCIL
<b>09:10- 09:20</b>	<b>REMARKS BY NAMC</b> Ms Nontshabha Gwamanda - NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING COUNCIL
<b>09:20 – 9:40</b>	<b>SOUTH AFRICAN HIGH PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE</b> Dr Abongile Balarane - SOUTH AFRICAN POULTRY ASSOCIATION
<b>9:40 – 10:00</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>10:00 – 10:20</b>	<b>OVERVIEW OF TESTING DONE FOR DETECTION OF INFLUENZA A VIRUSES AT THE DIAGNOSTIC PCR LABORATORY, ARC-OVR</b> Dr M. Rombo – AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL-OVR
<b>10:20- 10:40</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>10:40- 11:00</b>	<b>CONTROLLED DISEASES IN POULTRY</b> Dr Graetjie de Klerk – DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LAND REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
<b>11:00 – 11:30</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>11:30- 11:50</b>	<b>TEA BREAK</b>
<b>11:50 – 12:10</b>	<b>CHALLENGES FACED BY SMALL SCALE BROILER FARMERS</b> Ms Magphate Sisona Rakoma – FARMING WITH MAAPHATE
<b>12:10 – 12:40</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>12:40 – 13:00</b>	<b>CLOSING REMARKS</b> Bernard Manganyi - NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL MARKETING COUNCIL



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*It is important to note that the perspectives expressed by the various speakers solely represent their own viewpoints and do not, in any manner or context, purport to convey or reflect the official stance of the NAMC.*

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