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Ethiopian Veterinary Association

THE THREAT OF AVIAN INFLUENZA TO ETHIOPIA: IMPLICATION  
ON HEALTH, NATIONAL ECONOMY AND POLICIES

## Highlights



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The Ethiopian Veterinary Association (EVA), P.O. Box 2462, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Tel. 251-1-525020, Email: [eva.hq@ethionet.et](mailto:eva.hq@ethionet.et)



# Impact of Bird flu: A Case of Tamilnadu State, India

*G.Veerakumaran<sup>1</sup> and Dr.C.Pitcha<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor and Head, Department of Cooperatives, Faculty of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mekelle University,

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Cooperatives, Faculty of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mekelle University,

## Introduction

India is the fifth largest producer of eggs and ninth largest producer of poultry meat in the world, producing over 34 billion eggs and about 600,000 tons of poultry meat in 2004. In the overall market for poultry products, India was positioned 17 in World Poultry Production. An analysis reveals that the poultry sector in India has been growing at a much faster rate, along with other industries. Over the past decade the poultry industry in India has contributed approximately US \$229million, to the Gross National Product (GNP).<sup>1</sup>

The Indian poultry industry's success story is uniquely exceptional. From a backyard venture, it has made a quantum jump to emerge as a dynamic industry. The last three decades showed significant development in poultry industry with each decade focusing the developments in three different sectors. The seventies saw a spurt in egg production; the eighties in broiler production; the nineties in poultry integration, automation and feed production. The present decade promises to exploit value added products and global trade avenue.<sup>2</sup>

However the spread of news on bird flu virus caused an estimated loss to poultry and allied industries at 46 million USD per day,<sup>3</sup>. This alarming situation drives the authors to make an attempt to study the situation in a systematic way.

## Objectives of the Research

The major objectives of the study are:

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1 <http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/301191/>

2 <http://www.fao.org/ag/aga/workshop/feed/papers/7bala.doc>

3 <http://www.hinduonnet.com/holnus/006200603261323.htm>



- to highlight the status of poultry industry in the state of Tamilnadu, India,
- to review the social, economical and political impact of bird flu on the poultry industry and the people in the state of Tamilnadu, India,
- to spell out the lessons to be learned by Ethiopian poultry farmers and the people.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The study was carried out with secondary data only. To justify the first objective current status of poultry industry in relation to meat and egg production were taken into consideration. The second objective was analyzed by taking in to consideration the change in food habit of the people, reduction in sale of poultry meat and egg and need for government intervention during the year 2005-06. The third objective was justified by choosing appropriate lessons that could be adopted in Ethiopia. The authors feel that this modest attempt can be a basis for further research and development.

### **Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study was made in accordance with the objectives framed viz., status of poultry industry in the state of Tamilnadu, India, social, economical and political impact of bird flu on the poultry industry and the people in the state of Tamilnadu, India, lessons to be learned by Ethiopian poultry farmers and the people.

### **General Description of Tamilnadu State**

Tamil Nadu ("Land of the Tamils") is a state at the southern tip of India. Tamil Nadu's gross state domestic product for 2004 is estimated at \$56 billion in current prices. Possessing the fifth largest economy (2004-2005) among states in India, Tamil Nadu is also the second most industrialised state next to Maharashtra. It ranks second in per capita income (2004-2005) among large states. It ranks third in foreign direct investment approvals (cumulative 1991-2002) of Rs.22,582.64 crore (\$5 billion), next only to Maharashtra (Rs.36,602.41 Crore (\$8.1 billion)) and Delhi (Rs.30,303.79 Crore (\$6.7 billion)). The State's investment constitutes 9.12% of the total FDI in the country. Unlike many other states, the economic resources are quite spread out, rather than concentrated in a small industrialised area.

According to the 2001 Census, Tamil Nadu has the highest level of urbanization (43.86%) in India, accounting for 6% of India's total population



and 9.6% of the urban population. Tamil Nadu has a network of about 110 industrial parks and estates offering developed plots with supporting infrastructure. Also, the state government is promoting other industrial parks like Rubber Park, Apparel Parks, Floriculture Park, Park for Biotechnology, Information Technology Park, and Agro Export Zones among others.

Annual Plan outlays have increased by a record 75% from Rs.5,200 crore (\$1.1 billion) in 2001-2 to Rs.9,100 crore (\$2 billion) in 2005-6.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Status of Poultry industry in the State of Tamilnadu, India.**

The term poultry includes fowls, ducks, turkeys, geese, quails, swans, ostriches and guinea fowls domesticated for economic purpose. Fowls constitute 99% of the total poultry reared in the State. The development of poultry industry is significant in the State. The State occupies second position in egg production in the country. Poultry farming in the State has transformed into a big vibrant industry from a mere backyard enterprise over the past three decades. Now, this sector is a dynamic industry having a vast scope for exports and employment generation.

This process was speeded up with the help of Poultry Extension Centres, which acted as demonstration farms and extension centres providing training to farmers to take up poultry farming. Moreover, the formation of Tamilnadu Poultry Development Corporation, Government support for establishing poultry units, widespread immunization against Ranikhet disease and easy availability of quality feeds, all contributed to development of poultry rearing as an industry. Poultry rearing has now become a commercial activity in many places in the districts of Namakkal, Salem, Erode and Coimbatore. In fact the Namakkal belt has emerged as the egg basket in the State contributing around 65% to the total egg production in the State.

Though poultry farming has developed into a big industry, eco-friendly backyard poultry rearing is also practiced in the State as a profitable traditional backyard enterprise. It still continues to be the livelihood preposition of several poor farmers in the rural areas and contributes to 10% of the total egg production in the State. Backyard poultry rearing consists of

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamilnadu>



5 to 10 birds per household and is reared with a little investment. The household gets meat and eggs from these birds. Birds are on free range and feed on worms, insects, waste grains, white ants etc. and they convert the farm and kitchen waste into egg and meat. These birds are very susceptible to the highly fatal Ranikhet disease<sup>5</sup>.

The 17th Quinquennial Livestock and Poultry Census was carried out by the Department of Animal Husbandry of the State in 2003-04 with 15.10.2004 as the reference date. As per the Census, the species wise distribution of livestock and poultry, their percentage to the total livestock and poultry and density in the State are as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 Poultry Population and Density

Species	Population	Density (Per sq. km)
Fowls	8,61,19,929	662
Ducks	2,46,960	2
Turkeys	51,014	1
Others (Quails & Gini birds)	1,73,370	1
Total Poultry	8,65,91,273	666

One of the salient features of Census 2003-04 is that the Poultry population has substantially increased by 137.16%, from 36.51 million in 1997 to 86.59 million in 2004<sup>6</sup>.

During the year 2004, the estimated egg production has increased to 3.784 million numbers, an increase of 30%. During the same period, the per capita availability of eggs per annum was 61 numbers.

### **Social, Economical and Political impact of bird flu on the poultry industry and the people in the state of Tamilnadu, India.**

Against this backdrop, the industry is now facing a setback due to bird-flu, the widely known disease of poultry. The Government and the poultry experts came out openly that there is no symptom of the disease in the State. But, the Industry in the State fall prey to the hue and cry of the people and forth estate in the other parts of the world: This is basically due to the fear of the public. This ultimately affected the social, economic and political trend of the people of the State.

5 [http://www.tn.gov.in/policynotes/animal\\_husbandry-2.htm](http://www.tn.gov.in/policynotes/animal_husbandry-2.htm)

6 [http://www.tn.gov.in/policynotes/animal\\_husbandry.htm](http://www.tn.gov.in/policynotes/animal_husbandry.htm)



### **Social Impact**

The eating habit of the people of the State is mixed, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Due to the urbanization, the people in the cities and towns invariably consume poultry meat on Sundays. Egg is a regular dish in the menu on the weekdays and particularly the children are fed almost daily. Now, after the spread of bird-flu in the other parts of the world, the people almost stopped taking the poultry meat and egg because of fear. This affected the sale of poultry product and the industry is in standstill.

The industry, NGOs and Government are on a war footing working towards changing the mind set of the people. One such measure is that the Industry bigwigs organized "chicken melas (festival)" in various cities to instill confidence among the people. In these melas, known personalities publicly eat eggs or chicken and demonstrated that they are safe. In smaller towns unfertilized eggs are being projected as a cheap source of protein to boost sales<sup>7</sup>.

### **Economic Impact**

Hundreds of poultry farms in the State of Tamil Nadu are suffering severe financial losses on account of fall in demand for eggs and broilers due to the fear psychosis caused by the reports of bird virus, although the State is free from the disease.

The crisis has reached a point where the poultry farmers in the State can neither continue feeding the birds in their farms nor cull them (in view of the non-movement of chicken and eggs) as both would ruin them. Hence, till the crisis ends and market recover, there is an urgent need for infusing additional working capital for the poultry farmers to tackle the financial crisis.

It is reported that the crisis had hit the sector at a time when its export revenue touched Rs 2,500 million.

This industry has been funded around Rs 20,000 million by the banks and financial institutions directly and indirectly which is at stake in view of the latest crisis.

<sup>7</sup><http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2006022714750600.htm&date=2006/02/27/&prc=th&>



Another suggestion to safeguard the Industry is to impress upon the railways, airlines and defense to restart serving dishes containing eggs and broilers to instill confidence among the consumers.

### **Political Impact**

The problem of the poultry industry became a big headache to the government and it is forced to intervene in the sector immediately. The governments, both Federal and Regional / State took the following measures to tackle the issue.

The Federal Government explored the scope for de-zoning the poultry rearing States that remain free from avian flu and declared them as 'disease-free' zone of which the State of Tamil Nadu is one.<sup>8</sup>

The Federal Government recommended the banks and financial institutions to reschedule the loans extended to the poultry industries in view of the loss caused by the avian flu outbreak. The industry asked for a moratorium, extension of repayment of advances and also a cut in the interest rate considering the huge financial loss the sector had to suffer in the light of the bird disease reports, accordingly the Government considered the request.<sup>9</sup>

To help the Poultry farmers in Tamil Nadu, the State Government decided to include an egg a week in the free noon meal scheme for the school children. This would reverse the sagging fortunes of the poultry farmers, besides ensuring definite and continued work for thousands of others connected with the industry.<sup>10</sup>

Kerala, a neighboring State, one of the largest users of the poultry product from Tamil Nadu, stopped movement in the wake of the bird flu scare. But after a week it allowed the transport of chicken and eggs into the State bringing relief to poultry producers after ensuring that the disease has not affected the poultry industry in the State<sup>11</sup>.

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8 <http://www.hinduonnet.com/businessline/2006/02/27/stories/2006022701531000.htm>

9 <http://www.hinduonnet.com/businessline/2006/02/27/stories/2006022701541000.htm>

10 <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2004/05/21/stories/2004052102580300.htm>

11 <http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/thscrip/print.pl?file=2006022201961200.htm&date=2006/02/22/&prd=bl&>



Above all, the National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) decided to advertise regularly on television, through catchy tunes combined with visuals to promote the consumption of eggs.<sup>12</sup>

Both Federal and State governments have come up with a preparedness programme to safeguard the poultry industry.

#### **Lessons to be learned by Ethiopian poultry farmers and the people**

Based on the above analysis the authors advocate the following measures in Ethiopia in addition to the WHO guidelines<sup>13</sup> and FAO directions.

Government interventions in all respect are inevitable and have to respond immediately by taking up a lead role.

The poultry producers should form an association (if it is not existing) and come out with uniform measures.

The poultry producers and people must be advocated to adhere all preventive measures.

The people must be advocated to consume the well-boiled poultry product, which will kill all the germs, if any.

The poultry producers and the government should give propaganda widely about the merits of poultry meat and egg consumption.

The banks and financial institutions should also be instructed to show lenience in the recovery of loans and reduction of interest.

The government machineries and the NGOs must be fully tuned to carry out an extension activity for the poultry producers and the poultry product consumers.

The cooperative institutions could be utilized for marketing of poultry product and propagation against the rumors on bird-flu, since it is people's movement.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2005/stories/20030314005411800.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Responding to the avian influenza pandemic threat- Recommended strategic actions by WHO, 2005.



### **Conclusion:**

The experience of India is a lesson to be learned by the poultry producers of Ethiopia particularly during the period of such crisis. Even though the industry has affected socially, economically and politically, the government, NGOs, Poultry associations and committees have joined hands together and fight against the evil disease to protect the poultry producers. Hence, a coordinated effort will thwart the ills of all these and safeguard the people and the poultry industry.

Be wise to avoid frightful evil; not to fear the dreadful is folly of the weak  
Thiukkural:428