

POLICY BRIEF

Policy and Legislative Framework to Mainstream Poultry Husbandry Practices Towards Cage-Free Production in Kenya

Introduction

Poultry farming in Kenya has been on the rise for the last 15 years and has continued to revolutionize as the sector incorporates modern ways of animal husbandry such as the adoption of the battery cage system that causes inherent animal welfare issues. It has dramatically changed, moved from traditionally small family farms to large agricultural industries. To keep up with the increased demand for poultry products, the industry now produces as much as possible with as little costs and minimal concern to animal welfare practices.

In view of the current legislative framework in Kenya, the battery cage system is neither enacted nor unauthorized. Its use therefore is neither legal nor illegal. A scarcity of laws and the inadequacy of the current ones provides a major gap that results in no scrutinization whatsoever. If left unregulated and unmonitored the industry may bring about direct and indirect socio-cultural and economic impacts because of outbreak of diseases – owing to the way in which humans interact with, and handle the production, distribution, processing, and marketing of live poultry and poultry products.

As the poultry industry in Kenya is developing and integrating new technology and new ways of doing things, there is need for Kenya to incorporate legislative frameworks that take a precautionary approach – in that the policies will seek to cushion all the risks that may accrue from the expansion of the industry as well as cater for the poultry welfare needs. The laws should be proactive and not reactive in dealing with the poultry industry.

Therefore, the policy recommendations are timely as Kenya is at a time where the agricultural industry is undergoing legislative reforms as it incorporates sustainable development as envisaged under the economic pillar of Vision 2030. Reforms should be geared towards out-lawing the battery cage system due to its cruelty and inhumane aspects.

The policy recommendations emanate from findings of a study by Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) and Open Wing Alliance (OWA) in conjunction with the 47 County Governments of Kenya and other relevant stakeholders in addressing the welfare concerns emanating from poultry battery cage farming in Kenya and the legal gaps thereof.



Issue 1

Poultry Welfare Standards

Animal welfare in poultry is an important aspect to be considered by farmers who seek to engage in poultry production. This is mostly driven by the consumers in demanding great welfare standards in the husbandry practices by the farmers. Great welfare standards comply with the five freedoms which give us the boundaries with which to access animal welfare in improving and safeguarding well-being within the agricultural industry. Therefore, the main objective in the formulation of any framework is to have guidelines that advance, respect, and promote welfare in the poultry industry as well as denounce caged systems that infringe on such freedoms.

ACTIONS

- i. Education: Consumers need to be educated on the agricultural practices surrounding poultry farming and whether they are caged or cage-free. This will enable them to understand and be aware of the production systems that are used in the rearing of poultry.

Increased education will increase awareness and hence consumers will make the producers accountable for the poultry products.

- ii. Policy makers need to recognize that animal welfare has a lot of dimensions – its scope is wider than the health of the animal. While there is general acceptance of the animal welfare international standards across the world, Kenya lags in establishing frameworks that uphold good welfare practices in the poultry industry.
- iii. Policy commitments need to be increased & incentives that supplement the legal norms in persuading poultry owners to implement sustainable practices that promote good husbandry poultry practices.
- iv. Provide a code of hygienic practices for poultry handling and environmental health standards.



Issue 2

Health and Biosecurity Measures

Whether you raise poultry in confinement housing or outdoor pens, a low-stress environment should be maintained by providing good nutrition and health care, adequate space, shelter from extreme weather conditions, and care in handling - the risk of disease in poultry is real. However, the risks are exacerbated by the large-scale poultry industrial system - although not typically recognized, the system generates a unique ecosystem environment that may facilitate the evolution of zoonotic pathogens and their transmission to human population.

As the large-scale poultry industrial system increases, potential impacts on human and environmental health

from long term inadvertent exposure to the increased wastes and to contaminants that may be present in the system are possible. Studies surrounding the impact of large-scale industrial systems show that contaminants from the industry include veterinary pharmaceuticals, pathogens, naturally excreted hormones among other wastes – bearing in mind that antimicrobials are used extensively not only to treat or prevent microbial infections, but also commonly used to promote more rapid growth.

ACTIONS

- i. It is paramount for veterinary experts, medical experts, farmers and other stakeholders to come together and agree on the safety of all feeds, vaccines and other chemicals that are used to rear the poultry to ensure health preservation of all their consumers.
- ii. There is need to provide biosafety/biosecurity guidelines that are to be upheld by farmers to ensure that there is proper handling of poultry in and out of the poultry confinements.
- iii. It is also paramount that the industry ensures that all personnel maintain a proper inventory of all the animals in their facilities. In addition to that, the industry should have good practices that ensure there is minimal contact with animals to avoid spreading of zoonotic diseases.
- iv. Establish a waste management system that will ensure that the wastes from the hatcheries are composted effectively in a controlled manner away from the people and other animals.



Issue 3

Safety of the Poultry Products

Consumers have three main concerns about the safety of poultry products, i.e. antimicrobial residues which are as a result of excessive use of antimicrobials in veterinary practice or as a supplement in ready-produced feed; hormone residues used to achieve growth rates and production qualities of poultry; and food borne pathogens easily spread during the trade and processing of the poultry production – spread is



facilitated by industrialization and the growing trade in animal feed, live animals and food. The safety issues continue to intensify with the increased use of antimicrobials and the increased scale of poultry production.

The issues imply a lack of proper management practices on the part of the producer.

ACTIONS

- i. There is need for government to establish mechanisms to put pressure on the producer to supply safe products. The role of the government is to act as a check and balance and ensure, through administrative and regulatory methods, that consumers are not exposed to unsafe poultry products.



Issue 4

Facilities and Equipment

Having understood and appreciated the need of upholding welfare in the poultry industry, standards need to be set to provide for minimum requirements for facilities that farmers use to raise poultry. The farmers should have guidelines that ensure that the facilities have a low-stress environment by providing adequate space, shelter from extreme weather conditions, and ensure proper care and handling.

ACTIONS

- i. Educate the farmer on the five freedoms and the need to uphold them.
- ii. Establish frameworks that upholds great environmental standards – environmental

conservation measures need to be considered. Legislators should establish strict liability enforcement avenues for which the industry can be accountable to.

- iii. Increase focused partnerships between civil society, relevant stakeholders and intergovernmental agencies in a bid to provide expertise on the various issues and effect changes & progress in the industry.



Issue 5

Trade and Actions Incidental to Trade

As the demand for poultry products increases, the industry now produces as much as possible with little costs as possible. Therefore, for economies of scale to be felt, farmers tend to have trade practices that disregard the poultry. This can be in terms of transport, improper packaging or marketing of the product.

ACTIONS

- i. Establish guidelines that govern transportation of poultry.
- ii. Strengthen the surveillance role of the police authorities to ensure that transport regulations are upheld when transporting poultry.
- iii. Most consumers equate appearance as the primary indicator of quality. Therefore, consumers would prefer if all the information is ascribed on the package material of the poultry products. This would enable them to make informed decision on the products that they will purchase.





Promotion of Inter-agency Collaboration

As the industry increases in magnitude, there is need of increased cooperation between different agencies in the country. There will be important as policy makers can take the precautionary approach and incorporate policies as we move. This will provide for a holistic and inclusive industry that takes care of the health of the public all while incorporating great welfare standards for the poultry.

ACTIONS

- i. Kenya needs to express and pledge their support to the OIE principles and work towards incorporating its principles in all their legislations and regulations.
- ii. Kenya needs to form partnerships with different agencies in a bid to seek technical expertise from animal welfare experts who will be instrumental in formulating policies that will be beneficial to both the people and the animals.

Going Forward

Poultry production holds an important place in Kenya economically and as a food source. Therefore, its viability ultimately hinges on consumer demands and perceptions of poultry production. Consumers expect good quality products derived from healthy animals raised in a healthy environment – to be natural, fresh tasting and nutritious. Recognition and adaptation to consumer opinion will assist poultry production viability

Consumers believe that government intervention is required in poultry farming especially with the introduction of the various antimicrobials. They believe that if government puts in place mandatory stringent regulations on the introduction and use of antimicrobials, both organically and conventionally produced poultry will possess similar level of health for the consumer. Therefore, it is paramount that the government takes charge and make progressive change in the industry as it continues to revolutionize.



Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) is an indigenous Pan-African non-governmental organization which works to sustain animals as sentient beings through showing them compassion, care, and appreciation. We achieve this by influencing policy, community empowerment, advocacy and attitude change.

Kifaru House,
Number 137, Milima Road, Hardy-Karen.
PO Box 3731 – 00506, Nairobi, Kenya.
Cellphone: +254 – (0) 727 – 234447.
Landline: +254 (02) 6006510
Fax: +254 (02) 6006961
Email: info@anaw.org