

Factory chicken farming



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Factory Chicken Farming is the practice of raising chicken in a confinement at high stocking density. A farm operates as the factory. The main product of this industry is eggs and chicken meat for human consumption. Confinement at this high stocking density is one of the emerging practices aimed at producing the highest output at the lowest cost by relying on scale economics, modern machinery, biotechnology and global trade. This type of livestock keeping at such high stocking density requires antibiotics and pesticides to control the spread of diseases and rapid multiplication of pests catalyzed by the crowding living conditions.

These antibiotics are also aimed at killing intestinal bacteria; this stimulates livestock growth (Stanfield 2009) Factory farming techniques are different in different parts of the world. Like any other type of farming practice, factory farming comes with its benefits and risks. These issues are perceived in different key perspectives including; efficiency of food production, animal welfare, whether this farming method is sufficiently effective for feeding the increasing global human population, the environmental impact and health risks involved.

In contrast to other farming methods factory farms are distinguished with their large number of animals which are mostly reared indoors at high densities. The aim of this kind of operation is to produce animal products namely egg and chicken meat at lowest possible cost. Food is supplied to chicken in their poultry houses where a wide variety of artificial farming methods are used in order to maintain animal health and to increase their production. Some of these artificial techniques include the use of antimicrobial agents, vitamin supplements, and growth hormones.

Physical restraints are used to restrain the birds from unnecessary or undesirable movements. Improved breeding methods are employed to produce animals with most suited characteristics and are able to produce consistent food products (Stephen Baldwin Twining 2009) Benefits of Factory Chicken Farming Low monetary cost, by reducing other costs including land cost, managerial costs through contained methods, factory farming tend to produce food that can be sold at lower cost to consumers.

However, critics argue that this seems cheap but the compromised cost is charged to the environment in form of pollution to the public purse in form of subsidies to conventional commodities, and to the public health in the cost of diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases. This also compromises the welfare of the farm and factory workers health and the well-being of the animals. Standardization and efficiency; factory farming method permit improved consistency and control over product output.

Animals in confinement can be supervised more closely hence more effectively than free-ranging animals. Sick animals can be easily identified and treated faster. Efficient production requires fewer animals to be raised for the same produce in other farming methods. Food safety and animal health; according to Meat chicken farm sequence, reducing the number and diversity of agricultural production facilities may make an oversight and food regulations quality much easier. A large farm will not require greater resource to maintain a high level of animal health.

A single animal farming expert can supervise a large number of animals contained in a small farm much easier. Industrial farming provides more mechanisms for the use of antibiotics to treat and prevent diseases as

compared to non-industrial farming Challenges of Factory Chicken Farming Intensive farming may make the evolution and spread of harmful diseases easier and faster. Many communicable diseases spread more rapidly, and much easier through densely spaced population. Overcrowding of animals makes genetic re-assortment more likely.

On the other hand, small family farms are more likely to introduce bird diseases with frequent association with humans; like it was the case with 2009 bird flu pandemic (Twining 16) some studies have also suggested that antibiotics use in farming practices has contributed to antibiotic resistance in humans. In the highly populated farms, large quantities of produced wastes pose a risk of polluting rivers and lakes; this is most likely to happen where animal wastes are improperly recycled. In the US, animal raised for food produce more excrete waste than the entire US population an estimated 89, 000 pounds of animal waste per second.

According to Oregon State University agriculture Professor Peter Cheeke factory farming constitute a frontal assault to the environment with massive water and air pollution (Scott 69). Air pollution may also happen especially where dense population of birds produces high levels of foul smells as opposed to the cases of animal farming in the countryside. However in most cases, these large farms are capable of maintaining and operating controlled systems to control waste products. Small farms are in most cases unable to operate such systems and can therefore do little in recycling animals' waste products.

According to a survey by the United Nations, raising the big number of animals for food requires big land used to grow food crops. In total, 30

percent of the earth's land mass is used to cultivate corn and other food products which factory animals farming require. in US alone, more than 260 million acres of forests has been cleared to create enough land to grow enough grain to feed farmed animals. According to scientists from Smithsonian institution, an equivalent of seven football fields of land has been cleared off the forest every minute worldwide to create more room for the animals, and grains growing fields for factory farmed animals .

According to Greenpeace, all the animals and trees in more than 2. 9 million acres of the amazon rainforest in Brazil were destroyed between the years 2004 and 2005 in order to create enough land for growing crops used to feed chicken and other factory farms. Raising animals including birds, for food is grossly inefficient. This is because these animals feed on large quantities of grain, soya beans oats, and corn, yet they produce comparatively small amount of meat and eggs in return.

This translates to more than 70 percent of grain and cereals grown in US being fed to animals. In figures, it takes 16 pounds of grain to produce one pound of meat as quoted in Poultry Production in the United States In terms of energy, it takes more than 11 times as much fossil fuel to make one calorie from animal protein as it requires making one calorie from plant protein energy according to Meat Production Wastes Natural Resources. This energy is used in growing massive amount of corn and soybeans, tilling the farms and irrigating.

Additional energy for transporting the grain and soybeans to the manufacturers, to operate the factory farms, to transport the animals to slaughter and food processing industries, and also to operate the industries.

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Transporting meat and eggs to the grocery and stores, and to preserve the meat and meat products in refrigerators until it is sold also requires. According to John Anthony Allan 2008, a professor at King's College London and the winner of the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize, it takes more than 2400 gallons of water to produce 1 pound of meat, while growing one pound of wheat requires 25 gallons only.

According to the scholar, one saves more water by not eating a pound of meat than one does for not taking a bath for six months! A total vegetarian diet requires 300 gallons of water in a day, compared to 4,000 gallons of water required by a typical meat eating diet eater per day. From watering the crops that farmed chicken eat, providing them with water for drinking and cleaning waste in the factory farms, in slaughter houses and in the transport trucks, farmed animal industry poses a great threat on water supply.

Due to these factors, the professor urged people worldwide to go vegetarian due to waste of water involved in animal food production. Nearly half of all waters used in the United States go to raising and production of animals for food. The Factory meat chicken production process Chicks are transported from the hatchery to broiler farms, usually in well ventilated chick boxes in special air conditioned trucks. For the first 72 hours, all the chicks need is warmth for the remains of the yolk sac provides enough nutrients and moisture. After these hours, the chicks require warmth, feed and water at reasonable intervals. On arrival at the broiler farm, day old chicks are placed onto the shed floor, confined to less than a half of the total shed, usually referred to as the brooding area. In this space, they are given supplementary

warming from heat lamps or gas heaters (brooders) for three months. This exercise is referred to as the brooding as defined in the Poultry Farm. The air temperature in the brooder should be about 35 degrees centigrade at first, and then reduced by 1-2 degrees per day until it gets to 23 degrees centigrade in about three weeks.

High protein (22%) starter rations are fed to meat chicks to ensure maximum growth at their early days. This is continued for 18-24 days. A medicine called a Coccidiostat is added to the feed of the chicks to prevent the intestinal disease, Coccidiosis. At this stage, lower level of protein (19%) is fed from three weeks of age to slaughter which is 42-56 days of age. A special food is fed to them before they are fed on finisher food. Meat chickens are fed on pelleted food which is more efficient for there is less wastage as compared to mash.

This is because pellets improve the digestive system and can be broken into smaller sizes (Eiri 56). Monitoring is done continuously with the use of real time cameras and physical monitoring is also necessary. Their rearing houses must be well fitted and strong enough so as to protect the chicken from predators which include carnivorous, birds of prey and some families of rodents. Catching or harvesting is mostly done at night when the birds are a bit calm, then got into the process of slaughter without much delay to reduce stress and check on weight loss.

Catching may be done on hands or by use of mechanical devices. They are then placed on plastic crates or design modules, well designed with ventilations and safety from bruising during transportation. Harvesting, also known as partial depopulation, thinning out or multiple pickups may be done

up to four times, depending on need for heavy or light birds. This thinning out sheds allows more space for remaining birds and reduces room temperatures in the sheds. Harvest can start as early as 30 days and run until 55- 60 days according to Factory Poultry Production (PETA)