

**POTENTIAL OF EXPANDING THE CAPACITY OF INDIGENOUS
POULTRY FARMERS IN SRI LANKA: A CASE STUDY IN
THIRAPPANE AREA**

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The Sri Lankan government declared chicken as an essential food commodity in the year 2006. Chicken industry has entered into a progressive arena in income generation with the increasing consumer demand for meat and eggs in the last three decades. With the present rate of growth, chicken industry supports more than 70% to the livestock sub sector in Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, most of the agricultural development programmes at present focus on sustainable farming systems in poverty alleviation. Hence, the objective of this study was set to identify the potential of village chicken rearing in rural livelihood development.

The data used in this study were gathered from one of the sites (Thirappane) of the GEF-UNEP-ILRI-FAnGR Asia Sri Lanka project. Eighty eight village chicken rearing farm families were selected using the stratified random sampling method from 4 villages namely Alagollewa, Ooththupitiya, Dematagama and Labunoruwa. Structured questionnaire survey was used to collect data. There were 88.63 % of the households headed by males, where a majority (62.5%) of the farmers belonged to the ethnicity of Muslim. Most of the farmers (97.7%) had permanent houses and are with the education up to G.C.E. ordinary level (60.2%). Land extent owned by the minor majority (38.18%) of the village chicken farmers were 1-5 acres. Normal village chicken, naked neck, crown, and frizzled feathered indigenous chicken types were predominant types reared in flocks with the average flock size of 9 birds. There were more than 85% of the village chicken reared in the free range system in day time and confined (with roof) at night (50%). The mean mortality rate of village chicken was the 0.88 ± 1.42 . Even though the village chicken rearing is popular, the level of income becomes the third most important source of income, indicating its high contribution for the home consumption. As estimated, 72% of the farmers reared village chicken to satisfy the household dietary requirements. Despite the veterinary care provided by the government veterinary officials, 20% of the farmers did not have access to the information on chicken rearing. The sources of information used by 22% of the farmers, were radio and TV. There were 55% farmers in need of training. High mortality rates due to poor housing, low productivity due to lack of proper management practices and the lack of knowledge were the major constraints in the development of poultry farming in the area. Land availability, adaptability of the birds to harsh environmental conditions and market demand for village chicken products were identified as the positive contributors in improving the capacity of indigenous poultry farmers in the area.

Financial assistance given by the GEF-INEP-ILRI Asia FAnGR project is acknowledged.