

## **SOME CONSTRAINTS IN THE PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF EGGS**

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A field survey was carried out from March to December 2000 to determine the constraints involved in the production and marketing of eggs in the Horana Electorate of the Western province. Out of the 92 Village Officer (Grama Niladari) divisions, 24 divisions were randomly selected for the study. Fifty farmers from these divisions were personally interviewed using a questionnaire.

Inadequate experience in poultry farming was a major constraint and 48 % of the farmers were found to have less than three years experience. Sixty two percent of the farmers also had less than 500 birds at any one time.

The majority (90 %) of the farmers were unable to maintain a sustainable production throughout the year and 94 % of them were completely dependent on commercially prepared feeds. When farm-mixed rations were used, the average cost of production of an egg was found to be Rs 2.40. However, when commercially prepared feeds were used the average cost of production increased to Rs 3.10. The high feed cost and the fluctuation in the prices of eggs were the main problems that brought losses or reduced profits to the farmers during most parts of the year, except during the festive seasons.

A proper assessment of the cost of production of eggs and the profitability of the industry at smallholder levels were found to be difficult due to non-maintenance of records by most of the farmers. Also non-availability of capital, land, labour shortage and problems of marketing eggs were found to hamper the expansion of the existing farms. Brown eggs were found to have a better market than white eggs both in terms of price and demand.

Most farmers sold their eggs either directly to the wholesalers or to individuals, without paying any attention to the quality or grade of the eggs. No interest was also shown to obtain better prices by adopting such procedures as packing eggs in attractive egg boxes.