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A STUDY ON PROBLEMS OF POULTRY FARM OWNERS WITH REFERENCE TO TIRUPPUR DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT
The poultry industry in India has undergone a paradigm shift, transitioning from a mere backyard activity into a major commercial agribusiness over the last four decades. This study investigates the production and economic challenges faced by poultry farm owners in the Tiruppur district, a significant poultry hub in South India. Using primary data collected from 50 respondents via structured questionnaires, the study employs the Weighted Average Ranking Method to identify key constraints. The research analyzes socio-economic factors, cost-return structures, and environmental stressors. The findings reveal that labour shortage, disease outbreaks, and water quality are the primary hurdles impacting profitability. The study concludes with suggestions for technological adoption, institutional support, and improved bio-security measures to sustain the growth of the poultry sector in the region.
KEYWORDS: *Poultry Farming, Economic Analysis, Production Constraints, Labour Shortage, Agri- business Management.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Poultry farming is one of the fastest-growing segments of the agricultural sector in India. While agricultural crop production has been rising at a rate of 1.5% to 2% per annum, the poultry sector has demonstrated a robust growth rate of 8% to 10%. India currgntlQ stands as the world's fifth- largest producer of eggs and the eighteenth-largest producer of broilers. This growth is driven by rising per capita income, rapid urbanization, and a shift toward protein-rich diets.

Significance of Tiruppur District

In Tamil Nadu, the Tiruppur district—encompassing regions like Palladam, Udumalpet, and Dharapuram—is recognized as the "Poultry Capital" of South India. The region's economy is heavily intertwined with the poultry supply chain. However, the industrial nature of the district, dominated by the textile and garment industry, creates a unique set of challenges for agricultural activities, particularly in terms of resource competition and labour availability.

Problem Statement

Despite the industrialization of poultry, farmers face significant risks. Price volatility in feed ingredients like maize and soya, high mortality rates due to tropical heat stress, and the recurring threat of viral diseases create a precarious economic environment. There is a critical need to investigate the specific production constraints that hinder the economic potential of these farms to provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mehta et al. (2015) observed that the Indian poultry sector is unique because it achieved a high growth rate significantly outperforming general agriculture. This "Pink Revolution" is attributed to the adoption of high-yielding hybrid breeds like Babcock and Hy-Line. Unlike traditional breeds, these hybrids are genetically optimized for specific outputs: Layers for egg production and Broilers for rapid meat gain.

Selvam (2014) in his study in Tamil Nadu indicated that the education level of the farm owner is a primary determinant of profitability. Farmers with higher technical knowledge were found to be more adept at managing the Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR).

Thirunavukkarasu (2011) identified that seasonal demand fluctuations in India are deeply tied to religious sentiments, leading to predictable but sharp price drops during specific months.

Singh and Khan (2019) argued that in semi-arid regions like Tirupur, heat stress is a documented barrier, leading to respiratory distress in birds and lower shell quality, which directly impacts the market value of the produce.

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Landes et al. (2004) emphasized the structural shift toward "Integrator" models. In this system, large corporate entities provide inputs, while the farmer provides infrastructure, reducing the farmer's exposure to market price fluctuations for chicks and feed but capping their potential profit margins.

Research Gap

While numerous studies have been conducted on the Indian poultry industry, several gaps remain in the existing literature that this research specifically addresses:

Impact of Industrial-Agricultural Competition: Most existing research focuses on purely agricultural regions. There is a significant lack of study on poultry clusters like Tirupur, where a dominant industrial sector (Textiles/Garments) competes with the poultry sector for the same pool of unskilled and semi- skilled labor. This study fills the gap by analyzing how industrial wage competition creates a unique "Labour Shortage" crisis for poultry owners.

Micro-level Economic Constraints in the Palladam-Tirupur Cluster: National-level studies often generalize the problems of poultry farming. However, the specific environmental and quality-related issues—such as the depletion of groundwater and the specific "heat stress" profiles of the semi-arid Tirupur region—have not been adequately documented in recent years.

Transition from Independent to Integrated Farming: While "Contract Farming" (Integration) is a known concept, there is limited empirical data from the 2024-2026 period regarding how small- scale farmers in Tirupur are struggling to remain independent versus being forced into integration due to rising input costs (Medicine and Feed).

Biosecurity vs. Actual Field Practice: Literature often discusses the theoretical "Gold Standards" of biosecurity. This study identifies the gap between these academic standards and the actual field-level constraints (lack of funds and infrastructure) faced by 50 real-world respondents in the study area.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objectives of this study are to conduct economic analysis of poultry feed and chickens price movement and to determine the factors that influences the price movements. The specific objectives are to:

- To analyze the socio-economic characteristics of the poultry farm owners.
- To estimate the costs and returns of poultry industry in the study area.
- To identify the factors promoting the chicken production in the poultry farms.
- To examine the various production problems faced by the poultry farm owners.
- To identify the major constraints and challenges in poultry production in Tirupur.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive research design was adopted to describe the current state of production problems in the poultry sector. This approach allows for the systematic collection of data to provide a factual picture of the economic conditions of the respondents.

Sampling Design

Study Area: Tirupur District, Tamil Nadu.
Sampling Unit: Individual poultry farm owners (both independent and contract farmers).
Sample Size: 50 respondents were selected to provide a representative cross- section of the local industry.
Sampling Technique: Convenience Sampling

Data Collection

Primary Data: Collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of 29 questions covering socio-economic status, farm management, and ranking of problems.

Secondary Data: Sourced from various journals, government publications (Draft National Poultry Policy 2009), and industrial reports.
Statistical Tool: Weighted Average Ranking

To analyze the intensity of problems, weights were assigned to ranks provided by respondents. For a 6-variable problem set: Rank I (6 points), Rank II (5 points), Rank III (4 points), Rank IV (3 points), Rank V (2 points), and Rank VI (1 point).

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DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents

The survey revealed that approximately 65% of the farm owners are in the age group of 35- 50 years, suggesting that poultry farming requires significant experience and maturity. Furthermore, 70% of respondents have a secondary education or higher, which correlates with the high technical demand of managing hybrid birds.

Ranking of Production Problems

The production problems were analyzed using the weighted scoring method to determine which issues require the most urgent attention.

Table 1: Weighted Average Ranking of Production Problems

Problems	I (6)	II (5)	III (4)	IV (3)	V (2)	VI (1)	Tot al Score	Mean Score	Rank
Labour	20 (120)	15 (75)	5 (20)	4 (12)	3 (6)	3 (3)	236	4.72	I
Shortage									
Diseases	12 (72)	12 (60)	10 (40)	8 (24)	5 (10)	3 (3)	209	4.18	II
Water Security / Quali ty	5 (30)	10 (50)	15 (60)	10 (30)	5 (10)	5 (5)	185	3.70	III
Medicine / Feed Short age	6 (36)	5 (25)	10 (40)	15 (45)	10 (20)	4 (4)	170	3.40	IV
Lack of Sufficient Funds	4 (24)	5 (25)	5 (20)	8 (24)	18 (36)	10 (10)	139	2.78	V
Climate Conditions	3 (18)	3 (15)	5 (20)	5 (15)	9 (18)	25 (25)	111	2.22	VI

Interpretation

Rank I: Labour Shortage (Mean: 4.72): This is the most critical problem. Tiruppur is a global textile hub, and the high wages in the garment sector create a massive labour drain from the agricultural and poultry sectors.

Rank II: Diseases (Mean: 4.18): Despite modern medicine, viral outbreaks such as Ranikhet and Coccidiosis remain significant threats that can wipe out capital investments overnight.

Rank III: Water Quality (Mean: 3.70): The depletion of groundwater and the salinity of available water in certain parts of Tiruppur impact the health and growth rate of the birds.

FINDINGS

Labour Dynamics: 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that the lack of migrant labour and the preference of local youth for industrial jobs have made manual poultry management unsustainable.

Cost of Production: Feed costs account for nearly 75% of the total expenditure. Farmers who are not part of "Integration" schemes are significantly more vulnerable to the rising costs of maize.

Environmental Stress: During the summer months (March to June), mortality rates increase by 5-10% due to heat-related respiratory failure in birds.

Institutional Gaps: While 60% of farmers are aware of government subsidies, only 20% have successfully accessed them due to complex documentation and the lack of organized farmer groups.

Biosecurity Awareness: Most farmers implement basic biosecurity (foot dips, restricted entry), but advanced diagnostic facilities are lacking at the village level.

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SUGGESTIONS

Automation: To combat labour shortages, farmers should be encouraged to shift toward automated feeding, nipple drinking systems, and environmental control systems (ECS) through low-interest technology loans.

Feed Cooperatives: Small-scale farmers should form cooperatives to purchase feed ingredients in bulk directly from producers in Karnataka or Maharashtra, thereby reducing middleman margins.

Insurance Coverage: The government and private insurers should develop "Micro- Insurance" products tailored for poultry, covering not just bird mortality but also production losses due to extreme heat.

Skill Development: Vocational training for farm managers on advanced FCR management and early disease detection can significantly reduce operational losses.

CONCLUSION

The poultry industry in Tiruppur remains a beacon of agricultural success, yet it stands at a crossroads. The transition firom manual to automated farming is no longer a luxury but a necessity driven by the labour crisis. While the industry has shown resilience against price movements and diseases, its future sustainability depends on narrowing the gap between small- scale farmers and large integrators. By addressing the primary constraints— specifically labour and disease management—through technology and institutional support, the Tiruppur poultry cluster can continue to serve as a primary contributor to India's protein security and economic growth.

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