

from Israeli and West Bank mills. There are six local feedmills which have a combined monthly output of about 2500 tons, ie. around 60 percent of domestic needs.

Farmers procure replacement flocks and necessary feed supplies from local dealers who themselves provide producers with all other supplementary inputs (ex. medicines and equipment). These dealers act also as the main source of technical advice for their clients and, until a few years ago, provided them with liberal credit facilities. Credit services advanced by poultry dealers have been severely reduced for fear of losses ensuing from the rapidly falling exchange rate of the Israeli currency relative to the Jordan Dinar, which is the alternative local currency in circulation.

Broiler flocks have an average size of about 3000 chicks per batch, as compared with 2000 hens per layer farm. Broilers are kept in confinement and under intensive care for 50-60 days, in which time they reach the marketable weight of 1.6 - 2.0 kilograms.

Poultry raisers deliver their produce to middlemen who in turn channel the live broilers and table eggs to retail dealers of poultry products scattered in nearby rural and urban markets.

Practically all West Bank broilers are sold alive in retail poultry shops where they are slaughtered and eviscerated on request, mostly using inefficient and unhygienic equipment.

Laying flocks are either brought one day old and reared to laying age (5 months) or, more commonly, they are bought at the age of 100-120 days from specialized breeding centres in Israel. Layers are kept on farms for 14-18 months in actual production, and then sold for meat at the age of 20-24 months.

Most egg farms use the cage system for rearing layers. The cages themselves are often bought second hand from Israel at attractive prices. Broilers, on the other hand, are raised on the floor using what is called the deep-litter system. Rearing broilers in cages is hampered by certain technical difficulties which have severely restricted their use in the West Bank and Israel, mainly by causing too many chest blisters.

Profitability situation

Being a highly intensive form of agriculture closely tied up with complex market variables, profitability of poultry farming is subject to violent fluctuations which do not always follow a predictable pattern. Therefore profitability varies considerably from one time to another, depending largely on the price relations of production inputs relative to those of end products.

Interestingly, profitability of poultry farming is much less influenced at present by disease problems, which were once considered the limiting factor in determining profit or loss.

The following analyses cover broilers and eggs separately, and they are based on data collected in July 1980 and 1981 (see Tables IX - 14 and IX-15).

Unlike most other forms of dry farming, over-head fixed expenses constitute an important cost item which is too large to overlook. The cost of raising pullets from one day to laying age has been substituted by the market price of five months-old pullets because most farmers prefer to buy their pullets close to laying age, instead of going through the often frustrating experience of rearing them for five months.