

Emerging poultry farmers to get hands-on experience with advanced KZNPI chicken house

An advanced new chicken house built at the KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute (KZNPI), with the support of the US-based World Poultry Foundation (WPF), will see emerging poultry farmers get hands-on training with the latest chicken farming technologies.



The KZNPI poultry management training centre near Pietermaritzburg is an accredited Agriculture Sector Education Training Authority (AgriSeta), upskilling students and emerging farmers from across South Africa, as well as from other African countries including Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Nigeria and Mauritius.

Training on newest production processes

Having initially had only two naturally ventilated chicken houses accommodating 400 chicks each, there was a need to add more advanced, automated systems to allow for training on the newest production processes. The new chicken house also accommodates older chicks, allowing students to gain experience farming birds at different stages. The new facility was built with funding from WPF, and equipped with the help of donations by Fancom BV and Dorna Distributors CC. Officially opened earlier this year, the new facility can accommodate up to 1,400 birds. The first consignment of chicks arrived during lockdown, allowing the KZNPI team to adapt to the new systems before training resumes after lockdown.

Lindelihle Nxumalo, KZNPI farm manager, explained that the original, open-sided chicken houses rely on natural ventilation, which has certain drawbacks in hot areas like KZN, where climate control is difficult to maintain.

Easier for staff, beneficial for birds

“This new chicken house is equipped with climate controls, automated feeding systems, and state-of-the-art scales that automatically monitor the birds’ weight,” he says. “This advanced system allows us to get the birds to the optimum weight without feeding them too much. The new chicken house also has cooling pads, which help to keep the birds cool in very hot weather, and thanks to the automated feeding system, these birds are able to feed throughout the night.” Ultimately the new facilities are expected to significantly improve the feed conversion ratio. “It’s easier for the staff and more beneficial for the birds,” says Nxumalo.

KZNPI director Tessa de Carle says that while these new facilities are beyond the reach of many emerging farmers, those

being trained to use the advanced equipment allows them to see and experience the latest technology. “It offers a huge addition to their vision and their hopes,” she says. “People who are lucky enough to be trained here may then go on to work for the local South African poultry producers and many are able to start or advance their own small businesses.”

Ongoing WPF campaign

The new chicken house is part of an ongoing campaign by the WPF to improve capacity among poultry sector stakeholders in South Africa. Nearly 200 emerging poultry farmers have learned to improve their financial management and discovered more efficient and cost-effective farming methods in a series of workshops by the World Poultry Foundation. Several emerging South African poultry farmers have also benefited from training in the US where they received training at major commercial farms and processing plants as part of a WPF-funded internship programme.

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