

Avian flu hits egg supply

By [Shaun Gillham](#)

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While multiple outbreaks of devastating avian flu have knocked the country's poultry industry, the virus has brought a fresh challenge to both the industry and consumers in the Eastern Cape - a looming egg shortage.

An increasing shortage of eggs in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces is expected to expand into other parts of the country, pushing up prices of what is considered to be one of the cheapest forms of protein.



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Effects of avian flu being felt

The poor, tourism businesses and commercial food industries are expected to bear the brunt of shortages and higher egg prices over the December holiday period.

More than three million birds around the country have been affected by the virus.

Spar Eastern Cape marketing director Abri Swart acknowledged the impending shortage, saying the effects the avian flu had on the poultry industry were already being felt on egg supply locally. The retail group sourced a significant portion of its egg stocks from the hard-hit Western Cape, and shortages were already being experienced at their supplier, Swart said.

"At this stage, we anticipate the shortages could last into January."

Consumers can expect egg price increases

Absa AgriBusiness agricultural economist Karabo Takadi said as a result of the avian flu, the continued culling of chickens and supply shortages, consumers could expect increases in the prices of eggs in the coming months. "The cost impact could flow further to producers of goods that use eggs as ingredients, and ultimately to the consumer," she said.

"In the coming months, consumers can expect to pay as much as R3 more per dozen eggs."



Bird flu outbreak sees egg shortage, hefty price increases on the cards for SA

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Knock-on effect

Sean Allan, brand manager at East London-based Sunrise Eggs, which supplies major retailers and other businesses across the Eastern Cape, said the shortages which initially arose in the Western Cape would have a knock-on effect in other provinces. "We do expect increasing shortages. This is going to have a very negative impact on the poor, who rely on this cheap source of protein, and on the tourism industry.

"Traditionally, a lot of eggs are consumed in the December period.

"There are a large number of complexities and variables in this industry, which makes it difficult to create a quick solution," he said.

"One cannot, for example, bring in more chickens to lay eggs in a particular area, because of the avian flu."

Allan said prices would certainly increase, not only as a result of the egg shortages but also due to the money poultry businesses had had to invest in protecting their poultry from disease.

Owner of popular Port Elizabeth patisserie and bakery The Pastryworks, Cherilyn Gottschalk, said her business had not yet experienced any shortage of eggs, which they sourced locally. "I think this will affect businesses such as large retailers which buy in bulk and perhaps out of the province," she said. Gottschalk said The Pastryworks used 48 30-egg trays a week to make its products.

Source: Herald

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