

New brining regulations to make chicken unaffordable

Regulations on the brining of poultry products published by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) will make chicken unaffordable for the poor, shrink the local poultry sector, weaken the soya bean processing and maize production outlook, and increase unemployment.



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South African Poultry Association CEO, Kevin Lovell says while many allegations and unsubstantiated statements were made around the issue of brining by competitive stakeholders, no checks were done at a time to test whether these points were valid.

“All the scientific, technical and economic information SAPA supplied on brining has essentially been ignored, with no impact assessments conducted by DAFF on the effects of the regulations on consumers retailers or the local poultry industry,” says Lovell. “Besides the potentially devastating results on local poultry production and the jobs that depend on it, this constitutes an assault on the poor of South Africa who will not find the price of Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) chicken unaffordable.”

Contraction of poultry industry

In 2006, on behalf of the local industry, SAPA wrote to DAFF asking them to update the poultry regulations under the Agriculture Product Standards Act.

“For the last 10 years, we have fought to have these regulations updated in a way that benefits all parties in the poultry value chain, with the added assurance that South African consumers can be absolutely certain that what they believe they are buying is what they actually get,” says Lovell. “But having refused to consider the true facts of brining, its purpose for improving meat quality, and most importantly the manner in which this practice actually improves the national diet by reducing the cost of South Africa’s favourite protein product these regulations will reduce the size of the largest sector of local agricultural production and cause considerable job losses – all of this for no good reason.”

Regulations to make SA an attractive dumping ground

Lovell adds that chicken importers have long campaigned against local brined IQF as they have to date not been able to compete in this market segment.

“South Africa is ranked as one of the top importers of chicken surplus and waste products from mostly developed countries that favour the white meat and export the rest, mostly at prices equivalent to dumping that has been proved repeatedly in various ITAC investigations,” he says. “For every 10,000 tons of chicken imported we lose over a 1,000 local, direct and indirect job opportunities in our economy. These regulations will simply heighten our attractiveness as an export destination for the chicken pieces the developed world doesn’t eat, and our ability to feed ourselves as a country through sustainable and secure food production will be reduced.”

Given the economic crisis facing South Africa today, these regulations symbolise the beginning of a major contraction in our industry at a time when the country cannot afford contraction in any industry. “SAPA will be contesting this assault on our industry and our consumers in the strongest possible way so that the harm that it will cause to our economy is stopped.”

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