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Exploring Intervention Options for Small-scale Family Poultry Development in the Atsimo Atsinanana Region, Madagascar

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Abstract

Poultry farming occupies an important role in the Malagasy rural economy and the livelihoods of its people. Research in the Atsimo Atsinanana region (South East Madagascar) shows that consumption of eggs is uncommon, despite proven health benefits and the existence of large numbers of poultry. This study tries to contribute to improving the local nutritional situation and health of the rural population, especially for women of reproductive age and children in the 1000-day window. The main objective of this study was to describe current challenges and opportunities to small-scale family poultry rearing and egg consumption in the rural area of the Atsimo Atsinanana region and to explore viable options for the advancement of poultry production and egg consumption via development interventions. A multi-tiered survey approach was used, including online international and local expert interviews as well as on-site interviews with beneficiaries in the study area. Findings show that critical constraints for poultry production include high mortality, poor husbandry, cultural constraints, low productivity of local chickens, and poor marketing. The major health constraint that hinders poultry farming is Newcastle disease. Small-scale family poultry production offers opportunities for nutrition and income, as poultry provides animal protein and can be sold at local markets. It can promote gender equality and empowerment since women tend to have more control over poultry production than other activities. Birds are slaughtered for socio-cultural purposes and sold to meet other needs like the purchase of seeds, school supplies, or medicine. Only small numbers of eggs are consumed because people prefer hatching instead of eating them due to the low egg-laying potential of local chickens. Possible solutions to this situation include improvements in breeding and production. Interventions stressed by international experts, local experts and rural people from the research region include health interventions (vaccinations and biosecurity) and interventions with a focus on animal husbandry or nutrition. Furthermore, training for farmers on poultry management practices, marketing, and poultry health were suggested. Another focus should be put on creating awareness about the nutritional benefits of poultry products and the potential benefits of making poultry farming a primary activity for farmers.

Keywords: Development interventions, Madagascar, poultry, small-scale family poultry development, smallholder farmers