

A publication of the Market Information Service (MIS) - Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
"Linking the market and primary producers"

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Chickens belong to the family *Phasiandae* and are one of the most domesticated animals. It is also part of the poultry farming and its scientific name is *Gallus gallus domesticus*. Local Samoan chickens are different from the overseas chickens, they are easy to look after and raise but the problem is their slow body growth and produce tinier eggs in size

Chickens contribute significantly to the rural economy, custom, welfare, health and nutritional needs of the community as they are very much capable of using household leftovers that might otherwise be wasted for their growth, development and reproduction. In addition, chickens play a crucial part in traditional ceremonies although they are not as high-status as pigs. Still, a huge proportion of chickens are commonly consumed at traditional festivities.

Common breeds found in Samoa

Three main groups of chickens are found in Samoa, these are the local breeds, pure breeds and hybrids. The local breed is the main breed that accounts for most of the total chicken population in Samoa. Local chickens are usually small in body size, for instance, at maturity, the male weighs about 1.5-2 kg with females weighing in around 1.5 kg live weight.

Local chickens are categorized in 3 categories, Meat (Broilers or heavy breeds), Egg (Layers or light breeds) and Egg & Meat (Dual purpose breeds). Meat-producing chickens are broad breasted and larger than the laying breed and can reach 2.5kg in 35 to 42 days. Layers are the domesticated female chickens that are twenty weeks old or above and it is raised primarily for the production of commercial

CHICKEN



The most widely distributed livestock in Samoa are chickens. They are well adapted to the usual rural conditions, needing little inputs of skills, management and capital.

eggs and can lay around 280 to 320 eggs per year. Dual purposes chickens are known as the scavenging breeds of chickens that reared for both meat and egg production. Currently, in Samoa there are two main broiler breeds – Ross Broiler and Cobb Broiler. For egg-type, brown layers are used for egg production in Samoa (no white egg strains) and there are three popular breeds - Hy-Line Brown hen, Lohmann Brown hen and ISA Brown hen.

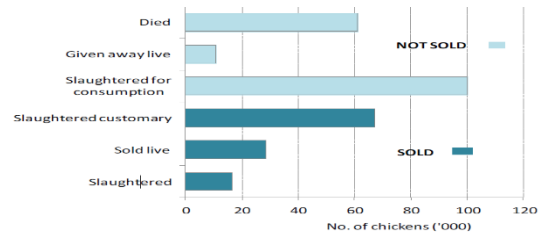
The differences between these breeds of chicken are body shape, size and skin color. Although, varieties of chickens can be differentiated within breeds by comb type, feather color and pattern.

Local Production

¹Poultry farming has long been an important activity for households. As a food source it provides protein in meat and eggs, and also is important in ceremonial practices and feasts. Chickens in Samoa are still mostly raised traditionally, in the back yard, where they are left to scavenge for food, with owners supplementing this feed with coconut or, more often now, rice. Chickens are less important than pigs in the custom, culture and diets of the Samoans, but are of higher numerical significance compared to other livestock. There are two farming systems in Samoa Village Level and Commercial Level.

²In October 2014, there were 513,260 chickens being kept and raised by 15,857 households in Samoa with an increase of 19 percent compared to 2009. Chicken are raised mainly for household use as it is important in rural areas with 81 percent of household in Savaii raises chickens. In 2015, there were 295,659 new born chickens in Samoa, and this has contributed to the increase number in 2015. Nearly 60 percent of the chickens were slaughtered for family consumptions or for family customary purposes, while only 16 percent of the total disposals were sold.

Figure 1: Disposal of chickens, twelve months to October 2015, Samoa



Source: Samoa Agricultural Survey 2015

³ It was recorded in the 2009 Agriculture census that 307,000 chickens were kept by 13,350 households where 68 percent were kept in Upolu and 32 percent in Savaii. In 2019, 235,577 chickens were raised by 8,981 households of which 70 percent were from Upolu and 30 percent in Savaii. Hence, the number of households that raised chickens over the years has decreased by a third and so as the number of chickens rose has been decreased by 23 percent.

Figure 2: Number of by region and census years

REGION	NUMBER OF CHICKENS RAISED			
	1989	1999	2009	2020
APIA URBAN AREA	39,366	52,353	28,930	21,503
NORTH WEST UPOLU	75,170	121,936	89,728	80,053
REST OF UPOLU	95,135	124,000	90,206	63,091
SAVAII	100,308	132,801	98,176	70,930
SAMOA	309,979	431,090	307,040	235,577

Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics.

⁴ In 2023, the SCATAP have distributed 3,576 chicks and 6,1000kilograms of feed to the project broiler model farmers and interested farmers in the third quarter and they helped prevent and control the epidemic. Recently, a total of 10,202 chicks and 19,221 kilograms of feed have been distributed with 4,976 chicks being sold or consumed by the model farmers

Welfare

There are five freedoms of animal welfare which guides all the livestock including chickens, namely:

1. Freedom from fear and distress,
2. Freedom to express normal behavior,
3. Freedom from pain, injury and diseases,
4. Freedom from discomfort and
5. Freedom from hunger and thirst.

¹ Samoa Agriculture Census 2019

² Samoa Agricultural Survey 2015

³ Samoa Agriculture Census 2019

⁴ SCATAP Phase V Third Quarter of 2023 Progress Report

The Animal Production and Health Division (APHD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) have prepared a perfect manual for chicken rearing. This manual looks at the more competitive or commercial production issues. It is important that chickens need to be housed and fed properly if a farmer wants to get good yields of meat and eggs.

Problems

Feed is an issue and a problem for poultry and will be harder to resolve especially for broiler production. Chickens general feed with coconuts and household leftovers but most times search food around the containment area. Commercial poultry productions are mainly relying on imported feeds but this is constrained by high tariff on these feeds. Due to the difficulty, cost and risk of sourcing and incorporating local proteins or the necessary mineral, vitamin and amino acid supplements, local alternatives can be used together with commercial feeds or supplements. So, because of the absence of a proper feed mill in Samoa, a project between Government of Samoa and Republic of China through SCATAP phase V, a feed mill was built to improve local feed resources for poultry.

In addition, poor containment is seeing as the main constraint to poultry production thus resulted with high mortality rate. Also a very serious production and welfare issue is aggressive feather pecking and cannibalism and can occur in any confined group systems – with or without cages. But these can be prevented with good management of more confined or semi-confined systems.

Parasites, both internal (worms, coccidian) and external (lice, fleas, ticks, mites), can infect chickens. Many problems can result from these infections, and care must be taken to prevent or cure them. Clean housing is very important for preventing parasitic infections.

Market Information

⁵ According to the 1999 Agricultural Census, the number of slaughtered chickens in Samoa totaled to 119,000. These were sold (4%), consumed (65%) and given away as gifts or offering (31%). In 2009 Agricultural census, it recorded the number of slaughtered chickens in Samoa totaled to 89,494. These were sold (9%), consumed (62%) and given away as gifts or offering (29%). ⁶ The 2019 Agricultural census reported an even more substantial decrease within the same period. The number of slaughtered chickens in Samoa totaled to 80,462.

Samoa imports over 95% of its poultry and this is extremely cheap (dumped) leg quarter chicken from the US. It is not possible for Samoa to compete in this bulk market, but the limited demand for whole chickens may provide an opportunity. There is potential to generate more income by substituting some of this meat with local chicken meat but it requires some improvements to the current system. People are relying on imported meat instead of increasing the local meat production, thus contribute to the decline.

Samoa is almost self-sufficient in eggs but does not have any significance intensive poultry meat production. The reasons are partly attributed to the levels of protection or containment, which are 50% for eggs and nil for poultry. Local eggs are of good quality, far superior to imports, and dominate the market.

⁵ Agriculture census 1999

⁶ Agriculture census 2009

Table 1: Average Prices at the Local Markets

Commodities (SAT\$/lb)	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Lowest Price for 2023 to date	Highest Price for 2023 to date
Taro	5.41	4.83	3.74	6.20
Banana	1.88	1.85	1.31	2.50
Taamu	14.94	11.56	5.04	22.83
Coconut	0.97	0.99	0.80	1.12
Breadfruit	2.34	2.72	1.06	5.98
Yam	5.61	5.31	5.31	7.35
Head cabbage	8.55	9.65	8.11	17.02
Tomato	16.23	18.31	15.72	31.07
Chinese cabbage	7.23	8.89	6.85	11.56
Cucumber	6.50	6.76	5.88	8.72
Pumpkin	4.65	5.31	3.91	7.95

Source: Samoa Bureau of Statistics

Table 2: Foreign currency per tala (ST\$)

November-December 2023	USD\$	NZD\$	AUD\$	YEN\$	FJD\$	EURO
1 Samoan Tala SAT\$ =	0.3775	0.6100	0.5622	52.9700	0.8316	0.3637

Source: ANZ Exchange Rate

Market Link Newsletter

This newsletter is published bi-monthly and it seeks to assist stakeholders (farmers, consumers, wholesalers, policymakers) make informed market and marketing decisions based on credible, relevant price and supply information. Help us, help you by providing constructive feedback on market information issues that will improve the service which will lead to growing a healthy and wealthy Samoa. For more information, contact the Policy Planning and Communication Division and ask for Fereni Tofilau.

Disclaimer

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