

Bulgarian hatchery prepared for EU entry

The arrival of 2007 saw Bulgaria and Rumania entering the EU. To see what is happening in these countries International Hatchery Practice recently visited Rumania and one of that country's leading poultry producers to look at their new purpose built hatchery.

Stara Zagora has been in poultry production since 1994 and in 2007 expects to produce some 40,000 tonnes of poultry meat.

In addition, the company has significant activities in the grain sector and exports some 264,000 tonnes per year – mainly wheat, barley, maize and sunflower.

The poultry business has some 230,000 m² of its own poultry housing and imports Cobb 500 parent stock from Holland or Germany.

Heavy investment

In recent years there has been heavy investment in key facilities such as the processing plant, the feed mill and the hatchery.

The processing plant meets EU requirements and its construction was supported by a €2.3 million subsidy from the EU towards its €18.2 million cost. It is ISO, HACCP and Halal certified and the processing plant currently exports to Georgia and Macedonia and soon hopes to be exporting to Germany.



The Bulgarian, company and EU flags outside the hatchery.

The new processing plant was only recently opened in October 2006 and is capable of processing 9,000 birds per hour although this is still to be achieved. The feed mill was opened in 2001.

The entry of Bulgaria has been something that the company has dreamt about for many years because this opens up a market of some 500 million people with no trade barriers and as the company feels its products more than meet EU criteria it is looking forwards to good times.

On the agricultural side things are being scaled up to meet the expected increase in

orders at the processing plant. The company currently has four breeder farms each comprising of five houses.

On the growing side, houses typically stock 18-20,000 birds at a rate of 18-20 birds per m². A thinning occurs at 33 days but most birds go to the processing plant on their 42nd day.

At 42 days 2.2kg is being achieved and birds killed at younger ages reach 1.7-1.8kg.

Predicted growth

Currently, some 1.5 million hatching eggs per month go to the hatchery which has been designed to cater for a projected requirement of four million hatching eggs set a month. Breeder flocks are usually cleared at 62-64 weeks of age and typically produce up to 122 chicks per hen housed.

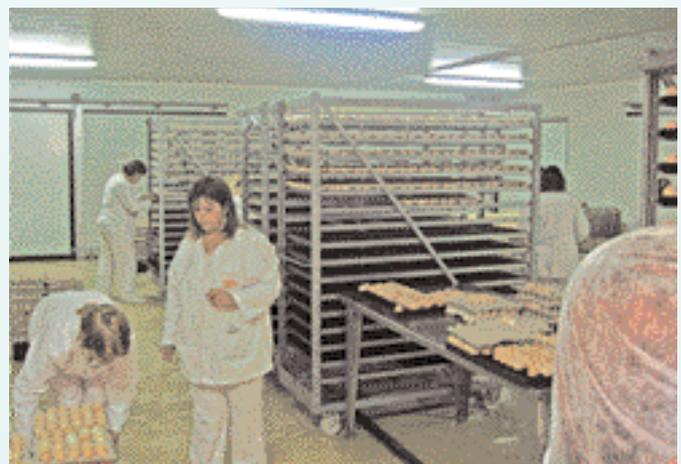
Purpose built hatchery

As was previously said, the breed used is the Cobb 500 and 8-10% males are in each laying flock. Spiking typically occurs at around 38-42 weeks of age. The eggs from the in lay flocks are transferred daily to the hatchery.

The hatchery was purpose built and uses HatchTech incubators.

Continued on page 8

Attention to detail at egg traying and, right, eggs trayed up and ready for the setters.





The HatchTech setters and . . .

Continued from page 7

Eggs arrive at the hatchery from the breeder farms on cardboard Keyes trays and are trayed up on to the setter trays in the traying room. This job is relatively labour intensive as the traying up process is accompanied by a grading of the hatching eggs to augment the grading that has occurred on farm. Dirty, cracked, misshapen and small eggs are removed.

High hygiene standards

Eggs are then stored in the egg room where temperatures are usually 18-20°C and hygiene standards are kept high.

Prior to setting eggs are pre-warmed and are set in the HatchTech setters to produce

Inside the hatcher – note the control panel.





... and hatchers.

the number of chicks that will be required in due course at the processing plant.

The company chose HatchTech machines on a basis of value for money and the quality of the resulting chicks.

To date the machines have come up to expectation and the staff are proud of them and the chicks that they produce for the company's farms.

Currently, hatch of set figures are running at 88-89% and on hatch days take off and

chick processing occurs between 9.00am and 1.00pm.

On the day we visited the hatchery chick quality was reasonable. An interesting system of perfusing air into the chick holding room was used (see photograph). This seemed to work very well as the chicks were comfortable and showed no tendency to huddle or gasp.

Time will tell what impact this Bulgarian hatchery will have on the EU. ■

Tray washing and chick holding area. Note, right, the novel ventilation system.

