

The impact of avian flu in Thailand

The recent avian influenza problems have hit the poultry industries of many Asian countries but, because of its significant export trade, Thailand was particularly badly hit.

Recently, International Poultry Production was given an update on the current situation by Pornsri Laurujisawat of the Thai Broiler Processing Exporter's Association. In this short review we will summarise what we were told.

The impact of bird flu on Thailand was particularly severe because of lost exports and the fact that over two million people in Thailand are dependant on the poultry sector.

So far, the avian flu has cost the Thai Government some 10,00 million Baht, of which a good half has been to compensate Thai farmers for birds that were culled.

Fig. 1 shows the impact of the avian influenza on the exports of chicken meat from Thailand in 2004. In essence, production fell 32% from 1.44 million in 2003 to 980,00 tonnes in 2004 (Fig. 2).

In parallel with this domestic consumption fell 13% (896,000 to 780,000 tonnes), while exports fell by 63% (546,000 to 200,000 tonnes).

Export earnings dropped from US\$1,200 million to US\$560 million. This is only a drop of 53% and is less than the tonnage drop because of the switch over to higher valued cooked products.

If we look at exports by product type raw product sales dropped from 389,000 tonnes in 2003 to just 26,000 tonnes in 2004 and are expected to be zero in 2005.

Conversely, cooked product exports rose from 157,000 tonnes in 2003 to 174 tonnes in 2004 and are expected to reach 300,000 tonnes in 2005.

That is, in percentage terms cooked product as a proportion of all sales will have risen from under 30% in 2003 to 100% in 2005!

When the Thais look at their overseas export markets they have lost ground in the fresh meat sector to the Brazilians, but are holding their own when it comes to cooked meat products.

In fact, in the EU Thailand has doubled its exports of cooked meat in 2004 when compared to 2003.

Thailand has been through two waves

of avian influenza. The first started in January 2004 and the second in July.

This second wave has involved small, backyard flocks (see Table 1) and has mainly affected native chicken and backyard duck flocks (see Table 2).

So, what is Thailand going to do to secure its future export trade?

It is simple – they are going to provide the world with high quality, nutritious, safe poultry products and this will necessitate a comprehensive Quality Assurance System from 'farm to fork'.

This Quality Assurance Scheme will encompass feed raw materials, poultry feed production, farms, slaughter house and further processing plants and embrace a variety of internationally recognised schemes (see Fig. 3).

At broiler farm level they see a situation in the near future when closed housing will be the norm for birds destined for export.

Strict biosecurity is currently practised but, in the future, even stricter biosecurity will be the norm for all farms producing birds for export.

Additional aspects of quality assurance will include locating of farms for export in designated areas, routine cloacal swabbing of flocks to confirm freedom of avian influenza, a live bird inspection system that will generate bird movement permits and the cloacal swabbing of birds at slaughter to reconfirm that they are free of avian influenza.

In addition, there will be full traceability from farm to table with clear identifi-

cation of birds and products at every stage of the production cycle.

This system will involve registration with standard approval for farms, feeds, medicines and sources of day old chicks.

Knowing the Thais this will happen and it will not be too long before they are once again a major force on the world stage. ■

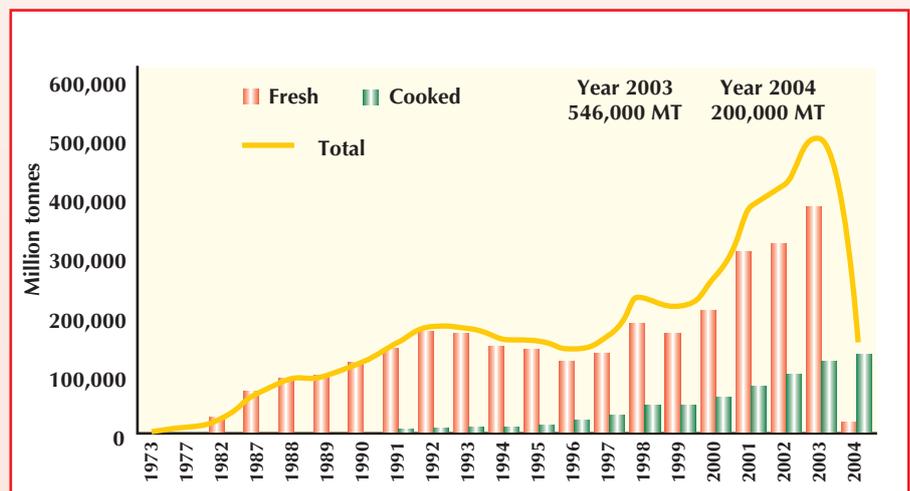
Flock size (birds/flock)	AI cases	%
<500	1,330	87
501-1,000	32	2
1,001-20,000	167	11

Table 1. Number of poultry culled in Thailand between 3rd July and 26th November 2004.

Species	Infected cases (approximate %)
Native chicken	61
Duck	30
Broiler	2.4
Laying hen	3.1
Others	3.5

Table 2. AI case classified by type of poultry).

Fig. 1. The impact of avian influenza on Thai poultry exports.



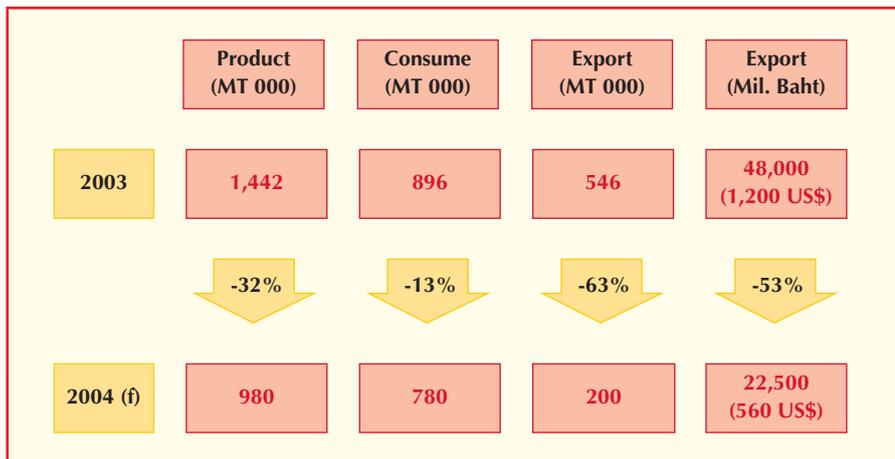


Fig. 2. The impact of avian influenza on the Thai poultry sector.

Fig. 3. The Thai 'farm to fork' Quality Assurance System.

