

Modern poultry weighing in Austria

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Geflügel GmbH Schlierbach is a nice example of a poultry producer that is always looking for the latest technologies to get better results. With a 20 year tradition, the company originally focused only on the sale of eggs for brooding, chicks and pullets, but several years ago, it also embarked on the active merchandising of eggs.

It currently purchases its organic free range eggs from 90 Austrian organic farms and – at its premises in Schlierbach – it operates Austria’s most advanced packaging facility for organic eggs, which receives and packages organic free range eggs only.

Since October last year, the company has also been running its own sorting machine for conventionally produced eggs.

Weighing of pullets

An important activity of the company is the production and the sale of pullets, with approximately 800,000 pullets being produced every year. Over the past years, most farms have changed to aviary type systems, and also many new aviary type farms have been built.

Weighing of live birds is essential for every poultry farm. When the company started production of pullets, the farmers agreed to weigh the chicks manually and send an average

Manual weighing.



Geflügel GmbH Schlierbach in Austria.

weight report to the central office once a week. This system is common in many poultry companies, so it seemed to be the best and proved solution.

In fact, this worked out fine at the beginning, but after a few weeks the farmers became reluctant and these data had to be requested more and more often from them. After a while, some of the farmers even stopped sending the data completely. In principle, weighing of a small group of birds manually is accurate enough, but as it turns out, there is a problem with people doing the weighing. Either only several birds are weighed, so the results are not accurate enough, or even worse, the farmers fake the results up and do not weigh a single chick.

“Many times, we did not know about problems at the farm or we uselessly raised or lowered the feed because the farmers reported wrong average weights,” Markus Wagenleitner told International Poultry Production. “It took a long time to find out that the farmers are not reliable enough to weigh the chicks accurately.”

“Finally, I had to visit all the farms every week and weigh the birds myself,” Markus added. “There was no other way to force the farmers to make the weighing right and get reliable data. With more than 30 farms spread over a large area we had to travel about 600km every week and spent big amounts of money and time just to weigh the birds accurately. The furthest farm is about 260 kilometres from our office, which took me six hours to go there, weigh the birds on this farm and get back.” One can imagine that it was too much effort to just weigh the chicks correctly.

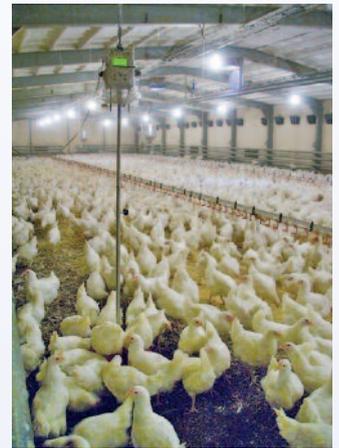
The company’s ongoing increase of pullet production made it increasingly difficult to keep control over the weighing process, so a better controlling system had to be established to increase the quality of the pullets. In the end, there was no other choice than to find a solution for automatic weighing.

Software solutions

“We knew about all the advantages of automatic weighing and we had been gathering information about it for a long time,” Markus told us.

“We found many solutions on the market, but none of them offered us simple installation and wireless data transmission to our central office. This is when we happened to meet Veit Electronics, a Czech company that sells this type of scales. We were glad to get two Bat2 scales for

testing purposes free of charge, so we could try the scales in two halls together with their unique GSM transmission system. During the testing period, Veit supported us in bringing the scales and the software into operation and they were always ready to provide assistance whenever any questions or problems arose.”



Simple and quick installation.

“We were surprised how simple and quick the installation is; just hook the scale into the hall, plug it to the mains or use a battery and that is it,” Markus added. “Thanks to

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Data can be collected from any distance.



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 its compact design and GSM communication, no additional cables are needed. Moving the scale from hall to hall or taking the scale out during disinfection takes only several minutes.”

Successful installation

After about two months of successful testing, they decided to install the Bat2 scales on all farms to be able to stop the exhausting manual weighing completely.

Overall, they have installed 27 scales on parent livestock farms and another three scales on organic broiler farms. Once all the scales

were installed and running, receiving the weighing results was very comfortable.

Every day, an SMS with daily statistics is sent automatically from each scale. All the SMS are received to a computer in the central office and converted into various reports or graphs.

“When I come to my office every morning and turn my computer on, I have fresh data from all farms,” Markus told us.

Robert Sperrer, the production manager agreed and added that the results can also be received to any mobile phone without the need to know how to work a PC.

“From my experience, this system could not compare with the old

Farms are spread over a large area within Austria.

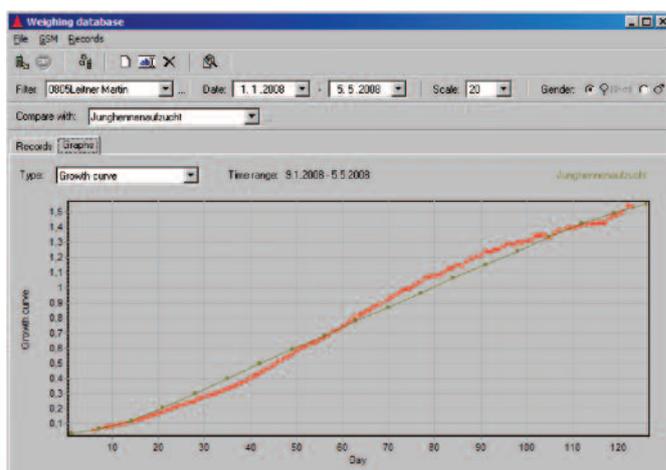
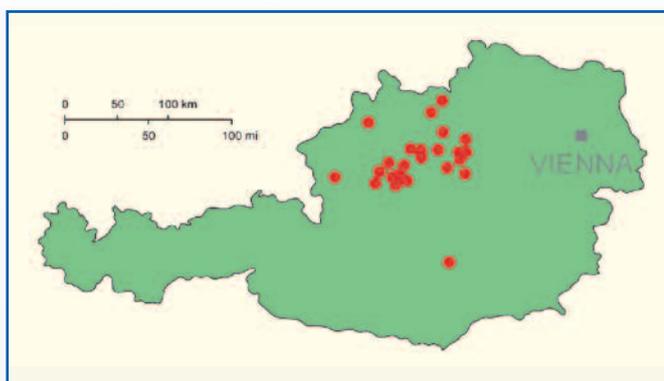


Fig. 1. Weighing results.

manual weighing or common automatic weighing systems,” he told us.

“Ever since we have been using this system, we are in a position to receive the latest data on a daily basis, for example, the current average weight curves, the daily gain, the uniformity or the difference between the average weight and the target weight.

This technology not only enables us to fully control feed suppliers, but also to have access to information on chicks, on brooding-farms and even on the quality of parent live-stocks. In case of problems, this

information enables us to react instantly and to avoid complaints from egg producing farms. If there are any problems, sometimes a simple print out of a file saved in the scales can help to sort out an argument between a producer of pullets and an egg producing farmer.”

“If I look back to our old system of manual weighing, I cannot imagine that I would be able to do it again,” Markus added.

“We are very satisfied with the current results and plan to increase the use of this technology in the future. ■