

What does the poultry industry of tomorrow look like

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Summary

Consumption of poultry products globally remains high and demand is still strong. The poultry sector continues to be attractive to investors. Research, development and improvements into livestock animal health will continue. Whilst the future brings challenges, the poultry industry has demonstrated its resilience and adaptability.

Introduction

New trends in protein production and consumption are changing the landscape of the poultry sector. Compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, does the poultry industry have a future?

Method

Analysis was carried out to investigate the extent of the short- and long-term trends in the poultry industry following the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and HPAI outbreaks at the end of the same year. There were 2 major negative impacts on the poultry sector: bans were put in place on EU exports to many third countries not applying regionalisation and consumption of poultry products was reduced because food services were closed. The research comprised desk research and a literature review.

Results

Digital revolution

The COVID-19 outbreak accelerated a switch to online methods of communication which brought the consumer closer to the producer. Response times and service levels were expected to be much quicker and higher. The strain placed on global supply chains were only too apparent as product shortages and empty supermarket shelves were seen by all. The importance of decentralised production and flexibility within the supply chain were realised. With increased focus on health and well-being, consumers had to be reassured that the highest food quality and food safety standards were being upheld.

Demand for protein from high-welfare systems

Demand for healthy animals raised in antibiotic-free production systems continued to grow. There is increasing emphasis on optimising diets and ensuring the maintenance of a healthy microbiome of birds. The use of precision microbial therapies for the treatment and prevention of disease, an increased scrutiny on nutrition and the increased use of vaccines to help reduce antibiotic use continues to gain importance. Health and nutrition are no longer considered as separate disciplines but viewed as inter-related. Using diagnostics and data to inform decisions is vital.



Transparency in the environmental impact of production systems

This increasing transparency extends from the use of soybeans in poultry feed that exacerbates deforestation, to management of waste in the production process, eliminating the use of plastic packaging, reducing emissions during transports, and integrating biodiversity into business decision making.

Emerging trends

Cultured meat, produced by *in vitro* cell cultures, is gaining interest. This, along with other new consumption trends such as vegetarianism and veganism need to be monitored. Parasiticides and cell and gene therapy should also be noted as future trends with the potential to impact the industry.

Discussion

Consumption of poultry products remains high. Careful consideration should be paid to the trends within the industry and wider society to ensure that the poultry sector has a tomorrow.

References available upon request.

