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Research planned on poultry production

The College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is planning to conduct an investigation on sustainability of poultry production in rural Fiji communities.

The Department of Animal Science has written a proposal on the research topic and has put together a brief overview of the poultry industry from available texts.

It shows that the commercial poultry industry in Fiji is dominated by two broiler companies: Goodman Fielder (Crest) and Rooster Chicken, with 60% and 40% of the market share respectively, while the egg market is controlled by Ram Sami & Sons which has 85% of the market share.

Reddy's and Imam Ali Halal control the formal duck sector with 5% and 20% of the market respectively. These producers have their own hatcheries and Crest operated its own large feed plant that also produces dairy feeds and sells direct to supermarkets and hotels.

The big companies operate out-grower schemes (small poultry units) to which the company provides chicks and feed and the buys back and markets the products. Crest has about 85 of these smallholder growers that produce about one third of their total output.

Most of the poultry farming is in the Central Division, which has the majority of the egg producers and hatcheries and produces about 65% of the broilers, while the Western Division produces 35%.

Figures show Fiji is 97% self sufficient in poultry meat and 100% self sufficient in eggs.

The industry is protected by a 27% duty on imported poultry and eggs. Imports of poultry meat amount to about F\$ 3-4 million per year and comprises mainly chicken portions, often reportedly dumped by NZ due to their low price.

Backyard poultry is estimated to comprise about 15% of total production, but plays an important role in rural areas where poultry is the most common commodity kept by most farmers at semi-subsistence level.

They are mainly free range hens, but some are semi-commercial and supply larger birds for the live market demand, which is currently strong while being considered cheaper and better flavoured than intensively reared frozen poultry from the supermarket.