

GFRAS-YPARD Competition

Coping with COVID-19: Stories from the Field

Poultry Farmer: Making Ends Meet with Homemade Feed **By Elizabeth Mandala**

A 51-year-old Nellie Manjandimo thought Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) would halt her fifteen year-old poultry business. She puzzled upon hearing the announcement of a possible 21 days' full lockdown in Malawi after the country registered a couple of COVID-19 cases.

Malawi has recently embarked on diversifying its agricultural commodities and among others is to encourage farmers to major into poultry. For years, the country has indeed seen tremendous growth in poultry production, reaching 20.6 million in 2019, from the 19.2 million recorded in 2012, according to the Nation, Malawi News publisher.

Chicken is consumed by most Malawians as relish or snack. Its availability on the market has always been crucial for different purposes.



MALAWI - 3rd Place **Youth Category**

“My family depends on this business and so do our loyal customers, they rely on us to supply quality dressed chickens and with the lock-down I thought that could be the end of it. I had full grown chickens, ready to be sold but the lock-down restrictions were not giving a room to that,” she says.



Nellie Manjandimo

Manjandimo rears about 1000 broiler chickens at a time in her home village Lutchenza, Thyolo in the southern part of Malawi. She supplies her chicken upon orders from individuals at household level as well as in bulk for certain events or celebrations.

Despite that the full lockdown failed to commence after the Human Right Defenders Coalition obtained an injunction, the government still imposed restrictions that have had an impact on her business.

"The ban of gathering of people has made me not to supply chicken in bulk anymore. I now rely on household orders and I have to do door to door deliveries in Blantyre and surrounding township. However to keep my business going in this trying time I have taken a few measures just to cut costs and make a reasonable profit and without compromising quality of my products," she said.

"Initially I used to buy feed weekly for my chickens thus from starter, grower to finisher and it costs me about 300, 000 Malawi Kwacha (400 US Dollars). So as one way of maximising my profits as well as keep the supply chain, I decided to be making my own feed right at the production premises which also results in cutting transport costs. The ingredients which includes corn are cheaper on the market as farmers have just harvested so its manageable unlike buying already made feed," says Manjandimo.

With the home made feed Manjandimo is now spending about 100,000 (75 USD) less per week. To maintain the quality of the chickens Manjandimo no longer slaughters chicken as she used to when she was getting more orders, rather she transports live chickens that can survive for at least few weeks unlike dressed ones which loose taste when refrigerated for a longer time considering that the demand is now low.



Some of the poultry produced by Nellie

With all these measures Manjandimo says she is still realising profits of 250,000 to 300,000 Kwacha (333 to 400 USD) from 400,000 to 500, 000 (530 to 670 USD) which she used to realise monthly before COVID-19. She is also able to supply chicken to her new and old customers and has never run out of stock.