

Poultry industry supports traders and communities

Across the country, chicken producers are helping informal traders get back into business following changes to the coronavirus lockdown regulations. There have also been substantial donations of chicken products to poor communities and the homeless.



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The efforts are being coordinated by the SA Poultry Association (SAPA), which sees small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) as an important part of the chicken-distribution value chain.

Keeping communities informed

"We have a list of about 670 SMMEs and have been keeping them informed about how the regulations affect their business during the lockdown. It was evident to us from the drop in demand for day-old chicks and feed that large numbers of these small operators stopped farming as a result of the lockdown," said Izaak Breitenbach, general manager of SAPA's Broiler Organisation.

"We have been facilitating communication between SMMEs and the authorities regarding applications for trading permits or problems that arise in the implementation or interpretation of the lockdown regulations."

SAPA has provided information to both large and small businesses on hygiene practices to curb the spread of the virus,

both in business operations and at home.

Relaxed regulations welcomed

The issue of allowing informal traders to sell live chickens was raised with authorities by the SA Poultry Association, "as traders sell thousands of live chickens which are the most important source of food protein for poor communities," said Breitenbach.

"The trade-in live birds was stopped by the initial regulations, putting numerous traders out of business. South Africa moves almost 1 million end-of-lay breeders per month into these informal markets and keeping those channels open means a lot more people will have access to food.

"Now that the regulations have changed, we have been informing SMMEs of the change and advising them on how to apply for trading permits. We have also informed them about the financial assistance that is available from the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, and where they can apply for this assistance."

Safeguarding food security

In addition to this formal help to small business, chicken producers across the country have been donating chickens to poor communities near their operations, and to homeless shelters. Industry members are also supplying hand sanitiser to informal traders and taxi drivers in the communities where they operate.

"While we face an extended period of lockdown, our main priority remains to keep our workforces healthy and ensuring that we do what we can for food security in South Africa during this trying time," said Breitenbach.

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