

# SA egg industry celebrates World Egg Day amid bird flu challenges

By Octavia Avesca Spandiel | 11 October 2024 | 7:23 am

***The South African egg industry joins the global celebration of World Egg Day on 11 October, highlighting the essential role that eggs play in both nutrition and economic sustainability.***



The theme for this year's World Egg Day, 'United by eggs', is particularly poignant for the local industry, which has been navigating severe challenges, including the ongoing impact of avian influenza, or bird flu.

Dr Abongile Balarane, CEO of the South African Poultry Association's Egg Organisation, told *Farmer's Weekly*: "This year's theme celebrates how the incredible egg can connect and unite people from all corners of the globe. The South African egg industry is a member of the [International Egg Commission](#)."

"We show our united strength and commitment towards our Egg Master Plan, and specifically transformation in the egg industry. Two weeks ago, we cracked an egg by launching our first Egg Master Plan transformation project, an aggregation pack station in Gauteng. This was made possible by the partnership between Gauteng Agriculture and the industry."

Despite such milestones, the industry is grappling with ongoing struggles related to bird flu and rising input costs.

"Eggs represent the fourth-biggest animal protein industry in South Africa, with a gross agricultural value of about R14,5 billion that we contribute to the economy. At retail value, we estimate a gross value of about R26 billion, making us the price takers," said Balarane.

The outbreak of bird flu has caused a steep decline in egg production and consumption. "Our per capita consumption has in recent years dropped from 148 per person in 2022 to about 123 in 2023. The 2024 figures will be available by the end of the current financial year. This drop in

per capita in 2023 was mainly attributed to the rise in egg prices due to the bird flu that has destroyed about 30% of the local industry,” Balarane said.

He further mentioned that under normal conditions, South Africa’s egg industry operated with a national flock size of approximately 27 million hens, producing around 7,8 billion eggs annually. However, bird flu has caused a significant reduction in production, and many farmers have been forced to exit the industry due to financial pressures.

“Not all egg farmers in South Africa are members of the [South African Poultry Association](#). We are probably responsible for 85% to 90% of the total production, coming from about 170 members. That membership number has dropped from 200 in 2021. I must say, the high input costs of feed, electricity and fuel, as well as the devastating bird flu, have unfortunately forced many small producers to exit the industry,” said Balarane.

He added that restocking farms has been a challenge for many producers who lack access to financing, compounded by the absence of compensation from government. While there are ongoing discussions about the use of vaccines to control bird flu, the short-term outlook for many farmers remains bleak.