

# Challenges of egg powder production in Nigeria

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*Confectionery industry in Nigeria spends about \$1 billion on importation of powdered eggs into the country yearly while egg glut and closure of poultry farms characterize the industry as a result of under-utilisation back home. Hence, Mr Samuel Shewoniku, Director of Operations, Answer Industry, the only processor of eggs into powder forms in the country, explained to FEMI IBIROGBA, Head, Agro-Economy, how egg powder is processed, and what the government can do to stimulate more investments in the sub-sector as a panacea for glut and losses intermittently experienced by egg-producing farmers. Excerpts:*

## **Confectionary companies producing beverages do use imported egg powder. Have they started using locally processed egg powder or what is the challenge?**

When we started, we wrote letters to major companies, but they are not yet ready for us. We contacted a popular food making company and had several meetings with them, and they came with their teams and looked at our processes, got samples of around 5kg. We got feedback, they tried our products and were satisfied with it. They were skeptical of our capacity to meet their demands.

## **What is the capacity of your factory per day?**

Currently, we are not working up to capacity but we can still process about 50,000 eggs in a day. This is close to one tonne per day depending on the size of the eggs. Though we have been trying to expand, before we can do that, we must have a market for it.

It is believed that the frequent egg gluts in Nigeria will be minimised if there are many companies producing egg powder and that will trickle down to the poultry industry as well?

As a matter of fact, it won't just have a positive effect, but multiplier effects. Assuming we have demand, definitely, we would order for eggs. And, if for example, you as our customer produces 50 creates, and we are buying all the creates and still they are not enough for us. And many people are equally buying from you. You would be forced to increase your capacity knowing well that you have a ready market. You will employ more hands. That is why I said it would have a multiplier effect.

## **Does that mean the big players in the beverages are importing egg powder without buying anything from local processors?**

They import in tonnes, and there was a time some of them tried our product and it worked perfectly for them, because I met a plant manager twice and I demanded results, and he said it worked for them. At the end of the day, they started talking about pricing and at the end they talked about certification.

## **How do you process eggs to powder? Will you explain the process?**

After washing eggs, the candling follows (this is the separation of the bad ones from the good ones) and we pass them into the machine that cracks and separates the shells, separates the yolk from the white if we want, and it moves to the pasteurising tank. We pasteurise at 40 degrees. From there, it moves straight to the dryer in the liquid form and comes out as powder.

## **Particularly, what are the challenges in egg powder production?**

Egg powder is part of the value chain in the poultry subsector. People don't know much about it in

Nigeria. Let me say some people know about it, but don't have an idea about how it is processed or looks like. In the last few years, people have been really careful about what they eat because there is more information about what to eat and what not to eat.

And there was a time people started talking about plastic rice and meat. So, most people would want to ask, "egg powder? What does it look like? How do we do it? So, we have to start convincing people. But the product is in beverages and other industrial foods that most Nigerians do eat. The product is mostly used by industries and bakers.

**Now, what do you suggest the government should do to move egg utilisation beyond boiling and frying?**

I have told a number of big players that even if we can't meet the whole demand, we can still meet a certain percentage of their demand once they check our product and see that it is certified and standardised internationally. They can give us some percentage of what they use as local content utilisation. A particular company said it just wanted us as a standby in case they had a problem with importation of egg powder.

**Are you now suggesting that the government should restrict the importation of egg powder to develop the production at home as they did for rice and chickens?**

Yes. They can do that but not at once. They can bring up policies that out of one hundred per cent egg powder you are using, you can give local suppliers 20 to 30 per cent. Once we know that we have that, we can increase our capacity to start supplying maybe 60 to 70 tonnes. The truth is that, the bigger your capacity, the lower your cost of production.

**Another problem some experts hinted about production of eggs powder is the abuse of antibiotics among farmers. How do you source raw materials to avoid too much deposit of antibiotics?**

We have to be sure of the feeds you are using. Once we are sure of the feeds you are using, we buy your eggs. We don't buy eggs old laying birds. We buy mostly the ones that are not more than a year and mostly. We don't use any egg that is more than three to four days.