

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE

Question one

David HODGETT: Yes. Hi, Anna. Similar to Nicole, I am just actually looking for a figure. I do not know if you know off the top of your head how many chicken farming places there are in the state. If not, maybe we can look it up or take it on notice. But similar to Nicole's issue, you talked in your submission about making it difficult to upgrade operations, and certainly I am out near Yarra Ranges way, so we experienced Marven Poultry, before they sold out many years ago, and the challenges they faced with neighbours and the EPA and that sort of thing. But I am looking for two things. One is perhaps an example of upgrading your operations – are they minor or major, and are you still getting blocked for minor things to just improve efficiencies and operations? And back to Nicole's point, I guess, is there enough in the planning already, and you just need the planning enforced properly to allow you to go about your business, as opposed to just getting into a dispute with neighbours who might be encroaching on the farm?

Anna FEDELE: Yes, okay. The first one is with the upgrading of farms and animal welfare changes – so, the stock density per square metre. Historically, it was 21.5 birds per square metre when the farms first started, and as time has gone on, with RSPCA and FREPA standards or whatever, it has diminished down to probably an average of 16.5. The broiler code allows you to expand – you are not expanding actually but just putting your licensing numbers back to the original numbers of when the farm was first built. The problem, I believe, as to your second point, is that they should follow the farm practicing. Even in the broiler code it states that you may not need to advertise it, and you actually should not because you are not changing your footprint; you are just upgrading your facilities so you can have your licensing numbers.

How many chicken farms in Victoria?

There are approximately 165 meat chicken farms currently in Victoria. I am at the understanding that processors require more farms to keep up with supply and demand.

To expand on challenges with upgrading your operations:

One of the challenges is council's/shires understanding of our operations and the broiler code. As per my responses to upgrade your facility for better efficiency and welfare standards or to original placement numbers should not require advertisement (as per broiler code, advertisement isn't necessary) as you are not expanding, just upgrading your facilities. When they do advertise, it alarms the neighbours as they interpret that you then fall under green field site and then they believe they may have an opportunity to close down your farm/business as green field sites require modelling but existing do not as per broiler code and this line get blurred and the EPA are sometimes called as well. As the council/shire have only limited powers and understanding this allows the neighbours to take it further and you end up at VCAT. Which should not happen. If farms don't have viability, they will simply close down as the stress it to much for the farmers.

Planning

The broiler code 2009 outlines what is required but the planning enforced by council's/shires to allow you to go about your business in my opinion isn't good enough.

There should be a covenant or legislation in place protecting all farming from neighbours ability to complain if you are building a new farm or upgrading an existing farm and allow farmer to do

their job. This will stop neighbours disputes and we require EPA and council's/shires to work for the farmers not against. As all farming practices there will be noise and smell on occasions, this is farming. We require more shedding to meet demand we need to make this process as seamless as possible and the farms need to be protected.

Question two

Martha HAYLETT: Another stat request, Anna, which you can take on notice as well, is: how many people are supported employment-wise through the chicken farming industry? Do you have any stats on exactly how many people are employed?

Anna FEDELE: Would you want to know the processing plants, or would you prefer the farms, depending on the size of the farm? If you want to let me know which one – both?

Martha HAYLETT: Maybe the whole sector, or both. I do not know if you can split them.

Anna FEDELE: Yes. I will split them, because farms are run very differently from the processing plants. I know Inghams employs around 750, but each farm is different. I will just take it on notice and give you a bit of modelling on a superfarm compared to a farm like mine.

Martha HAYLETT: That would be great. Thank you.

Employment in the meat chicken farming:

After speaking to all the state farming managers in Victoria, the processors hire approx. the following numbers:

Hazeldene's: 1100 people

Inghams: 1650

Turosi: 1800

Which is a total of 4550 people, they are made up of the processing plant, feed mill, live haul, breeder, hatchery and support staff.

Farms

After speaking to all different size farms, the best way to calculate staff numbers is:

Per 120,000 birds a staff member is required, i.e.

Super farm that holds 1 million birds:

Farm: 8 full time staff 1 casual

Office: 1 full time staff member

Medium 450,000 birds:

Farm: 3 full time and 1 casual

Office: 1 Part time

Small Farm between 100, 000 to 200,000 birds

Farm: 1 full time and 1 casual

Office: 1 Casual

As demand gets larger so does the employment number. My approx. number for staff on farms at this point, in total would be around the 1200.