

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MARKETING OF POULTRY IN THE SEKINCHAN WHOLESALE MARKET

The term "poultry" includes both chickens and ducks. Poultry is by far the most important commodity within the livestock so far discussed. It is the only one that is generally acceptable to all ethnic groups in Malaya and has resemblance to universal consumption.

Most chickens in this country can be termed as "Malay kampong fowls". The typical kampong fowl is quite small, only 2 - 4 katie in weight. Such birds are kept by most households, small in number often underfed and scavenging in the back-yards subsisting on table left-overs.

Ducks are raised both for meat and for eggs. The local ducks are hardy and generally less susceptible to Ranikhet disease. They are found in most padi areas where they thrive well in the flooded padi-fields as well as in the waterways and irrigation canals.

#### Sources, purchases and transportation

The poultry handled are local ones, birds reared by local farmers and villagers.

The usual case is for the birds to be brought to the market by the farmers. Also the stall-holder will go round to the farms and buy the birds direct.

It must be emphasised that the wholesale poultry dealer is not the only person dealing in the poultry business in Sekinchan. There are about forty motorised (motor-cycles) buyers who go around Sekinchan buying poultry for themselves. These people do not operate from the wholesale market building.

Buying is strictly competitive. There are no forms of contracts, formal or otherwise, between the wholesaler to buy from or to sell to any of these motorised traders.

Ducks are handled on a smaller scale. There are two main types: water ducks (itek ayer) and white ducks (itek puteh).

## Own source of poultry

The wholesale dealer also rears a few hundred chickens on his small farm. However chickens from his farm represents only a small proportion of his business requirements. He has to depend mainly on outside supplies.

According to the dealer, his farm is of the simple type. He manages the farm himself, with the help of the family. No artificial heating is used. The small chicks, newly hatched ones, are bought from another dealer at a cost of 20 cents per chick, that is if purchases are on bulk. Otherwise the cost will be 28 cents per chick. These birds take four to six months to mature.

## Patterns of sales and purchases of poultry

Through years of business experience, the wholesale dealer have learned that the farmers' sales of chickens and poultry do conform to a definite seasonal pattern. During the padi-planting season more chickens are available from farmers. The reason is that during this period the lands are flooded; the chickens will find difficulty in searching for food. Thus the farmers are forced to sell off their birds, for artificial feeding of chickens is something quite unheard of, at least in the rural areas. Furthermore the farmers need the money to buy the necessary farming materials.

However during the padi-harvesting season, the padi fields will abound with food grains, readily available for the chickens to peck. Farmers are reluctant to part off with their birds for they help in clearing the fields of vermins and insects. Thus lesser amounts of poultry will be available in the wholesale market.

With regards to the sales of ducks, the above patterns do not necessarily follow closely. The marketing of ducks cannot be said to conform to any definite pattern.

## Purchases and finances

The wholesale dealer purchases about 60 katis of poultry daily. Assuming the average price is \$1.00 a kati, the purchases will amount to \$60.00.

The dealer does not keep records of his business. But he is able to provide the following figures.

TABLE 17

### WEEKLY PURCHASES OF POULTRY

Type of poultry	Padi-growing season	Padi-harvesting season
Chickens	800 kt.	200 kt.
Ducks	400 "	200 "

The figures in table 17 clearly illustrate the variations in quantity of poultry handled for the two periods. For ducks the amount handled was halved; but for chickens it was reduced to a quarter( $\frac{1}{4}$ ).

For purposes of comparison, below is listed the amount of poultry bought by the wholesaler during the day of the survey (23.4.1966) and the amount sold at the time of the interview.

TABLE 18

AMOUNT OF POULTRY TRANSACTED ON DAY OF SURVEY

Type of poultry	Purchased from farmers	Sold to consumers
Chickens	50 kt.	30 kt.
Ducks -white	15 "	11 "
-water	5 "	5 "

The next day when he was re-interviewed the wholesaler gave the information that all of the ducks were sold off, and only 5 katis of chickens (approximately two heads of birds) remained. Thus his claims that whatever he buys represents the amount sold is quite justified.

Sales and prices

The purchases and sales of poultry is simple and straightforward with regards to prices.

TABLE 19

TRANSACTION PRICES OF POULTRY

Type of poultry	Padi-growing season		Padi-harvesting season	
	Farm (a) Price	Retail (b) Price	Farm Price	Retail Price
Chickens	\$1.00 c/kt	\$1.20 c/kt	\$1.20 c/kt	\$1.35 c/kt
Cockerel	1.30	1.40	1.40	1.45
Hen	0.90	1.00	1.50	1.60
Ducks -white	1.10	1.20	1.10	1.20
-water	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.10

The data illustrate that the forces of supply and demand exert themselves to influence price. Poultry shortages during the harvesting season manifest itself in slightly higher prices being charged.

Most of the sales will be centred within Sekinchan itself. But sometimes the wholesaler may sell to people from outside the area. According to him, a month back, poultry agents from Klang came ten times to buy poultry from him. The amount of their purchases cannot be ascertained, but may range between the minimum of 50 katis to a maximum of 200 katis. The average price charged is \$1.30 cents per kati.

#### Storage, wastage and related problems

As in the case of the retail market no forms of storage whatsoever is available. Unsold poultry is carried back home, a problem by itself. Apart from this the wholesaler considers the inadequacy of poultry supply as another major problem, arising from the competition of other poultry dealers.

With regards to wastages this is an inevitable fact arising from his business. He has estimated that in a week his losses will be about four katis.

#### A digression on the marketing of dried fish

This is a minor occupation carried out in the premises of the wholesale market by the wholesaler himself and a few other persons (who actually are squatters for they do not pay any licence fees). Nevertheless this business is on a small scale only. And as it is outside the scope of this exercise no discussion on it will be made.