

# AKATE FARMS

FEEDING GHANA



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*The expression 'chicken feed' normally implies something cheap and insignificant, but this is far from the truth when half a million chickens are involved, as Abdul Salam Akate tells Alan Swaby*





It's hard to imagine that frozen chickens from Brazil or China can be sent halfway around the world and sold at a price which undercuts local producers in equally low labour cost areas in Africa. Nevertheless, it happens, and many chicken farmers in Ghana are up in arms, complaining bitterly that the government promises much but delivers little in the way of help. There are calls for import duty to be levied on frozen chicken but these have been resisted, apparently under pressure from the International Monetary Fund.

But rather than looking for some form of protectionism, Alhaji Abdul Salam Akate—founder and CEO of Akate Farms, one of the country's largest chicken producers—feels that a better deal from banks and financial institutions would enable local producers to redress the balance without government intervention.

“This is the area where the government needs to act,” he says. “Ghana has the potential to be self-sufficient but it is depressing that after more than 50 years of independence, we are still plagued by problems of food security. Small Ghanaian businesses can solve the problem but they can't get access to the capital they need. My farms have a successful track record and are comparatively large operations, yet we still have to fight hard to get loans from banks under acceptable terms.”

Capital has been the bane of Akate's life since he first tried his hand at rearing

chickens back in 1987. His first attempt ended badly and he had his fingers burned, but without a credible alternative at his disposal, Akate felt he had no other option but to try again. “I am from a simple farming background,” he says. “When my father died I was in class two at school but as the oldest I had to leave without an education and take on the responsibility of helping to feed the family.”

Eventually, when older, Akate moved from his rural homeland in the upper north-west of the country, and headed south to

the country's second largest city—Kumasi—in search of better prospects. Naturally enough, for someone without formal education, he found only labouring work and consequently felt the only way out of that particular situation was to build his

own business. As already mentioned, the first stab didn't work but with the invaluable help of a couple of friends, Akate finally made a successful second start from which the business has never looked back.

“The problem I encountered the first time around,” he explains, “was the high cost of buying feed and the difference the second time around is that I knew how to make the feed myself. Margins are small and profit comes from the rapid turnover we get from chicken production. Having to buy ready-made feed meant there was nothing left to build up profits.”

Driven by a desire to succeed, Akate sold his car and through a friendship with

160

Number of cows at Akate Farms



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a Canadian missionary, started again with credit of 800 broilers and 1,500 layers which he was able to pay for once cash began to flow. Today, the farm has half a million chickens plus a few turkeys, guinea fowl and ducks, not forgetting 160 cows, 300 sheep and a fish farm.

These days, the business relies on no-one and is self-sufficient throughout all its stages. Not only does the Akate hatchery provide day-old chicks for his own production but it also provides stock for many other smaller independent growers throughout Ghana.



The hatchery

Twice every week, another 57,000 chicks enter the food chain, a process that takes 21 days—18 in the incubator and another three days in the hatchery.

Birds destined for the market need a minimum of five to six weeks to reach the first 1kg in weight and another couple of weeks if the customer wants 1.5kg chickens. From there they

go through the farm's slaughtering and dressing department and then out on refrigerated vans to retailers and catering companies. Not only does Akate sell on the local market, it also does business with the

## LOHMANN TIERZUCHT GMBH



Lohmann Tierzucht GmbH is very proud to be a partner of Akate Farms Ltd in Ghana and congratulates Mr and Mrs Akate and the whole team.

Lohmann Tierzucht has provided Akate Farms with the special African line 'Lohmann Tradition', a rustic layer with XXL brown eggs, for more than 10 years. The Lohmann Tradition is a very forgiving bird which is able to persist with high productivity even with poor feed quality, management mistakes and heat stress.

During our long relationship, Lohmann Tierzucht has supported Akate Farms with on-farm training as well as schooling of staff members at our facilities in Germany.

Regular visits to the farm and hatchery as well as feed testing help to ensure the high quality of the chicks produced by Akate Farms. Annual seminars organised by Lohmann support the Ghanaian egg producers in achieving higher incomes with their layer birds.

We wish Akate Farms all the best for the future and are looking forward to continuing to improve the Ghanaian poultry market together for the benefit of the Ghanaian farmers.

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View of the farm



The farm grows a range of crops



The farm is home to half a million chickens

“I TRY TO BE AS TRANSPARENT AS POSSIBLE. PEOPLE KNOW THAT THEY CAN RELY ON WHAT I SAY BECAUSE I STICK TO MY WORD”

neighbouring countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Ensuring that nothing goes to waste, the considerable amount of faecal matter deposited by half a million birds is composted to produce 80,000 bags of chicken manure a year that is eagerly sought by the agricultural community.

But it is the question of feed that raises the most hackles. “Our formula for chicken feed

needs about eight or nine ingredients,” says Akate, “but the largest component is some form of grain. Soya is now prohibitively expensive and we have switched almost entirely to maize. Currently we are buying around 200 tonnes of maize a week.”

His farms already grow a wide range of fruit and vegetables—citrus, mango, plantain, cassava and yams—largely for the

farm’s own consumption. Not surprisingly, though, there is a big drive on now to increase the acreage being devoted to maize.

These days, Akate is a pillar of the community. Awarded many times for his contribution to the industry, not only is he regularly called upon for his views on the chicken rearing business but he is also doing his share for the less privileged members of society. Heavy machinery is often dispatched north to his homeland on road building duties or to drill boreholes.

He is also thought to be the only person in Ghana to single-handedly sponsor the building of a mosque, and a big one at that. The structure at Bugubelle in his home state is 500 square metres with 70 roof

supporting pillars and can accommodate about 5,000 people at a time during prayers.

Akate has come a long way in a short time—an achievement he puts down to his commitment and total involvement. “I try to be as transparent as possible,” he says. “People know that they can rely on what I say because I stick to my word.”

So when Akate says that within five years he wants to double the chicken flock to one million and have a 3,000-strong herd of cattle, we should probably believe him. **BE**

For more information about Akate Farms visit: [www.akatefarms.com](http://www.akatefarms.com)

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