



WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY



Theme: 'Food Standards Saves Lives'

Kenchic: Where chicken is bred with safety in mind

To guarantee their products are safe for consumption, Kenchic traces every piece of meat, not only from the chicken it came from, but also the egg it hatched from, and the parent that laid the egg

BY MILLICENT MWOLOLO

Today is the fifth World Food Safety Day (WFSB), an occasion set aside to draw worldwide attention to the ever-present need to avoid foodborne risks.

Chicken is a delicacy almost everywhere, but it is also susceptible to infections. In addition, its products are highly perishable. It therefore takes a lot of dedication and expertise to ensure chicken and chicken products are ultimately safe for consumption.

Kenchic Limited is a well-known brand in this respect.

"Food safety is at the fore of our operations, as we are keen on protecting our customers from any risks of foodborne illnesses caused, especially, by harmful pathogens. By implementing strict food safety measures, we minimise these risks and safeguard public health," says Kenchic Limited Managing Director, Jim Tozer.

He says that Kenchic poultry products are produced using some of the best international animal health practices. The products are processed and distributed through the strictest biosecurity and animal welfare protocols laid down by reputable global organisations, such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). "Our consumers' well-being is our priority," Mr Tozer assures.

To guarantee their chicken is fresh and safe to eat, Kenchic traces every piece of meat, not only from the chicken it came from, but also the egg it hatched from, and the parent that laid the egg. In fact, Kenchic tracks every stage in its chickens' life journey.

The company's "Farm to Fork Model" aligns all aspects of the business with the principles of good animal husbandry. Every egg that is hatched and every chicken they raise is traceable, not just to the farm, but back two generations to the "grandparent breeding stock". "Hence if a consumer complaint came in about one of our products on the shelves, we are able to trace it all the way back to find out what inputs went into the bird and when and where along the production value chain," says Mr Tozer.

All of Kenchic's farms and hatcheries adhere to the strictest biosecurity and animal welfare protocols. For instance, all birds are given clean water and good quality feed. They are produced at an ISO-certified plant, and are continuously tested against breed standards.

"At the hatchery, we vaccinate all day-old-chicks against deadly viral diseases. The day-old chicks are either placed on Kenchic broiler farms and reared for meat, or they are sold to broiler, layer and Kenbro farm-

ers for subsistence and commercial farming," explains the MD.

First hatchery in Africa to achieve ISO 9001:2015 Certification

For its focus on quality, Kenchic recently achieved a great milestone on receiving the ISO 9001:2015 certification for its hatchery, being the first in Africa to achieve such recognition. This prestigious award showcases the company's unwavering commitment to exceptional practices in collecting, receiving, and hatching eggs, as well as its impeccable incubation monitoring, processing of chicks, and delivery to customers.

Food Safety System Certification

In 2011, Kenchic was the first company in Kenya to attain Food Safety System Certification 22000 (FSSC 22000). The company slaughters its birds at maturity, adhering to the global FSSC 22000 and Halal requirements. All the products are certified by the Muslim Council of Kenya. Besides, every batch of Kenchic chicken is certified healthy by government veterinarians at each stage of their breeding.

Also, Kenchic was recently re-certified for the most comprehensive food safety management system standard, and is recognised by the Global Food Safety Initiative.

"In 2022, Kenchic was the best ranked business in the 2021 Pecking Order Survey carried out by World Animal Protection, scoring 83 percent in our commitments and practices, way ahead of competitors who included international brands, with the closest scoring 33 percent in this survey," says Mr Tozer.

He adds that Kenchic does not use antibiotics to prevent infections or as feed additives. "We adhere to our antimicrobial usage policy, ensuring we only use antibiotics whenever completely necessary and only after prescription by our vets," the MD

"We are driven by our belief that delivering high-quality products not only elevates the poultry industry, but also fosters healthier, more prosperous communities"

Mr Jim Tozer, Kenchic Limited Managing Director



Kenchic employee at a broiler farm.

stresses. This has earned Kenchic international recognition, including being named by TRANSFORM, a USAID-backed project, as one of the eight international organisations in the world that have adopted good antimicrobial usage principles. Kenchic is the first on the continent to receive this recognition.

The company has an in-house ISO-certified laboratory that tests every batch of chicks and chicken products against pathogenic bacteria and antibiotic residues. "Though these measures have increased production costs, the business cannot compromise the health and safety of consumers for a quick profit," Mr Tozer says.

Kenchic is also compliant with the recommendations and requirements of all local statutory and regulatory bodies, including the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), Occupational Health Safety (OHS), and Good Veterinary Practices.

With all these, Kenchic has cultivated a strong niche in high quality poultry products that meet international standards, a unique brand positioning that has endeared it to the market for generations.

"We are driven by our belief that delivering high-quality products not only elevates the poultry industry, but also fosters healthier, more prosperous communities. Together, we strive to improve the livelihoods of poultry farmers and build a brighter future for all. That is what places us ahead of our competitors," says Mr Tozer.

He continues: "Our diverse range of products, include processed chicken meat such as whole chicken and cuts, further processed products that include sausages and burgers, and

our newest introduction of breaded chicken range – Crispy Kuku."

The MD says Kenchic is devoted to making these nutritious and delicious options accessible and affordable to all Kenyans, ensuring a reliable source of healthy and safe protein.

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Upholding animal welfare principles

Kenchic's farming and processing practices conform not just to Kenyan, but also to European Union and World Health Organisation regulations.

As a responsible supplier of healthy chicks and chicken, Kenchic continuously refers to the latest local and international veterinary advice to inform forward planning and ensure delivery of the highest quality chicken in the region.

In addition to the Farm Animals Responsible Minimum Standards (FARMS), which are international guidelines on farm animal welfare, Kenchic has embedded some core principles and values throughout their "Farm to Fork" philosophy.

For instance, the firm ensures flock health by having isolation pens for keeping sick and injured birds for treatment in each of their poultry units. "Also, at Kenchic, we have culling protocols in our health plans and farm procedures to reduce the suffering of birds that are too sick or maimed. All our staff are trained to recognise signs of disease and injury. Our veterinarians are on stand-by to address veterinary issues on the farm within 12 hours," says Kenchic Limited Managing Director, Mr Jim Tozer.

The birds are taken care of by a competent team of farm staff led by animal health-trained farm managers. Farm personnel undergo routine trainings on husbandry practices, such as brooding, biosecurity, and hygiene, with refresher sessions carried out every three months.

The time Kenchic chicks and meat chicken spend between the airport to the farms and farms to the processing plant respectively, does not exceed four hours. This is to minimise suffering.

All meat chicken at the processing plant are handled in the least distressing and most pain-free manner possible, by trained and competent staff. The chicken are electrically stunned without live inversion before slaughter.

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Empowering local farmers to produce quality chicken

Kenchic sources its inputs locally, including feed, and these support numerous secondary sector players like agricultural firms and service providers

BY MILLICENT MWOLOLO

Poultry farming in Kenya is a substantial contributor to the local economy, in terms of both output and employment. Kenchic Limited has been a champion of sustainable socio-economic development in the country by empowering local farmers to produce quality poultry for the market and subsistence use.

Kenchic sources its inputs locally, including feed. These inputs support numerous secondary sector players like agricultural firms and service providers, including transporters and veterinarians.

The company employs approximately 1,000 staff directly in management and administration, and through hatcheries, breeder farms, broiler farms, in-house transportation and processing plants. The combined wages for these employees average about Ksh1.5 billion per annum.

In 2022, the broiler sector generated a revenue of Ksh18.9 billion from the sale of 62 million kilograms of processed and further processed chicken. During same year, production of table eggs from commercial farmers was 1.9 billion eggs, which translated to Ksh22 billion. The total revenue realised from poultry industry in 2022 was approximately Ksh42 billion.

Kenchic's premium day-old chicks play a pivotal role in enhancing the livelihoods of poultry farmers throughout the region. The company has three lines of day old chicks – Broiler, Layer, and Kenbro.

Kenbro is an improved kienyeji (indigenous) dual-purpose bird that can give eggs or meat depending on the needs of the farmer. This is a bird that gives you the taste and 'hardiness' of the kienyeji chicken with faster growth rates and better performance.

"Bred to meet exacting standards, our chicks are complemented by comprehensive training and support for farmers, empowering them to achieve optimal yields and sustainable success," says Kenchic Managing Director Jim Tozer.

As a major supplier of day-old chicks to poultry farmers in the region, Kenchic is committed to providing sound technical assistance to poultry farmers, advising them on bird housing, chicken feed, animal husbandry and health management. "That is why we offer free weekly technical trainings at our headquarters at Exsan House



Day old chicks, Kenya's finest pre-vaccinated chicks.

every Monday, to farmers and anyone interested in getting into the chicken business," explains Mr Tozer.

These trainings are also periodically undertaken by Kenchic's technical teams across the country.

Together with partners such as USAID and Cargill, Kenchic provides biosecurity trainings to farmers in Nairobi, Machakos, Kiambu, Nakuru, and Kajiado counties under the USAID-funded TRANSFORM project, which stands for

Transformational Strategies for Farm Output Risk Mitigation.

"This project aims to address global health challenges, including zoonosis, antimicrobial resistance and transboundary diseases through training for human behaviour and farm practices change," Mr Tozer points out.

Kenchic's Poultry Centres are a 'one-stop' shop for scientific, technical advice and support, managed by its in-house, registered veterinarians. Kenchic is determined to

support the growth of subsistence and commercial poultry farming in the region by ensuring local farmers are equipped to maintain the best farming practices. For instance, Kenchic's hatchery vaccination procedure is an accurate, cheaper, and faster way to ensure that all of the farmers' chicks are vaccinated, reducing the cost of labour, human error and time for on-farm vaccinations.

Kenchic is determined to support the growth of subsistence and commercial poultry farming in the region by ensuring local farmers are equipped to maintain the best farming practices. "We have been at the forefront in supporting projects by the government and other stakeholders aimed at improving the performance of the livestock subsector in the country," he points out.

For Kenchic, this is not just a typical CSR effort, but their corporate commitment to the country and region at large. "We believe that lifting the standards of farmers, and even our competitors, plays a big role in improving the sector and livelihoods of our people. Kenchic's day-old chicks are pathogen/disease-free due to the strict biosecurity protocols in the breeder farms and hatchery operations. This means we avoid any vertically transmitted diseases entering the system, and safeguards farmers' investments whenever they buy our chicks," the MD says.

Besides, the company's farm and hatchery operations are up to date and are in compliance with emerging issues on animal welfare, antibiotic usage, and international

agricultural best practices to produce the best quality eggs for chick hatching purposes.

Innovation in poultry production

Kenchic provides environmental enrichment, including perches and nest boxes, for their breeder chicken in all in-house and contracted broiler farms, to stimulate positive emotional states.

Mr Tozer explains: "We already provide two metres of usable perch space per 1,000 birds across all our operations. In addition, each unit has equipment to measure and ensure that levels of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, ammonia and light are at acceptable levels, which guarantee positive animal welfare."

The use of Innovax vaccine technology provides comprehensive, life-long protection against Infectious Bursal Disease (IBD) or Gumboro, Newcastle Disease (ND) and Marek's Disease (MD) in a single, 3-in-1 easy to administer dose at the hatchery.

As explained by the MD, "The introduction of full hatchery vaccination for broilers, and now with Innovax, serves to ensure that vaccination is handled by our experts at the hatchery instead of farm-level vaccination, which is prone to failures such as poor vaccine sourcing, breaking of the cold chain, poor administration techniques, among other issues."

The firm also introduced infra-red debeaking, which has not only made operations easy for farmers, but also reduced pain to the birds that would otherwise be caused by often-times crude on-farm debeaking procedures. Besides, the Kenchic processing plant is one of the most modern in Africa, enabling them to produce quality products of international standards.

Being ahead of innovations in poultry rearing has allowed for safer and better quality of poultry products and reduced the workload placed on the farmer and subsequent production losses.

Different innovations and new technologies are helping farmers to increase their productivity and output. "We are the first company to explore novel water treatment options in our farms and contract out-growers, and this has led to significant improvements in performance though reduction in mortalities and plant condemnations," says the MD.

Mr Tozer has an extensive experience in the agri-business sector in the UK and Europe, and has successfully applied his expertise in Kenchic Ltd over the past 18 years. His comprehensive understanding of the global poultry market, its advancements, and current trends, has equipped him to focus on developing a long-term vision and plan for the company, its industry, and the regional poultry market.



Ksh42 billion

The approximate total revenue realised from Kenya's poultry industry in 2022

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