

Blue Mountain Ostrich Nutrition E-Bulletin #97

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The Future Potential of Ostrich Production

There are many reports suggesting that global meat consumption will increase by as much as 25% by 2025 with the increase attributed to the increasing wealth in developing countries. At the same time the consumers in the more wealthy countries enjoy greater variety of meat choices. However, these consumers, as a result of many health scares, are becoming increasingly demanding about the methods of production of the animals supplying their meat.

The last 20 years has seen the introduction of Ostrich farming in many countries of the world, but this has not yet been translated from a breeder market into large-scale production. Now is the time to introduce the technology, production methods and training to enable Ostrich to be produced on an industrial scale, to achieve the full genetic potential and to build an industry with sustainable growth. The opportunity to take a share of the growth in the meat market is there for those with vision.

What is the potential rate of growth?

Another new agri-processing industry, Aquaculture, has shown rapid expansion in recent years, going from 7million metric tonnes in 1980 to 58million metric tonnes in 2002. Figure 1 shows the comparative growth rate of one specie, Farmed Atlantic Salmon, over that period compared with Ostrich from 1993, when the first ostrich records were published. The early years of farmed salmon were on similar levels to Ostrich production and in a period of 20 years it has increased production to 1.2 million metric tonnes, showing phenomenal growth year on year.

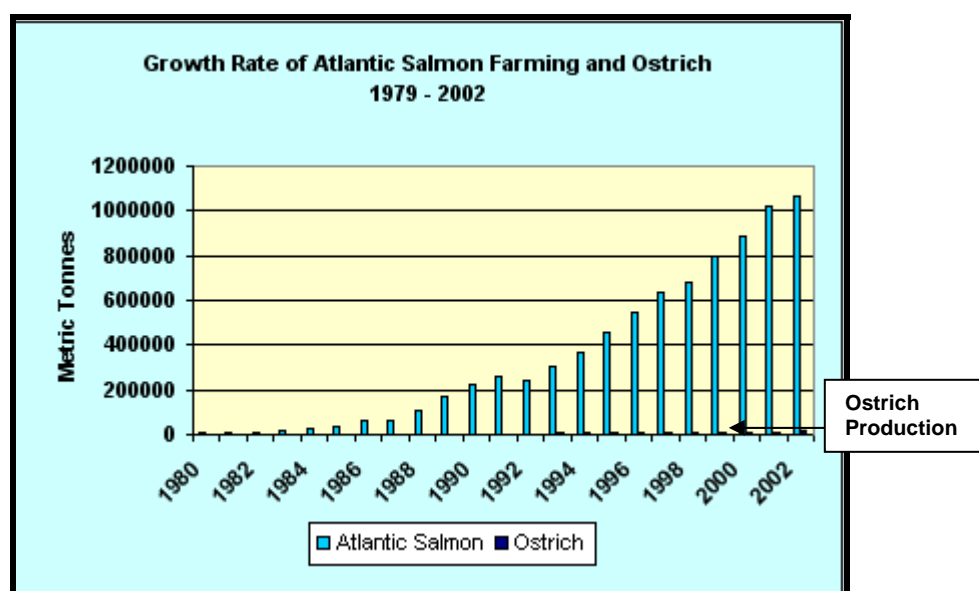


Figure 1 - Comparative Production Atlantic Salmon and Ostrich
[Source: Atlantic Salmon - FAO. Ostrich see Figure 2]
[Figure 1 reprinted with permission from WOA]

By comparison, Figure 2 shows that in the same period the Ostrich industry has failed to grow – rather it has continued to stagnate and decline.

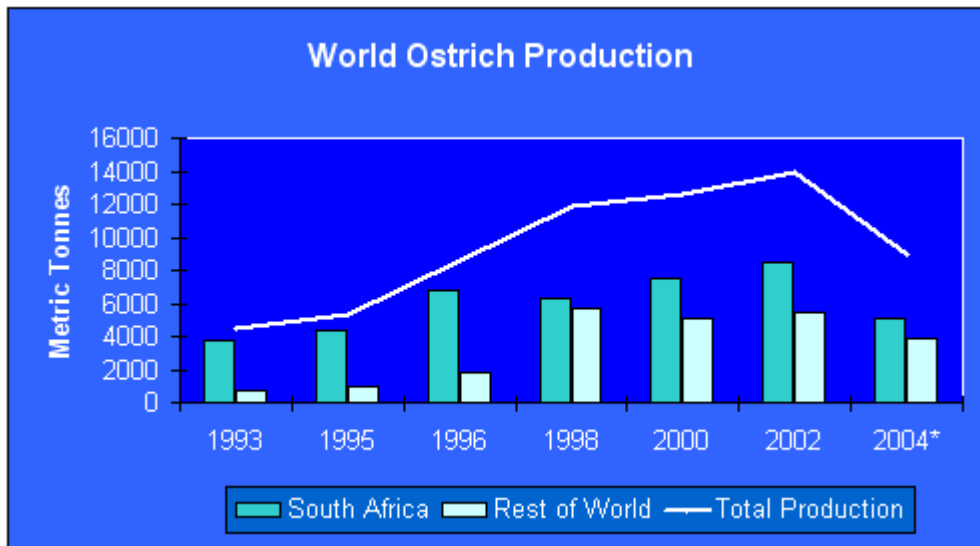


Figure 2 - World Ostrich Slaughter Figures

[Source: NOPSA, Peter van Zyl, Report on the on the Investigation into the effect of deregulation on the South African Ostrich Industry]

[All World Ostrich Figures are estimated by the various sources. * South African 2004 figures estimated]

[Figure 2 reprinted with permission from WOA]

Many who have farmed ostrich commercially for a number of years report an inability to achieve greater than 20 slaughter birds per hen. A recent global survey^[1] reported an average of 15.3 chicks per hen at 3 months of age with the top 25% reporting an average of 36.9 chicks per hen. At the same time many report average egg production in excess of 60 eggs per hen and reports of hens exceeding 100 eggs in a season are not uncommon. These statistics are key indicators of the production potential of Ostrich when farmed correctly.

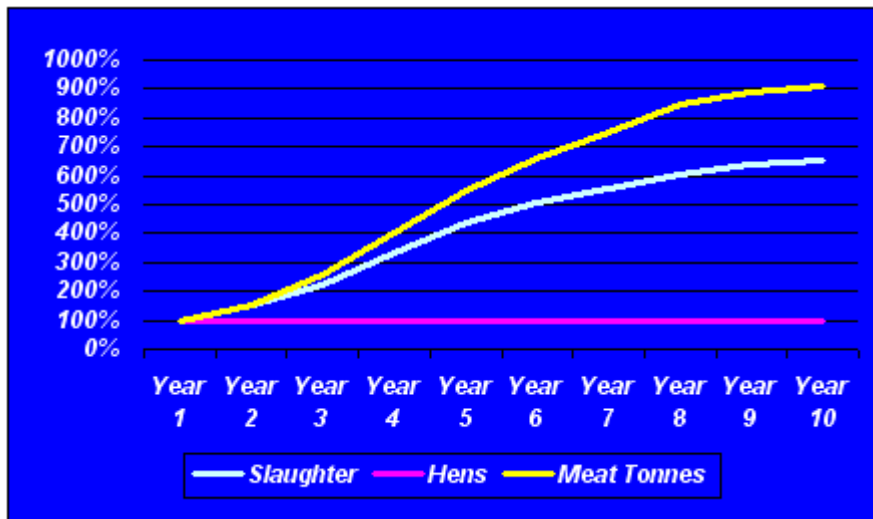


Figure 3 - Potential Growth Rate of Slaughter Birds

The growth rate illustrated in Figure 3 shows what can be achieved with exactly the same number of breeder hens, assuming the introduction of the correct technology and production methods. One can see the potential for growth in meat production, not only from an increased number of slaughter birds/hen but also through a progressive increase in average meat yields from 25kgs to 45kgs in the 10 year period

Growth of the industry will be dependent on market conditions and the correct coordination of growth...but what is the production potential?

Taking a scenario:

- Retaining as future breeder birds 15% of annual chick production for the first year, 2.5% for the next 4 years and 1% thereafter
- Culling the breeder herd heavily of poor producers
- Introducing progressive improvements in performance as in Figure 3
- Starting with production at 350,000 slaughter birds and 25kilos meat per bird

In 10 years there could be in excess of 20 million slaughter birds and 1 million tonnes of meat production.

Why is this growth rate achievable?

The development (breeder) phase of a new livestock industry experiences:

- high prices paid for “so called” breeding stock
- no meaningful records kept to correctly select the best genetic animals
- no meaningful slaughter market so all production is sold as potential breeder stock, regardless of their suitability
- all producers are new to the specie and in many cases have no previous “production” livestock experience
- all support specialists are new to the specie
- feed companies using data from other specie as a result of no meaningful information or research
- the limited experience of all involved results in a plethora of misinformation on all aspects of the production chain, which is continually replicated

All the above and many more influences result in lack of production, inconsistent supply and inconsistent quality of end products. All of these are negative factors when attempting to enter the commercial production phase and when needing to enter sophisticated markets in competition with long established mainstream species.

“The Road Map to the New Ostrich Industry” ^[2] summarises the steps required to bring Ostrich Production into line with mainstream livestock specie by achieving the levels of production outlined in the above scenario. In order to fully understand “The New Ostrich Industry” principles, it is imperative to first understand the details of “The Road Map to the New Ostrich Industry”. Then it will become clear that “The New Ostrich Industry” references are far more than simply a catchy phrase or an attention getting by-line. Rather it is a detailed and effective plan that will revolutionize the entire Ostrich industry if followed in correct detail.

The New Ostrich Industry

The New Ostrich Industry is one that will:

- Have Production Standards and Goals
- Have Professional Livestock Production Methods
- Have Grading Systems and Standards for all Products
- Maximise Revenue from all Products
- Reward Quality
- Be Market Driven

The New Ostrich Industry achieves this by taking the industry from 1950’s style farming to utilising modern livestock production technology to bring Ostrich Production into line with mainstream livestock specie. The principles of The New Ostrich Industry are an essential component to

overall commercial success for producers, processors and marketers involved in Ostrich Production today.

The Review of 2004, Bulletin No. 96^[3], discusses a solution to achieve these objectives, the development of WOMRAD.

WOMRAD (World Ostrich Marketing, Research and Development Co.) will be a company that will be affiliated to the World Ostrich Association and open to any Ostrich Production Company wishing to achieve these goals. WOMRAD will enable Ostrich production to compete on fair terms with other livestock production industries.

Any readers interested in becoming members of WOMRAD should contact the WOA at secretary@world-ostrich.org.

[1] – Kim Bunter, Animal Genetics and Breeding Centre, University of New England, Armidale, Australia “Are you setting your goals high enough?”

[2] – Daryl Holle, Fiona Benson “The Road Map to the Ostrich Industry” <http://www.blue-mountain.net/bulletin/bull92.htm>

[3] – Daryl Holle, Fiona Benson, Stan Stewart “Ostrich Industry Review 2004” <http://www.blue-mountain.net/bulletin/bull96.htm>