

# With poultry industry gradually collapsing, PAN proposes border reopening, other solutions

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**I**t would be strange to hear that any farmer group in Nigeria would want the country's borders reopened, much less for agricultural products to come in. However, pushed to the wall following several months of seeing the industry gradually collapse, the Poultry Association of Nigeria in a recent statement asked government to "Partially keep the borders open for markets in Agriculture and critical food products in transparent and predictable manner, but not the export of under produced foods either formally or informally."

Of course, PAN did not ask that the borders be fully reopened, but its request was part of several other suggestions made in order to save the ailing industry bedevilled by high cost of feed, which has seen farmers struggling to keep their

birds fed and healthy for market. Some have also had to shut down, as they could no longer keep their livestock fed.

The statement signed by Ezekiel Ibrahim, PAN president, noted that; post COVID-19 and the lockdown that followed, the Poultry industry suffered devastating losses occasioned by the restriction of movement of goods and services which included Eggs, Day Old Chicks (DOCs), Poultry feeds and other essential inputs for poultry production.

"Billions of Naira were lost in sales of Eggs and chicken resulting in the closure of many small and medium size poultry farms," said Ibrahim.

With the worsening situation of grains supply in the country, the prices of Maize went up from N95,000 per ton to N165,000 per ton in June, 2020, according to Ibrahim. While acknowledging that government supported

the industry with the release of 5,000mt of Maize at subsidized prices expecting that the price of Maize will fall or stabilize during the harvest season, price of maize as at 26th November was selling between N145,000 - N160,000 per ton as against the price of N85,000 per ton same time last year.

Worsening the situation, Soybean, the other major component required for poultry feed has also been scarce, further compounding the woes of helpless farmers. Despite being harvest period, there is virtually near scarcity and absence of Soybean in the Nigerian markets.

According to Ibrahim, the reasons being adduced as responsible for the scarcity and high cost is the insecurity in the country, climate change and activities of traders buying and hoarding the grains: Soybeans and Maize.

"Intelligence and field reports have also indicated that the Soya-

beans in seeds and meals are being exported out of the country thereby causing the present crisis being witnessed," he said.

Where available, Soybean was selling between N215,000 - N250,000 per ton, according to Ibrahim. The poultry industry feed cost is about 75 percent of the cost of poultry production, and this has risen by over 75 percent between March and November, 2020. In March, the price of finished feed sold between N2,650 -N3,000 is now selling between N4,600 - N5,300 per 25kg bag.

"In view of the above negative impacts that will befall the Nigeria poultry industry if urgent actions are not taken immediately by the Government, the industry might be forced to shut down completely by January 2021. The present atmosphere and scenario of things are very alarming and critical.

The Poultry Association of Nigeria suggested among other

things; an immediate halt of export of Soybeans and Soya meal so as to protect the local food systems and security; allow for the immediate importation of Soybeans and Maize into the country as a stop gap measure to mitigate the impending doom in the Nigeria poultry industry.

It also said that in order to assist the industry achieve its target and getting prepared to participate in the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), duty and other tax exemptions be granted for the importation of Maize and Soybeans.

PAN also requested that Government and its relevant agencies should engage with the Association on constant basis on issues that affect the industry before critical policy decisions are taken in order to remove most of the ambiguities in policies that affect the industry and the generality of Nigerians.

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