



Changing Agri-chicken for Net Zero

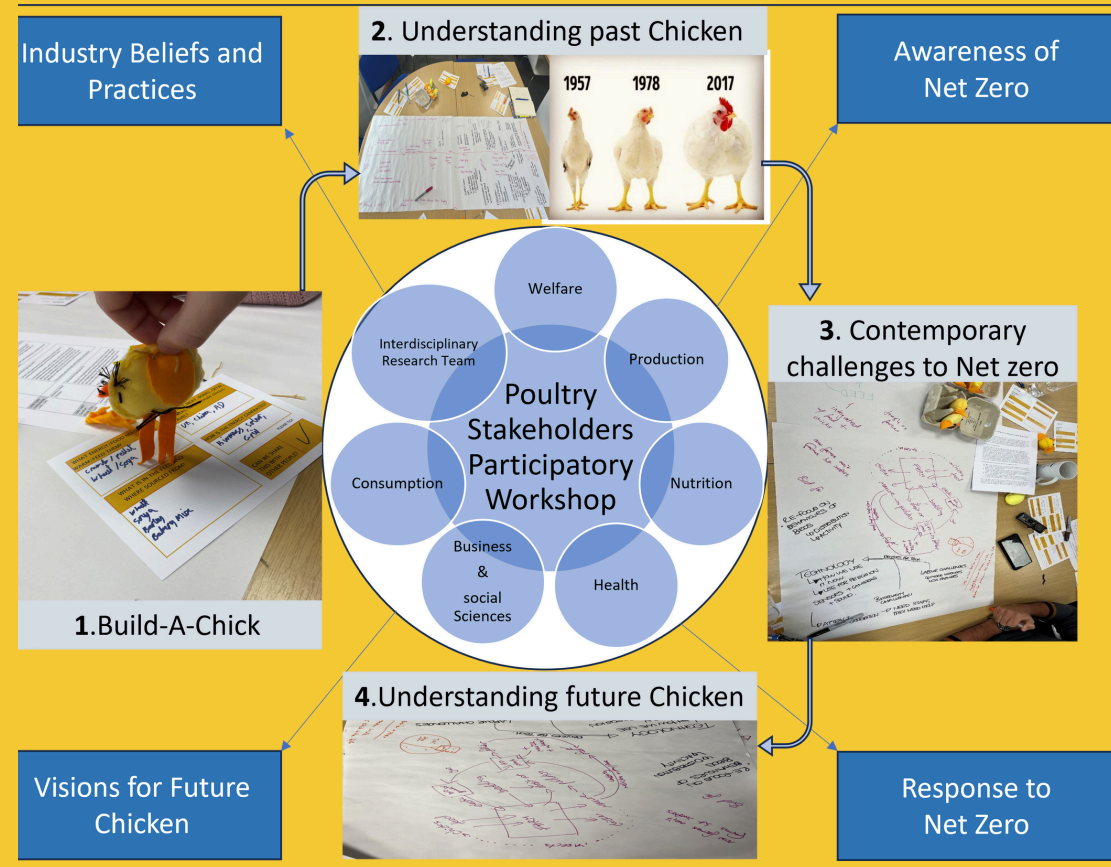
INTRODUCTION

Poultry meat accounts for about 50% of total meat production in the UK, providing affordable protein to meet the dietary needs of Britons. Despite its low carbon footprint, poultry production exerts substantial influence on air and water quality, and contributes to wastes and resource consumption. Consequently, the UK Net Zero Strategy 2050 mandates the poultry industry to radically alter operations to lessen their impact on the environment and increase resilience to the effects of climate change.

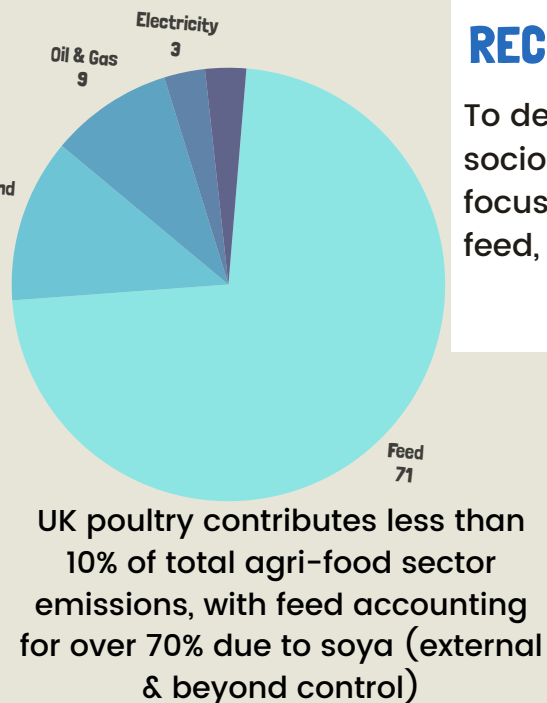
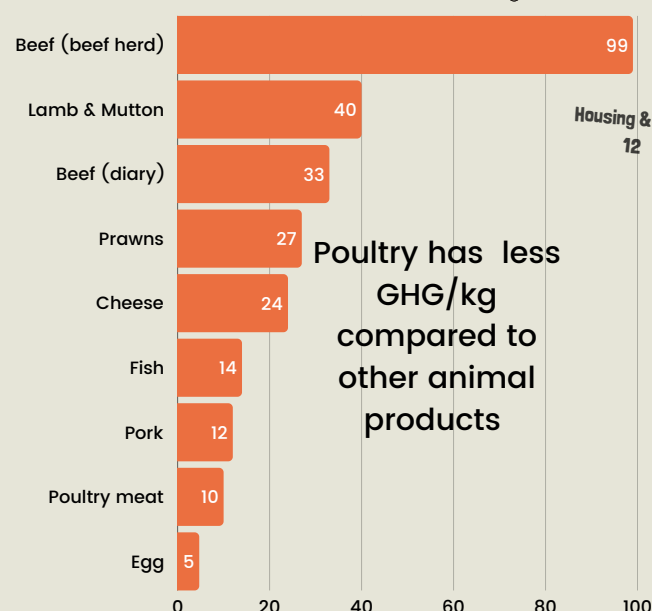
Through participatory research methods, our study contributes to work to deliver emission reduction by advancing understanding of how diverse poultry sector stakeholders currently understand efforts and opportunities for action, both their own and others to address net zero in conjunction with visions of future chicken.

METHODOLOGY

Participants were engaged through four (4) creative activities to explore the industry beliefs and practices around their awareness and response to net zero, and potential changes in the future to meet net zero targets.



SOME HIGHLIGHTS



Authors

Roe E., Maye D., Lambton S., Mafulul D., Helwegen M., Green S., and Hasnain S. (2024). Changing Agri-Chicken for Net Zero. University of Southampton, Southampton.



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- *Over 1.08b chicken valued at £2.9bn slaughtered in 2022
- *£2.9bn value of poultry meat produced in 2021.
- *1.0bn dozens of eggs valued at £818m in 2021.

KEY FINDINGS

- Unjustified blame on the farmers for only 5% of emissions from on-farm activities, resulting to feeling of unequal and unfair responsibility towards net zero.
- Disconnected supply chain, especially between farmers and consumers influenced by the press, and lack of agency.

"I would say, I know everybody has to chip in for the net-zero, but I believe the pressure on the farmers is not justifiable to the amount of emissions they produce on the farm. That's me just as the farmer talking. So the farmers are unfairly in the spotlight for that. Other people need to take a bit more responsibility." (Participant 8)

"They really have no idea. The only thing that they know about chicken farming really is what animal rights activist are putting out there because the industry doesn't really have a voice. So, they just see all the negative press." (Participant 7).

- Lack of ethically driven approach to achieve genuine net zero outcomes, as existing standard(GFLI) prioritises financial value over emissions, highlighting the need for a full LCA.

- High concern and expectation over total cut from soybeans, with call for greater responsibility and action from processors & integrators who control over 80% of the sector.

- Complexity in balancing affordability, animal welfare, workers well-being, business viability, and environmental impact, as progress in one area often compromises another.

.. "But this is it. It feels like it's such a massive accounting, so like net-zero is that everything goes like it's just about counting and how you count. And I just think that we've lost some of the other discussions around like what should we do, what are the ethics of it." (Participant 10).

CONCLUSION

Poultry remains the fastest-growing agri-food industry. A poultry system thinking approach is essential for a comprehensive net-zero assessment that accounts for all supply chain relations, including those beyond UK boundaries, ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To develop an ethical policy framework for managing industrial socio-metabolic processes in UK food system resilience, with a focus on net-zero. This includes researching the impact of poultry feed, waste, and processed chicken on public health.

Scan here for references:



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