

Combined efforts needed to build a risk-free poultry sector: Speakers

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Speakers come up with the opinions at the round table conference titled 'Poultry Value Chain Securing Policy Strategy' at The Daily Samkal office in the capital's Tejgaon on Wednesday.

Abuse of antibiotics to increase weight of chickens is alarmingly on the rise. Antibiotic resistance is happening in the human body in many ways especially starting from food intake. Consequently, everyone involved in poultry production, processing, marketing,

supply and consumer level must work together to keep people healthy and ensure safe food. At the same time, the existing laws and regulations should be properly implemented.

Speakers came up with the opinions at the round table conference titled 'Poultry Value Chain Securing Policy Strategy' at The Daily Samkal office in the capital's Tejgaon on Wednesday.

The conference was organized under the auspices of non-governmental organisation 'Mati Bangladesh' and The Daily Samakal in collaboration with USAID.

Sheikh Rokan, associate editor of The Daily Samakal, moderated the meeting with Abu Sayeed Khan, advisory editor of The Daily Samakal in the chair.

Professor Dr Madan Mohan Dey of Agricultural Science Department of Texas State University, Aktaruzzaman Khan, Fulbright Scholar of Texas State University, and Rakhi Chakraborty, associate professor of Bangladesh Agricultural University, joined the meeting virtually and presented their valued articles.

Professor Madan Mohan said, along with the use of harmful chemicals including antibiotics, hormones, growth promoters at various stages of the poultry value chain, health risks are being created due to the contamination of poultry feed and the infection of germs at the stage of poultry sales. Despite knowing the facts, the stakeholders are not taking steps to stop those malpractices. Marginal farmers are forced into practices harmful to public health due to financial risk. In other areas of the value chain, the problem remains due to non-enforcement of existing laws and regulations. Hence, a standard guideline and its implementation are essential to secure the value chain. Moreover, training and awareness campaigns of the stakeholders are badly needed.

The meeting was addressed by Agriculturist Zikrul Hakim, managing director of APYZ Safe Foods Agro Limited; SM Nazer Hossain, vice chairperson of Consumer Association of Bangladesh; Dr Biplab Kumar Pramanik, general secretary of the World Poultry Science Association; Anjan Majumdar, coordinator of Poultry Professional Bangladesh; Shahidur Rahman, professor of Poultry Science Department of Bangladesh Agricultural University; Professor Rezaul Karim Siddiqui, general secretary and executive director of BSAFE Foundation; Dr. Shakila Farooq, chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute, Laila Akhtar, director of Safe Food Authority; Md Shahidul Islam, development director of Mati Bangladesh.

Conveying greetings on behalf of Mati Bangladesh, Shahidul Islam said, “Though malnutrition is not evident, our lack of nutrition and unequal distribution of food still remains a hidden hunger. Lack of safe food has become a deadly problem today. Harmful chemicals, pesticides, preservatives, dyes, antibiotics, hormones are being used in food products. People are suffering from various diseases and dying by eating those. Most worryingly, the new generation is growing up with sick bodies and minds. You have to take initiative from your own stance to get rid of this malpractice.”

Agriculturist Zikrul Hakim said, “The use of antibiotics is increasing due to some common problems prevailing in the poultry sector. Nevertheless, farmers who are following the guidelines for antibiotic use should be acclaimed. Besides, those who are abusing, they need to be brought under punishment.”

Anjan Majumdar said that if you want to change the poultry value chain, you have to change the management. The claim of using excessive antibiotics is not fully flawless. If these were the facts, the chicks could not have been saved. Many times, wrong message is being forwarded to common people in this regard. Everyone, including the media, must be careful to prevent misinformation. Poultry board should be formed along with counseling of marginal farmers.

SM Nazer Hossain said, “It is important to reach the correct information at the consumer level to ensure safe food. Proper enforcement of laws and oversight by food safety authorities is essential to prevent misuse of antibiotics at the farm level.”

Biplab Kumar Pramanik said, “Antibiotics are a global problem. Studies have shown that amoxicillin is being used in poultry. Speaking from 20 years of experience in this sector, it is not used in poultry. What is the basis of the antibiotic resistance that is being talked about in the poultry sector? More research is necessary whether antibiotics are actually being used in the poultry sector or to what extent the sector is responsible for resistance in the human body.”

Shahidur Rahman said, “Research should be done on whether the appropriate amount of antibiotics is being used in the poultry sector, and if so, how much harm is being done. To my knowledge, there is no excessive use of antibiotics in poultry. Again, there was no harmful situation was created at the consumer level.”

“Poultry sector stakeholders should increase their knowledge. There are so many contradictions in the existing laws and regulations. In this work, the coordinated efforts of all organizations, including the safe food authority, consumer rights protection directorate, ministries are necessary,” said Professor Rezaul Karim Siddiqui.

Rakhi Chakraborty said, “Although there is no lack of knowledge, there is a lack of implementation by farmers. Antibiotics are necessary to keep poultry healthy. But more is being used than needed. The supervision should be increased to stop it.”

“Farmers are encouraged to use antibiotics from the village pharmacy. Whereas humans are not compliant with antibiotic use, abuse is common in the poultry sector. It does not have the necessary manpower to control it. The capacity of safe food authority needs to be enhanced,” said Aktaruzzaman Khan.

Shakhila Faruk said, “People are leading to take safe food due to increasing purchasing capacity. Chickens need to be protected all the way from processing, marketing, delivery and reaching the consumer. Rules and regulations must be implemented by strengthening the institutions of the government.”

Laila Akhtar said, “The biggest challenge for us is to provide safe food. To ensure this, three rules and 11 regulations have been made in the light of the law. Four more regulations are being formulated.”

“It will not be right to claim that the poultry sector is in 100 percent compliance. Again, it cannot be said that the sector exists in anomalies. Actions should be taken in cases where rules are violated. The state has to come forward in this regard,” opined Abu Sayeed Khan.

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