

ECC broiler production: Mitigating economic impacts to deliver better welfare

Modern broiler production prioritises productivity and efficiency, often at the expense of welfare. Selective breeding for rapid growth and high meat yield has led to a range of health and welfare issues, limiting birds' ability to express natural behaviours, while they are typically kept in overcrowded, barren sheds.

The European Chicken Commitment (ECC) aims to improve broiler welfare through a set of science-based criteria. Transitioning to ECC systems typically raises production costs; mitigating these economic challenges is critical to deliver better welfare for broilers.

ECC systems are associated with:

	Increase costs	Decrease costs
On farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fewer birds per shed - Longer lives resulting in higher feed costs - Provision of enrichments - Shed alteration for natural light 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower mortality rates - Less culls - Lower antibiotic costs
At slaughter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Installation of Controlled Atmosphere Systems (CAS) - Gas price 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower electricity and water consumption in CAS
After processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower carcass weight - Less breast meat yield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less myopathies - Lower rejection rates - Less carcass downgrades

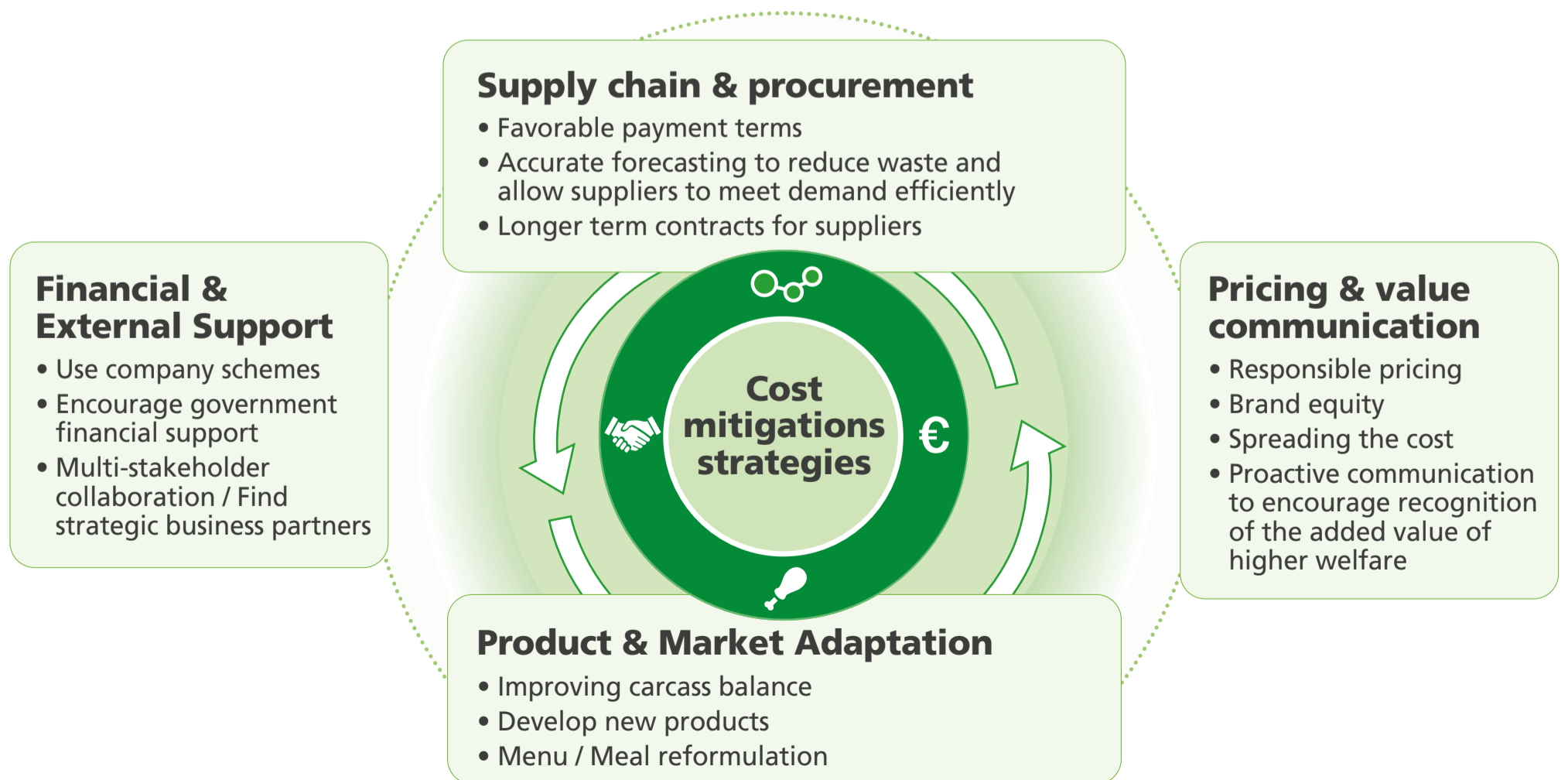
Economic impact calculations

	ADAS (2024)		van Horne <i>et al</i> (2025)	
	% Increase	Cents	% Increase	Cents
Total increase per kg/meat	37.5*	+75.6*	19.4	+22
Total increase at farm gate (kg live weight)	37.5	+75.6*	18.5	+19.3
Total increase after slaughter (kg carcass weight)	Not provided		15.9	+29
Total increase after processing (kg meat)	Not provided		19.4	+46.3

Note: The estimated cost increase depends on the production phases included in the analysis and assumptions made on breed performance (due to lack of field data)

*reported as kg/meat but measured at farm gate

From: Impact of the European Chicken Commitment (ECC) broiler production system on economics, the environment and food safety (2025) Peter van Horne, Jan van Harn, Pim Mostert, Nico Bondt, Luuk Vissers
Costs and implications of the European Chicken Commitment in the EU (2024) ADAS



The ECC represents not just a cost, but an investment in a more sustainable and ethical future for poultry production. Cost mitigation strategies and recognising the broader benefits of higher welfare systems are key to success.