



GHANA AGRIBUSINESS PLAYBOOK SERIES

2026



BROILER CHICKEN

Value Chain Analysis

A mapped breakdown of the value chain, from farmgate to factory, and who captures what along the way.

Center for Entrepreneurship
Ashesi University



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<https://agribusinessplaybook.com/playbook/poultry>



Executive summary

THE THESIS

Ghana raises birds but has too little capacity to slaughter, chill and move them at scale, so imports hold the modern shelf. The chain below follows the bird from the imported chick to the plate, shows who earns what, and names the link that decides whether local chicken competes.

This standalone Value Chain Analysis carries the same content as Pillar 6 of the Broiler Chicken Playbook. It maps the chain from input supply to consumer, shows who adds and captures value, and identifies thin processing and cold chain as the sector's binding constraint and its largest opening.

About this document

Prepared as part of the Ghana Agribusiness Playbook Series for students, entrepreneurs, investors and ecosystem actors. Figures are as reported between July and September 2026 and may have changed since.

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Glossary

Plain definitions for the terms used most often.

Broiler

a chicken bred to grow meat fast and convert feed efficiently, ready for market in about six to nine weeks.

Feed conversion ratio (FCR)

kilograms of feed eaten for each kilogram of liveweight gained. Lower is better. It is the single biggest driver of cost.

Dressed weight

the weight of the bird after slaughter, plucking and cleaning; roughly 70 to 75 percent of liveweight.

Deep litter

a floor system where birds are raised on bedding such as wood shavings that absorbs droppings.

Parent stock and grandparent stock

the breeding birds that produce hatching eggs; Ghana imports almost all of them.

Avian influenza (HPAI / H5N1)

bird flu; a notifiable viral disease that triggers culling and movement bans.

Spent layer

a hen that has finished laying and is sold for meat; most of Ghana's local chicken meat is spent layers, not broilers.

Day-old chick (DOC)

a newly hatched chick, the starting input of every broiler cycle; in Ghana most come from imported genetics.

Liveweight

the weight of the live bird at sale, before slaughter and dressing.

Brooding

the first two weeks, when chicks cannot control their own body heat and must be kept warm.

Stocking density

how many birds, or kilograms of bird, share a square metre of floor.

Newcastle disease

a fast, often fatal viral disease of poultry, controlled by vaccination, since there is no cure once it strikes.

Cold chain

the unbroken chain of refrigeration that keeps frozen or chilled chicken safe from processor to plate.

VALUE CHAIN ANALYSIS FOR GHANA

Broiler Chicken Value Chain Analysis

The chain from chick to plate

A broiler passes through the same set of hands from egg to table, and value is added, and captured, at each one. The stages are input supply (the imported parent stock, hatcheries and feed mills), production (the farms of Pillars 4 and 5), aggregation (the traders who gather birds), processing (slaughter and dressing), distribution and cold storage, retail, and finally the consumer. The stages look like any country's; what matters in Ghana is where they are strong and where they break.



The Ghana broiler value chain, and the missing middle



processing and cold storage are thin, so few local birds reach the modern shelf

FIGURE 1 The Ghana broiler value chain from imported chick to consumer, and its thin processing and cold-storage middle

Source: Onumah et al.¹ Aboah et al.²

① Stage by stage: who operates each link, and where it breaks ①

The chain rewards a close look, because the value, the power and the breakages are not spread evenly. Walk it link by link and the pattern is clear: the value is created upstream at the farm, but the control, and the cold chain that reaches

the modern shelf, sit downstream with a few well-capitalised players. Three links decide the chain: the imported input base, the thin middle and the concentrated distribution end.

¹ Edward Ebo Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis of the Broiler Industry in the Southern Sector of Ghana," *Caraka Tani: Journal of Sustainable Agriculture* 38, no. 2 (2023): 371-386, <https://doi.org/10.20961/carakatani.v38i2.74187>.

² Joshua Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems in Ghana's poultry value chain: A group model building approach," *Journal of Agriculture and Food Research* 20 (2025): 101738, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jafr.2025.101738>.

TABLE 1 The broiler value chain read link by link, for the entrant

LINK	WHO OPERATES IT	WHAT IT CAPTURES	ITS BINDING CONSTRAINT	THE OPENING INSIDE IT
Input supply	A few parent-stock and chick importers, a few local hatcheries, and feed mills	Scarce inputs priced off the dollar, with strong pricing power	Parent stock, soybean meal and concentrates are imported, so chicks and feed are exposed to the exchange rate	Local hatching and feed milling that cut the import bill
Production	Many smallholders and a few large integrated farms	The most value added, but it carries the disease and cost risk	Fragmented, high-risk, and few cycles a year	Efficiency and aggregation services
Aggregation	Informal traders and middlemen	Thin, opaque margins; the chain's weakest connective tissue	In a survey published in 2023, about 42 percent of producers' birds were sold live under contract to buyers in Côte d'Ivoire and other neighbouring countries, because producers could not process them	Organised aggregation and offtake tied to a confirmed buyer
Processing	A few plants, including Darko Farms and Aglow Farms, and market slaughter points	A high potential margin the country barely captures	Too little hygienic dressing and cutting capacity; about 10 percent of producers' birds went to processors in a survey published in 2023	Certified small-scale processing, the single biggest gap
Distribution and cold storage	Concentrated frozen-import distributors and cold stores	Concentrated sales, with Gini coefficients of 0.55 to 0.70 across importers, wholesalers and retailers ³	The cold chain serves imports, so local fresh is locked out	Cold-chain logistics that give local birds a route to the shelf
Retail	Cold stores and supermarkets for frozen; open markets for fresh and live	A retail margin on frozen, a premium on trusted fresh	Buyers switch to imports once local is much dearer	A branded local-fresh position the import cannot occupy
Consumer	Households, food service, and festive and institutional buyers	Large and rising demand, price-led for the bulk	Fresh and trusted for the premium, cheapest for the rest	The fresh, festive and institutional lanes local can win

Sources: Onumah et al.;⁴ Apike et al.;⁵ Aboah et al.;⁶ and Pillars 1, 4 and 5.

³ Isaac Akurugu Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market and willingness of distributors to accept domestically produced and processed chicken: evidence from Ghana," *Cogent Food & Agriculture* 10, no. 1 (2024): 2296121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311932.2023.2296121>.
⁴ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."
⁵ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."
⁶ Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems."

The input base is imported. The chain does not begin in Ghana. It begins with parent stock and day-old chicks shipped in, and with feed that depends on imported soybean meal and concentrates. In a survey published in 2023, 95 percent of producers bought their chicks mainly from importers.⁷ Input suppliers are few and hold real pricing power, because they sell a scarce good, priced off the dollar, that every farm must buy, and each cycle starts with a foreign-exchange bill before a bird is fed. The first structural fix in the chain is to make more of this input base at home.

The middle is thin. Between the farm and the shelf sits the link that should turn a live bird into a standard, chilled, sellable product, and in Ghana it is thin. Aggregation is informal and processing takes a small share of output, about 10 percent of

producers' birds in a survey published in 2023,⁸ so a farmer with mature birds often has nowhere to take them but the live market at the farm gate. The value that should be captured in dressing, portioning and cold storage simply leaks away. This thin middle is the chain's defining weakness and its largest opening.

The end is concentrated. Where the local chain is fragmented across many small farms, the imported chain's distribution end is tightly held by a few well-capitalised importers and cold-store operators.⁹ With the cold storage and reach the local chain lacks, they have strong influence over the terms of trade. The result is an hourglass: many small farms at one end, a mass market at the other, and a narrow, powerful, import-fed waist in between.

① One bird, two chains ①

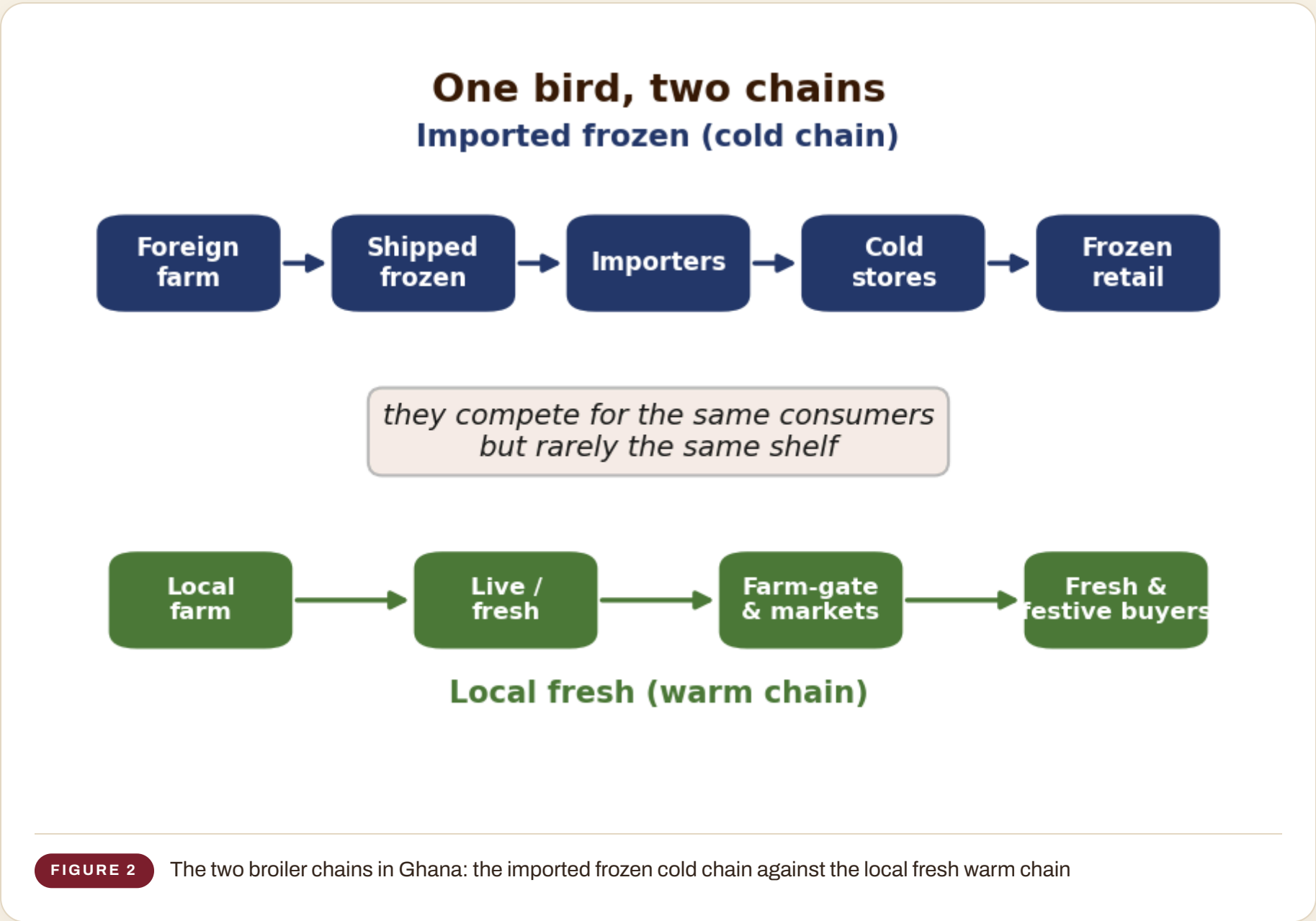
The single most important fact about the chain is that there are really two of them, running side by side and barely touching. The **imported frozen chain** runs cold: birds raised abroad, shipped frozen, cleared through a concentrated group of importers, held in cold stores and sold as frozen

cuts. The **local fresh chain** runs warm: birds raised on Ghanaian farms, sold live or freshly dressed, moved fast because there is little cold storage, and eaten near where they are grown. These two chains compete for the same stomachs but almost never on the same shelf.

⁷ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

⁸ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

⁹ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."



Source: Onumah et al.,¹⁰ Apike et al.,¹¹ Aboah et al.¹²

Laying the two side by side shows why they rarely meet, and why the local chain cannot simply copy

the imported one. They differ at every link.



¹⁰ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."
¹¹ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."
¹² Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems."

TABLE 2 The two broiler chains compared, link by link

	IMPORTED FROZEN (COLD CHAIN)	LOCAL FRESH (WARM CHAIN)
Where it starts	Foreign farms raising birds mainly for breast meat	Ghanaian farms, the production of Pillars 4 and 5
How it moves	Shipped frozen and held in cold stores; moved refrigerated	Sold live or freshly dressed; moved fast because little cold chain serves it
Who controls it	A concentrated group of importers and cold-store distributors	Fragmented producers and informal traders
Its cost edge	Leg quarters are a cheap by-product of the breast-meat trade	None; it carries the full cost of feed, chick and time
Where it wins	The frozen shelf, supermarkets and price-led home cooking	Fresh, live, festive and, now, institutional buyers
Its weakness	Depends on trade and the exchange rate; far from freshness	Little processing or cold chain to reach the modern shelf

Q WHAT THIS MEANS

The two chains explain why the market feels stuck. The imported chain wins the frozen commodity market on price, as Pillar 2 showed, while the local chain holds the fresh and live market on freshness and trust. Local chicken holds its own arena, and it is kept out of the frozen arena by cost and out of modern retail by thin processing and cold chain. Fix the second, and the local chain can finally reach the shelves the import now owns.

Who earns what: the value distribution

Follow the money along the local chain and a clear pattern appears. On the best Ghanaian evidence, producers add about 45 percent of the chain's value, about GH¢15.7 a bird at the survey's prices, when producers sold a bird for about GH¢22, and earn a return of about 89

percent.¹³ Producers also earned the largest net income in the study, about GH¢1,013 per 100 birds against GH¢955 for processors and GH¢764 for distributors, while carrying the disease and feed-cost risk.¹⁴ Processors add about 32 percent of the chain's value and

¹³ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

¹⁴ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

distributors about 23 percent, and earn lower returns of about 40 and 32 percent.¹⁵ Because processors and distributors are mostly small, the

study found they collude in informal cartels to raise their bargaining power, and distributors held the most bargaining power of any actor.¹⁶

Who earns what: the producer adds the most value and earns the highest return

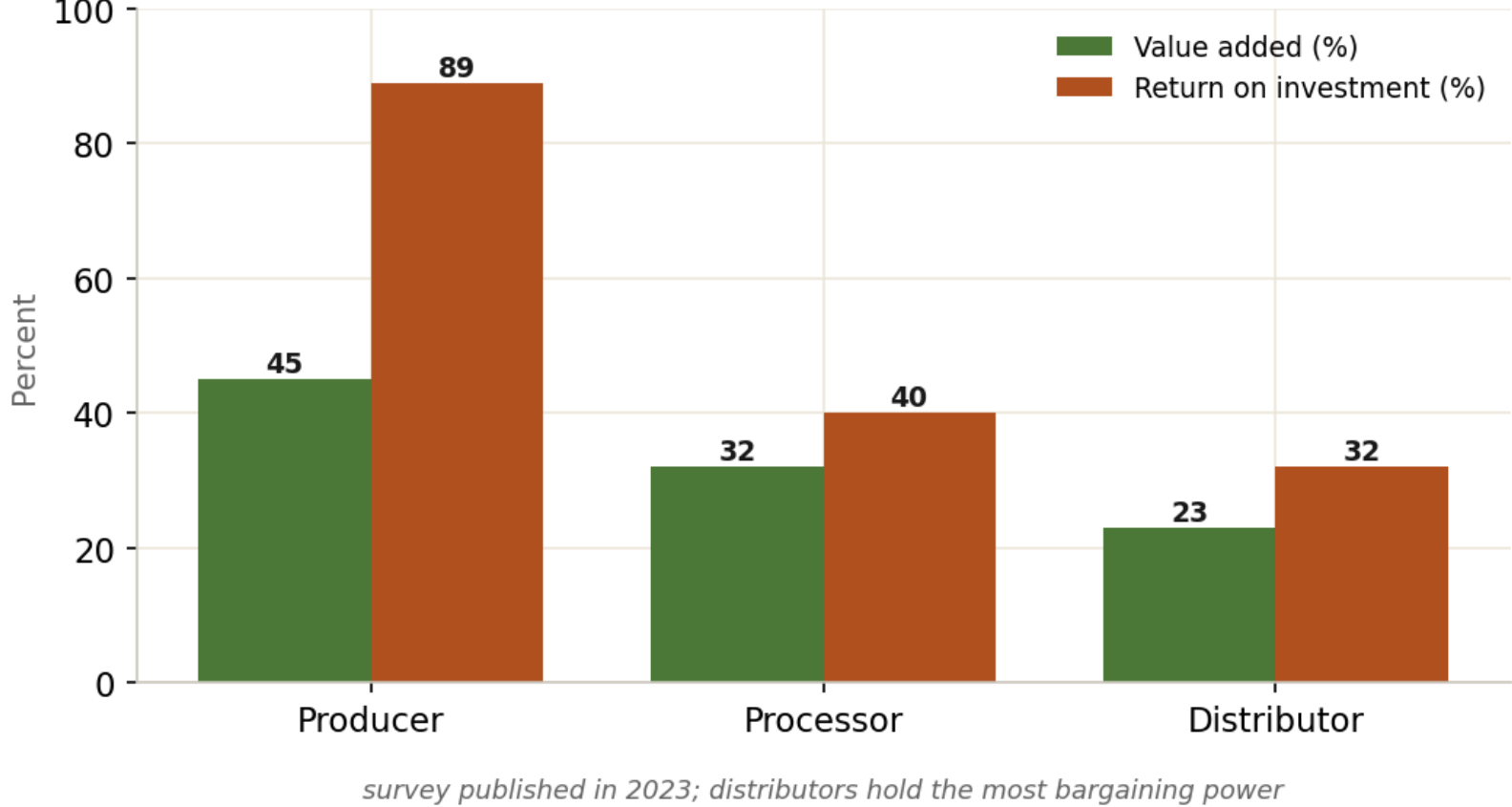


FIGURE 3 Who earns what along the local broiler chain: value added and return by actor

Source: Onumah et al.,¹⁷ survey of 180 producers, 65 distributors and 45 retailers in Greater Accra, Ashanti and Bono, with processor data from the same study; cedi values at survey prices.

Q WHAT THIS MEANS

The producer is what the study calls the chain's key governor, the actor everything depends on, while distributors hold the most bargaining power and processors the most protection from competition. The scarce capacity sits in processing: in the survey only about 10 percent of producers' birds went to processors. A newcomer with capital can take a position in processing and distribution, where capacity is short and bargaining power is concentrated.

¹⁵ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

¹⁶ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

¹⁷ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

⑤ The missing middle: processing and cold chain ⑤

Here is the broken link that matters most. Ghana can raise birds, but it struggles to slaughter, dress, chill and move them at scale. Processing and cold-storage capacity is still small against demand, though it grew in 2025 and 2026. Darko Farms, revived with a GH¢22 million Ghana EXIM Bank loan under One District One Factory, processes up to about 10,000 birds a day.¹⁸ Aglow Farms at Gomoa Potsin processes about

10,000 birds a shift and handled birds for the Nkoko Nkitinkiti programme from December 2025,¹⁹ and a poultry cold store, reported at 2,400 to 3,000 tonnes, opened at Kpone in February 2026 beside a processing complex under construction.²⁰ Where cold chain is missing, local birds cannot be stored, cut into standard parts or placed on a supermarket shelf, which is where the imported frozen chain wins.²¹

MARKET SIGNAL: THE MISSING MIDDLE IS THE OPENING

The missing middle is a high-value opening. The bottleneck sits after the farm: slaughter, dressing, chilling and distribution. Whoever builds affordable processing and cold chain also opens a market for the producers upstream by giving the local bird a route to the modern shelf. The mature bird with no home is a problem for the farmer and an opportunity for the person who solves it.

⑤ The import chain and the success-to-the-successful trap ⑤

The imported chain crowds out the local one, and the pattern is self-reinforcing. In a 2025 systems study, stakeholders mapped a loop in which cheap imports fill the supply gap, local producers exit, and the gap and imports grow again; the

authors call it a success-to-the-successful trap, in which importers prosper as the local industry weakens.²² The frozen-import trade is concentrated, with Gini coefficients of 0.55 to 0.70 for importers, wholesalers and retailers, and

¹⁸ Samuel Kwame Boadu, "Once Ghana's poultry titan, Darko Farms eyes comeback amid market pressures and state support," *Accra Street Journal*, 26 May 2025, <https://accrastreetjournal.com/2025/05/26/once-ghanas-poultry-titan-darko-farms-eyes-comeback-amid-market-p pressures-and-state-support/>.

¹⁹ Mamavi Sephakor Tay, "'Nkoko Nkitinkiti Project' processes 50,000 birds at Aglow Farms as Ghana targets 18 million goal," *MyJoyOnline*, 29 January 2026, <https://www.myjoyonline.com/nkoko-nkitinkiti-project-processes-50000-birds-at-aglow-farms-as-ghana-targets-80-million-goal/>; Julius Yao Petetsi, "Nkoko Nkitinkiti Initiative: Broiler processing project takes off, targets 18m birds this year," *Ghanaian Times*, 30 January 2026, <https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/nkoko-nkitinkiti-initiative-broiler-processing-project-takes-off-targets-18m-birds-this-year/>.

²⁰ Victor A. Buxton, "3,000 tonnes cold storage facility commissioned in Kpone," *Ghanaian Times*, 17 February 2026, <https://ghanaiantimes.com.gh/3000-tonnes-cold-storage-facility-commissioned-in-kpone/>; Benjamin Xornam Glover, "2,400-tonne cold storage facility for poultry inaugurated at Kpone," *Graphic Online*, 16 February 2026, <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ghana-news-2-400-tonne-cold-storage-facility-for-poultry-inaugurated-at-kpone.html>.

²¹ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."

²² Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems."

most frozen-chicken distributors would stock local chicken at the same price or up to 10 percent dearer, but only about a third would at 25 percent dearer.²³ A handful of well-capitalised

importers set the terms, while local supply stays fragmented across many small farms with little bargaining power against them.

Q WHAT THIS MEANS

The trap can be broken. One of its drivers is that the import chain has the processing and cold chain that the local chain lacks. The same missing middle that starves the local producer is what lets the import chain compound its lead. Break the processing and cold-chain bottleneck, and the self-reinforcing loop can be turned the other way, which is why every serious policy lever in Pillar 8 points at that link.

④ The four problems that hold the whole chain back ④

Stepping back from the individual links, stakeholders in a 2025 systems study of Ghana's poultry chain prioritised four problems that reinforce one another and keep the local chain

weak.²⁴ Naming them matters, because each is a place where a reform, or a business, can intervene, and because no single one can be fixed on its own.

TABLE 3 The four systemic problems in Ghana's poultry value chain, and where each can be broken

THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEM	WHAT IT DOES TO THE CHAIN	WHERE IT CAN BE BROKEN
Weak vaccine and research funding	Disease keeps circulating, raising loss and cost on every farm	Investment in animal health and diagnostics (see Pillar 3)
Low biosecurity	Repeated outbreaks and reinfection undermine even well-run farms	Affordable biosecurity kits, training and certification
Limited access to credit	Farms cannot fund the working capital a cycle ties up, so they stay small	Cycle financing and input-on-credit tied to a confirmed buyer
Import competition and input dependence	Cheap frozen imports cap the price, and imported chicks and feed raise cost, together starving the local chain of scale	Stronger border control and a higher tariff (proposed by stakeholders; the tariff on chicken meat is 35 percent), paired with local processing, hatching and feed

23 Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."

24 Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems."

Q WHAT THIS MEANS

The four problems are linked: disease and weak biosecurity raise cost, thin credit keeps farms small, and cheap imports cap the price, so no single fix is enough on its own. Reform has to reach the whole chain. The input, health, finance and processing gaps have to be closed together, which is exactly why the missing middle and local inputs are the leverage points.

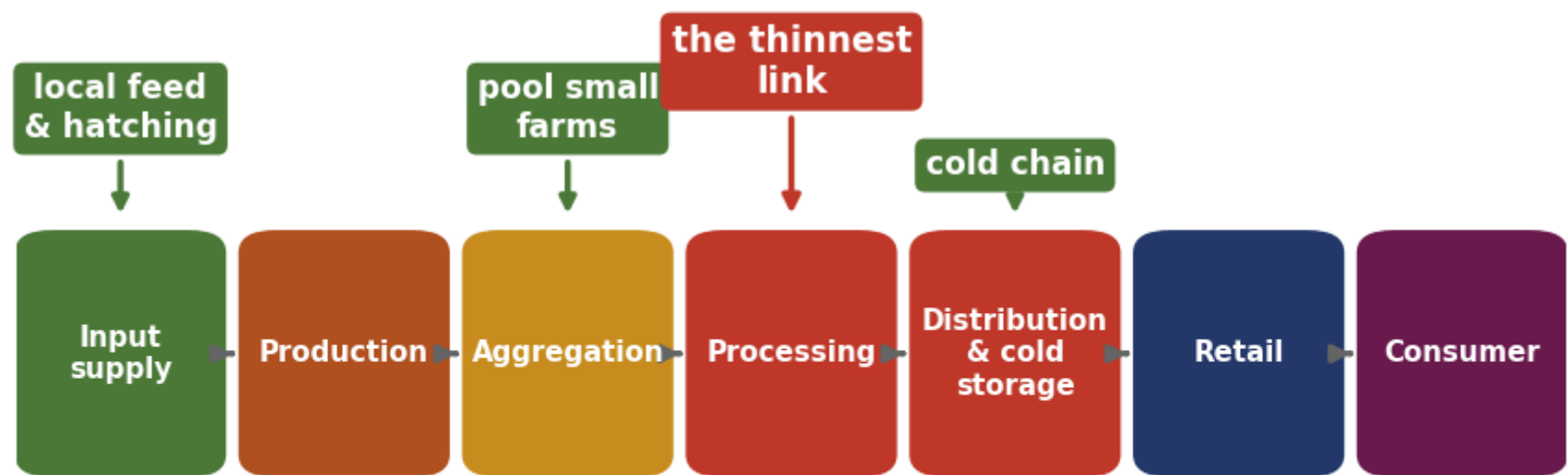
⑤ Where a newcomer fits ⑤

The value chain read as a map of openings tells a first-time entrant where to stand. The crowded, capital-heavy, high-risk node is production itself. The underserved, higher-leverage nodes are the ones around it: the input side (local hatching and

feed of Pillar 1), the missing middle (aggregation, processing and cold chain), and the fresh-retail end (branded local chicken of Pillar 2). The lesson of the chain is to enter where the need is greatest and the competition thinnest.



The value chain as a map of openings



the underserved links are where new businesses can stand

FIGURE 4 The broiler value chain as a map of openings

Source: Author synthesis from Onumah et al.,²⁵ Aboah et al.,²⁶ Apike et al.²⁷

OPPORTUNITY

Small-scale processing and slaughter: hygienic, certified dressing of local birds into standard cuts is the missing link, and it unlocks every producer who can then reach a modern buyer.

Cold chain and logistics: even modest chilled storage and refrigerated transport let local fresh chicken reach supermarkets, food service and institutions instead of only the farm-gate live market.

Aggregation and offtake: pooling smallholder birds to supply processors, schools and food service at volume, and buying inputs in bulk, attacks the small-scale penalty from both ends.

²⁵ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."
²⁶ Aboah et al., "Patterns of systemic problems."
²⁷ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."



Plate 4 Birds being dressed and packed in a small processing unit, the link between the farm and the modern shelf.



⑤ The risks that sit inside the value chain ⑤



No home for the mature bird

VERY HIGH

WHAT IT IS

With little processing capacity near most farms, a farmer with birds ready at market weight often has nowhere to sell them but the live farm-gate market, where the price is set by whoever turns up. Birds held waiting keep eating, so every day without a buyer eats the margin.

EVIDENCE

In a survey published in 2023, only about 10 percent of producers' birds went to processors,²⁸ and the larger plants, such as Darko Farms at up to about 10,000 birds a day and Aglow Farms at about 10,000 a shift, are few.²⁹

WHO IT HITS

Every producer without a confirmed buyer or nearby processor, worst for those far from the big markets.

HOW TO MANAGE IT, AND THE OPENING

Line up a processor or offtake buyer before placing birds, and time production to a confirmed order. The opening is the processing and aggregation service itself, the single biggest gap in the chain.



The cold-chain gap

HIGH

WHAT IT IS

Without chilled storage and transport, local fresh chicken cannot be standardised, stored or placed on a supermarket shelf, so it is locked out of the modern retail and institutional markets that the imported frozen chain serves by default.

EVIDENCE

The imported chain wins the frozen and supermarket shelf precisely because it has cold chain and the local chain has little, a gap that lets imports compound their lead.³⁰

WHO IT HITS

Local producers trying to reach modern retail, food service or institutional buyers.

HOW TO MANAGE IT, AND THE OPENING

Invest in even modest chilled storage and refrigerated transport, or partner with someone who has it. The opening is cold-chain logistics as a service to the whole local chain.



²⁸ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

²⁹ Boadu, "Once Ghana's poultry titan Darko"; Tay, "'Nkoko Nkitinkiti Project' processes 50000."

³⁰ Apike et al., "Structure of imported chicken market."



Undercapitalised entry at the wrong node

MEDIUM-HIGH

WHAT IT IS

A newcomer who puts scarce capital into another production unit, the most crowded node, carries the chain's disease and price risk, while the underserved processing, cold-chain and aggregation nodes go unbuilt.

EVIDENCE

Producers add the most value and earn the highest return, while distributors hold the most bargaining power and only about 10 percent of producers' birds reach processors.³¹

WHO IT HITS

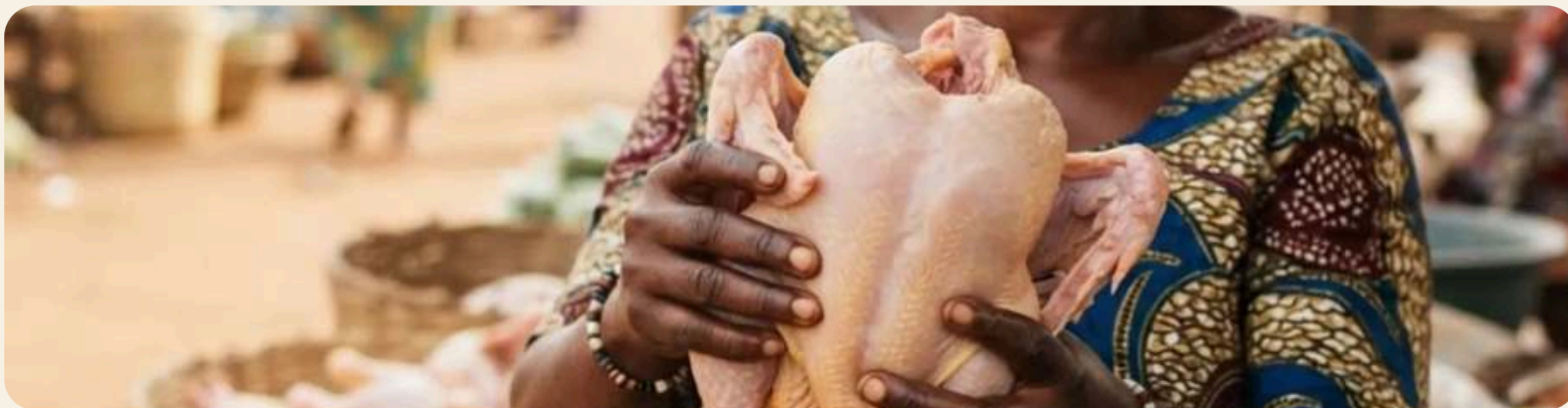
First-time entrants who assume 'poultry farming' means owning birds, and enter where competition is thickest.

HOW TO MANAGE IT, AND THE OPENING

Study the chain before choosing a node, and enter where the need is greatest and competition thinnest, usually the missing middle. The opening is precisely the node others are avoiding.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Ghana has two broiler chains: an imported frozen cold chain and a local fresh warm chain. They compete for the same consumers but almost never on the same shelf.
- Producers add the most value and earn the highest return, while distributors hold the most bargaining power and little of the output reaches processors.
- The missing middle, processing and cold chain, is the broken link that keeps local chicken off the modern shelf. It is a high-value opening.
- The import chain crowds out the local one in a self-reinforcing loop that runs on its cold-chain advantage. Breaking the processing bottleneck can turn that loop around.
- For a newcomer, the smart move is often to take a position in the underserved middle: processing, cold chain or aggregation.



³¹ Onumah et al., "Value Chain Analysis."

Practitioner intelligence

FOR STUDENTS

If you are looking for a way into this business, do not assume it means owning birds. Walk the chain and find the missing link near you: often it is a farmer with mature birds and no hygienic place to have them dressed and chilled. Start by aggregating birds and arranging processing and delivery to a fresh buyer, learning the chain before you tie up capital. The trap is entering at the most crowded, riskiest node, production, just because it is the most visible. What you gain is a view of where the real gaps are, and a service business that needs coordination more than capital.

FOR ENTREPRENEURS

First move: build or secure small-scale processing and cold storage, because the missing middle is where the leverage and the least competition sit. Line up producers upstream and fresh, institutional or food-service buyers downstream before you invest, so the capacity is full from day one. The trap that kills first-timers is adding another production unit to a crowded node while the processing and cold-chain gap that would unlock the whole chain goes unbuilt. Solve the mature-bird problem for many farmers and you own the scarcest position in the chain.

FOR INVESTORS

Diligence asks: where in the chain does this venture sit, and is that node underserved or crowded. Production is capital-heavy, crowded and risky; processing, cold chain and aggregation are scarce and hold pricing power. The thesis worth backing is the missing middle: certified processing and cold-chain logistics that give local birds a route to the modern shelf and break the import chain's compounding advantage. Underwrite the offtake and the throughput, and treat another undifferentiated broiler farm as the least attractive way into this sector.

FOR ECOSYSTEM ACTORS

The lever is the missing middle: public and blended finance for certified small-scale processing, cold-chain infrastructure and aggregation hubs, the link the market has failed to build on its own. Measure success as processing and cold-storage capacity created and the share of local birds reaching modern retail and institutions. The failure to avoid is financing yet more production while the processing and cold-chain bottleneck stays shut, which strands the extra birds and repeats the cycle that past programmes have run.



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