



## Ensuring balanced diet is one of key factors to successful organic and low-input poultry

PPILOW focus group discussions organized with supply side specialists in Finland, France, Italy, Romania and United Kingdom indicated several challenges which require specific attention in organic and low-input poultry farming.

One of the main challenges is to provide the birds with a balanced diet. The relative feed intake in organic production systems is often high in comparison to other systems.

Feeding has a substantial impact on the cost of production of organic poultry as organic feed is more expensive than conventional feed. Ensuring that essential amino acids and minerals are available in the diet is challenging in fully organic feed. New regulations which require feed to be 100% organic would prove to be problematical for producers to provide a balanced, high quality organic diet, and thus require careful planning of the diet and sourcing of appropriate feed materials.

Cannibalism and feather-pecking usually occur as a result of birds experiencing stress. A balanced diet is one of the main factors, although not the only factor, that helps to alleviate feather pecking.

The addition of amino acids could improve the balance of feed ration, but it is not allowed in organic production. Sodium chloride added to the drinking water can also have a calming effect on the birds.

It is also essential to ensure that there are enough feed and water access points for birds. Controlling these factors helps to prevent feather pecking.

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