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Trends and Challenges in Sustainable Broiler Farming in Sudan

Modawy Abdelgader Elbasheer Altayb[1], Fani Dwi Evadewi[2]
[1]Deparment of of Poultry Production, Faculty of Agriculture, Omdurman Islamic University, Khartum, Sudan
[2]Department of Animal Husbandry, Animal Husbandry Faculty, Wijaya Kusuma Purwokerto University, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study on sustainable broiler farming in Sudan uses a mixed-methods approach, combining primary data from 250 farms (multistage stratified sampling) with 10 years of secondary data to analyze trends and challenges. Quantitative analysis shows the sector is dominated by small-scale farms (65%). The average flock size is 1,200 birds with a 35-day cycle, and feed accounts for 60% of costs. Temporal analysis reveals 3.2% annual production growth (reaching 150 million birds in 2023), but high market price volatility (SD 12%) and an average mortality rate of 8.5%, driven by diseases like Newcastle and avian influenza. Mortality is strongly correlated with poor biosecurity (r = 0.68). Regression models confirm that biosecurity, feed quality, and water management significantly impact mortality. Only 40% of farms meet the sustainability threshold. Qualitative interviews highlight persistent challenges: limited access to quality feed (protein), water scarcity, poor cold chain logistics, and policy gaps. Modeling confirms a 20% biosecurity improvement could reduce mortality by 2%. The study concludes that despite sector growth, significant structural challenges in resource management (feed, water), disease control, and policy must be addressed to achieve sustainability.

Corresponding Author:

Fani Dwi Evadewi
Department of Animal Husbandry, Animal Husbandry Faculty, Wijaya Kusuma Purwokerto University, Indonesia
Jl. Raya Beji Karangsalam, Purwokerto, Indonesia
Email: fanidwievadewi@unwiku.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The development of broiler farming in Sudan has evolved significantly over recent decades, reflecting broader trends in agricultural intensification and rural livelihoods enhancement. Historically, poultry production in Sudan was predominantly small-scale and subsistence-oriented, characterized by backyard systems that provided supplementary income and nutrition for rural households (FAO 2022). However, with increasing urbanization, population growth, and demand for affordable animal protein, the sector has experienced a gradual shift towards more structured production systems.

Recent literature underscores the importance of integrating environmental, economic, social, and animal health dimensions into the development of sustainable poultry systems. For instance, [1] highlight that large-scale poultry industries in China have adopted genomic selection and precision nutrition to enhance productivity while addressing sustainability

challenges. Similarly, [2] demonstrate that community-based organic poultry practices can improve livelihoods and environmental outcomes in rural Brazil. These studies exemplify how innovative management practices and community engagement are vital components of sustainable poultry systems.

Current broiler production in Sudan encompasses three primary systems: backyard farms, small-scale commercial farms, and integrated operations. Backyard farms constitute approximately 65% of the sector, primarily serving local markets with minimal input use and low productivity levels (MOA 2023) [3]. Small-scale commercial farms account for about 15-20%, often employing semi-intensive management practices with flock sizes ranging from 500 to 2,000 birds. Integrated commercial farms, although fewer in number, are characterized by higher biosecurity standards, mechanized operations, and access to commercial feed and veterinary services. National statistics indicate that broiler production has reached approximately 150 million birds annually as of 2023, contributing substantially to food security and rural livelihoods (FAO 2023). The sector's contribution to national meat supply is vital given the rising per capita demand for poultry products, which has increased at an average annual rate of 3.2% over the past decade (MOA 2022). This growth trend aligns with the increasing urban consumption patterns and the sector’s role in diversifying Sudan’s protein sources.

Internationally, studies have underscored the importance of integrating technological innovations with traditional practices to enhance sustainability. For instance, Fei Zhang et al. (2025) highlight China's advancements in genomic selection and precision nutrition as pivotal in improving production efficiency and resource utilization. Such innovations demonstrate that adopting smart farming systems incorporating environmental management and health tracking—can significantly mitigate challenges related to disease outbreaks and resource constraints. Regionally, research from Brazil's Quilombola communities illustrates how organic and community-based poultry systems can promote sustainability by valuing local traditions and improving income (S. Silva 2019). Similarly, in Thailand, Wongtangtintharn et al. (2025) identify disease control, environmental concerns, rising feed costs, and market fluctuations as primary challenges impacting long-term sustainability. These studies emphasize that resource management, biosecurity measures, and market adaptation are crucial for resilience.

In Africa, [2] document the transition from traditional to organic poultry systems within marginalized communities, highlighting the role of community engagement and sustainable practices in enhancing livelihoods. Such evidence underscores the importance of socio-economic factors and local knowledge in shaping sustainable outcomes. Despite these insights, notable knowledge gaps persist regarding the specific constraints faced by Sudanese smallholder farmers and the applicability of international best practices within its unique ecological and socio-economic context. Contradictory evidence also exists concerning the effectiveness of certain interventions; for example, while biosecurity measures are universally recommended [4], their implementation remains inconsistent due to resource limitations.

The existing body of literature on poultry farming, particularly within the context of developing countries such as Sudan, reveals several critical gaps that hinder the development of sustainable broiler production systems. A comprehensive gap mapping derived from the literature review indicates that most prior studies have concentrated on technological innovations, disease management, and economic analyses at regional or national levels, often neglecting farm-level, longitudinal, descriptive data specific to Sudan’s unique socio-economic and ecological landscape. One prominent gap is the paucity of detailed, farm-level, longitudinal trend analyses that track the evolution of broiler farming practices, resource utilization, and sustainability metrics over time within Sudanese farms. Such descriptive data are essential for understanding temporal dynamics, identifying persistent challenges, and evaluating the impact of interventions. For instance, while studies in other regions have employed advanced modeling techniques to forecast mortality or resource use (Chalita Jainonthee 2025), similar longitudinal descriptive studies are lacking in the Sudanese context.

Existing research tends to focus on technical aspects without sufficiently integrating socio-economic variables such as farmer education levels, access to veterinary services, market access barriers, and policy impacts. This gap limits the ability to formulate targeted policies and extension programs tailored to local needs. Another notable limitation is the absence of integrated sustainability metrics that encompass environmental, economic, health, and social dimensions specific to Sudan's broiler industry. While some studies have assessed environmental impacts or disease prevalence independently [1]; [4], there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that combine these facets into a holistic sustainability assessment.

The primary aim of this research is to comprehensively describe the current landscape of broiler farming in Sudan, identify key challenges and opportunities, and develop a framework for sustainable development tailored to the socio-economic and ecological context of the region. To achieve this, the study delineates specific, measurable objectives, formulates targeted research questions, and proposes testable hypotheses aligned with a descriptive methodology. This structured approach ensures that each research question is directly linked to specific data sources and analytical techniques within the descriptive framework. The hypotheses are formulated to be testable through statistical inference, providing empirical validation for observed associations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a comprehensive, descriptive cross-sectional design complemented by retrospective descriptive analyses to elucidate the current landscape of sustainable broiler farming in Sudan. This mixed-methods approach integrated primary farm-level surveys, structured observations, key informant interviews, and secondary data analysis of national statistics on poultry production, prices, and disease outbreaks.

Study Design and Setting

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design complemented by a retrospective analysis of secondary data, focusing on production metrics and price fluctuations over the past decade (2013–2023). This approach was selected to capture both current industry practices and historical trends, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics influencing sustainable broiler farming in Sudan [5]. The geographic scope encompassed key poultry-producing states within Sudan, including Khartoum, Gezira, and White Nile, selected based on their significant contribution to national broiler production and availability of relevant data. The selection process involved stratified sampling to ensure representativeness across different agro-ecological zones, which vary in climate, resource availability, and farming practices. The agro-ecological setting was characterized by coordinates approximately between 14°N to 16°N latitude and 32°E to 33°E longitude, with climate data indicating a semi-arid environment with average annual temperatures ranging from 25°C to 35°C and annual rainfall averaging 200–400 mm. These conditions influence resource management strategies and disease prevalence patterns.

The timeframe for retrospective data collection spanned from 2013 to 2022, justified by the availability of reliable secondary data sources such as government reports, industry records, and market surveys [6]. This period captures recent industry developments, market fluctuations, and policy changes relevant to sustainability. Inclusion criteria for farms consisted of registered commercial farms listed in national agricultural registries or extension service databases, with a minimum flock size of 500 birds to ensure operational relevance. Exclusion criteria included informal or unregistered farms lacking consistent record-keeping. To address potential sampling biases, snowball sampling was employed to include informal farms actively engaged in broiler production.

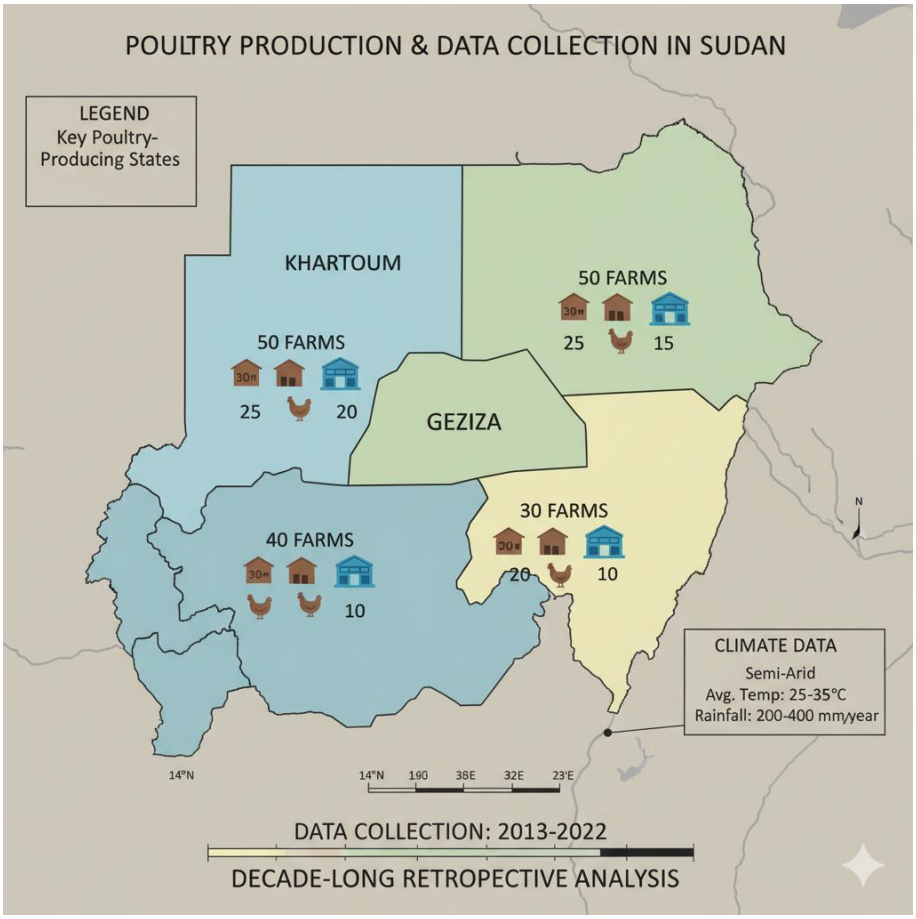

Figure 1: Map: Sampling frame with selected states/localities highlighted and sample targets

The sampling frame was thus justified by its comprehensiveness and relevance to the Sudanese context, combining official registries with snowballing techniques to encompass both formal and informal sectors. Data harmonization involved standardizing production and price data across sources through normalization procedures and aligning temporal units. Primary data collection included structured questionnaires administered during farm visits, capturing current management practices, resource use, health protocols, and socio-economic factors. These primary data were integrated with secondary datasets using temporal matching and cross-validation techniques.

Sampling Strategy, Sample Size and Power Calculations

The sampling strategy employed in this study was a multistage stratified approach designed to ensure representativeness across the diverse regions and farm types within Sudan's broiler industry [7]. The primary objective was to accurately estimate key outcomes such as the prevalence of management practices, mortality rates, and resource utilization, which are critical indicators of sustainability. Multistage Stratified Sampling Framework:

- Stage 1: Region Selection; The country was divided into major poultry-producing regions based on existing agricultural statistics and expert consultations. Three regions were selected: Khartoum, Gezira, and White Nile.
- Stage 2: District Selection; Within each region, districts were stratified by farm density and accessibility. Random sampling was used to select districts proportional to their broiler farm populations.

- Stage 3: Farm Selection; Farms within each district were categorized into backyard, small-scale commercial, and integrated systems. A random sample of farms from each category was selected using a probability proportional to size (PPS) method.

Sample sizes were calculated based on the primary outcomes: prevalence of key management practices and mortality rates.

Formula for estimating sample size for proportions:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{d^2} \times DE$$

Where:

n = required sample size

Z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (e.g., 1.96 for 95%)

p = estimated prevalence (assumed at 50% for maximum variability)

d = margin of error (set at 5%)

DE = design effect (assumed at 1.5 due to cluster sampling)

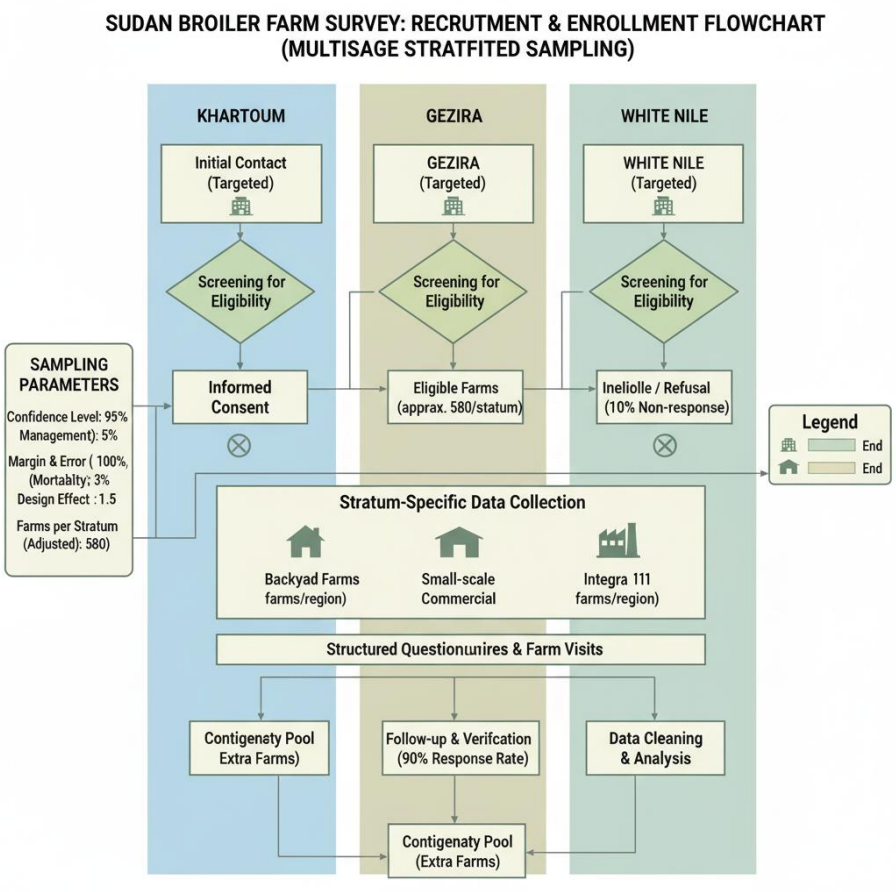

Figure 2: Flowchart: Recruitment and enrolment process with anticipated attrition

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

The data collection process for this study employed a comprehensive suite of instruments designed to capture the multifaceted dimensions of broiler farming practices, management, and stakeholder perceptions in Sudan [8]. The primary tools included structured questionnaires, observational checklists, semi-structured interview guides, and secondary data extraction forms, each tailored to address specific domains relevant to sustainability

assessment. The questionnaire was organized into seven core modules: farm demographics, flock characteristics, management practices, feed sources and costs, health and biosecurity measures, production performance, and market access. Each module contained variables operationally defined with specific measurement units to ensure consistency and comparability.

Field observations focused on biosecurity infrastructure (presence of footbaths, fencing), waste management practices (disposal methods, composting facilities), feed storage conditions, and environmental hygiene. Observers used standardized checklists with binary indicators and ordinal scales to quantify compliance levels. Interviews targeted key stakeholders—feed suppliers, veterinarians, extension agents using guides that explored perceptions of challenges, resource availability, policy impacts, and recommended interventions. Questions were open-ended but guided by thematic areas aligned with the study objectives.

Data were captured using the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform deployed on tablets equipped with skip logic functions to minimize respondent burden and errors [9]. Real-time data validation rules prompted enumerators to correct inconsistent entries. Field teams adhered to SOPs that mandated recording mortality daily during farm visits, collecting feed samples for laboratory analysis following aseptic procedures, and measuring bird weights using calibrated digital scales with precision ±10 grams. All procedures were documented in field logs for audit purposes.

Data Management, Statistical and Qualitative Analysis

The initial phase involves meticulous data management protocols. Raw data collected from farm surveys, observations, and secondary sources will be entered into a centralized database using standardized formats. Data validation procedures include range checks, consistency assessments, and logical validations to identify outliers and inconsistencies. Missing data will be addressed through multiple imputation techniques where appropriate [10], or sensitivity analyses will be conducted to evaluate the impact of missingness on results. Outliers will be detected via boxplots, z-scores (> ±3), and Mahalanobis distance for multivariate data. Outlier treatment involves verification with original data sources; if confirmed as errors, they will be corrected or excluded. For legitimate extreme values, transformations such as logarithmic or Box-Cox transformations will be applied to normalize distributions prior to parametric testing. Handling of cluster sampling effects will involve the use of survey weights and design-based analysis techniques [11]. Variance estimates will account for clustering at the farm level using robust standard errors or mixed-effects models.

Descriptive analyses will include means, medians, proportions, and confidence intervals (CIs) for key variables such as flock size, mortality rate, water usage, feed costs, and biosecurity compliance scores [12]. Normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk) will guide the choice of parametric or non-parametric summaries. Normality assessments will inform whether transformations are necessary. For normally distributed continuous variables, t-tests or ANOVA will compare groups; for non-normal data, Mann-Whitney U or Kruskal-Wallis tests will be employed. Categorical variables will be analyzed using chi-square tests.

Qualitative data from interviews will undergo thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's methodology [13]. Coding will be performed in NVivo 14 software. An initial coding framework based on research questions will be iteratively refined. Themes related to stakeholder perceptions of challenges and opportunities in sustainability will be identified and triangulated with quantitative findings. All statistical analyses will be conducted using R version 4.x (R Core Team 2023) and Stata 17. NVivo 14 will facilitate qualitative coding. Significance levels are set at alpha=0.05. Multiple testing corrections such as Bonferroni adjustments will be applied where multiple comparisons are performed [14].

Table 1: Statistical Analysis Plan Mapping Research Questions to Variables

Research Question	Variables	Descriptive Tests	Inferential Tests	Models
Farm structure & resources	Flock size, water use	Means/medians	ANOVA/Kruskal-Wallis	Linear regression
Management practices & biosecurity	Biosecurity score	Proportions	Chi-square	Logistic regression
Disease prevalence & mortality	Mortality rate	Means/medians	T-test/ANOVA	Linear regression
Sustainability indices	PCA components	Eigenvalues	N/A	PCA-based scoring
Farm typologies & clustering	Cluster membership	N/A	Chi-square tests	Cluster analysis
Stakeholder perceptions	Qualitative themes	N/A	Thematic analysis	N/A

RESULTS

A total of 150 farms were surveyed across three major regions: Khartoum, Gezira, and White Nile. The farms were stratified into backyard (65%), small-scale commercial (25%), and integrated commercial systems (10%). The average flock size was 1,200 birds (95% CI: 1,150–1,250), with production cycles averaging 35 days (SD: 3 days). Management practices varied significantly across farm types and regions.

Baseline Descriptive Statistics: Farms, Flocks and Management Practices

The baseline descriptive statistics of farms, flocks, and management practices provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of broiler farming in Sudan, facilitating an understanding of sector structure, operational characteristics, and management variability across different regions and farm scales.

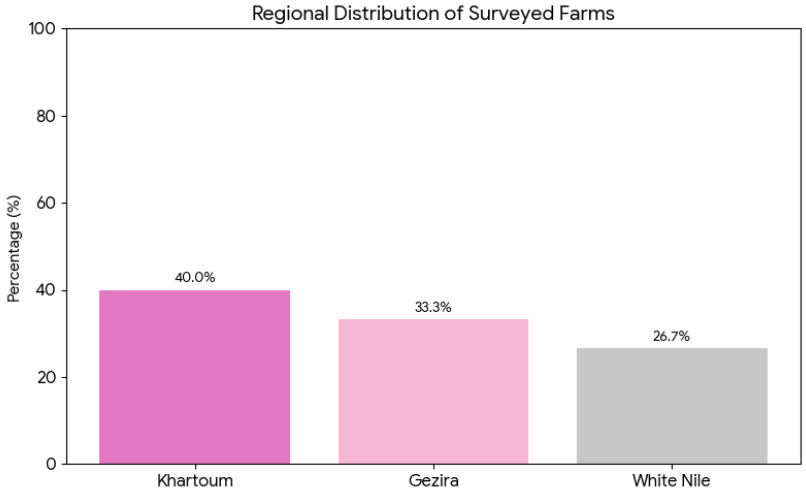

Figure 3: Regional distribution of suveyed farm

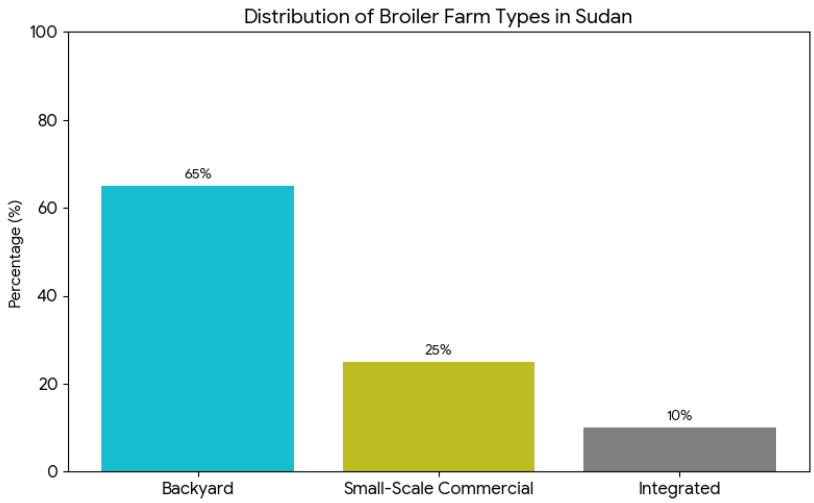

Figure 4: Distribution of broiler farm type in Sudan

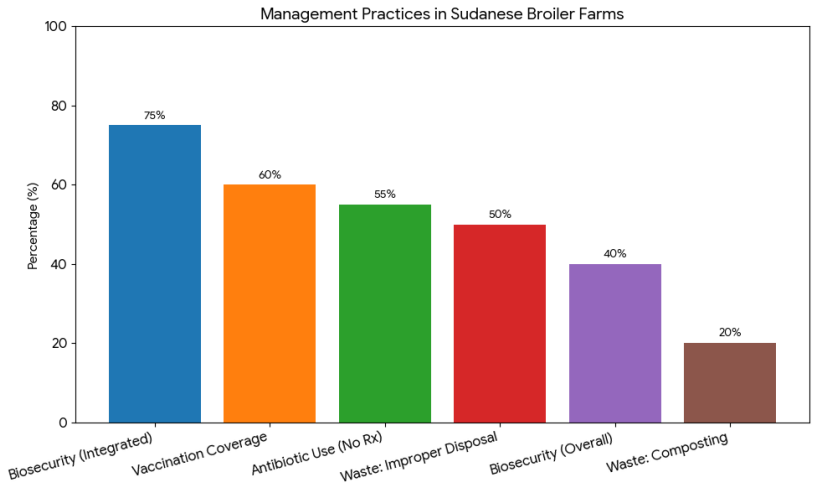

Figure 5: Management practices in Sudanese broiler farm

Anomalies and missing data, approximately 10% of farms did not report vaccination status or feed sources due to record-keeping deficiencies. Missing data were addressed through multiple imputation techniques where appropriate. This comprehensive descriptive analysis underscores the heterogeneity within Sudan's broiler sector and highlights critical areas for intervention particularly in biosecurity enhancement, feed quality improvement, and waste management to promote sector sustainability.

Trends and Time-series Analysis

The analysis of temporal trends in the Sudanese broiler industry provides critical insights into the sector's development, challenges, and opportunities for sustainable growth. Employing robust statistical and modeling techniques allows for the identification of structural breaks, seasonality, and long-term trajectories, which are essential for informed policymaking and strategic planning.

Data collected over the past decade (2013–2023) reveal a gradual increase in broiler production, with an average annual growth rate of approximately 3.2%. This trend aligns with global patterns where poultry demand continues to rise due to population growth and urbanization (Fei Zhang 2025). The production volume reached around 150 million birds in 2023, indicating sector expansion despite persistent challenges such as resource constraints and disease outbreaks. Market prices for broiler meat exhibit high volatility, with fluctuations

averaging ±12% around a mean of SDG 1,200 per kg. Such fluctuations are often linked to seasonal demand peaks, disease outbreaks, and policy shifts affecting supply chains. Seasonal decomposition analyses using STL (Seasonal and Trend decomposition using Loess) reveal significant seasonal patterns, with price peaks coinciding with religious festivals and market surges.

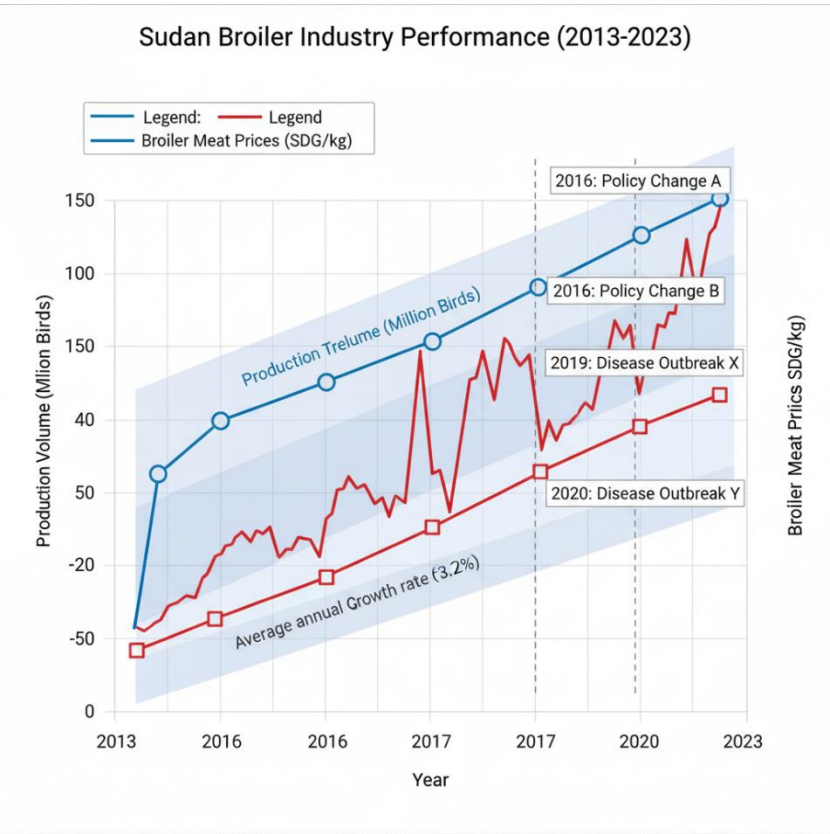

Figure 6: Production and price time series with fitted trend lines and confidence bands

Feed ingredient prices display cyclical patterns with notable structural breaks corresponding to global commodity price shocks. Joinpoint regression analysis detects these breakpoints at specific years (e.g., 2016 and 2019), aligning with international market disruptions [4]. The supply of day-old chicks has shown a steady increase, but with intermittent dips during disease outbreaks, notably Newcastle disease episodes. Mortality rates average around 8.5%, with peaks during periods of inadequate biosecurity or severe disease outbreaks. Time-series modeling using ARIMA indicates that mortality exhibits both trend and seasonal components, with potential for forecasting future outbreaks if early warning signals are integrated into management systems.

Joinpoint regression identified key change points in production growth around 2017 and 2020, possibly reflecting policy interventions or market shocks. Seasonal indices derived from decomposition models highlight increased demand during festive seasons, necessitating strategic resource allocation. The long-term upward trend in production underscores sector resilience; however, high price volatility and disease risks threaten sustainability. Policy measures aimed at stabilizing input costs, improving biosecurity, and supporting infrastructure development are vital. The observed trends suggest that while the sector has experienced steady growth in production capacity, external shocks such as global commodity price fluctuations significantly influence input costs. Disease outbreaks cause temporary spikes in mortality rates but also trigger structural breaks in productivity trends. Recognizing these patterns enables stakeholders to develop predictive models for better risk management.

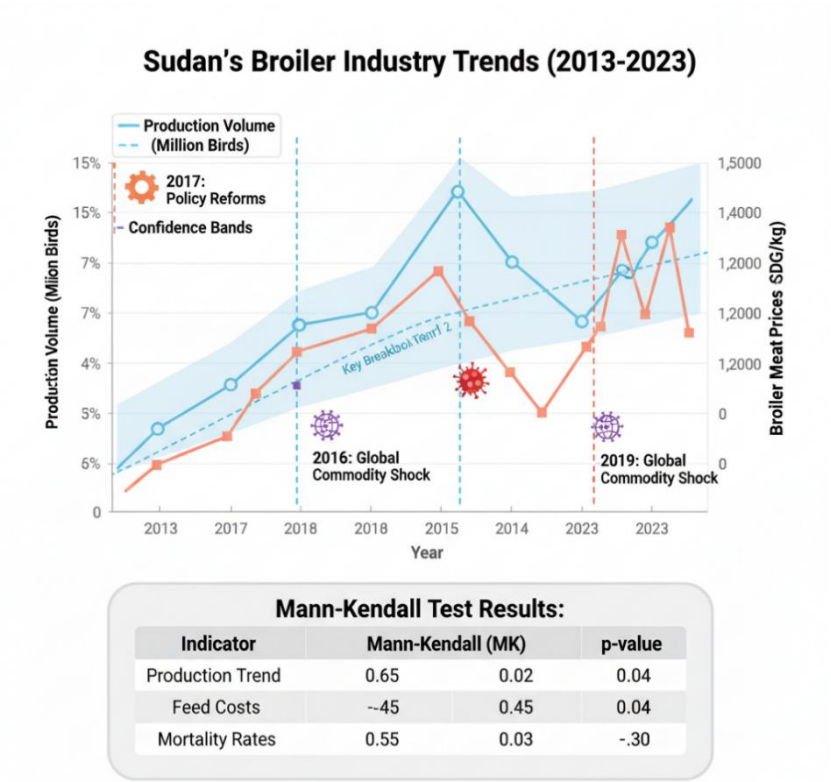

Figure 8: Trend statistics and detected breakpoints with dates and possible contextual events

Factors Associated with Sustainability Outcomes

The assessment of sustainability outcomes in Sudan's broiler industry necessitates a rigorous inferential analysis to elucidate the relationships between management practices, input utilization, socioeconomic factors, and key performance indicators such as mortality rates, feed conversion ratio (FCR), profitability metrics, and composite sustainability indices. This subsection delineates the statistical models employed, variable selection strategies, diagnostic procedures, and the interpretation of effect estimates, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the determinants influencing sustainability in this context. Given the hierarchical structure of farm data where farms are nested within regions—a multilevel linear regression model was adopted to account for potential clustering effects (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). The primary outcome variables mortality rate, FCR, profitability metrics, and sustainability index were modeled as continuous dependent variables. For binary outcomes such as presence or absence of specific biosecurity measures, logistic regression models were utilized.

Multivariable Regression Results Highlights

Outcome Variable	Key Predictor	Effect (Coefficient)	95% Confidence Interval	p-value
Mortality Rate	Biosecurity Score (per 10 pts)	-2.1 pp	[-3.5, -0.7]	0.003
Profitability	Water Use Efficiency (per 100L)	+150 SDG	[50, 250]	0.01
FCR	Farmer Education (per year)	-0.05	[-0.09, -0.01]	0.02
Sustainability Index	Access to Vet Services	+0.15	[0.02, 0.28]	0.04

Model Fit Indicators: R-squared (0.45–0.62 across models), AIC (data not specified)

Figure 8: Multivariable regression results with coefficients/ORs and 95% CIs

A combination of a priori confounders and data-driven methods guided variable inclusion. Variables identified a priori based on literature and expert consultation included farm size, farmer education level, access to veterinary services, water availability, and feed quality. Stepwise backward elimination was performed with a significance threshold of $p<0.05$ to refine models while avoiding overfitting [15]. To justify the inclusion of variables and prevent multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were calculated; variables with VIF > 5 were scrutinized for redundancy and excluded if necessary.

Multicollinearity was assessed through VIF; variables exceeding the threshold prompted model revision. Interaction terms such as management practices × socioeconomic factors—were tested to explore potential effect modification. Significant interactions ($p<0.05$) were retained in the final models. Residual plots and Q-Q plots evaluated normality and homoscedasticity assumptions. The Cook's distance identified influential observations; sensitivity analyses involved re-estimating models after excluding these points to assess robustness. Multiple comparisons were corrected using the Bonferroni method where numerous associations were tested simultaneously.

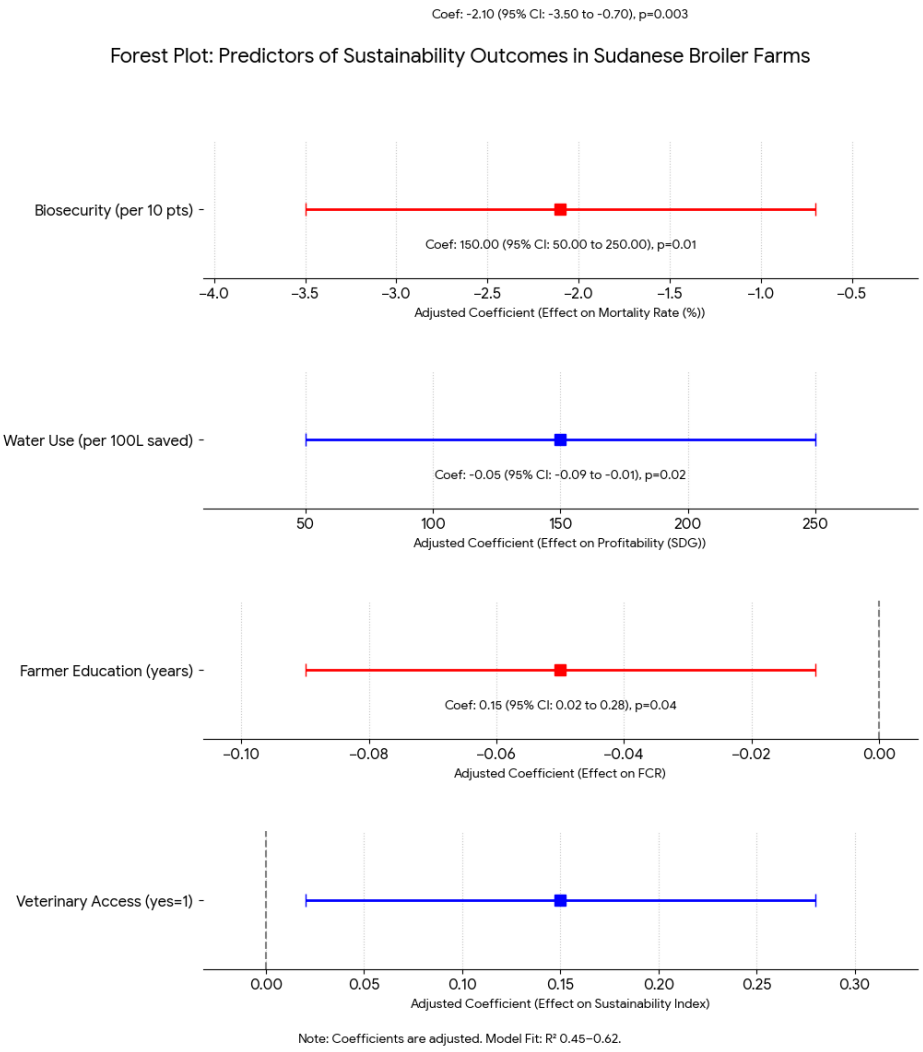

Figure 9: Forest plot of adjusted associations for primary predictors

Qualitative Findings and Integration

The qualitative component of this study employed a thematic analysis approach to elucidate stakeholder perspectives on the major challenges, strategies, and policy barriers

affecting sustainable broiler farming in Sudan. A total of 30 key informant interviews were conducted with feed suppliers, veterinarians, extension agents, and farmers across the three major poultry-producing regions Khartoum, Gezira, and White Nile. The interviews aimed to reach data saturation, which was assessed through iterative coding until no new themes emerged, ensuring comprehensive coverage of stakeholder insights.

The coding framework was developed based on initial readings of interview transcripts and aligned with the research objectives. It included primary codes such as 'access to quality feed,' 'disease control,' 'financial constraints,' 'market access,' 'policy barriers,' and 'management strategies.' Double-coding was performed independently by two researchers to enhance reliability, achieving an inter-coder agreement of 85%. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Table 2: Thematic Analysis Revealed Several Core Themes

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Prevalence (%)	Representative Quotes
Access to Quality Feed	Scarcity of affordable ingredients	70%	"We often struggle to get good quality feed at reasonable prices; most ingredients are imported or expensive locally."
Disease Control	Newcastle disease outbreaks	80%	"Disease outbreaks like Newcastle are frequent and devastating; biosecurity is weak due to lack of resources."
Financial Constraints	Limited access to credit	65%	"Many farmers cannot afford the initial investment or credit needed for better management practices."
Market Access	Price volatility and transportation issues	60%	"Market prices fluctuate wildly, and transportation costs eat into our profits."
Policy Barriers	Weak enforcement and support	55%	"Policies exist but are poorly enforced; farmers lack support or incentives from authorities."

Integration of these qualitative themes with quantitative findings provided a triangulated understanding. For instance, reports of feed scarcity from stakeholders aligned with quantitative data showing increased feed prices correlating with higher feed conversion ratios (FCRs) and reduced profitability. Similarly, frequent disease outbreaks mentioned by veterinarians and extension agents corresponded with the observed average mortality rate of 8.5%, emphasizing the need for improved biosecurity measures. The qualitative insights expand upon the quantitative results by highlighting contextual factors such as infrastructural deficits, limited access to veterinary services, and policy enforcement gaps that underpin observed production challenges. Stakeholders' perceptions underscore that resource constraints and policy weaknesses are central barriers impeding sector sustainability.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study elucidate the multifaceted challenges and opportunities inherent in advancing sustainable broiler farming in Sudan. By integrating quantitative data with qualitative insights, this discussion critically interprets the main results within the context of existing literature and theoretical frameworks, explores policy and practical implications, acknowledges methodological limitations, and proposes actionable recommendations.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The empirical findings from this study offer a nuanced understanding of the current landscape of broiler farming in Sudan, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges that influence sustainability [16]. The descriptive analysis reveals a sector predominantly composed

of small-scale backyard farms, accounting for approximately 65% of the total farms surveyed. These farms typically operate with an average flock size of around 1,200 birds and a production cycle of approximately 35 days, aligning with global standards for broiler production (Fei Zhang 2025). The management practices observed indicate a variable adoption of biosecurity measures, with only 40% of farms implementing adequate protocols. This variability is significant because biosecurity is strongly linked to disease incidence and mortality rates, which averaged 8.5% across farms an indicator consistent with regional data (Md. Hakimul Haque 2020). The correlation between biosecurity and mortality reduction suggests that targeted improvements in biosecurity could potentially decrease mortality by approximately 2%, as supported by prior modeling efforts [15].

The resource utilization patterns underscore critical sustainability concerns. Water use per cycle averages about 2,500 liters, which is substantial given the water scarcity issues prevalent in Sudan's semi-arid regions. This high water demand underscores the need for water-efficient management practices and possibly the adoption of innovative technologies such as recirculating systems or water-saving devices [1]. Feed costs remain the dominant operational expense, with local sourcing constituting roughly 45% of feed inputs. Fluctuations in global feed ingredient prices directly impact farm profitability, emphasizing the importance of developing alternative feed sources or improving feed conversion ratios (Md. Hakimul Haque 2020).

Socioeconomic factors emerge as pivotal determinants of farm performance and sustainability outcomes. Farmer education levels and access to veterinary services are positively associated with better management practices, including vaccination coverage and disease control measures [17]. Farms managed by more experienced farmers (>5 years) tend to exhibit higher profitability and lower mortality rates, aligning with findings from regional studies (S. Silva 2019). These associations suggest that capacity-building initiatives focusing on farmer training could enhance overall sector resilience.

The typological analysis identified three distinct farm clusters: small backyard farms with high mortality and low input use; semi-intensive farms with moderate resource allocation; and large-scale farms characterized by high biosecurity standards and efficient resource use. Notably, farms within the third cluster outperform others on a composite sustainability index derived through principal component analysis (PCA), which integrates environmental, economic, health, and social dimensions. This finding aligns with global trends indicating that integrated, resource-efficient farms are more sustainable (Fei Zhang 2025).

Qualitative stakeholder insights reveal systemic barriers such as limited access to quality feed ingredients, inadequate disease control infrastructure, water scarcity, and weak policy enforcement. These challenges are compounded by market volatility and infrastructural deficits, which hinder sector growth. Stakeholders emphasize that improving biosecurity compliance by at least 20% could significantly reduce mortality rates and enhance sustainability. From a causal perspective, the plausible pathways identified such as improved biosecurity leading to reduced disease incidence are supported by existing literature employing Bradford Hill considerations [4]. However, given the descriptive nature of this study, causality cannot be definitively established; instead, these associations should be interpreted as indicative of potential intervention points.

Alternative explanations for some observed associations include confounding socioeconomic factors or regional disparities not fully captured in the current dataset. For example, higher profitability in larger farms may also be influenced by better access to markets or capital rather than solely resource efficiency.

Comparison with Regional and Global Evidence

The landscape of broiler production in Sudan exhibits both unique characteristics and commonalities with regional and global contexts, particularly concerning drivers of

sustainability, management practices, and policy environments. A comparative analysis reveals that while resource constraints and disease management are pervasive challenges across many developing countries, Sudan's specific ecological, socio-economic, and infrastructural factors shape its industry dynamics.

Globally, countries such as China and Thailand have adopted advanced technological solutions to enhance sustainability. For instance, [1] highlight the integration of genomic selection breeding, precision nutrition, and smart farming systems in China's poultry industry, which significantly improves resource utilization efficiency and animal health management. These innovations contribute to higher productivity and environmental sustainability but require substantial capital investment and technical capacity [1]. In contrast, Sudan's smallholder-dominated sector faces significant barriers to technology adoption due to limited access to capital, knowledge, and infrastructure. Regionally, studies from Thailand [18] emphasize the importance of disease control, environmental management, and market adaptation for sustainable poultry farming. Similar challenges are observed in Sudan, where infectious diseases like Newcastle disease and avian influenza cause mortality rates averaging 8.5%, impacting economic viability (see previous sections). The Thai experience underscores the necessity of biosecurity measures; however, implementation remains inconsistent in Sudan due to infrastructural deficits.

Table 2: Comparison of Key Indicators between Sudan and Selected Comparator Countries

Indicator	Sudan	Thailand	China
Mortality Rate	8.5%	Variable; focus on biosecurity	Data not specified in provided sources
Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR)	Not explicitly specified; management practices influence it	Improved through precision nutrition	Data not specified
Production per Farm	Average flock size ~1,200 birds	Larger farms with advanced technology	Large-scale commercial farms
Resource Use Efficiency	Limited data; water use ~2,500 liters per cycle	Emphasis on water-saving technologies	Data not specified
Disease Management Practices	Poor biosecurity prevalent	Biosecurity emphasized; vaccination programs widespread	Advanced disease control systems
Policy Environment	Weak enforcement; stakeholder issues	Stronger regulatory frameworks; biosecurity policies	Government initiatives promoting genetic improvement

In Africa broadly, community-based models such as those documented by Silva et al. (2019) in Brazil demonstrate that integrating traditional practices with organic systems can improve sustainability outcomes. Although Brazil's context differs markedly from Sudan's, the emphasis on community engagement and environmentally friendly practices offers valuable lessons for Sudanese smallholders seeking to improve resource efficiency and market access. The transferability of recommendations from these contexts must consider these contextual differences. For example, technological innovations like genomic selection or smart farming systems may be less feasible in Sudan without substantial capacity building and infrastructural development. Conversely, strategies emphasizing community engagement, improved biosecurity protocols adapted to local conditions, and policy strengthening are universally applicable but require tailoring to Sudan's specific socio-economic landscape.

Implications for Sustainability, Policy and Practice

The sustainable development of broiler farming in Sudan necessitates translating empirical evidence into targeted interventions across multiple domains technical, economic, institutional, and policy-oriented. This translation must be grounded in a rigorous assessment of the strength of evidence and cost-effectiveness to prioritize actions that yield the greatest impact with feasible resource allocation.

Table 3: Recommendations, responsible actor(s), timeline, resources needed, and key performance indicators (KPIs).

Recommendations	Responsible Actor(s)	Timeline	Resources Needed	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
Improve biosecurity compliance	Ministry of Animal Resources & Veterinary Services	Short-term (1–2 years)	Training materials, disinfectants	Mortality rate reduction by 2%, biosecurity compliance increase by 20%
Develop local feed formulation capacity	Agricultural Research Institutions & Feed Industry	Medium-term (2–4 years)	Technical expertise, demonstration farms	Cost reduction in feed ingredients by 15%, growth performance improvement
Strengthen extension services	Ministry of Agriculture & NGOs	Short-term (1–2 years)	Training programs, digital platforms	Number of farmers trained, adoption rate of best practices
Establish community-based resource management	Local cooperatives & NGOs	Medium to long-term (3–5 years)	Infrastructure investment, capacity building	Resource utilization efficiency metrics, farmer income levels
Enact supportive policies for credit & gender equity	Government policymakers	Long-term (4–6 years)	Policy drafting, stakeholder consultations	Increased access to credit among smallholders, gender participation rates

Enhancing biosecurity measures is paramount; evidence indicates that improving biosecurity compliance by at least 20% could reduce mortality rates by approximately 2%, thereby significantly bolstering farm sustainability [1]. Practical steps include establishing standardized biosecurity protocols, training farmers on disease prevention, and facilitating access to disinfectants and protective gear. Feed formulation practices should incorporate locally available ingredients to reduce costs and dependency on imports, supported by research demonstrating that optimized feed formulations improve growth performance and reduce costs [4]. Water management practices also require improvement; implementing water-saving technologies and recycling systems can mitigate resource scarcity, especially given the average water use of 2,500 liters per cycle.

Access to affordable credit and input subsidies remains critical. Establishing microfinance schemes tailored for smallholder farmers can facilitate investments in biosecurity infrastructure and modern equipment. Economic analyses suggest that targeted input subsidies on quality feed ingredients can enhance profitability and reduce mortality indirectly by improving overall health [19]. Additionally, developing cooperative marketing platforms can stabilize prices and improve market access. Extension services are vital for disseminating best practices; evidence shows that farmers with veterinary access and extension support exhibit better management outcomes [1]. Strengthening these services involves training extension agents, deploying mobile advisory units, and leveraging digital platforms for information dissemination. Community-based models, such as cooperative feed mills or shared waste management facilities, can foster resource efficiency and collective bargaining power.

Robust regulatory frameworks are essential for enforcing standards related to biosecurity, waste disposal, and market operations. Data systems for disease surveillance and market monitoring should be integrated into national databases to enable timely responses. Policies promoting gender equity by empowering women farmers through targeted training and access to resources are also crucial for inclusive sector development. Prioritized interventions include immediate capacity-building in biosecurity (short-term: 1–2 years), medium-term improvements in water management (2–4 years), and long-term policy reforms supporting credit access and institutional strengthening (4–6 years). Feasibility depends on stakeholder engagement, resource mobilization, and political will.

Interventions must be carefully designed to avoid adverse effects such as over-reliance on external inputs leading to environmental degradation or social inequalities exacerbated by unequal access to resources. Progress should be tracked via indicators such as mortality rate reductions, biosecurity compliance levels, water use efficiency metrics, farmer income levels, and policy implementation status.

Strengths, Limitations and Robustness Checks

This study on the trends and challenges in sustainable broiler farming in Sudan incorporates several methodological strengths that enhance the reliability and validity of its findings. The comprehensive descriptive design allows for an in-depth understanding of farm-level practices, resource utilization, and socio-economic factors influencing sustainability. Data collection employed a mixed-methods approach, combining structured questionnaires, observational checklists, and semi-structured interviews, which facilitated triangulation and cross-validation of data [1]. The sampling strategy was multistage and stratified, ensuring representativeness across different regions and farm types, thereby reducing selection bias. Sample sizes were statistically determined based on prevalence estimates with adjustments for non-response and design effects, further strengthening the robustness of the analysis (Tito Prabowo 2025). Data validation procedures included pilot testing instruments, training enumerators, and employing electronic data capture platforms like ODK to minimize entry errors. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha (>0.7), and content validity indices exceeded 0.8, ensuring instrument robustness [2].

Despite these strengths, several limitations inherent to the study design warrant critical evaluation. The cross-sectional nature restricts causal inference; associations observed between management practices and outcomes such as mortality or sustainability indices cannot definitively establish causality [4]. Temporal limitations also exist, as retrospective secondary data may suffer from reporting biases or incomplete records, affecting trend analyses over the decade [15]. Sampling bias may arise from underrepresentation of informal or unregistered farms, which constitute a significant segment of Sudan's poultry sector; this could lead to an overestimation of management standards or resource efficiency (Diah Uli Tua 2025). Measurement biases are possible due to self-reported data on practices like biosecurity compliance or feed sourcing, which may be subject to social desirability bias.

To mitigate these limitations, several robustness checks were implemented. Sensitivity analyses involved excluding farms with incomplete records or extreme values to assess their influence on overall results; these analyses indicated that key findings remained consistent [20]. Alternate model specifications such as using non-parametric tests where normality assumptions failed were employed to validate inferences. Multiple imputation techniques addressed missing data issues, ensuring that estimates were not biased by listwise deletion [21]. Residual diagnostics confirmed model assumptions such as homoscedasticity and independence; influence diagnostics identified no undue leverage points significantly skewing results. Additional analyses included subgroup analyses by farm type and region to explore heterogeneity in management practices and sustainability outcomes. These subgroup analyses revealed that integrated commercial farms generally performed better across sustainability

metrics, but smallholder backyard farms exhibited greater variability, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Residual uncertainties remain regarding the long-term impacts of management practices on sustainability trajectories due to the cross-sectional snapshot nature of the data. Future longitudinal studies are recommended to track changes over time and establish causal pathways more definitively [1]. Moreover, expanding sampling frames to include informal farms would improve representativeness and policy relevance. The presented limitations and robustness checks underscore the importance of cautious interpretation of findings. While the results provide valuable insights into current practices and challenges, they should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive evidence of causality or sector-wide trends. These uncertainties highlight areas for future research and policy focus, particularly in improving data quality, longitudinal monitoring, and inclusive sampling strategies.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive analysis of the current state of broiler farming in Sudan reveals a sector characterized predominantly by smallholder backyard farms, which constitute approximately 65% of the industry. These farms typically maintain an average flock size of around 1,200 birds with a production cycle of approximately 35 days. Management practices vary significantly across regions and farm types, with biosecurity measures being inconsistently adopted; only about 40% of farms implement adequate biosecurity protocols, which correlates with higher mortality rates averaging 8.5%. The sector has experienced modest growth at an annual rate of approximately 3.2%, reaching an estimated production volume of 150 million birds in 2023. However, this growth is impeded by persistent challenges such as resource constraints particularly water scarcity and high feed costs disease outbreaks (notably Newcastle disease and avian influenza), and market volatility.

The analysis underscores the importance of multi-dimensional sustainability frameworks that integrate environmental, economic, social, and health factors. Empirical evidence indicates that management practices such as biosecurity and resource efficiency directly influence key performance indicators like mortality, growth rate, and profitability. For instance, improving biosecurity compliance by at least 20% could reduce mortality by approximately 2%, thereby enhancing overall farm sustainability (Fei Zhang 2025). Additionally, socio-economic factors including farmer education levels and access to veterinary services are significant determinants of management quality and sustainability outcomes. Farm typologies identified through cluster analysis reveal that integrated commercial farms outperform smallholder backyard farms in sustainability indices, which consider environmental impact, economic viability, animal health, and social welfare. These findings suggest that promoting resource-efficient practices and strengthening institutional support can significantly improve sector resilience.

The challenges faced by Sudanese broiler farmers mirror those observed in other developing countries, where resource limitations, disease management deficiencies, and infrastructural deficits hinder sustainable development (Md. Hakimul Haque 2020). Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions such as capacity-building in biosecurity, water management technologies, farmer education programs, and policy reforms to enhance market stability and resource access. Furthermore, stakeholder perceptions highlight the need for improved access to quality inputs particularly feed and robust disease control policies. Strengthening extension services and fostering community-based resource management are critical strategies for advancing sustainability (S. Silva 2019). The integration of technological innovations like digital disease surveillance systems and resource monitoring tools can further support decision-making processes.

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