

to be the most practical means of producing broilers on a commercial scale. As a result of this system, only a few companies, each with its own feed mill, hatchery, processing plant and contract growers, are involved in Georgia's broiler production.

Up until vertical integration, poultry production had been a gamble. At times markets fluctuated greatly and some growers went out of business because of poor demand and low prices. Vertical integration assured growers of steady and dependable income. Thus, an interdependence developed between the growers and those who supplied the various inputs.

Broiler producers also benefitted from the economy of scale. In the 1940's, most farmers produced 5,000 or fewer broilers at a time. But by the 1960's, operations of 100,000 or 200,000 were common.

Strong consumer demand was responsible for this increase in poultry production and sales. The stronger demand was due, at least in part, to more aggressive marketing and promotional efforts by various poultry organizations throughout the state. In addition, processing and freezing techniques made chicken more convenient and less expensive than other meats.

Southern poultry producers had a definite advantage over other producers because of their gains in efficiency, due largely to the work of poultry scientists in nutrition, health and breeding. Research resulted in faster growing birds with higher meat quality, and a reduction in labor costs associated with automatic watering, feeding, and other tasks. For example, since 1940, there has been a steady

decline in the amount of feed required to produce a pound of chicken. Labor requirements for broiler production also were reduced due to faster gains, mechanized facilities and improved housing. Because of these improvements, the trend has been to fewer and larger poultry farms.

As in other areas of agriculture, Georgia's commitment to improvement has provided a profitable enterprise for producers and an affordable, nutritious product for consumers.

