

Poultry farming livelihood strategies and their relevance for zoonotic disease management in Northern Viet Nam



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Introduction

This study explores the intersection between local livelihoods and global zoonotic disease concerns in Viet Nam, to explain how and why actors engaged in the rearing of poultry can impact upon disease risk.

Objective

To understand how far farmers can make a living while at the same time make investments into biosecurity

Research questions

- How do actors in Viet Nam's poultry PDNs obtain finance and conduct transactions with others in production, trade, processing, or retail?
- What are the conditions in which different types of farmers work and what are the roles of other actors they engage with in this?
- To what extent, and how, does the type of farm and poultry production and its finance system correlate with specific relations and practices?

A potted history of Viet Nam's poultry sector

Pre-1970s: government prioritized rice production to feed a hungry nation, with little ambition for engagement with an international market.

1986: committed to extensive reforms that shifted the country towards a market-oriented economy.

1988: opened the doors to foreign investment

1990s: rising incomes and more lenient land use regulations and tenures allowed for simultaneous growth in livestock production and meat consumption.

Now: small-scale poultry farming (usually <100 birds) is still practiced by more than seven million Vietnamese households, while the commercial sector produces over one million tons of poultry meat per year.



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Methods

- This study took place between June 2021 and February 2023 and applied qualitative social science methods and ethnographic techniques
- Research consisted of two phases conducted in three provinces of Northern Viet Nam: Hanoi capital, Bac Giang and Hai Duong
- 80 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a range of actors

Limitations and adaptations

- **Mix of interviewers** –With a variety of researchers undertaking fieldwork with participants it was hard to build consistently upon information gained in previous interviews, limiting adaptability to new findings.
- **COVID-19** – Local and international travel restrictions and fear of infection limited field access and necessitated a narrowing of scope of work.

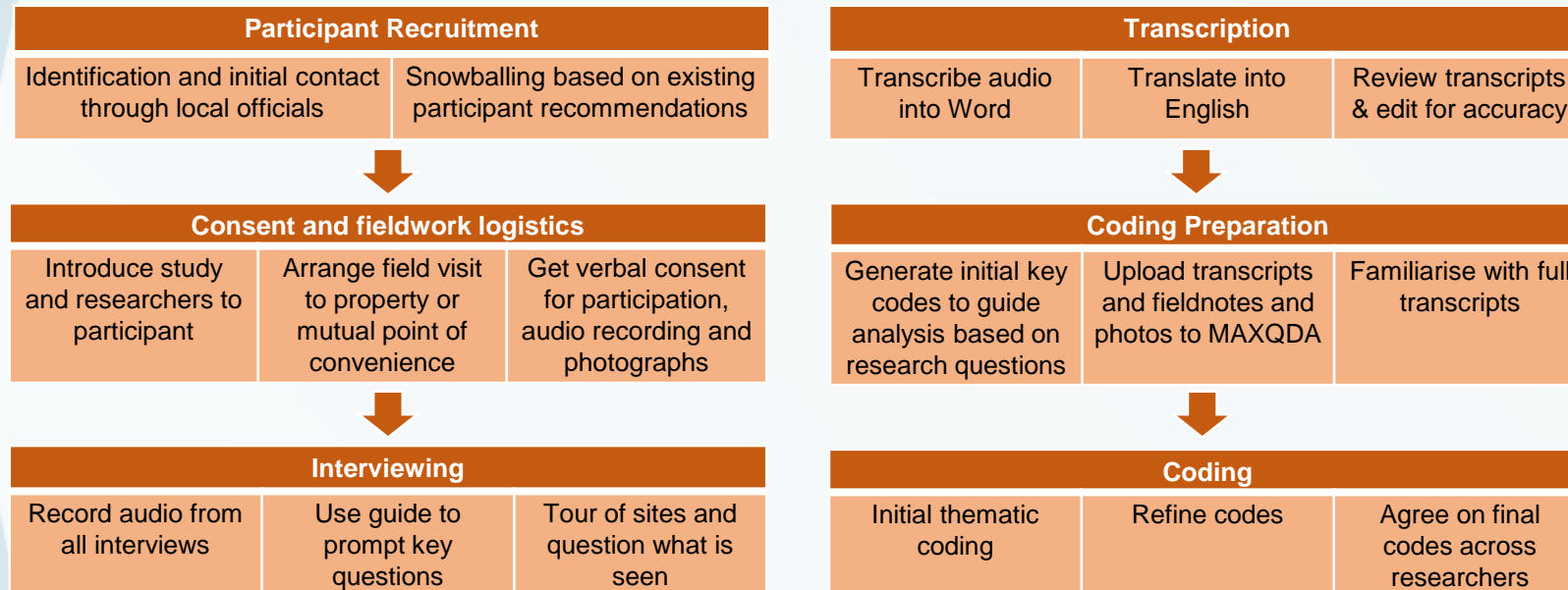


Figure 2: Qualitative data analysis process

Actor	Number
Farmers	30
Brokers	10
Traders	12
Feed dealers	11
Drug dealers	6
Slaughterhouse workers	3
Incubator managers	2
Feed company agents	5
Live bird market manager	1
Total	80

Figure 3: Participant types and respective numbers. Categorisation was based on participants' self-description of their primary role. Notably, many actors take on multiple roles at once, so categories are not rigid.

The sector's reputation for profitability and ease:

- People enter commercial poultry farming as it is seen as a financially reliable endeavour, with little initial investment needed (versus pigs), and with technically simple daily associated tasks.
- Fewer regulatory requirements makes it easier to enter into than other livestock options, increasing the appeal.

Dynamic raising and sale systems to maximise profits and avoid seasonal disease:

- Multiple bird houses allow some to stagger the sale of birds, giving a more constant flow of income and smaller capital costs to restock birds.
- Coloured birds maintain better health for longer than white broilers, allowing farmers to delay sale if the market is bad, protecting profits without birds dying.
- Not raising any chickens during winter lets farmers avoid the worst season for low market prices and disease.

- The reputation associated with the sector (and in some cases, how the sector is pitched to potential new farmers) may have some influence in how amenable farmers are to efforts relating to disease management. Costly or time-consuming interventions may meet resistance or influence the longevity of existing farming operations

- Constant poultry rearing and staggering sales creates more chance of passing disease from one batch to another and more frequent visits from external traders for collection.
- Ceasing poultry rearing for dedicated periods means farmers become more dependent on having diversified income, meaning they are more likely to maintain multiple farming operations on their land, with less separation between livestock.

Key Findings

Potential Consequences