Demand for poultry meat and eggs in the USA has been increasing annually in recent years. In 1987, annual poultry meat consumption (33.6 kg a person) surpassed beef consumption (31.8 kg a person) and poultry meat consumption estimates for 2002 will be more than 45 kg, with chicken and turkey meat intakes at 37.0 and 8.3 kg per capita (NCC, 2003). Demand has increased because of the realization that poultry meat is lean, low in cholesterol, and saturated fats, and more economical than fish or other meats. Furthermore, poultry meat is not discriminated by religious or cultural beliefs like some red meats and pork. Demand for eggs and egg products (currently 255 eggs person\(^{-1}\) yr\(^{-1}\), AEB, 2003) has steadily increased in the last 20 yr because the direct link between dietary cholesterol and coronary heart disease has been dismissed by the scientific community and the greater role for saturated fats established. Today, more eggs are consumed as breakfast fast-food egg sandwiches, and people are eating out away from the home and ordering eggs. The largest area of growth in egg consumption (nearly 44%, AEB, 2003) are as egg products used in the manufacture of the many snack foods, mayonnaise, and prepared meals consumed by our fast-paced society.

To meet the demand for poultry products, poultry farming like many industries has evolved from small flock enterprises to a largely integrated industry. Today, family and publicly held companies hold contractual arrangements with independent farmers to grow birds in close proximity to a company owned hatchery, feed mills, and a processing plant.

In 2001, the combined value from the sales of broilers, eggs, turkeys, and mature chickens in the USA was $24.0 billion. Of this total, 70% was from broil-