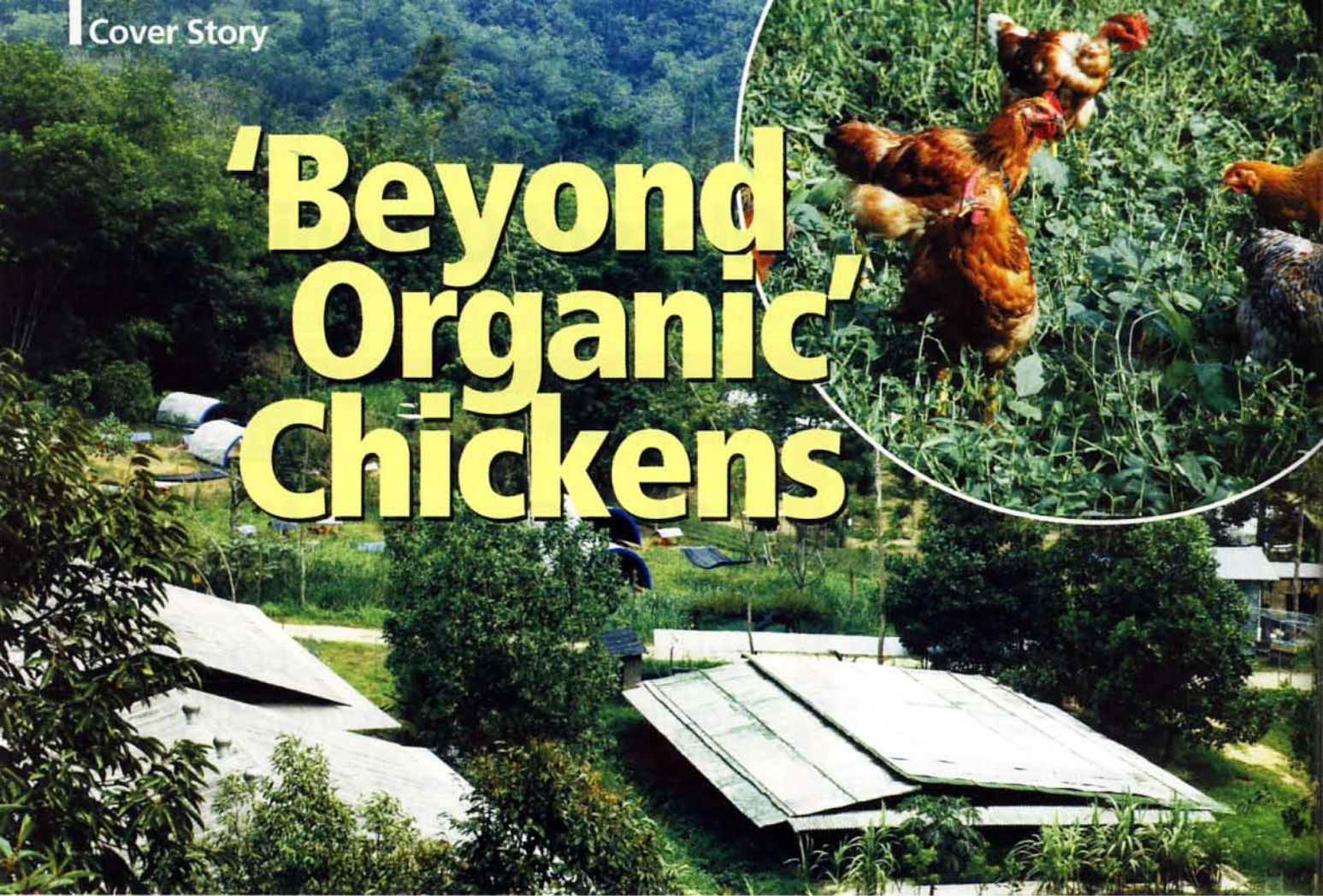


# 'Beyond Organic' Chickens



With garlic to boost immunity, probiotics to improve the digestive system and deep sea algae for Omega 3, a healthier kind of chicken meat is now available in the local market. The farm in Bentong, Pahang, though not certified, comes very close to offering organic chickens raised in environment-friendly conditions.

**G**oing organic does not mean you have to forego meat. But how the animals are raised must meet organic standards. In Malaysia, chicken is the all-time meat favourite. No chicken farms have been certified organic because local standards and enforcement are not in place yet. However, there is a 50-acre chicken farm in Bentong, Pahang, which claims that its raising and feeding methods are environment-friendly and their products offer added nutritional value. It markets its products as DQ 'Clean' Chickens which are free-range and fed on organic grass fields.

Theoretically, the absence of hormones, steroids, antibiotics are not sufficient to define an 'organic' chicken. The birds would have to be raised in a truly clean and natural environment, without chemicals. This would apply to many parameters such as the location of the farm, foraging grounds, chicken

feed, methods of cleaning of chicken dung and chicken processing methods.

Founder of DQ 'Clean' Chicken, Mr. HS Wong, started selling the 'clean' chicken about four years ago. He uses the word 'clean' as he has developed environment-friendly ways in his farming methods. He is quick to note that stockists and consumer representatives should visit his farm to see for themselves and not just take his word.

## Environment-friendly

Instead of antibiotics, Mr. Wong explains that the birds' immune system is boosted with daily doses of garlic and *kunyit*. They are also moved from one field to another to avoid the problem of intestinal worms. The chickens are also fed a special brew of probiotics (friendly bacteria) to ensure that they have a healthy digestive system. Mr. Wong notes that there is



Mr. HS Wong at his Bentong farm

vinegar and hydrogen peroxide (bio-degradable and non-toxic) are used.

### Omega balance

According to Mr. Wong, the feed is different from that of conventional farms. From research, he has found that grain is not a good feed as it raises the Omega 6: Omega 3 ratio of chicken meat. The ideal ratio for humans on an overall dietary basis is not more than 4:1 because a high ratio is implicated in many degenerative diseases. Mr. Wong reveals that DQ chickens are fed on grass, a mixture of up to 30 varieties of plants and also a meal made from deep sea algae (rich in Omega 3). This special feed and the clean environment are said to contribute to lower cholesterol content and better Omega 6: Omega 3 ratio (as low as 4:1) when DQ chicken meat is tested (see chart).

Instead of growing the chickens as fast as possible to reach table weight (about 2 kg), Mr. Wong says he delays the process to an average of 90 days. He explains that the faster a bird is sent to market, the higher the likelihood of toxic residues because chicken do not have an efficient elimination system like mammals.

a random laboratory test every three months on the chickens for antibiotics (in parts per billion) and all tests have shown negative residues.

The chickens have space to 'exercise' as each has about 25 sq ft of land to roam. They are moved from one fresh field to another every two to three weeks. Control of flies is by the use of local aromatic herbs and the guinea fowl. To clean the farm,

Mr. Wong is no ordinary farmer. He gave up a lucrative CEO career, in year 2000 when he found that many of his peers had died at a very young age from cancer and realised that the quality of food is a contributing factor. Why did he choose to go into chicken livestock? His hobby was keeping birds and *seramas*. He thus did research on raising chickens (also birds) in an organic way and plunged into commercial farming. The pioneer met with heavy financial losses in the beginning. Through much trials and tribulations, Mr. Wong has managed to increase the farm capacity to 3,000 birds.

The International Organic Standard stipulates that regardless of farm size, not more than 5,000 birds can be raised in one locality, to minimize the impact on the environment. Mr. Wong says he will abide by this standard and stop expansion when the limit is reached.

### Healthier mutton

From chickens, Mr. Wong has diversified into goats which are raised on a 200-acre farm in Kuala Pilah, Negri Sembilan in a joint venture with the Negri Sembilan State Economic Development Corporation. He labels them DQ Cabrito goats and describes the meat as having little or no 'goat' smell and very low in saturated fats and cholesterol.

Mr. Wong asserts that laboratory tests show that 'DQ' lamb has 50% less cholesterol than those sold in the conventional market. The meat has a 4:1 Omega 6 to Omega 3 ratio.

Sharing his knowledge, Mr. Wong says that he is currently working with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industries to come out with local standards for animal husbandry which can meet international food safety standards and good farming methods. He believes that meeting standards set by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) will be costly and will increase prices of meat beyond the reach of the masses. "It has to be sustainable so that everybody can enjoy the benefits," he concludes. 😊

### Test results from Universiti Putra Malaysia on DQ chicken and DQ cabrito lamb (July 27, 2004)

	DQ1	%	DQ2	%	LAMB	%
Arachidonic (20:4 n-6) – AA	41.4	9.8	66.7	14.5	57.4	5.3
Eicosapentaenoic (20:5 n-3) – EPA	2	0.5	4.7	1.0	Trace	
Docosapentaenoic (22:5 n-3)	Trace		Trace		2.3	0.2
Docosahexaenoic (22:6 n-3) – DHA	12.6	3.0	46.5	10.1	52.1	4.8
Total saturated fatty acids	239.1	56.6	172	37.5	452.3	42.0
Total unsaturated fatty acids	183.5	43.4	287.2	62.5	623.5	58.0
Total PUFA n-3 (or omega-3)	16.5	3.9	52.4	11.4	56.9	5.3
Total PUFA n-6 (or omega-6)	92	21.8	127.5	27.8	232.8	21.6
n-6 to n-3 ratio	5.6		2.4		4.1	
Unsaturated to saturated fatty acids ratio	0.8		1.7		1.4	
Moisture content (%)	71.15		70.77		73.54	
Total fat content (%)	4.12		5.29		4.71	
Cholesterol content (mg/100g)	35.013		33.251		43.096	