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The Director

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Therefore, this United States

Patent

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Katherine Kelly Vidal

DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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If this application was filed prior to June 8, 1995, the term of this patent begins on the date on which this patent issues and ends on the later of seventeen years from the date of the grant of this patent or the twenty-year term set forth above for patents resulting from applications filed on or after June 8, 1995, subject to the payment of maintenance fees as provided by 35 U.S.C. 41(b) and any extension as provided by 35 U.S.C. 156 or any disclaimer under 35 U.S.C. 253.



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Wala et al.

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(54) **METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ANIMAL GROWTH REGULATION FOR IMPROVED PROFITABILITY AND MITIGATED RISK**

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G06Q 10/0631 (2023.01)

(Continued)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC **A01K 29/00** (2013.01); **G06Q 10/04** (2013.01); **A01K 5/02** (2013.01); **A23K 50/70** (2016.05); **G06Q 10/0631** (2013.01)

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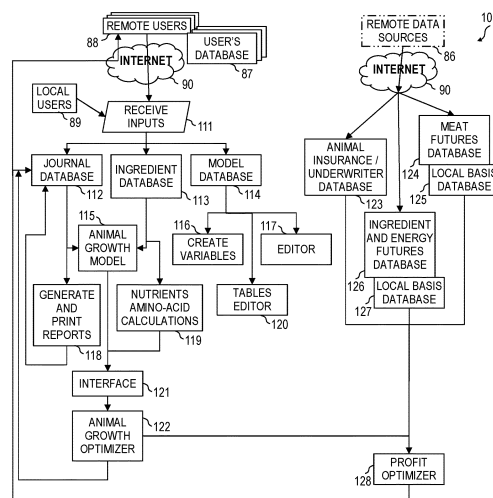
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus and method for profit maximization and risk mitigation that uses nutrition modeling of animals, including poultry and marine animals, is a critical component of the respective enterprise optimization and managed environment pollution control. The optimization accuracy depends on the description of utilization efficiency of nutrients in a population of animals. Utilization efficiency of nutrients for meat production in a population is preferably based on at least three component parts of nutrient utilization, namely maintenance, linear gain, and non-linear gain, instead of one only. Efficiencies for maintenance and linear gain are fixed value(s), but nutrient efficiency is a result of intra-population variation and efficiency of linear gain, and affect profit. Similar processing is performed to obtain optimal crop growth and profit. Finally, one or both of the animal-growth optimization and the crop-growth optimization are combined with a profit-maximization and risk-mitigation processor to provide information for a decision maker.

20 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets



Related U.S. Application Data

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See application file for complete search history.

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FIG. 1A

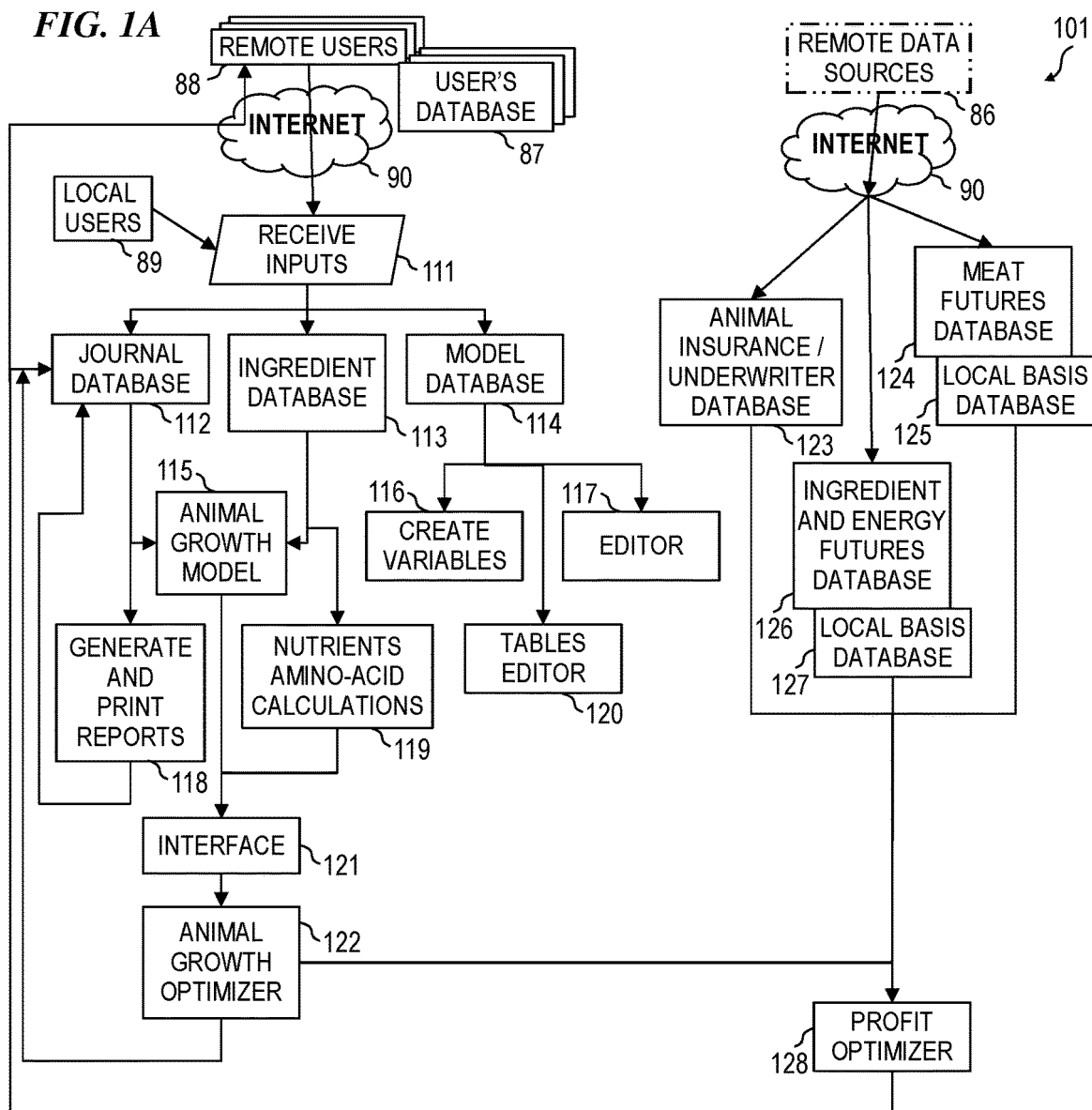


FIG. 1D

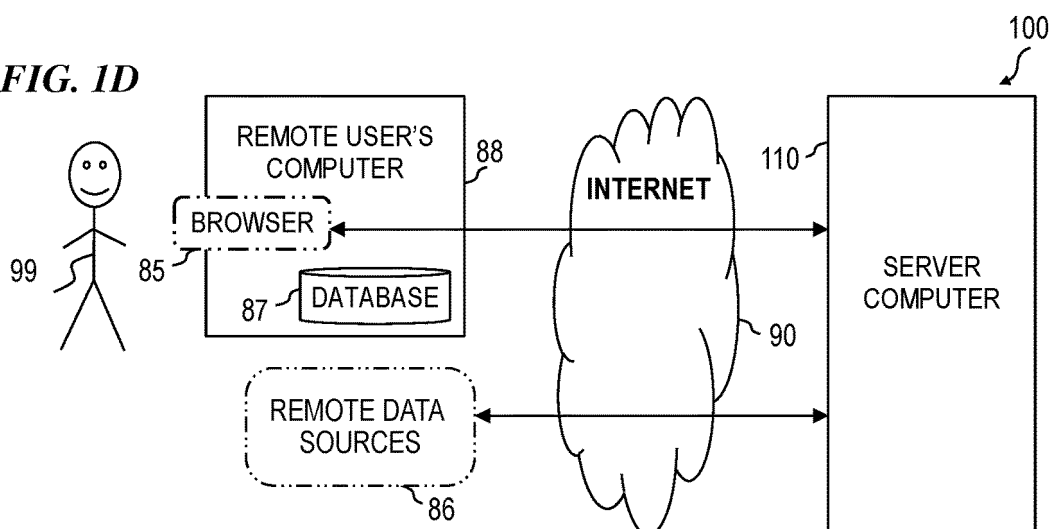


FIG. 1B

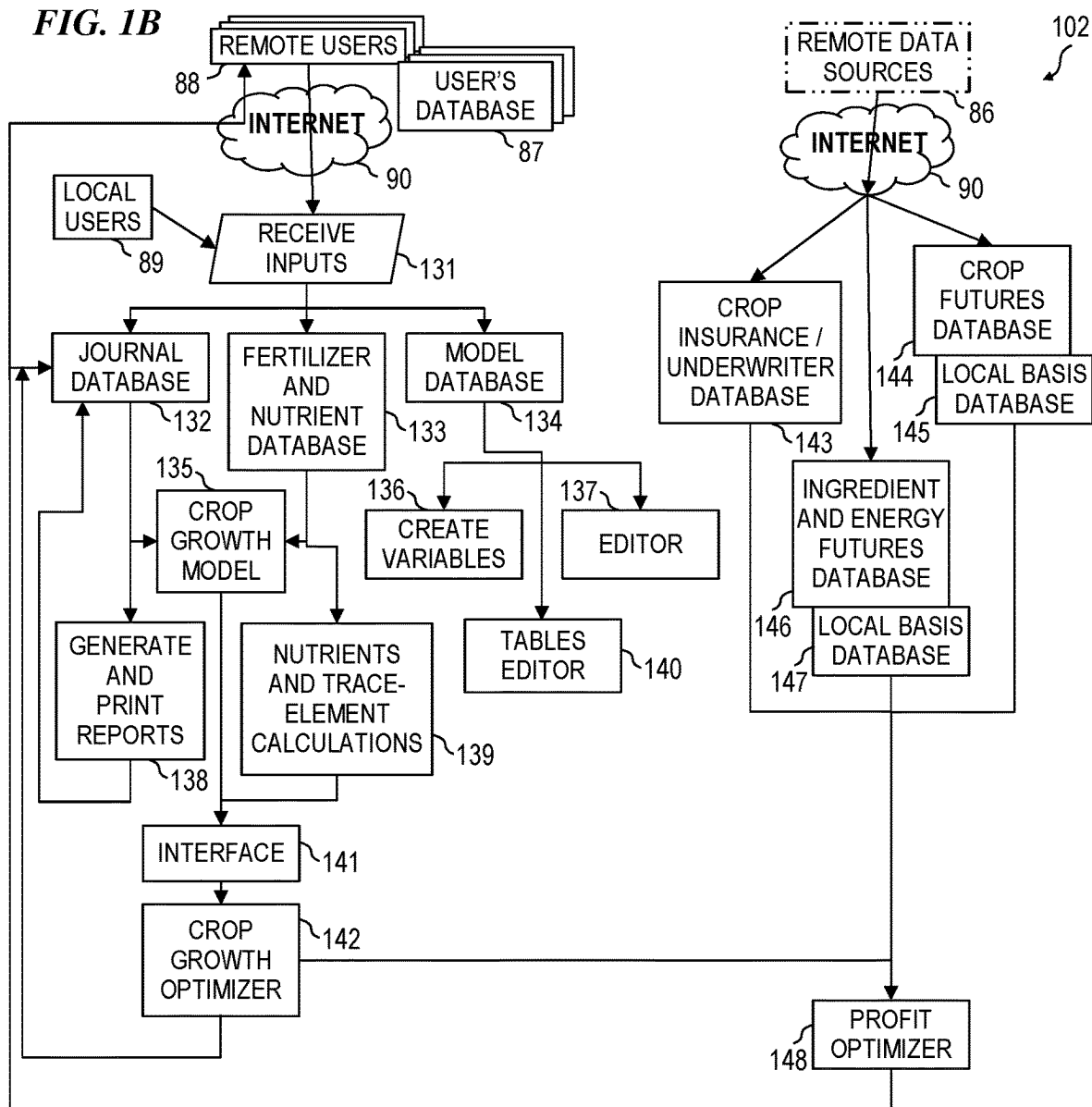


FIG. 1C

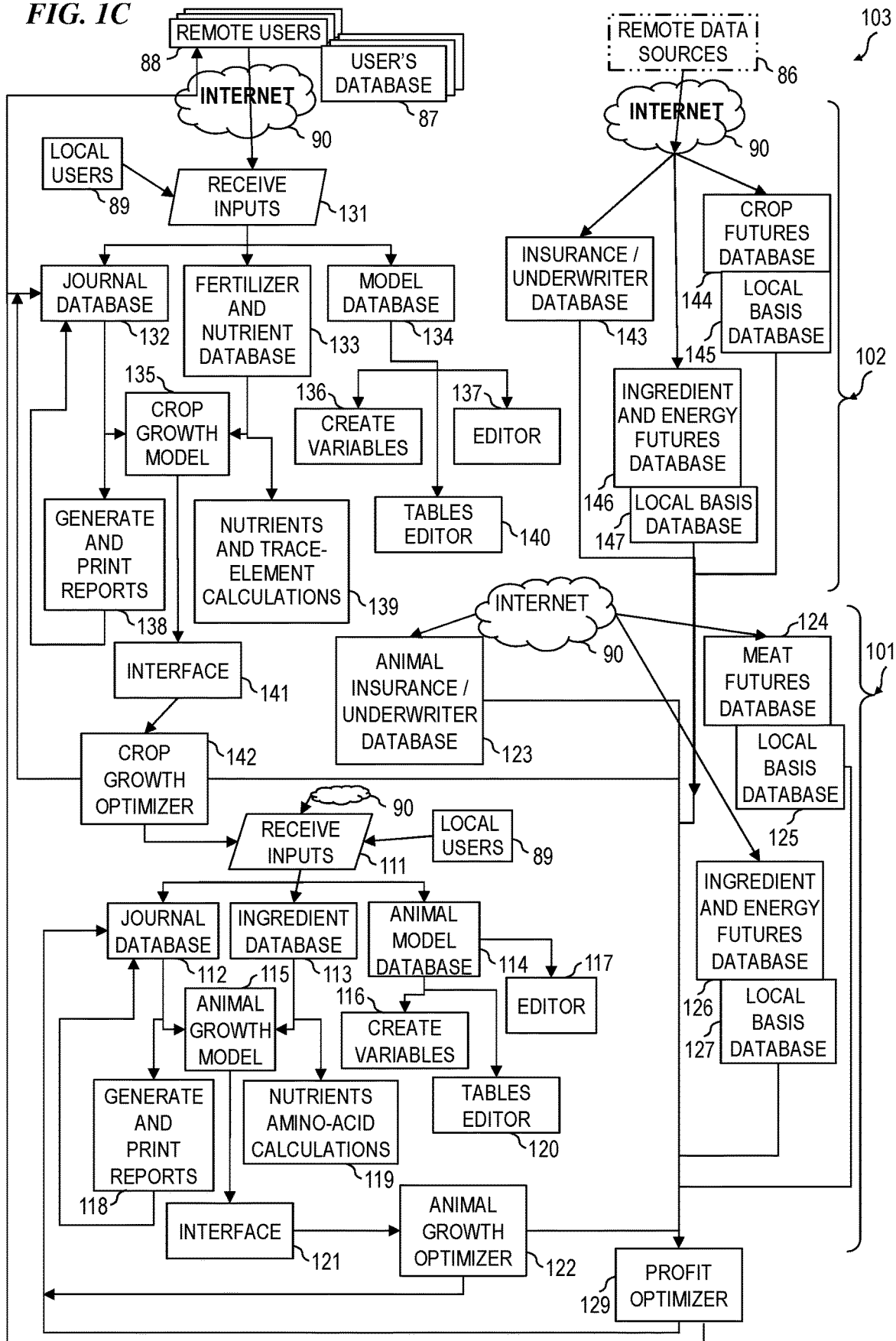


FIG. 2

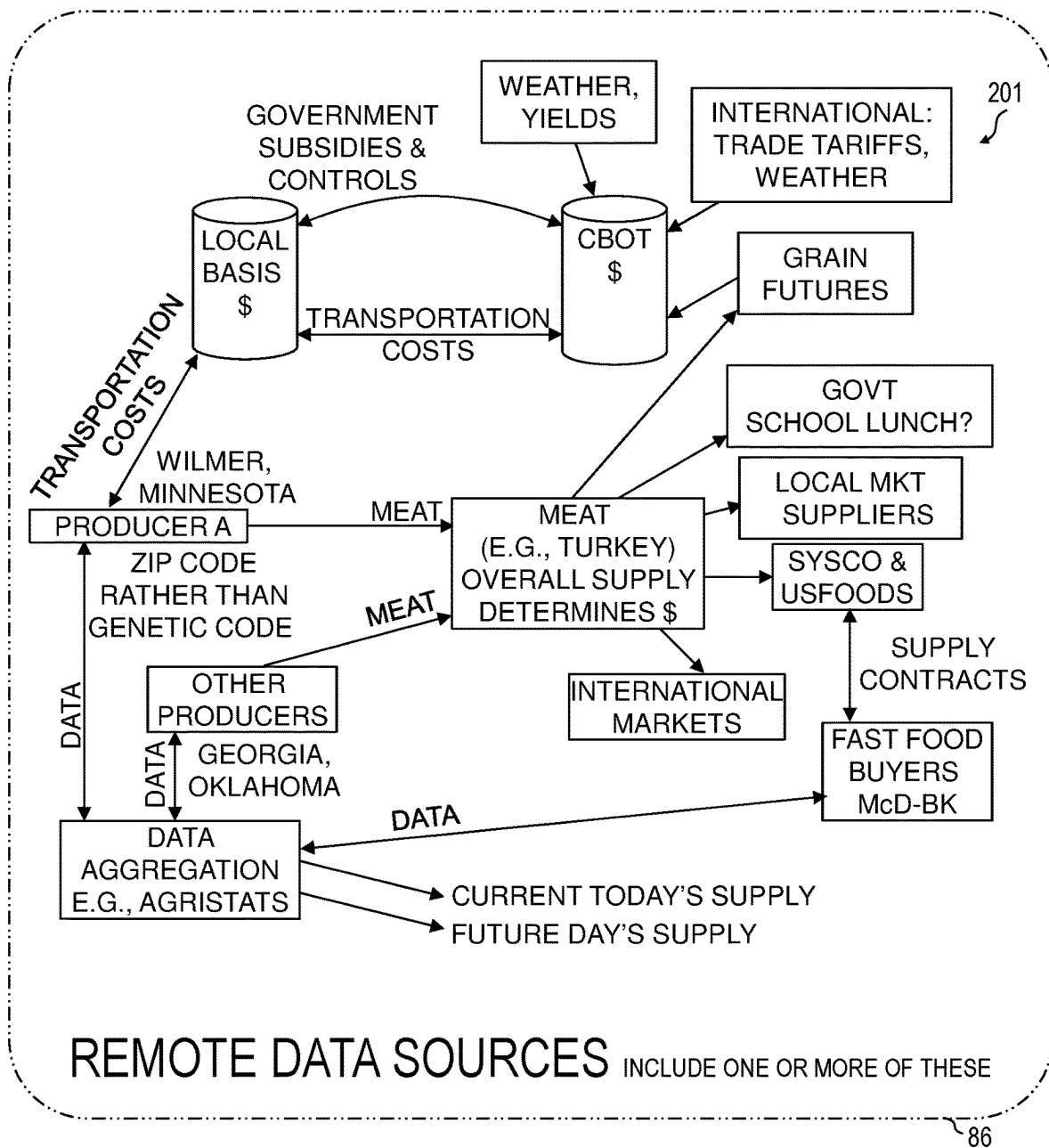


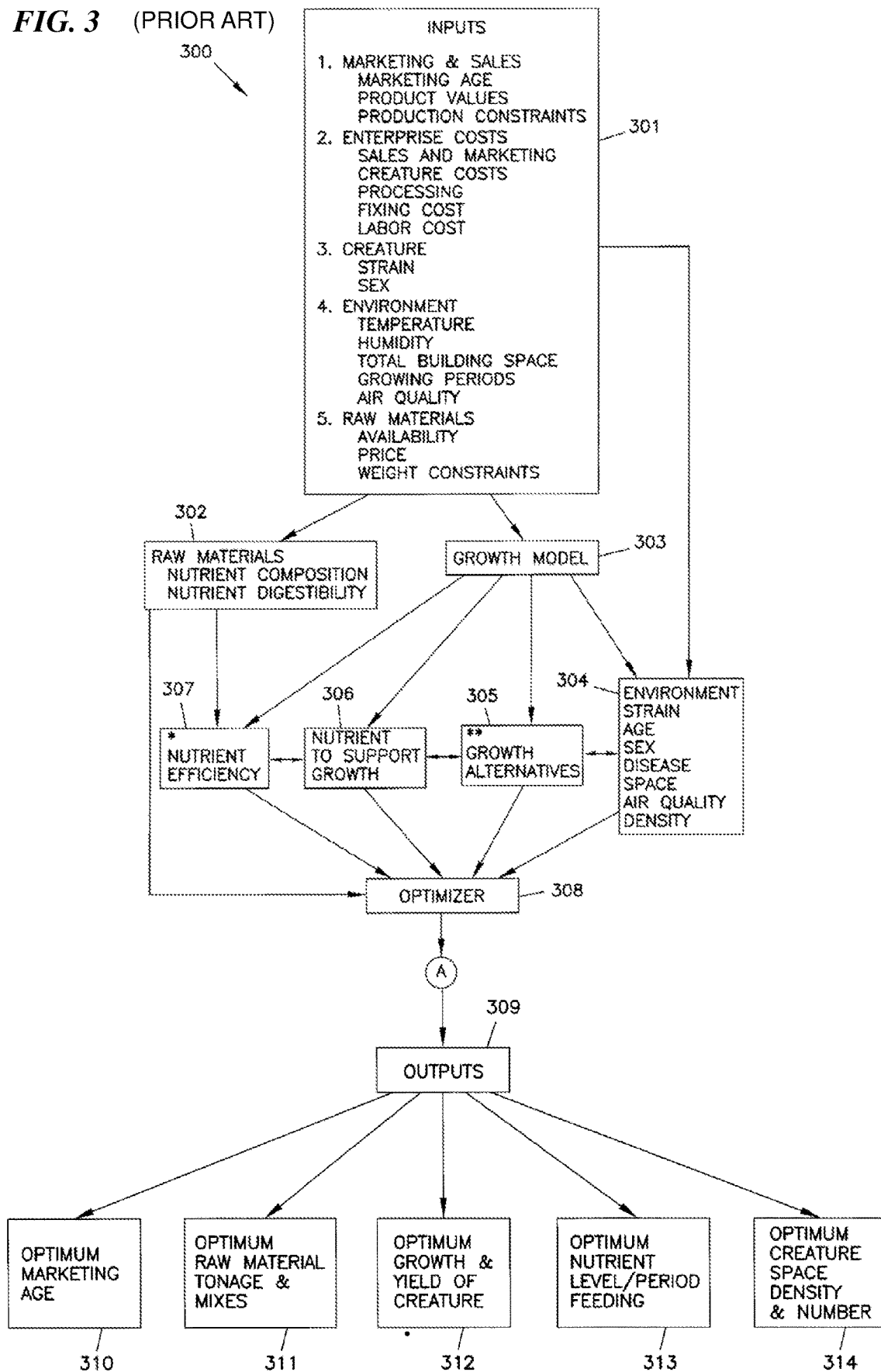
FIG. 3 (PRIOR ART)

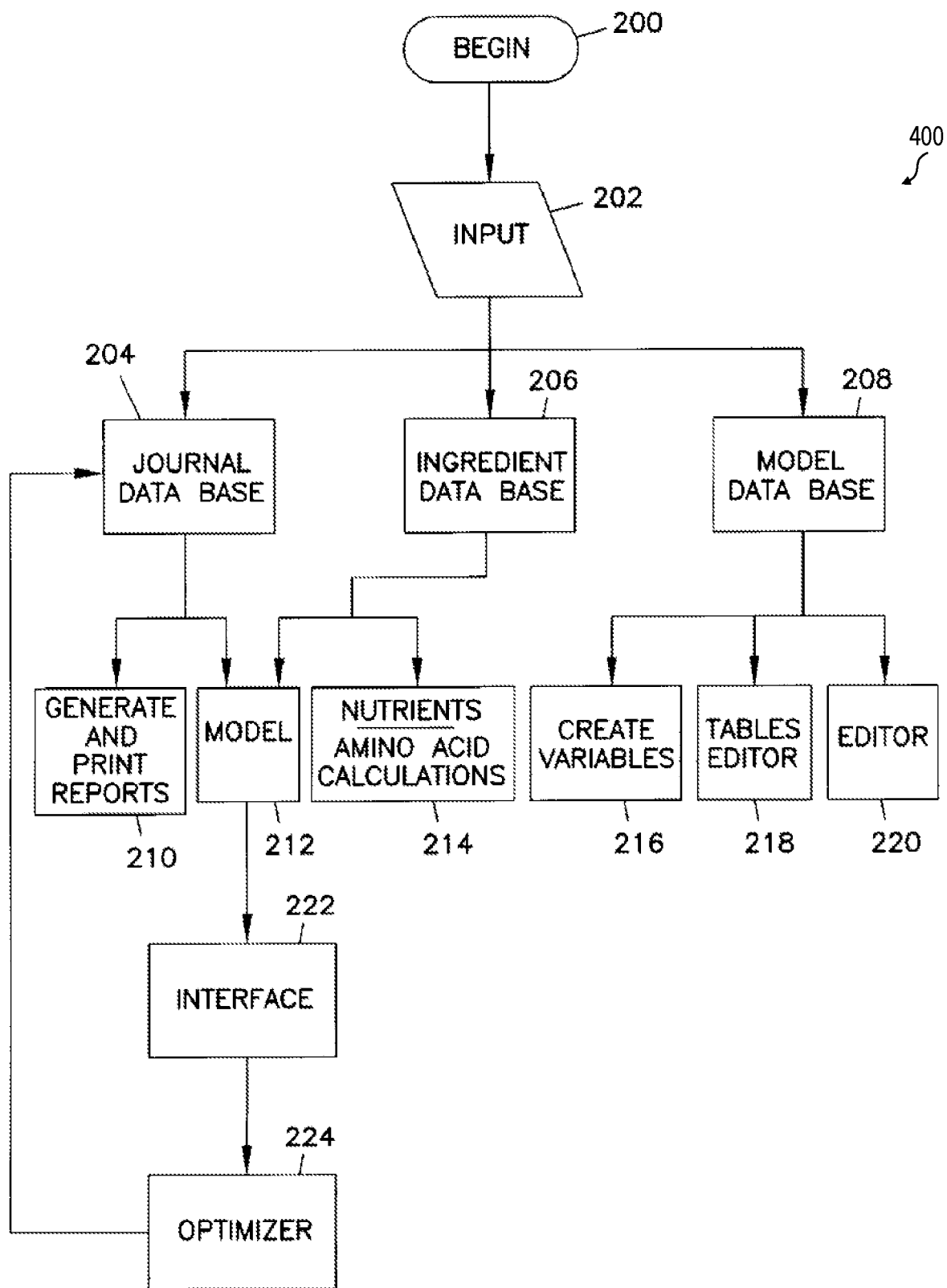
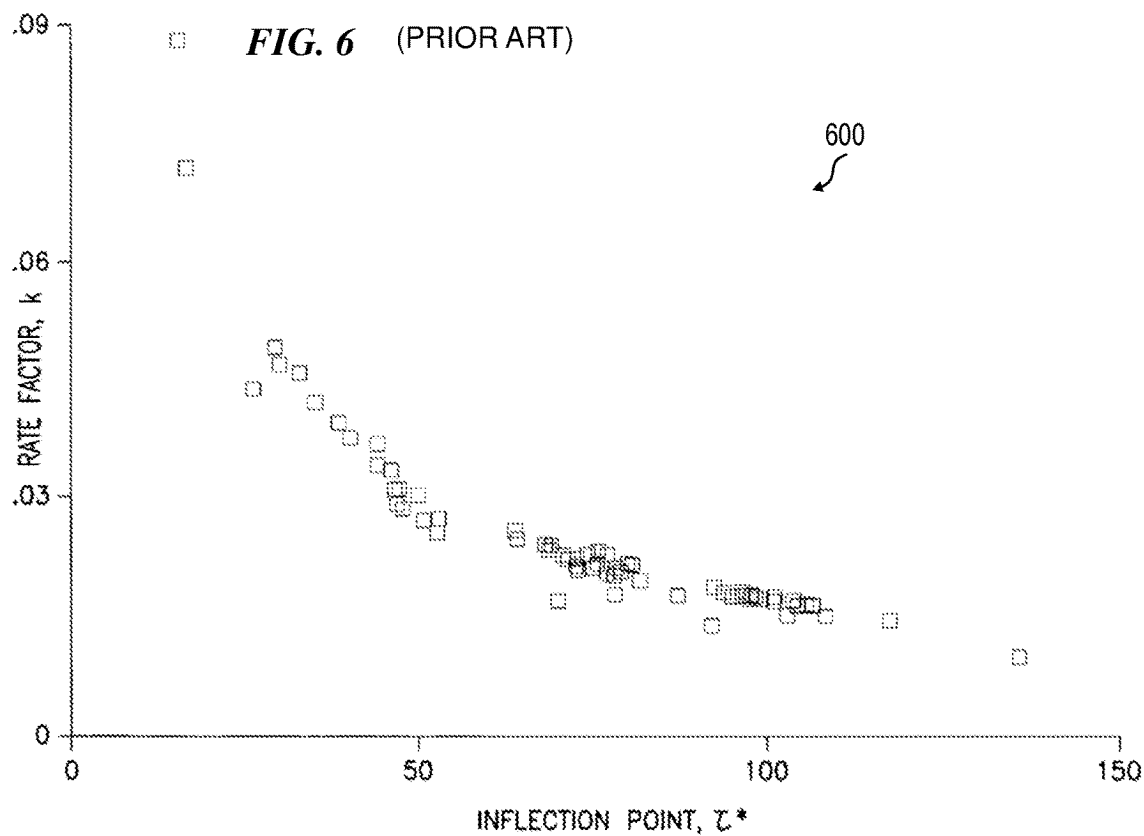
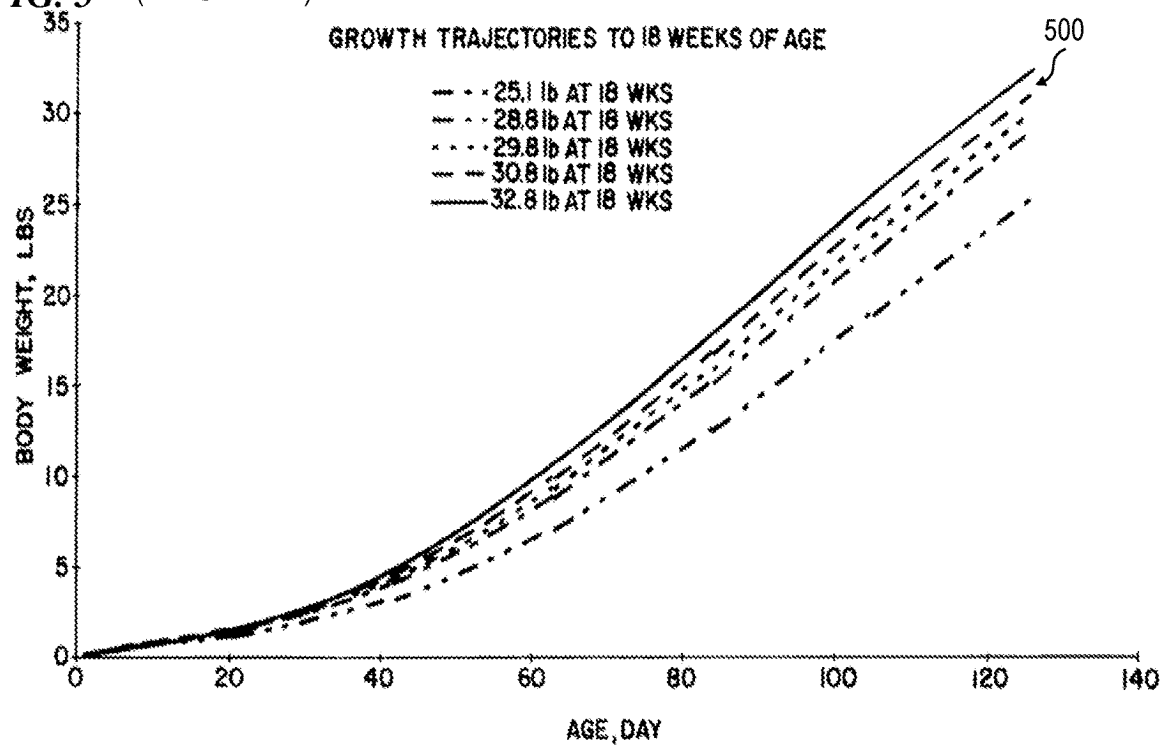
FIG. 4 (PRIOR ART)

FIG. 5 (PRIOR ART)

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METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR ANIMAL GROWTH REGULATION FOR IMPROVED PROFITABILITY AND MITIGATED RISK

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/533,622, filed Aug. 6, 2019 by Fazal Wala et al. and titled "System and method for animal growth regulation for improved profitability and mitigated risk" (which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 11,266,125 on Mar. 8, 2022), which claims priority benefit, under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e), of U.S. Provisional Patent Application 62/715,084, filed Aug. 6, 2018 by Fazal Wala et al. and titled "System and method for animal growth regulation for improved profitability and mitigated risk," each of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

This invention is related to U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, issued to Jinkui Liu et al. on Sep. 5, 2000 with the title "Generating growth alternatives," which is a continuation of U.S. Pat. No. 5,668,718, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/289,652, filed Aug. 12, 1994, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/125,409, filed on Sep. 22, 1993, and is also related to U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 issued to Jinkui Liu on Jun. 13, 2000 with the title "Utilization effectiveness of nutrients in a population," each of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to the field of agricultural product profit maximization conditioned to a given level of risk mitigation, and more specifically to an apparatus and method for generating optimized living entity and edible tissue growth alternatives and amounts, and generating an inter-variable and temporal relationships between tissue-growth factors of an animal in order to optimize edible tissue output production given inherent enterprise finance, resources, processing, and marketing constraints.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The economic optimization and viability of an enterprise depends on the ability to accurately analyze the relationship between the cost of materials, services, and labor that are input into the enterprise and the return that is achieved on the product that is output by the enterprise. In agribusiness industries that raise animals such as livestock, poultry, marine animals, etc., the inputs include the animal itself, food, shelter, and services. The output, of course, is the marketable tissue components of the processed animal. One of the most critical relationships in optimizing the economic margins of an enterprise is the relationship between the controllable and uncontrollable factors that affect the rate at which the animal and its tissue components grow and the final size of the animal at marketing age. Thus, it is important to have a value-based food chain model that describes the relationship between each of these factors and the rate of growth of a population of animals.

Variables affecting the growth and yield of edible tissue of animals can be divided into genetic and non-genetic categories. Genetic variables are fixed and are reflected by the growth potential of the individual type of animal of interest. It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the growth rate of an animal is never higher and only lower than

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the maximum potential. During its life, an animal seeks to achieve its genetic potential, but fails due to the impediment of non-genetic variables.

Non-genetic variables that are partially controllable by the commercial operator can be divided further into living factors and food factors. Living factors encompass environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, animal density, ventilation, disease conditions, air quality, etc. Food factors encompass the types and digested amounts of material that are ingested by an animal. In some embodiments, food factors are controlled in a commercial environment through nutrition. The food factor reflects a major portion of the cost during the growth period.

To maximize an enterprise's before tax net margin, many scientists have used models to simulate the growth of various types of animals. (See G. C. Emmans, "The Growth of Turkeys," 21 Recent Advances in Turkey Science, 135-166 (C. Nixey and T. C. Grey eds. 1989); H. Talpaz et al., "Dynamic Optimization Model for Feeding of Broilers," Agric. Sys, 121-132 (1986); H. Talpaz et al., "Economic Optimization of a Growth Trajectory for Broilers," 70 Amer. J. Ag. Econ., 382-390 (1988); P. E. Waibel et al., TURKS Program Agricultural Extension Service (University of Minnesota 1985)). It will be appreciated that the various models represent efforts to take into account the incredibly complex and diverse structure of living entities, as well as the innumerable variables that affect the living entities in their environment.

One model that is used to describe animal growth is the Gompertz curve (B. Gompertz, "On the Nature of the Function Expressive of the Law of Human Mortality, and on a New Mode of Determining the Value of Life Contingencies," Philos. Trans. Roy. Soc., 513-585 (1825)), which shows the current mass weight as a function of age with known constant parameters. Gompertz curves have been used to describe the growth of poultry only in terms of a singular factor or characteristic such as a genetic characteristic, a living condition, or a food factor (G. C. Emmans, "The Growth of Turkeys," 21 Recent Advances in Turkey Science, 135-166 (C. Nixey and T. C. Grey eds. 1989); R. M. Gous et al., "A Characterization of the Potential Growth Rate of Six Breeds of Commercial Broiler," 2 Proceedings of XIX World's Poultry Congress, 20-24 (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, September 1992); N. B. Anthony et al., "Comparison of Growth Curves of Weight Selected Populations of Turkeys, Quail and Chickens," 70 Poultry Sci., 13-19 (1991)). However, because all the parameters are independent from one to another among all the curves, each Gompertz curve can describe growth in terms of only one set of conditions.

Because of the complexity of a life form, there is a need for a model that describes growth alternatives in terms of a plurality of different conditions. Such a model would permit an accurate economic analysis that allows a commercial operator to simultaneously (non-repetitive) optimize the relationship between the conditions and growth. In turn, the production of living animals would be more easily controlled in order to optimize production and hence maximize economic return.

U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 issued to Jinkui Liu on Jun. 13, 2000 with the title "Utilization effectiveness of nutrients in a population" and is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 describes nutrition modeling of animal, poultry and marine animals is a critical component of the respective enterprise optimization and managed environment pollution control. The optimization accuracy depends on the description of utilization efficiency

of nutrients in a population of animals. The current invention demonstrates that utilization efficiency of nutrients for meat production in a population should be described based on at least three component parts of nutrient utilization, i.e., maintenance, linear gain, and non-linear gain, instead of one only. Efficiencies for maintenance and linear gain are fixed value(s), but nutrient efficiency for non-linear gain is a result of intra-population variation and efficiency of linear gain.

U.S. Pat. No. 5,668,718 to Liu et al. issued Sep. 16, 1997 with the title "Generating growth alternatives" and is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference. U.S. Pat. No. 5,668,718 describes an apparatus and method for determining when a living animal reaches its optimum rate of growth. This information is then used to calculate the optimal parameters for achieving the maximum Return on Investment (ROI). The computer determines the optimal number of birds for a flock, type and amount of feed, length of time between hatching and sale to food processor, etc. The computer consists of a microprocessor, random access memory, a storage device, a keyboard, a computer screen, a printer, a math co-processor.

What is needed is improved agricultural decision-assisting software including live audio-video interactions with experts who may be called to assist in use of the software and in making decisions, wherein the software automatically acts to maximize profit and return on investment, while limiting risk to a chosen level.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In some embodiments, the present invention uses the apparatus and method that builds on the teaching of U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,115,692, 6,076,043 and 5,668,718, by further including financial, market-demand, insurance, weather, genetics, and risk-mitigation models and the like to maximize expected profit while operating to limit risk to a chosen level.

One advantage of the present invention is that it is based on the correlation between constant parameters among a multitude of Gompertz curves, each describing the growth of an animal given a predetermined characteristic. Thus, a commercial poultry operator can use the apparatus and method of the present invention to simultaneously optimize growth and yield in a plurality of living and food conditions in order to maximize economic return.

The present invention generally relates to a modeling method and operating a computer that computes the time trajectory that a bird can reach its optimum rate of growth with age. Using this information, the computer can simultaneously determine an appropriate size for a flock of birds, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the flock, and the age at which a flock should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize the profits realized by a commercial integrator who raises or subcontracts meat production.

More specifically, the present invention is an apparatus for optimizing the ratio between expenditures and rate of growth for living animals. This apparatus includes processing means for optimizing the ratio between expenditures and the rate of growth for animals, wherein the processing optimum rate of growth according to the equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is the current body weight of the animal, A is the weight of the animal at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is the current age of the animal, and t^* is the age at which the animal has its maximum rate of growth, t^* and k being statistically related.

The apparatus also includes memory means for storing data corresponding to information about feed, information about the characteristics of the animals, and information generated by the processing means. The memory means is operationally coupled to the means calculates the optimum rate of growth with age at which the animals can experience their processing means.

The present invention is also in the form of a method for operating the apparatus. The method steps include calculating the time trajectory at which the animal can experience its optimum rate of growth with age according to the equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is the current body weight of the animal, A is the weight of the animal at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is the current age of the animal, and t^* is the age at which the animal has its maximum rate of growth, t^* and k being statistically related. The method includes the additional step of storing data corresponding to information about feed, information about the characteristics of the animals, and information generated by the processing means.

These and other advantages and capabilities, which characterize the present invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereof and forming a further part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and objects obtained by its use, reference should be made to the drawings, which form a further part hereto, and to the accompanying descriptive matter, which illustrates and describes a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

In some embodiments, the software includes detection algorithms that automatically act to detect and reduce risk.

In some embodiments, the software includes optimization algorithms that automatically act to maximize expected profit while keeping the entire operation within a chosen level of risk.

The present invention provides an apparatus and method for profit maximization and risk mitigation that uses nutrition modeling of animal, poultry and marine animals is a critical component of the respective enterprise optimization and managed environment pollution control. The optimization accuracy depends on the description of utilization efficiency of nutrients in a population of animals. Utilization efficiency of nutrients for meat production in a population are preferably based on at least three component parts of nutrient utilization, i.e., maintenance, linear gain, and non-linear gain, instead of one only. Efficiencies for maintenance and linear gain are fixed value(s), but nutrient efficiency for non-linear gain is a result of intra-population variation and efficiency of linear gain. Similar processing is performed to obtain optimal crop growth and profit. Finally, one or both of the animal-growth optimization and the crop-growth optimization are combined with a profit maximization and risk mitigation processor to provide information for a decision maker.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a block diagram of an animal-profit maximizing system **101**, according to some embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 1B is a block diagram of a crop-profit maximizing system **102**, according to some embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 1C is a block diagram of a crop-and-animal-profit maximizing system **103**, according to some embodiments of the present invention.

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FIG. 1D is a block diagram of a computer system **104**, according to some embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of interacting data sources **201** that together form remote data sources **86** shown in FIG. 1A, FIG. 1B, and FIG. 1C.

FIG. 3 is a prior-art flow chart of method **300**, used in some embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 4 is a prior-art flow chart of method **400**, used in some embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a prior-art graph **500** showing the growth alternatives described by a Gompertz curve.

FIG. 6 is a prior-art graph **600** showing the relationship between the rate factor, k , and the inflection point, t .

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES

Although the following detailed description contains many specifics for the purpose of illustration, a person of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that many variations and alterations to the following details are within the scope of the invention. Specific examples are used to illustrate particular embodiments; however, the invention described in the claims is not intended to be limited to only these examples, but rather includes the full scope of the attached claims. Accordingly, the following preferred embodiments of the invention are set forth without any loss of generality to, and without imposing limitations upon the claimed invention. Further, in the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments, reference is made to the accompanying drawings that form a part hereof, and in which are shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. It is understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. The embodiments shown in the Figures and described here may include features that are not included in all specific embodiments. A particular embodiment may include only a subset of all of the features described, or a particular embodiment may include all of the features described.

The leading digit(s) of reference numbers appearing in the Figures generally corresponds to the Figure number in which that component is first introduced, such that the same reference number is used throughout to refer to an identical component which appears in multiple Figures. Signals and connections may be referred to by the same reference number or label, and the actual meaning will be clear from its use in the context of the description.

Preferably, in some embodiments, the computer of the present invention is programmed using a suitable database that is distributed such that many competing users can maintain the confidentiality of their own data and with individual parts securely updated across the internet, while at the same time aggregating an overall anonymized database that can assist all users in their individual decisions without collusion or conspiring to fix prices. In some embodiments, any suitable database software packages such as Paradox, DB2, Access, etc., may be used, and the computer may also be programmed using Visual Basic, C, Fortran, Pascal or other suitable programming languages. During execution of the program, the microprocessor system sequentially executes a series of individual instructions in each of one or more parallel-operation processors. However, as described herein, the operation of the microprocessor implementing the program will be defined in terms of major functional steps.

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FIG. 1A is a block diagram of an animal-profit maximizing system **101**, according to some embodiments of the present invention. In some embodiments, system **101** is largely implemented by software programs that run on server computer **110** of FIG. 1. In some embodiments, the remote users **88** and/or local user(s) **89** input information via block **111** (in which in some embodiments, the computer system **104** provides a secured and encrypted password-protected browser interface that elicits and receives information from the user **99** or the user's computer **88** or other source having an internet connection) that is put into the databases (as additions, updates or modifications to journal database **112**, ingredient database **113**, and model database **114**). In some embodiments, the remote users can maintain and use private user-specific databases **87** to supplement or replace the system journal database **112**, ingredient database **113**, and/or model database **114**. The information received by input block **111** (which is typically inputted by a user via keyboard, USB thumb-size FLASH drive, and/or spreadsheet) is entered into the journal database **112**, ingredient database **113**, and/or model database **114**. The journal database **112**, stores information that relates to the characteristics of the flock or herd such as sex, weight, number, strain, etc. This journal database **112** also stores the information that is generated by the model **115** and the optimizer **122**. Such journal database **112** information relates to the optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, financial figures, etc. The ingredient database **113**, stores information that relates to the potential ingredients that may be included within the feed and the nutritional values of the various ingredients. In some embodiments, ingredient database **113** also includes equations that the users **99**, via users' computers **88** and/or **89** can cause to execute to recalculate the value of the amino-acid nutrients and metabolizable energy for each day or stage of the animal's life. In some embodiments, these equations are based on the weight per bushel and the protein content of the ingredients. The model database **114**, includes information (e.g., equations) that are used in the actual code of the execution files. The model database **114** also includes information that relates to the variables that are used within the execution files.

In some embodiments, the blocks **118**, **115**, **119**, **116**, **117**, and **120** represent the various execution programs that are required to control the computer of the present invention. In some embodiments, these blocks implement function described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,115,692, 6,076,043 and 5,668,718, which are incorporated herein by reference. In some embodiments, any one of these blocks may contain a plurality of execution files in order to fulfill its function. As described above, in some embodiments, the execution files and the databases are written utilizing the Clarion™ database software or other suitable database software.

The animal-growth model **115** allows the user to execute the model that forms the equations that are described in the section below titled "A. Theory." That section also forms equations that calculate the predicted mortality rate and other effects of living conditions, predicted yield for various economic body parts, and nutrient calculations. More specifically, the model creates a plurality of simultaneous equations that it will pass through the interface **121** to the animal-growth optimizer **122**.

The interface **121** reconfigures the information generated by the animal-growth model **115** into a form that is acceptable by the animal-growth optimizer **122**. In some embodiments, optimizer **122** includes a non-linear simultaneous equations optimizer, which are well known in the art.

The animal-growth optimizer **122** will solve the simultaneous equations in order to create the optimal values for each of the variables that describe the predicted mortality rate and other effects of living conditions, predicted yield for various economic body parts, and nutrient calculations. In some embodiments, the animal-growth optimizer **122** provides data that provides the highest growth rate and earliest date for marketable animals ready for the processing plant. This information is then passed from animal-growth optimizer **122** to the journal database **112**, where it is stored.

In some embodiments, data is also passed from animal-growth optimizer **122** to the animal profit optimizer **128**, which also takes into account data collected from remote data sources **86** (including public data such as from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, public universities and the like, insurance and underwriting company data, and private purchased data from such sources as Agri Stats, Inc. at www.agristats.com and the like) using internet connections **90**. This collected data is placed into one or more databases such as animal insurance/underwriter database **123**, meat futures database **124** (optionally including a local-basis database **125** of price variations in one or more local markets) and/or ingredient-futures and energy-futures (optionally including cost-of-capital, cost of labor, and/or cost of automation information) database **126** (optionally including a local-basis database **127** of price variations in one or more local markets). In some embodiments, profit optimizer **128** performs hundreds or thousands of repeated runs of most or all the information using different variations of input deltas (such as lengthening or shortening the growth period before the animals are harvested, changing the space per animal (does the benefit to animal health and meat production outweigh the cost of additional housing space, and what is the optimal space per animal that provides the best profit given a set amount of risk, and what other factors (such as heat, humidity, light, ventilation, manure control and the like), provide the best environment for the animals), in order to find the most and best local maximums, in order to find the overall maximum given constraints on the business.

Block **118** is the portion wherein the user may execute the files that generate and print reports. These reports are described in detail below. In some embodiments, the user **99** edits, using tables editor **120**, the tables that store information about the various ingredients that may be included in feed in Nutrients amino-acid calculations **119**. More specifically, the user may delete or add ingredients, and edit the nutritional values associated with each ingredient. Additionally, the user may execute amino acid and energy equations that recalculates the values of the amino acid and metabolizable energy nutrients based on the weight per bushel and protein content of each ingredient. The information manipulated by **119** is stored in the ingredient database **113**.

In some embodiments, the user is helped to create variables that are used in the various execution files in create variables **116**. In some embodiments, at tables editor **120** the user may create and edit the various electronic data tables (EDTs) that are used to organize and store information within the databases. Finally, in some embodiments, the user creates and edits the execution files and databases at editor **117**.

FIG. **1B** is a block diagram of a crop-profit maximizing system **102**, according to some embodiments of the present invention. In some embodiments, system **102** is largely implemented by software programs that run on server computer **110** of FIG. **1**. In some embodiments, the remote users **88** and/or local user(s) **89** input information via block **131** (in which in some embodiments, the computer system **104**

provides a secured and encrypted password-protected browser interface that elicits and receives information from the user **99** or the user's computer **88** or other source having an internet connection) that is put into the databases (as additions, updates or modifications to journal database **132**, fertilizer, mineral and nutrient database **133**, and model database **134**). In some embodiments, the remote users can maintain and use private user-specific databases **87** to supplement or replace the system journal database **132**, ingredient database **133**, and/or model database **134**. The information received by input block **131** (which is typically inputted by a user via keyboard, USB thumb-size FLASH drive, and/or spreadsheet) is entered into the journal database **132**, fertilizer, mineral and nutrient database **133**, and/or model database **134**. The journal database **132**, stores information that relates to the characteristics of the crop such as genetics, resistances to various diseases and pests, water needs and drought tolerance, salt tolerance, and the like. This journal database **132** also stores the information that is generated by the model **135** and the crop-growth optimizer **142**. Such journal database **132** information relates to the optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, financial figures, etc. The ingredient database **133**, stores information that relates to the potential ingredients that may be included within the feed and the nutritional values of the various ingredients. In some embodiments, fertilizer, mineral and nutrient database **133** also includes equations that the users **99**, via users' computers **88** and/or **89** can cause to execute to recalculate the value of trace nutrients and water needs for each day or stage of the crop's life cycle. In some embodiments, these equations are based on the weight and content of the fertilizer, mineral and nutrient ingredients. The model database **134**, includes information (e.g., equations) that are used in the actual code of the execution files. The model database **134** also includes information that relates to the variables that are used within the execution files.

In some embodiments, blocks **138**, **135**, **139**, **136**, **137**, and **140** represent the various execution programs that are required to control the computer of the present invention. In some embodiments, these blocks implement function described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,115,692, 6,076,043 and 5,668,718, which are incorporated herein by reference. In some embodiments, any one of these blocks may contain a plurality of execution files in order to fulfill its function.

The crop-growth model **135** allows the user to execute the model that forms the equations that are similar to those described in the section below titled "A. Theory." That section also forms equations that calculate the predicted mortality rate and other effects of living conditions, predicted yield for various economic body parts, and nutrient calculations. More specifically, the model creates a plurality of simultaneous equations that it will pass through the interface **141** to the crop growth optimizer **142**.

The interface **141** reconfigures the information generated by the crop-growth model **135** into a form that is acceptable by the crop-growth optimizer **142**. In some embodiments, crop-growth optimizer **142** includes a non-linear simultaneous equations optimizer, which are well known in the art.

The crop-growth optimizer **142** will solve the simultaneous equations in order to create the optimal values for each of the variables that describe the predicted loss in case of drought and other effects of growing conditions, predicted yield for various economic plant parts, and nutrient calculations. In some embodiments, the crop-growth optimizer **142** provides data that provides the highest growth rate and earliest date for marketable animals ready for the processing

plant. This information is then passed from crop-growth optimizer **142** to the journal database **132**, where it is stored.

In some embodiments, data is also passed from crop-growth optimizer **142** to the crop-profit optimizer **148**, which also takes into account data collected from remote data sources **86** (including public data such as from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, public universities and the like, insurance and underwriting company data, and private purchased data from such sources as Agri Stats, Inc. at www.agristats.com and the like) using internet connections **90**. This collected data is placed into one or more databases such as animal insurance/underwriter database **143**, crop futures database **144** (optionally including a local-basis database **145** of price variations in one or more local markets) and/or ingredient-futures and energy-futures (optionally including cost-of-capital, cost of labor, and/or cost of automation information) database **146** (optionally including a local-basis database **147** of price variations in one or more local markets). In some embodiments, crop-profit optimizer **148** performs hundreds or thousands of repeated runs of most or all the information using different variations of input deltas (such as lengthening or shortening the growth period before the animals are harvested, changing the space per animal (Does the benefit to animal health and meat production outweigh the cost of additional housing space? What is the optimal space per animal that provides the best profit given a set amount of risk? What other factors (such as heat, humidity, light, ventilation, manure control and the like), provide the best environment for the animals?), in order to find the most and best local maximums, in order to find the overall maximum given constraints on the business.

Block **138** is the portion wherein the user may execute the files that generate and print reports. These reports are described in detail below. In some embodiments, the user **99** edits, using tables editor **140**, the tables that store information about the various ingredients that may be included in feed in Nutrients amino-acid calculations **139**. More specifically, the user may delete or add ingredients, and edit the nutritional values associated with each ingredient. Additionally, the user may execute amino acid and energy equations that recalculate the values of the amino acid and metabolizable energy nutrients based on the weight per bushel and protein content of each ingredient. The information manipulated by **139** is stored in the fertilizer, mineral and nutrient ingredient database **133**.

In some embodiments, the user is helped to create variables that are used in the various execution files in create variables **136**. In some embodiments, at tables editor **140** the user **99** may create and edit the various electronic data tables (EDTs) that are used to organize and store information within the databases. Finally, in some embodiments, the user creates and edits the execution files and databases at editor **137**.

FIG. **1C** is a block diagram of a crop-and-animal-profit maximizing system **103**, according to some embodiments of the present invention. In some embodiments, crop-and-animal-profit maximizing system **103** combines animal-profit maximizing system **101** of FIG. **1A** and crop-profit maximizing system **102**, and combines and enhances the animal-profit optimizer **128** and crop-profit optimizer **148**, in order to further optimize the overall combined profit using non-linear simultaneous-equations optimizer **129**.

FIG. **1D** is a block diagram of a computer system **104**, according to some embodiments of the present invention. In some embodiments, computer system **104** includes a server computer **110** that connects across the internet **90** to a remote user's computer **88** that includes a local database **87** and a

browser **85**. In some embodiments, a human user **99** is a decision maker who needs a relevant presentation of data on which human user **99** is able to make better decisions to maximize profits given the level of risk the user is prepared or permitted to take on. The human user **99** controls which data from their local database **87** is sent to the server computer **110** (data such as space per animal, the genetic breed of the animal, local weather data and price of ingredients in the animal's diet. In some embodiments, using well-known algorithms, the data provided from database **87** and from browser interface **85** is encrypted by the remote user's computer **88** before being transmitted to server computer **110** where it is decrypted sufficiently to be used in calculations, and the result data is encrypted by server computer **110** before being transmitted back, and that result data is decrypted by the remote user's computer **88** for presentation to user **99**. In addition, data is presented from the server computer **110** that the human user **99** can act upon to mitigate and control risk.

FIG. **2** is a block diagram of interacting data sources **201** that together form remote data sources **86** shown in FIG. **1A**, FIG. **1B**, and FIG. **1C**. In some embodiments, it is most important to classify the data as to the source location (e.g., the ZIP code) rather than on the breed of animal (the genetic code) when gathering data for profit maximization. This is at least in part because the local weather, climate, humidity and the like have a larger effect on profit results than does the breed of poultry.

FIG. **3** is a prior-art flow chart of method **300** showing the program execution from U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692 (FIGS. 21a and 21b of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692), which is incorporated herein by reference. Block **301** illustrates the various inputs into the logical program flow in order to calculate and solve the various equations. Block **302** includes information on nutrient composition and digestibility which may be stored in the form of a look-up table or some other known database structure. This data is provided to block **307** where data and/or equations on the nutrient efficiency is stored. Additional information is provided to block **307** from the growth model block **303** and the nutrient to support growth block **306**. Each of the various blocks **302**, **307**, **306**, **305**, and **304** provide data and equations to optimizer block **308** which solves the equations in an optimized manner. The outputs of optimizer block **308** are provided to output block **309** which provides the results to the journal database **204** (best seen in FIG. **4** (FIG. 20 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692)). This information is illustrated as including: optimum marketing age, block **310**; optimum raw material tonnage and mixes, block **311**; optimum growth & yield of animals, block **312**; optimum nutrient level/period feeding, block **313**; and optimum animal space density & number, block **314**.

FIG. **4** is a prior-art flow chart of method **400** showing the program execution from U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692 (FIG. 20 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692), which is incorporated herein by reference, used in some embodiments of the present invention. In some embodiments, a program that controls the computer of the present invention begins at block **200**. In some embodiments, a user inputs information into the databases at Block **202**. The information inputted may enter either the Journal database **204**, Ingredient database **206**, or Model database **208**. The Journal database, block **204** stores information that relates to the characteristics of the flock such as sex, weight, number, strain, etc. This database also stores the information that is generated by the model and the optimizer. Such information relates to the optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, financial figures, etc. The Ingredient

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database, block **206**, stores information that relates to the potential ingredients that may be included within the feed and the nutritional values of the various ingredients. One skilled in the art will realize that the Ingredient database also includes equations that the user can execute to recalculate the value of the amino acid nutrients and metabolized energy. These equations are based on the weight per bushel and protein content of the ingredients. The Model database, block **208**, includes information that relates to the actual code of the execution files. The model database also includes information that relates to the variables that are used within the execution files.

One skilled in the art will realize that the blocks **210**, **212**, **214**, **216**, **218**, and **220** represent the various execution programs that are required, in some embodiments, for program execution. Each of these blocks may contain a plurality of execution files in order to fulfill its function. The source code for the model is described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 titled "Utilization effectiveness of nutrients in a population," which is incorporated herein by reference. As described above, in some embodiments, the execution files and the databases are preferably written utilizing the Clarion™ database software.

At block **212**, in some embodiments, the user causes execution of the model that forms the equations that are described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 titled "Utilization effectiveness of nutrients in a population," which is incorporated herein by reference. U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,043 titled "Utilization effectiveness of nutrients in a population," which is incorporated herein by reference. This section also forms equations that calculate the predicted mortality rate and other effects of living conditions, predicted yield for various economic body parts, and nutrient calculations. More specifically, the model will create a plurality of simultaneous equations that it will pass through the interface, block **222**, to the Optimizer, block **224**.

The interface, Block **222**, reconfigures the information generated by the Model, Block **212**, into a form that is acceptable by the Optimizer. In some embodiments, the interface is written in C++. In some embodiments, the Optimizer is a non-linear optimizer, which are well known in the art.

In some embodiments, the Optimizer, Block **224**, solves the simultaneous equations in order to create the optimal values for each of the variable that describe the predicted mortality rate and other effects of living conditions, predicted yield for various economic body parts, and nutrient calculations. This information is then passed to the Journal database, Block **204**, where it is stored.

At block **210**, in some embodiments, the user causes execution of the files that generate and print reports. These reports are described in U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, titled "Generating growth alternatives," which is incorporated herein by reference. At block **214**, the user may edit the tables that store information that about the various ingredients that may be included in feed. More specifically, the user may delete or add ingredients, and edit the nutritional values associated with each ingredient. Additionally, the user may execute amino acid and energy equations that recalculates the values of the amino acid and metabolizable nutrients based on the weight per bushel and protein content of each ingredient. The information manipulated by block **214**, is stored in the Ingredient database, block **206**.

At block **216**, in some embodiments, the user creates variables used in the various execution files. One skilled in the art will realize that at block **218** the user may create and edit the various tables that are used to organize and store

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information within the databases. Finally, the user may create and edit the execution files and databases at block **220**.

For an egg or broiler enterprise, there are multiple input variables that affect profit and loss (the bottom line):

- Nutrition in feed: energy input e.g., whether based on corn or soybeans or animal proteins
- proteins lysine, arginine, methionine
- vitamins E, D, A, K
- Minerals Calcium, Phosphorus
- Genetics: Strain of the animals
- Sex of bird
- Housing for animals: building cost: energy (heat/cooling), space,
- ventilation (remove ammonia), lighting
- bird kilograms per meter² floor quality, manure-removal slots,
- cages or open,
- Labor persons or automation, shifts per day
- cost of money interest, who invests
- processing plant

In some embodiments, the present invention correlates equations that describe the multitude of Gompertz curves for various variables that describe the growth of living animals. The results of the correlation allow an animal processor to simultaneously optimize the ratio between expenditures and growth and thus optimize profit margins. In other words, the growth rate of the animal is substantially optimized when the market value of the animal and the cost incurred from raising the animal maximizes the before tax net margin associated with raising the animal or population of animals.

Additionally, the variable can describe both genetic and non-genetic characteristics or factors involved with modeling the growth of the animals or the population of animals. The non-genetic variables are substantially at their optimal values when the net margin is maximized. Some examples of non-genetic characteristics that are described by the non-genetic variable include body weight, population density, nutrient composition of the feed, temperature, and humidity.

In various embodiments, the present invention is used for any type of animal whose growth can be described by a Gompertz curve. However, for purposes of description, the present invention is described in the context of poultry.

"A. Theory"

FIG. **5** is a prior-art graph **500** (FIG. 1 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, titled "Generating growth alternatives," which is incorporated herein by reference), showing the growth alternatives described by a Gompertz curve.

FIG. **6** is a prior-art graph **600** (FIG. 3 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, titled "Generating growth alternatives," which is incorporated herein by reference), showing the relationship between the rate factor, k, and the inflection point, t.

As described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,115,692, 6,076,043 and 5,668,718, a Gompertz curve represents mass as a function of time, and is commonly used to represent the growth of poultry. The Gompertz curve that describes a growth pattern in Laird form is as follows:

$$W = W_0 \exp(L/k)(1 - \exp(-kt)) \quad (1)$$

where W is the current body weight, W_0 is the initial body weight, $\exp()$ is the number e (the root of the natural logarithm; about 2.718281828) raised to the power of the argument in the parentheses, L is a constant, k is a constant, t is the current age of the bird, and represents an exponent. (Laird, A. K. 1966. Postnatal growth of

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birds and mammals. Growth 30:349-363) Equation (1) can be rearranged as follows:

$$W=f(t)=W_0 \exp((L/k)\exp(-L/k)\exp(-kt)). \quad (2)$$

The limit of equation (2) as $t \rightarrow \infty$ is defined as:

$$\lim f(t)=A=W_0 \exp(L/k) \quad (3)$$

where A is the bird's mature body weight. Combining equation (2) and equation (3) results in the following equation:

$$W=A \exp((-L/k)\exp(-kt)), \quad (4)$$

which can be written as follows:

$$W=Au \quad (5)$$

$$\text{where } u=\exp((-L/k)\exp(-kt)). \quad (6)$$

Equation (4) can be rewritten as:

$$W=A \exp(-B \exp(-kt)) \quad (7)$$

where $B=L/k$.

From equation (7), the average daily gain is:

$$f'(t)=WkB \exp(-kt). \quad (8)$$

The rate at which the average daily gain changes is defined as:

$$f''(t)=k^2BW \exp(-kt)(B \exp(-kt)-1) \quad (9)$$

If $f''(t)=0$ at the age of maximum gain, then:

$$0=k^2BW \exp(-kt^*)(B \exp(-kt^*)-1)B \exp(-kt^*) \\ =1B=\exp(kt^*) \quad (10)$$

where t^* is defined as the inflection point, which represents the age at which the maximum daily weight gain is achieved.

The constants t^* and k govern the form of growth curve. If equation (10) is substituted into equation (7), then

$$W=Au \quad (11)$$

Where $u=\exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$. Equation (11) shows that current body weight depends on mature weight A and u. Mature weight A is a genetically inherited value. Given fixed genetic conditions, the form of growth trajectory depends on u, i.e., the growth rate factor k and inflection point t^* . Therefore, living conditions affect the form of growth trajectory through the parameters t^* and k. The growth trajectory represents body weight over age.

Rate factor k and inflection point t^* are independent of each other among multiple growth curves even though they are constrained by equation (10) within one curve. Due to the simultaneous impact of living conditions, the two parameters of equation (11) cannot be used to optimize growth by optimizing parameter k and t^* independently. Independent optimization of parameter k and/or t^* may result in faulty combinations of the two parameters in terms of describing animal growth. Their inter-relationship among different curves has to be established in order to make equation (11) cover multiple curves so that it can be used in an automated computer optimization process, i.e., either make constant k a function of the inflection point t^* so that $k=f(t^*)$ or make t^* a function of k so that $t^*=f(k)$.

The equations that are utilized in the program of the present invention are:

$$W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-f(k)))) \quad (12)$$

which can be rewritten as:

$$W=A \exp(-\exp(-f(t^*)(t-t^*))). \quad (13)$$

For simplicity, Equation (13) will be used for explanation.

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When mature weight A and age t is known, only one variable t^* is left to predict body weight W in equation (13). The difference between equation (11) and equation (13) is that equation (11) represents only one growth curve and t^* is a constant. However, equation (13) represents multiple curves wherein t^* is a variable that can be optimized in an optimization process. Therefore, the relationship between k and t^* must be defined. This relationship will be in the form of a function $k=f(t^*)$.

Experimental growth data for broilers, quails, and turkeys with different genetic and environmental conditions have been obtained from public domain sources and summarized. This information is contained within the program of the present invention and can be used to define the relationship between k and t^* .

The body weight for male turkeys of age 0 to 18 weeks (Waibel, P. E., "Pelleting, fat, and protein levels in turkey diets." 67 Proc. of Maryland Nutrition Conference for Feed Manufactures, March 16-17, (1989)) and female turkeys of age 0 to 18 weeks (Waibel, P. E. et al., "Factorial Study of Protein Level Sequence and Diet Energy/Pelleting on Performance of Large White Hen Turkeys," 68 reported in Poultry science Association Annual Meeting, University of Wisconsin, Madison. July 24-28 (1989)) are each comprised of 24 different protein sequence treatments. The body weights of each treatment at different ages was independently fitted into equation (11) and the corresponding value for k and t^* was calculated. More specifically, constant k and t^* were experimentally determined by (See Hurwitz, S. et al., "Estimation of the Energy Needs of Young Broiler Chicks," Proceedings of the Meeting, Arkansas Nutrition Conference 16-21 (Riverfront Hilton, North Little Rock, Ark., Sep. 10-12, 1991); Talpaz, H. et al., "Dynamic Optimization Model for Feeding of Broilers," Agric. Says, 121-132 (1986); Talpaz, H. et al., "Modeling of Dynamics of Accelerated Growth Following Feed Restriction in Chicks," 36 Agric. Sys., 125-135 (1991); Gous, R. M. et al., "A Characterization of the Potential Growth Rate of Six Breeds of Commercial Broiler," 2 Proceedings of XIX World's Poultry Congress, 20-24 (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, September 1992); Emmans, G. C., "The Growth of Turkeys," 21 Recent Advances in Turkey Science, 135-166 (C. Nixey and T. C. Grey eds. 1989); Anthony, N. B. et al., "Comparison of Growth Curves of Weight Selected Populations of Turkeys, Quail and Chickens," 70 Poultry Sci., 13-19 (1991)) and fitted into equation (11) by mathematical methods that are commonly known in the art. The values of B and L are calculated using equation (10). It is helpful to graph k plotted against t^* . In some embodiments, such a graph demonstrates the relationship of $k=f(t^*)$ and that the relationship between k and t^* is non-linear. In some embodiments, the graph shows that statistical methods demonstrate that $k=0.79878t^*(-0.83747)$, where adjusted correlation coefficient $r=0.9746$.

Equation (13) can be rewritten as

$$W=A \exp(-\exp(-(0.79878t^*(-0.83747))(t-t^*))). \quad (14)$$

This equation covers a multitude of growth-curve possibilities and can be used for different types of poultry including turkey, broiler, duck, quail, etc. Given equation (13), constant t^* is the only variable to be affected by various living conditions.

Equations (12) and (13) reveal that the rate at which a bird grows depends on only one variable— t^* or k. As discussed above, t^* is the age at which a bird has its maximum rate of gain and k is a growth-rate factor. The earlier the age, the quicker the bird will grow to the weight at which it may be

marketed. The commercial applications of equation (12) or (13) will be very important tools in selecting the most efficiently growing genotype of bird and in genetic breeding. In some embodiments, the present invention has applications related to the production of other types of animals as well as vegetation.

Equation (13) can be utilized in optimizing poultry production because it correlates multiple growth curves, which include a genetic potential growth curve of the type shown in FIG. 5 (FIG. 1 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, titled "Generating growth alternatives," which is incorporated herein by reference). A curve of this type is required in order to implement a computer optimization process. As discussed above, the genetic potential growth curve of FIG. 5 defines the minimum age at which a bird's maximum growth rate is reached. Given the curve of FIG. 6 (FIG. 3 of U.S. Pat. No. 6,115,692, titled "Generating growth alternatives"), a computer can calculate optimum weight gain and average body weight for each feeding period of a flock of birds. The weight gain and average body weight is then used to determine the optimal living and food environments. The following example shows how the potential weight gain can be modified by changing the density of turkeys within a certain living space.

Change of weight gain= $0.71556+7.9902 \text{ MDENSITY}-57.765 \text{ MDENSITY}^2$ where r (correlation coefficient)=0.8846; overall p-value (possibility value)=0.0006; and MDENSITY-body weight density ranged 0.03 to 0.06 meter²/kg 0.67. Similar predictions can be derived by establishing the effect of temperature, humidity, ventilation, etc. on weight gain.

In addition to predicting physical mass of the entire bird, the inflection point t^* can be used to predict the growth of each component part of a bird's body. The following is an example for turkeys:

Breast (% of Eviscerated carcass)= $67.121-2.2824 \text{ Sex}+0.37094 \text{ Age}-0.00093294 \text{ Age}^2-93116 \ln(\text{Age})-0.14238 t^*$

where $r=0.843$; and p-value of coefficient $t^*=0.0000$.

Thigh (% of Eviscerated carcass)= $14.6+0.056919 \text{ Age}-0.00022113 \text{ Age}^2-0.026625 t^*$ where $r=0.875$; and p-value of coefficient $t^*=0.0000$.

Wing (% of Eviscerated carcass)= $26.399-2.3552 \text{ Sex}+0.10141 \text{ Age}-0.0018162 \text{ Age}^2+0.0000064398 \text{ Age}^3-0.10284 t^*$ where $r=0.90$; p-value of coefficient $t^*=0.0000$.

Neck (% of Eviscerated carcass)= $18.056-2.1653 \text{ Sex}-0.0095747 \text{ Age}-0.085037 t^*$ where $r=0.6367$; and p-value of coefficient $t^*=0.0000$ where Sex=1 for male, 2 for female; age=age in days; t^* =inflection point (days); r =correlation coefficient; and p-value=possibility value.

All the above regression equations show that the inflection point t^* has a significant effect on dependent variables as indicated by the small number of p-values.

In some embodiments, the report that is generated includes values for the maximum profit that is achieved at each one of a plurality of values of the level of risk taken to achieve the corresponding maximized profit, and then lists the values for each of the variables of flock size, sex, strain, and each of the nutrition variables used to formulate the animal feed, space per animal, ventilation and the like needed to obtain the maximum profit at each of the levels of risk. In some embodiments, a plurality of three-dimensional (3D) curves are graphed and output for the human decision maker, wherein each 3D graph shows the expected maximized profit (e.g., on a Z-dimension) for each pair of values

for two variables each representing an important factor relating to risk. In some embodiments, the software of the present invention determines which factors have the highest effect on risk, and the sets of 3D graphs of profit are selected to demonstrate how profit shifts based on which risk factors are addressed by hedging and/or insurance, so that the human decision maker can more easily choose a level of risk to take and the expected profit (and/or a curve representing a range of expected possible profit values) that is/are likely to result.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized apparatus that includes: a first server system operably connected to the internet; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information based on characteristics of the flock or herd including sex, weight, number, and strain; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; and software executing on first server system that varies selected values for each of flock size, sex, weight, number, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculates an expected profit in order to maximize profit for a predetermined amount of risk.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized method that includes: providing a first server system operably connected to the internet; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of the flock or herd including sex, weight, number, and strain; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; and varying selected values for each of flock size, sex, weight, number, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculating an expected profit in order to maximize profit for a predetermined amount of risk.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized apparatus that includes: a first server system operably connected to the internet; means for eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of the flock or herd including sex, weight, number, and strain; means for eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures; means for eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; and means for varying selected values for each of flock size, sex, weight, number, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, means, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, for calculating an expected profit in order to maximize profit for a predetermined amount of risk.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized non-volatile computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon that when executed by a

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suitably programed first server system operably connected to the internet, performs a method that includes: eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of the flock or herd including sex, weight, number, and strain; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; and varying selected values for each of flock size, sex, weight, number, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculating an expected profit in order to maximize profit for a predetermined amount of risk.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized apparatus that includes: a first server system operably connected to the internet; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information based on characteristics of a flock of animals including number of each sex, weight, and strain; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet; software executing on first server system that elicits and receives into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; and software executing on first server system that stores values for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a value for a first level of risk, and varies selected values for each of number of each sex, weight, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculates an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for the first level of risk.

In some embodiments of the apparatus, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, wherein the software executing on first server system optimizes a ratio between expenditures and rate of growth the birds according to equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is a current body weight of the birds, A is a weight of the birds at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is a current age of the birds, and t^* is an age at which the birds have a maximum rate of growth, and wherein t^* and k are statistically related.

In some embodiments of the apparatus, the software executing on first server system calculates an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and wherein the software outputs a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

In some embodiments of the apparatus, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, wherein the software executing on first server system calculates a bird-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average bird of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this information to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the flock of birds, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the flock, and the age at which a flock should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize the profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

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In some embodiments of the apparatus, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time.

In some embodiments of the apparatus, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides a computerized method that includes: providing a first server system operably connected to the internet; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of a flock of animals including number of each sex, weight, and strain; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; storing values in the first server system for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a value for a first level of risk; and varying selected values for each of number of each sex, weight, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculates an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for the first level of risk.

In some embodiments of the method, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, the computerized method further including optimizing a ratio between expenditures and rate of growth the birds according to equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is a current body weight of the birds, A is a weight of the birds at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is a current age of the birds, and t^* is an age at which the birds have a maximum rate of growth, and wherein t^* and k are statistically related.

In some embodiments of the method, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, and the computerized method further includes: calculating an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and outputting a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

In some embodiments of the method, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, and the computerized method further includes: calculating a bird-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average bird of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this information to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the flock of birds, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the flock, and the age at which a flock should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize the profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

In some embodiments of the method, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time.

In some embodiments of the method, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss.

In some embodiments of the method, the varying of selected values includes varying values of future predicted market-demand to maximize expected profit while operating to limit risk to a chosen level selected from the plurality of levels of risk.

In some embodiments of the method, the varying of selected values includes varying values of future predicted risk-mitigation costs to maximize expected profit while operating to limit risk to a chosen level selected from the plurality of levels of risk.

In some embodiments, the present invention provides non-volatile computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon that when executed by a suitably programed first server system operably connected to the internet, performs a method that includes: eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of a flock of animals including number of each sex, weight, and strain; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, flock size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet; eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof; storing values in the first server system for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a value for a first level of risk; and varying selected values for each of number of each sex, weight, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values, calculates an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for the first level of risk.

In some embodiments, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, and the medium has instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes optimizing a ratio between expenditures and rate of growth the birds according to equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is a current body weight of the birds, A is a weight of the birds at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is a current age of the birds, and t^* is an age at which the birds have a maximum rate of growth, and wherein t^* and k are statistically related.

In some embodiments, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, and the medium has instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes calculating an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and outputting a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

In some embodiments, the animals are chicken birds being raised for broilers, and the medium has instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes calculating a bird-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average bird of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this information to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the flock of birds, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the flock, and the age at which a flock should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize the profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

In some embodiments of the medium, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time.

In some embodiments of the medium, the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss.

While the invention and method have been described in conjunction with a specific embodiment thereof, it is evident that different alternatives, modifications, and variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art in view of the

foregoing description. Accordingly, the invention is not limited to these embodiments or the use of elements having specific configurations as presented herein.

It is to be understood that the above description is intended to be illustrative, and not restrictive. Although numerous characteristics and advantages of various embodiments as described herein have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with details of the structure and function of various embodiments, many other embodiments and changes to details will be apparent to those of skill in the art upon reviewing the above description. The scope of the invention should, therefore, be determined with reference to the appended claims, along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled. In the appended claims, the terms "including" and "in which" are used as the plain-English equivalents of the respective terms "comprising" and "wherein," respectively. Moreover, the terms "first," "second," and "third," etc., are used merely as labels, and are not intended to impose numerical requirements on their objects.

What is claimed is:

1. A computerized apparatus comprising:

a first server system operably connected to the internet, the first server system comprising a microprocessor and software instructions to:

elicit and receive into the first server system information based on characteristics of a group of animals including number of each sex, weight, age, and strain;

elicit and receive into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, group size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet;

elicit and receive into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof;

store different risk-level values for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a risk-level value for a first level of risk;

vary selected values for each of sex, weight, strain, optimal diet, environmental conditions, predicted yield, marketing age, and financial figures; and

calculate an expected profit conditioned to each one of the plurality of risk-level values by varying each of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit conditioned to the first level of risk for each of a plurality of combinations of the varied selected values.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the animals are livestock, wherein the software executing on first server system optimizes a ratio between expenditures and rate of growth the livestock according to equation $W=A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is a current body weight of the livestock, A is a weight of the livestock at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is a current age of the turkeys, and t^* is an age at which the livestock have a maximum rate of growth, and wherein t^* and k are statistically related.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the software executing on first server system calculates an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and wherein the software outputs a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the animals are turkeys, wherein the software executing on first server system calculates a turkey-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average turkey of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this informa-

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tion to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the turkeys, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the group of animals, and the age at which the group should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time.

6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss.

7. A computerized method comprising:

providing a first server system operably connected to the internet, the first server system comprising a microprocessor and software instructions;
 eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of a group of animals including number of each sex, weight, age, and strain;
 eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, group size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet;
 eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof;
 storing a plurality of different risk-level values in the first server system for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a risk-level value for a first level of risk;
 varying selected values for each of sex, weight, strain, optimal diet,
 environmental conditions, predicted yield, marketing age, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values; and
 calculating an expected profit conditioned to each one of the stored plurality of different risk-level values while using each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit conditioned to the first level of risk.

8. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the animals are turkeys, the computerized method further including optimizing a ratio between expenditures and rate of growth the turkeys according to equation $W = A \exp(-\exp(-k(t-t^*)))$, where W is a current body weight of the turkeys, A is a weight of the turkeys at physical maturity, k is a growth rate factor, t is a current age of the turkeys, and t* is an age at which the turkeys have a maximum rate of growth, and wherein t* and k are statistically related.

9. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the animals are turkeys, the computerized method further including:

calculating an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and
 outputting a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

10. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the animals are turkeys, the computerized method further including:

calculating a turkey-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average turkey of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this information to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the turkeys, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the turkeys, and the age at which the turkeys

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should be sold to a food processor, in order to maximize profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

11. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time.

12. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss.

13. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the varying of selected values includes varying values of future predicted market-demand to maximize expected profit while operating to limit risk to a chosen level selected from the plurality of levels of risk.

14. The computerized method of claim 7, wherein the varying of selected values includes varying values of future predicted risk-mitigation costs to maximize expected profit while operating to limit risk to a chosen level selected from the plurality of levels of risk.

15. A non-volatile computer-readable medium having instructions stored thereon that when executed by a suitably programed first server system operably connected to the internet, performs a method comprising:

eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on characteristics of a group of animals including number of each sex, weight, age, and strain;
 eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including optimal diet, environmental conditions, group size, predicted mortality rate, predicted yield, and financial figures from the internet;
 eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including type of feed and nutritional values of various ingredients thereof;
 storing a plurality of different risk-level values in the first server system for each one of a plurality of levels of risk including a risk-level value for a first level of risk; and
 varying selected values for each of sex, weight, strain, optimal diet,
 environmental conditions, predicted yield, marketing age, and financial figures and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values; and
 calculating an expected profit conditioned to each one of the plurality of stored plurality of different risk-level values while using each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit conditioned to the first level of risk.

16. The medium of claim 15, wherein the animals are turkeys, the medium having instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes:

calculating an expected profit for each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit for each one of the plurality of levels of risk; and
 outputting a curve of likelihoods of profit values over a range of profit levels for each of the plurality of risk levels.

17. The medium of claim 15, wherein the animals are turkeys, the medium having instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes:

calculating a turkey-weight-versus-time trajectory that an average turkey of the sex and strain reaches its optimum rate-of-growth versus age and uses this information to simultaneously determine an appropriate size for the group of turkeys, the type and amount of feed that should be fed to the group of turkeys, and the age at which the group of turkeys should be sold to a food

processor, in order to maximize profits realized by a commercial integrator who subcontracts meat production.

18. The medium of claim 15, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of transportation and a cost of feed storage at each of a plurality of future moments in time. 5

19. The medium of claim 15, wherein the financial figures used to maximize profit include a cost of borrowing money and a cost of insurance against loss. 10

20. The medium of claim 15, the medium having further instructions stored thereon such that the method further includes:

eliciting and receiving into the first server system information based on genetics, resistances to diseases and pests, water needs and drought-tolerance characteristics of a crop; 15

eliciting and receiving into the first server system information including fertilizer, mineral and nutrient data characteristics for a growth model of the crop; and 20

varying selected values for each of crop nutrients and trace elements and, for each of a plurality of combinations of the selected varied values of crop nutrients and trace elements, calculating an expected profit conditioned to each one of the plurality of risk-level values while using each of a plurality of the varied selected values in order to maximize profit of crop growth and animal growth conditioned to the first level of risk. 25

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