

ROLE OF POULTRY PRODUCTION IN BOOSTING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the roles of poultry production in boosting youth empowerment in Nigeria. Among the challenges facing Nigeria is unemployment issues, particularly among the youth. Poultry farming stands as unexploited resources that can pave way to employment for millions of Nigerian youths and also alleviate the problems of nutritional and livelihood status of the citizen. This paper through a review of literature scrutinizes the importance of poultry and poultry products and explores how it can be harnessed as a relief for unemployment challenges among youths. Various potentials in poultry production were discussed, challenges the youth may be encountering in poultry production were also explored. Recommendations made include organizing a series of seminars and workshops by government and non-governmental organizations for poultry farmers in order to learn and update their knowledge of poultry production. Government should use poultry production business as a means to pursue youth empowerment in order to reduce level of unemployment in the country. To encourage poultry production, credit facilities should be made available to farmers with little or no interest, so that establishing standard hatcheries and breeding farms which are necessary for boosting poultry business among farmers is made easy.

Keywords: Poultry production, Youth empowerment, empowerment, Nigeria, sustainable development.

Introduction

In Africa, Agriculture remained at the forefront of economic activities, accounting for 30 percent of the national income (Heise *et al.*, 2015) and large proportion of the overall exports. For this reason, both public and private concerns in the agricultural sector continue to increase. According to Connolly (2014), about three-quarters of the total population in Africa depend on agriculture for livelihood and the demand for various agricultural products has continued to increase in recent years. With the increase in the disposable income of the population, the demand for agricultural produce especially poultry products (eggs and meat) has continued to increase across the African Continent.

The popularity of poultry birds in Nigeria is noteworthy and can be attributed to the numerous benefits associated with poultry production and other value chain.

Heise *et al.* (2015) argue that poultry birds are good sources of protein, either used as eggs or meat. They further explained that the production of poultry birds is relatively cost effective, thus, making it possible for low income farmers to start up the business. More so, the return on poultry investment is relatively high compared to other livestock production and the high level of acceptability of the poultry meat across diverse ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs broadens the market share and makes the business very viable. In addition to the benefits created by the poultry meat, Ojo (2003) and Aboki *et al.* (2013) remarked that poultry eggs are more affordable for low income earners compared to other sources of protein. This adds to the relative importance of poultry to agriculture.

The distribution of poultry production across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria as provided by the Presidential Committee on Livestock (PCOL) (2003) include 17.8

million birds, 15.8 million birds and 22.6 million birds in the northwest, northeast and north central zones respectively, while the south-east, south-south and south-west geopolitical zones have 16.0 million birds, 15.2 million birds and 24.3 million birds respectively. The production estimates of poultry birds in the report indicate that between 1998 and 2003, 179,667 metric tons of meat was produced while 434,000 metric tons of eggs was produced in Nigeria. In spite of the positive spill-over effects associated with poultry production, the output hardly meets the growing demand. This is because consumption increases rapidly than output. Rotschild (2002) posits that the domestic production shortfall is estimated at 25,000 metric tons. Thus, increasing importation undermines exchange rate stability and external reserve build-up.

The poultry production is among the foremost important agribusiness venture being involved by the youths in Nigeria after crop production (Onuekwusi, Nmerigini & Amanze, 2019). Poultry refers to the birds which are domesticated by man for egg or meat production. It includes such birds like chicken, ducks, geese, turkeys, pigeon, guinea fowl, quail etc. Poultry production involves the breeding, tending and/or raising of poultry to produce eggs and meat (Nwarieji, Obi and Ejiofor, 2017). The poultry industry has remained the most dynamic and fastest growing segment in the animal husbandry subsector. It constitutes about 58.72 per cent of the total livestock resources in Nigeria and many people have gone into poultry production either producing egg or meat or both (Adeniran, Akinagbe, Obute and Olatunji, 2018).

The importance of poultry to national economy cannot be over emphasized as it has become popular for the small-holders that have contributed to the economy of the country. The poultry sub-sector occupies a prominent position in providing the needed animal protein, minerals and vitamins to balance the human diet (Adeniran et al, 2018). In Nigeria, poultry contributes about 15 percent of the total annual protein intake with approximately 1.3kg of poultry products consumed per head per annum (Osuji, 2019). Apart from the provision of needed protein, the poultry industry serves as source of income, employment and poverty

alleviation. Production of poultry is seen to be a part of rural life in most rural Africa where youth form part of the workforce. Approximately 80% of rural households are involved in smallholder poultry production (Heinke, Alexandra, and Ludwig, 2015).

However, despite the vast opportunities abounding in poultry production and its potency in reducing the rate of unemployment among the youths and its role in improving the living condition of rural households, its development has not been fully embraced by the youths (Nwigbo et al, 2016). Youth engagement and interest in agribusiness including poultry production in Nigeria has been low recently.

Generally, youth worldwide have lacked motivation to enter and persist in the agro enterprise (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2017). Potential entry into the poultry enterprise has carried a host of challenges and entry barriers such as insufficient access to knowledge, information and education and limited access to land, financial services, markets, disease outbreaks, poor quality chicks, high cost of feed, and involvement of quacks as well as concerns about environmental pollution from poultry manures (Inyang and Eko, 2015; FAO, 2017). Furthermore, despite worrying accounts of youth's interest in poultry production and other agribusiness areas, there has not been adequate research done to explore the potentiality and opportunities for Nigerian youth to engage actively in poultry farming. It is because of the aforementioned issue that this paper sought to examine the potential role of poultry production in boosting youth empowerment in Nigeria.

Specific objectives are:

1. Identify the importance of poultry and poultry product.
2. Explore the potential role of poultry production among youth.
3. Examine the challenges that youth poultry producer encounter in production.

Importance of Poultry and Poultry Products

Poultry plays significant role in human economy through provision of food while also creating wealth through job provision for our teeming population (Alders, *et al.*, 2019). The presence of smallholder poultry

worldwide and the increasing popularity of 'backyard' poultry in high-income countries reflects their multiple and crucial roles in human societies (Alders *et al.*, 2018). However, the potential of smallholder poultry is yet to be fully and efficiently attained in terms of their contribution to sustainable national and household food and nutrition security. Furthermore, according to Darre (2015), the poultry industry also provides economic support and development effect on the tourism sector as well as the fashion industries. Specifically, however, the poultry industry is relevant to human lives and human living as follows: food provision in the form of the supply of protein, vitamins, minerals, and oils; industrial uses such as in the production of vaccines, fertilizers and animal feeds; pharmaceutical importance including as preservatives during semen storage; in paint and adhesive production companies as varnishes, adhesives, and printers ink; in leather producing companies as leather tanners and in textile industries during the production of different types of cloth dyes. Furthermore, the hospitality industry relies on it for the supply of feathers for display and comfortable luxury mattresses, pillows and cushions as well as in the agricultural industry in the production of organic fertilisers. Lastly, it provides affordable meat for the nation's populace especially those in urban areas (Wahyono and Utami, 2018).

Potential Role of Poultry Production in Youth Empowerment

The followings are the areas where the youth should be actively engaged to alleviate the problems of unemployment:

1. Poultry manure

Poultry manure is a good source of organic materials and contains about 30 percent protein which can be used for making vermicompost, it generates a biofertilizer containing adequate quantities of N, P, K, and several micronutrients which are essential for plant growth every year an average 2-2.5 million tons of poultry litter is produced as a by-product. It enriches soil fertility and

improves its physicochemical and biological properties. In mixed farming systems such as duck/chicken with fish farming, where chicken manure can be used as feed for fish. It can also be used for producing biogas for household use and for power generation (Oliveira *et al.*, 2012).

2. Feathers

High-quality feathers are used to make accessories, hats, and clothes. Other feathers can be processed properly and can be used as animal feed. In addition, they can be converted to biodiesel, biodegradable plastics, and organic fertilizers. Chicken feathers contain about 91% protein (keratin), 1% fat, and 8% water.

3. Egg Shells

Egg shells are waste from the food industry and hatcheries together with restaurants and homes. Eggshells contain approximately 98.2% calcium carbonate, 0.9% magnesium, and 0.9% phosphate, respectively. It can be a valuable source of calcium for livestock feed. Eggshell membranes including the inner and outer membranes contain 69.2% protein, 2.7% fat, 1.5% moisture, 27.2% ash and 10% collagen. After the extraction, collagen has diverse applications in the medical, pharmaceutical, biochemical, food, and cosmetic industries.

4. Designer eggs

The composition of egg nutrients can be modified by making changes in the diet of the hen. Designer eggs that contain extra amounts of desirable nutrients and related compounds from feed can be used to supply important nutrients like fatty acids, minerals, and vitamins. They may act as a potential source of pharmaceuticals that supply the body with antibodies essential for maintaining good immunity and health. According to consumer demands, these can be produced such as low cholesterol eggs, omega 3 enriched eggs, and mineral enriched eggs.

5. Value added products

In poultry industry, besides marketing of meat, egg and manure, there are various demands by the society from poultry industry.

- Whole egg powder, brined and pickled eggs, egg rolls, egg strips, egg souffle, egg cutlet, egg crepe and waffles, albumen flakes/rings, yolk powder, natural yellow pigment from yolk, lecithin, conalbumin and avidin from eggs used in pharmaceutical industry.
- Lysozyme, di-calcium phosphate from shell and shell membranes, cured and smoked chicken, chicken patties, intermediate moisture diced products with long shelf life, battered and breaded enrobed products, chicken chunkalona, chicken soup, chicken essence, nuggets, kababs, meat spreads, marinated breast filled, hot-dogs, frankfurters, etc.
- Giblets, liver and liver extract, deboned meat for airline industry, chicken gizzard pickle, feather meal, poultry by product meal from inedible portions as a source for poultry feed, etc.
- High demand for various forms of egg powder and Hatching eggs including Specific Pathogen Free (SPF) Eggs. Especially SPF eggs are used for research purpose.

6. Potential for employment generation

Poultry farming has tremendous potential for expansion and employment generation. Youth in general and educated unemployed youth in particular can take up this profession easily. The inputs required for poultry farming are available locally in rural areas.

Poultry farming provides employment to those who are engaged in the production of eggs and chicken meat, hatchery operators, feed dealers, building materials, egg cases and trucks, processors of eggs and poultry products and all dealers engaged in the marketing of eggs and poultry meat from the time they leave producer's premises until they are in hands of consumers.

Challenges of Poultry Production in Nigeria

Despite the leading role of poultry production in the livestock industry, it's not without challenges. The challenges of poultry production in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. These challenges have slowed down the rate of production in the industry.

High rate of disease and pest attack as a major challenge in poultry production was reported by Ajala *et al.* (2007) and Aromolaran *et al.* (2013). Lack of access to Loan and credit procurement was also identified in different research carried out (Agbato, 1997; Akeeb 1997; Adebayo and Adeola, 2005; Aromolaran, 2013). Lack of technical knowledge was also reported by Olaniyi *et al.* (2008), and Aromolaran *et al.* (2013) as another challenge facing the industry, this they say, that most people go into poultry farming simply because of the huge profit they see others getting, but fail to enquire the necessary knowledge involved in poultry production. High rate of mortality was also identified by Chilate and Guta (2001); Aromolaran (2013); Anosike *et al.* (2015), as major challenges facing the industry, this they say was due to supply of poor quality chicks as reported by Ajala *et al.* (2007); Adeyemo and Onikoyi (2012); Anosike *et al.* (2015). Anosike *et al.* (2015), also reported that most farmers do not have an idea of the farms that hatch the chicks they buy, as they buy from road side hawker. Ajala *et al.* (2007), also reported that mortality mostly occur at brooding stage. High cost of poultry feeds was identified by Agro-Ind (2002); Sonaiya and Swan (2004); Adeyemo and Adeyemo (2009) Adeyemo and Onikoyi (2012) reported that inadequate poultry extension services are one of the major challenges faced by the poultry industry. Inadequate access to and high cost of Veterinary services was reported by Adeyemo and Onikoyi (2012); Anosike *et al.* (2015) as another major challenge posing a trait to the industry.

Conclusion

With the current economic predicament of Nigeria, having a large number of unemployed youth in the society, and the country is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. The agricultural production capacity for both crop and animals is insignificant to meet up the demand. Therefore, for a country like Nigeria to be food secured there is a need for

economic diversification through agricultural production for both crops and animals. However, investment in poultry production would serve as a remedy in terms of job creation, food security, self-reliance and stand a good source for economic diversification in the developing countries like Nigeria.

Recommendations

- i. Seminars and workshops should be organized for poultry farmers in order to learn and update their knowledge of poultry production. This will ensure the availability of poultry and poultry products and hence serve as a good source of income to the farmers.
- ii. The government should use poultry production business as a means to pursue youth empowerment in order to reduce level

of unemployment in the country. This measure will enable the Government to fulfill their promise of providing employment for our youth and also will reduce the violence and the issue of insecurities in our society.

- iii. Provision for capital and subsidize farm incentive to farmers would help to improve the productivity of poultry production.
- iv. Medicine and vaccine should be made available for effective poultry production.
- v. Establishing standard hatcheries and breeding farms is necessary for boosting poultry business among farmers.
- vi. Electricity should be made available for effective poultry production and for the storage of necessary facilities like vaccines.
- vii. Credit facilities should be made available for farmers with little or no interest rate, so that to encourage production.

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