

Cattle production and marketing in Nigeria; the impact of diseases. A case study of Maiakuya, Assakio and Shinge cattle Markets in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Investigations were carried out in three major cattle markets in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State from January to September 2000 to evaluate the impact of animal diseases on cattle production and marketing. The study area are Maiakuya, Assakio and Shinge cattle markets. Cattle rearing and marketing constitute a major livestock enterprise in the study area, yet, diseases remain one of the major constraints hindering the growth of the enterprise. Structures questionnaires were administered to collect information on this study. In all, 200 questionnaires were administered out of which 185 were returned. Some of the issues addressed by the questionnaires includes; herd size, breed of cattle, knowledge and impact of diseases, fly problems, treatment of animals, benefit and cost of treatment, marketing and lucrative ness of cattle farming among others. The results showed that cattle owners in the study area are aware about the problems of animal diseases and the resultant effects on the productivity and profitability of their cattle. Trypanosomosis, worms infestations and skin diseases among others are some of the diseases mentioned. 148 (80%) of the respondents are familiar with tsetse fly and trypanosomosis problems with 58 (31.4%) and 72 (38.9%) rating trypanosomosis as No 1 and No 2 problems respectively. The results further revealed that treatment charges are expensive. 161 (87%) of the respondents held this view with insufficient Government owned veterinary clinics and high cost of drugs as some of the reasons advanced for this unhealthy situation. The objective of this study is to highlight the potentials and constraints of livestock production and marketing in the face of increasing demand for protein of animal origin for Nigerians and sub-Saharan populace in general.

INTRODUCTION

Livestock production is faced with a number of constraints, which on the long run results in low productivity and reduced profitability. Prominent among these constraints are diseases. Animal diseases constitute a major obstacle to economic development as well as posing health risk to the human population of tropical Africa. Problems associated with reduced livestock productivity and profitability include; inadequate consumption of protein of animal origin, poverty, unemployment, low contribution to the Nations Gross Domestic Product (GDP) among others. This situation has in no small measure prevented the effective utilization of the huge potentials of the livestock sector.

Animal production in many African countries contribute 20 – 30 percent of Agricultural Gross Domestic Product (Ag GDP)(Anon,2004). In countries such as Botswana,

Mauritania and Namibia, this may reach 80%(Abassa,1995). Yet animal production is almost impossible in the hot and wetter parts of Africa due to diseases such as trypanosomosis (Agyemang,2004) and the pressure of parasites(ticks, worms etc).

Sustainable Agricultural development is one of the main prerequisites for growth and stability of the economy of an agrarian Nation like Nigeria- a Nation that is highly endowed with both human and natural resources which favour both crop and livestock production. The contributions of the agricultural sector to the Nation's economy in the pre and postcolonial era when agriculture was the main thrust of the economy cannot be over emphasized. Animal agriculture is an indispensable pre-requisite towards the sustainability of human development because of food provision, employment generation etc (Oluwafemi, et al, 2001). In Nigeria, a high

percentage of the population earns their living from agriculture and agriculture oriented activities and therefore contributes to the development of the Nation.

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Livestock accounts for 18-20% of Nigeria's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) with livestock alone accounting for 4.5 – 5% (FAO,1987). In the same vein, anon (2006) reported that the Nigerian agricultural sector has continue to play a pivotal role in the rapid economic transformation of the Nation with the impressive performance accounting for 41% of the Country's Gross Domestic Product, 80% of the non – oil foreign exchange earnings and over 60% of active labour force in the country. Livestock have the characteristics of a capital investment yielding an interest in the form of milk, eggs and other valuable products (Oluwafemi et al,2001). Apart from serving as a source of food for humans, animal agriculture is also important in providing non- food materials such as hides, skin, wool and feather which are in turn used as raw materials for manufacturing other valuable products e.g hides as skin for leather goods. The restoration of these past achievements requires collective and sincere commitment of all stakeholders.

Focus on agriculture is not a misplacement, although, both the previous and present administrations in Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture has put in place several programmes and policies towards the goal of food security, these efforts has always been confronted with a number of constraints such as crop and livestock pests and diseases among others. Attempt was therefore made in this study to highlights the enormous potentials and the impact of diseases on cattle production and marketing in three major cattle markets in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in three major cattle markets namely- Maiakuya, Assakio and Shinge cattle markets in Lafia Local Government of Nasarawa State from January to September 2000. Nasarawa State was originally part of Plateau State and is located next to the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja and in the central area of the middle belt region along latitude 7o North and longitude 7o and 10o east. The study area lies within the Biological Control of Tsetse fly project area. Data for this study were obtained with the use of structured questionnaire. Administration of the questionnaire was preceded by enlightenment and necessary interaction and information about the importance

of the study with the respondents.

In all, 200 questionnaires were administered during the study period out of which 185 were returned. The target respondents were mostly Fulani cattle owners , individual cattle owners, middle men in cattle marketing business and veterinarians (including quacks) who are major players in cattle production and marketing business in the study area. Some of the issues addressed by the questionnaires include; herd size, breed of cattle, knowledge and impact of diseases, fly problems, treatment of animals, and marketing and lucrative ness of cattle farming among others.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 200 questionnaires were administered in the study area to collect information on the impact of diseases on cattle production and marketing. Out of the 200 questionnaires administered, 185 were returned with useful information in respect of the study. The results showed that majority 131 (70.81%) of the respondents were cattle owners (Fulani and other individuals), 39(21.1%) were middlemen in cattle marketing business while veterinarians and others who renders services based on commission constitutes 15(8.1%).

The major breeds of cattle identified during the study are White Fulani (Zebu) and Sokoto Gudali with the White Fulani constituting over 70% of the cattle population. The questionnaires also revealed that herd sizes of cattle owners among the respondents varies with the majority (33%) having less than 20 cattle, however larger sizes are common with Fulani in which 15.7% have between 31 – 40 cattle, 17.3% have 41 and above. Cattle owners with less than 20cattle are mostly civil servants, traders and farmers who are into the business of cattle rearing and marketing as a way of supplementing their income. These group of cattle owners usually engage the services of herd boys and other cattle keepers who normally take the cattle out for grazing on commission basis. It was also observed during the study that marketing of cattle is usually at its peak during festivities such as the Muslim and Christian religious festivities. This reason among others according to most of the respondents is why cattle production and marketing is considered a viable livestock enterprise in the study area.

82.2% respondents are aware of diseases or conditions that usually have negative impact on their cattle. Some of such conditions identified include; trypanosomosis, skin diseases, worm infestations, foot rot and fly problems. The resultant

effects of these diseases as indicated in the questionnaires are poor growth, emaciation, rough hair coat, anaemia, general ill health and death when the condition is severe. 83% of the cattle owners usually treat their cattle against these unhealthy conditions but complained that the treatment charges are expensive. Although the respondents unanimously agreed that treatment of animals against these diseases has a lot of benefits (prominent among which is the increase productivity and market value) yet the survey revealed a lot of problems being faced by cattle owners. Apart from the high cost of drugs and treatment charges, government owned veterinarians and veterinary clinics are insufficient, leading to the existence of quacks in the area.

Verbal interactions with some of the respondents revealed that the hostile attitude towards our team by some Fulani cattle owners was as a result of what they have suffered in the hand of some quack veterinarians and fake middlemen. Therefore, since these cattle owners are familiar with most of these diseases, the result revealed that they usually buy drugs from local drug sellers while they carry out treatment. The importance of good health in determining the productivity, size and hence market value of cattle as revealed by this study cannot be over emphasized. As a result of these factors, the study showed that some adult cattle were sold for as low as ten thousand Naira only while some others were sold for as high as fifty thousand naira and above.

Considering the importance of cattle farming in providing livelihood for the respondents and their family, and the deleterious effects of diseases on cattle productivity and market value, 77% of the respondents are prepared to make commitment to livestock development programmes. Therefore, some of the respondents offer different suggestions to the government towards livestock development. Some of the suggestions includes; request for incentives like subsidy on veterinary drugs, establishment of veterinary clinics and training of more veterinary personnel including veterinary extension agents among others.

CONCLUSION

Reviewing the state of cattle production and marketing in the study area showed an enterprise in need of attention, an enterprise that is not properly supervised by the government and an enterprise that is viable to the extent of solving a considerable percentage of unemployment problems facing the nation. The restoration of the collective will in the minds of the various operators in the agricultural industry is

paramount in efforts to step up production (Onucheyo, 1998). According to this author, agriculture will have to be repackaged, just like an attractive product for investors to buy. This product must be promoted properly. It must have the right price and must be sold to the right people at the appropriate places.

The present study has shown that the livestock sub-sector can make more significant contribution above the present level to the Nation's GDP if its potentials are considerably utilized. Policies and decisions that will allow government incentives such as loan to get to the farmers should be properly implemented. In the past, most of the benefits of government agricultural support through agencies like the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC) and a host of others hardly get to the resource poor farmers. This in most cases is due to stringent conditions such as presentation of collateral security attached to such facility, and this can hardly be met by majority of the farmers. This situation should be carefully looked into by the authorities concerned with the provision of such facility in order to achieve the goals of poverty reduction, employment generation and sustainable economic development among others. Training and engagement of more livestock extension agents will no doubt make positive contribution to this effort.

The plight of cattle owners in the study area should be considered, taking into account their challenges, promises and suggestions towards a better condition for cattle production and marketing. Finally, according to Nielson (2004), if agriculture is to fulfill its promise of being the driving force of economic growth, it needs greater attention in development policies and priorities.

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