



INFORMATION NEEDS OF FARMERS IN RABBIT PRODUCTION IN SAGAMU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF OGUN STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the information needs of farmers involved in rabbit production in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. Sixty respondents involved in rabbit production were purposively selected, sampled and interviewed through a well structured interview schedule. The data obtained were analysed with the aid of frequency counts, percentages and cumulative percentages while Chi-square analysis was used for testing the research hypothesis. The various areas where information is needed by the farmers involved in rabbit production include: identification of various rabbit diseases, factors causing pests and diseases in rabbits, methods of eliminating ecto-parasites, appropriate number of rabbits per cage, housing pattern, sources of suitable rabbit breeds, types of feed available for rabbits and weaning age for fryers. The findings revealed the demographic characteristics of the farmers involved in rabbit production and also revealed the different sources of information available to the respondents. Statistically, it was revealed that there was significant relationship between respondents' level of education, contact with extension agents and number of rabbits kept and their information needs with the chi-square calculated values greater than the chi-square tabulated values in each factor.

KEYWORDS: Information Needs, Rabbit Production, Chi-Square.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic animals play a vital role in global food supply. About 33 percent of protein consumed in human diet globally is from animal products, while animal products provide about 16 percent of food energy (Martins, 2001). Nigeria is a nation where the populace food intake is deficient in animal protein. Food and Agriculture Organisation (1981) posted that minimum protein requirement of adult weighing 70kg is 65-70g protein/day and out of which 35g should be of animal origin. In Nigeria, it was reported that the daily animal protein intake is 5.9g/day which is below the recommended value.

The government is aware of the deficiency of animal protein in diets and has designed policies to encourage livestock production and such policies include: National Livestock Policy of 1988, which was formulated toward self-sufficiency in livestock production. These policies however have been centered on cattle, sheep, goat, pig and poultry production. Lately, it has been realised that animal protein supply of the country can be sourced from other livestock species rather than the ruminants and poultry. Such sources are derivable from a category of livestock termed "micro-livestock" or "small-ruminants". The term micro-livestock/small ruminant actually connotes their small body size, moderate nutritional and management requirements examples of which include rabbit, grass cutters and guinea pigs.

Rabbits have been found to be nutritiously low in fat and fine grained and suitable alternative to poultry meat. Yet little is known by farmers concerning their production. Umaru *et al.* (1988) opined that interest has been shown by the Directorate of Food, Roads and Infrastructure (DFRRI) in rabbit production as a means of improving the nutritional status of Nigerians. Also, Owen (1976) stated that rabbits are gaining attention as meat sources. Rabbit possesses a lot of characteristics that are advantageous in comparison with other livestock animals which include rapid growth rate, high reproductive potential, inexpensive and easily constructed housing. Their carcass is also very high in protein, low in fat, sodium and cholesterol.

In spite of all these advantages, very few farmers are involved in rabbit rearing, hence their production level is low. The Presidential task force on alternative formulation of livestock feeds stated that of all livestock

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produced in the country, rabbits have the lowest production when compared to the total production of livestock. The low level of production of rabbits can be attributed to lack of needed information about rabbit rearing among the farmers. Information has been identified as one of the resources required for the improvement of agricultural production. It is said to be a resource that must be acquired and used in order to make an informed decision. Those who possess appropriate and timely information will make a more rational decision than those without it.

According to Williams and Williams (1978), agricultural development depends to a larger extent on the provision of appropriate information to the farmers. Similarly, Agricultural Development Project (ADP) has disseminated rabbitary information to the farmers but their productivity is still low which has led to low adoption and abandoned adoption, hence farmers don't make expected output compared to ADP projection. Therefore, in view of this, the study intent to determine the information needs of farmers involved in rabbit production in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. Specifically, the study intends to identify the demographic characteristics of the farmers involved in rabbit production, determine the areas in which farmers need information in rabbit production and identify the sources of information available to farmers involved in rabbit production. Also, it was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between the demographic characteristics of the farmers and their information needs in rabbit production.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State. The local government area shares boundary with Owode-Obafemi Local Government in the west, Odogbolu and Ikenne Local Government in the east while Odeda Local Government is in the north and Ikorodu Local Government of Lagos State in the south. Agricultural activities in the area included production of food crops such as maize, yam, cassava, vegetables and okra while permanent crops grown include cocoa, cashew, mango, citrus and pineapple. In the study area, five communities were purposively selected to investigate the information needs of farmers involved in rabbit production. The selected communities include Mosimi, Itun alalro, Igbepa, Likosi and Emuren. The population of the study consists of all farmers involved in rabbit rearing including both male and female.

The list of farmers involved in rabbit production and management was provided by the ADP officials in the study area containing 60 farmers. In view of this small number of farmers involved in the practice, all the respondents constitute the sample for the study. A well-structured interview schedule was administered on the respondents to obtain the needed information.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics used include frequency counts, percentages and cumulative percentages while inferential statistics used to test for relationship between the variable (hypothesis) was chi-square analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Data presented on table 1 show that, majority of the sampled respondents (81.7%) were male while the remaining 18.3% represent female respondents. This indicates that male were more involved in rabbit production than the female. The reason for low female participation in rabbit rearing may be due to other activities such as caring for the home, rearing of the children, fending for the home as well as other household chores which the women were involved and which may take more of their time.

The table further reveals that 85% of the respondents were married, 10% single and the remaining 5% were widowed. It also revealed that majority (66.7%) of the sampled respondents were Muslims while the remaining 33.3% accounted for Christian respondents. This implies that religion barrier does not hinder rabbit production i.e. rabbit rearing does not have religion implication hence irrespective of

Ones religion, rabbit production is a business which everyone can venture into.

Similarly, majority of the respondents (55%) were within the age group of 41-50 years while 28.3% were within the age group of 21- 40 years and the remaining 16.7% represent those respondents who fall within the age group of 51 years and above. The implication of the age distribution is that many individuals will actively participate in rabbit production if there is adequate and timely information delivery in relation to rabbit production to encourage them.

The table further revealed that 33.3% of the respondents had no formal education hence they could not read and write and none of them had either adult education or vocational training while 31.7% had primary education, 30% had secondary education and only 5% had tertiary education. It was also seen on the table that, 38.3% of

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the respondents keep between 7-13 rabbits while 31.7% have between 1-6 rabbits and the remaining 30% keep between 14 rabbits and above.

It was also found that majority of the sampled respondents (83.3%) had contact with extension agents while the remaining 16.7% do not have contact with extension agents.

Areas in which farmers require information in rabbit production

Data presented on table reveals that majority of the sampled respondents (33.3%) require information relating to the weaning age of fryers while 16.7% require information relating to the factors causing pests and diseases in rabbits and 13.3% require information relating to identification of various rabbit diseases. Also 11.7% of the sampled respondents require information relating to methods of eliminating ectoparasites in rabbit and appropriate number of rabbits required for cages respectively while 6.7% need information in the area of housing pattern in rabbit production and only 3.3% need information in the area of sources of suitable rabbit breeds and type of feed available for rabbits respectively. This implies that all sampled respondents require information in one area or the other so as to expand the scope of their activities, thereby maximizing profits.

Respondents' sources of information in rabbit production

As it could be seen on table 3 that majority of the respondents (56.7%) obtain their information through the extension agents only while 20% obtain information through extension agents and fellow farmers and 16.7% indicated that their source of information is through fellow farmers and friends. Only 6.6% indicated that their source of information is through the radio.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Table 4 shows the summary of the chi-square analysis of the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and their information needs. The table shows that there is significant relationship between respondents' level of education, contact with extension agents and number of rabbits kept and their information needs while there is no significant relationship between gender, religion, age and marital status and information needs. This implies that educational level, contact with extension agents and number of rabbit kept had positive influence on the respondents' information needs in the study area.

CONCLUSION

This study determines the information needs of farmers involved in rabbit production in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun state with particular focus on five rural communities namely Mosimi, Itun alaro, Igbepa, Likosi and Emuren. The following conclusions were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Majority of the sampled respondents (81.7%) involved in rabbit production were male, married (85%), Muslim (66.7%) and adult between ages 41-50 years (55%).
2. A larger proportion (66.7%) of the respondents involved in rabbit production were literate, keep between 7-13 rabbits (38.3%) and had contact with extension agents (83.3%).
3. Access to needed and timely delivery of information will encourage respondents to increase their production.
4. All the sampled respondents have access to information but through different sources. Majority obtain information through extension agents (56.7%) and require information relating to the weaning age of fryers.
5. There was significant relationship between respondents level of education, contact with extension agents and number of rabbits kept and information needs with X^2 calculated values greater than X^2 tabulated in each factor.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Technical information needed for rabbit production should be provided to the farmers and adequately.
2. Extension activities should be intensified in mobilizing more farmers into rabbit production as well as to encourage the farmers that are already in the business.

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	49	81.7
Female	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0
<u>Marital status</u>		
Single	6	10.0
Married	51	85.0
Widowed	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0
<u>Religion</u>		
Islam	40	66.7
Christianity	20	33.3
Total	60	100.0
<u>Age (Years)</u>		
21-30	7	11.6
31-40	10	16.7
41-50	33	55.0
51 and above	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0
<u>Level of education</u>		
No formal education	20	33.3
Primary education	19	31.7
Secondary education	18	30.0
Tertiary education	3	5.0
Total	60	100.0
<u>Number of rabbits kept</u>		
1-6	19	31.7
7-13	23	38.3
14 and above	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0
<u>Contact with extension agents</u>		
Yes	50	83.3
No	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2011.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to areas of information needs

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Identification of various rabbit diseases	8	13.3
Factors causing pests and diseases in rabbits	10	16.7
Methods of eliminating ectoparasite	7	11.7
Appropriate number of rabbits per cage	7	11.7
Housing pattern	4	6.7
Sources of Suitable rabbit breed	2	3.3
Type of feed available for rabbit	2	3.3
Weaning age of fryers	20	33.3
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2011.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to information sources in rabbit production

Characteristics	Frequency	%
Extension agents	34	56.7
Fellow farmers and friends	10	16.7
Radio	4	6.6
Extension agents and fellow farmers	12	20.0
Total	60	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2011

Table 4: Summary of Chi-square analysis of the relationship between respondents' demographic characteristics and their information needs.

Demographic characteristics	Df	X ²	X ²	Remarks
		calculated	Tabulated	
Sex	2	3.41	5.99	NS
Marital status	4	0.74	9.49	NS
Religion	2	2.40	5.99	NS
Age	6	10.08	12.59	NS
Level of education	6	21.76	12.59	S
Number of rabbits kept	4	11.07	9.49	S
Contact with extension agents	2	7.65	5.99	S

At 5% significance level.