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J. Amin. Prod. Res. (2015) 27:213-218

YOUTH IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION: KEY TO THE ACTUALIZATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AGENDA (ATA) - A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the involvement of the youth in livestock production as being crucial to the actualization of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA).This paper looked at the socio-economic role of livestock to include; provides source of essential food product- meat, milk, egg and other diary product, increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), create employment, provide income, generate draught power and organic manure for arable farming, and also serves as an index of social prestige. The paper reviewed the rate of youth involvement in livestock production as being too poor as reported by Umeh and Odom (2011),Arowolo *et al.* (2013), Aphunu and Atoma (2010), Gwary *et al.* (2008), Onuekwusi and Ottah (2006), Madukwe (2000), and Onuekwusi (2005). They also identified constraints to youth involvement in livestock production to include: lack of incentive form the government, insufficient land, lack of infrastructure in the rural areas, inadequate training and extension services, non-recognition of youth as partners in rural development by power brokers, government policy, long gestation period as compared to crop production which has short gestation period, lack of interest, labour intensive and stress. It finally agrees with some key factors which if considered will bring about the actualization of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) through the involvement of the youth in livestock production, they include; youths' sufficient access to knowledge, information, and Education, youth's access to land, youth adequate access to financial service, youth access to markets, and youth involvement in policy dialogue. As reported by (FAO, 2014). Addressing these factors will prove vital to increasing youth's involvement in the agricultural sector, most especially in the area of livestock production and ultimately addressing the vastly untapped potential of this sizeable and growing demographic group.

KEY WORD: Youth, Livestock production, Agricultural Transformation Agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Livestock production and the involvement of the youth in livestock production is as old as the biblical times as shown in Genesis 46. In verses 33-34, Joseph instructed his brother 'when the king calls for you and asks what your occupation is, be sure to tell him that you have taken care of livestock all your lives' (Ikhatua, 2000). Youth, the state of being young, is a transitional period in personality development that bridges the years between childhood and adulthood (D' Souza, 1970). The age bracket varies among authorities, ten to twenty years and 10-30 years (Anonymous, 2000). Youth possess unique capabilities, dynamism, strength, adventure, ambition, hilarity etc (Udah, 2000; Waldie, 2004; Akwiwu *et al.*, 2005). These are assets for livestock production. Youth sometimes have their livestock farms while on the other hand complement parents' effort by supplying labour for a wide variety of activities. They receive farm information and insome cases assist parents in analyzing innovations (Nnadi and Akwiwu, 2008). The youth constitute the larger percentage of the labour force of every country. It is however unfortunate that in spite of the unique capabilities possessed by theyouth, their involvement in livestock production is rather low, this is because the youth lack encouragement from government and relevantauthority in agricultural decision and policy making. Studies in the past have looked atother aspect of youth involvement, such as;

youth migration (Angba, 2003), preference for agriculture discipline (Ajaero and Njoku, 2005), Youths' restiveness (Adesope *et al*., 2000) and youth participation in agriculture (Nnadi and Akwiwu, 2008.)

This paper looks at how youth involvement in livestock production, can help in the actualization of the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA). Agricultural Transformation Agenda is one of top point Agenda of President GoodLuck Jonathan (GCFR) President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Its objectives and goal is to increase, on a sustainable basis, the income of smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs that are engaged in the production, processing, storage and marketing of selected commodity value chains (Akinwumi, 2012). This will in turn, alleviate poverty, enable the country attain food security, reduce unemployment rate (job creation) and increase National GDP. The various area of livestock production in which the youth can go into include; poultry production, cattle production, pig production, sheep and goat production. Also feed production, meat processing and animal fattening are areas in livestock production where the youth can engage.

THE STATE OF NIGERIAN LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

Accurate statistical data on the Nigerian livestock population are very scarce and are as varied as the human population figures. Various figures have been given by different sources and at different times. Resource Inventory and Management, 1990 gave the livestock population to comprise about 14million cattle, 23million goat and 13 million sheep (RIM, 1990). However these figure have since increased to 15.2 million cattle, 28 million goats and 23 million sheep, (FAO, 2006, Aregheore, 2005) other ruminant livestock species of economic importance are asses, horses and camels. Nigeria is the largest livestock producer I the Sub-Sahara Africa, while Ethiopia and Sudan have the largest livestock population in the African continent (Lamorde, 1998). Cleaver and Shreiber (1994) put the surface area of Nigeria as 91.07 million hectares, 57%of which is believed to be either under crops or pasture while the remaining 43% is divided amongst forest, water bodies and other uses. The Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria (FMEN, 2001) 1993 estimate of irrigation land at 9570km^2 and arable land about 35%, 15% pasture, 10% forest reserve, 10% for settlement and the remaining 30% considered uncultivated for one reason or the other. (Boomie,1998) corroborated the irrigation land at 9570 km^2 with arable land 33%, permanent crops, 3%, permanent pasture 44% forests and woodland 12% and others 8%. In spite of the vast natural resources at its disposal, Nigeria remains among the least animal protein consumer in Africa. The animal protein intake for North America, Western and Eastern Europe are 66, 39 and 33 g/head/day. While the average intake for Africa is 11 g/head/day, the average value for Nigeria is 7.5 g/head/day (Lamorde, 1998). Realizing that the annual population growth rate of 3%is relatively faster than the 2% annual growth rate in livestock production, the situation appears to be deteriorating with time. The trend calls for an urgent reorientation, most especially among the youth to engage actively in livestock production.

SOCIO- ECONOMIC ROLE OF LIVESTOCK

In Nigeria the population growth rate and demand for food is over 3% while growth rate in food production is between 1.0-1.5% leaving a short fall 1.5-2% in annual food supplies (Ikhatua, 2000). It is important to note also the imbalance in these food supplies between plant and animal sources; the former contributing over 75% and the later accounting for the remaining 25%. This is mainly due to improper development of the livestock industry (Lamorde 1998). Livestock production is an integrated economic activity which contributes5-6% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 20% of the agricultural component of the Gross Domestic Product. Livestock therefore plays a major role in the socio-economic development of the nation. Between 70 – 80% of the nation's population of over 150 million

are engaged in agriculture as their major occupation (though 60% are subsistent farmers). Livestock production provides continuous sources of essential food products – meat, milk, eggs and other dairy products throughout the year. It sustains the employment and income of millions of people in rural areas and generates draught power and organic manure for arable farming mainly in the savanna ecological zones of the country. The sale of livestock and livestock products provides the major source of cash income to the Fulani pastoralists for the purchase of consumer goods, agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizer and pesticides to improve and increase cropproduction (Ikhatua 2000). Among the nomadic Fulani and Shuwa Arab pastoralists, livestock also serves as an index of social prestige (Lamorde, 1998).

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

It is rather unfortunate that in spite of the enormous contributions of youth to household agriculture and despite the qualities possessed by the youth, their involvement in livestock production is too low. According to the research carried out by Umeh and Odom (2011) in Aguta L.G.A. of Anambra State, only (17%) out of the total of 100 youth sampled were involved in livestock production in the area. Also according to the research carried out by Arowolo *et al* (2013) (45.3%) out of the 150 youth sampled gave no reason for not involving in livestock production precisely cattle rearing. The study further revealed that inadequacy of feed forage all year round, lack of capital, lack of interest, the labour intensiveness and stress involved were reasons given by the youths for their non-attractiveness to cattle farming which is an aspect of livestock production. Furthermore, the research carried out by Aphunu and Atoma (2010) in Detal State shows that (69.3%) of the 150 youth sampled were highly involved in arable crop production, while less than (40%) were involved in livestock production, this also agrees with the findings of Gwary, Pur, and Bawa (2008) who reported that youth were interested mostly in crop production than livestock production.

CONSTRAINTS TO YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

Constraints which have led to the low tune of youth involvement in livestock production are not farfetched. Aphunu and Atoma (2010) identified the lack of incentives form government, insufficient land, lack of infrastructure in the rural areas, and inadequate training and extension services as major constraints to youth involvement in livestock production, Onuekwusi and Ottah (2006) also identified lack of infrastructure and essential imputs, Nor and Madukwe (2000) indentified ineffective agricultural extension system as a constraint. Umeh and Odom (2011) in their findings also identified lack of social amenities, non recognition of youth as partners in rural development by power broker, lack of good leadership as constraints to youth involvement in livestock production, these also agrees with the findings of Onuekwusi (2005) who reported that bad leadership (government policy) and lack of community support as constraints. Aphunu and Atoma (2010), identified that livestock production is capital intensive and has short gestation period, which ensures late turnover as constraints to youth involvement in livestock production, these also agrees with the findings of Gwary *et al.* (2008) who reported that the capital intensity and long gestation period in livestock production as compared to crop production are constraints to youth not been involved in livestock production. Arowolo *et al.* (2013) also identified lack of capital, lack of interest, labour intensiveness and stress as constraints to youths' non involvement in livestock production.

ACTUALIZATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AGENDA THROUGH YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

The federal government in the bid to ensure the actualization of agricultural transformation agenda has taken some important steps, such as the constitution of a 14 member policy – working group to develop innovation polices and institution that would facilitate the actualization of the agricultural transformation agenda. The aim is to institutionalize agricultural policies and make sure that there are legislations to protect the reforms embarked on by the current administration. Also the government has involved the private sector in agricultural development projects; they now play an important role in actualization of the agricultural transformation agenda, through the employment of youth in various private sectors, setting up processing plants in zones of high food production, to process commodities into food products.The youth Employment and Agricultural Programme is a clear step to the actualization of the agricultural transformation agenda (Akinwumi, 2012).

The actualization of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda, through involvement of the youth in livestock production is feasible, if some key factors are taken into consideration, these key factors include;

Youth's sufficient Access to Knowledge, information, and Education: Particularly in developing countries, there is a distinct need to improve young men and women's access to education and to incorporate agricultural skills into education curriculum. Agricultural training and education must be adapted to ensure that graduates skills meet the needs of rural labour markets. Poor and inadequate education limits productivity and the acquisition of skills while insufficient access to knowledge and information can hinder the development of entrepreneurial venture.

Youth's Access to Land: Access to land is fundamental to starting a farm; it can be often difficult for young people to acquire. Loans to assist youth in acquiring land are needed, while leasing arrangement, through which youth gain access – though not ownership to land may also prove effective.

Youth Adequate Access to Financial Services: Most financial service providers are reluctant to provide their services – including credit, savings and insurance to youth due to lack of collateral and financial literacy, among other reasons. Promoting financial product directed at theyouth, mentoring programmes and start-up funding opportunities can also help remedy this issue. Encouraging youth to group themselves into informal savings clubs can also prove useful in this respect.

Youth's Access to Markets: without such access youth will not be able to engage in viable sustainable agricultural ventures. Access to market for youth is becoming more difficult due to international influence of supermarkets and the rigorous standards of their supply chains. Improving access to education, training and market information can facilitate youth's access to markets, with niche markets offering particularly significant opportunities for young farmers. Facilitating their involvement in (Youth) producers' group can similarly be beneficial in this respect.

Youth's Involvement in Policy Dialogue: Too often young people's voices are not heard during the policy process, and so their complex and multifaceted needs are not met. Policies often fail to account for the heterogeneity of youth, and so do not provide them with effective support. To remedy this, youth need the requisite skills and capacities for collective action to ensure that their voices are heard. Policymakers themselves must actively engage youth in the policymaking process.

Youth in livestock production

Addressing these factors will prove vital to increasing youth's involvement in the agricultural sector, most especially in the area of livestock production and ultimately addressing the vastly untapped potential of this sizeable and growing demographic group. In developing countries in particular, facilitating the youth cohort's participation in livestock production has the potential to drive widespread poverty reduction among youths and adults alike (FAO, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

Ensuring that youth have access to the right information is crucial, integrated training approaches are required so that youth may respond to the needs of a more modern agricultural sector, modern information and communication technologies offer great potential in this regard. There is a distinct need to organize and bring youth together to improve their capacities for collective action.Youth-specific projects and programmes can be effective in providing youth with the extra push needed to go into livestock production; and a coherent and integrated response is needed from policymakers and development practitioners alike to ensure that the core challenges faced by youth are effectively addressed

(FAO, 2014). Indeed, the actualization of AgriculturalTransformation Agenda, through a coordinated response to increase youth's involvement in livestock production is more important now than ever, in view of the rising global population and decreasing livestock productivity.

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