
BACKYARD BULL FATTENING: A STRATEGY FOR REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Fattening of large ruminants as a business is not very common in Nigeria. Small ruminants are usually reproduced on the farms or houses and are sold around festivities (sallah or Christmas) or when cash is required. No special efforts, other than grazing the animals, are made by many smallholder farmers and pastoralists to "fatten" them. A similar situation exists for fattening of large ruminants (bulls) as a business. Most farmers in Nigeria sell their bulls once they have used them to plough their farm for a number of years. Little or no inputs and improved management practices have been introduced to "fatten" these animals commercially. Lack of interest in bull fattening as a means of employment is no doubt one of the major contributing factors to the problem of youth unemployment in Nigeria. The high rate of Youth unemployment is not only because there are no jobs at all, but because the youth, especially educated, prefer to wait for well-paid jobs in the formal sector instead of engaging in other activities like bull fattening businesses. The paper discussed the unemployment situation in Nigeria, bull fattening business and its profitability in Nigeria. Importance of bull fattening; Status of fattening in Nigeria; Strategy for effective bull fattening business in Nigeria; Feeding requirements of fattening bulls; and Challenges of Bull Fattening Business Enterprise in Nigeria and some recommendations and conclusion were proffered. The following are some of the recommendations that both rural and urban fatteners should be encourage to participate in animal production and related agricultural business, there should be adequate exposure of fatteners/students to the practical guides or skills through adequate provision of training in the bull fattening for effective production, government should provide preventive, curative drugs that can help to minimise pests and diseases invasion in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Fattening, Bulls, Unemployment, Ruminants, Youth, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Cattles farming play major social and economic roles in African societies in terms of food security and income generation. The growing demands for ruminants' meats from city dwellers also present opportunities for fattening as well as improved markets for the animals. Fattening of animals is a highly profitable venture with return of premium to the fattener. Babale (2012) reported that, in Nigeria cattle and small ruminants fattening have been carried out mainly by small holder farmers while medium or big time farmers can handle on a commercial basis feedlot operations. Cattle fattening in Nigeria, has

been an established practice for the long period of time, but largely carried out by butchers and cattle traders being the only category of people with the interest to buy both cattle and feeds while the unemployed youth roaming the street searching for a white collar job neglecting bull fattening business.

Application of the techniques of fattening bulls in a feedlot by the people of Nigeria is one of the best way of increasing animal protein supply and creating source of employment to the over 600,000 graduating students yearly (Usman and Tafida, 2009). Meat production from cattle in Nigeria is almost entirely extensive with low input under traditional method of

domestic meat animal production and this is due to the fact that animals received the bulk of their nutrition from overgrazed ranges which are poor in quality. However, the size of such ranges is declining due to their use for industries including new agricultural development project devoted to especially crop production. Fattening technique of meat production if properly utilised can meet the future demand for beef in particular and animal protein in general (NAERLS, 2007). Marketing of fattened animals in most Nigerian city passed through existing local market channels. The number of animals being fattened is still limited and demand of beef in the market is high, which is reflected in doubling of prices of meat and live animals in the past years especially during festivities.

Unemployment Situation and Bull Fattening Business in Nigeria

The data from National Directorate of Employment, (2010) disclosed that North West had 846,872 (25.41%), North East 649,759 (16.49%), North central 386,950 (11.60%), south East 430,845 (12.92%), South West 718, 789 (21.56%) and South South with 401,234 (12.03%) unemployed graduates and youths nationwide in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2014) the rate of unemployment in Nigeria stood at 23.9 percent in 2011, while urban unemployment was estimated at 29.5 percent in 2013. In addition, the Financial Derivatives company Limited (FDC, 2014), a Lagos-based financial advisory firm forecast that the misery index would likely to increase further in 2014, from 38 percent it stood in 2013.

If Nigerian government both at the national and local levels are able to design and implement the measures needed for the fattening sector to deliver its full employment potentials and recognized fattening as a source of growth and an instrument for improved food security particularly meat diet and also seen as the major employer of the more than half of the 38 percent unemployed young people reported by

derivatives company limited in early 2014. More so, Nigerian animal sector can absorb large numbers of new job seekers and offer meaningful work with public and private benefits. For this to happen, constraints to land, capital, and animals diseases, among others problems must be addressed, and features to make programs friendly to the needs of the young enhanced. Existing programs in finance, animal diseases, education and extension can be adjusted to address the specific needs of both urban and rural young people. The agricultural businesses that attract young people will have to be profitable, competitive, and dynamic and these are the same characteristics required for agriculture to deliver growth, to improve food security, and to preserve a fragile natural environment. Agriculture offers a handsome youth dividend that will benefit young people themselves, their wider societies, and the global community. With clarity of vision and political commitment from leaders, that dividend can be collected and widely shared (Karen, 2012).

Profitability of Bull Fattening in Nigeria

For a fatterer to ensure a profitable income from fattening bulls, there are factors that are to be considered. Younger fattening bull require longer feeding period and feed is utilized for their maintenance and growth but the older ones take shorter time period but for a profitable fattening business Middle age of 2-3 years old is Preferable which are called Steers (castrated males) due to their inherent capacity to gain weight, grow faster and easily manage. Report from Cattle Fattening Enterprises (2008), showed that, In Nigeria the choice of animal for fattening were mainly the Bunaji (white fulani) (59%), the Rahaji (red bovor) (34%) and Bokoloji (sokoto gudali) (8%) breeds. Cattle Fattening Enterprises further stressed that, the Bunaji and the Rahaji breeds are preferred fattening cattles because they respond faster to improve feeding (good feed conversion ratio) and in addition, they can be employed as work bulls during the early wet season

thus serving a dual purpose investment, the Sokoto gudali breed is more available at further northern part of Nigeria, hence are less important among the fatteners. In Nigeria some farmers fattened bulls that were previously used as work bulls.

IFAD Damida and World Bank (2010) reported that, variable costs of N200.42 per fattening bull per day was obtained, which constituted 53.314% of the total costs, while the cost of feeds, supplements and water constituted 48.15% of this cost. Labour input accounted for 4.16% of the total cost. Fixed costs involve the fattening stock and depreciation on shelter, feeding and watering utensils. The fixed cost item accounted for 47.69% of the total cost of production. Three months after the date of purchase, fattened bull should weigh approximately 275-325 kilograms and to bring hundred percent profits from investment therefore, ready for market. Improper handling of animals before and during transport to livestock markets may cause serious injuries or even death of animals. In transporting animals there is need for adequate bedding and loading facilities. Avoid overloading or overfeeding to ensure profitable investment.

Importance of Bull Fattening business

It takes between 60 and 90 days for the bull to reach the targeted weight which determined by the breed and age of the bull, among other factors of fattening. Salisu (2008) stated that fattening sector provide a source of employment and income for a large proportion of urban and rural populations as well as an important source of protein in local and international diet. The contribution of hides and skin for export dating back to 8th century, providing raw materials for tanneries, supporting a huge local handcraft industry and the employment of millions of Nigerians, traders in live animals, transporters of animals, butchers and meat processors, researchers and other various fields related to the fattening business contributed significantly to economic

development. Fattening is a strategic feeding option that can have the following advantages under Nigerian system of animal production. Desta (2013) reported that bull fattening system is quite simple and within the capabilities of small fatteners to implement and the results of production is always highly visible. The bull fattening helps farmers to have confidence in the technique of production because the outcome of production is always good. Other techniques such as feeding to boost reproductive performance are less convincing because the farmer may be unsure that the extra feed resulted in any benefit of production. Benefits can be realized within a short period of time unlike other animal production activities. Furthermore, Merkel (2013) reported that Fattening generates cash income that is eagerly sought by fatteners and generally profitable because the value per kilogram of live weight increases and pieces of the animals are generally used in the farm as manure. Fattening business require substantial capital investment as well as small area of land for fattening bulls confinement.

Status of Cattle Fattening in Northern States of Nigeria

A study conducted by Cattle Fattening Enterprises, (2008) revealed that in Nigeria the traditional method of cattle fattening still predominated and this method used traditional feeding pattern of production but Kebbi Investment Bulletin (2013), estimated production of cattle in Kebbi State was 20,955,017 heads in the year 2013, while actual production for the same year was 3,536,169 heads and this gave shortfall of 17,418,848. The slaughter figure for cattle for the year 2013 stood at 89,570 heads, which fell short of demand of about 220,320 heads per annum. The report further indicated that cattle production as well as slaughter figure per annum in the north western states could not be achieved without fattening effort therefore; fattening has to be hasten in Nigeria especially in the north western states to improve meat production and generate employment among the teeming youth. However, meat

production per head of cattle livestock is very low when compared north western states to its counterpart of northern eastern states of Nigeria.

Strategy for Effective Bull Fattening Business in Nigeria

According to Maria (2007) bulls must be confined and provided with clean and low energy feed and a week after arrival and deworming as well as spraying of the fattening bull should be carried out. Another important consideration is the feeding area of the animal which should be always kept clean and drained to ensure proper health and good sanitation. The fatterer should always be watching for any signs of illness such as reduced feed intake, abnormal discharge or unusual bad behaviour. If any kind of illness is suspected with the arrived fattener bull, ask for the help of a Veterinarian or Livestock officer. Valdez (2007) further emphasise that the animal should be vaccinated against foot and mouth disease and hemorrhagic septicaemia if they have not been vaccinated previously because the fatterer here must seek knowledge of history of the animal. The bull can be tethered in grassy or vegetative area for a short period of time be exposed to sunlight and kept in the coral in the evening then finally being washed at least once a week. To increase its feeding, there should be adequate water supply, minerals supplements and growth stimulants should be added to the feed as needed with the help of ordinary salt at the rate of 30-50 grams per head daily.

Feeding Requirements of Fattening Bulls

In the selection of feed, the ration should be adjusted to the requirements for fattening bull based on the availability of feed materials in the local environment. Talat (2013) is of the view that bull can be fattened on all roughage rations or a roughage-concentrate ration. While giving roughage the fatterer should make sure to give good quality grass-legume mixture in the form of pasture herbage. These should be given in full feeding. Roughage-concentrate ration

is the combination of forage or farm by-products and concentrates. The author further emphasis that some common concentrates used are: rice bran, copra meal, leaf meal, corn by-products, plus meat or bone meal and salt. Fattening of bulls are fed with fresh foliage together with the succulent twigs and immature pods of this plant. All the green feed that the animal can consume in a day is placed in the feed bunk so that the animals have access to that feed all the time.

For a profitable fattening business however, maize and sorghum stover leaves are the most important basal feeds offered to fattened bulls in the northern Nigeria. Alawa (2000) revealed that, a higher percentage of fatterers used sorghum stover leaves in Katsina (100%) and Kano (88.71%) than Kaduna (48.30%) while the reverse was the case with maize stover utilization. This may be the reflection of the types of cereals grown to match the rainfall pattern. The utilization of sugar cane leaves and tops was localised along the flood plain (fadama) areas of all the three State favourable for sugarcane cultivation. Grasses are usually cut at the end of the rains dried and stored on roofs. They were in most cases the first basal feedstuffs fed to the animals during the early dry season before the cereal grains are harvested to make their residue available. Maize offal was the energy supplement of the 95% of the farmers engages in cattle fattening in northern Nigeria. Parih and Rhinehart (2008) observed that, smallholders' fatterers never use whole maize grains but the bran of cereals probably because of the cost implications and competition with human and poultry feeds. Katsina and Kano States used whole cotton seeds at one time or the other as a protein supplement in fattening rations compared to Kaduna. Groundnut haulm was widespread among all the farmers. Most cattle fattening utilised potash either solely or in combination with common salt.

Challenges of Bull Fattening Business in Nigeria

Most businessmen engage in bull trading (buying and selling) in Nigeria do not take the risk of investing their capital in bull fattening business they are only interested in making one hour or one day quick profits. Alasa (2012) stressed the role of entrepreneur who coordinates all other factors of production as well as assuming the risk of a business and Agricultural industry in Nigeria has been generally neglected for many years; this is as a result of over dependence on the oil. The neglect of the sector has led to disappearance of prime agricultural products of the sector which would have served as high raw materials base for many meat industries and Government of the day are however, not ready in making funds available in terms of grants, loans, incentives as well as subsidies to cattle fatteners and producers. Poor capital investment also impedes the growth and development of more fattening business in Nigeria. If there is no regular supply of capital to the business whether small or large scale such business will fold up. Government are not also interested in granting incentives and assistance to agricultural related business, but if they act otherwise, it will induce recipients to undertake necessary action in floating more local business in Nigeria (Alasa, 2011).

A large percentage of the animal products spoiled after slaughtering. Prices of these products fall too low immediately after processing because the processors cannot store the product properly till they have better prices, that means storage and other cold room facilities are inadequate. Poor transportation slows down the movement of fattened animals from point of rearing to the outside areas where they are highly required due to bad roads, the rails line are no more in existence, water and air transportation are also expensive to the fatteners. There are external and internal diseases that attack the animals and this may result to large quantity of meat product being lost during production and storage, the fattener spend extra money in the purchase of medicine to control the

disease, there is also reduction in both the quantity and quality of the product (Iwanyanwu, 2011).

CONCLUSION

One of the most critical challenges of this 21st century is the attainment of full employment and sustained economic growth in the global market. In Nigeria today, ruminant fattening production is necessary to actually cope youth unemployment and poverty as well as playing a key role in order to meet the immediate demand for high protein in the diet of Nigerian people and also to revive the inadequacy of the products need of meat factories and also improve the quality of life of the people in the nation at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To develop a good bull fattening business in Nigeria which in turn create an environment that promote the growth and development of our economy, the following recommendations should be adapted:

1. There should be more fund allocation toward agricultural development.
2. There should be adequate exposure of fatteners/students to the practical guides or skills through adequate provision of training in the bull fattening for effective production.
3. Both rural and urban fatteners should be encouraged to participate in animal production and related agricultural business.
4. Adequate security should be provided for bull fattening farmers and pastoral herdsmen.
5. Government should provide preventive, curative drugs that can help to minimise pests and diseases invasion in Nigeria.
6. Provision of enough and good cold storage facilities that can contain large quantity of beef without spoilage.
7. The educational system need to be overhaul as suggested by Awodi (2011) for adopting transfer of knowledge and creating new knowledge and skills to enhance cattle

fattening as well as sustainable industrial development.

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