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Rabbit Domestication: The Best Alternative to Bush meat Trade in Nigeria

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Abstract

Bush meat markets are on the increase, and the current demand for bush meat is not sustainable. A purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of respondent. The aim of this study is to review different scholars' views on rabbit production in Nigeria and how its help in conserving wildlife. An interview was conducted with the owner of the agro-allied company where series of questions were asked and the responses were recorded. This study sought to provide insight into alternatives of the bushmeat trade in Nigeria. This was done to ascertain how wildlife biodiversity can be sustained in the study area. It is therefore concluded that If we enlightened the public about conservation of wild animals, and we have more people in act of domestication of rabbits and even the wild animals like grasscutter, bushbuck, Maxwell duiker and the likes, it will protect the wild animals from extinction and the people will still keep enjoying the bushmeat from the different domestication unit and not from the wild.

Keywords: Bush meat, domestication, sustainable, wildlife

Introduction

Bushmeat (the meat of wild animals) has traditionally been a natural protein source for people in all over the world, most especially in West and Central Africa. During the past decades, however, bushmeat hunting and trade has become a widespread commercial activity, with serious negative consequences on wild animal populations. As human populations continue to grow and poverty increases, increasing numbers of people are becoming dependent on bushmeat and on the income opportunities from the trade (Bowen-Jones *et al.*, 2002; Milner-Gulland *et al.*, 2003). Over the past decade the hunting for wildlife across West and Central Africa has increased so drastically that it is now recognized as a major threat to the region's rich biodiversity, including Africa's great apes (Fa *et al.*, 2002, Nganje 2003?). In fact, one of West Africa's primates, the Miss Waldron's red colobus (*Procolobus badius waldroni*), was declared extinct in September 2000 as a result of many years of overexploitation (Oates *et al.*, 2000).

Bushmeat is transported from forests (where the hunting mainly takes place) to markets within local communities or to larger markets in urban centres, where it is then sold or traded. A great number of animal species can be found in these markets, ranging from birds, reptiles, bats, rodents and antelopes to larger mammals such as elephants, buffalos, leopards and primates. The current rate of exploitation is not only unsustainable but also indiscriminate, i.e. all animals are taken whether they are common or endangered (Bowen-Jones *et al.*, 2002).

Rabbit production is being encouraged in Nigeria as a means of improving the daily protein intake of individuals (Ekpenyong and Bioaku, 1986). Exotic rabbits are assuming prominence in an effort to alleviate the supply-demand of animal protein in Nigeria. The extent to which such efforts succeed will depend on how well local and other management practices can be put in place to ensure optimum performances.

The aim of this study is to review different scholars' views on rabbit production in Nigeria and how its help in conserving wildlife.

Materials and Methods

A rabbit farm was used in Osogbo as a casestudy, the name of the farm is TAAO Agro-Ilied Company. Osogbo (also *Oşogbo* , rarely *Oshogbo*) is the state capital city of Osun. Agriculture is the traditional occupation of the people of Osogbo. The tropical nature of the climate favours the growth of a variety of food and cash crops. The main cash crops include cocoa, palm produce, kola, while food crops include yam, maize, cassava, millet, rice and plantain. These trees and other living components of the area have been disturbed by annual forest fires and other human activities. A purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of respondent. An interview was conducted with the owner of the agro-allied company where series of questions were asked and the responses were recorded.

Results and Discussion

Data on rabbit farmers views on rabbit production in Nigeria and how its help in conserving wildlife are presented in table 1. This study sought to provide insight into alternatives of bushmeat trade in Nigeria. This was done to ascertain how wildlife biodiversity can be sustained in the study area. It is therefore concluded that If we enlightened the public about conservation of wild animals, and we have more people in act of domestication of rabbits and even the wild animals like grasscutter, bush buck, Maxwell duiker and the likes, it will protect the wild animals from extinction and the people will still keep enjoying the bushmeat from the different domestication unit and not from the wild.

Table 1: Details about the interview conducted with the owner of the farm

S/N	Questions	Responses
1.	What can you say about Rabbit Farm?	• Rabbit is very easy to rear. • Rabbit is a white meat and it is edible meat for all. • Rabbit farm is easy to maintain because they can feed on grasses and kitchen waste (vegetables). • Rabbit taste is unique just like that of bushmeat for example Maxwell duiker and Grasscutter. • Rabbit market is profitable.
2.	Who are the category of people that patronize you?	• Food sellers • Farmers • Public Servants
3.	What is the reaction of people that patronize you?	• The food seller said that it has replaced the bushmeat they had been buying and her customers are demanding for more. • The farmers said that this is really a profitable market, that once the female gave birth to the younger ones the sell it at the rate of ₦1500 • The public servants said it is the best meat because it is a white meat and it is recommended by medical doctors.
4.	Do you know anything about biodiversity conservation?	Yes
5.	Do you think this type of farming can help to conserve our biodiversity?	Yes
7.	How can this type of farm help to protect our biodiversity?	If we enlightened the public about conservation of wild animals, and we have more people in act of domestication of rabbits and even the wild animals like grasscutter, bush buck, Maxwell duiker and the likes, it will protect the wild animals from extinction and the people will still keep enjoying the bushmeat from the different domestication unit and not from the wild.

Recommendation

I hereby recommend that a research works on bushmeat trade should be encouraged and supported by institutions, governments and non-government organizations. Aggressive campaign against unregulated hunting of wild species to prevent them from being dragged to extinction. And the domestication of species traded by the bushmeat stakeholders is encouraged to satisfy the market demand of bushmeat. This will guarantee less hunting pressure on wild species and thereby maintaining the stability of the ecosystem biodiversity.

References

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