

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF LIVESTOCK FARMING AS A CAREER CHOICE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assessed the perception of students to livestock production as a choice of career. Fifty six final year students of Animal Science related disciplines in four selected tertiary institutions in Niger State were randomly selected and data were collected using structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage and means. Majority (71.6%) of the respondents had a favourable perception toward livestock farming as a choice of career. Top ranked influences on choice of career were personal interest, work experience, people known to be involved in livestock farming, parent's background and career guidance. Top ranked constraints to choosing livestock as a career were inadequate practical exposure, difficulty in acquiring land, inadequate access to capital/money to start up livestock farming and poor awareness of the potentials of career in livestock farming. The study concluded that the students had favorable perception toward livestock production as a choice of carrier. It was recommended that funds be made available and accessible to students upon graduation to enable them start livestock farming while increasing their exposure to practical and creating more awareness on the potentials of livestock farming.

Key words: Livestock farming, career choice, perception.

Introduction

Livestock contribute 40 percent of the global value of agricultural output and support the livelihoods and food security of almost a billion people. The livestock sector is one of the fastest growing parts of the agricultural economy, driven by income growth and supported by technological and structural change (Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO, 2009). This reveals that livestock plays a significant role in tackling food insecurity, unemployment and poverty in developing countries of which Nigeria is one. Despite the relevance of the livestock sector in the country, over the years, attention has been shifted to the oil sector due to huge revenue accruing from the sector leaving agriculture sector and in particular the livestock subsector in the hands of the elderly ones.

The youth though constitute a potent force in agricultural development because of their proneness to innovation, minimal risk aversion, less fear of failure, less conservativeness, greater physical strength and faster rate of learning, yet not much of their participation has been recorded in livestock farming. According to Apantaku (2004), interest of youths in agriculture remain low and unless those presently engaged in farming are encouraged and have their welfare improved,

future withdrawal from the sector is inevitable.

In Nigeria, agriculture is faced with challenges of ageing; the old people no longer have the strength to farm and meet the food demand of the country while the youths are not willing to participate in farming. According to Mama (1991), there is the danger that Nigeria might face near extinction of the farming population resulting from incapacitation of her farmers by age or death. The interest of youths in farming activities is diminishing especially among students in higher institutions (Williams, 1997). Generally, students regard agriculture as a career that is too laborious and would not like to practice agriculture upon graduation. Most often, agriculture is usually seen as the last resort by students seeking admission into tertiary institutions. Only 3% of those who were trained in agricultural institution take to agriculture after graduation (Igbon, 2004). The decline in the number of young people entering farming has been a serious concern to government due to its attendant consequences.

Very little attention has been paid to the characteristics and the perception of these students by social scientist. There is need gain an understanding of the perception of students in tertiary institutions on livestock farming as a career choice as well as the factors responsible for their

choice. This will government and other policy makers in the design of programmes and curricula that will attract youths and encourage more students to study livestock related courses and also practice livestock farming after graduation from school. Until this is done, it may be difficult to achieve the desired development in livestock production.

It is based on this backdrop that this study was carried out to assess the perception on livestock production as a choice of career among students of tertiary institution in Niger State. The specific objectives of the study were to determine their perception to livestock production as a career, find out factors that influence the choice of livestock as a career among the students and ascertain the constraints to the choice of livestock farming as a career among the students.

Materials and Methods

Niger state is located between latitude 8°22'N and

11°30'N, longitude 3°30'E and 7°20'E. Four tertiary institutions out of the present nine (9) in the state were sampled for the study. The institutions include Federal University of Technology, Minna, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa and Federal College of Wildlife Management, New Bussa. Final year students in the Department of Animal Science and related disciplines were selected in the two Universities while Higher National Diploma II Students in the Department of Animal Production Technology were selected in the two selected Monotechnics. A simple random sampling was used to select 75% of the total number of the selected final year students each of the selected institutions to give the sample size of the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire focused on issues such as students' perception to animal production as a career, their

Table 1: Perception of livestock towards livestock as a choice of career

Perception Statements	Mean	SD
Livestock farming is lucrative	4.43	1.1
Means of livelihood after graduation	4.59	0.8
Risk too overwhelming	3.26	1.2
There is bright future with livestock farming	4.31	1.1
Livestock farming is a prestigious venture	4.04	1.2
Livestock farming can ensure a regular income after school	4.51	1.0
livestock farming can make one an employer of labour	4.35	1.1
I am ready to go into farming as soon as I graduate from school	4.04	1.1
I will only practice livestock farming if I am unable to secure a good job after school	3.22	1.5
Livestock farming is my number career choice after I graduate from school	3.54	1.4
Livestock farming can me pay me better than any other job after graduate	3.61	1.3
Livestock faming is usually the last resort	2.95	1.6
I can be financially independent by going into livestock farming	3.68	1.5
it is a waste of time going into livestock farming as a young graduate	2.58	1.4
livestock is a very profitable venture	3.77	1.5
I will prefer to be a livestock farmer rather than work in other sector like banking , oil companies	3.50	1.3
Income of livestock farming is too small to make achieve my desired standard of living	2.70	1.3
Livestock faming is capable of making animal production graduate financially independent	3.67	1.5
The training I obtained in livestock production is sufficient for me to go into livestock production	3.88	1.4
I will practice only when I am retired from active service	2.70	1.5
My parents lured me into reading Agriculture/ Animal production/Animal Science as a last choice to have a tertiary education	2.65	1.5
Many Nigerians have made a lot of money from livestock farming	3.79	1.3
Because livestock farming produces food for human consumption there is always a demand for its products.	3.86	1.4

Source: Field survey, 2014. SD: Standard deviation

involvement in livestock production and the constraints to their involvement in animal production. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage. The students' perception of livestock farming was measured on a five-point Likert scale such as Strongly agreed:5, Agreed:4, Undecided:3, Disagreed:2 and Strongly disagreed:1 for positive statements while the reverse was the case for negative statements. There were twenty three (23) statements in all.

Results and Discussion

Perception of the respondents towards livestock as a choice of career

As revealed in Table 1, the respondents had positive perception ($x \leq 3.00$) for just a few (5) of the statements. The summary (Table 2) shows that majority ($x=71.6\%$) of the respondents had a favourable perception or disposition toward livestock farming as a choice of career while the remaining 28.4% had unfavourable perception on livestock farming as a career. It is thus clear from this, that the students upon graduation from their various institutions would be willing to go into livestock farming as a career. This finding is in agreement with that of Ayanwale and Laagye (2007) who found that students still had positive perception of agriculture in spite of its low enrolment in tertiary institutions in the country. It then becomes very important for this positive perception to be explored by the government and

other relevant development agencies so as to ultimately transform the present situation to increased food supply and improved economy especially now that the country is experiencing dwindling supply of revenue from oil. This also has the capacity of greatly reducing youth employment in the country.

Influence on the choice of livestock farming as a career

As shown in Table 3, some factors were identified to have influenced the choice of livestock farming as a career among the students. The first ranked influence was personal interest ($x=2.34$). This implies that the students were first of influenced to choose livestock a career due to their personal interest in livestock farming. Work experience ($x=2.13$) was ranked the second influence while people known to be involved in livestock farming ($x=2.12$) was ranked third. This implies that some of the students must have had some experience in livestock farming which could be during their industrial work experience or through other means thus stressing the importance of such practical experience. Parent's background ($x=2.10$) and career guidance ($x=2.10$) were ranked fourth indicating that parent's background could also influence the choice of career of the children. Onuekwusi and Ijeoma (2008) reported that parents are important influence on their children's career decision. The finding also points out the important role played by career guidance in educational institutions and the need to strengthen this unit at all levels of education.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their level of perception

Category of perception	Frequency	Percentage	Range of scores	Mean
Favourable	48	71.6	86-113	86.14
Unfavourable	19	28.4	53-85	

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Table 3: Influence on the choice of livestock farming as a career

Influence	To a great extent	To a little extent	To no extent	Mean	Std	Rank
Parent background	25(37.3)	24(35.8)	18(26.9)	2.10	0.10	4
People you know who are involve in livestock	26(38.8)	26(38.8)	15(22.4)	2.12	0.09	3
Other family members	15(22.4)	22(32.8)	30(44.8)	1.78	0.10	10
Personal interest	38(56.7)	14(20.9)	15(22.4)	2.34	0.10	1
Work experience	26(38.8)	24(35.8)	17(25.4)	2.13	0.10	2
Career guidance	27(40.3)	20(29.9)	20(29.9)	2.10	0.1	4
Previous educational background	27(40.3)	16(23.9)	24(35.8)	2.04	0.11	7
Media	21(31.3)	16(23.9)	30(44.8)	1.87	0.11	9
School	29(43.3)	16(23.9)	22(32.8)	2.10	0.11	4
Mentors influence	25(37.3)	14(20.9)	14(20.9)	1.95	0.11	8

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Constraints to choosing livestock farming as a career

Table 4 reveals that inadequate practical exposure was ranked first as a constraint to choosing livestock as a career ($x=2.06$). This indicates that practical exposure of the students were inadequate for them to start livestock farming. This is followed by difficulty in acquiring land ($x=2.05$),

poor access to capital/money to start up livestock farming was the third constraint ($x=1.98$) while poor awareness of the potentials livestock farming ($x=1.94$) was the fourth constraint. This suggests the need for intensifying awareness creation on the potentials of livestock farming as a career among the youths.

Table 4: Constraints to choosing livestock as a career

Constraint	Serious	Mild	Not a constraint	Mean	Rank
Inadequate access to fund	23(34.3)	20(29.9)	24(35.8)	1.98	3
Difficulty in acquiring land	26(38.8)	19(28.4)	25(35.8)	2.05	2
Fear of livestock failure	17(25.4)	25(37.3)	25(27.3)	1.88	6
Attitudinal problem/psychology of being called a farmer	12(17.9)	19(28.4)	36(53.7)	1.64	9
Poor recognition of livestock farmers by government	15(22.4)	22(32.8)	30(44.8)	1.77	8
Poor funding of Agriculture by government	21(31.3)	19(28.4)	26(38.8)	1.91	5
Poor awareness of the potentials of livestock farming	22(32.8)	19(28.4)	26(38.8)	1.94	4
Uncertainty in livestock	17(25.4)	22(32.8)	28(41.8)	1.83	7
Lack of readiness to make a career decision	10(14.9)	16(23.9)	41(61.2)	1.53	10
Inadequate practical exposure	25(37.3)	21(31.3)	21(31.3)	2.06	1

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clear from the study that the youths upon graduation from their various institutions would be willing to go into livestock farming as a career. Factors that influenced their choice of career were personal interest, work experience, people known to be involved in livestock farming, parent's background and career guidance while the constraints to choosing livestock as a career were inadequate practical exposure, difficulty in acquiring land, inadequate access to capital/money to start up livestock farming and poor awareness of the potentials of career in livestock farming.

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend improved access to funding/capital to students after graduation so as to start livestock farming, laying emphasis on practical training of students through the provision of adequate equipment and facilities needed for laboratory and farm practical in the tertiary institutions as well as creating more awareness on the potentials of livestock farming.

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