

THE POTENTIALS AND PROSPECTS OF THE NIGERIAN CATTLE INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The review highlighted the potentials and prospects of the Nigerian cattle industry and how to maximize these potentials. It noted that indigenous cattle breeds were characterized by low productivity, and low heritability estimates. The population and socio-economic importance of cattle as well as prospects and challenges were highlighted. The country's cattle industry is characterized by diverse breeds, each with unique characteristics, adaptations, and production potentials. Beck in 1970 described the Nigerian cattle industry as a sleeping giant that will assume its rightful place in the Nigerian economy. As at 2024, 54 years after this statement was made, it seems the giant is still sleeping. The potentials of the Nigerian cattle industry is great, the outlook is very promising. It was concluded that the potentials and prospects of the Nigerian cattle industry are tremendous but require a major fundamental reorganization to be able to tap its full potentials. Developing value chain initiatives (processing, packaging), Establishing a national cattle breeding program, Developing a comprehensive livestock policy, Enhancing research and development in cattle production, and Promoting regional and international trade, were recommended

Keywords: Breeds, Cattle, Distribution, Population, Potentials

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, boasts of a significant cattle population, playing a vital role in the nation's agricultural sector and food security. The country's cattle industry is characterized by diverse breeds, each with unique characteristics, adaptations, and production potentials (Adoligbe *et al.*, 2020). Beck in 1970 described the Nigerian cattle industry as a sleeping giant that will assume its rightful place in the Nigerian economy. As at 2024, 54 years after this statement was made, it seems the giant is still sleeping, Beck further went on to say that the potentials of the Nigerian cattle industry is great, the outlook is very promising, which was alluded to by the Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu while declaring open the National Livestock Stakeholders Consultative Workshop in Abuja on October 24, 2024. He further stated that he became aware of more of the potentials of the Nigerian livestock industry after the Inauguration of the National Livestock Reform Committee, co-chaired by Professor Attahiru Jega, but much more needs to be done to tap these potentials to the benefit of Nigeria. With the creation of the ministry of livestock development, it is hoped that the cattle subsector will get a huge boost and hence the entire livestock sector. This is expedient given the downturn in the Nigerian Economy (Ocheja *et al.*, 2022). Boosting cattle/ and hence livestock production is one of the ways of diversifying Nigeria's revenue sources

This review highlights the potentials and prospects of the Nigerian cattle industry hopefully leading to improved productivity, sustainable cattle production and enhanced livestock production and hence positively impacting the Nigerian economy

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Importance of Cattle

Food Security: Cattle provide milk, meat, and hide, essential for human nutrition and livelihood. (FAO, 2012)

Economic Significance: Cattle farming contributes to the national economy through milk and meat production, utilization and sale of other by products, value addition, employment, and trade. It provides raw materials such as bones, horns, skin, hooves, hair, etc for industries (Abaliaka *et al.* (2021)

Cultural Significance: Cattle hold cultural and symbolic value in many societies, representing wealth, status, and tradition.

Agricultural Purpose: Cattle serve as draft animals, facilitating agricultural production and transportation.

Research and Development: Cattle are used in scientific research, particularly in genetics, veterinary medicine, and nutrition..

Cattle Breeds in Nigeria

Nigeria is home to over 20 indigenous and exotic cattle breeds (Chiejina, 2013). The primary indigenous breeds include:

1. N'Dama: Originating from West Africa, known for heat tolerance and resistance to trypanosomiasis (ILRI, 2019).
 2. Muturu: A hardy breed, well-adapted to the Nigerian environment (Ajayi, 2011).
 3. Bunaji: A popular breed in Nigeria, recognized for its high milk production (Ozoje, 2004).
 4. N'Dama: Originated from West Africa, known for heat tolerance and resistance to trypanosomiasis.
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 6. Bunaji: Popular breed, recognized for high milk production.
 7. Red Bororo: Known for its hardiness, resistance to diseases and beef production.
 8. Sokoto Gudali: Dual-purpose breed, suitable for milk and meat production.
 9. Holstein-Friesian: Exotic breed, used for dairy production.
 10. Jersey: Exotic breed, used for dairy production.
- Exotic breeds, such as Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, and Simmental, have been introduced to improve milk and meat production (Falade, 2017).

Other breeds are Wadara (Shuwa Arab) Azawak, Kuri (Chad), Yola, Keteku,

Total Cattle Population in Nigeria

Nigeria's cattle population is estimated at over 20 million (Federal Department of Livestock and Pest Control Services, 2020). According to Statista (2024), the Nigerian cattle population as at 2022 stood at 22.9 million. Nigeria was reported to have the fourth highest cattle population in Africa. Aminu *et al.* (2022) reported a total cattle population of 20,585,000, while the Nigerian Livestock Resource Survey (NLRS, 2021) gave a figure of 13,900,000. However, President Ahmed Bola Tinubu, while declaring open the national livestock stakeholders meeting in Abuja in October, 2024, said the Nigerian cattle population was 58 million.

Table 1; Total Cattle Population of Nigeria

Population	Sources
20.9 Million	Statista, 2024
20.59 Million	Aminu <i>et al.</i> , 2021
13.90 Million	NLRS, 2021
58 Million	NIAS News Letter, 2024
20 Million	FDLPCS

Production performance

According to the FDLSPCS (2020), the cattle population growth rate was 2.5%, beef production was 360,000 tons (NASS, 2020), while milk production was put at 1.3 billion litres in 2020. The livestock sector (of which cattle is a major component) contributes 5 to 30% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Statista, 2024). According to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as reported by Nigerian Institute of Animal Science (NIAS) News Letter of October, 2024, the average milk yield by pastoralists cows was between 0.5 – 1.5 litres per day, compared to a global average of 6.6 litres per day; milk production was 0.7 billion litres per year while the per capita consumption was 8.7 billion litres per year, thus making importation of milk and dairy products inevitable, gulping a whopping 1.2 – 1.5 billion dollars per annum. The extensive system of management accounts for 82.1% of the total cattle population, as most of the cattle/livestock in Nigeria are managed using the low cost – low input methods.

Challenges and Opportunities of the Nigerian Cattle Industry

Nigeria's cattle industry plays a vital role in the country's agricultural sector and economy. However, the industry faces challenges, including:

1. Low productivity: Due to genetic make-up, climatic factors, inadequate breeding, feeding, and health management practices (Falade, 2017).
2. Conflict between Herders and Farmers
3. Infrastructure Deficit: Limited access to markets, Abattoirs, veterinary services etc
4. Pests and Disease prevalence: Trypanosomiasis, Anthrax, Brucellosis, and other diseases impact cattle health and productivity (ILRI, 2019).
5. Climate change: Affecting cattle distribution, productivity, feeds, water, health and survival (Chiejina, 2013).

Addressing these challenges through improved breeding programmes, disease management, and climate-resilient strategies can enhance Nigeria's cattle industry, contributing to national food security and economic growth. (Ajayi, 2011; Sechii *et al.*, 2024; Ocheja *et al.*, 2023; Ocheja *et al.*, 2022;)

Federal Department of Livestock and Pest Control Services. (2020). reported some of the opportunities to be :

1. Market Demand: Growing demand for beef, milk, and hide of which the Nigerian population of over 200 million offers an advantage
2. Value Chain Development: Potential for processing, packaging, and export.
3. Policy Support: Government initiatives to enhance cattle production.

To enhance the productivity and sustainability of Nigeria's cattle industry, it is crucial to address the challenges and leverage opportunities. This requires a multi-faceted approach, involving government policies, private sector investment, and community engagement.(Falade, 2017)

CONCLUSION

There are about 15 recognized breeds of cattle in Nigeria , spread across the geo-political zones, producing sub optimally and thus requiring urgent intervention. The Nigerian cattle subsector requires a major fundamental reorganization to be able to tap its full potentials. Developing value chain initiatives (processing, packaging), establishing a national cattle breeding program, developing a comprehensive livestock policy, enhancing research and development in cattle production, promoting regional and international trade, and fostering public-private partnerships will help in this direction. A comprehensive livestock/ cattle census should also be carried out to enhance good national livestock and economic planning

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