

Information Needs of Urban Poultry Producers in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract – This is an investigative study of the information needs of urban poultry producers in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo State. The Specific Objectives were to describe the socio-economic characteristics of urban poultry farmers in Owerri North Local Government Area, to assess the information needs of urban poultry farmers, to determine the perceived usefulness of the various government incentives/policies that are embarked upon to boost and encourage agricultural production, to determine the production benefits of urban poultry farmers in the study area, to identify the sources of information of urban poultry farmers in the study area and to identify the constraints of urban poultry farmers in the study area. Data were collected using primary and secondary sources. Four communities were purposively selected with twenty-five (25) farmers randomly selected through the snow-balling method from each community making a total of 100 respondents. Descriptive and Inferential statistics (Pearson's correlation coefficient) were used to analyze data collected. Findings indicates that majority (60.0%) of the farmers were between 35-54 years, 92.0% were married, majority (87.0%) had secondary education and above, while all of the poultry farmers were producing on a small scale. Further findings indicated that major sources of information to farmers were from fellow farmers ($\bar{x} = 2.72$) and Extension agents ($\bar{x} = 2.69$). Findings also showed that poultry farmers needed information on the quality/type of feed ($\bar{x} = 3.31$), agricultural credit ($\bar{x} = 3.22$) etc. Also, 98% of the poultry farmers were aware of various government policies while LAPO ($\bar{x} = 2.33$) and ADP ($\bar{x} = 2.26$) were perceived useful by poultry farmers. Result from the hypothesis carried out showed that there is a significant relationship between farmer's educational level ($r = 0.370$; $p < 0.05$) and their information needs on urban poultry production. This study showed that farmers lack capital and credit facilities to improve productivity. Therefore, government should subsidize credit facilities for poultry farmers in order to boost and encourage production.

Keywords – Information Needs, Urban Poultry Producers, Imo State.

I. INTRODUCTION

Information needs is a condition that refers to a gap between what is desired and how it should be attained and or obtained [8] while this gap refers to a problem which usually occur when there is an existing difference between “desired performance” and “actual performance” [7]. Need could be said to be an inclusive term to embrace impulses, goal set, urges, motives, craving, desires, wants and wishes [8]. According to [13], Need could be said to be the existing gap when comparing “what is with some desirable standard or “what ought to be”. According to [15], No one can categorically claim to know all the

information needs of farmers especially in an information dependent sector like agriculture where there are new and rather complex problems facing farmers every day. He further posited that information needs may be grouped into five headings namely agricultural inputs, extension education, agricultural technology, agricultural credit and marketing.

Urban Poultry Production (UPP) can be defined as the rearing of domesticated birds such as chicken, turkey, guinea fowl, geese, duck and other game birds in urban areas [13]. Urban Poultry Production (chicken: broiler, layers, cockerel) can be on small scale, medium scale and large scale. The small scale also known as backyard poultry farming may be defined as one that keeps from 50 – 5,000birds, medium scale, from 5,001 – 10,000birds while large scale is above 10,000 birds [1].

According to [4], more than 85% of rural families in Sub-Sahara Africa keep one or more species of poultry. House-holds flock sizes ranges from 3 – 97 in Africa, 10 – 31 in South America and from 50 – 2,000 in Asia, yet the level of productivity is low compared to high input systems. Example; a scavenging bird lays only 30 – 50 eggs per year and up to 90 eggs per year under improved feeding and husbandry conditions. In contrast, an industrialized battery cage hen lays 280 eggs annually. Furthermore, studies in Nigeria have estimated that the overall flock mortality may be as high as 90% in some areas [6], [7].

The majority of poultry farmers in Africa are illiterates who lack technical know-how, yet the ratio of extension agents to poultry farmers in many African and Asian countries is not encouraging. The average ratio of extension officers to farmers in Southern Africa is 1:1,000. This situation is no better in other parts of the continents. As of 1974, the ratio in Nigeria was 1: 20,000. The need for more extension agents in order to facilitate the flow of information to farmers for effective and efficient productivity cannot be overemphasized.

Poultry products in most developing countries especially Africa is still expensive. The marketing system is generally informal and poorly developed unlike eggs and poultry meat from commercialized birds derived from imported stocks; those from indigenous stocks are generally preferred by consumers. The existence of a local market is needed by the farmers which can offer as a good sales opportunities and also adequate transportation are of great importance for good production and continuity in the industry [9].

The general objective of the study was to assess the information needs of urban poultry producers in Owerri

North Local Government Area of Imo state. The specific objectives were to:

- Examine the socio-economic characteristics of urban poultry farmers;
- Assess the information needs of urban poultry farmers;
- determine the perceived usefulness of the various government incentives/policies that is embarked upon to boost and encourage poultry production;
- Determine the production benefits of urban poultry farmers;
- Assess the sources of information of urban poultry farmers and
- Examine the constraints of urban poultry farmers

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the personal characteristics of urban poultry farmers and their information needs.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo state with its headquarters at Orié Uratta. It occupies a land area of 198km² and with a population of 175,395 people. It consists of 19 autonomous communities. Four communities namely Uratta, Egbu, Azaraubo and Ezedibia were purposively chosen from Owerri North Local Government Area because they are more urbanized and also because of the predominance of poultry farming in these areas. Twenty five (25) poultry farmers were randomly selected from each of the communities through the snow-balling method which entails going from one farmer to the other, making a total of 100 poultry farmers. Data were collected with the aid of copies of well-structured questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was tested by a professional in the field of Agricultural Extension through the face and content method. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentage mean and standard deviation were used. Inferential statistics such as Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the hypothesis.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Table I shows that majority (60.0%) of the poultry farmers were between 35-54 years; hence this represents their active age group though the mean age of the farmers was 42 years. This study agrees with the findings of [4] who noted that most farmers are below 50years. From the table, there is not much difference between the percentage of males and females who engaged in poultry production in the study area and majority (92%) of the respondent were married. This implies that agriculture with reference to poultry production is practiced mostly by married people to make ends meet and also cater for their family as posited by [3]. The table also showed that majority of the farmers (87%) had secondary education and above. This implies that poultry farmers are quite educated and the mean age of experience was 6.4 years. The table also reveals that 69.00% were into full time farming proving

that majority of the poultry farmers engage in it as their main occupation while few of them combine poultry farming with trading, cloth-making etc. this could be related to the intense care required in the poultry industry.

The table also indicates that 100.00% of the farmers were small-scale producers. This study agrees with the findings of [12] who stated that Agriculture in Nigeria, as in most other developing countries is dominated by small scale producers. The table also shows that 99% of the poultry farmers utilize personal savings as source of finance. This is largely due to high interest rate charged by banks on borrowed loans and high demand as collateral as security for loans.

Table I: Distribution of Respondents According to Socio-Economic Characteristics

Chara- cteristics	Frequency	%	Mean
Age (years)	25 -34	21	21.00
	35 -44	28	28.00
	45 -54	32	32.00
	55 and above	19	19.00
	Total	100	100.00
Sex	Male	52	52.00
	Female	48	48.00
	Total	100	100.00
Marital status	Single	7	7.00
	Married	92	92.00
	Widowed	1	1.00
	Total	100	100.00
Education	No formal education	3	3.00
	Primary education	10	10.00
	Secondary education	71	71.00
	NCE/OND	12	12.00
	B.Sc and above	4	4.00
Years of experience	1 -5	48	48.00
	6 -10	37	37.00
	11 -15	14	14.00
	16 -20	1	1.00
Nature of production	Part-time	31	31.00
	Full-time	69	69.00
Stock size	Small scale (50 -5000 birds)	100	100.00
	Medium scale (5001 - 10000 birds)	-	-
	Large scale (> 10000 birds)	-	-
	Total	100	100.00
Source of finance	Personal savings	99	99.00
	Loans from banks total	1	1.00
		100	100.00

Respondents Agricultural Information Needed

Table II shows the various agricultural information needs that are needed by poultry farmers. It indicates that though they were acquainted with the agricultural information needs, farmers still needed more information on these areas so as to improve their skills and technical knowledge. One posited that training and education in poultry production are necessary if farmers' skills are to be improved. These areas include: Agricultural inputs [Quality/Type of feed ($\bar{X} = 3.31$)], Agricultural Technology [Land-Saving Technique ($\bar{X} = 3.27$)], Agricultural credit [Terms of loan ($\bar{X} = 3.22$)], Extension Education [Demonstration farms ($\bar{X} = 3.28$)] and Marketing [Current prices ($\bar{X} = 3.26$)].

Table II: Agricultural Information Needed

Parameters	Mean (Acquaintance)	Mean (Information needed)	Standard Deviation (Information needed)
Agricultural inputs			
Quality/type of feed.	3.85*	3.31*	.581
breeding stock	3.85*	3.32*	.584
Agricultural technology			
land-saving technique	3.16*	3.27*	.633
labour-saving technique	3.09*	3.27*	.633
Agricultural credit			
terms of loans	3.03*	3.22*	.613
interest rate	3.21*		
amount lendable	3.03*	3.22*	.613
terms of payment	3.19*		.598
Extension education			
training by extension agent	3.27*		.601
demonstration farms	3.28*		.587
seminar by extension agent	3.28*		.587
Marketing			
Information on what type of bird to rear.	3.29*	3.26*.5	.567
current prices	3.46*	.597	.597
forecast of market trend	3.27*	.601	
sales timing	3.44*	3.27*	.601

Significant mean > 2.50 ; Source: Field study, 2010.

Government Policies and Programmes Perceived and used by Respondents.

Table III shows the various government policies/programmes perceived useful by respondents. It indicates that Agricultural Development Programmed [ADP ($\bar{X} = 2.26$)] and Lift above Poverty Organization [LAPO ($\bar{X} = 2.33$)] were perceived useful by urban

poultry farmers while Microfinance ($\bar{X} = 1.95$), NAPEP ($\bar{X} = 1.88$) etc were not perceived useful.

Table III: Government Policies/ Programmes Perceived Useful By Respondents

Parameters	Mean	Standard Deviation
Lift-Above Poverty Organization (LAPO)	2.33*	.587
Agricultural Development Programme	2.26*	.579
Micro-finance	1.93	.607
National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP)	1.88	.573
Supervised Agricultural Loan Board (SALB)	1.01	.100
Agricultural Credit Support Scheme (ACSS)	1.01	.100
Small and Medium-Scale Enterprise Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS)	1.00	.000
Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (ACGSF)	1.00	.000

*useful (mean > 2.00); Source: Field study, 2010.

Respondent Perceived Benefit of Urban Poultry Production

Table IV indicates that poultry production has benefited farmers in the following aspects such as source of organic fertilizer ($\bar{X} = 3.69$), income generation ($\bar{X} = 3.68$), house-hold food security ($\bar{X} = 3.48$), employment ($\bar{X} = 3.58$), dietary nutrition ($\bar{X} = 3.48$) and poverty alleviation ($\bar{X} = 3.68$). This finding agree with the study of [7] who stated that poultry production is a contribution that goes beyond direct food production for the fast growing human population as well as employment and income generation. They also serve as a means of capital accumulation and as a barter product in society where there is no circulation of currency.

Table IV: Production Benefits of Respondents

Parameters	Mean	Standard Deviation
Source of fertilizer (poultry droppings)	3.69*	.506
Income Generation	3.68*	.469
Poverty alleviation	3.68*	.469
Employment	3.58*	.516
Dietary Nutrition	3.48*	.577
House-hold Food Security	3.48*	.541

*benefited (mean > 3.00); Source: Field study, 2010

Respondents information Source

Table V shows the various sources of information of urban poultry producers. It indicates that urban poultry farmers got their information regularly from Fellow Farmers ($\bar{X} = 2.72$), Extension Agents ($\bar{X} = 2.69$),

Friends and Neighbours ($\bar{X} = 2.40$) and Radio/Television ($\bar{X} = 2.32$). [2] however attributed that the rise in farmers preferring fellow farmers as first hand information source may be due to the apparent ineffectiveness in the public extension services in developing countries. Also, this finding agrees with [17] who posited that poultry farmers usually learn most information from their colleagues. Nevertheless, [15] stated that extension agents still remains a significant means by which farmers receives information on new technology.

Table V: Respondents Information Sources

Parameter	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fellow farmers	2.72*	.494
Extension Agents	2.69*	.598
Friends and Neighbours	2.40*	.550
Radio/Television	2.32*	.601
Veterinary Services	1.96	.400
Farm journals	1.24	.429
Bulletin/Posters/Handbills	1.07	.293
Internet	1.04	.197

*Regular (mean > 2.00); Source: Field study, 2010.

Urban Poultry Production Constraints Perceived By Respondents

Table VI shows the constraints urban poultry farmers face in urban poultry production. Findings indicated that constraints such as High cost of inputs ($\bar{X} = 3.41$), Lack of and high cost of poultry drugs and vaccines ($\bar{X} = 2.98$), Inadequate and inconsistent government policies on poultry ($\bar{X} = 2.82$) and High interest rate when credits are available ($\bar{X} = 2.81$) were perceived serious. This finding agrees with the study carried out by [5] who posited that high cost of inputs reduces the chances of poultry farmers buying or utilizing available technologies or information.

Table VI: Urban Poultry Production Constraints

Parameter	Mean	Standard Deviation
High cost of inputs	3.41*	.668
Lack of/ and high cost of poultry drugs and vaccines	2.98*	.681
Inadequate and Inconsistent government policies on poultry	2.82*	.845
High interest rates when credits is available	2.81*	.800
Inadequate storage system for poultry products	2.37	.734
Low purchasing power	2.33	.682
Erratic electricity supply	2.12	.808
Scarcity of day-old chicks	2.07	.685
Lack of technical know-how	2.06	.750
Non-availability of extension agents	1.97	.481
Disease outbreak	1.95	.592
Poor quality of birds	1.94	.468
Waste disposals	1.93	.537
Poor market structure	1.91	.653
Pilferage(theft)	1.77	.584

*Serious (mean > 2.50); Source: Field study, 2010.

Relationship between Respondents Socio-Economic Characteristics and Agricultural Information Needs

Table VII shows the relationship between respondent's socio-economic characteristics and their information needs. The result proves that the farmer's socio-economic characteristics have a positive correlation with their information needs and education was found to be statistically significant at 5% level of significance. This implies that the educational status of the farmers greatly influence the type of agricultural information they receive. Hence the more educated they are, the more information in the areas of agricultural inputs, extension education, agricultural technology, agricultural credit and marketing they also receive and thus are able to effectively utilize them in order to boost productivity.

Table VII: Relationship between respondents Socio Economic Characteristics and Agricultural Information Needs

Parameter	Information needs (total score)	Probability level
Age	-0.154	0.126
Sex	-0.005	0.964
Nature of production	0.014	0.891
Education	0.370	0.000*
Poultry farming experience	0.051	0.615

*Significant at 5% level (0.050)

Source: Field study, 2010.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the empirical evidence from this study, urban poultry producers need more information on quality/type of feeds, agricultural inputs, credits and technology, extension education and marketing. Also, urban poultry producers need the right government programmed /policies which will boost and encourage productivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Farmers should be assisted with low interest loans especially from LAPO so they could increase their scale of production.
- Conventional sources of information like radio, television and extension agents should intensify their messages on poultry management so farmers could be more equipped/informed.
- Government should intensify efforts I monitoring programmes so that they can achieve their objectives.

IMPLICATION OF STUDY

Africa is primarily an agricultural dependent continent with 64.3% of its population of 231,411,000 engaged in farming (FAO, 1989). In spite of this large labour force, there is food deficit in Africa. Many African countries have to import food items from countries with negligible agricultural labour forces such as the United Kingdom

(2.2%), U.S.A (2.7%), Canada (4.0%) and Australia (5.7%). The success of these countries with large surplus of food has however been linked to technological innovations which have greatly helped in boosting their agricultural production, as [16] asserted that research into media use pattern of farmers in developing countries is a concern for agricultural technology dissemination. There is need for African countries, Nigeria inclusive to be informed of this technology innovation and appropriate channels of dissemination so as to improve in both crop and animal production.

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