

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN EGG-LAYING DOMESTIC FOWL PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The need to financially develop and empower women and youths (especially the numerous unemployed) as prerequisite and necessary preparation for their adequate and successful role as 'home-builders' and 'leaders of tomorrow' was considered. Entrepreneurship was alluded to as a very reliable avenue to ensure the success and sustainability of this necessary development and empowerment need. Egg-laying domestic-fowl production was identified as having the much prospect for successful venture into entrepreneurship. The role and use of the domestic fowl production as a tool to enhance the entrepreneurial development and financial-empowerment was highlighted and appraised. The egg-laying domestic-fowl is a necessary and profitable venture and instrument for successful entrepreneurship and sustainable financial-development, empowerment and poverty-alleviation among unemployed/underemployed men, women and youths as well as a means of averting the possible involvements of these vulnerable groups in vices and criminality. The cost of carrying out the projects, duration, the financial returns, and possible sources of funds/financial assistance were highlighted.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurship, Financial empowerment, Domestic fowl, Women, Youth,

INTRODUCTION

An overview of the Poor and/or Unemployed in Nigeria:

Available records show that more than 70% of Nigerians are either unemployed or under-employed. This puts the poverty percentage at not less than 68% in Nigeria. More than 80% of this population are youths and women of which over 85% are able-bodied and healthy. About 55-60% of the entire groups are youths, No doubts this statistics is both alarming and frightening, which obviously calls for much concern and urgent action.

Youths have been said and are known to be leaders of tomorrow all over the world. They are the young adult human beings that eventually become the fathers, mothers, policy-makers and opinion-leaders of homes, nations and society. Women, no doubts have been identified as home-builders and known to be character-molders for our off-springs which constitute the youths and

their younger ones. However, they will not be able to successfully play these expected roles without being adequately developed and empowered intellectually and financially. As such the development and empowerment of these very important set of human-beings in any nation and society cannot be over-emphasized, neither should it be under-estimated. Unfortunately, these necessary requirements and preparation of youths and women in Nigeria have over the years only been given 'lip-services' or at best little attention. This great lapse (if not negligence) by leaders and governments in this country has culminated in the issues of youth-restiveness, kidnapping, militancy, prostitution, way-wardness, insecurity and other forms of criminality and vices involving youths, some men and even women in Nigeria today and recent past.

However, the present moves by the Federal and State governments to address (if not reverse) the aforementioned ugly involvements and activities of these Nigerians with emphasis on financial-development and empowerment is welcomed. These moves, involving introduction of Petroleum subsidy re-investment (SURE-P) programme, Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES), Young Entrepreneurs Programme (YEP), etc, need however, to be handled with veracity, seriousness, forthrightness and efforts to ensure their success and sustainability.

Higher-educational institutions like the universities are also embarking upon entrepreneurship programmes for their students. In the light of the fore-going and other related activities towards the development and empowerment of youths and other unemployed or under-employed persons especially in Nigeria financially, it becomes imperative to key-in by identifying programmes/activities that can draw from the new interest in youth development and financial empowerment aimed at reducing (if not removing) their interest and involvement from these negative activities into which they have become engulfed due to the past negligence. The egg-laying domestic-fowl production has been identified and is being proposed here as a tool to sustainably develop and empower youths for their role as "leaders of tomorrow".

One thousand (1000) day-old pullets per participant is ideal for use in addressing this. Although the cost of carrying out this project (to be run initially for three (3) years) is up to six million, two hundred thousand naira (N6,200,000), the financial returns within the period is more than fifteen million naira (N15,000,000). The capital could be raised from the federal and/or state governments, multi-nation companies and such-like operating in Nigeria, etc. as part of their social-security and/or social-responsibility measures and given as recoverable grants or (at worst) soft/low-interest loans to the participants/beneficiaries. SURE-P programme, Youth Empowerment projects, monies being recovered from embezzlements, oil-companies, multi-national companies, etc .are sources/channels through which this project can be funded/supported. The need to involve professionals in animal production and financial-management experts for monitoring and implementing the programme successfully is strongly advocated. Egg-producing domestic-fowl production is highly recommended as a veritable tool for sustainable entrepreneurship and financial-development and empowerment of unemployed and/or under-employed Nigerians and as a means of preparing them for their role as home and community-leaders, home-builders and/or future leaders in Nigeria, as it has the potentials to accomplish this if adequately supported and carried-out accordingly.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of domestic fowls.

According to Kekeocha (1998), domestic fowl is among the species of birds that render economic services to mankind. The domestic fowl, commonly called chicken but scientifically known as *Gallus gallus domesticus*; Galliformes, reproduces freely under man's care (Smith, 1990). The economic services rendered to mankind by domestic fowl include its use as source of meat and eggs as food; its droppings (faeces) for manure in crop-production and as feed for fish in aquaculture; the feathers and bones for ornamentals and decorative; the offal, meat and bones are also used in production of some animal-feeds and/foods (Elenwo and Okafor-Elenwo, 2014).

Compared to a number of other livestock species like cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and rabbits, the domestic fowl is easier to rear, less-laborious to cater-for and financially less expensive to maintain. The domestic fowl has fast-growth and high financial- returns; with few social, health and religious taboos against its consumption, usage and production than the aforementioned animals (Job, 1992; Bincan, 1992). Kekeocha (1998) reported that domestic fowl production is less-demanding for space as it can be done in relatively small spaces such as the backyard and wooden-cages (especially in vertical-tiers). The domestic fowl production can be carried-out in two forms viz:

- Meat production (broiler and cockerel production) and
- Egg production (Layer-production).

There is however, a third form involving the raising of day-old chick-producers (i.e. parent-stock production) which is usually more demanding financially and in attention, time and technicalities than the formers.

Egg-Production

This is usually brought about by some domestic fowls genetically-programmed and raised to specifically produce unfertilized eggs that are eaten by humans and/or used for related purposes. Such eggs are usually referred to as table-eggs (Elenwo and Okafor-Elenwo, 2013).

The egg-laying domestic fowls have the potentials of giving the farmer income from a minimum of two major sources, namely: their eggs and meat (as old/or "spent" layers). They lay more eggs than other species of birds that can be farmed as poultry. The egg-laying domestic fowl production has up to 30% of the world's animal-protein sources for human consumption (Permin and Hansen, 2005; Elenwo and Okafor-Elenwo, 2013). The need and demands for eggs from the domestic fowl is very high globally and more-so in Nigeria and Africa generally. Such demands are so high that people come all the way from Benin Republic and other West African countries to Nigeria in search and demands for domestic fowl eggs. As such the demands and markets for domestic fowl eggs can be described as insatiable.

From the foregoing and other advantages of the domestic fowl, there are no doubts whatsoever as to the significance and role of the egg-laying domestic fowl production. This will meaningfully engage many unemployed or under-employed Nigerians and adequately or substantially empower them, thereby contributing to reduction in unemployment, restiveness, criminality and

deviances. With development and poverty-alleviation the much-needed peace and progress in the country will be achieved

Egg-laying domestic fowl production also has the potentials of bridging the animal-protein needs gap of Nigerians (which at present is less than 5g per head per day, compared to minimum of 11g per head per day recommended by the World Health Organization reported by Job (1992; Elenwo, 2002). Elenwo and Okafor-Elenwo (2014) reported that a poultry-farmer raising five hundred (500) broilers makes up to four hundred thousand naira (N400,000.00) as profit at the end of three months period of rearing such to “table-size”. This profit, is higher (not less than twice or more) than that of layers), where the farmer engaged in egg-laying domestic fowl production, as proceeds would come from eggs as well as meat (where the birds are sold-off as old or “spent”-layers and (sometimes) from the droppings (the faeces) if sold as manure for crop-production and/or aquaculture feed.

2.3 Aims and Objectives:

The major aim of this work is to proffer the egg-laying domestic fowl production for use in entrepreneurship and to financially develop and empower youths, women and other unemployed and/or under-employed persons in Nigeria to enhance their performance economically and of their roles as ‘leaders of tomorrow’, home-builders, opinion-leaders, etc, successfully. Other objectives of the work include:

- (i) To expose the entrepreneurial and financial potentials of egg-producing domestic-fowl production using three-year production analysis.
- (ii) To show the profitability of egg-laying domestic fowl production as a sustainable entrepreneurship and means of financially developing and empowering poor Nigerians for their role as leaders of tomorrow, opinion-leaders and home-builders.
- (iii) To use a case study of raising one thousand (1,000) egg-laying domestic-fowls to demonstrate the veritability of empowering, developing and occupying Nigerian-youths participating in this project.

METHODOLOGY

Housing, Procurements and Raising the Birds

These involve the procurement of day-old pullets to be reared for egg-production as from sixteen weeks old. These birds can be housed in properly built poultry houses, size-able and reasonably ventilated rooms, or in some wooden cages with wire-meshes. The cages can be constructed in vertical-tiers to accommodate more birds.

Properly formulated feeds (many are commercially available) and clean water are usually given daily (but not more than three times to minimize loss, wastages, and unnecessary expenses on the project). Routine/prophylactic medication and other necessities should be provided for the birds accordingly.

Preparation, Selection and Involvement of the Participants:

For efficiency, continuity and sustainability, there is the need to organize training programmes in form of workshops. Practical and regular involvements and monitoring of youths that would benefit/participate in this, to be facilitated by the use of such professionals as qualified, Veterinary-Council of Nigeria (V.C.N)-registered veterinary doctors and (sparingly) animal scientists. The training programmes should be compulsory for anyone that must participate and/or benefit from this development, empowerment and poverty-alleviation venture before commencement of such participation. The professionals (preferably veterinary-doctors) should be involved from the inception, and running of this programme who should also monitor the activities of participants and beneficiaries in running the farms, to direct and guide the programmes/projects at least for first three years of operating the farms. This would ensure impartation of necessary knowledge and skills to participants to ensure the expected/desired success of the development, empowerment and poverty alleviation being aimed at.

Funding of the Programme/Project

The need for grant (or soft-loan) to the youths to facilitate and ensure success of this vital youth programme cannot be over-emphasized. As such, the federal, state and (possibly) local governments can and should raise or at least assist in raising the funds to be given as grants (or at worst soft loans with very low interest-rates). Banks and other financial institutions, SURE-P and such like agencies should be approached to fund this programme/project. Other possible sources of funds include Youth With Initiatives in Nigeria (YOU-WIN) programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria, Young-Entrepreneurs Programme of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP); and Youth Empowerment Scheme (YES). Also community-development departments of oil-companies and other multi-national agencies in Nigeria, etc. have programmes and resources from which participants in this youth development project through Egg-laying domestic fowl production can be funded.

The loans or grants for this programme are recoverable and as such cannot be lost when properly, adequately, seriously and closely monitored. As such, involvement of professionals in veterinary medicine and animal production, as well as some financial experts and institutions, is very necessary and would ensure profitability, efficacy, sustainability and effective recovery of loans or grants pushed into this programme.

Sample Size

A minimum of five hundred (500) but preferably one thousand (1,000) domestic fowls per participant/beneficiary is ideal.

Population Size

The participants/beneficiaries should be drawn from mainly across Nigeria, with a minimum of five hundred thousand (500,000) per state and Federal Capital Territory.

Programme/Project Duration

Four (4) years in first instance is recommended.

- First year should be for public enlightenment/awareness, call for and accreditation of participants, workshops and training for participants, processing and disbursement of funds to participants.

- Second year to fourth year are for first phase of the project, at the end of which the grants/loans should be recovered by at least half (if not fully).
- Subsequently, (i.e after the first four years of this programme for each participating-set,) participants should be made to fund the bills for their projects/farms' continuation (but under supervision and monitoring by the professional for at least one year).

Production Projections and Analysis

It is projected that for a more reasonable production, each participant/beneficiary should embark upon raising one thousand (1000 pullets) for period of three years. This would involve the following materials and estimated production costs and expenses.

First year of Operation:

• Construction of farm house/poultry pen for 1000 layers	=	N350,000
• Procurement of poultry accessories	=	N250,000
• Procurement of 1000 day old pullets	=	N250,000.
• Procurement of feeds for the birds	=	N450,000
• Vaccination and medication of the birds	=	N450,000
• Labour: (3 farm-attendants at N10,000/month)	=	N360,000
• Security guards at N10,000/month	=	N360,000
• Utilities: (a) waters = N150,000 =- (b) light supply	=	N150,000
• Transportation at N10,000/month N150,000	=	N150,000
• Insurance cover for the project (5% total cost)	=	N138,500
• Contingencies (10% of total cost)	=	N282,850
Total project expenditure in the 1st year	=	<u>N3,111,350.00</u>

Second year operation:

The expenditure will be less in the subsequent years as cost of pen-construction, day-old chicks procurement and procurement of poultry feeding and watering accessories, will virtually be absent while, those for feed procurement, vaccination and mediation, contingencies and insurance will reduce by up to 50%. The projected expenses during the second year of operating the project are thus:

• Construction of poultry-house/pen (maintenance)	=	N35,000
• Procurement of poultry-accessories (maintenance)	=	N15,000
• Procurement of day-old chicks (no new ones this year)	=	-
• Medication and Vaccination	=	N225,000
• Procurement of feeds	=	N225,000
• Labour and security (6 staff)	=	N720,000
• Utilities	=	N200,000
• Transportation	=	N120,000
• Insurance	=	N69,250
Total expenses in the 2nd year	=	<u>N2,059,250.00</u>

Third year operational expenses

• Construction of poultry house/pen (maintenance)	=	N35,000
• Procurement of poultry accessories (maintenance)	=	N15,000
• Procurement of day-old chicks (no new ones this year)	=	-
• Medication and Vaccination	=	N115,000
• Procurement of feeds	=	N225,000
• Labour and security (6 staff)	=	N720,000
• Utilities	=	N120,000
• Transportation	=	N120,000
• Insurance	=	N129,025
Total expenses in the 2nd year	=	N1, 949, 250.00

Total expenses for the (3) years of raising, egg-laying domestic fowls
 = N3,111,350 + N2,059,250 + N 1,949,250 = N6,220,050.00

RESULTS

This is reflected in the returns accruable from this venture when effectively embarked upon as explained above. The projected returns and eventual profits are shown below, in line with the projected expenditure shown under materials and methods above. This is taken on yearly basis.

Egg-Production Projections:

In Nigeria, it is on record that a domestic-fowl raised for egg-production lays between 250 and 270 per year, although they are known to do better (up to 280 eggs per layer) in developed/especially temperate countries. On the average, a layer produces 260 eggs per year. However, in a poultry farm some of the birds die along the line. This is taken as normal mortality where it falls within 3-5%. Where we take our normal mortality (under expected good management/handling of the birds) to be 5%, here the projected productivity of farm will be total-stock x 5%.

For a farm engaged in egg-production, the birds are expected to start laying as from 16 weeks (4 months) old but could stretch to twenty four weeks (6 months) old. With 5% mortality before 24 weeks (normal age of consistent egg lay, expected number of laying birds in farm raising 1000 laying birds = $1000 - (1000 \times 5\%) = 1000 - 50 \text{ birds} = 950 \text{ birds}$).

First year of operation:

For one year of age, the birds would have laid $950 \times 260 \text{ eggs} \times 1/2 = 950 \times 130 \text{ eggs}$ (in the first six months of egg-lay) = 132,500 eggs = $132,500 \div 30 \text{ crates} = 4,413.33 \text{ crates of eggs}$.

Second year of operation:

For the second year of operating the farm (one full year of eggs production is expected), the egg yield is as follows:

Normal mortality = $950 \times 5\% = 48 \text{ birds}$.

Number of laying birds = $950 - 48 = 902 \text{ birds}$.

Egg-yield = $902 \times 260 \text{ eggs} = 234,520 \text{ eggs}$.

$$= 234,520 \div 30 \text{eggs} = 7,483.33 \text{ crates}$$

Third year of operation

: During the third year of operating the farm, the egg-yield is as follows:

No of laying birds during the 2nd year -5%

Normal mortality i.e 902 – 5% = 902 – 41 birds = 861 layers.

No. of eggs during the 3rd year operation = 861 x 260 eggs = 223,860

eggs = 7,462 crates of eggs

Total egg-yield over three years of operating the farm (i.e 2 1/2 years of egg-lay) = 1st year yield (1st six-months of lay) + 2nd year yield + 3rd year yield = 4,413.33 crates + 7,483.33 crates + 7,462 crates = 19,358.66 crates = 19,358 (Taking 0.66 crate as some losses due to other causes).

Meat-yield from the Layers:

Although from point of lay (16 weeks old), the birds are mature-enough to be eaten, only at the end of lay can meat-yield be quantified, as the birds that die before then are mostly regarded as unfit for human consumption, especially as they are not consciously sacrificed. The meat-yield from layers in this project is given by the number of layers in the third year of operation, thus 861 layers (regarded as old or spent layers).

DISCUSSION

The high and increasing level of unemployment, under-employment and neglect or near-to-non-empowerment of youths, women and other able-bodied persons (in most developing countries) especially in Nigeria over the past years and its attendant gross under-development (if not non-development) of these very important and criminally vulnerable group, and future hope of our nation, society and homes can sincerely and undeniably be majorly have done a lot of harm to the peace and progress of Nigeria. This unfortunate situation has led us into our present predicaments of youth restiveness, criminalities, insecurity and other vices and activities that have been eroding the peace of the nation and grossly retarded (if not stagnated) the progress and overall development. It has also put to serious doubts, the ability and hope of the youths of the nation's population to play their roles as leaders of tomorrow. No wonder, a former President and Head of State of Nigeria, Chief (Rtd-General) Olusegun Obasanjo in recent past, openly declared that Nigerian-youths should not or cannot be referred to or regarded as 'leaders of tomorrow' as according to him, he saw nothing in them to qualify them for such.

Infact, former President Obasanjo said the youths were not prepared to be tomorrow's leaders in Nigeria. The question is how can the youths play their role or be seen as prepared to be 'leaders of tomorrow' when they had been neglected and non-developed (if not under-developed). However, with the apparent realization of the need to address unemployment and underemployment, the authors of this paper have identified that financial-development, empowerment and poverty-alleviation of the youths are pivotal and very integral to their ability to actively and successfully prepare, and assume their role as 'leaders of tomorrow'. It is believed that one very simple, fast and cheap, but effectively and sustainable tool to develop, empower and alleviate Nigeria-youths, especially the rural, semi-urban and unemployed ones is to engage them in egg-laying domestic-fowl production. This, in addition to generally putting real-money, clean-money, in their pockets with dignity, will also improve the animal-protein

needs and availability in nutrition of Nigeria and West Africa as a whole, in a very sustainable way. This has the potentials of reducing (if not eliminating) various vices, crimes and negative tendencies which have characterized many youths of this nation. It can also ensure greater peace, security of lives and properties and the progress and enhanced development of our nation.

Although the project would initially require investing a few millions (but not more than ten million naira per participant), the returns will far out-weigh this and will ensure complete offsetting of this initial financial involvement to leave the participating-youths with good profit that will continue to grow for as long as they continue with the project. With supervision of these youths and their projects by qualified and dedicated professionals (especially veterinary doctors), and gathering of experience by the participants, the success of this programme can not be over-emphasized.

Egg-producing domestic fowl production has the potentials of fast-growth and rapid returns. (Jobs,1992; Elenwo, 2002). From the analysis on the productivity and financial returns of a farmer raising 1000 egg-laying domestic fowls, in the first three years of operation, (although such a farmer would spend up to slightly above six million naira (6,000,000), the eventual yield from the farm runs up to sixteen million naira, (N16,000,000), leaving the farmer with about ten million naira (N10,000,000) net profit. This project is worth giving a try, if not fully embarked upon without further delay.

CONCLUSION

The psychological satisfaction, social and spiritual upliftment associated with and accruing from engaging the youths in egg-laying domestic fowl production are enormous and no doubts, will ensure their rapid financial (and even general) development, empowerment and poverty-alleviation. Other latent potentials and God-endowed qualities and talents of these youths will also manifest in no distant time as the issues of fear, shyness, dormancy and indolence which, erroneously, have been associated with or characterized them in the past will disappear like dews do when sunlight appears and the day progresses. Afterall, there is an Igbo saying that “*Aku na esi obi ike*” (i.e wealth strengthens the mind). In other words, fear, timidity, shyness, foot-dragging, apparent-indolence, etc, disappear in the presence of wealth.

No doubts, egg-producing domestic fowl production is (or at least has the potentials of being) a veritable tool for sustainable youth development, poverty-alleviation and empowerment in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the inherent potentials of egg-producing domestic fowl production to sustainably develop, empower and alleviate poverty from the Nigerian-youth and youths from other developing worlds, the authors of this paper recommend as follows.

1. Egg-producing domestic-fowl production should be favourably considered as an entrepreneurship tool and a very fast, cheap and sustainable means of achieving this great and laudable objective of developing, empowering and poverty-alleviation in Nigeria..

2. Although this project will need money to be invested in millions for a farm of 1000 birds, it could be reduced to a minimum of 500 birds, to reduce the estimated production cost. The funds for this project are recoverable at the end of the first three years of operation, after which the project can continue without any serious need for further loans or grants except for expansion (which could be taken care of by the farmers themselves).
3. Unemployed and/or under-employed youths should be encouraged and assisted to participate in this laudable venture. There is adequate market in Nigeria and West Africa as the demand for fowl-eggs is much and increasing. The demand far outweighs the supply. There is also room for export through tie export promotion centers in Nigeria.
4. The financial assistance for this project should be given as grants or soft-loans with very low interest-rates, but not as 'free-money' and as such should be and are recoverable.
5. The funds should/could be channeled through a body of reputable, honest and trust-worthy individuals, group or organizations to ensure adequate, careful, meaningful and effective disbursement, control, monitoring and recovering of the funds. However, there should not be unnecessary bottlenecks and conditions in running the funds and project, to reduce or remove frustrations to the success of this project.
6. The project can be taken gradually by involving a few participants initially (such as ten thousand woman per state per year or every six months). This can also be a way of controlling the financial involvement/implications needed for this programme. In this case, the loan or grant may become revolving, although this has its own short comings. As such the authors recommend that enough funds should be set aside abinctre. This is very possible, because even if the women in Nigeria are up to fifty million and they are given six million, five hundred naira each, this would sum up to about three hundred and twenty five million naira (₦325, 000, 000) only. The cost of this project in this case cannot be more than four hundred million naira for the three or four years of kick-starting this programme/project. This money, as has been reiterated severally, is recoverable within the maximum of four years from the start of the project.

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