

# Indigenous Poultry Keeping as A Source of Employment for the Rural Youth in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Nigeria is currently facing serious security challenges ranging from arm struggle such as boko-haram, militancy, robbery, kidnapping, corruption, political thuggery and human trafficking. These challenges pose a great challenge to attaining economic stability in Nigeria. Youth are at the centers of entire crisis due to under employment to some extent and unemployment to large extent. And most of these youth migrate from rural areas where there is a vast area of land and resources suitable for free range system of poultry keeping. Nigeria is endowed with all the natural conditions favorable for both crops and livestock production. This paper aimed at proposing ways for overcoming these challenges through improved method of raising local breeds of chickens with the aim of reducing unemployment among youth. With the review of some related literature and market survey of the price of essential inputs in three markets across Katsina state of Nigeria, this paper indicated that with little improvement in terms of feeding, housing and management, farmer who started with only 10 hens and 1 cock can increase his stock by more than 1,600 chickens in a year. In monetary terms a farmer who started rearing with only a little more than ₦25,000 to cover the variable cost can make up ₦880,000 in just one year. Egg laying capacity and carcass value of the local breeds can be improved by supplementing feeds and eggs/chicks withdrawal. Government and non-governmental agencies should join hand to facilitate easy acquisition of inputs and creates ready market for the outputs.

**Keywords :** Employment, Indigenous, Poultry, Rural and Youth

## I. INTRODUCTION

Never in history has Nigeria experience such a daunting security challenge that threaten the existence of this country as a nation. In Nigeria some local government in Borno state have been under the control of boko haram insurgents for a long time. Abdullahi and Ibrahim (2014) reported that people who fled the overrun areas numbering almost 200,000 are living without basic requirement of life like water and shelter. More than 200 school girls of Chibok are still under captivity by boko haram insurgents. Number of life lost run into thousands. Kabiru, Lawan Adamu and Ronald (2014) reported that boko haram

overrun and occupied some communities in Adamawa state including Buzza, Michika, Gulak and Madagali causing thousands to flee to other parts of the country. More than 20 local governments are currently under the control of boko haram insurgents. Political thuggery, like 'kauraye', 'kalare', 'area boys' and 'Bakassi boys' and so on are now security threat to even the politicians that created them.

The current economic recession is largely caused by the crash in crude price and insurgency in Niger Delta region. Nigeria is moving away from the monocultural economy to a broad base economy by

encouraging farming and other revenue generation sources.

According to Marian, Paul, and Mark (2003) problem with both free-range broiler chickens and egg layers is that, although birds kept on commercial scale are given access to a large outside area, many of them do not come outside the house at all or at best stay within the immediate environment of the house. This challenge is common with improved breeds poultry but local breeds moves and scavenge away from the house.

Other challenges with keeping indigenous breeds are that of predators such as fox, cats, moles, crows, eagles and kites.

## II. WAY OUT

Agriculture is the only viable option, as being encourage by the current regime, to tackle the problems posed by unemployment and its attendant consequences of economic constraints. Nigeria is endowed with favorable soil and climatic condition to grow almost all the crop cultivars and rear almost all the animal species used by man. Demand for poultry product by far exceeds the supply and the demand for indigenous poultry meat is steadily increasing due to health safety and palatability.

## III. RELEVANCE OF INDIGENOUS CHICKENS

Indigenous chickens are adapted to our environment hence require little or no environmental control measures. They are tolerant to diseases than commercial breeds. Local breeds protect themselves against predators more than the commercial breeds that cannot identify a potential danger. Initial investment is than the capital needed in establishing commercial breeds. They can be fed on cheap locally available feeds like kitchen waste and grains. Under free range system they need little feeding or medication hence cutting down cost of production.

Their meat and eggs are testier and healthier as they are natural and conforms more to our body

requirements. They can be used to control insect pest and their droppings are rich in nutrients. There is always a ready market for their meat and eggs.

## IV. IMPROVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS CHICKENS

Farmer needs a good breeding stock with one cock for every ten hens. Choose a hen that is broody if chicks were to raised using mother hen. A brooding house is needed for raising chicks. Housing can be made by local materials such as sticks or thatch materials to make 'akurki', mud pots or cages. Water and feed containers made up of plastics, mud or calabash.

## V. MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Management practices are simple and require no much skill to carry out. The management practices include;

- A. **Feeding.** Feeding is the most important aspect of poultry keeping and takes more than 80% of the total investment in commercial breeds keeping. With indigenous breeds the cost of feeding is reduced to barest minimum. According to Ayivor and Hellins (1986) commercial breeds are correspondingly more demanding and stringent in their nutritional requirement than pure breeds. With little investment in feeding the local breeds perform wonderful in terms of growth and eggs laying. Some grains, kitchen waste, a little of fishmeal/blood meal/bone meal can be fed to the chicks to supplement the insects, worms and fresh greens scavenged by the birds. Provide a clean water to the birds at all times.
- B. **Medication.** Indigenous chickens are hardy and tolerant to most of the diseases and pest attacks, but prevention is always better than cure. Ayivor and Hellins( 1986 ) pointed that medicines have limited value as they can only help to a small extent and should never take the place of sanitary measures. Therefore avoid bad

housing condition, poor feeding, and rampant introduction of new breeds, unnecessary visitors and immediate isolation of any bird that shows sign of diseases. Vaccinate regularly against diseases and report any diseases outbreak to the nearest veterinary.

- C. **Collection of eggs.** Safe, dark and dry place should be available for laying of eggs. Collect eggs and record their dates in pencil or markers. Handle the eggs with care to avoid shaking of the embryo. Use gloves to collect the eggs and with broad end facing upward. Eggs should be collected regularly to plan hatching using either an incubator or broody hen.
- D. **Hatching of eggs.** Eggs can be hatched using mother hen or an incubator. In both methods use only eggs that were laid in the last 14 days. Using broody hen, number of eggs should correspond with the body size of the mother hen. Eggs should be completely covered by the hen. Delay the first hen that becomes broody by giving it only one egg to sit while waiting for other hens to lay enough eggs to become broody. This is done to synchronize hatching. Surrogates hens can make two consecutive hatching by removing the first set of chicks hatched to the brooder house. Using the incubator turn the eggs regularly to receive even temperature and humidity.
- E. **Brooding of chicks.** Brooding can be achieved by using foster hen, lantern, kerosene stoves or charcoal stove. It better to raise chicks without hen because chicks often catch diseases and pests from the mother hen. It is also waste of hens time to allow her to remain broody when she could be laying eggs as reported by Ayivor and Hellins (1986). Where foster hen is used conditioned it by introducing new chicks to it for a day. Using foster is cheaper and requires no skills in temperature control.
- F. **Chicks feeding.** Provides clean water at all times in a shallow clean water trough. Add protein sources such bone meal, soya bean, groundnut

cake or cotton seed cake to growing chicks feeds. Guinea corn, grounded maize or millet can be supplied to feed the poultry.

- G. **Cost and Benefit Implication** Initial cost of starting free range poultry rearing is very small compared to commercial hybrid rearing as indicated by the table of market survey below. The availability of vast area of land is major limiting factor in free range traditional poultry keeping.

**Table 1.** Some input/output prices in Naira as at February 2017

S. No	Inputs/outputs (Quantity)	Market Places and Prices (₦)			
		Batsari	Dandume	Yarkutungu	Average
1	Guinea corn (100kg)	9,500	8,000	10,000	9,166.67
2	1 Matured chicken	500	550	600	550
3	An egg (indigenou s)	15	15	20	16.67

NB: Batsari and Dandume markets are rural bulking market while Yarkutngu is an urban market.

Initial cost of breeding stock with ten hens and a cock in the study area was just six thousand fifty naira (550x11=₦6,050). A bag of guinea corn(100kg) of less than ten thousand naira(₦9,166.67) is enough for one production cycle. Water trough and housing materials are locally sourced using recycled, mud and thatch materials.

Benefit of this method cannot be over emphasized. For instance with only ten hens under good management can lay 200 eggs with 20 per hen. Each hen can sit and hatch 15 eggs making 15 x 10 chicks. Six month after hatching a farmer can have 161 chickens. Assuming 40% to be cocks (Laban, 2015), the farmer will have 90 new hens plus the original stock totaling 100 hens.

After another six months the birds will lay 2000 eggs. Following the principles of 15 eggs per hen the farmer will have 1600 hens after six month. The remaining balance of eggs can be sold or consumed by the farmer.

In monetary terms, taking the average price of a hen to be five hundred and fifty naira from the table above,  $550 \times 1600 = 880,000$  naira. With good management and under a conducive environment the benefit can be more than this estimate considering the fact that a hen can lay between 200 and 300 eggs (Laban 2015).

### VI. SUMMARY

The economic challenges in the country is mainly posed by the teaming unemployed youth. Hence any attempt to address the situation will fail unless jobs are created to engaged the unemployed. The only viable option in arresting the situation is revitalizing agriculture by subsidizing inputs and creating market for the output. Indigenous poultry keeping is not capital intensive compared to commercial breeds and requires less skill. The local breeds meat is becoming more preferred than that of commercial breeds. There is always demand for the local breeds and their eggs.

### VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

To encourage the our unemployed and under employed youth to take to poultry.

1. The government must ensure security of life and property in the country,
2. There should be incentives in terms of provision of social amenities in rural areas, soft loans and subsidies to entice youth to go back to rural areas,
3. Training on improved poultry management should be given to those that are interested in poultry farming and have access to land.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion this paper is of the opinion that free range poultry keeping can be used to reduce problems of; unemployment in our rural youth, security and protein intake among our teeming population.

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