Chapter 7

Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Livestock Production: The Experience of Rural Farmers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on livestock production by rural farmers in Nigeria. Questionnaire, interview, and personal observation methods were employed to elicit information on the impact of ICT on livestock production on rural areas of Nigeria. The study reveals the significance of personal characteristics of the respondents. The findings also reveal that rural farmers need to be encouraged by providing them with relevant ICT gadgets in order to enhance effective access to information on veterinary and extension services to improve productivity. It is therefore concluded that the establishment of internet facilities in rural communities should be the priority of the State and Federal Governments in order to encourage computer literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian society is a social system compounded by contested demands on access to scarce resources especially information. Nigeria is naturally blessed because of the rich alluvial deposits and other natural composites. The fertility of the country makes it possible for the people to carry out fishing, hunting and animal rearing (Otolo, 2008).

Domestic animals are tamed and could be kept for commercial purposes and social means in Nigeria. Anyanwe and Ashaya (2007) opined that some of the domesticated animals such as
sheep and cow can be used for meat and milk production. Herren (2004) postulated that one of the advantages of domestic animal production is the low cost of feeding. This is because most of the domesticated animals feed on grass and less expensive grains. However, McNut (1995) revealed that in spite of the cheap process of rearing domestic animals, some factors still militate against intensive and extensive livestock production in Nigeria and these include inadequate veterinary services and absence of genuine veterinary drugs. But with the advent of information and communication technology (ICT) on livestock production domestic animal rearers now find solace with the application of ICT.

Most of the rural farmers are not highly educated and most of them understand and speak their dialects only. Experience shows that the ability to acquire and use information is fundamental to the development of animal production especially in the adoption of new technologies. Poor access to information is a major constraint to domestic animal production in Nigeria, and the situation is aggravated by the high level of illiteracy among the rural farmers. It is a clear evident that the ability to acquire and use information is a sine qua non for the application of ICT and agricultural development at all levels.

Fasheun (2001) declared that computer compliance by farmers have become the most important factor for productivity and prosperity. Communication is the process of imparting or exchanging information. To expose rural farmers to a better way of animal husbandry, there is need to educate them in the language they will understand better. In view of the nature of rural farmers, which are relatively isolated and the economic activities which are predominantly agriculture oriented, there is therefore the need to bring farmers to the centre of development for the upliftment of their standard of living. It therefore, calls for a communication development strategy that is democratic, participatory and productive or result-oriented. This can be achieved with the adoption of ICT in retrieving and dissemination of information on domestic animal production (Kwesiga, 2000).

Rural farmers need a wide range of agricultural information access, especially in all areas of agricultural activities such as veterinary services, prices of drugs, diseases outbreak, processing, storage facilities and marketing. The information received helps to enlighten them on the latest species of diverse animals and current prices.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that the findings will enable the rural farmers in Nigeria to be acquainted with new ideas of domestic animal production through the application of ICT.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ogur (2003) stressed that much efforts have been made by the Federal and State Governments to enhance animal production and other agricultural activities. Few of the programmes launched by the Federal Government were “Operation Feed the Nation and Green Revolution”, which focus attention measurably on students, civil servants, the police and army. These programs hardly favor the rural farmers especially the rural animal rearers.

Rural farmers are isolated from the dealers of agricultural produce, and therefore need a wide range of information to improve in their systems of farming. Information from the context of this study is defined as a processed data that is logically arranged and recorded in various forms, and is retrieved, stored and disseminated in the right format and at the right time with the application of Information and Computer Technology (ICT). Information could also be inform of recorded ideas, skills, feelings, experiences and research results that can be communicated for the improvement and development of others (Unegbu, 1999). Sanusi (2003) remarked that information, if well
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