

## INFORMATION SOURCING AND TRAINING AMONG RABBIT FARMERS: EVIDENCE FROM SOUTH -WEST NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

*Agricultural information is an important aspect of farming which is capable of providing farmers with useful information that could help improve the productivity, various study have being carried out in relation to rabbit nutrition, reproduction, housing, profitability and rabbit value chain but not much study exist on how farmers source for information on rabbit farming to help improve productivity hence this study was designed to have an insight into how existing rabbit farmers source for information on rabbit production and productivity. Using a structured questionnaire at scheduled interview sections necessary information was collected from 105 rabbit farmers in South-West Nigeria on the activities of extension agents, training attended and how they source for information on rabbit production. Data collected were analyzed descriptively. Result from this study revealed that majority of the respondents get information on rabbit production from the internet while only few depends on extension agents. About 73% of the respondents were not visited by extension agents and 38% of the respondents want to be visited. About 35% of the respondents had undergone formal training on rabbit keeping while 58% of the respondents have not. The study submits that there is a need for extension agents to be more proactive on various social media platforms involving rabbit farmers and be better equipped with information on rabbit production which could be of help to farmers. The study recommends that rabbit farming be included alongside other livestock practices like poultry, pig and fish production during trainings organized by stakeholders.*

Keys: Information, Rabbit farming, Trainings, Extension agents, Internet.

**IJAFS 2021 (4).11:1629-1633**  
**Accepted for Publication**  
**September, 2021**

## **Introduction**

Information is an essential resource for individual's growth and survival since information enriches the mind and keeps it un-deformed (Ayanyemi, 2006). Agricultural information on the other hand is an important aspect of farming in a variety of ways. It helps farmers to take good production and management decisions which could have impacts on the productivity of such agricultural venture (Kursat, 2010). To improve the productivity of any agricultural venture, there is a need for farmers to have up-to date information on new innovations as related to such ventures. Rabbit farming is not left out. The necessary information needed to bring about improvement can be sourced using various means some of which includes one on one interaction with other farmers, attending formal trainings, activities of extension officers, from book, use of internet etc. The internet has become an important tool in information dissemination particularly via the various social media available. Anirban (2017) reports that the speed, distance and coverage of the social media makes it an important tool in modern agriculture.

Rabbit farming is an aspect of micro-livestock that is gradually becoming popular particularly among small scale backyard farmers who wish to improve their household protein intake while making some extra income for the family (Ndyomugenyi *et.al*;2013). In other to increase productivity and availability of rabbit meat in Nigeria there is need for farmers to be well informed about new innovations and technologies as related to rabbit farming. Various study have being carried out in relation to rabbit nutrition, reproduction in rabbits, housing of rabbits, profitability of the rabbit industry and rabbit value chain but not much study exist on how farmers source for information on rabbits and rabbit farming to help improve productivity hence this study was designed to have an insight into how existing rabbit farmers source for information on rabbit production and productivity and to suggest how these information dissemination system can be improved to help the rabbit industry to grow.

## **Materials and methods**

A survey was carried out among rabbit farmers in South-West Nigeria to find out how rabbit farmers get information and trainings to help them with improvement of the enterprise.

Using a multistage sampling technique, five (5) states in South-West Nigeria which were Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun and Ondo states were randomly selected for the experiment which involved only rabbit framers. Then, Rabbit farmers Associations in the various states were contacted through extension agents in the Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) of each State. A snowball sampling technique was used to identify twenty (25) rabbit farmers in each of the State. Information on how the farmer's sources for information on rabbit farming, if they have attended trainings related to rabbit farming and activities of extension agents we gathered during the survey. Of the one hundred and twenty-five (125) questionnaires administered, only one hundred and five (105) were properly answered. Results obtained from the survey alongside one-on-one discussion

with the respondents were used to depict various value chain of rabbit production in the study area. Data collected were analyzed descriptively using SPSS 16.0 package.

### **Result and Discussion**

The result on table 1 shows response of respondents on how information on cuniculture are sourced and exchanged in the study area. From this result it is observed that majority (about 54%) of the respondents get information on rabbit production from the internet, 31% from other farmers while only 5% depends on information from extension agents. The high number of farmers sourcing for information from the internet suggests that the internet plays an important role of equipping rabbit farmers with some form of informal training. With the existence of various rabbit producers groups on different social media platform on the internet, sourcing for information by farmers in such group is made easier but the authenticity of such information maybe questionable hence there is a need for livestock extension officers to be proactive on various social media platforms, this could help rabbit farmers have access to up to date innovations and knowledge exchange which could bring about positive change in the rabbit industry (Anirban, 2017).

It is important for farmers to be trained before embarking on any form of livestock production since trainings help improve the productivity of any venture as reported by Mansoor, (2007) as new information are gathered from such training. This study revealed that only about 35% of the respondents had undergone formal training on rabbit keeping while 58% of the respondents have not taken trainings on rabbit keeping hence it is assumed that such persons who have not being trained in the act of rabbit farming will be learning on the job which may involve a lot of mistakes and they learning from such mistakes (Amitabh, 2012). The high number of untrained rabbit farmers could be associated with absences of organized training focused on rabbit farming as most livestock training organized by agricultural training institutes are often centered on poultry, fishery and pig production, hence the need to include cuniculture in some livestock farm trainings organized by stakeholders in the livestock industry to help more persons get familiar with farming rabbits.

On the activities of extension officers in the rabbit production industry, the result from this study revealed that only about 27% of the farmers were visited by extension officers, about 38% of the respondents who are not visited will want to be visited by extension agents who have information on how to improve the productivity of the rabbits. During the course of the study some of the farmers who do not want to be visited by extension officers complained that some extension officer's visit is often centered on collection of data on productivity and performance of the venture and do not have necessarily new information about rabbit farming for them. In view of these, there is a need to further educate livestock extension officers on rabbit production, how to improve productivity and address common challenges related to rabbit farming. These could be archived by carrying out in-service training to help keep the available livestock extension agents abreast on new technologies and innovations that could help the farmers. This study is in agreement with that

of Jasim *et al*; (2016) on the need for an in-service training of extension agents for better performance of extension agents.

### Conclusion

The findings of this study on information sourcing and training of rabbit farmers revealed the need for;

1. frequent in-service training on rabbit farming to help keep the available livestock extension agents abreast on new technologies and innovations that could help the farmers.
2. rabbit farming be include alongside other livestock practices like poultry production, pig production and fish production during trainings organized by both the governments and NGOs
3. livestock extension officers to be proactive on various social media platform, this could help rabbit farmers have access to up-to-date innovations and better knowledge exchange among rabbit farmers.

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**Table 1: Responses of rabbit farmers in South-West Nigeria on how they get relevant up-to-date information on rabbit farming.**

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Have you attended any form of training in rabbit farming?</b>		
Yes	37	35.2
No	61	58.1
No response	7	6.7
Total	105	100
<b>How do you source for information on Rabbit farming?</b>		
Other farmers/ friends	33	31.4
From the internet	57	54.3
Institutions around	10	9.5
Extension officers	5	4.8
Total	105	100
<b>Are their extension agents visiting you?</b>		
Yes	28	26.7
No	77	73.3
Total	105	100
<b>Will you want to be visited by specific extension agents?</b>		
Yes	40	38.1
No	23	21.9
No response	42	40.0
Total	105	100
<b>Frequency of extension visitation</b>		
No response	77	75.2
Forthrightly	14	13.3
Twice monthly	7	6.7
One monthly	3	2.9
Twice weekly	2	1.9
Total	105	100
<b>Have you got any form of government interventions?</b>		
Yes	0	0
No	100	95.2
No response	5	4.8
Total	105	100

Source: Survey 2019