

Analysis of Farm Management Skills of Poultry Production Operators in Ebonyi State

Dr. Egbe, Benjamin O.

Technology and Vocational Education (Agricultural Education), Ebonyi State University
Abakaliki
egbejamin.o@gmail.com

Abstract

Managerial skills of poultry production operators in Ebonyi State are not yet defined. This study was therefore carried out to analyze the management skills of the operators. The study used survey research design, through a questionnaire to elicit information from 216 respondents. The questionnaire was structured on four point rating scales and was validated by 3 experts. Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Findings reveal that among the studied management skills, risk oriented skills had the least ranking means. In addition, poultry production operators had the best ability in marketing skills with average of ability rate of 2.89. According to the results, it is necessary to improve the risk management and resource mobilization skills of poultry operators in this area through extension services and participation in training activities. Farmers should be encouraged to utilize experts' advice in taking informed decisions to boost their production to meet market demand. Government should assist farmers create efficient financing system by establishing price of their products.

Keywords: Farm Management, Management Skills, Poultry Production, Skills

Introduction

Poultry is a team addressing wide variety of domestic birds such as chickens, ducks, geese, turkeys, guinea fowls and ostriches. Poultry keeping is a lucrative business venture and it requires little investment to start (Banerjee, 2005). The author stated further that poultry droppings is an excellent organic manure for enriching vegetable gardens; while crop residues are in turn fed to poultry such a symbiotic farming operation enhances efficiency of farm resources to increase outputs. Thus, Ezeibe (2010) reported that poultry production is a very important arm of the livestock sector as poultry has high feed conversion rate, high fecundity and contributes high to economic gains of the operators in Nigeria. He stressed further that poultry production enjoys high interest among livestock production and the meat has high demand in Nigerian markets because of its nutritional facility. But, Mohammad and Fatholah, (2011) reported that the distance of demand and supply of poultry products is very high to provide the least needed animal protein of 36g per person in a day. This report is in keeping with the general observation of inefficiency in poultry enterprises heading to low productivity. This calls for analysis of the managerial skills of the operators to properly define the skills possessed and utilized for production.

In the words of Hornby (2010) analysis means investigation, examination, enquiring or revering something. In the context of this paper, analysis means study or examining the skills possessed and utilized by farm operator, for poultry production. Reviewing of the skills and their extent of utilization by poultry operators is vital; operators in this study means managers who use various skill areas to run

poultry businesses. That is, for poultry managers to act with maximum efficiency to reach an end, they need one set of management skills.

A skill is an ability to do something expertly well (Egbe, 2005). In this study, skills are the abilities of poultry operators to correctly take decisions and set goals of the enterprise, mobilize and utilize resources, utilize technical skills in poultry business venture, manage risks and market poultry farm manager take informed decisions and work toward maximizing profits. These are the consonants with the views of Arena (1998) that farm managers require marketing, financing and accounting skills in order to choose the best time to sell their products, record sales and estimate profits of the farm. Onuka and Olaiton (2007) added that poultry producers need skills for daily inspection and sanitary of the farm, proper feeding management of resources like feeds and keeping records of farm activities. But the extent the poultry operators possess and use these skills in the study area has not been defined.

The people of Ebonyi State have great value for poultry, as it is highly required during marriages, burial rites, feast and festivals. Unfortunately, poultry productions, in most cases are left to small scale native farmers who find it difficult to apply high level management skills. Economic studies indicate that most farmers find it difficult to maximize profit because of risks and challenges. It is in recognition this that this study is made to identify the skills possessed by the operators and the extent of utilizing them for managing poultry enterprises, with a view to enhance production activities and output.

This study will provide vital information to investors, serve as a guide to farmers as well as reveal important hints on ways of averting risks challenges in poultry business. It will also improve poultry industry and motivate more people into it.

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to review the abilities of poultry operators for managing their enterprises. Specifically, it sought to:

- (a) Determine the abilities for taking decisions and goal settings.
- (b) Ascertain the operator's resources' mobilization skills.
- (c) Determine the extent of utilization of technical skills.
- (d) Ascertain farmers' abilities in managing risks and uncertainties of the farm.
- (e) Access the skills utilized for marketing poultry products.

Materials and Methods

The study covered the three agricultural zones of Ebonyi State; Abakaliki, Afikpo, and Onueke. It was a survey research design and used questionnaire to elicit information from a sample of poultry farmers and extension agents. Multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to get an extension block from each of the three agricultural zones. Thereafter, 63 poultry operators and 9 extension agents were randomly picked from each block. This gave a total of 216 respondents; made up of 159 poultry operators and 27 extension agents. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher on four point scale and validated by 3 experts. It was used to collect data which were analyzed with mean and standard deviation, to answer the research questions and t-test for testing the hypothesis.

Table 1. Poultry operators' ability rate on decision taking and goal setting skills

Rank	Decision and goal setting skills	X	RMKS
1.	Ability to make good decision about the technologies to accept and use.	2.99	P
2.	The ability to take right decision about the time to produce.	2.97	P

3.	Ability to design production programs and identify production targets.	2.83	P
4.	Ability to design production programs and identify production targets.	2.78	P
5.	Ability to predict and estimate the production cost over a production period.	2.55	P
6.	Ability to predict and estimate the income from the production over a period of time.	2.36	NP

Results in table 1 indicate that the respondents believe that poultry operators are moderate on skills for making decisions on technological and time of production ($X=2.99$ & 2.97), ability to predict required input ($X = 2.83$), ability to design production targets ($X = 2.78$) and ability to estimate cost of production ($X=2.55$). Each of these skill items has mean above the cut off point of 2.50, showing that it is possessed for use. But one of the items has the mean of 2.36, signifying that the operators have low ability rate in predicating and estimating income from the farm. This may be due to fluctuations or lack of stabilized poultry prices in the market.

Table 2. The operators’ ability rate on resources mobilization skills

Rank	Technical skill items	X	Remark
1.	Ability to use inputs with minimum cost to get maximum efficiency	2.79	P
2.	Ability to choose techniques and methods that make efficient use of resources	2.75	P
3.	Ability to complete activities in the best possible time	2.69	P
4.	Ability to correctly identifying and correct production problem	2.42	NP
5.	Ability to effectively use information from advisors on management	2.56	P
6.	Ability to get and use credit and financial resources from varioussources	2.55	P
7.	Ability to use the best management operators in poultry production units	2.41	NP

Data in table reveal that six out of the seven items had their means above the cut off point of 2.5, signifying that the ability to use minimum inputs to get maximum efficiency ($x = 2.79$), ability to choose technologies and methods for efficient use of resources ($x = 2.79$) and ability to complete activities timely ($x = 2.79$) were rated high. Others rated positively were ability to use information’s from exports and ability to use financial resources from various sources with means 2.56 and 2.55 respectively. But ability to correctly identify and solve production problems and ability to utilize the best management operations in various units were rated low with 2.42 and 2.41 as their means. The inability of the operators to identify and correctly solve farm problems may be responsible to low productivity and the inability of the poultry industry to meet increasing demand for the poultry products.

Table 3: Respondents’ view point on Technical management skills

Rank	Technical skill items	—	X	Remark
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1.	Ability to prepare houses before stocking the Farm	3.10	P
2.	Ability to manage feeding system	3.09	P
3.	Ability to properly manage watering	3.03	P
4.	Ability to manage physical environment (Light, air heat and humidity	2.99	P
5.	Ability to control density	2.91	P
6.	Ability to control sanitary conditions, health measures and preventive actions.	2.91	P
7.	Ability to develop and manage day old chicks	2.47	NP
8.	Ability to formulate poultry feed	2.46	NP
9.	Skills in familiarize with work and insurance	2.39	NP

The results in table 3 show that most of the skill items enjoyed good situations; as six out of nine skills are enquired by the operators. Those acquired were ability to prepare the house ($x = 3.10$), ability to manage feeding ($x = 3.09$), management of watering system (3.03), controlling of physical environment ($x = 2.99$), control of density ($x = 2.91$), and ability to control sanitary, and health measures ($x = 2.83$). The other three skills were rated low with means of 2.47, 2.46 and 2.39 for ability develop day old chicks, formulated feeds and use insurance rules. The inability of the operators to produce day old chicks and feeds on their own increases production cost as cited by Onuka and Olaitan (2007) that field takes up to 60% of the production costs.

Table 4. Respondents' view point on Risk Management skills

Rank	Technical skill items	X	Remark
1.	Ability to understand the fact that risk is sometime necessary	2.80	P
2.	Ability to effectively manage production markets and financing risks	2.64	P
3.	Ability to predict and develop strategies for facing danger conditions	2.57	P
4.	Ability to create savings and financial support when it is	2.48	NP
5.	Proper use of Agricultural insurance	2.32	NP

Data presented in table 4 show the first three items had their mean ranged from 2.80 to 2.57 signifying that the operators have these skills for managing risks. It is important as agriculture is one of the most risking jobs, than is then necessary for the managers to enjoy high capacity and ability to face crises and danger condition. But, two of the items on ability to create savings for emergency situations and ability to properly use agricultural insurance were rated low, with average scores of 2.48 and 2.32 respectively. The results agree with the general observation that farmers in the study area save little and find it difficult to expand their enterprises from the farm produce.

Table 5: Mean ratings on marketing and accounting management skill

Rank	Technical skill items	X	Remark
1.	Ability to choose the best time to sell the products	3.40	P
2.	Ability to analyze market situation in terms of demand, supply and prices of poultry products	3.31	P
3.	Skills in using good advertising and other marketing		

	strategies	3.11	P
4.	Ability to supply products directly to consumers	2.76	P
5.	Ability to sell and calculate profits from poultry business	2.66	P
6.	Ability to analyze government policies on poultry markets	2.62	P
7.	Ability to create a good and efficient financial system	2.40	NP

Results of the data in table 5 indicate that the means of first six items ranged from 2.62-3.40, and each is above the cut off point of 2.50. This implies that poultry operators have these skills for marketing and accounting. The results are in consonant with the views of Yaaghubi et al (2009) that successful farmers must not only focus on the production but also in marketing accounting and financial affairs of the business. The authors stressed further those farmers who recognize marketing opportunities easily break even, may be responsible for the high interest enjoyed by the poultry industry in the study area. The skill on ability to create good and efficient financial system was rated low. The reason for this result is that most farmers in the study have poor socio-economic background. Little education rubs many farmers of efficient record keeping and poor financial background leads to inefficient financial system.

Conclusion

The study focused on the review of the managerial skills of poultry operators with which to take correct decisions and effectively manage their profession. These skills enable farmers to face changes in agric business environment and farmers in high competition of trade environment. The results of this research indicate that among the investigated management skills, risk oriented management skills had the least ranking means. Until farm operators are fully equipped with risk management abilities, agricultural production, marketing and financial management is prone to fluctuations. After risk management skills, resource mobilization skills are lowest in average. In this area, ability to use the best management operations in various units of production ranked least. Based on the results, it is necessary to improve farmers' risk management skills through extension and participation in training activities. The use of training to improve farmers' management skill is an important task of extension service. Also, farmers should be encouraged to utilize experts' advice in taking decisions about the resources to adopt and use in production to meet the satisfaction of target market both in quality and quantity of the products. Again, government should assist farmers in creating efficient financial system, by stabilizing price of agricultural commodities.

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