

A Socio-Economic Analysis of Livestock Pilferage in Rural and Urban Areas of Benue State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT A survey study was conducted in 2005 to assess the level of pilfering in livestock industry in Benue State, Nigeria. A 4-stage stratified random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 120 livestock farmers. Primary data were garnered using a well-structured questionnaire, and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies and percentages. It was found that Poverty (50%) and unemployment (41.67%) accounted for livestock pilferage in urban areas and the same poverty (46.67%) and unemployment (34.92%) accounted for livestock pilferage in rural areas of Benue State. It was also found that livestock farmers in the state suffered 68% financial losses and many farmers lost between 1-5 (73.68%) animals to pilfering. Recommendations made included improvement in working conditions, improved economy, provision of employment opportunities, legislation against pilfering activities and formation of Vigilante Groups to check the trend.

1. INTRODUCTION

The population of Nigeria is increasing at 2.3 percent annually. However, the per capita food production and supply had seemingly been static at 1.2 percent annually (FOS, 1989). Acha (1990) noted that Nigerian economy before the discovery of oil was basically dependent on the revenues from agricultural products. In recent times, there has not only been a reverse but a serious protein malnutrition problem responsible for infant mortality and general debility in the country (UNICEF, 1998). One possible reason is inadequate protein intake due to inadequate supply of animals. One plausible source of this problem is livestock pilferage, that is, illegal, disproportionate exploitation of a good number of these animals.

According to Olusanya et al. (1995), the means of rural survival have been threatened by losses despite improved technologies in genetics, nutrition, health and management practices. Possible causes of pilfering, as pointed out by Banwo (1995), include protests that may arise from aggrieved relations or workers, hunger or economic depression, attempt to seek compensation or redress for some perceived losses like underpayment, wage deduction or deprived rest or a tendency for willful damage.

It has become difficult for Nigeria's livestock resources to meet the 34g/day of animal protein intake recommended by the FAO (Lamorde, 1997; Shaib et al., 1997; Abubakar, 1998) as a result of

effects insufficient livestock, caused also by pilfering. Banwo (1995) stated that of more importance to the market researcher are the economic effects of pilferage on the immediate business and the economy in general. The revenue of the government usually goes into the drains when agricultural commodities, including livestock, are pilfered (Joda, 1995).

Pilfering is a determining factor in the adoption and use of new technologies in agriculture because farmers who have fallen victims to pilferers and suffered great financial losses are likely going to reduce their investments in farming, and some may eventually become reluctant to adopt and use agricultural innovations (Adedoyin, 1995). It, also, encourages early disposal of immature animals and, in most cases, at poor or rock-bottom prices.

Pilfering is a worrisome activity on the farm that has often been mentioned in agricultural literature, especially extension and rural sociology, merely as one of the painful social problems encountered on the farm but ignored (Iibowo, 1992). Due to the prevailing poor economics situation in Nigeria pilferage in agriculture is so rampant that it touches and threatens all facets of agriculture (Adefuye and Adedoyin, 1994). To fight this menace at the National level the National Research Network on Pilfering in Agriculture (NARWPA) was established in 1995 (Adedoyin, 1995).

In Benue State, Nigeria, this phenomenon has degenerated into a conflict situation whereby

lives are lost and often communal crises arise as a result of organized pilferage. Nevertheless, adequate documentation of pilfering in formal scientific studies is lacking. It is in realization of this limitation that the researchers have carried out this research.

The study was aimed at identifying the major causes and effects of livestock pilferage in rural and urban areas of Benue State.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pilfering is petty theft or stealing in small quantities of valuable items (Olubanjo, 1995). It is a predatory crime in which a person deliberately takes someone else's property in a clever way on a continuous basis with a view of making the owner unsuspecting of the loss (Iaseinde, 1994, Adefuye, 1995). Pilfering could be in different forms based on the place of occurrence, the extent of occurrence, the background and status of the pilferers and the extent of its effect on the victims (Torimiro, 1995).

Olusanya et al. (1995) found out that causes of livestock pilferage include greed, poverty, Laziness, Unemployment, bad company, in-born traits/kleptomaria, lust and wickedness. Possible sources of livestock pilfering include internal sources. E.g relations of livestock farmers, marketers, friends, hired labour or assistants or even security agent; External sources: pilfers from outside the setup- these professional pilfers go about in small groups and in automobiles from one location to another pilfer (Olubanjo, 1995; Nasis, 1995). Pilfering has been accepted in the circle of delinquent youths as a kind of social behaviour that has been socially instituted. (Uman, 1992 and Torimion, 1995).

The effects of pilfering has been well documented. According to Olusanya et al. (1995) the effects of pilfering on the victims are financial losses, emotional disturbance and quitting of the business. According to Banwo (1995) pilfering is a factor of cost in three dimension: Damage to security apparatus, cost of item pilfering and reduction in government revenue. Generally pilfering is a major sources of agricultural loss (Joda, 1995; Adedoyin, 1995) and lowers the standard of living of the private livestock farmers (Olubanjo, 1995). Consequently concerted efforts need to be taken to curb this vice. Research is one of these efforts.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study area was Benue State (Zones A and C of the Benue State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority, BNARDA). Benue State of Nigeria lies on longitude 6°35'E to 10E and latitude 6°30'N to 8°10'N of the equator. It has a population of 2,780,359 and total land area of 30955 square kilometers (Benue State Government 2002). Administratively Benue State is divided into 23 local government areas with the headquarters at Makurdi, a town on the Bank of River Benue.

The population of the study comprised all livestock farmers in Benue State. One hundred and twenty (120) livestock farmers were selected using a 4-stage stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaires were used to generate data and descriptive statistics (frequency tables and percentages) were used to analyze the data. Objective was analyzed by use of frequency and percentage while objective was also analyzed by use of frequency and percentage.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Causes of Livestock Pilferage

The data in Table 1 presents the percentage distribution of respondents according to causes of pilfering in urban and rural areas. The result revealed that the most (50%) frequently mentioned cause of pilfering in urban areas was poverty. This was followed closely by unemployment (46.67%). Again, Poverty was frequently mentioned by the respondents in the rural area (41.67%), however, lower than the percentage in the urban areas. This agrees with the findings of Olusanya et al. (1995) that poverty, unemployment among other factors are cause of livestock pilferage. This implies that pilfering is a socio-economic phenomenon which could be abated when economic indicators such as poverty and unemployment are reduced in the society.

Table 1: Causes of livestock pilferage in urban and rural areas of Benue State

Variable causes	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Poverty	50.00	41.67
Laziness	16.67	12.77
Unemployment	46.67	34.92
Greed	21.67	10.64

4.2 Effects of Livestock Pilferage

Table 2 reveals that pilfering could result to both social and economic losses in both urban and rural areas of Benue State. Social losses include, financial losses in urban areas (68.33%) and rural areas (65.31%), discouragement accounted for 36.67% in urban and 22.45% in rural areas. Emotional disturbance accounted for 18.33% in urban and 6.12% in rural areas and quitting the business accounted for 16.67% in urban and 6.12% in rural areas respectively. Generally, it was found that Livestock farmers in the urban areas had suffered more financial losses than those in the rural areas because of their better financial base.

In terms of economic losses, it was found that livestock farmers in rural areas lost 73.68% animals to pilferers while their counterparts in urban areas lost only 48.89% of their animals to pilferers (Table 2).

Table 2: Effects of livestock pilferage in urban and rural areas of Benue State

	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
<i>Effects Social Losses</i>		
Financial Loss	68.33	65.31
Discouragement	36.67	22.45
Emotional Disturbance	18.33	6.12
Quitting Business	16.67	6.12
<i>Economic Losses Number of Livestock</i>	<i>lost by Farmers</i>	
1-5	48.89	73.68
6-10	44.44	23.69
11-15	2.22	-
16-17	4.45	2.63

Multiple responses recorded for social loss.

Source: Field Survey, 2005.

This could be as a result of free range system in the rural areas in line with Dafwang (1979) who reported that heavy animal losses occur due to theft under the extensive system of rearing.

The findings agree with the findings of Joda (1995) who noted that pilfering reduces government revenue, reduces farmers' morale, income and welfare. The implication of this finding is that pilfering inhibits livestock business. Consequently, stakeholders in livestock industry must wage a sustained fight against pilfering in order to boost livestock farmer's morale, increase his income and improve his welfare.

5. CONCLUSION

The per capita productivity of livestock farmers in rural and urban areas of Benue state would have tremendously improved by now if it were not because of pilfering which has been found to have some social and economic effects on livestock production. This antisocial malady is caused mainly by poverty of the people, unemployment of our youths and in some cases greediness and laziness. And as long as this antisocial malady persists, livestock production, processing and marketing shall continue to lag behind in rural and urban areas of Benue State.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations based on the findings of the research will assist the prosperity of livestock production in the State.

1. Improved economy – All the major stakeholders of the national economy should as a matter of urgency improve the economy to ensure better standard of living to alleviate poverty which is a major cause of pilfering as shown by the research.
2. Provision of employment opportunities – Government, individuals, private and corporate organizations should provide adequate employment to our youths who are potential pilferers if not gainfully employed.
3. Government should enforce the administration or application of pilfering laws already in existence for effective pilfering control since it has adverse effects on livestock production; and
4. Individuals can do more in pilfering control by forming Vigilante Groups to serve as Security Patrol in towns and villages of the State.

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