

# **ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILL ACQUISITION BY HERDSMEN THROUGH GRASS FARMING: IMPLICATIONS FOR LONG LIFE SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **Abstract**

*The present and absence of entrepreneurial skills in any society make the difference in the economic development of that society because the entrepreneurial role as a catalyst for economic development and a way of life for many people is well demonstrated in an industrialized and capitalist nation. It is likely that the herdsmen were not skilled in growing grasses for animal feeds and they are better opportune to acquire skills in grass farming to enable them prepare and make provision for cattle feed. It will stop further interruption of an aspect of agriculture (Crop farming) which is the base of the economy of any nation. This paper examines the concept of entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, entrepreneurship in grass farming, management of grass farming, why entrepreneurial skill acquisition by the herdsmen, implication for long-life sustainable national development. Suggestion and recommendation were highlighted and if well implemented will not only stop incessant herdsmen-farmer clashes but create job, boost national economy and increase utilization of dormant resources within the ecosystem.*

The persistent farmer – herdsmen clashes in Nigerian communities especially in crop cultivation zones is due to lack or insufficient pasture for animal feeds. But the continuous search for animal feeds in farms by herds and herdsmen most often results in misunderstanding, quarrel, conflict or serious fight between them and the farmers. The increasing rate of such incidence to farmers and host communities is worrisome to every well-meaning Nigerian citizen. There is no Nigerian State that has not experienced the incidence of farmer – herdsmen clashes, except if the State has no grasses and is surrounded by water. States such as Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Kogi, Enugu, Ekiti, Ebonyi, Kaduna, Ogun, Abia, etc can never forget their sad encounters with the herdsmen intrusion into their farmlands or communities.

According to Benue and Taraba State Governors, the recurring clashes have claimed lives and rendered many homeless. The herdsmen's nefarious activities such as destruction of farm crops, pollution of water bodies as well as maiming and killing farmers who dare stand against them are thorns in farmers' flesh or the nation as a whole. They even rape innocent women in their poor communities and there are many cases of loss of lives and properties. Farmers and the affected communities have cried out for help against these incessant and iniquitous behaviours of the herdsmen, yet it is even gathering momentum instead of coming to an end. These farmers with their communities need to be rescued so urgently because the issue at stake involves loss of lives. Moreover, they spend their time, money and energy in their farm to generate money, raise their standard of living and contribute meaningfully to ensure a sustainable national economy. Some do not farm enough or refused to farm again in far distant farms due to the fear of being raped. They complained that farming in their area is a waste without curbing the menace of herdsmen. It is of importance to give urgent attention to them since majority toiled in the farm and come out with nothing due to the menace of the herdsmen.

Small business enterprises are aspects of the building blocks of national economy if the citizens realize to put in practice the objectives of setting up small business structures. The absence of it is the existence of millions of unemployed and ill-employed youths in our society today. These sets of youths can cause societal ills and serial inter-labour clashes where farmer – herdsmen clashes have been encountered. Regrettably, many of these floating unemployed and ill – employed youths are with no skills or experience to defend themselves for a living. Being skilled creates opportunity for job creation, wealth generation, poverty alleviation, value reorientation, self-satisfaction and provision of enabling environment for development (Gana, 2009; Anoke, 2015). Absence of these brings about idleness, creates troubles and retends development. There is a saying that an idle mind is a devil's workshop. There is no gain creating unemployed or ill-employed people because a wounded soldier is the most dangerous weapon in the war front.

Each time farmer – herdsmen clashes occur, the amount of wealth, lives and properties wasted is the estimate of the cost of destructions and damages and time taken to acquire the lost properties and lives can never be regained. So under such science is the nation moving forward or backward in terms of longlife sustainable national development?.

However, farmer – herdsmen clashes are not something of today. It has been in existence as early as in the eighty's but instead of subsiding, it continues acquiring momentum to the detriment of national peace, unity and progressive sustainable development. Certainly, it could be that the herdsmen are ill-employed and fully engaged while the herds were feeding and do not know much about entrepreneurship and as such have no adequate employable and saleable entrepreneurial skills to engage themselves while taking care of the cattle. This could be more reason for having

sufficient time, wondering with the cattle and causing destructive behavioral encroachment of the herds in farmers' vineyard to the extent of having confrontational fight that attimes result in loss of lives and properties.

Engaging herdsmen in grass farming is an avenue of acquiring entrepreneurial skills, job creation, providing enabling extent for national development, reducing poverty ensuring peace, unity and wealth creation, if properly harnessed. This is because there is ready market considering high demand of animal feed consumption and the effect farmer – herdsmen clashes. The more people tap into grass farming in Nigeria, the better for them and country at large.

### **Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship covers all activities in all aspects of human endeavor and that is why it can be regarded as a way of managing a commercial undertaking rather than a characteristics of an individual. The concept has evolved over the years but viewed differently by scholars. The sociologists, psychologists, economists, managers etc all have different perspectives about who is an entrepreneur since it is central to the usage of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur pilots entrepreneurship as a way of undertaking activities that yield benefits. What could be considered as a general attitude that can be usefully applied in all working activities and in everyday life is the “way” of entrepreneurship.

According to Sanri, Bakoures & Petrodon (2010) those attitudes such as creativity and innovation are very useful in entrepreneurship. It is attitude or behavior that pushes one to become an entrepreneur. Thus regardless of background and location one may at one time become an entrepreneur by displaying entrepreneurial behaviors and creating opportunity of having his/her own commercial venture. Introducing entrepreneurship in education refers to education that provides training, experience and skills that are suitable for entrepreneurial venture, Ezeudu (2008). This implies that by the end of entrepreneurship education programme, those basic knowledge, ideas and values about functions and operations of a business will be formed and help to familiarize one with the business environment. Nnamani (2007) entrepreneurship is an instrument that empowers youths to be in control of their future by creating job and businesses for them to exercise creative freedom, have higher self-esteem, greater sense of responsibility and control of their own lives. This view is in line with Elechi's (2009) idea on the benefits of entrepreneurship education in development of business awareness, acquisition of managerial skills ability to bear risk, economic empowerment and reduction of social vices. Further, entrepreneurship creates opportunities for job experience, means of earning savings and investing money. It develops increase in appealing for business ownership which will make him become self-employed and will believe more in him/herself for self- worth. Above all, it helps in developing the occupational knowledge, job skills, mental interaction with the environment and working experience as he familiarizes himself with the business environment.

### **The Entrepreneur**

The word entrepreneur means undertaking a venture and could be used in relation to starting a new venture which is central to the usage of entrepreneurship. An entrepreneur is one who owns, manages the affairs of a business enterprise and is held responsible for the outcome of the business enterprise because he is the manager that pilots the entire business. He finances the business and works so hard to make sure his money is neither lost nor wasted. He is an employer, assigns duties to his/her employees/supervises them and coordinates duties for the success of his business venture. Notably, being a one man business, the establishment is relatively small with a small number of employees. An entrepreneur is highly optimistic with foresight to project/move the business forward. The urge for profit, innovative and creative attitudes of an entrepreneur are the driving force behind the success of the business venture. However, as he derives joy in making profit so he bears the risk alone.

In the view of (Etim, 2013), the attributes of an entrepreneur are summarized as being a good organizer, great achiever, decision maker, great competitor who enjoys a great emotional stability, absorbs high degree of shock and endures all manner of stress. As a leader of the business, he directs, initiates, re-enforces and guides the employees to accomplish a set objectives and goals for their benefits. As a risk taker, he synergizes his skills, experience, knowledge, ideas, ability and values into play to bring the best of him at the outcome of the business. Further, taking lead in planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling the activities of the enterprise are what make an entrepreneur a decision maker. In other words, he/she always seeks for solution and does not wait to be directed while channeling his dealings to the best interest of the business venture.

### **Entrepreneurship in Grass Farming**

Grass farming is the principal form of cultivating grasses for animal feed instead of the normal crop cultivation. It involves growing grasses (pasture) commercially in the farm. There is a growing demand for grass feed and meat protein which resulted from shortage of cattle feed and ever increasing Nigeria population respectively. The major basic factors required to set up grass farming are discussed below.

- Acquisition of Land: One needs at least acres of land at suitable location. Where it is not possible to get surplus land 2 – 5 acres can start the production. The location of the land should be close to a source of water. The site should not be close to the cities nor where cattle movement will create problem to the public or vice versa.
- Reliable source of water: There should be good steady water supply i.e. to say that water should be sufficiently available anytime it is needed at the site.
- Establishment of boundaries: Constructing boundaries in form of paths round the allocated land to prevent fire out-break into the farm.

➤ Labour: This is one of the major factors of production. People are employed as workers (employees) in the farm. A lot of work needs to be done to get to the finished product, so people are needed to manage the grass growing farm.

➤ Provision of capital: It is capital that is being used in the purchase of other factors of production and without which, production is incomplete.

In most cases, grass farming is mono-cultivation instead of inter-cultivation. Mono-cultivation allows only a specie of grass in a portion of land. It is easy to manage in terms of weeding and harvesting. Its disadvantage is that it is very easy to be infested by pest or diseases and destroy them. The techniques hence is to portion the allocated land according to the number of species of grasses available and to plant separately, portion by portion.

### **Management of Grass Farming**

It is not an easy task but has to be done for wealth creation and value reorientation. It involves the casting/sowing of grass seed in nursery or direct in the farm, nurtured to grow, harvest and sell the finished product plus other administrative affairs of grass farming. When the grass seeds germinate transplanting follows. The seedlings need to be manured, weeding is done before it matures and grass is harvested when mature and about 1 – 3 months depending on the species. Harvesting is done portion by portion and sold fresh or dry in hips. Sometimes, cattle should be allowed to feed direct on the grass farm on hourly bases and changed. The harvested and dried feed (hay) are packaged in bales and sold or stored pending when the need arises. In grass farming, keeping simple record/inventories is necessary. It is good to know the age of the harvested or mature grass. So, the time of casting the seed, germination, growth stage, flowering if possible and reproduction is important in the life of any selected specie.

### **Implications for Long-life and Sustainable National Development**

➤ Individuals are equipped with the right attitude of capital formation through grass production there creating job, reducing poverty.

➤ Developing in the individuals the relevant skills of innovation and creating in production activities is achieved.

➤ Through it individuals are able to generate ideas and enabling knowledge to set up business venture there by contributing in the economy of the nation.

➤ Creating more job to employ self and others by engaging them in all aspects of grass farming from production to harvesting, processing, packaging, marketing and transportation. It will help reduce unemployment and idleness.

➤ Providing employment for others. Lots of other small businesses will spring up from the original set up, thereby employing others. It will in effect help raise masses the standard of living and alleviate poverty.

- Increase utilization of resources: the effective utilization of other resources that might have been lying dormant is increased and ensued by employing them in where they fit in grass farming, starting from planting to consumption.
- Providing enabling environment: At least it helps create enabling means by which an individual to invests his/her potentials and energy for wealth creation and make one self-reliance.
- Providing long lasting peace and unity: The herdsmen will settle in their own community, have enough feed for their cattle, help develop their communities and will not roam about with their herds to destroy farm lands, thus peace will reign for long between the farmers and the herdsmen.
- It is a means stimulatory economic growth and effective capacity utilization in all sectors of the national economy.

### **Why Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition in Grass Farming**

The presence or absence of entrepreneurial skills in any society makes the difference in the economic development of the developed and the developing economies. According to Okafor (2015) and Gana (2009), the entrepreneurial role as a catalyst for economic development and as a way of life for many people is well demonstrated in industrialized nations. Okafor (2015) and Aladekomo (2004) laid emphasis on the need for functional education to be relevant and practical, involving suitable skill acquisition and development of competencies. These qualities will equip the individual to have a life sustainable living and contribute to the development of his/her society.

Fortunately, crop farming and cattle rearing are good business ventures. An individual can operate them separately or have them combined but it is very tedious to combine the two even if the capital is there. There are basic factors required for setting up a business or production, and those factors must be functional in operation for the progress of the production. Absence of any of the enabling factors of production will cause hindrance to the success of the business venture. Therefore, one is expected that when setting up grass farming business, the basic requirements needed should be on ground before taking off. This is to avoid set-back or interruption in the course of production or business operation. Now, who are the entrepreneurs of cattle farming business in Nigeria? Are they the herdsmen or the proper owners of the cattle? Did they make provision to secure the cattle feeds, water supply, land and equipment for taking care of the cattle and other auxiliary items?. The answers to these questions are important in cattle farming business because absence of any will create problem along the line. Entrepreneurs of cattle farming in Nigeria are the sole owners of the cattle and they employ the herdsmen to rear them by a way of wondering in the bush as nomadic herdsmen. These herdsmen keep wondering in the bush in search of grasses to feed the cattle. By doing so, they enter farm lands and eat up crops in the farms. On the other hand, farmers cannot fold their hands and watch such negative action on their farm

because they cannot go empty handed. Thus, they chase the herds away and if any cow is wounded, the herdsmen will go aflame and trouble/fight will start.

The herdsmen will feel that their herds were interrupted while feeding. With the incessant interruption that usually result in fight, they equipped themselves with dangerous weapons because their cattle must feed be safe. So, when the herdsmen carry sophisticated knives and other war weapons, where did they get them from and for what purpose. Why would they move about with such sophisticated weapons in a poor community? And who equipped them and licensed the weapons for them? There are other pertinent questions that come to the mind of any well-meaning Nigeria citizen.

Fortunately, entrepreneurial skill acquisition in grass farm is important in Nigeria for the following reasons:

- (i) Providing lasting solution to farmers – herdsmen clashes
- (ii) Boosting the national economy by way of increasing per capita production for consumption and per capital income.
- (iii) To create employment opportunities by way of absorbing into the system both the unemployed and ill-employed to be fully employed.
- (iv) Helping to utilize other dormant resources in the ecosystem and making them functional within the system.
- (v) Helping to life the socio-economic status of the people.
- (vi) Making feeds available for the herds and helping them grow faster bigger and healthier unlike when the herds wonder in the bush, trekking everywhere, from north to the south.
- (vii) For research purpose, through gene manipulation to raise species of desirable quality (Gulta and Gulta, 2010) like faster growth with high nutrient content.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that there is skill acquisition in entrepreneurship. Being skilled makes one fully engaged in genuine long-life activities to earn better living. Therefore, it is necessary that the herdsmen be skilled in grass farming to be fully engaged genuinely while their cattle are feeding. It will help their growth and the economy.

### **Recommendation**

According to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the incessant clashes between farmers and cattle herdsmen in the country would be brought to an end in the next two years *if there will be grazing areas in the country where the herdsmen would take care of their cattle*. The phrase in italics has raised great controversy but the discussions below will go a long way to solve the problem of farmers – herdsmen clashes and give Nigeria peace.

1. Preparedness by cattle owners: This refers to the extent of readiness of the owners of the cattle business to run the business. They should make provision the

necessary needs of the business because a trader does not his landlord to get his shop. He negotiates and pays before displaying his goods.

2. Establishment of ranches: Where cattle will stay and be provided with feeds that will make them grow faster, bigger and healthier is important. When they continue with the long journey of north to south, east and west, it does not help them. They emaciate and do not look healthy. Nigeria cannot continue living with grazing as a norm of today, but be prepared to embrace ranching which is the best global practice. Both private and government should come in for development of ranches which should be rented or paid taxes for their use.

3. Purchase land: Just like every other business (fuel business for instance)land matters a lot either for space to keep the animals or site for buying and selling. The entrepreneurs of cattle farming should make provision where they will keep their cattle. At times, the herds occupy farmers land and when farmers need it for farming, the herdsmen refuse to go. Let them purchase land and nurture it to benefit them and others.

4. Development of grass farming: This is a good business and vital to ranch. Here, grasses are grown for animal feed; which are cut when mature. Processed after harvesting, put in bales and sold to ranches i.e. a shift from grazing to ranching. This will help a lot to end farmers – herdsmen clashes. This is possible for both individuals and government to establish and create more job from it.

5. Government's provision of aids: Apart from private individuals, government should establish ranches, pastures and employ people to work there. It is an avenue to generate income through taxes and rentage.

6. Provision of conducive location: Ranches and pastures should be in conducive environments. It should not be close to the cities where cattle should create problem to the public and vice versa. Again the land should not have communal dispute so that it will not be collected back for other investment or human settlement.

7. Provision of basic infrastructure: Usually, this type of investment is located in rural areas where transportation is a problem. There should be provision of water supply, electricity access road to both the ranch and pasture sites, for the benefit of the workers and the entire communities.

8. Provision of maintenance equipments: Machines for cutting, harvesting, processing packaging in bales and other operational equipment to move the business forward should be made available.

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