

UNIT 2 DISTRIBUTION OF FARM ANIMALS IN NIGERIA

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, most of the types of livestock reared in Nigeria are kept by rural households mainly for family consumption, ceremonial demands, and occasionally for sales to provide quick money for the children's education. However, the change in social and religious orientations and urbanization has tended to increase the commercial value of livestock such as sheep, poultry, goats and cattle, especially in southern Nigeria. This has resulted in considerable movement of the latter two from the northern parts of the country to the rapidly urbanized southern parts. The strong influence of climate accounts for the natural adaptation of specific breeds of goats, sheep and cattle to locations or ecozones of occurrence.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to discuss:

- the different systems of keeping farm animals, and
- the patterns of spatial distribution and factors influencing these patterns in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The main livestock types in Nigeria are cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, donkeys, horses and poultry. There are two rearing systems of livestock,

namely domestic system involving the rearing of animals in small numbers by thousands of households, and large herds of cattle reared by nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples.

3.1 Types of Livestock

3.2 Domestic Livestock Keeping

The average number of all livestock kept per household in northern Nigeria is higher than the national average, judging from the large numbers of all animal types dispatched from northern Nigeria to southern Nigeria. The reasons for this distribution pattern are

- i. the need to provide means of sustenance to secluded women,
- ii. the widespread use of droppings as manure,
- iii. the scavenging habits of some domestic animals, which make the rearing of livestock significant in the rural economies of northern Nigeria, and the use of beasts of burden in many parts of northern Nigeria.

Domestic livestock is widely distributed among households, being kept by a large proportion of rural households. Poultry, goats and sheep are the most widely distributed in that order of households rearing them. Contrarily, the proportion of the rural households keeping cattle is surprisingly low, but still larger for northern Nigeria than the national average. This is primarily because cattle are not easy to handle by small households, and to a large extent also, the exclusion of nomadic groups which specialize in rearing them from surveys.

3.2.1 Goat Distribution

Goats are widely distributed in the country. The reasons for this are the convenience of women and children in caring for them, their ability to survive in nutritional environments that are incapable of supporting other livestock types, their ability to survive on supplementary feeds or fodder (collected grain, tree foliage) and the ease of sheltering them in verandas of houses and *garis*. There is a considerable variety of breeds with different physical characteristics, namely the Sokoto Red/Maradi (most prevalent in Sokoto State), Kano Brown (dominant in Kano-Katsina region), the desert goat (more widespread in parts of Borno State), and the dwarf goats of the forest zone. However, goats are more preponderant in northern Nigeria (68.7% by 1960-70 data), especially in Kano, Katsina, Bornu and Bauchi areas, than in the southern Nigeria. Also, domestic goat keeping is characterized by fluctuating significance nation-wide; there is a high demand for goats in western Nigeria, where there is limited capacity to satisfy the demand.

3.2.2 Sheep Distribution

The distribution is similar in many aspects to that of goats. Most of the sheep are reared in northern Nigeria, with the highest numbers in Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa, Taraba and Kano States. There is a strong relationship between sheep distribution and the prevalence of Islam; rams are slaughtered during some of the Muslim festivals. This also accounts for the larger proportion of sheep kept in western Nigeria, than in Edo and some eastern states. Furthermore, environmental conditions influence the type, size and number of sheep found in different parts of the country. This accounts for the preponderance of the dwarf, short-legged breeds in the south, the medium-sized Yankassa breed in the savanna areas, the Fulani herds and rural households, and the Ouda in the rigorous climatic conditions of the Sahelian zone (mainly along the Nigeria-Niger border).

3.2.3 Other Livestock

The distribution of poultry and beasts of burden (donkeys, camels, horses) shows regional variations. Camels are commonest in the tsetse-free areas of the Sudan and Sahelian zones. Poultry is more widespread in northern Nigeria than in southern Nigeria, where the local breeds in northern Nigeria are specially adapted to the temperature conditions (greater heat tolerance), there is higher women involvement in indoor rearing, while the social structure and spacious nature of the compound are more favourable for the rearing of various kinds of poultry, including turkeys, ducks and guinea-fowls. The number of swines (pigs) kept by Nigerian households is relatively small, compared to that of goats and sheep. Their distribution is also particularly restricted to northern Nigeria, due to the predominantly Muslim population which abhor the eating of pork for religious reasons. Also, many parts of the Sudan zone of northern Nigeria are too dry for pigs, which require a humid environment. However, ecological conditions in the forest and Guinea savanna areas of Nigeria are more favourable to the rearing of pigs on a household basis. This is partly because most of the local breeds reared originated from the wild species *Sus scrofa* which developed under warm, humid, tropical rainforest conditions, and partly because of the less widespread practice of Islam in the latter areas. Also, the shade, shallow standing water suitable for wallowing, and large quantities of waste food products available over extensive areas of southern Nigeria and the Middle Belt render the environment suitable for pigs. These account for the over 50% of the country's swine population which are found in the southern states. They are most widespread in Anambra and Imo States in spite of the small share (10%) of the national total distribution.

3.3 Herding of Cattle

Cattle are different from other types of livestock on account of their occurrence in herds of varying sizes outside households, their almost complete dependence on open pastures and the transhumance movements they are involved in especially during the dry season. About 94% of the country's cattle population is found in northern Nigeria, with most of the cattle being concentrated in the Sudan and Sahelian ecological zones. Only 2-3% of the cattle is found in the south; a large proportion of the cattle are in transit to consumers in the large urban centres. The main cattle-producing areas of Nigeria are found in Sokoto, Katsina, Kano and Bornu Provinces in northern Nigeria. The five main concentration areas are the Sokoto-Rima valley, the Kano-Katsina complex, northern, central and eastern Borno State, the Mambila plateau and the Jos plateau.

3.3.1 Seasonal Distribution of Cattle

Factors which influence the distribution of cattle are

- i. Incidence of tsetse fly: The distribution of cattle in Nigeria is significantly influenced by the presence or absence of tsetse flies (*Glossina* spp.) and the associated trypanosomiasis disease in cattle. This accounts for the main distribution of cattle in tsetse-free areas of the Sudan zone during the wet season.
- ii. Availability and adequacy of pastures: This is an important factor, especially in relation to the carrying capacity of tropical African pastures. The Sudan zone is overstocked while the Guinea savanna zone is undergrazed. The reason for this is that the pastures in the Sudan zone provide sufficient nutrients for cattle for only 3-5 months of the year, and fall below maintenance level in the dry season. Cattle are therefore moved generally southwards to the Guinea savanna areas in search of better grazing and water. In the Sudan zone, the grasses are annual, and characterized by low productivity, slow recovery and utilizable by cattle for only a short period. In contrast, in the Guinea savanna zone the abundant grass becomes available too quickly, and it is difficult to control and maintain them in a palatable and easily assimilable state for cattle.
- iii. The habitation and social characteristics of the herdsmen, and the variations in cattle breeds reared: The majority of cattle in northern Nigeria are still under the management of the nomadic Fulani, whose social life is closely related to the seasonal movements of cattle. The wet season, which marks the greatest concentration of their herds in the tsetse-free high plains of Hausaland and the plateau, coincides with a period of intense

social activity such as family and festive celebrations, and meetings of clan members. Predetermined routes during seasonal movements cause changes in the pattern of distribution of cattle, even during the dry season. The main stabilizing factor in the concentration of cattle in northern Nigeria, especially in the savanna zone, is the considerable number of semi-nomadic and settled cattle owners. The cattle herds owned permanently by settled cattle owners and mixed farmers enhance the cattle population of the Sudan zone during the dry season.

Generally, cattle distribution in Nigeria is related to the different breeds reared and their possible adaptation to conditions outside their areas of origin. The White Fulani is the most adaptable and widely distributed breed in the country. In the Guinea savanna, the breed is used to upgrade local breeds such as the N'dama and Keteku of western Nigeria, and the Adamawa Gudali of northern Nigeria. Most of the other breeds are restricted in their adaptability to the areas where they are found, and this limits the movement of herds and the numbers that can be reared. These breeds are the zebu cattle such as the Shuwa (Borno, Adamawa, Taraba); the Azaouak (northern Katsina, Kano State); the Kuri (near Lake Chad); and the Sokoto Gudali (Sokoto area). The distribution of cattle in the Guinea and derived savanna areas of southern Nigeria is due largely to the resistance to trypanosomiasis of the Keteku, the N'dama and the Muturu breeds.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learned that farm animals are reared both domestically and in large herds. In the latter, animal populations are influenced not only by the system of domestication, but also by breed type, ecological, socio-cultural and religious factors.

5.0 SUMMARY

Farm animals vary widely in their spatial distribution across ecozones in Nigeria. It depends, among others, on the husbandry system, cultural, social, religious, ecological factors and breed types.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. List the major types of livestock reared in Nigeria.
- ii. Mention and differentiate the two systems of rearing livestock in Nigeria.
- iii. Justify the assertion “the average number of livestock kept per household in northern Nigeria is higher than the national average”.

- iv. Why is cattle considerably less widely found in Southern Nigeria than the other types of livestock?
- v. Give any two reasons why goats are widely distributed in the country.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Agboola, S.A. (1979). *An Agricultural Atlas of Nigeria*. Oxford University Press:U.K. 248.