

IMPACTS OF HIGH COST OF FEED ON THE PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION OF BROILER BIRDS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Poultry farming has been one of the lucrative businesses common among many people in Northern Nigeria. Apart from those involved in poultry farming for egg production, there are those engaged in broiler farming for meat production. This branch of poultry farming has been lucrative and has provided cash-generating opportunities for hundreds of thousands of male and female farmers who leverage its potential to build sustainable business empires. The cost of feed in the broiler poultry business is, however, one of the most pressing challenges causing hundreds of farmers across the North to shut down their farms. This specific challenge is driven by the scarcity of ingredients used in feed production, insecurity resulting from the activities of armed bandits, desertification affecting the land used for producing farm products like maize and soybeans, and the increased cost of transportation due to the removal of the fuel subsidies. This development has now created uncertainty in the market, increased the cost of broilers for end-users, and led to a general crisis in the production, marketing, and distribution of broiler birds in the Northern region of the country. This paper aimed to evaluate the connection between the high cost of feed and the distribution of broiler birds, as well as to assess the general market visibility and opportunities in the Northern region. The paper adopted a mixed research methodology, combining a literature review and field interviews, with the goal of integrating the data collected from the field with the literature to arrive at findings that may be useful for future planning.

Keywords: Broiler Production, Poultry Feed Cost, Poultry Marketing and Distribution, Northern Nigeria Poultry Industry, Agricultural Production Challenges.

Introduction

In recent times, the prices of poultry feed have skyrocketed amidst the growing demand from thousands of poultry farmers across Nigeria. The sharp increase in the price of poultry feed may be due to a combination of many factors, most notably insecurity and fluctuating weather patterns (climate change), among other concerns. This development has caused a serious setback for both poultry farmers and the industry in general, as hundreds of poultry farmers are shutting down their potential farms due to their inability to cope with the high cost of feed. This is compounded by the slow pace of market accessibility due to a shortage of funds among final consumers.

The development may, however, be connected to the decision of President Bola Ahmad Tinubu's government to remove the fuel subsidy on the day it was inaugurated. According to Mojeed (2024), the immediate impact of the president's decision was a sudden increase in the price of petrol by over 100 percent, leading to a corresponding rise in transportation costs. The aftermath of this decision became evident in the increasing prices of goods and services across the country. Adversely, the prices of ingredients, especially maize and soybeans, which are commonly used in the processing of poultry feed, rose significantly, making it almost impossible for most poultry farmers to continue with poultry production. Mojeed (2024) argued, "Consequently, the prices of major staple food items and livestock feed ingredients such as maize and soybeans rose from what they were before President

Tinubu took over power from his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari to what it is today."

Broiler production is essentially the most important poultry sub-sector affected by this economic crisis. While the cost of broiler feeds increased by over 100% in the seven months since May 29th, 2023, the market viability in terms of broiler producers having access to markets for their finished products became increasingly scarce, as broiler farmers operated their farms at a consistent loss in every cycle (Wada 2024).

Added to this development are the resultant effects of the crash on job opportunities, as hundreds of young people who are employed in nearly all aspects of broiler production are beginning to lose their jobs due to the crisis in the industry. This, along with other factors such as outbreaks of major diseases and infections, as well as the low market value of poultry meat, has become a serious source of concern affecting broiler production and its marketing, especially in Northern Nigeria.

The situation has become more complex in the northern part of Nigeria due to the growing spate of insecurity caused by the actions of armed bandits in the Northwest, Boko Haram militias, and other militant groups such as Ansaru militants and members of ISWAP in the Northeast. According to Bawa (2024), fifty percent of potential poultry farmers in the Northwest, especially in states like Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Katsina, have shut down their farms due to the high cost of feed resulting from the closure of many farms where maize and soybeans are produced.

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Many were either threatened by the bandits or kidnapped and released only after the payment of a ransom. Evidently, however, the development has resulted in more than 60% of the farmland in these states being abandoned by farmers due to the fear of bandit brutality. These states are undoubtedly the largest suppliers of maize and soybeans to major feed millers in the North-west geopolitical zone. Major feed millers such as Olam Feed Mill, Hybrid Feed, Jargaba, and many other medium-scale millers rely heavily on farmers from these states to access thousands of tons of maize and soybeans for their feed milling processes.

The cost of transporting these major grains, along with increased tariffs imposed by both the federal and state governments, remains a consistent threat to the rising cost of broiler feed among Northern Nigerian poultry farmers. This is in addition to the cost of importing concentrates and other ingredients required for poultry feed production, which all has a multiplier effect on the final price of finished feed used by poultry farmers. As the prices of poultry feed continue to increase amidst growing concern, poultry farmers, especially those producing broilers, are facing serious indecision as the price of broilers continues to diminish on the open market. Up to August 2024, the price of one kilogram of broiler live-weight in Zamfara State, for instance, is between N1,800 and N2,000, while the price after dressing is between N2,300 and N2,500 (Wada 2024). This situation is compounded by the non-viability of the market around Gusau, the capital city, as well as the low demand for broiler birds for human consumption due to increasing poverty. The scenario described above is further exacerbated by the lack of concern from governments at all levels to address the problems confronting the poultry industry and develop ways to support its stakeholders through the provision of grants and soft loans to poultry farmers to enhance and boost their morale.

The objective of this paper is to examine the consequences of the scarcity of grains, particularly maize and soybeans, and the skyrocketing increase in the price of poultry feed among poultry farmers in Northern Nigeria. It also aims to assess the connection between the rising prices of poultry feed and market viability in terms of sales for profit margins by the farmers. The paper adopts a mixed research methodology, including a literature review and field interviews, to ascertain new facts emerging from these sources and how the findings can be used by both actors in the poultry industry and policymakers, in particular, to address this deficit for the sustainable development of the poultry sub-sector.

Overview of Broiler Production among Poultry Farmers in Northern Nigeria.

A broiler can be referred to as any type of chicken that is bred and raised specifically for meat consumption (Kruchten 2002). Even though broilers are reared for commercial purposes, they usually reach their slaughtering stage between weeks four and eight (4-8), depending on the type of feed and other facilities used. The term can also sometimes be used to refer specifically to younger chickens under 2.0 kilograms (4½ lb), as compared with the larger roasters (Gerrard).

Nigeria's broilers are one of the components of poultry breeds that contribute significantly to the growth of the poultry industry in Nigeria. Statistics have shown that the poultry enterprise, with about 180 million birds, is the most dynamic and fastest-growing sector of the livestock subsector in Nigeria.

Poultry meat in Nigeria, from about 180 million birds, stood at 45,000 metric tonnes. The improvement was largely due to an increase in the number of broilers, which produced more meat per bird. The growth in the industry can remain inclusive and create opportunities for small-scale and emerging producers in the value chain.

Meat and egg production in Nigeria, according to recent data from the National Bureau of Statistics, stood at 650,000 and 300,000 tonnes, respectively, in 2013. Nigeria is the secondlargest chicken producer in Africa after South Africa, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2013). Heise (2015) reported that the consumption of poultry meat would increase by 200% between 2010 and 2020 in Nigeria. This is expected to grow by 6 to 10% year-on-year between 2020 and 2025 (Nan-Dirk 2017). According to the National Agricultural Sample Census (NASC) Report 2022, published last month, there are about 40.2 million agricultural households in Nigeria. Of this figure, the report states that only about 42.5 percent (approximately 17.1 million) of agricultural households raise birds, most commonly chickens.

Over-View of the Increase in the Price of Broiler Feed in Northern Nigeria.

It is evident that many poultry farmers, especially in Northern Nigeria, are shutting down their farms due to their inability to cope with the skyrocketing prices of feed. Broiler producers are the worst hit by this crisis, as feed remains a critical and crucial ingredient required in raising broiler birds. The circumstances leading to this significant increase are multifaceted, as highlighted above.

In Zamfara State, for instance, farmers producing broiler birds usually rely on factory-finished feeds to raise their birds, primarily because the majority grow their birds within the quick range of one to six weeks at most. Only a very few allow their broiler birds to grow up to between eight and nine weeks. This alone demonstrates the simple fact that the majority of those involved in broiler production in the North have low capital income, which limits their capacity to raise a very limited number of birds within the shortest time frame (Babangida 2024). This development also has sequential effects on the number of feed distributors and retailers that can be sustained within the value chain of broiler production. In a state as large as Zamfara, with a population of over five million people, there are as few as ten reliable mega feed distributors (Wada 2024). These are individuals who have the capacity to supply an average of 1-3 trucks of assorted broiler feeds, depending on market reliability and viability (Wada 2024). The rest are small retailers who have the capacity to buy between 1-3 tons of feed and stock them in strategic areas for home-grown local farmers.

Table (1) Showing Estimate of Feed Retailers by (14) LG of Zamfara

S/No	Number of Small Retailers	Number of Retailers	Capacity
1	Anka	NA	(1) ton
2	Bakura	NA	Less than (1) ton
3	Bukkuyum	NA	Less than (1) tons
4	Birnin Magaji	NA	NA
5	Bungudu	2	More than (1) ton
6	Kaura- Namoda	5	More than (1) ton
7	Gummi	2	
8	Gusau	17	25) tons
9	Maru	2	More than (1) ton
10	Maradun	2	More than (1) ton
11	Shinkafi	1	NA
12	Tsafe	4	More than (1) tons
13	Talatar Mafara	6	(7) tons and above
14	Zurmi	1	Less than (1) tons

Source as Compiled by the Author, 2024

This development regarding the limited number of feed distributors has also made the availability of most feed brands very difficult at times. Celebrated broiler feeds such as Chukun Ultima, Chukun Super Starter, Top Feed, Jargaba, and others are often scarce, which limits farmers' ability to stick strictly to the feed of their choice. According to (Sanusi 2024), this affects the anticipated productivity and performance of the birds, especially at the

targeted period of disposal. (Sanusi 2024) argued further that farmers are often forced to use the brands of feed that are available, rather than those they prefer. He added that "sometimes, farmers have to pay money in advance to secure the appropriate quantity of feed they require to sustain their production chain, as the most desired feeds are not readily available."

Table (11) Showing Brand of Feeds that are Common in Zamfara State

S/No	Name of Dealer	Category
1	Vital Feed	Super Starter, Grower & Finisher, Premium
2	Hybrid Feed	Crumble Starter, Super Starter Base (1)/ 2 in 1
3	Jargaba	Super Starter, Finisher, Super Starter Plus
4	Chukun	Canteen Area Opp. PZ
5	Sun-Seed	Super Starter
5	Top Feed	Super Starter Crumble

Source as Compiled by the Author, 2024

The restrictions on the number of distributors also made price regulation and control virtually impossible. As argued by (Maryam 2024), sometimes people are accustomed to certain brands of feed, which are also restricted to certain distributors. These distributors often take advantage of their monopoly to set prices that are both exorbitant and unaffordable, forcing poultry farmers to switch to

alternative brands of feed that are not their preferred choice. She added, "Sometimes, when one calls neighboring states like Katsina and Sokoto, there appears to be a price difference of about N2,000 to N3,000 per bag. When attempts are made to supply from outside the state, the cost of transport is always too high, negating the benefits of alternative procurement."

Table (111) Showing Names of the Major Distributors of Feed in Gusau

S/No	Name of Dealer	Location	Capacity
1	Samu Agrovet	Adjacent Othaimin Jumuat Mosque Gusau	Three Trucks and Above
2	A A. Rasheed	Canteen Area, Igbo Road, Gusau	Three Trucks and Above
3	Abba Wada Enterprise	Canteen Area, A.A Master Plaza, Gusau	Two Trucks and Above
4	Mai-Shanu	Canteen Area Opp. PZ, Gusau	Three Trucks and Above
5	Mal. Ahmad Jargaba Enterprise	Anguwar Dallatu, Gusau	Not Known
6	Anas Mai-Kwai	Old Market Road, Gusau	Not Known
7	Alh Samaila	Garejin Mai-Laina, Gusau	Two Trucks and Above
8	Babangida Lawal	Adjacent Sterling Bank, Gusau	Not Known
9	Mai Nono Enterprise	Opposite Zakkat Plaza	Not Known

Source as Compiled by the Author, 2024

As for those small-scale poultry farmers that cannot afford finished feed, they usually resort to using ordinary maize mixed with finished concentrates, and with the scarcity of maize and its exorbitant cost, which is put at about N95,000 in Zamfara, they almost suffered severely in trying to raise their birds to a maximum level of profit maximization. The costly nature of the soybeans is also put at N105,000 based on Zamfara price. The consequential effects of this development resulted in broiler farmers producing low-quality feeds that can extend the time frame for the disposal of the birds beyond the normal six-week time frame. As argued by (Musa 2024), "Not only is the production of feed of low quality, but it also affects the expected weight of the broilers, as the

adequate nutrients required by the birds are not sufficiently provided." There is also the argument that even some mega feed millers are accused of compromising the standard of their feeds. As argued by (Wada 2024), some farmers are complaining about the low quality of finished feeds produced. Based on the assessment, it was discovered that some millers deliberately tried to maximize the cost of food production by reducing the quality of maize to below 35% and also compromised certain nutritional requirements. This resulted in the production of low-quality feed, which frustrated the farmers, especially those with a target of a short disposal period.

Impacts on the Marketing and Distribution

Table (1v) Cost of Raising Day-old Broiler to Week (6)

Product/Activity	Cost
Day-Old per Unit	N850
Feed for (6) Weeks	N1,800
Charcoal	N80
Medication/Vaccine	N120
Cost of Labour	N35
Cost of Sure-Dust	N35
Water	N30
Other Expenses	N100
Total	N3,050

Source As compiled by the Author, 2024

One of the most adverse effects of this emerging development, as it relates to the cost of feed, is the unreliability of the market when it is time for disposal. From the procurement of day-old broilers to their management over six to eight weeks, including feeding, medication, and daily care, one begins to wonder how and at what price the farmer will be able to sell his broiler birds. As argued by

Sanusi (2024), the majority of broiler farmers in Zamfara hardly recover their investment after disposal, since the price per kilogram of broiler bird is as low as N2,500 for liveweight and N3,000 after dressing. He further provided a statistical breakdown of the cost of broiler production as follows:

This statistical breakdown by (Sanusi 2024) is design to cater for production that is hitch free and where some un-anticipated circumstance emerged especially outbreak of Chronic Respiratory

Diseases (CRD) which has been the major problems confronting broiler poultry farmers in Northern Nigeria, the statistical analysis

above is no longer visible. Apart from the CRD Diseases, complicated cases such Newcastle which caused diarrhea in broiler birds always causes poultry farmers more expenditure than anticipated. (Sanusi 2024) argued, Cost of medication remain one of the problem that affected the anticipated profit plan among farmers.

Table (1v): Cost of Medication Necessary to Raising a Broiler

S/No	NAME OF MEDICATION	PRICE
1	100gm of Multi-vitamin	N1,800
2	100ml of Floricol	N5,000
3	100gm Tylodox	N8,600
4	50gm Embazzyn Porte	N4,700
5	100gm of Inter-gendox (Anti-Biotic	N5,200
6	Gumboro 1000ml	N5,000
7	Lasota 1000ml	4,200

These statistics alone make any price anticipation a broiler farmer has more daunting since, after adding the cost of medication and feed, he hardly understands the appropriate price to set for a kilogram of broiler bird at the point of sale. Secondly, despite the costs and expenses incurred during production, the major marketers and distributors of broiler birds also contribute to the problem. (Babangida 2024) argued that after farmers invest heavily in raising their birds, the distributors view the birds at the point of sale as a ready-made opportunity to make huge profits above the real farmers. Furthermore, Sanusi (2024) argued that, besides pricing the birds at a very low rate, the distributors do not typically purchase these birds on a cash-and-carry basis. Instead, they sell them on a loan arrangement, and payments are usually made on a pro-rata basis, resulting in payments to farmers being made in a very unhelpful manner. Salima, a poultry farmer in the Damba area of Gusau, argued that "most of the broiler distributors deliberately withhold funds meant for reimbursement to broiler farmers after disposal. Alternatively, they use the same money to buy broilers from other farms and make payments to the original order at intervals. Many broiler farmers lose their capital due to these practices, as the money is not returned in a timely manner that would allow a farmer to willingly restock another set of birds."

There are other exceptional situations where some local distributors may collect stocks of broiler birds and, after sales, deliberately refuse to pay the farmers, preventing them from restocking. This particular development has always been a major obstacle to the marketing of broiler birds among farmers in Northern Nigeria. (Sanusi 2024) argued that the majority of broiler farmers in Zamfara have shut down their farms simply because the distributors, who are the major marketers of their products, have refused to pay back the funds after the sales of their broiler birds. He added that sometimes, "many of the farmers who have suffered this frustration had to resort to involving the security agencies, especially the police and operatives of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, to recover their funds." This development, in the view of Wada (2024), has always been a deliberate act by some of the distributors who end up using these funds for personal use,

resulting in low-income poultry farmers losing their capital investment needed to sustain themselves in the business.

There is a deliberate policy developed by some distributors who collude with certain restaurants to purchase day-old broilers and feed from small-scale farmers, mostly women working from home. After these farmers raise the birds, they are required to sell them back to the distributors at a fixed price determined by the distributors. This development has caused serious crises, particularly in terms of price uncertainty. As argued by (Musa 2024), these distributors and vendors have consistently taken advantage of the limitations faced by some home-grown farmers, especially women, by manipulating them. They provide the basic capital needed to support the birds, while the farmers earn a very low profit for their efforts.

There is also the problem of a lack of government initiative to support the market value chain, which has always been a challenge faced by farmers in the North. According to (Musa 2024), "Perhaps with the exception of Kaduna State, where Malam Nasiru El-Rufai has mapped out deliberate plans for the establishment of Olam hatcheries and feeds, most of the states in the North have no plans or concern for the poultry industry. Farmers are left to their own devices to continue exploring internal initiatives to sustain the industry." He added, "In Zamfara State, for instance, farmers hardly experience government intervention, which is significant for enhancing the development of the poultry business in the state. Except recently, when the idea of collecting tax from poultry farmers emerged, it is rare to see practical government intervention in supporting poultry farmers."

There is also the crisis of a lack of factories and an abundance of eateries that demand birds at the point of disposal. In the argument of (Musa 2024), except perhaps in Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto, the majority of states in the North-West lack the availability of factories and eateries that require broiler birds in large quantities for end usage. He further argued that in states like Zamfara, the weekly consumption of most eateries and hotels is less than 200 units. This may be connected to the non-availability of larger

facilities such as Mr. Biggs, Chicken Republic, and others, whose demand for a larger number of birds is guaranteed.

There is also a lack of technology to enable innovation in the packaging of frozen broiler birds. It is evident that the people of Zamfara, especially households, do not frequently use frozen chicken in their daily lives (Wada 2023). This situation has significantly reduced the likelihood of an increase in the price of broiler chicken because farmers have been forced to seek market opportunities to sell the birds due to the high costs associated with bird management.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion so far, it is evident that the high cost of feed has consequential effects on the marketing and distribution of broiler birds in Northern Nigeria. The combination of the factors mentioned in the paper clearly shows that the industry suffers significantly due to a lack of proper decision-making regarding what should be done to enhance the farmers' expectations in terms of value for their finished products. It also highlights the deficiency in the capacity of government policies to respond to the demands of poultry farmers and provide proper solutions for them.

The findings in the paper provide a clear indication of the need for policymakers and farmers to come together and develop strategies to support the farmers and secure the North. This will ensure that a greater quantity of grains, especially soybeans and maize, can be adequately supplied to help lower the cost of feed for the farmers.

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