

CONSTRUCTION OF EARTHEN POND FOR FISH FARMING: AN ANTIDOTE TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION AMONG YOUTHS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Agriculture is the mainstay and occupation of tropical African people. This is because of the availability of the arable land. Fish farming was not popular in the olden days in Africa as fish(es) were caught from their natural environments and meant for feeding. It was the abundance of catches that led to commercialization through sales to those that needed. However, in the 20th century, African saw the need for development. To make this work, fish farming came into being to make money and provide for protein needs of the people as it was encouraged by the government. This paper examines the preliminary stage of fish farming which is the dredging of natural pond. It aims at enabling youths learn how to set out at dredging natural fish pond rather than concrete ones that are expensive, to make the youth know dimensions needed and utilize maximally the available land and set them for the stage of stocking the ponds with fish(es). The paper assesses the necessary skills needed to dredge the natural pond that is less expensive and where a piece of land can be leased and vacated later. The paper also tries to project a gap for the future and the later stage of fish farming in respect to stocking the pond and marketing the fish. Because of the non-availability of the white-collar job, youths are therefore encouraged through this paper to engage in fish farming.

Introduction

Poverty is when people are financially handicapped and cannot afford to live and sustain a comfortable livelihood. It could also mean human underdevelopment, socio-political isolation, ill-health, absence of functional capability, vulnerability, unsustainable livelihood, absence of basic needs and relative deprivation. Poverty is the state of being extremely poor or being inferior in quality or insufficient in amount. This is why a person or a country that is surrounded by a particular wealth but because he does not utilize or knows the importance of what he has, he lives in lack of such thing or uses just a little quantity of it, such a country is said to be in a state of poverty. Example is the state, where Nigeria as a nation is, has a

wealth of oil and gas, and other natural and agricultural resources yet her citizens cannot boast of putting food on their tables (Anger, 2010). An average Nigerian through the attack of poverty is living below (one dollar) poverty line. For instance, Nigeria is rated as one of the poorest countries of the world irrespective of her abundant human and material resources. (World Bank, 2014).

Poverty as a term in Nigeria is not new or unpopular. It can be felt by everyone, even the small or the young. This is because everyone has a pinch of it at any level. A lot of people in Nigeria rise up against poverty but become defeated at some point without a referee. This can be seen in the revelation of Obadan and Odusola (2001), cited in Anger (2010), who

disclosed that the per-capita income of Nigerians slipped from a high of over 1280 dollars in 1980 to a low five hundred (500) dollars in 1995. Available statistics indicate that life has become very dangerous for the average Nigerian as each person experience serious heat in the face of a suffocating heat of poverty. Anger (2010) opines that the country's situation has become more pathetic especially when compared to other less endowed developing countries in African and other parts of the third word. To buttress this, Kayode and Odusola (2010) showed that Nigeria per capita income of (\$240) in 1990 was below the average of over (\$500) for Sub-Saharan Africa. The figure for Nigeria was well below those of Botswana (\$3,210), Cote d'Voire (\$1,080) South Africa (\$3,500), Mauritius (\$3,710).

Edoh (2003) affirms that Nigeria is even rated in terms of percentage of population earning less than one dollar per day for randomly selected years. A careful look at the income of the workers in the public service proves that the extent of poverty in the nation has become even more alarming. This state of poverty has necessitated most of the corrupt practices noted in the country's public service. The rate of poverty in Nigeria is so glaring according to Committee report, cited in Anger (2010), that 50% of Nigerians live below poverty line; only about 40% of Nigerians have access to safe drinking water; about 85% of urban population lives in single houses with more than seven occupants on the average, only about 62% of Nigerians have access to primary health care and most Nigerians take less than one third of the minimum required protein and vitamins.

United Nations (2016) and OXFAM (2003) reported that poverty in Nigeria, a country with a population over 140 million

people face unbearable state of poverty with such scourge that is seen in the rising tendency which has continued for decades still indicating that Nigeria is ranked among the poorest countries in the world. The report analysis proves clearly that Nigerians are indeed very poor, no matter what criteria its poverty is measured with. This is because despite the natural and agricultural resources and laudable poverty reduction programmes like Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), etc. employed, it has failed to improve the living standards of its citizens.

Poverty which has been defined by different individuals, and groups based on different perspective has over the time been an issue of concern to everyone and everywhere in the world. This is why poverty is rated top on the list of programmes or issues that Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) needs to tackle. This concern made nations and individual organizations all over the world seek for solution. On this note also, the United Nations (UN) social summit in Copenhagen, Denmark (1992) and many others declared several years as the International year for the eradication of poverty (Anger, 2010).

Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

According to Agbodike, Igbokwe-Ibeto and Umeifekem (2015), youth unemployment is one of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria today and has maintained a rising trend over the years. According to Bello (2003), the subject of unemployment has always been an issue of great concern to the economists, policy makers and economic managers alike; giving the devastating effect of this phenomenon on individuals, the society and

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the economy at large. The population of every country can be viewed in two categories, the economically active and the economically inactive. The economically active population (labour force) or working population refers to the population that is willing and able to work, including those actively engaged in the production of goods and services (employed) and those who are unemployed. The second category, the economically inactive population refers to people who are neither working nor looking for jobs, (Njoku&Okezie, 2011).

Nigeria is the most populous black country in the world and with an estimated population of over 167 million people (NPC, 2011). With a nominal GDP of \$207.11 billion and per capita income of \$1,401, it has the largest economy in Africa, (Salami, 2011). As impressive as the above figures may appear, youth unemployment and low productivity has been one of the major problems facing the country. A high level of underemployment is one of the critical socio-economic problems confronting Nigeria. While the labour force grows with an increasing proportion of youth, employment growth is inadequate to absorb labour market entrants. As a result, youths are especially affected by unemployment. Moreover, young people are more likely to be employed in jobs of low quality, underemployed, working long hours for low wages, engaged in dangerous work or receive only short term and/or informal employment arrangements.

The effects of all these are pure and simple low productivity; increase in social vices, human capacity under-utilization; increased poverty amongst the citizenry, social alienation and weak purchasing power among other problems. Although the Nigerian government at various times had put in place a number of policies and

programmes to address and curb this menace. However, it is highly regrettable that the antidotes where applied have not yielded the desired result. This could be attributed to lack of commitment to the course of youth unemployment.

In the views of Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012), the inadequate employment opportunities for the youth have a number of socio-economic, political and moral consequences. Low productivity and chronic poverty are among such consequences. The share of the total population living below the \$1 a day threshold of 46 per cent is higher today than in the 1980s and 1990s in spite of the significant improvements in the growth of GDP in recent years. Unemployment and low productivity are so intertwined that one can easily confuse one for the other. Although, it is possible for one to be employed and still exhibit low productivity, this could as well be traceable to underemployment. Thus, by unemployment, it includes those underemployed. According to Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa (2012), youth unemployment and underemployment reflect the failure to make use of an important factor of production (labour) for fostering economic growth in Nigeria. They went further to argue that low returns to labour and high youth unemployment accelerate poverty.

Causes of Youth Unemployment in Nigeria

The fundamental factor that accounts for the high rate of youth unemployment in particular and unemployment in general in Nigeria includes but not limited to the following:

Adoption of untimely economic policy measures: A major factor that triggered unemployment problem overtime

is the demise of the small scale and cottage industries which operated in both formal and informal sectors. Following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1986 by Babangida's administration that ushered in liberalization, deregulation and the devaluation of the domestic currency, many of the teething domestic firms in the country collapsed. This resulted in the loss of many jobs and thereby rendering many people unemployed. Although, these policies were designed to jump start the growth of the economy; given the structure of the Nigerian economy, some of the policy packages became out rightly inimical to the system due to wrong timing.

Poor economic growth rate: The atmosphere in Nigeria since the late 80s has been very hostile to economic growth and development. The high level of corruption, mismanagement of public funds, harsh and unrealistic economic policies, and insecurity in some parts of the country coupled with long term despotic rule of the military among other factors have dampened the spirit of economic growth for a long time. The situation in the 90s was so terrible that analysts described the period as a lost decade to Nigeria in terms of economic growth and development (Damachi, 2001).

Neglect of the agricultural sector: Before now, agricultural sector has been the leading provider of employment in Nigeria especially in the sixties and in the seventies when the sector provided employment for more than 60 percent of the Nigerian population. However, in the wake of oil discovery, the attention on this anchor of the economy was gradually drawn away to the oil sector where employment generation capacity is very low. The resulting effect is the large number of job seekers who have no

place in the oil industry and the multi-national corporations. Even with the expansion of the industry from oil to gas, unemployment has continued to grow at an alarming rate.

Poor enabling business environment: The poor enabling environment that characterizes the economy over the years has continued to pose serious challenges to employment generation in Nigeria. This, coupled with insecurity in some parts of the country has continued to hamper investment drives and thereby reducing the prospects of employment generation. Many job seekers who would have embarked on self-employment programmes are unable to do so because of the hostile and frustrating environment. Others who make attempt are forced to wind up due to absence of basic infrastructures and the overall heat of the investment environment.

Wrong impression about technical and vocational studies: The wrong impression of students about the place of technical and vocational education also accounts for the deteriorating state of youth unemployment in Nigeria. According to Damachi (2001), there is an enduring social biased attitude against technical and vocational education. The large number of applicants seeking university education as against the number seeking polytechnic (technical) admission is a confirmation of this submission. A large number of job seekers in Nigeria lack practical skills that could enhance self-employment. That is why rather than providing jobs for others, the unemployed graduates keep depending on the government and the non-vibrant private sector for job offers.

Strategies towards Poverty and Unemployment Reduction in Nigeria

One basic step in alleviating poverty through farm fishing starts with the preparation in form of dredging the needed pond to rear the fish. It is on this basis that the job and probably the task would start. Also, putting in place the pond would serve as part of the capital investment. It is one of the plants needed for the project. It is assumed that before one engages in this project, there must be a take-off capital to put in place the necessary things that are needed (fixed assets). The money invested in this would be realized later when the project starts to yield interest over a length of time. Without the pond, the fish cannot be reared and when the fish are not reared, money cannot be made. And when money is not made, poverty cannot be alleviated. It is the primary set up that all other things and other stages would depend on. Therefore, the first step to alleviating poverty among the youths in Nigeria is dredging of the pond (earthen) needed for the project.

In Nigeria, problem of poverty has for a long time been a cause of concern to governments. Attention was initially focused on rural development and town planning as practical means of dealing with the problem. Youths in Nigeria suffer high unemployment due to lack of opportunities, physical and psychological challenges resulting from poverty. Some youths respond to these challenges by engaging in criminal or violent behaviour while others suffer from despair or depression. Unemployment creates a wide range of social ills and young people are particularly susceptible to its damaging effects namely; lack of skills, low self-esteem, marginalization, impoverishment and wasting of enormous human resources. These problems associated with

unemployment can be solved by empowering the youths through agricultural development programmes which will enable them to have opportunities for self-employment in agriculture (Agu, 2013).

Four major problems among several others accounted largely for youths lack of interest in agriculture, namely: drudgery in farm operations; lack of competitive market for agricultural products; lack of start-up capital; and lack of Buy Back Scheme (BBS) from the government (Akpan, 2010). However, the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) is working very hard to address all these problems through the following government, initiatives that are mostly private sector driven but government enabled. Some of the programmes include Private Sector Driven Agricultural Mechanization Programme (PSDAMP); Staple Crops Processing Zones (SCPZs); One Stop Agro-Centre (OSAC); Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme (YEAP); Growth Enhancement Support (GES) Scheme; Nigeria Incentive Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL); Commercial Agriculture Development Project (CADP); Fadama III; National Programme for Food Security (NPFS); Private Sector Driven Commodity Marketing Corporation (PSDCMC), among others.

In complementing the efforts of the government, Youth Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture (YISA) has embarked on Youth Agricultural Re-orientation workshop to educate Nigerian youths that agriculture is pure business and plays a critical role in the national food security. It also holds a lot of projects for business oriented individuals who can use the opportunities created by some of the programmes mentioned above to better their lots. YISA does not merely encourage

youths to take up agriculture as a business but creates a platform for active participation through the organization's Youth Collaborative Community Agriculture Programme (YOCCAP). According to Oyekale (2011), youths have great roles to play in agricultural development in Nigeria as they are considered to be the active working group.

In spite of attempts by successive regimes to improve the lot of Nigerian youths, the condition of Nigerian youths still leaves a lot to be desired. A lot more needs to be done in order to empower, re-energize and get them seriously involved in the task of nation building and socio-economic development (Adebayo, 1999). Past attempts at addressing the problems of the youths were characterized by much rhetorics and little in terms of concrete action. Even the little that were being done lacked focus such that the results were minimal, when not counter-productive.

Problems associated with agricultural development activities in Nigeria are the same as the problems faced by youth's development projects. These problems, according to Akinola (2012) are lack of adequate funding; basic facilities/infrastructures; execution of sub-standard projects; fraud, dishonesty and corruption in the society; politics, rivalries and envy; inability to accept change in traditional and cultural practices; difficulty in accessing resources such as land, finance and market information; and natural hazards such as flooding, theft among others.

Statement of the Problem

Youths in Nigeria suffer high unemployment due to lack of opportunities, physical and psychological challenges resulting from poverty. Some youths respond to these challenges by engaging in

criminal or violent behaviour, while others suffer from despair or depression. Unemployment creates a wide range of social ills and young people are particularly susceptible to its damaging effects namely; lack of skills, low self-esteem, marginalization, impoverishment and wasting of enormous human resources. These problems associated with unemployment can be solved by empowering the youths through agricultural development programmes which will enable them to have opportunities for self-employment in agriculture.

Objective of the Study

This paper aims at reducing high rate of poverty and youth unemployment and under-employment in Nigeria by enlightening youths on how to construct earthen pond. The specific objectives of this paper are to have a better understanding of water quality management, disease control, feeding, marketing and processing skills of fish farming; create operating costs and maximize the farmer's income; and by creating employment opportunities for young graduates.

Pond Construction for Fish Farming

There are two (2) main types of pond. They are earthen (soil) and concrete. The earthen is cheap to construct and the concrete is much expensive.

Earthen Pond

Fish farming is an important source of both food and income in many developing countries in Africa. Some depend wholly or partly on fisheries for their livelihood. Statistics indicate that Nigeria is the largest African aqua-culture producer, with production output of over 15,000 tonnes per annum. However, there exists a large unmet

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demand for catfish and others, and the market price is on the increase. In Nigeria, the rearing of catfish has proven to be a lucrative business. This is due to the country's high demand and like for catfish or fresh fish as it is popularly called and the shortage of such in our rivers. That is why so many, both the old and the young are now showing interest on rearing catfish to catch in on the opportunities arising from the inadequate supply of catfish in the country when compared with the demand. Below are the detailed analysis of what is required and how an earthen pond is constructed.

Site Selection for Earthen Pond

Soil Characteristics: The soil should hold water, so clay soils are desirable. Before starting construction, be sure to have borings made to ensure that sand, gravel or undesirable soils will not be exposed by the construction. To test for clay, dig 3ft x 4ft and 2ft deep. If little or no clay is found, dig deep by 3ft. if there is still no clay dig deep by 4ft.

Topography: Lay-of-the-land will determine the amount of dirt that has to be moved. Less dirt must be moved on flat land than in hilly or rolling land, so dirt-moving cost will be less.

Draining: Select sites to permit draining ponds by gravitational flow and to ensure that drainage from a neighbour's land is not blocked.

Geographical Location: Make sure the area will not be prone to flooding or water-way.

Pesticides: Check the soil for pesticide residues if row crops were ever grown on or adjacent to the site. There are three areas within a field that must be checked because of the potential for high residue levels:

- (i) **Low areas where run-off collects:**
An area such as this could have very

high levels of pesticides even though a higher area just a short distance away could have low pesticide concentrations that would not be harmful to fish.

- (ii) **Any area where spray equipment, either aerial or ground, are filled with pesticides:** Because of spillage, a fill-area can have high concentration of pesticides that could kill fish if ponds are constructed there.

- (iii) **Any area in the field where pesticides were stored or were disposed off are potential danger sites for pond construction:** Collect the soil samples from several locations around the proposed pond site, and pay particular attention to any area that may be similar to those mentioned above. The sample does not have to be large. One that is several inches deep is adequate. Then go for soil test and request that the sample be checked for chlorinated hydrocarbons with particular emphasis on toxaphene and endrin.

- (iv) **Water Availability:** Intensive production of catfish requires a dependable supply of large volumes of water. Usually one well with capacity of 2,000 – 3,000 gpm is adequate for four 17.5 acre ponds.

- (v) **Pipelines and Power Lines:** Before building ponds over pipelines or under power lines, check with the utility company to avoid possible legal problems later.

Pond Construction (Earthen Pond)

Size

Dig the pond according to the size of

the available land and the number of pond you want. The depth of the pond should be at least 4ft and maximum of 6ft. For commercial purpose, average ponds are 17.5 water acres on 20 acres of land. Also, it is good to note that larger ponds are more difficult to manage, and smaller ponds are more expensive to construct.

Drainage

The site should be selected and the pond should be constructed so that they can be drained by gravity flow. The lowest part of the pond must be higher than the canal or ditch into which the pond is being drained. Pond bottom should be flat and slope from the shallow to the deep end. Slope of bottom should be about 0.1 – 0.2 feet per 100 feet from shallow to deep end. A flat sloping bottom is necessary for harvesting and draining. Do not build a harvest basin inside or outside the pond.

- (i) **Inside Drain:** Most common is the turn-down pipe or modified canfield outlet which is located at the lowest point in the pond. The level of water is determined by pivoting the pipe up or down. It must be securely held in position to prevent unplanned drainage. This can be done with a chain from the end of the drain to a post on the bank. Heavily grease swivel joints to allow easy movement. Maintenance of swivel joints can be a problem since work has to be done under water or when the pond is drained.
- (ii) **Outside Drain:** The drain pipe should be laid through the levee at the lowest point in the pond. The inside end of pipe is screened and extends out from toe of slope at least 5.10 feet to prevent clogging caused by sloughing of dirt from levee.

Levee Width

Levee should be a minimum of 16 feet wide, and main levees where wells are located should be 20 feet wide to allow an easier flow of vehicle traffic. Gravel should be on top of levee on at least two sides of each pond to permit all-weather access for harvesting, disease and weed treatments, oxygen monitoring, feeding and moving aeration equipment.

Slope

A slope of 3:1 is satisfactory if property compacted. Increasing the slope to 4:1 or 5:1 will substantially increase the amount of dirt that must be moved.

Freeboard and Depth

Freeboard is the height of the top of the levee above the normal water line. The amount of freeboard should not exceed two feet nor be less than one foot depth of the pond should be at least three feet at the toe of the slope on the shallow end and should not be greater than six feet at the toe of the slope at the deep end as stated above.

Shape

Pond shape is largely determined by the topography and by property lines. The usual shape is rectangular because of greater ease and economics in harvesting and feeding although square ponds are cheaper to build.

Orientation

Orientation depends somewhat on the topography and property lines. There are arguments as to whether ponds should be oriented with the long axis parallel or at right angles to the prevailing winds. Levees of ponds with the long axis parallel to prevailing winds are subject to erosion because of increased wave action, but the

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ponds are better aerated because of this same increased water action. Ponds oriented at right angles are subject to less levee erosion because of wave action and are not as well aerated.

Concrete Pond

To construct a concrete pond, an experienced brick-layer, preferably the one that has done similar job before is needed. The following are recommended to ensure standard concrete pond:

- (i) For six (6) inches block, eighteen (18) blocks should be moulded with one (1) bag of cement.
- (ii) For nine (9) inches block, fourteen (14) blocks should be moulded with one (1) bag of cement.
- (iii) The blocks should be solid.
- (iv) Double plastering should be done on the pond.

Like the earthen pond, the base of the pond should slant to the end. Once all these are done, a plumber is needed to construct drainage and overflow pipes and also to construct pipes above the pond and put holes in the above pipes. The above pipes are means of enriching the pond with water. Overhead tanks should be connected to these pipes. The drainage system will help in removing polluted water from the pond. It will also help in removing dirt-like excess feeds from the base of the pond. While the overhead pipes will help in checking the level of the water against overflowing.

Preparation of the Concrete Pond

After the construction of the pond is completed, it should be left for two weeks before any treatment is given. After two weeks, the pond should be filled to the brim with water and the chicken manure should be added. For a pond size of 10ft by 20ft,

25kg bag of chicken manure should be added. This should be poured into the water and leave for one week. This process will help to know the solidity of the concrete and whether there is leakage or not and to remove acidity of the cement from the pond and add nutrient to the water. After one week, the water should be flushed out. Foam and water should be used to clean the pond. Sponge and soap should not be used. When this is done, fresh water should be pumped into the pond. Then, the pond is ready for stocking.

Conclusion

This study has brought to light the importance of Agriculture particularly fish farming to the alleviation of poverty among the teeming youths in Nigeria. It has also pointed out how youth can go about starting fish farming in respect to dredging natural or earthen pond for fishing. This is however a stepping stone to fish farming. The types of soil, the size of pond depending on the area to be used for the pond are highlighted among many others.

This paper posits that the process of fish farming starting with the dredging of pond would go a long way in engaging the services of the youth in productive issues rather than engaging in vices. The other processes and stages of fish farming in respect to the stocking of the pond with fingerlies to marketing of the fish would go a long way in supplying the protein needs of the nation and create wealth for the youths. When this is embraced by all it would not stop at supplying the needed protein but provide market to both Nigeria and her neighbours and alleviate poverty among the youths.

Recommendations

Having realized the importance of

fish farming and the enormous work needed for the youth in starting the fish farming with dredging of the fish pond, the following suggestions are made.

The Agriculture department of our various local governments should rise to the aid of the teeming youths in their respective local governments with fund to start fish farming. In doing this, the youths could organize themselves into cooperative societies to be able to access the fund easily where available.

The pond specifications have to be followed in dredging. The site location that includes soil characteristics, topography, pesticide prone area, availability of water, avoiding pipelines and power lines should be adhered to.

The size of the pond must be put into consideration. Too large pond for few fish is

not advisable while too small pond for a large number of fish is also not desirable.

The shape of the pond is better in a rectangular form. It should also be dredged in a sloppy form in all the four sides to facilitate easy entry when the need arises. It is also advantageous during cropping. The pond must also not be too deep so as to make entry easy. There must be pipe laid to allow excess water flow away from the pond during heavy rainfall.

The pond must be dredged at a water bed where there must be water in the pond always, and additional water could be added during the dry season if water is not enough for the fish.

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