

# Livestock Entrepreneurs from Northern Ghana: Their Motivations and Challenges

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*Entrepreneurship is acknowledged worldwide as the engine of economic growth. In Ghana, entrepreneurial activities cut across all sectors of the economy, providing a means of livelihood to about 75% of the total population. Despite its critical role, the focus of entrepreneurship research has generally focused on entrepreneurial activities in urban areas, to the neglect of rural entrepreneurial activities. This study is positioned within the agricultural sector, more specifically, within the livestock industry in Ghana, because of the importance of livestock to the attainment of food security in the nation (Oppong-Anane et al, 2008). Furthermore, northern Ghana plays a critical role in Ghana's livestock industry, and so understanding of the motivations and challenges of those who establish and operate livestock businesses in Northern Ghana would be a significant step towards helping to improve efforts at developing the sub-sector. The population for the study comprised all livestock farmers from Northern Ghana as compiled by the District and Regional Animal Health Officers as well as the District and Regional Agricultural Development Unit Officers in the three administrative regions. The data collection exercise comprised two phases – a survey and series of in-depth interviews. Three hundred livestock farmers were targeted for the survey, while 13 farmers randomly selected from the list of farmers at the Regional Offices of the Department of Animal Production at the Regional Agricultural Development Units took part in in-depth interviews. The survey data were factor analysed. The in-depth interviews were analysed to establish trends and patterns which were used as a basis to present explanations to the findings. Among the major findings were that the entrepreneurs' motivations for rearing animals include personal, financial and employment factors, with the financial factor being the strongest. Their challenges included poor animal health, business management, market, external and input factors, with poor animal health factor being the greatest challenge. Implications for policy and training are discussed in the paper.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship has been accepted globally as the engine of economic growth (Audretsch and Thurik, 2004). Entrepreneurs have been recognised for the significant role they play in sustainable economic development (O'Neil and Viljeon, 2001). African governments and policy makers appreciate the crucial role entrepreneurs play and their potential to propel the socio-economic development of the continent. This is reflected in their commitment to the creation of the requisite conducive environment for domestic entrepreneurs, which has been captured in the NEPAD document (NEPAD document 2001). In Ghana, entrepreneurial activities spread across all sectors of the economy, providing means of livelihood for about 75% of the total population (Adei, 2006). Additionally, investment by entrepreneurs and the growth of their enterprises have been identified as indispensable for Ghana's economic progress (Killick, 2004). Despite the critical role of entrepreneurship, the focus of the limited research in Ghana has generally focused on entrepreneurial activities in urban areas to (see Saffu and Manu 2004; the neglect of rural entrepreneurial activities. This study is positioned within the agricultural sector, more specifically, within

the livestock industry in Ghana. The livestock sub-sector is an important component of Ghana's agriculture and contributes to food security by providing animal protein to enhance the nutritional contents of diets of Ghanaians

(Oppong-Anane et al, 2008). It also provides employment opportunities for a large section of the population, especially those in the rural areas. Additionally, the livestock industry offers prospects for wealth generation, income enhancement and improvement in the rural livelihoods (Oppong-Anane et al, 2008). Further, its estimated contribution of agricultural GDP in 2006 was 7%, (this figure does not include the value of secondary products such as manure, draught power and transport, which are provided to the crop sub-sector).

## **STUDY CONTEXT**

Northern Ghana (comprising three administrative regions namely Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions) is selected for our study for a number of reasons. First, Northern Ghana's contribution to the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) is close to 28% and far exceeds the national figure (Oppong-Anane et al, 2008). Second, the region also accounts for 64% of the total land area in Ghana, and third, the bulk of the nation's ruminant livestock population i.e 74% cattle, 36% sheep, 43% goats and 42% pig population (Veterinary Services Department, 1996). This makes Northern Ghana an important player in the livestock industry in the country. Given the importance of livestock to the attainment of food security in the nation (Oppong-Anane et al, 2008), and the critical contribution of northern Ghana to Ghana's livestock industry, an understanding of the motivations and challenges of those who establish and operate livestock businesses in Northern Ghana would be a significant step towards helping to improve efforts at developing the sub-sector. Additionally, this study contributes to the literature on entrepreneurship in a rural setting which may be significantly different from what the extant literature has reported. This study is therefore guided by the following research questions:

- a. Why did the farmers choose to found livestock businesses?
- b. What are the challenges confronting them in the management of their businesses?
- c. How do they respond to the challenges they face?

## **PRIOR STUDIES**

### *Motivation*

Motivation is critical to any entrepreneurial process (Shane, Locke and Collins, 2003). Entrepreneurial motivations are the objective founders of enterprises try to achieve through the businesses they establish (Robichaud, McGraw and Roger, 2001). The most common reasons individuals give for deciding to found their own businesses, include the desire for independence, achievement, opportunity, job satisfaction, economic necessity and power (Kirkwood, 2004; Acs et al., 2004). In developing countries such as Ghana, the strongest motivation factors include making money, autonomy, redundancy and increasing income (Chu, Benzing and McGee, 2007). These motivation factors can be classified into "push" and "pull" factors. The "push" factors are mostly negative external factors that compel individuals to go into self-employment out of necessity and include job dissatisfaction, inflexible working hours, insufficient salary (Moult and Anderson, 2005). The "pull" factors on the other hand, are those attractive factors which draw individuals to found their own businesses and include factors such as the desire for independence, self-fulfilment, status and prestige (Moult and Anderson, 2005). Chu, Benzing and McGee (2007) argue that the "push" factors are stronger motivations for entrepreneurship in developing countries.

### *Challenges*

The challenges which confront entrepreneurship are many and varied. The ones which are most often cited include corruption, too much bureaucracy, inadequate capital, too many laws and regulations, lack of managerial skills, among others (Benzing, Chu and Kara, 2008; Macculloch 2001). Entrepreneurs from developing countries have to contend with weak economies, low income levels, bribery, corruption, inadequate funding, unstable business environments as well as the difficulty in hiring and maintaining

competent labour force (Ariyo, 2004; Pratt, 2001).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population for the study comprised all livestock farmers from Northern Ghana as compiled by the District and Regional Agricultural Development Units. The data collection exercise comprised two phases – a survey and series of in-depth interviews. Three hundred livestock farmers were targeted for the survey and these were randomly selected from the list of farmers at the Regional Offices of the Department of Animal Production at the Ministry of Agriculture.

First, we brought six Agricultural Officers (one representing the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions, two representing the Greater Accra Region, one for the Eastern Region, one for Ashanti and Brong Ahafo Regions, one for the Volta Region, and one for the Western and Central Regions) to Accra for a day's training in interviewing techniques. The training was facilitated by the researchers, one of whom had just retired from the public service as head of the Animal Production Department, as well as a Veterinarian. Half of the day was spent going over the questionnaire with the participants, and the remaining half of the day was spent in the field interviewing livestock farmers in the Greater Accra region. The third half day was spent reviewing the feedback from the field. Based on the feedback, five questions were amended. The trainees returned to their regions and trained their assistants to administer the questionnaire to the farmers on their farms. Because the farmers knew the Agricultural Officers and their assistants, cooperation was very high yielding a high response rate of 85%.

The questionnaire used was designed along the lines of those used in earlier studies by Saffu and Manu (2004) which was adapted from Brush (1988) as well as one used by Oppong-Anane et al., (2008).

The survey was followed by in-depth interviews to probe for more details on issues arising from administering the questionnaire. Thirteen farmers were purposively selected to include those who had been in business for over 10 years as they were considered to have richer and fuller experiences to share. Each of the in-depth interviews lasted between 55 minutes and an hour and twenty minutes. The quantitative data were factor analysed and the qualitative data were examined by conversational analysis to establish trends and patterns which were used as a basis to present explanations to the findings.

## **RESULTS**

### *Respondents' characteristics*

A total of 300 farmers were targeted for the survey which yielded 256 usable responses. Out of this number 243 (94.9%) were males with only 13 (5.1%) being females. An analysis of their ages also revealed that 9 (3.5%) were within the 20 -29 bracket, 48 (18.8%) within 30 -39, 76 (29.7%) within 40 – 49, 79 (30.9%) were between 50 – 59 and the remaining 44 (17.2%) were aged 60 and above. Most of the entrepreneurs were married – 238 (93.0%) predominantly polygamists, 7 (2.7%) had never married and 3 (1.2%) were divorcees and 5 (2.0%) were widowed. As many as 173 (67.6%) had no formal education, 34 (13.3%) were Junior High School leavers, 16 (6.3%) were Secondary/Technical/Vocational School leavers. 9 (3.5%) were diplomates, 7 (2.7%) had bachelors, 1 a masters degree and 8 (3.1%) had other forms of education. Most of them (83.6%) said they had specialised in agriculture, with the rest specialising in teaching, trading, banking, driving and other areas, with the figures ranging from 1 – 8%. Again the analysis revealed that these livestock owners specialised in agriculture because their very traditional upbringing exposed them to the requisite skills for the business. Furthermore, an analysis of the type of business ownership, revealed that 222 (86.7%) were sole proprietors, 11 (4.3%) were in partnerships and 12 (4.7%) were joint ventures. Most of the entrepreneurs (80%) had been in business for over 30 years. The dominant types of livestock business in northern Ghana are small ruminants (sheep/goats) and cattle rearing. However sheep rearing had the highest frequency. Again, majority of the owners (235 – 92.9%) relied on personal savings to

start their businesses. This was confirmed during the in-depth interviews when the participants explained how they start their businesses with proceeds from the rearing of a guinea fowl. It was also revealed that most of the support they received from family and friends were in the form of animals and not cash. To expand their livestock businesses, most of the farmers again relied on personal savings most of the time. It also came to light during the in-depth interviews that, they also had a unique source of finance which they resorted to in case of emergency – the butcher. The butcher will give them whatever amount they needed in exchange for an animal, mostly small ruminant. The animal could remain with the farmer till the butcher was ready to slaughter. The butcher was willing to give the money because of once the farmer had animals he (the butcher) could go in anytime to pick an animal worth the cash he loaned to the farmer.

*Motivation Factors*

There were 10 dimensions for this variable (personal satisfaction, opportunity, love for rearing animals, status/prestige, career, independence, achievement, redundancy, financial security and money). The KMO sampling adequacy was .772, indicating that the factor analysis is appropriate and the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity recorded .000 significance, which means the relationships among the variables is strong. The cumulative percentage of variance was 66.1%. The variable eventually loaded on three components after factor analysis. Factor I was labeled as Personal factor, Factor II as labeled Employment factor and, Factor III was labeled Financial factor. Table 1 presents results of the factor analysis.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Motivation

Variable	Component		
	Personal Factor	Employment Factor	Financial Factor
Personal satisfaction	.865		
Opportunity	.799		
Love for rearing animals	.795		
Status/prestige	.493		
Career		.763	
Independence		.743	
Achievement		.695	
Redundancy		.509	
Financial security			.882
Money			.716

It is evident from Table 1, that generally, the financial factor but more specifically, financial security, appears to be the strongest motivation for the farmers. This is followed closely by the personal factor, particularly personal satisfaction and then employment factor.

**CHALLENGES**

There were 23 dimensions to this variable which loaded on five factors as presented in Table 6. Our factor analysis recorded a KMO measure of sampling adequacy of .883, indicating the factor analysis was appropriate and .000 significance on Bartlett’s test of sphericity, which meant that the relationship among the variables was strong. The cumulative percentage of variance was 65.9%. The first factor was labeled Business management factors, the second was labeled Input, the third factor was labeled Animal health, the fourth factor was labeled Market factor and the fifth factor was labeled External factor. It is clear from Table 2 below that animal health factor appeared to be the greatest challenge the farmers were

confronted with, followed in second place by the business management factor. The third biggest challenge was input factor, followed by the market factor, and finally, by the external factor.

**Table 2: Factor Analysis of Challenges**

Variable	Component				
	Bus MgtFactor	Inputs Factor	Animal Health	Market Factor	External Factor
Difficulty in waste management	.818				
Government bureaucrac	.800				
Poor staff attitude to work	.790				
Corruption	.764				
Business associations	.760				
Staff dishonesty	.711				
Inadequate processing facilities	.698				
Difficulty in acquiring land	.671				
Infrastructure	.651				
Inadequate management skills	.486				
Destruction of grazing land by bush-fires		.816			
Poor quality feed		.790			
Unavailability of feed/feed ingredients		.657			
Lack of water		.597			
Theft of livestock		.552			
Money/capital		.331			
High incidence of diseases			.857		
High mortality			.828		
High cost of inputs (feed/drugs)				.809	
Technology as a Business				.662	
Poor market for produce				.508	
Extended social and family					.687
Inadequate agricultural					.623

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of the ages of the entrepreneurs revealed that over 77% of them were aged between 40 to 59 years. It therefore appeared that there were not many youth in the industry. Accounts from the interviews revealed that traditionally, the farmers started off rearing guinea and domestic fowls before graduating to rearing goats, sheep and then cattle. This accepted path to becoming a livestock entrepreneur among the farmers who participated in the in-depth interviews makes it plausible that most of the farmers started rearing guinea and domestic fowls at about age 10, in preparation to start rearing small ruminants before moving on to rear cattle. The finding that most of the farmers were engaged in polygamous marriages can be explained as a strategic decision that allowed the farmers to have more children to help with the rearing the animals. In the course of the follow-up interviews, there was unanimity amongst the farmers about the strategic importance of marrying more than one wife. They contended that children helped to take care of the animals, especially during the dry season when the children had to take the animals over long distances in search of forage and water. Two of the farmers asked: “*who can better care for my property than my own sons?*” and “*will my child steal my animals?*”

It was also evident from the analysis that a typical livestock business owner from Northern Ghana was most likely to be uneducated. During the in-depth interview some of the reasons they advanced included: *“My parents did not allow me to go to school as I had to help take care of the animals”* and *“If you went to school who would cater for your father’s animals?”* Though most of the farmers had no formal education, they said they had specialised in agriculture. During the follow-up interview, it became evident that, farming generally, and the rearing of animals in particular, was part of their traditional way of life as a people. Again the analysis revealed that these livestock owners specialised in agriculture because their very traditional upbringing exposed them to the requisite skills for the business. One of them explained it this way: *“We are X (representing tribe) and are traditionally farmers. You learn how to rear animals as you grow. First at a very tender age you assist in feeding and watering the animals. When you are of age, your father buys you a guinea fowl which you rear and from the proceeds your father will buy you a goat/sheep and you are required to be able to make a living from that and then progress to rearing cattle. So right from our childhood our fathers train us to acquire the skills for rearing livestock.”*

Most of the businesses were sole proprietorships and majority of the farmers had been in business for over 30 years. This fact, coupled with the fact that most of them were aged between 40 to 59 years, could be an indicator that they started rearing animals at quite an early age, probably, age 10. That also helps explain why most of them had no opportunity to go to school. They had to help care for their father’s animals and also started their own livestock businesses at very tender ages. Also, it was evident that the dominant types of livestock business in northern Ghana were small ruminants (sheep/goats) and cattle rearing. However of the two, sheep rearing had the highest frequency. During the in-depth interviews, it was revealed that the farmers preferred the sheep rearing because according to one of the respondents: *“it is easier to tend sheep than goats”*. Another respondent added: *“goats are very stubborn”*. Our finding that majority (92.9%) of the farmers relied on personal savings followed by funds from family and relatives to start their businesses is consistent with the extant literature (Coleman 2007; Ueda 2004). While the principle is the same, the modus operandi differs. As was explained during the in-depth interviews, the respondents started their businesses with proceeds from rearing guinea fowls which allowed them to buy a goat and or a sheep. As these multiplied over time, they sold some of the sheep and goats and bought a cow. It is noteworthy that most of the support received from family and friends was not in the form of cash, but rather it came in the form of animals. Aversion for bank loans at start-up was summarised by one respondent during the course of in-depth interview thus: *“The banks demand too much paper work and it takes too long to grant the loans.”* Given the high level of illiteracy among the farmers any amount of paper work can be overwhelming. *“I do not really find it necessary to take loans from the bank. If I need money I go to the butcher who will give me money in exchange for a goat or sheep which he could collect any time to slaughter.”*

#### *Motivation Factors*

Results of the factor analysis suggest that financial security ( a “push factor”) is the strongest factor which motivated the farmers to set up their livestock business. This is similar to earlier findings which suggest that financial security is a very strong motivation factor for entrepreneurs from developing countries (Chu, Benzing and McGee, 2007; Bewayo,1995). Understandably, coming from a background with little or no education, weak economies where joblessness is high and there is a high level of poverty, the prime reason for going into self-employment will be to make money to satisfy the basic need of food and shelter (Kozan, Oksoy and Ozsoy, 2006). This finding is however different from findings from advanced countries where entrepreneurs are mostly motivated by self-esteem, achievement and other “pull” factors (Minitti et al., 2006). Findings of prior studies suggest that men are usually attracted to entrepreneurship (Orhan and Scott, 2001). On the contrary, the farmers in this study who are predominantly men, appear to have been pushed into entrepreneurship by the need for financial security. Personal satisfaction has been found in previous studies to be motives for going into business (King, 2004; Baum, 2001). Our finding that personal factors are important reasons why the farmers chose to operate livestock

businesses supports prior studies. However, for our sample, the choice of business to go into namely; livestock farming was due to more than personal factors. On the contrary, rearing of animals is part and parcel of their traditional way of life. In particular, male upbringing involves tending to animals at a very early age. It is therefore not surprising that they find happiness and pleasure as livestock owners. This may explain why personal satisfaction is such an important motivator.

The employment factor or the need to create employment for oneself is critical for one's own upkeep and the upkeep of one's family. This finding is consistent with results of previous studies that found people go into business to look after their families (Chu, Benzing and McGee, 2007). During the in-depth interview, the farmers disclosed that they sold the birds (ie domestic fowls, guinea fowls, turkeys) to cater for daily needs of their families such as purchasing groceries. The small ruminants were similar to short-term savings and were sold whenever there was the need for money to pay for funeral expenses or a bicycle. The cattle represented their long-term savings which they rarely sold. They sold them only when there was the urgent need for a huge sum of money for buying a bus to use for transport business or build a house for rental. Cattle was also used when dowry had to be paid.

### *Challenges*

The challenges faced by these farmers were similar to those of entrepreneurs in other developing countries which included bureaucracy, lack of management skills, staff dishonesty, poor attitude of staff, etc (Cetindamar, 2005; Maculloch, 2001). In this study however, (with a focus on livestock businesses) the major problem was animal health factor. This is similar to the findings by Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2008) that high incidence of disease and animal mortality was a major problem for livestock farmers from northern Ghana. During the in-depth interviews, the farmers complained of the high cost of drugs inadequate veterinary services and so they sometimes fell on Fulani herdsmen who used traditional herbs to treat the animals. It was also found during the interview that even where the drugs and veterinary services were available, the farmers wanted them free of charge. When the researchers wanted to know why they did not sell some of the animals to pay for the cost they replied that the government had to bear the cost. This is so because the government through the veterinary services had been providing some drugs free and subsidised others while veterinary services were entirely free throughout the country until the mid 90s.

It therefore appeared that they were not willing to invest money in their livestock businesses.

The second problem related to management of waste, bureaucracy, business associations, staff dishonesty, etc. Their lack of education made it difficult to easily understand government laws and regulations, better organise themselves at the association level and also affected the quality and level of management skills. The next significant challenge which was the input factor pertained to the high cost of drugs and poor quality of feed, destruction of grazing land by bushfires, and unavailability of water, particularly during the dry season. From the in-depth interviews it was realised that unlike the practice in developed countries, these farmers did not invest in growing feed and providing water for the animals. They relied on any available grazing land and water and appeared unwilling to pay for drugs. The market factor comprised high cost of drugs, lack of technology and poor market from their produce. As previously explained, these problems could be traced to their unwillingness to invest in their businesses and to their lack of education. During the interview none of them responded positively to the idea of educating their children so that the educated children could introduce technology into the business in the future. They appeared to prefer the traditional way of doing things and if they were to accept technology, then the cost had to be borne by the government. It was also found during the interviews that contrary to the views expressed by the farmers, market could be described generally as good but slowed down slightly whenever supply was greater than the demand. – a problem they could have solved with a

little education and better strategic planning. The final constraint was the external factor which had to do with problems of extended family members interfering with the business – particularly when disputes arose over inherited animals that had been mixed up with those of the farmers.

### *Conclusion*

Farmers from Northern Ghana contribute immensely to the livestock industry in Ghana. Majority of them were 40 years and above, and have been in livestock business for over 30 years. They have no education and came to acquire the skills of rearing livestock through their traditional upbringing. The predominant livestock business is sheep rearing. Their motivations for rearing animals include personal, financial and employment factors, with the financial factor being the strongest. Their challenges include poor animal health, business management, market, external and input factors, with poor animal health factor being the greatest challenge. Interactions during the in-depth interview identified an unwillingness to make investment in the business in areas such as providing feed, regular purchase of drugs, technology, etc. It could therefore be concluded that, though the motives of these farmers are entrepreneurial, their response to their challenges are not.

### *Managerial Implications*

Based on the conclusions which have been drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are made to help promote the growth and survival of livestock entrepreneurs and ultimately, the livestock industry in Ghana:

- a. The government through the ministries of Food and Agriculture and Education, must persuade the farmers to release their children to go to school as formal education will improve their attitudes, skills and knowledge. The farmers must also be encouraged to hire labour to help on their farms.
- b. Education in the North, should focus on agriculture, particularly livestock rearing, (since by tradition, that is a passion of the people), as well as entrepreneurship.
- c. The ministry of Food and Agriculture should take particular interest in educating the farmers on entrepreneurship so as to equip them with the requisite skills to manage and grow their businesses more effectively.

### *Limitations/Future Research*

This study specifically examined the livestock entrepreneurs in Northern Ghana, caution is therefore recommended in extrapolating the findings to other contexts. Future research comparing the motivations and challenges of entrepreneurs in the livestock business from different parts of the country is recommended. This will help provide a more complete understanding of entrepreneurs in Ghana's livestock industry, and consequently, help the government in her efforts towards ensuring the food security of the nation,

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