Factors Affecting the Production of Rabbits by Small Holder Farmers in Mt Darwin District of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study looked at economic factors affecting commercialization of rabbit production in rural areas of Mt Darwin District of Zimbabwe. All the 85 rabbit producing farmers identified were used in a survey conducted in four wards of Nohwedza, Dotito, Mudzengerere and Karoi. Findings of the research revealed that crop production was the main source of income (98 per cent of farmers), however where rabbits were concerned; fathers were the main owners of rabbits (81%), followed by sons and mothers at 15% and 4% respectively. Rabbits were mainly kept for consumption purposes (39 rabbits/farmer/year) and a few rabbits (31/farmer/year) were sold each year. On average only 1% of the rabbit producers sold more than 100 rabbits per year, 9%, between 50-100; and 90%, between 0-50. Farmers indicated lack of access to credit and feeds as the major challenge to rabbit production. Regression results revealed that the main factors affecting commercial rabbit production are lack of extension services, low rabbit price, low agricultural education and lack of experience in rabbit keeping. These were significant at $p < 0.05$. Rabbit farmers revealed that they need assistance in market identification, extension service and government support in terms of market creation through the setting up of rabbit meat and fur industries.

Keywords: Rabbits, Commercialization, Rabbit Meat, Ownership

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Introduction

The high level of poverty experienced in Africa has been a concern for a long time. A World Bank report of 2008 showed that in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), poverty levels shot from about 200 million to 220 million in the rural areas between 1993 and 2002, (World Bank 2008). The expectation is that the number of rural poor will exceed that figure by 2040. It has therefore been agreed that there is a need to put in place measures that can reduce the poverty levels and improve the livelihood of most poverty stricken rural families (Casidra', 2015). By embarking on income generating projects, rural farmers can have their lives changed for the better. Some