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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The human population growth in developed countries is stabilizing while that of developing countries including Nigeria is still increasing rapidly. Thus, the search for alternative sources of protein to meet up the population challenge is imperative. Economic indices indicate that as this population trend continues, more people are to be fed. Agricultural outputs need to be increased rather than through food importation into such countries (Allen, 1993). In order to maximize food production and meet protein requirements in Nigeria, viable options need to be explored and evaluated (Owen et al., 2008). Among such alternatives is the use of livestock species that are yet to play a major role in animal production within these countries.

Fast-growing livestock such as rabbits possess a number of features that might be of advantage in the small holder subsistence – type integrated farming in developing countries. Rabbit farming in Nigeria is faced with myriad of problems, which have resulted to a gross shortage of meat to meet up the population challenge in our country (Nworgu, 2007). The growth rate of the Nigerian agricultural sector is below the potentials of natural and human resources due to high cost of agricultural inputs, poor funding of agriculture, inadequate functional infrastructural facilities, inconsistencies of government agricultural policies, inadequate private sector participation, poor mechanized farming and little or no adoption of some simple agricultural technologies developed by scientists (Nworgu, 2007). In Nigeria, consumption of animal protein remains low at about 6.0-8.4 g/head/day which are far below the 13.5g per day prescribed by the WHO (Egbunike, 1997).

Rabbit production is a veritable way of alleviating animal protein deficiency in Nigeria (Ajala and Balogun, 2004). The rabbit has immense potentials and good attributes which include high growth rate, high efficiency in converting forage to meat, short gestation period, and high prolificacy, relatively low cost of production, high nutritional quality of rabbit meat which includes low fat, sodium, and cholesterol levels. It also has a high protein level of about 20.8% and its consumption is bereft of cultural and religious biases (Biobaku and Oguntona, 1997). The presence of caecal microbes enables the rabbit to digest large amounts of fibrous feed as most non ruminant species cannot (Taiwo et al., 1999).

#### 1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rabbit production in Nigeria plays a significant role in the development and provision of food and materials for marketing purposes; however there are some problems which may be affecting the production of rabbit in Nigeria; these problems could be poor management procedure, poor funding and lack of treatment measure for health promotion in rabbit production area of agriculture. Secondly there have been series of studies on rabbit production but not even a single study has been carried out on the management of rabbit production by peasant farmer in Takum local government area

#### 1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the research work is to examine the management of rabbit production by peasant farmer in Takum local government area. Other specific objectives of the study are:

1. to determine the management procedure adopted by peasant farmers in Takum L.GA in rabbit production
2. to examine whether rabbit production influence socio economic development in Takum local government area, Taraba State

3. to investigate on the factors affecting rabbit production in Takum L.G.A, Taraba State
4. to determine if the management of rabbit production in Takum L.G.A, Taraba State is effective
5. to examine the potentials and problems that may be envisaged in rabbit production in Nigeria

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