

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Fish farming is a significant contribution to the economy of Kwara state, particularly in Asa Local Government Area. The state's favourable climate and water resources make it an ideal location for fish farming. However, despite its potential, the fish farming industry in Asa Local Government Area faces numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited access to credit, and poor marketing strategies. These challenges can affect the livelihood status of fish farmers, making it essential to assess their livelihood status to identify areas for improvement.

Fish production significantly contributes to the incomes of several people in Nigeria and all over the world (Adisa, Ifabiyi and Opeyemi 2021) Ifabiyi, Banjoko and Komolafe, 2017). It's a vital source of nourishment for the populace. Fish production also helps in ensuring that many Nigerians are food and nutrition-secured. Globally, fish provides micro-nutrients to about 3.3 Billion people and about 600 Million people depend on fisheries and Aquaculture for their livelihoods (WorldFish, 2024; Ifabiyi et al., 2023). For those with low incomes worldwide, fish represents a significant and reasonably priced source of food (Bene et al., 2015). According to FAO (2018), humans eat around 88.42 percent of the 171 million tons of fish produced, fisheries play a critical role in ensuring the security of food and nutrition worldwide.

Fish makes up over 17% of the animal protein that people eat worldwide (FAO, 2018). With the largest market for fish and fisheries products in Africa and a per capita intake of 14.9kg annually, Nigerians are heavy fish consumers (Olaoye and Oloruntoba, 2011). With its contribution of over one-tenth of the country's GDP to the agricultural sector, the fisheries sub-sector in Nigeria's economy holds a special place (FDF, 2008).

Nigerians eat fish and fish products (FAO, 2012). Among animal proteins, it is unique due to its fatty acid profile, low cholesterol level, high vitamin and mineral content (calcium, iron, zinc), and amino acid profile (FAO, 2012). Fish currently makes up 41% of the average Nigerians animal protein consumption and is gradually replacing meat owing to health and nutritional concerns, even though it is very vulnerable to deterioration in the absence of any preservatives

(Okont and Ekelemu, 2005). Livelihood refers to the process of making a living. Accordingly, a livelihood I'd

considered manageable when 'it can deal with and recover from strains, sustain or improve its capacity, while not depleting the natural resource base'. Turner (2017) idealized sustainable livelihood to be the outcomes in manageable opportunities for the next generation, paying net paybacks to other livelihoods. Although the sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) has been extensively utilized. It is a suitable model for investigating smallholder livelihoods (Panday et al., 2017). Sustainable livelihood is an active idea that offers procedures to exterminate poverty and how underprivileged persons organize their lives. Livelihood results are the accomplishments and reimbursements that households anticipate obtaining through the employment of specific activities and approaches. These results can also be designated as the expectations of the household (Nguthi & Niehof, 2008). There is a huge opportunity for the fishing subsector to boost the nutritional security of Nigerians, (FAQ, 2019). This is so as several Nigerians are involved in fish farming activities in the country. Due to the high demand for fish and fish products in Nigeria, several unemployed people have been encouraged to take opportunities in fish farming to enhance their income. However, the Nigerian fishing and aquaculture sub-sector of Agriculture is attributed to be at a small scale, with low levels of technology, marketing problems, and high labour intensity (Ifabiyi, Komolafe and Adisa, 2022 & FAQ, 2022). The high cost of fish feeds and medications has been reported to constitute substantive input costs for the farmers (FAQ, 2019). These would limit the income and output of the fish farmers in Nigeria.

Hence, it is essential to carry out a study on the livelihoods of fish farmers that would favourably influence government policy towards the farmers and the other actors in the fish industry.

Also, there is a paucity of information on the livelihood attributes of fish farmers in Kwara state, Nigeria. Livelihoods are 'means of making a living', the various activities and resources that allow people to live. Different people have different lifestyles and ways of meeting their needs. Similarly, households perform various activities to gain and maintain their livelihoods. The nature of these livelihood activities depends on the availability of assets, resources, labour, skills, education, social capital, seasonality, agro-climate/agro-ecology, and gender (Pasteur, 2002; Alli, 2005; Okali, 2016; Porter et al., 2017; Akinwale, 2010).

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF THE STATEMENT

The livelihood status of fish farmers in Asa Local Government Area of kwara state is a concern due to the various challenges they face. The lack of adequate infrastructure, limited access to credit, and poor marketing strategies can lead to low income, poor living conditions, and limited access to basic amenities. This can result in a low livelihood status, making it difficult for fish farmers to sustain their livelihoods. Therefore, there is a need to assess the livelihood status of fish farmers in Asa Local Government Area to identify the challenges they face and develop strategies to improve their livelihoods.

Hence, it is essential to carry out a study on the livelihoods of fish farmers that would favourably influence government policy towards the farmers and the other actors in the fish industry. Also, there is a paucity of information on the livelihood attributes of fish farmers in kwara state, Nigeria. This established the gap that this research would fill. Therefore, this necessitate the need to carry out the study on the livelihood attributes of the fish farmers in Ilorin, kwara state, Nigeria.

1.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the socio-economic characteristics of the farmers?
2. Is fish farming profitable?
3. How does fish farming influence the overall livelihood of the respondents?
4. What are the constraint faced by fish farmers in the study area?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to assess the livelihood status of fish farmers in Asa Local Government Area of kwara state, while the specific objectives are to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of fish farmers in Asa Local Government Area.
2. Analyze the profitability of fish farming.
3. Identify the factors that influence the overall livelihood of the respondents.
4. Examine the constraint faced by fish farmers in study area.

1.5 THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The hypothesis of the study is stated in null form.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the socio economic characteristics of fish farmers in the study area and their livelihood status.

Hi: There is significant relationship between the socio economic characteristics of fish farmers in the study area and their livelihood status.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

CONTRIBUTION: a gift or payment to a common fund or collection.

LIVELIHOOD: is the total combination of activities undertaken by a typical household to ensure a living. Most rural households have several income earners, who pursue a combination of crop and livestock, farm, off-farm and non-farm activities in different seasons to earn a living.

STATUS: the position of respect and importance given to someone or something.

FISH FARMERS: is someone who raises fish for commercial purposes. Fish farming, also known as pisciculture, is the practice of raising fish in captivity for food or other purposes.