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Swot Analysis on the Application of Biotechnology in Livestock Improvement in Nigeria

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Abstract

The application of modern biotechnology to livestock improvement programme in Nigeria is still at its infancy compared with crop agriculture. Application of biotechnology in animal agriculture holds promise in Nigeria in terms of improved quantity and quality of livestock and livestock products. The establishment of a national policy on biotechnology by the national government is an incentive to the promotion of agricultural biotechnology. However, the level of funding is low in spite of the availability of skilled albeit few researchers. Funds from local and international donors should however be judiciously utilized since mismanagement of funds is one of the major treats to successful application of animal biotechnology in Nigeria. There is also the need to re-design animal science curriculum at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels to include the teaching of biotechnology to improve capacity building. The existing national policy on biotechnology should be geared towards the safe application of biotechnology, poverty alleviation and conservation of biodiversity, and these should be captured in well articulated strategic plans.

Introduction

The human population projection for sub-Saharan Africa is put at about one billion by the year 2020 (Winrock, 1992). Nigeria presently with a population of over 140 million is expected to contribute a significant percentage of the expected population growth. This means more pressure on governments on how to feed the expected huge population. The present rate of growth in the agricultural sector is considered too slow to match the expected population growth. The application of biotechnology to agriculture in Nigeria is not new as traditionally biotechnology has been applied to food preparation and preservation in African societies long before now. However with respect to animal production little is done in this respect though animal improvement is largely restricted to crossing of seemingly "best parents". Tewe and Abdullah, 2005 reported that biotechnology application in poultry and feed mill operations in Nigeria should focus on the development of quality chicken, improved feed ingredients, diseases detection, prevention and control, heat stress management and waste management. A study by Ajani *et al.* (2009) conducted in the Southeastern Nigeria revealed that some of the institutions have been involved in biotechnology research for the past two decades but significantly in the areas of bio-processing (58.8%) and cell and tissue culture (33.2%). The results may not be too different from other ecological zones of the country. There are several techniques used in biotechnology. The use of biotechniques in livestock production is progressing fast and includes molecular biological techniques for genome diagnosis and genetic engineering (Peters, 1992; Rege, 1996) and anti-nutritional factors in feeds (Soetan and Abatan, 2008). Africa holds a great percentage of livestock in the world but low productivity of the animals continues to be a source of concern. A careful and selective application of some of these modern biotechnology techniques will no doubt enhance animal production in Nigeria (Abu, 2007; Alabi *et al.*, 2007). The Nigerian government has been reported to openly support

modern agricultural biotechnology (Rothschild, 2005). In this article the SWOT analysis and way forward for biotechnology application in Nigeria are highlighted.

Challenges of biotechnology in animal production in Nigeria

Nigeria is still grappling with morphological and genetic characterization of the indigenous livestock population. Studies have been conducted in the development of anticonal antibodies and vaccines. Analysis of genomes of livestock is still rudimentary. Gene separation and gene mapping of our genetic resources and reproductive performance by conventional quantitative genetic procedures are opportunities for advancement. The development of the Shika Brown chicken is a major step towards the development of the locally produced strain of laying chicken. Bioinformatics is almost none existence and if at all practiced it is at the very rudimentary level. Conventional cross breeding is slow and measurement of genetic distance and progress is also slow. Unlike cloning and other advanced technologies it is possible to make very rapid genetic gains via these molecular techniques (Carnwath, 1992). The strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to animal biotechnology in Nigeria are explained in Table 1. The institution and enforcement of patent and copyright laws will guarantee innovativeness and hence ensures that the holders have exclusive rights to use the invention for commercial purpose. Patent also encourages innovativeness. However, the level of patent and copyright in animal biotechnology in Nigeria is low. Meyn (1992) opined that in livestock breeding the possibilities to secure special rights are; animal breeder rights, utility patterns and process patterns. However in Nigeria Irefin *et al.* (2005) reported that only 4.0% of scientists studied possessed intellectual property rights and received royalties regularly, while the majority did not patent their research results because of the lack of interest (45.4%), ignorance (32.0%) and the rigours of the procedure (32.3%). The level of biotechnology research

publications in Nigerian Journal of Animal Science is low compared with other areas of research such as animal production, nutrition, conventional breeding and genetics. (Unpublished data).

Conclusion and Recommendations

A successful implementation of biotechnology in Nigeria will require a Biosafety policy so that biotechnology is focused on feeding the population in a safe and sustainable manner. Biotechnology is expensive and the huge cost of training can be reduced by designating centres of excellence, reducing duplications and cost. Foreign donors should assist in developing specific areas that are of immense and direct benefits to our development. Regular and constant supply of electricity is important. Running biotechnology facilities on a 24-hr electricity supply from generating sets is

polluting, uneconomical and therefore unsustainable. Genuine efforts should be made to supply sufficient sustainable electricity from the national grid. The Nigerian Institute of Animal Science with the National Universities Commission (NUC) should re-design the curriculum of the animal science courses to include animal biotechnology. Institutions involved in animal biotechnology should focus on research that has commercial value. The ethics and regulation of law concerning introduction of animal biotechnology should also be controlled and pursued with relevant government bodies. For small scale of livestock farmers to benefit therefore such biotechnological interventions should be tailored to meet the needs of the farmers. The intervention must be affordable and flexible to fit into local animal production systems.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Animal Biotechnology in Nigeria

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Availability of diverse intact crop and animal genetic resources? ii. High human and livestock population to absorb biotechnology products? iii. Availability of trainable staff? iv. Availability of infrastructure and market for service (s) or products? v. Working relationship established with foreign and national institutions and agencies? vi. Vibrant, effective and efficient information media? vii. Press freedom viii. Favourable disposition of National government to biotechnology in Nigerian agriculture ix. Absence of pressure group to introduction of biotechnology products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Poor implementation of national biotechnology policy ii. Low level of awareness of biotechnology in the public domain? iii. A deteriorating competitive position with other African countries? iv. Obsolete facilities and curricula in institutes and universities? v. Non-availability of highly qualified and competent staff in certain areas e.g. bioinformatics? vi. Poor track record in implementing strategy? vii. Lack of funds to finance needed changes in strategy? viii. Inadequate working capital base and wasteful expenditure? ix. Absence of a comprehensive computerized database on biotechnology research x. Biotechnology research skewed to crops than animal production.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. High capability for trainable personnel ii. Accessibility of biotech products to end users iii. Opportunities in large genuine partnerships and linkage with industry and international organizations iv. Opportunities to go into commercial ventures due to its unique and potentials v. Opportunities for assistance with national and international donor agencies vi. Patents and rights of biotechnological inventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Poor funding? ii. Inconsistency in government policy? iii. Poor implementation strategy of education policy? iv. Decline in funding of tertiary institution? v. Loss of the few skilled staff due to other countries. vi. Political instability vii. Deplorable state of infrastructural facilities and equipment in research institutes and universities. viii. Mismanagement of funds ix. Loss of biodiversity

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