SURVEY OF CHEESE PRODUCERS IN OYO TOWN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Cheese production in Oyo town is presently at a subsistence level and the producers are not well organized and employ mostly the traditional method of production of the snack. This study was aimed at collecting vital statistics that may help attract the attention of the concerned authorities to cheese producers, not only in Oyo town, but in Oyo state in general. Snowball sampling of the producers were employed and a total of twenty cheese producers were reached with interview schedule covering vital aspects like their bio data and cheese production activities. The results obtained show that all the respondents were female traders. Also, majority of them (75%) were within the age range of 20-39 years and married. All the respondents sourced their milk from cow while 45% and 35% of them used 20-29litres and 30-39litres of milk for production during the rainy and dry seasons respectively. Lack of capital to expand the business (40%) and inappropriate pricing of the product (25%) were major problems faced by the respondents. The study also revealed that all the respondents agreed that cheese production is profitable with majority of the making a profit ranging from 100-1000 naira and 1,100- 2000 naira during the dry and rainy seasons, respectively.
Key words: *cheese producers, Oyo town, production characteristics, production challenges, production finances*

INTRODUCTION
Cheese is a word derived from a Latin word *caseus* which translates, to ferment. It is also derived from the ancient English word *chese*, meaning "product derived from sour milk." Cheese is a hard consumable by-product of milk which is made by coagulating milk into solid form (Miaschi, 2017). Cheese is produced basically from milk, coagulant (animal or plant based enzyme) and salt.

About 20 million MT of natural cheeses was produced globally in 2011 and Cheese from cow´s milk accounts for above 80% of the global natural cheese production. Other sources of milk for cheese production include sheep, goat, and buffalo. Europe and Northern America produce more than 75% of the world cheese production (PM Food & Dairy Consulting, 2014). The North America and Europe are seen as major contributors to the global cheese production with their market share of not less than 75%. It was estimated that there were about 2000 varieties of cheese globally (OÃ¢Â Â™Connor, 1993, as cited by Orhevba and Taiwo, 2016). Cheese is mainly produced in Nigeria by the spouses of the Fulani nomads, which, apart from creating a variety into which milk is consumed, also serves the purpose of preserving excess milk produced due to poor storage facilities (Orhevba and Taiwo, 2016). It's been observed that culture greatly influences milk and milk products consumption in Africa (Ndambi *et al.*, 2007).

The study was carried out in Oyo town which has three Local Government Areas namely, Oyo East, Oyo West and Atiba. The town is the fourth largest in Oyo state and has an area of 1,757km2 and a population of 168,246 according to the 2006 census. The actual sampling was carried out in Akesan market, which was the largest and most cosmopolitan market, in terms of those who patronize it, in Oyo town. Snowball sampling technique was adopted in the study area. A total of 20 interview schedules were administered on the respondents. Information such as socio-economic characteristics, cheese production and cheese production finance were elicited from the respondents. Collected data were processed and subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency counts and percentages.

Result and discussion

Table 1: Bio data of cheese producers in the study area

Item	Criterion	No.	%
Gender	Female	20	100
Marital status	Single	02	10
	Married	15	75
	Separated	03	15
Age (years)	20-39	15	75
	40-59	05	25
Religion	Islam	12	60
	Christianity	06	30
	Traditional	01	05
	Atheist	01	05
Occupation	Trader	20	100
Household size	Below 5	09	45
	5-9	07	35
	10 above	04	20

Table 1 above shows the bio data of respondents in the study area. From the table, it was observed that all of the cheese producers were female traders. This signified that the business of cheese production was regarded as one for the womenfolk and that the producers engaged in cheese trading as a source of income. Also, majority of the respondents were between the age range of 20-39 years (75%), married (75%) and had household size below 5 (45%). The age range signified that the respondents were in their youthful age while the small household size was an indication that family labour was most probably not adopted in the production of cheese. Although, majority of the producers were Muslims (60%), the result obtained shows that other religions, including atheism were represented amongst the cheese producers. This was an indication that there was no religious discrimination against cheese production in the study area.

Table 2: Cheese Production in the study area

Item	Criterion	No.	%
Source of your milk	Cow	20	100
Volume (liters) of milk used in cheese production during dry season	10-29	13	65
	30-59	07	35
Volume (liters) of milk used in cheese production during raining season?	10-29	12	60
	30-59	08	40
Method of production	Traditional	20	100
Benefits of cheese production	Source of food	07	35
	Source of income	06	30
	Body development and freshness	06	30
	Source of strength	01	5
Challenges of cheese production	Lack of capital to improve the business	08	40
	Poor road network to transfer raw milk from farm	01	5
	Inappropriate market pricing	05	25
	No problem encountered	07	30
How do you feel the problem can be solved?	Provision of soft loan from government	06	30
	Membership of co-operative societies	12	60
	Good road infrastructure for transporting raw milk	08	40
Any assistance from government?	No	20	100

Table 2 above shows data on cheese production in the study area. Data from the table shows that the respondents' only source of milk was from cow and they all employed the traditional method of cheese production. Also, the average litre of milk used for production in the dry season was within the range 20-29 litres (45%), while the average used during the rainy season was within the range 30-39 (35%). Also, the average worth of cheese that a litre of milk could produce was ₦200 (55%) and majority (40%) of them claimed that capital was the major problem facing cheese production. Also, majority of the respondents claimed the problems facing them could be solved by making funds available for them. However, all the respondents claimed that cheese production was profitable during both dry and rainy seasons. The main benefits of production of cheese were income (30%) and food source (35%) and the average profit range during dry season was ₦600-1000 (70%), while the average profit during rainy season was within the range ₦1100-2000 (70%).

Table 3: Cheese production finance in the study area

Item	Criterion	No.	%
Is cheese production profitable?	Yes	20	100
Litre price of milk (₦) during dry season?	100	10	50
	150	9	45
	200	1	5
Litre price of milk (₦) during raining season?	100	8	40
	150	9	45
	200	3	15
On the average, how much worth (₦) of cheese can a litre of milk produce?	150	6	30
	200	11	55
	250	1	5
Profit (₦) per day from cheese during dry season?	100-1000	14	70
	1100-2000	4	20
	2100-3000	2	10
Profit (₦) per day from cheese during raining season?	100-1000	7	35
	1100-2000	13	65

Table 3 shows the financial implication of cheese production in the study area. From the table, all the respondents claimed that cheese production was profitable. It was also observed, from the table, that the average cost of a litre of milk was ₦100 (50%) and ₦150 during the rainy and dry seasons, respectively. The result from the table also shows that, on the average, a litre of milk produced ₦ 200 worth of cheese and the average profit range for the cheese producers per day were ₦100-1000 and ₦1,100-2,000 during the dry and rainy seasons respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result from the study shows that young, married women were engaged in cheese production in the study area. It was also observed that there was no religious bias against the production of cheese in the study area as the various religious groups were represented amongst the producers. Also, cheese production was considered profitable by the producers and the major problems militating against the business were capital to expand their businesses and inappropriate pricing of their products by the retailers. It is therefore recommended that the appropriate authorities should make soft loans available to the producers in order to enhance their businesses. Also, the producers should organize themselves into cooperative units in order to easily access loans and work against the inappropriate pricing of their products by the retailers and unit buyers.

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