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A Gender Perspective of Cavy Farmers' Livelihood Analysis for the Western Highlands of Cameroon

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Abstract

The growing population pressure on the land and fragmentation of holdings has implications for few rural household subsisting without any form of farm income. A gender perspective of cavy farmers' livelihood analysis was conducted in the western highlands of Cameroon in order to know who the cavy farmers are, where they kept the cavies and production difficulties. A pretested structured questionnaire was administered to 250 cavy farmers and data was analysed using SPSS. Results showed that 54% of the farmers are females and 27% of them could neither read nor write. Most cavy farmers entered the business within the last five years and are Christians of protestant or catholic denominations with a monthly income of less than 50,000 FCFA (≈ 100 USD). Indigenous cavy breeds mostly bought from neighbouring markets or farms, feed with forage stocks and kitchen waste, were kept for cash income, consumption or manure, in the house; running freely (24.35%) or in a special area of the kitchen (26.96%) and later sold to meet planned needs or emergencies. Cavies which tended to be kept alone are not provided with drinking water. Major difficulties encountered by farmers include the unavailability of quality concentrate feeds, prevalence of pests and diseases, lack of technical knowledge and financial assistance. Training and funding is greatly needed to boast cavy production in the western highlands of Cameroon.

Keywords: *Cavia porcellus*, western highlands, gender, income, livelihood.

Introduction

The growing population pressure on the land and fragmentation of holdings has implications for few rural household subsisting without any form of farm income. The smallholder sector throughout Sub Saharan Africa is characterized by the extent and diversity of non farming activities. The economics literature (Doll and Orazem, 1978) already suggests that labour and capital are the two main factors of production. In cavy production these two factors are required at minimal levels. Forty percent of the Cameroon population live below the poverty line thereby lacking capital to invest in agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture, 2002). Poverty seems to be an endemic problem in Africa as a whole and SSA in particular because, in spite of the willingness of rural farmers to work in agricultural/farming sector they lack enough money to invest in agriculture.

Global poverty and food insecurity continue to remain critical issues, especially in rural areas. Developing and fostering agricultural systems that not only require low to moderate amounts of economic capital and few external inputs but also maintain and enhance the resource base of production are key features of sustainable agricultural development. Sustainable agricultural development, including diversifying smallholder production to include livestock, is a pragmatic approach to address both rural poverty and food insecurity. Livestock play important roles in the lives of humans as converters, recyclers and banks of nutrients.

Smallholders raise a diversity of livestock species and often raise multiple species simultaneously. High fecundity, diet flexibility and adaptability to a wide range of housing and management approaches are critical traits of livestock species well suited for producing meat for home consumption and marketing in the context of rural smallholders. Swine (*Sus scrofa*) and chicken (*Gallus domesticus*) meet many of these criteria and are well known livestock species. This paper examines the potential for a lesser known species of livestock, guinea pig (*Cavia porcellus*) in the enhancement of food security and household income of rural smallholders. Cavy *(Cavia porcellus)*, a non conventional mini livestock seems to fit in well with the population quest to improve on their livelihoods needing small capital, minimal labour and minimum managerial skills. Research work has been conducted on mini-livestock and cavy (guinea pig) in particular (Ngoupayou, 1992; Ngoupayou *et al*., 1995; Lukefahr, 1999; Nuwanyakpa, 1993; Niba *et al*, 2012)but a gender perspective analysis of the different aspects studied is lacking. There is therefore a need for a livelihood analysis with a gender perspective since any transfer of technology will need to be directed to the appropriate persons. The non popular nature of cavy keeping although with its great importance in dietary food security and economic reasons warrants that something be done to improve its productivity. In order to lay emphasis on the advantages of cavy keeping a livelihood analysis of cavy keeping from a gender perspective will highlight who are the keepers of cavies, what species of cavy they keep, how they keep them and why they keep them with obstacles to improved productivity.

Methodology

The survey method was a one shot case time study. The sampling technique used was the snowball sampling a non probability sampling technique described by Babbie (2004). This procedure is appropriate because the members of a

special population (cavy farmers) are difficult to locate. The objectives were to know who the cavy farmers are, where they keep cavies, how they keep cavies and challenges to cavy production

Data was collected from cavy farmers from the western highlands during the months of May to November 2012. Trained field enumerators conducted interviews in the language of the cavy farmer to ease comprehension. A total of 250 cavy farmers were interviewed for the western highlands (175 for northwest region, 75 for the west region),

A structured pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data from the sample for respondents who have been keeping cavies for at least a year. The data was analysed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) and the Chi square and T tests were used to show for significant differences where they occurred

Results and Discussions

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Gender of respondents:

Table 1 presents the frequency of distribution of the respondents according to sex.

Table1: Distribution of respondents by sex in the western highlands of Cameroon.

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	115	46.00
Female	135	54.00
Total	250	100

The table indicates that there are more females (54%) involved in cavy farming in the western highland. This result is in line with those of Manjeli et *al* (1998) who indicated that women were found to be in a majority in raising cavies. The National Research Council (2006) also observed that women easily managed cavies. This is important as sex stereotyping and farm role is common in many countries and is usually based on the socio-cultural significance traditionally ascribed to certain crops and/or animals relative to others.

***Literacy level of respondents*:**

The level of education varied from those who had no education at all, through primary school, secondary school, high school and to higher (university) education (Table 2). This is important as education enables individuals to gain knowledge and skills thereby increasing their power of understanding and tendency of adoption of new technologies.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their level of education for the western highlands of Cameroon

	Level of education of respondents					
Gender	No education	Primary	Secondary	High School	Higher education	Total
Male	16	41	41	7	5	110
Female	50	50	15	4	1	120
%Male	6.96	17.83	17.83	3.04	2.17	47.83
%Female	21.74	21.74	6.52	1.74	0.43	52.17
Total	66	91	56	11	6	230

The result of the study shows that only seven per cent of the male respondents had not been to school compared with about 22% of the female respondents. More of the male respondents (23.04%) had at least secondary education compared with the females (8.37%). Overall the male respondents were more educated (40.87%) than the female respondents (29.64%)

Analysis of the data also shows that 41% of the male respondents compared with 27% of the female respondents could read and write (Table 3). The female respondents were of equal proportion in regard to if they can read and write or not (about 26% could while 27% could not read and write). The level of education could affect the decision making especially as regard to production systems, management, feeding and marketing of their animals. The ability to read and write for both sexes falls in line with the level of education indicated in table 2.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents by literacy level and by gender for the western highlands of Cameroon

Sex	Read and write		
	No	Yes	Total
Male	14	98	112
Female	62	65	127
%Male	5.86	41.00	46.86
%Female	25.94	27.20	53.14
Total	76	163	239

Agricultural and cavy farming experience of respondents:

Results of the study also show that respondents are of all ages ranging from the young to the old. The youngest respondents for males and females were nine and 10 years and the oldest were 90 and 80 years old with an average age of 44.80 years. Field survey results indicate that there are individuals involved in cavy production who have never practiced agriculture (farming) while others have practiced agriculture throughout their whole life. Respondents have been involved in cavy keeping ranging from a year through 45 years with most of them having entered into the business

during the past five years. Involvement in cavy production varies by gender with females having been involved for longer periods in the study area (45 vs 24) than the males. Table 4 presents mean values by gender for experience in agriculture and farming. There was a significant difference between male and female experience in agriculture.

Table 4: Agriculture and cavy farming experience by gender for the western highlands of Cameroon

Experience in Agriculture	Western Highland
Gender	Mean(years)
Male	23.57
Female	31.02
Cavy farming experience	
Male	5.06
Female	8.04

Religious affiliation of respondents:

Religious affiliation does not appear to be a barrier to cavy farming (Table 5) as the respondents belong to different religious faith like catholic, protestant, African traditional faith among others. A majority of respondents irrespective of gender are Protestants (51%). While there are more female respondents of the protestant faith (29%) while more of the male respondents are of the catholic faith (21%)

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to their religious affiliation in the western highland of Cameroon

	Male		Female	
Religious affiliation	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Catholic	51	21.43	46	19.33
Muslim	3	1.26	2	0.84
Hindu	1	0.42	1	0.42
Seventh Day Adventist	1	0.42	0	0.00
Protestant	51	21.43	70	29.41
Traditional African Religion	5	2.10	7	2.94
Total (238)	112	47.06	126	52.94

Cavy farming, as shown from field experience does not have any cultural barriers or taboos for keeping or for consumption.

Level of income of respondents:

Data in table 6 show that respondents irrespective of gender have a very low level of income, with a large majority of the respondents' households having a monthly income of at most 100,000 FCFA[1]. Approximately 52% of the respondents who are male and 39% who are female had a monthly income of at most 100,000FCFA. There were not up to one per cent of the male or female respondents with a monthly income above 400,000FCFA for the study area. The level of income determines the standard of living of every individual.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents as reflected by their income and gender for the western highlands of Cameroon

	Male		Female	
Income Range	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 50,000	77	33.92	67	29.52
50,000 - 100,000	41	18.06	22	9.69
100,001 - 200,000	9	3.96	5	2.20
200,001 - 400,000	2	0.88	2	0.88
400,001 - 500,000	0	0.00	1	0.44
More than 500,000	1	0.44	0	0.00
Total	130	57.27	97	42.73

Cavy breeds kept by respondents by gender in the western highlands:

Inventory of cavy type and maximum number kept by each member of the family shows that cavy farmers (mother, father, father and mother, daughter and son) kept either indigenous (breeds believe to be of local origin) or exotic (those breeds believe to have their origin from out of the country). Mostly indigenous breeds of cavies were kept compared with the exotic breeds. The son kept the highest number (36) of local origin cavies for the western highlands and only the father attempted to keep exotic cavies, and the daughter did not keep cavies at all.

Purpose for cavy keeping

The purpose of carrying out an activity usually is said to influence the extent to which investments are made towards realizing the objective. Cavy farmers have different reasons (be it primary or secondary) for getting involved in cavy production. Objectives for keeping cavies ranged from income generation through manure, consumption to

[1] 1 USD = 500 - 510 FCFA at the time of the survey.

company/pets, in increasing order. A distribution of the respondents according to their primary objectives of keeping cavies by gender for the western highland is presented in table 7. Data in table 7 show that most of the male respondents (24%) kept cavies primarily for income generation, while most of the female respondents (23%) kept cavies for the use of its droppings as manure in the study area. There has been a changing trend from what was observed in earlier studies, as family consumption ranked first in 1997 before income (Ngoupayou, 1992; Ngoupayou et *al*., 1995) in peri-urban and rural (Nuwanyapkpa, 1993) areas of Cameroon.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to their main motivations for keeping cavies in the western highlands of Cameroon

Main objective	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Sale(cash income)	59	23.89	51	20.65
Consumption	30	12.15	19	7.69
Manure	17	6.88	57	23.08
Company	7	2.83	3	1.21
Others	1	0.40	3	1.21
Total	114	46.15	133	53.85

The male respondents indicated that their primary objectives of keeping cavies included the following: income generation, consumption and manure, while the female referred to manure, sale and consumption (Table 8). The second most important reasons referred to were: income generation, consumption and manure, for the male and sale, manure, and consumption for the women. Data in table 8 indicate that both male (16.73%) and female (22.45%) respondents had income generation as their secondary objective for keeping cavies. However, while the male respondents said consumption (15.51%) and the provision of manure (11.84%) followed; the female respondents indicated that manure (15.92%) and consumption (14.29%) followed in decreasing order. Olojede and Njoku (2007), as also indicated the same reasons for keeping livestock by women.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to their secondary objective of keeping cavies by gender in the western highlands of Cameroon

Secondary objective	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Sale (cash income)	41	16.73	55	22.45
Consumption	38	15.51	35	14.29
Manure	29	11.84	39	15.92
Company	4	1.63	3	1.22
Others	0	0.00	1	0.41
Total	112	45.71	133	54.29

Sources of breeding stock

The breeding stock of cavies was obtained from many sources as shown in Table 9 for the western highland. The respondents mostly purchased their cavies from a neighbouring farm or the market (28% male and 32% female). Purchase from a distant farm/market was observed in 3.29% males and 3.70% females. Development projects seem not to have played a role in the provision for breeding stock. In conclusion, cavy farmers actually bought their first cavies out of their interest to keep them although for varied reasons. The fact that most of the respondents irrespective of gender bought their breeding stock from either a neighbouring farm/market, from a friend or from a neighbour indicates how related the animals can be.

Table 9: Distribution of respondents according to where they first got cavies for the by gender in the western highlands of Cameroon

Origin of first lot of cavies	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Inherited (from mother/father)	7	2.88	5	2.06
Purchased from neighbouring farm/market	70	28.81	78	32.10
Purchased from a distant farm/market	8	3.29	9	3.70
Purchased from a friend	10	4.12	13	5.35
Obtained from a dev project as a gift	1	0.41	4	1.65
Obtained from a dev project as loan	1	0.41	1	0.41
As a gift from relative/friend	7	2.88	6	2.47
As a loan from relative/friend/neighbour	0	0.00	1	0.41
Purchased from neighbour	7	2.88	10	4.12
Others	2	0.82	3	1.23
Total	113	46.50	130	53.50

Analysis of field data shows that 54% of the male respondents indicated that they keep cavies with other animals 46% female respondents indicated same in the study area. There was a significant difference ($P<0.05$) in Chi Square value (3.641) between the act of keeping cavies with other animals and cavies alone. The reason might be because, cavy production requires less room than traditional livestock and reproduces extremely quickly making them a more profitable source of food and income than many traditional stock animals such as pigs and cattle. This reasoning is in line with that of Egena (2010). This shows that integrated cavy and other animals husbandry is not commonly practised. Multi species farming should be encouraged to minimize risk of disease and feed scarcity since the most important issues of animal husbandry appear to be related to animal diseases and feed resources particularly in the dry season (Maass *et al.* 2010). Other animals kept included dog (*Canis lupus*), poultry/local chicken (*Gallus domesticus*), cat *(Felis catus*), pigeon (*Columba livia*), but mostly chicken and cats were kept.

Cavy feeding

The management and feeding of livestock has an influence on its productivity. A presentation of the production system practices by the cavy keepers now and for five years ago is presented in tables 10 for the western highland. Cavy feeds in study zone vary with season (rainy and dry season) due to forages stock and kitchen waste variations. They range from freshly cut forage through fresh grass and legumes through crop residues to kitchen wastes. Although cavy farming is an all season activity, however, considering involvement by season the results irrespective of gender show that more persons appear to be engaged in cavy keeping in the rainy season than in the dry season in the western highland. Ninety one per cent of the respondents practice cavy farming during the rainy season as against 84% for the dry season in the study area.

The choice of production system practiced (Table 10) during the rainy season was mostly housed and fed on forages plus kitchen wastes for 40% male and 50% female respondents in the western highland. During the dry season, there were 41% male and 49% female respondents and for five years ago where not many respondents indicated the production system only seven per cent and 29 % female housed and fed on forages and kitchen wastes. Irrespective of gender the production system practiced both in the dry and rainy season is that cavies are housed and fed on forages plus kitchen waste, and the least practiced system are pen feeding on freshly cut forages and fresh grass and legume. Feeding with pelleted commercial feeds is rare. The production system practiced for most of the cavy keepers that is housed and fed on forages and kitchen wastes falls irrespective of season in line with the findings of Abu *et al.* (2008) who report that cavy like rabbit diets are primarily forages, including mainly grasses and legumes, and kitchen wastes. In Africa cavy production is rudimentary as cavy traditionally live in the interior of home, which explains why its existence has been constantly ignored (Fotso *et al.*, 1995). In addition Hardoiun *et al.,* (2003) noted that mini-livestock production is suitable for backyard family production where they can contribute to increased food security.

The choice of a production system depends on the availability and cost of resources needed in the production. This implies that for any type of production system practiced by a farmer there are usually reasons that are advanced for the choice made. In the western highland cavy farmers advanced reasons for the choice of production systems practiced during the rainy season and the dry season (table 11). Justification(s) of an action usually take place in a producer's mind before the action is carried out. Reasons given for the choice of production system in the dry or rainy season for the study area included the following: these are the only available feed; to avoid predation; to avoid diseases; introduced by a project among others.

Respondents in the study area indicated the availability of feeds and to avoid predation as the two main reasons why they chose the production system they practiced during the rainy season. Approximately 39% of the male and 37% of the female respondents indicated the availability of feeds as their reason for practicing the production system of choice. The choice of production system was used primarily as a means to wear off predators by eight percent of the male and 14% of the female respondents. On the contrary, while only four percent of the male respondents had reasons of avoiding predation 21% of the female indicated so. It should be noted that no respondent indicated that there was lack of sufficient feed or to achieve faster growth as a main reason of having practiced a chosen production system. During the dry season, respondents put forward the same reasons as in the rainy season with 41% male and 38% female indicating that availability of feed was the main reason for the production system they practiced; seven percent male and 11% female pointed to the avoidance of predations as main reason for the production system practiced during the dry season. There was a significant difference ($P<0.05$) in Chi Square (9.58) between gender for reasons of choice of the present system.

Field results show that five years ago about 58% of the male cavy keepers had as primary reason of availability of feed to housing and feeding their animals with forages and kitchen waste compared with about 42% of the female in the study area.

Table 10: Choice of current production system by gender for the rainy and dry season and five years ago in the western highlands of Cameroon

System chosen	Current production system rainy season				Current production system dry season				Production system five years ago			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Pen feeding on freshly cut forages	2	0.88	5	2.19	2	0.95	1	0.48	0	0	0	0
Housed and fed on forages plus kitchen waste	90	39.47	113	49.56	87	41.43	103	49.05	1	7.14	4	28.6
Fresh grass plus legume	0	0.00	1	0.44	0	0.00	1	0.48	0	0	0	0
Others	13	5.70	4	1.75	12	5.71	4	1.90	7	50	2	14.3
Total	105	46.05	123	53.95	101	48.10	109	51.90	8	57.14	6	42.9

Table 11: Distribution of respondents according to by gender and reasons for production system practiced during the rainy and dry season in the western highlands of Cameroon

Choice of system	Rainy Season				Dry Season			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
These are the only feeds available	81	38.57	78	37.14	70	41.42	64	37.87
To avoid predation	17	8.10	30	14.29	12	7.10	18	10.65
To avoid diseases	1	0.48	0	0	1	0.59	1	0.59
To achieve faster growth rate	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
As advised by technicians	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
Lack of sufficient feed on the farm	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
Introduced by a project	0	0.00	0	0	1	0.59	0	0.00
Others	3	1.43	0	0	2	1.18	0	0.00
Total	102	48.57	108	51.43	86	50.89	83	49.11

Cavies are kept at various locations of the home either restrained or allowed to run freely. They are allowed to run free in the house, restrained to a special area of the house, to be in a special area in the kitchen, in a special cage, separate room/pen or some other locations (Table 12). Results show that most of the respondents (27.39% male and 24.35% female) allowed their cavies to run freely in the house. A good proportion also indicated that they confined their cavies to a special area in the kitchen (12% male and 27% female). The result also shows that while more male respondents allowed their cavies to run freely in the house the female respondents kept their cavies in a special area in the kitchen. A little proportion of the respondents both male and female indicated that they had a separate room/pen for their cavies.

Table 12: Distribution of respondents by gender according to where they keep cavies for the western highlands of Cameroon

Where they Keep cavies	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Female(No.)	Percentage
Running free in house	63	27.39	56	24.35
Special area in the house	2	0.87	2	0.87
Special area in the kitchen	27	11.74	62	26.96
special cage	2	0.87	2	0.87
Separate room/pen	9	3.91	4	1.74
Others	0	0.00	1	0.43
Total	103	44.78	127	55.22

Various types of cavy pen with different characteristics were identified to have been adopted by those who indicated to have pens in the study area. As regard to roof type most of the respondents (33% male and 36% female) had the pens roofed with iron sheets. Although the wall could be earth/mud, stone/brick or poles with rafters; the wall type indicated by most of the respondents (39.13% male and 46% female) is earth/mud. Again both male (44%) and female (52%) had earth floors for their cavy pens. Only a few males (four percent) had concrete floor and no female had a concrete floor for her cavy pen. In investigating whether the cavy keepers provided a resting area or not for the animals, it was found that most of them 36% male and 49% female do not make provision for a feeding area while only 13% male and two percent female made provision for feeding area for their cavies. In providing drinking water more males (23%) than females (two percent) did so. Again more males (22%) than females (seven percent) provided resting area or night shelter for their cavies. Generally, for those cavy keepers who have pens, irrespective of gender the roof was mostly with aluminium sheets, the type of wall was earth or mud with an earth floor. No feeding area is provided by both sexes. The provision and non provision of water was significant ($P<0.05$) with a Chi Square of 7.83. There was also a significant difference ($P<0.05$) with Chi square value (6.42) in gender for providing resting area. In both case men tend to provide water and a resting place. The provision of drinking water should be encouraged as one of the guidelines for the housing of cavies in scientific institutions is to provide drinking water to these little promising animals. Johansson (2006) recommends that cavies be given new fresh water on a daily basis.

Gender cavy consumption and marketing decision

Preparation of cavy meat does not have any standard recipe or procedure. From field experience the meat is both spiced and boiled in plantain leaves or roasted (barbecue) to accompany any meal as the meat. It would therefore be a good strategy to increased production and consumption to produce recipes for cavy meat preparation. In consumption all members of the household participated in eating cavies (except a few mothers who because of their attachment to their small loving animals refuse to consume them). This implies that there are no known social, cultural or religious barriers against the consumption of cavy meat. This has also been observed by Lammers *et al.* (2009). In cavy marketing whenever there was need to sell off a few cavies the decision of selling had to be made by someone. Respondents indicated who decided where to sell. Decision to sell was made by four categories of persons (Tables 13)

Table 13: Distribution of respondents by gender on who decided upon the place to sell cavies in the western highlands of Cameroon

Decider of place to sell	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Household male	48	20.87	5	2.17
Household female	13	5.65	94	40.87
Joint household(Male/female)	16	6.96	9	3.91
Children (Male/Female)	0	0.00	0	0.00
Non household member	28	12.17	17	7.39
Total	105	45.65	125	54.35

When there was need to sell some cavies the most of the female (41%) indicated that the household female decided where to sell as against 21% male who reported that the male household did decide on the venue of sale. However, some cases occurred that non household members decided on where to sell (12% male and seven percent female).

Sales are made to attain planned and meet emergency household expenses (like to pay for school fees, part of livestock trade, or to reduce flock size). Most of the decisions on cavy sales were made by the women. As in the case of cavy purchase, a large majority of cavy producers sold their cavies to other farmers within their villages and to an extent out of their villages.

Challenges to increased production

In the study area cavy production is still very traditional little or no technical knowledge on cavy production is available to the farmers. Some major challenges hindering massive production irrespective of gender include unavailability of quality concentrate feeds, prevalence of numerous pests (predation by cats, dogs and snakes) and diseases, problem of excessive heat and lack of fast growing species (Dikko *et al*., 2009). However, according to Fonteh *et al*. (2005), the overall productivity and economic returns in cavies can be improved by early weaning of after 11 days with efficient feeding offering significant improvement in the kids' growth performance and survival. Inbreeding was reported (numerous unexplained mortalities) to be very common as most of the cavy farmers in the area do not replace their breeding flock. There is little or no assistance in technical and financial terms by the government.

Conclusion

Cavy production in the western highlands of Cameroon is still traditional with little managerial skills and without religious and cultural barriers both during production and consumption. This study showed that 54.00% of the farmers are females and 27.00% of them could neither read nor write. Most cavy farmers entered the business within the last five years and are Christians of protestant or catholic denominations with a monthly income of at most 100,000 FCFA (≈ 100 USD). Indigenous cavy breeds mostly bought from neighbouring markets or farms, fed with forage stocks and kitchen waste, were kept for cash income or manure, in the house; running freely (24.35%) or in a special area of the kitchen (26.96%) and later sold to meet planned needs or emergencies. Cavies which tended to be kept alone are not provided with drinking water. Major difficulties encountered by cavy farmers include the unavailability of quality concentrate feeds, prevalence of pests and diseases, lack of knowledge and technical and financial assistance. In order to increase cavy production in the western highlands of Cameroon, technical and financial assistance is greatly needed.

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