

Assessment of Food Security Policies in Nigeria.
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By

Idris Ahmed Jamo¹

Department of Public Administration

Ahmadu Bello University Zaria

Phone: +2348028536501, +2348160992383

Email: iajamo112@yahoo.com; iajamo@abu.edu.ng

Introduction

In recent years, there have been growing concerns over food security globally. This challenge coupled with the global financial crisis that continued to be a serious threat to both developed and developing economies.

Nigeria is not an exception, food insecurity is not a recent problem, rather it has been within the country since 1970th when agricultural contribution to the Nigeria economy started to decline; Since then, successive governments have been making efforts towards reviving the Nigeria's agricultural glory. Yet, most of the strategies employed have not achieved the desired objectives despite abundant human and agricultural potentialities in Nigeria, for instance the bulletin of the office of the secretary to the government of the federation revealed that:

The ecology which ranges from mangrove and tropical forest in the south to savannah in the north, favour the production of wide array of crops, lives stocks, fishery. Again, 39% of the land mass is potentially suitable, the remaining 3.4 million has been FADAMA... the rainfall averages over 2000mm per annum in the south east, 1000mm in the central reducing to a low as 500mm in the North East (OSGF Bulletin, 2008:Pp 3-6).

1. Idris Ahmed Jamo is a Lecturer at the Department of Public Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Unfortunately, despite these agricultural potentialities, food security is among the serious challenges to the Nigerian government. In fact, one will be forgiven by admitting that, Nigerian government lack concern on agriculture, rather, misallocation of priorities, and mismanagement of public funds allocated to that sector became the order of the day, this has posed serious difficulties to Nigerian farmer which has no alternative but to look for another means of survival. For instance, at independence, Nigeria was able to feed her self and even export food abroad. Then, the country was the leading producer and exporter of groundnuts, cocoa and palm oil, and sugarcane. During the time agriculture remained the largest contributor to Nigerian an economy (from 63% in 1960), until 1970th when the country started to experienced oil boom which relegated agriculture to second major source of revenue. The contribution of agriculture in 1988 declined to 34%. Since then, the agricultural contribution to the economy continued to decline despite series of strategies made by several governments. This paper is an attempt to overview food security policies in Nigeria and highlight silent problems that bedeviled successful achievement of these strategies and finally provide possible solution to the problems in the contemporary global financial crises.

The paper is divided into four sections, the first contain the introduction, and statement of the problems. Section two contains theoretical framework and conceptualisation, while the third section concerns about overview of food security strategies, while the fourth section mainly concerns about the summary our research findings, section five drew conclusion and make recommendations.

Statement of the Problem

1. *Idris Ahmed Jamo is a Lecturer at the Department of Public Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

Nigeria is an agricultural nation, with over 60% of her workforce engaged in agriculture. The country is blessed with abundant agricultural potentialities that favor production of wide array of crops. Again, with the present increased funding on agriculture by the federal government in the national budgets as for instance, from 10 Billion Naira in 2006 to 121.1 Billion Naira in 2008, the expectation of many Nigerians is that, the problem of food insecurity in the country would be solved, yet, Nigerians are still living in hunger despite increased funding on agricultural sector and series of food security strategies employed by successive governments.

However, farming in Nigeria is left to peasant farmers and still done using crude methods and implements. This has resulted in stagnation in the sector. It is against this background Food Agricultural Organisation listed Nigeria among other nations that at the moment far away to meet food security due to the lack of input.

The question now is that, is the attainment of food security difficult to Nigeria or is it due to insufficient funding or not?; Or is it due to improper implementation of most agricultural policies in the country?. These research questions would serve as bases for this research.

Conceptualization

Food Security:

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations Organisation defined Food Security in both macro and micro perspectives. At macro perspective, it can be seen as “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.

While at micro perspective, “food security means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and as assumed ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, begging, or other coping strategies”.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is Socrates and Plato’s theory of reality. They hypothesized that, “reality is in ideas not in the things. If the ideas behind the things are eternal and beautiful, the things though outwardly not very beautiful, are reality beautiful and attractive. So it can happen with all the aspects of life, both physical and material. Thus we should not go by outward appearance which could be deceptive but try to go deep in finding out reality (Plato.380 BC.).

The relevance of the theory to this work is that, looking on the Nigerian situation, there have been a series of food security strategies. Yet, most of these strategies neither increase food production nor add more skills to Nigerian farmer; instead, they are beautifully packaged to mystify the reality. We are therefore, need to understand, carefully cautioned and guided by the theory of reality and not to be deceived by the outward appearance or blue print of any policy introduced by the government, we are therefore, need to scrutinize and go deep in beyond it outward appearance so as to really pin-point the agenda of those who decide who gets what when and how?.

In the light this theory, one will carefully understand that, Nigerian food security strategies have been over the years used as an instrument for campaign and propaganda

1. *Idris Ahmed Jamo is a Lecturer at the Department of Public Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*

by successive governments so as to mystify the reality but, in reality, most of these policies were passion out to suit the situation and preference of their profounders.

Overview of Food Security Strategies in Nigeria

The Oil Boom Era:

With the emergence of oil boom in 1973, many youth farmers' abandoned farming and drifted to urban centres in search of white cola-jobs. The emergence of oil money posed a drift from local to foreign foods, the situation ushered negative consequences on our economy and marked the beginning of food insecurity in the country. Since then, foreign foods continued to surface local production.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) 1976

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime took over from Gowon and embarked on strong measures on agriculture and food production in order to exploit our blessings. The government reasoned that, there was no reason why a country like Nigeria should have a deficit in food production. Nigeria has a land area of 228 million acres, only 25 million acres of this was cropped. "A World Bank study indicated that an area of seven million acres was relatively unsuited for agriculture. In other words a vast area of over 170 million acres was lying fallow".

However, the expectation was that, if this available land has been utilized, it would have improved our agricultural production. It was against this background that, Murtala Obasanjo regime introduced operation feed the nation (OFN). In fact, the policy did not achieve its objectives; hence, nothing tangible can be identified as a success with regard to that policy.

Green Revolution of 1980

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The civilian administration that succeeded General Obasanjo was more determined to change the future of agriculture and improve food production in the country. “In 1962, he observed, agriculture had contributed 61.2% of GDP of Nigeria. By 1979-80 the figure dwindled to 21%. Further, between 1970-74 agriculture grew at an average annual rate of 7.8%. By 1976, it had declined to 1%”. This was the underlying philosophy behind the launching of green revolution.

The term “green revolution” generally means breeding plants that will bear more edible grains and thus increase yields without increasing cultivated crop areas. Historically, it refers to a concept of rural development through the spread of high yielding variety of seeds (HYV). They are sensitive to fertilizer, chemicals, irrigation and drainage.

The success of the policy in some countries Shagari dreamt of importing it with necessary modification so as to alleviate the hunger within the Nigerian population. Varieties of crops, fertilizers and ideals were made available funds were released through Eleven River Basin Development Authority (RBDA).

It is important to mention that, the programme increased food production in the country, however, excessive corruption and embezzlement of public fund crippled the full success of the policy.

Buhari and Rapid Food Production Programme (RFPP)

With assumption in office, Buhari’s administration centered on the cooperation and willingness of the people and was not to involve the state in as direct expenditure as the GR of Shagari. Instead, the price of fertilizer was reduced. In addition fertilizer

credits were extended to farmers and technical advice on agriculture were made available to them. Many youths returned to rural areas for farming.

In fact, there was massive increase in food production in the country. However, before achieving the desired objective, the government was overthrown.

2001 Obasanjo's Agricultural Policy

Obasanjo came into office in 1999, and attempted to change the situation. In 2001 he introduced another food agricultural policy that emphasis the following objectives;

The evolution of strategies that will ensure self-sufficiency in food production through improvement in technical and economic efficiency;

- Reduction of risk and uncertainties through the invigoration of the existing agricultural insurance schemes to protect farmer's investment and enhance access to credit through indemnity against losses.
- A nation wide, unified and all inclusive extension delivery system under the agricultural development programme (ADP);
- Encouragement of agro-processing to add value, promote rural industrial activities and entrepreneurship and link farmers with markets.
- Provision of rural infrastructure, rural banking, primary health care and cortege industry. In order to improve rural landscape, stimulate agriculture and rural development and encourage youths to return to agriculture (Dahiru, 2010)

These strategies coupled with NEPAD's comprehensive Africa development programme (CAADP) which was adopted by African heads of state and governments in 2003.

Although the policy was comprehensive in nature, however, it neither add value to Nigerian farmer nor did it increase food production in the country. It can be said that, agriculture in the country did not witness any remarkable change. In fact it was based on the Obasanjo's failure, Yar'adua in 2007 identified food security as one of his 7 point agenda.

Yar'adua's Food Security Strategy of 2007

In 2007 president Yar'adua in his swearing inauguration speech identified food security in one of his seven point agenda, he further mentioned that, agricultural sector can be realized if productivity, profitability and competitiveness of agriculture can be improved. The Bulletin of the OSGF, (2008:21) further highlighted that; food security in country can be achieved through the following strategies as policy options.

1. Review the existing policies such that a functional public private sector collaborative approach will be developed in pursuance of a fully integrated and coordinated agricultural revolution in Nigeria.
2. Review agricultural input supply and distention system with a view to developing an effective and sustainable private led input supply and distribution.
3. Address cross cutting constrain like the exchange rate constraint, monetary policies especially in the area of cost borrowing access to appropriate financial service such as micro credit facilities. The Nigerian Agriculture Cooperative and Rural Development (NARDB) needs to become a more pivotal and real catalyst to real agricultural development.

4. Support all season farming by promoting rain-fed and irrigation farming with an emphasis on Fadama agriculture.
5. Development markets and agribusiness with the provision of adequate infrastructure in the area of transport, communication power and water resources.
6. Put measures in place to minimize or complete by eradicating post-harvest losses resulting from inadequate storage facilities.
7. Strengthen agriculture and stream/living the extension delivery system through the involvement of NGO's.
8. Improve the competitiveness of the Nigerian agriculture in the international markets.
9. Expend and possibly consolidate the existing initiatives e.g. bio-fuels as a global favored sector can attract substantial foreign investment.
10. Resuscitate the green Belt programme due cognizance given to the menace of desertification in the North, erosion and flood in the middle and south, and coastal/river pollution in coastline neighboring states.
11. Take advantage of the various concessions and arrangement provided by the World Trade Organization (WTO) Africa great partnership for African Development (NEPAD), The European Union for Africa Caribbean and Pacific states agreements (EUACP).
12. Increase budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector.
13. Reform the land tenure system. The project agenda further explained that, the successful implementation of the strategic options will enable the

government to achieve the target set in NEEDS and the party manifestation with a positive impact on the lives of the people.

However, if the above policy options have been achieved, the following outcomes can be achieved;

1. Diversified economy
2. Food security
3. Employment generation
4. Economic linkages
5. Exports
6. Poverty eradication.

Looking on the above, one may think that, Nigeria would have achieved food security, but unfortunately none of these projections came into reality. It therefore quite unbelievable that, with such agricultural potentialities, he country is still suffering from food in security.

The State of Agriculture in Nigeria

Although official record shows that, the country has recorded some success in agricultural sector. FAO has reported that, agricultural out put grew by 7% in 2003, while the National Bureau for statistics put it at 5.1%, whereas National Economic Intelligence Committee put the figure at 5.3%. It is the fact that, the figures above are not impressive considering the fact that agricultural sector is the second largest contributor to the country's GDP, in the non oil sector as well as the steady population increase in the country. Nigeria water resources master plan study report put up the population increase from 88.317 million in 1991 to about

219.165 million by the year 2025, representing an increase of 248% over the years. Again what worsen the situation is that, over 90% of Nigerian agricultural output comes from helpless peasant farmers who suffer from lack of access to modern agricultural inputs.

Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Although, Nigerian government have been making efforts toward alleviating hunger and making the country food secured, however, available evidence proved that, most of the food security policies have not achieved the desired objective mainly due to lack of government concern on agricultural sector. Thus thwarting the hope of the Nigeria peasant farmer, this situation has engendered difficulties mainly as a result of corruption and mismanagement of agricultural funds by corrupt officials.

In fact, there have been series of food security strategies ranging from operation feed the nation, green revolution, rapid food production program, 2001 Agricultural policy, and finally the food security of the Yar'adua seven point agenda. However available evidence shows that, most of these packages have not seem to really reflect reality, rather some of these policies were used by successive governments to mystify the reality of the Nigerian farmer. Instead, most of these polices were used for campaign and propaganda for those in the corridor of power. Moreover, if government is really and sincerely want to achieve food security, the following measures need to be taken into consideration.

Recommendations

- (i). Fertilizer credits and other farming implements should be made available to farmers.

- (ii) All finances allocated to agriculture in our national budget should be properly monitored.
- (iii) There is need for government to increase budgetary provision on agriculture.
- (iv) There is need for government to increase subsidy on agriculture.

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