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AGRICULTURAL POLICIES INFLUENCE ON SMALLHOLDERS' FARMING IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria's agricultural policy is the synthesis of the framework and action plans of Government designed to achieve overall agricultural growth and development. The policy aims at the attainment of self-sustaining growth in all the sub-sectors of agriculture and the structural transformation necessary for the overall socio-economic development of the country as well as the improvement in the quality of life of Nigerians. The small-holder farmers are vital for Nigeria's agriculture and rural economy. They are defined as those marginal and sub-marginal farm households that own or/and cultivate less than 5.0 hectares of land and constitute about 70 per cent of the country's farmers. This paper therefore reviewed the Nigerian agricultural policy influence as it affects small holder farming. It reviewed the Nigerian agricultural policy landscape and the new national agricultural policy as they affect some macro-economic policies since the post- civil war era. The paper depended mainly on content analysis and secondary information. Some gaps identified in the national agricultural policy were also reviewed. A critical examination of the reforms/policies and their implementation over the years constituted major obstacles to the implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of these policies. The role of the small holder farmer in Nigeria who occupies the majority of land and produced most of the crops and livestock's products was also examined. The paper recommends that the various stakeholders should be involved in the planning and execution-of agricultural policies as well as an increase in investment and extension for irrigation facilities targeted at market-oriented, younger and educated farmers

Keywords: Agricultural policy, Smallholder farming, Rural economy, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Policy is a pre formulated action plan or rule of behaviour. It is any statement of whose actions is meant to influence future decisions activities and behaviour in the general management of agriculture in Nigeria. Policy formulation is culture dependent which has the believes and norms of the people and value system and they and they affect the following; farming systems in Nigeria like the shifting cultivation, rudimentary mixed farming, intensive irrigated agriculture and terrace, also emanate from the cropping system like sole cropping, double cropping, mixed cropping and inter cropping, land tenure system, problems that are particular to agriculture can generate a set of policies, effects of various tenurial types under structural transformation designed to meet the need of

increased food production, specific demands of different agro ecological zones, demands of the national economy, the need to bridge the gap between desire and reality, national agricultural history and the nation's resource base which comprises of both human and non-human. Some potentialities of policies are in; education, good training, well organized and efficient extension methods/ services, more farmers embracing farming, telecommunication, and market survey of the people that will buy the agro commodities and domestic consumption of the ever increasing Nigerian population.

The agricultural policy makers in Nigeria have in the last couple of years crafted excellent policies with the purpose of increasing food production, but such

policies were grossly inefficient and ineffective to make any meaningful impacts on the smallholder farmers. The dynamic changes now influencing agricultural production, diversification and competitiveness require a thorough re-analysis to develop better ways to support tomorrow's agriculture. For the development of agriculture to thrive and be sustainable, there has to be evidence of increased rural income, poverty alleviation, reduction in unemployment, minimum inequalities, increased rural value added production, enhanced good health and education, enhanced quality of life through portable water, electricity and good roads, greater integration of rural people into the political and economic process and good telecommunication services (Oladipo, 2008).

According to Inoni (2019), a policy is a deliberate plan of action to guide decision and achieve rationale outcomes. It is a set of guidelines consisting of principles and rules governing the behaviour of individuals in a society while agricultural policy is a statement of actions and a fundamental tool employed in achieving agricultural growth and development. Agricultural policy deals with articulated plan of action or way of management of farm enterprises, farming land, its use and ownership under a system of rules of conduct recognized in each Nigerian community as binding on all and intended for the advancement of the interest of farmers. Agricultural policies are general while some are specific. Some examples of the general agricultural policies were the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) etc, while some of the specific policies were the Accelerated Maize Production, Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) amongst others. Some policies targeted at producing crops in Nigeria were; the crop should feed the people in Nigeria, there should be enough crops to serve the domestic industry and there should be sufficiency of the crop to be exported. The purpose of agricultural policy is the development of favourable and sustainable guidelines for the promotion of efficient agricultural practices that will guarantee food security, provide employment for the citizens, raw material for all agro-based industries and earn foreign exchange (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012). According to Akinbarnowo (2013), this usually involves infrastructural scale up and technological infusion

for increased productivity from the primitive farming stage to fully mechanized systems through an appropriate policy framework so as meet its constitutional responsibilities to Nigerians. For a policy to have meaningful impact, it must have strategies geared towards accomplishment of specific objectives and the ultimate goal of the policy (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012).

Emokaro (2024) asserted that smallholders are small scale farmers, pastoralists, forest keepers and fishers who manage areas varying from less than one hectare to 10 hectares. The smallholder poultry farms are usually categorized as backyard (< 50 birds per cycle) or semi-commercial (>50 birds per cycle) farms according to their sizes. While in the view of Ogisi (2014), the Nigerian agriculture is overwhelmingly small-scale holdings with distinct impact on production patterns and earnings. The average farm productive capacity is low with preponderance of small farm size per capita. The average farm size per capita is 2.54 hectares which is fragmented over 2—4 plots and family labour is largely used to reduce cash expenditure on inputs. The small scale farming is a system of farming that is characterized by low asset base, low fixed capital investment, labour intensive practices, small farm size, low investment and expenditure on farm inputs and improved technologies, crude tools and equipment and low productivity (Omotosho, 2015). Alimi (2012) mentioned that small holder farming literally is a type of farming that feeds farmer's family only. It is an agricultural system in which a farm family or community uses what it produces and produces what it uses. According to him, the small holder farmer does not keep markets in mind when planning production. The small holder farmer is an island in the agro- inputs and outputs markets or exchange system. The opposite of small holder farming is commercial farming.

The Role of Small Holder Farming in Nigeria:

Nigeria has about 79 million hectares arable land, of which 32 million hectares are cultivated. Over 90% of agricultural production is rain-fed. Smallholders, mostly subsistence producers account for 80% of all farm holdings. Both crop and livestock production remain below potentials. Inadequate access to and uptake of high-quality seeds, low fertilizer uses and inefficient production systems led to this shortfall (Nwajuba, 2013). Government policy should, more than in the past, consider environmental challenges

and remediate poor past and present agricultural management practices, which hinge on input support, and land resource utilization, management and conservation. The central role of women in the agricultural economy needs to finally be recognized and reflected in the policies and measures that purport to buttress smallholders farming (Alimi, 2012).

Agriculture in Nigeria is dominated by smallholder farmers who occupy the majority of land and produce most of the crop and livestock products. The key long-standing challenge of the smallholder farmers is low productivity stemming from the lack of access to markets, credit, and technology in recent years compounded by the volatile food and energy prices and very recently by the global financial crisis. Despite the number of sound agricultural policies adopted by most countries, implementation has been lagging. The recent surge in food prices as well as the need for greater diversification towards domestic-oriented production brought about by the financial crisis could serve as a wakeup call for the sector to receive due attention, given its importance and untapped potential.(Salami *et al*, 2010).

Smallholder farmers in developing countries have, for quite some decades, been carrying out their agricultural activities at subsistence levels. This is obvious because their farming operations are mostly characterized by traditional practices. The World Bank (1996) reported that low productivity in agriculture is the cause of high incidence of poverty in Nigeria. However, Njoku *et al* (2007) and Ekong (2003) argued that, apart from agriculture, rural dwellers need to expand and diversify their sources of income and livelihood activities in order to reduce poverty. One of the major ways that smallholder farmers can achieve this is the adoption of affordable agricultural innovations that cut across the various facets of agriculture and agriculture-related enterprises. (Donye *et al*, 2013).

The African (with Nigeria inclusive) smallholder farmers can be categorized on the basis of:

(i) the agro-ecological zones in which they operate; (ii) the type and composition of their farm portfolio and landholding; or (iii) on the basis of annual revenue they generate from farming activities. In areas with high population densities, smallholder farmers usually cultivate less than one hectare of land, which may increase up to 10 ha or more in sparsely populated semiarid areas, sometimes in combination with livestock of up to 10 animals

(Dixon *et al*, 2003). On the basis of farm revenue, smallholder farmers range from those producing crops only for family consumption to those in developed countries earning as much as USD 50,000 a year (Dixon *et al*, 2003). Most smallholder operations occur in farming systems with the family as the centre of planning, decision-making and implementation, operating within a network of relations at the community level. In this review, smallholder farmers, defined on the basis of land and livestock holdings, cultivate less than 5 hectares of land and own only a few heads of livestock. According to Salami *et al* (2010), most small holder farmers have the constraints of land tenure, access rights and land management, financing agriculture and access to credit, input and output markets, infrastructure, agricultural extension and innovation, policy related and institutions, climate change and related food challenges.

The Agricultural-Rural Economy: Eboh (2011) stated that with Nigeria's total land area of about 92.4 million ha (out of which 75-80% is cultivable), large population (and by implication, domestic market) of 150 million people (2009 estimated) and wide range of agro-ecological conditions, Nigeria has the enormous agricultural potentials which should be taken advantage of to achieve food security and economic prosperity for the populace. Currently, about 44% of the cultivable land is under arable and permanent crops and the rest are under permanent pastures. Of the estimated 32 million ha under arable and permanent crops, 92% is arable land while the rest are under permanent crops. The demographic exhibits an increasing dependency burden (as shown by increasing share of under-18 years in total population) and increasing urban population now estimated at about 48% of Nigerian. Nigeria's socioeconomic and agro-ecological contexts impose huge responsibility on agricultural sector for food security, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation.

Ike (2024) stated that the agricultural activities in Nigeria are dominated by small holder farmers who constitute about 90 percent of farm holdings in the country. About 60% of Nigeria's working population is employed in agriculture, mainly as smallholders, out of which 60-70% are women who produce up to two-thirds of food-crops. In spite of agriculture's economic significance, the oil sector

accounts for about 95% of export revenue and close to 80% of consolidated government revenue, but accounts for less than 1% of total employment. Crop production contributes closed to 85% to agricultural GDP, livestock production 10%, fisheries production 4%, and forestry production 1%. In terms of cropping patterns, cereals (particularly maize, sorghum and millet) account for the largest share of total cultivated area and also dominate in value terms (due to price advantage), while roots and tubers (particularly yam and cassava) account for the largest share of total output (in weight terms). Smallholder farmers (with total holdings of less than 5 ha) constitute more 70% of farming population and produce up to 90% of total national output. Irrigated cultivation utilizes less than 10% of total irrigable land, that is, just about 1% of total cultivated land.

Nigerian Policy Landscape — Agricultural and Rural Development

Agricultural policies in Nigeria have been dictated largely by the philosophy of the governments in power and the priority rating attached to various categories of Agricultural and rural development problem (Olayemi and Dittoh, 1995). The Nigerian agricultural policies have undergone five distinct chronological phases in line with the developmental stages of agriculture in the country since 1960-2012 (Prabuddha and Babu, 2010, Akinbamowo, 2013). The first phase spanned the colonial period and the post-independence decade from 1960 to about 1970, the second phase covered the period from about 1971 to 1985, while the third phase started from 1986 in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) period to 1994, the fourth is the post-SAP era to date spanning 1995 to 2012 and the fifth phase running from 2013 to 2020 (FMARD, 2021).

According to Coker and Adebayo (2012), during these development phases, policy statements were strongly on thematic sub-sectors and regional policies. In 1988 however, a more holistic and articulated agricultural policy document for Nigeria was undertaken with the support of the erstwhile Federal Agriculture Coordinating Unit (FACU) and was revised in 2001 as the New Agricultural Policy Thrust. Most of the policies in agriculture related to the following; food production, industrial raw material production, employment generation, foreign exchange generation, natural resource conservation, environmental abatement, market for output of the economy for both industrial and

agriculture, social stability, macro specific policies (exchange rate, interest rate, international trade policy and fiscal policy. Others were sectoral specific policies are on; land use, farm holding, forestry/wildlife, fishery, produce holding, agricultural taxation, subsidy, farm income, rural infrastructure, mechanization, credit, export crops, food crops, research and extension.

According to Eboh (2011), Nigeria's post-independence economic planning started with the 1st National Development Plan (1962-1968). At Nigeria's independence in 1960, agriculture was contributing 64% of GDP. The thrust of the 1st National Development Plan (NDP) was to move the inherited colonial economy to an independent modern agricultural economy. The main source of investment was government revenue from agricultural taxes and agricultural exports (cocoa, groundnuts, palm kernels/oil, hides and skin, natural rubber, raw cotton, timber and bananas) through the marketing board system. During the post-independence period, the three regional governments implemented agricultural development initiatives, including agricultural research and extension, export crop marketing, price stabilization and farm settlement schemes. By 1970, crude oil share of total exports had reached 58%, while agricultural share of total exports had dropped from 82% in 1960 to 30% in 1970. This was the economic context within which the 2nd NDP (1970-74) was initiated. Towards the end of that period around 1973/74, agriculture share in GDP had fallen to about 34%, while petroleum share had risen from about 1% in 1960 to more about 17% (FRN, 1975). Similarly, by 1974, crude oil share of total exports had risen to 92% while agriculture share of total exports had dropped to less than 5%. The dramatic changes in the economic landscape underscored the context for the enunciation of the 3rd NDP (1975-1980). The Plan sought to use the oil earnings to develop the productive "non-oil" sectors of the economy, that is, to diversify the economy. The period witnessed heavy public investments in agricultural and rural development, particularly state-driven approaches in commodity marketing, input and credit subsidies, agricultural extension and technology dissemination, water resources and irrigation development and agricultural mechanization.

Typical of the tide, this period witnessed many agricultural sector initiatives such as the NAFPP in

1975, OFN in 1976, Land Use Decree of 1978 and the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs). However, the agricultural sector continued to slide particularly because of oil-induced overvaluation of the currency, distortion of economic incentives, inefficient public agricultural spending, rising corruption and policy failures. Though, fewer gains came in the form of increased agricultural output, they were driven largely by expansion in cultivated area rather than productivity increases. To succeed the 3rd Plan (1975-1980), Nigeria flagged-off the 4th NDP (1981-1985) which promoted the development of agriculture, water resources and economic infrastructure, among others. During the 1980s, the tide of public investments for agricultural development swelled with initiatives such as Green Revolution in 1980, Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) and Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986 and others. From early to late 1980s, the GDP recorded negative growth rates and major economic sectors deteriorated as oil boom-induced borrowing led to accumulated domestic and external debts.

By 2000, the 1st National Policy on Integrated Rural Development (NPIRD) fostered a paradigm shift from agriculture-centered approaches to establishing the framework for multi- sector and integrated rural development on a sustainable basis. The NPIRD & RDSS represented twin frameworks for maximizing the contributions of the agricultural-rural sector to national economic development. The period also saw the formulation and adoption of the National Policy on Agriculture in 2001. Nigeria witnessed remarkably improved macroeconomic and growth performance upon the adoption of the National Economic and Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004 and thereafter the derivative States Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (SEEDS). In 2007, the NEEDS was succeeded by the short-lived 7-point Agenda which still prioritized agriculture in the economic framework. Overall, agricultural development falls within the overarching context of Nigeria's Vision 20:2020 (2009-2020) blueprint and the medium-term implementation plan 2010-2013, both modeling agricultural development as a strategic component of the overall national prosperity ambition of becoming one of the top 20 economies by the year 2020. As a critical growth pole, the agricultural sector is expected to drive productivity,

competitiveness and diversification of the economy. Towards achieving longer-term structural transformation whereby the National Implementation Plan (NIP) 2010-2013 spells out the strategies for promoting productivity, value-addition and production-market linkages. Accordingly, it posits enhancing total factor productivity in the agricultural sector through the application and diffusion of knowledge and improvement in the technology base.

Other policies were; the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy (2000), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) (2012-2016), Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) " Green Alternative" (2016-2020), Feed Africa: Strategies For Agricultural Transformation in Africa (2016-2025), National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria (2016—2027), National Gender Policy in Agriculture (2019-2026). This is for smallholder women farmers. National Forestry Policy (2020-2030). National Climate Change Policy (2021-2023) and the National Agricultural Technology & Innovation Policy (NATIP) (2022-2027)

The New National Agricultural Policy In Nigeria: The declared objectives of Nigeria's national agricultural policy are to (i) self- sufficiency in basic food supply in achieving the goals of food security;(ii) Increase in the production of agricultural raw materials for industries;(iii) Increased production and processing of export crops, by the use of improved techniques; (iv) generating gainful employment; (v) rational utilization of agricultural resources, improved protection of agricultural land resources from drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and flood, and the general preservation of the environment for the sustainability of agricultural production;(vi) promote the increased application of modern technology to agricultural production; and (vii) improvement in the quality of life of rural dwellers (FMARD,2022).

Some factors influencing the effectiveness of policies and regulations on agriculture in Nigeria included high demand for agricultural produce, availability of improved technology, efficient dissemination of information by the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), and value added leading to improved income. On the other hand, the common factors responsible for ineffectiveness of policies and regulations, especially on the

downstream segment of agriculture, include instability of the political climate, insecurity of investment, non-standardized product quality, non-competitive nature of agricultural products from the country in the export market due to high cost of production and lack of adequate processing facilities. (FMARD, 2002).

Some key Features of the New Policy: Some of the key features of the new national agricultural policy were the evolution of strategies that will ensure self-sufficiency and improvement in the level of technical and economic efficiency in food production, reduction of risks and uncertainties in agriculture, a nationwide, unified and all inclusive extension delivery system, an active promotion of agro-allied industry to strengthen the linkage effect of agriculture on the economy and the provision of such facilities and incentives as rural infrastructure, rural banking, primary health care and cottage industries. While the major content of the policy framework covers issues on (i) agricultural resources (land, labour, capital, seeds, fertilizer, etc.) whose supply and prices affect the profitability of agricultural business,(ii) crops, livestock, fisheries and agro-forestry production,(iii) pest control,(iv) mechanization,(v) water resources and irrigation, (vi) rural infrastructure, (vii) agricultural extension and technology transfer,(viii) research and development (ix) agricultural commodity storage, processing and marketing,(x) credit supply,(xi) insurance, (xii) agricultural cooperatives,(xiii) training and manpower development, and (xiv) agricultural statistics and information management. According to Olowa and Olowa (2014), some of the macro-economic policies in Agriculture so far were;

(1) Agricultural commodity marketing and pricing policy: In 1977, six national commodity boards were established which include; commodity boards for cocoa, groundnuts, palm produce, cotton, rubber and food grains.

(2) Land use policy was promulgated by the Federal Government in 1978 vesting the ownership of all lands on the government as to giving genuine farmers access to farmlands.

(3) Agricultural extension and technology transfer policy aimed at improving the adoption of improved agricultural technology by farmers with the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) and Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) as implementing agencies.

(4) Input supply and distribution policy was promulgated to ensure adequate and orderly supply of agricultural inputs notably fertilizers, agrochemicals, seeds, machinery and equipment as follows:

- a) In 1972, Government created the National Seeds Service (NSS) to produce and multiply improved seeds such as rice, maize, cowpea, millet, sorghum, wheat and cassava.
- b) In 1975, Government centralized fertilizer procurement and distribution with numerous agro service centres nationwide.

(5) Agricultural inputs subsidy policy on fertilizer, seed (50%), agro-chemicals (50%) and tractor hiring services (50%).

(6) Agricultural research policy: The policy was aimed at coordination and harmonization of agricultural research and extension linkage. Agricultural Research Council was established in 1971. The 1973 Decree empowered the Federal Government to take over all state research institutions. The 1975 reconstitution by the Federal Government of the Nigerian Agricultural Research Institute Network led to the establishment of 14 institutes which were later increased to 19 and the creation in 1977 of the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) to coordinate all research activities in Nigeria.

(7) Agricultural Cooperative policy-In 1979, a department of Agricultural Cooperatives within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development was created to actualize this policy aimed at encouragement of farmers to form cooperatives and the use of same for the distribution of farm inputs and imported food commodities.

(8) Water resources and irrigation policy brought about the establishment of eleven River Basin Development Authorities in 1977 charged with the responsibility of developing Nigeria's land and water resources.

(9) Agricultural mechanization policy: The policy was instrumental to the creation of the Ministry of Science and Technology and the establishment of some Universities of Science and Technology, the operation of tractor hiring units in all the states of Nigeria, reduce import duty on tractors and agricultural equipment and implements, generalized and liberalized subsidies on farm clearing and establishment of a centre for agricultural mechanization.

(10) Agricultural sector policies and strategies document re-designed (1985-1990) on food crops, livestock and fish production, industrial raw materials (crop and byproducts) production, and forest products and wildlife.

(11) Policies on support services such as agricultural extension, technology development and transfer; agricultural credit; agricultural insurance; agricultural mechanization; water resources development; rural infrastructure; agricultural statistics and data bank; agricultural investment and management advisory services; and agricultural manpower development and training.

Gaps Identified in National Agricultural Policy:

Nine identified gaps in the development of national agricultural policy were:

- (1) Non interaction between and among stakeholders.
- (2) Weak agricultural policy.
- (3) Role conflict between different programmes and projects.
- (4) Short duration of agricultural policies and programmes.
- (5) Inconsistency/incompatibility of regional policies with the national policies.
- (6) Emphasis on mainly food and animal production.
- (7) Delay, embezzlement, misappropriation and lack of fund to pursue specific policy to an expected end.
- (8) Inadequate virile technical advisory/extension services.
- (9) Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of programme/project.

Challenges of the Agricultural Policies in Nigeria

Some challenges to agricultural policies in Nigeria are;

- Weak linkages agriculture and industry except tobacco by the Nigerian Tobacco Company, industry and research, production (farmers) and banks in the credit system.
- Lack of true values by the farmers.
- Fear of insecurity in terms of banditry, climate change and other unknown by the farmers.
- Constantly changing technology.
- Poor transportation system
- Poor national planning for agricultural development.
- Social and economic conflicts.

- High investment cost which becomes a challenge to production.
- Non-coordination of machineries for production no research, farmers and manufacturing industries.
- Non-coordination of production personnel-Farmers, agricultural technicians, administrators, legislators, mass media professionals, manufacturers, merchants and other public stakeholders.

The Nigerian Agricultural Policy Somersault

The National Agricultural Policy did not address the food crisis as there was no deliberate attempt to properly reposition the small holder farmers to facilitate their production activities. As it was observable, what was obvious was the emphasis on the private sector participation which is the usual capitalist approach. With the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986, government admitted the failure of past polices to significantly improve the economy and reverse the declining trend of production in the agricultural sector. The Structural Adjustment Programme relied most especially on the agricultural sector to achieve the objectives of its far-reaching reforms on diversification of exports and adjustment of the production and consumption structure of the economy (Adubi, 2004).

A critical examination of the reforms/policies and their implementation over the years showed that policy instability, policy inconsistency, lack of policy transparency, poor coordination of policies as well as poor implementation and mismanagement of policy instruments constitute major obstacles to the implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of these policies. Policy instability and lack of policy transparency are not unconnected with political instability and bad governance (IFAD, 2011). For example, between 1979 and 1999, the country had five military/civilian regimes. Many of the strategies used to improve agricultural growth in the past have failed because the programmes and policies were not sufficiently based on in-depth studies and realistic pilot surveys. This could be attributed to lack of public participation in the design, formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies as well as limited implementation capacity within the sectoral ministries and a poor understanding of the details and specifics of policies by implementers (Adebayo, 2004).

FMARD (2002) mentioned that the main factors that influenced the effectiveness of policies on agriculture include the high demand for agricultural produce, availability of improved technology, efficient dissemination of information by the ADPs and value added leading to improved income. On the other hand, the common factors responsible for the ineffectiveness of policies and regulations, especially on the downstream segment of agriculture include instability of political climate, insecurity of investment, non-standardized product quality, non-competitive nature of agricultural products from the country in the export market due to high cost of production and lack of adequate processing facilities. Clearly, the persisted failures of agricultural programmes in Nigeria have revealed the basic weakness of agricultural policies in Nigeria and the inability of the several administrations in Nigeria to solve the basic and fundamental problems of agricultural development (Amalu, 1998). A cream of authors (Amalu, 1998, Ayoola, 2001 and Madukwe, 2008) has also laid the failure on the door-steps of governments for the absence of weak agricultural policies.

While Akinbamowo (2013) in analyzing the constraints to achieving policy objectives stated that some of the fundamental weaknesses that impeded the effectiveness of agricultural mechanization policies and programme implementation as identified by Ademosun (1990) and FMA (2001) included:

(1) Hostile environment where macro-economic policies and the agricultural policy are in disharmony thus resulting in escalating costs of production and reduced purchasing power of farmers.

(2) Inconsistency and instability in macro-economic policies which discourage medium and long term investment in agriculture.

(3) Poor state of rural infrastructure.

Inadequate appropriate indigenous technology to reduce the drudgery in agricultural production and processing activities.

(4) Inadequate technology.

(5) Inadequate database for policy formulations, monitoring and evaluation as well as impact assessment.

(6) Poor translation and articulation of policy prescription into implementable programme.

(7) Inadequate involvement of beneficiaries in programme design, monitoring, evaluation and

implementations arising from under-rating of the knowledge, ability, capability and sensitivity of the small holder farmers.

- (8) Lag between project costs and budgetary provisions resulting in sub-optimal allocation.
- (9) Fragmentation of farmlands into small units which are sometimes far apart.
- (10) Cropping systems not often adequate for mechanization.

Goals of Previous Food Policies in Nigeria: One of the overarching goals of previous agri-food policies in Nigeria is the achievement of improved productivity and income of smallholder farmers who not only make up the vast majority of the farming population but also produce the bulk of food commodities in Nigeria. While previous policies such as the 1972 National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP); 1980 Green Revolution Policy; the 2008 Vision 20: 2020; 2012 Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA); the 2016 Agricultural Promotion Policy also known as The Green Alternative (2016-2022) and most recently, the 2022 National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Plan (2022-2027), have always had as an overriding objective to improve productivity, yet outcomes have been mixed. Several of such policies had particularly failed to achieve the set goals while a few others made some paltry progress. In order to support future policies and create the needed platform for institutional reforms to achieve the desired target, there is a need to understand the key issues that had undermined the achievement of these lofty goals set out but not achieved. The research note is one means to supporting this process.

The Need for a Food Policy for Nigerians: There is no tangible food policy in Nigeria at present probably because there is little appreciation of its complementary role to agricultural system and practices to promote relative self-sufficiency in food production (Adeoti, 1989 and FMARD. 2002). While an expansive agricultural programme is being pursued, there is also the need for a national food policy which seeks to assure all citizens access to food supply that is reasonably priced, relatively safe, adequately in quantity and nutrition (Claffey and Stucker, 1982, Nyangito, 1999). A food policy that is properly formulated will encompass diet policy that shows the relationship of good diet with good

living, as well as the causal link between inappropriate or insufficient diet with major and common debilitating diseases. With the current knowledge of human nutrition, food policy will be guided by what the human body requires and which particular food items provide it, all of which are prerequisites for effective food choices by the people. Agricultural policy-makers and planners will also be guided by food policies to factor good nutrition that leads to healthy food consumption into the food production programmes.

Furthermore, a food policy, unlike agricultural policy should stipulate safety guidelines for food production in the growing food industry, it will crystallize in food safety regulations such as the minimum requirements of basic nutrients that must be present in the food, the conditions under which the food is produced, its packaging and even the advertisement to promote the consumption of the food (Davis. 2009).

CONCLUSION

Achieving growth in agriculture is harder than it was thought previously. It is imperative to develop a policy framework that goes beyond the traditional policy approach that recognizes the important linkages between policy and small holder agriculture, and which allows a more dynamic understanding of all stakeholders' roles. There is a need to revisit the role of government in agriculture. Open and inclusive policy debate about the role of agriculture especially for small holder farming in economic growth and poverty reduction should be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Nigeria needs a programme devoted to small holder farmers and a new generation of farmers that trains young educated people interested in agricultural entrepreneurship and provides financial and technological support. They should be enabled to use improved technologies and modern management approaches that help ensure farm profitability and sustainable resource use.
- Agriculture is mostly rain-fed. Increased investment and extension for irrigation facilities, including water harvesting and precision drip systems is to be targeted at

market-oriented, younger and educated farmers.

- Maintenance of soil facility and protecting ecological diversity is crucial to the future of farming.
- Various stakeholders including farmers/rural people should be involved in the planning and execution of agricultural policies. Also agricultural policy should be open, transparent and must be framed within a context in which agricultural development policy are national issues that are based on a consensus broad enough to guarantee continuity and freedom of expression of individuals opinions on decisions.
- Government should promote a virile extension liaison services that is empowered and backed up with adaptive research and mobile personnel equipped with necessary media facilities and information.
- Policies should also be monitored and their efficacies evaluated in terms of a specific impact of that policy.
- Policy makers should also identify and evaluate alternative or different intervention programmes in terms of both their immediate and long term impacts and of their implications to the communities and the society at large.
- The philosophy of policy consistency should be adopted in Nigeria. This is the easiest way to streamline, direct and focus on agricultural development.
- Government should provide enabling environment for small holder farmers' involvement in agricultural development especially in areas like processing, preservation, exportation, recreational and environmental services.

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