

Agricultural Development Intervention Programmes in Nigeria (1960 To Date): A Review

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Abstract

Development of Nigeria's Agricultural Sub-sector will be imperative if meaningful and sustainable national development is envisaged. Agriculture contributes significantly to the Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It provides employment to a large proportion of citizenry, and provides raw materials to some-agro allied industries among other contributions. Nigeria's population is fast growing without a corresponding increase in the growth in agricultural production. Unabated rural migration of able-bodied youth; malnutrition; unemployment; lack/inadequate basic necessities of life, etc have been on increase at alarming proportion. The situation calls for serious intervention by stakeholders. Various agricultural and rural development programmes and policies have been developed and executed by successive administrations in Nigeria from early 60s to date. These were aimed at improving the level of agricultural production and ensure self sufficiency in food production. This paper examines the programmes and policies and the challenges they faced with a view to making recommendations to key players in the agricultural development project such as the policy makers, researchers, farmers, extensionists, input suppliers, marketers and other stakeholders.

Key Words: Agricultural development, GDP, policy/agency based interventions.

Introduction

Agricultural development is an integral part of national development. It is that aspect of development that is related to agrarian reforms. Considering the contribution of agriculture to the socio-economic development of many countries, several scholars have postulated theories linking agriculture with national development.

Within the context of development paradigms postulated in the field of agriculture, communication, sociology and economics there are evidences to show that changes are taking place in the agricultural sector across the globe. Therefore, such changes can be viewed from contributions of agriculture to the national

economies of various countries in form of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the general goal of development initiatives is total transformation in the quality of the life of the people or target beneficiaries of development programmes.

In development process, people are not only the most important means, but also the ultimate end of development. Therefore, agricultural development can be viewed as another arm of development, which connotes improvement in the principles, and practice of agriculture given both human and material resources that will result in maximum output from a combination of minimum inputs. (Olawoye and Ogunfeditimi, 1989).

In general, development has been viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective. These are related to political, economical, social, psychological, cultural and ecological phenomena at almost all levels of human activity. Consequently, several schools of thought have continued to view development from the economic, social or modernization and technological perspective (Chauvin, 1993). Thus, development should be defined in relation to sustainability and of course its relevance to the socio-cultural circumstances of the people affected by changes inherent in the process.

In other words, development should be those changes with a “human face” or that are human centered. This implies that development is that conscious effort aimed at bringing about total transformation in the quality of life of the people. Therefore, development can only take place if the factors related to it have a positive impact on the circumstances surrounding human existence that bring about improvement in human life, long and healthy living, access to knowledge and availability of sufficient resources for decent living standards, conducive social, political, economic and cultural atmosphere needed for peaceful coexistence or national stability. It is against this background that this paper examined the community-oriented strategies that could facilitate sustenance of agricultural extension delivery in Nigeria. This is in view of the precarious development crisis been experienced in Nigerian agriculture in the last decade following withdrawal of the World Bank funding of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs).

Agriculture: The backbone of rural development

Over 70% of Nigerian population reside and earn their living in rural areas. Majority of these ruralites are actively involved in

agriculture and agriculture related enterprises especially women, youths and children (Yahaya, 2000).

It is sad to note that in Nigeria, the rural sector suffers more neglect and under development with ever increasing cases of population growth, unabated rural migration of able bodied youths, malnutrition, lack of basic necessities of life (health care centers, schools, good roads, portable and safe drinking water, electricity, irrigation), total marginalization, etc. Consequently, what were left are multiple negative forces in the social system such as armed robbery, advanced fee fraud (419) and general dishonesty, cheating and stealing. This justifies the need for urgent actions and interventions to address the myriads of problems of the rural areas and set the nation on the path to glory and excuse a larger proportion of the nation’s population from inhuman living circumstances in order achieve greatness.

It is probably as a result of the aforementioned that successive governments in Nigeria have executed several agricultural development interventions aimed at improving or elevating the level of agricultural production that will ensure self-sufficiency in food production. These interventions can be viewed from two perspectives that is based on Policy and Nature of the Agency. An attempt is made in this paper to review some intervention programmes of successive governments in Nigeria.

a) Policy Based Intervention Programmes

i National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)

This programme was designed in the early 60s by both the Federal and state governments to accelerate the production of grains (maize, rice, guinea corn, millet, wheat, cassava and cowpeas).

It was the opinion of the initiators of this programme that target crops for accelerated production are major staple foods of Nigerians and if produced in abundance, hunger and related food crisis will be put to check.

This was achieved through the introduction of high yielding varieties, use of appropriate fertilizers, agrochemicals, good storage and processing facilities, provision of credit as well as marketing outlets. In addition, several research institutes were mandated to develop improved crop varieties and were made popular through extension agents and the use of mass media.

ii Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

In 1976, Operation Feed the Nation was launched to address the problem of rising food crisis, rural-urban migration and escalating food import bills. The OFN programme attempted to mobilize the general public to participate actively in agricultural production and ensure self-sufficiency in food production. The programme stimulated Nigerians to farming through the strategy used. Some of these strategies included subsidized production inputs, increased bank credit to farmers, establishment of commodity boards and fixing of attractive prices for agricultural produce.

iii Green Revolution Programme (GR)

The Green Revolution Programme replaced the Operation Feed the Nation of the Federal Military Government by the civilian government in 1979. This was an attempt to bring about radical changes in Nigerian Agricultural production and eliminate inherited food problems of successive governments. Large, medium and small-scale farmers received a number of incentives to boost their production level during the implementation of the programme. Livestock and crop components were introduced while the research

institutes were re-organized to make them more responsive to the need of the programme (Williams, 1981).

b) Agency-Based Intervention Programmes

i National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)

This development authority executed a national agricultural land development programme aimed at moderating the problems of low utilization of abundant farm land, thereby increasing food production level of farmers through expansion of farmers' farm lands. A survey conducted by the Central Bank of Nigeria in 1998 indicated that the agency was able to develop 16,000 hectares of land. Out of this, 12,984 (81.1%) was cultivated with various crops. It also provided extension services to farmers at project sites. The overall goal of NALDA was to encourage farmers to plant above what they can consume, so that the surpluses can be sold at the local markets or exported to other countries for foreign exchange earnings.

ii River Basin Development Authority (RBDA)

The existing abundant water resources in the country and its potential for increasing agricultural production prompted the establishment of River Basin Development Authority (RBDA). The scheme became necessary because of persistent short rainy seasons in many parts of the country which has continued to restrict cultivation to single cropping pattern the year round. However, the establishment of various large-scale irrigation facilities the country witnessed unprecedented multiple cropping patterns. In addition, larger areas were put into cultivation, while livestock and fisheries production were intensified.

Available statistics from eight River Basin Development Authorities showed that there was an increase in the tempo of activities in 1998 when the total land area developed by the authorities rose from 30.3 thousand ha in 1994 to 47.7 thousand ha in 1998. William (1981) had earlier reported that the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin and Tiga and Challawa dams located in former Kano State could conserve enough water to irrigated land that can produce over 50% of the nations need for wheat, 30% of its need for rice, cotton and sugar cane. In addition, it could produce several thousand tons of fish; develop livestock, poultry and hydroelectric power generation.

iii Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs)

The idea of Agricultural Development Programmes is an offshoot of the concept of integrated agricultural and rural development. It started in 1972 in Northern Nigerian towns of Gombe and Gusau with two pilot projects assisted by the World Bank. This became necessary because of the need for the application of knowledge and skills in all the relevant areas of agriculture. This concept involves the provision of Infrastructural facilities such as roads, schools, water supply in the rural areas at the right times in required quantity to farmers. The ADP is the implementation organ of the state ministry of agriculture and natural resources. It is semi autonomous and focuses on the small farmer. It adopts the integrated rural development strategy in its operations (Jibowo, 2005).

The success of the Gombe and Gusau projects encouraged other state governments to embark on more of such projects with the assistance of the World Bank. Since then, Nigeria has continued to witness agricultural development programmes of various dimensions. It is against this background that effective extension

services have been established. The closest assistance ever realized by farmers in Nigeria have come from contact with various Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and the extension agents working under the Training and Visit (T and V) system. The Activities of ADPs in Nigeria spread over three thematic areas; provision of infrastructural rural facilities, conducting worthwhile trainings on improved agricultural technologies and supply of farm inputs.

iv Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)

Trends in the transformation of the rural sector shows that despite the huge investment in the agricultural sector, which was assumed will automatically bring about eradication of rural poverty and isolation has not been achieved. This is partly due to the deplorable conditions of rural areas, enormous size and dwindling economic resources to address the problem of rural under development in Nigeria. In 1987, the Babangida administration established the Directorate of Foods, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI).

On establishment, DFRRI attempted to open the rural areas through the construction of access roads, and provision of basic amenities of modern living. This is inevitable because it has long been realized according to Otubanjo (1992) that the economic future of Nigeria depends on the development of rural areas. Therefore, the potentials of rural areas were seen to be both immediate and long term. The idea of opening up of rural areas with feeder roads and integrating it with other parts of the country provide basis for food that could be evacuated to enhance the quantity of food and raw materials consumption.

Consequently, there will be more food at cheaper rate. On the other hand, improved rural condition will stem the rate of rural-urban migration; improve quality of rural life and by implication, its productive capacity that would ensure a greater exploitation of the potentials of rural areas. The problem of DFRRI was hardly one of enthusiasm and relevance but of variation between enormity of rural under development and the quantum of resources available to subdue the problem.

Implications of Policy and Agency-Based Development Initiatives

All these agricultural and rural development initiatives have affected agricultural production level in Nigeria. Omenesa (1991) reported that annual production of sorghum has continued to increase, even though it is grown only in the Savannah ecological zones of Nigeria. This is as a result of improved varieties developed by researchers for its popularization. Furthermore, the area under sorghum production has increased from 0.5 million ha in 1959 to over 3 million hectares in 1989 with a total production of over 3 million tones.

Wudir (1991) reported that rice is the most popular of all cereals grown in the country. It is grown in all the states of the federation. In 1989, there were over 1 million hectares of rice under cultivation with a total production level at about 2 million tones. It accounts for nearly 12% of Nigeria's food consumption. Maize forms major component of poultry and piggery feeds. It is also part of the concentrate ration of dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats. In all these, maize is a major raw material for several industries. For instance, the ban on importation of malted barley used mainly in the brewing industries, the industries in Nigeria automatically resorted to the use of maize as alternative.

Cassava is one of the most staple food crops in many households in Nigeria. Nigeria is the largest producer of cassava in the world. It has over taken Brazil and Thailand; there are more than 400 varieties of cassava species in Nigeria now (IITA, 1992). And the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has made tremendous contribution to the improvement of cassava production in Nigeria (IITA, 1992). About 13.2 million tones of cassava tubers were produced in 1989 and the most common food from cassava is garri. Some by-products of cassava include starch and cassava flour.

All these aforementioned are traceable to the policy and agency based development initiatives of successive governments in Nigeria over the last decades. While it cannot be said that these policies are not vibrant enough for rural and agricultural transformation, lack of continuity and eagerness to be identified with a named policy intervention of successive government in our country has been the bane of the much desired rural and agricultural development and transformation to guarantee self-sufficiency in food and fibre.

Limitations of Past Agricultural and Rural Development Strategies

It is obvious that in spite of the positive impact of some of the rural/agricultural development strategies adopted in Nigeria, several noticeable limitations were evident. However, some of these are common to all the programmes. These include the following:

1. Top-down approach in project design and implementation.

In many of the programmes, development planners assumed both the problem and solutions and forced them on the target beneficiaries whose programmes are often times at variance with the needs of the people.

This often results in conflicts, wasting of scarce resources, time and energy and sad enough the affected people at the end of it all are worse off.

2. Bureaucratic bottlenecks

In Nigeria development agencies are often erroneously subjected to the civil service rules and regulations level of development achieved. It is very important to stress the need for sustainability at the onset of the development initiatives and during the process of programme implementation. This is necessary if the entire effort must stand the test of time.

This could take the form of accountability not only in terms of financial or running cost but also in terms of impact. This is in recognition of the need for continuity of programme of activities and what the people stand to benefit from the project.

The Way Forward

The design and management of rural development and agricultural programmes in Nigeria can only move forward if the present practice is adjusted to the social and economic realities and progressive strategies and ideas are given a chance. This is with due acknowledgement to existing shortcomings.

To achieve the most cherished result in this direction, design and management of development programmes should be a collective venture where all the stakeholders will have a say. Not only that, both sponsorship, policy design and implementation should receive the inputs of targets of development programmes.

It is against this background that this paper recommend the formation of cooperatives; organization of demonstrations (Field days); Market days; festivities, etc. as the way forward.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is no longer news that Nigerian society is segregated in such a way that the urban sector is controlled by small influential group of elites who are better-off economically and more educated and control the industries as well as hold key government positions. On the other hand, the sub-urban segment is made of the slums and areas inhabited by the illiterate or half educated citizens forced out of the rural sectors by the pull and push factors, particularly, harsh realities of economic deprivation.

Rural areas are large in population and land area. They are characterized by traditional practices, hopelessness and fatalism, very poor, and lack the basic necessities that make life worthwhile (lack motorable roads, medical facilities, schools are almost absent because where they even exist, there are inadequate teachers, lack furniture with poor attendance records and they predominantly practice subsistence agriculture).

In the process, monitoring and evaluation should be fully integrated into the project. While target beneficiaries should form the cardinal point of the evaluation process, the gains and outcomes in both social and economic perspectives should form the principal indicators in the process of evaluation. No matter what happens or befall Nigerian agriculture today, it will turn out to be the savior of the nation's social and economic doldrums in the nearest future.

Finally, policy direction in rural and agricultural development programmes should be integrated with target beneficiaries seen as active rather than passive participants. Hence, the development of both human and economic capital in the face of social and cultural challenges should have human face and sympathy.

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