

EFFECTS OF PRESIDENT UMARU MUSA YAR’ADUA’S 7-POINT AGENDA ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examines the effects of President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua’s 7-point agenda on agricultural development and food security. The UN population divisions have estimated that the world population would increase to 8.9 billion in 2050 and half of this will be concentrated in eight countries including Nigeria. The food sub-sector of Nigerian agriculture parades a large array of staple crops, made possible by the diversity of agro-ecological production systems. The major food crops that are produced are: cereals (sorghum, maize, millet, and rice); tubers (yam and cassava); legumes (groundnut and cowpeas) and others (fruits and vegetables). These commodities are of considerable importance for food security, expenditures and incomes of households. However, the highest incidence of undernourishment is found in sub-Saharan Africa, where one in every three persons suffers from chronic hunger. It is also noted that in the 21st century, because of decreasing fertility rates, the number of people who have attained 60 years old or more will triple in three out of four developing countries. The total number of older people in developing countries is expected to rise from 8 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent in 2050. This development will put serious strains on human security as people’s ability to move out of poverty and cope with crisis will be undermined. A good performance of an economy in terms of per capita growth may therefore be attributed to a well-developed agricultural sector capital. Hunger has threatened the lives of many people in developing countries. In fact, there is a widespread of hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity despite the fact that there are adequate food resources in Nigeria. The paper therefore investigates the Nigerian government, agricultural development and food security, United Nations Organizations and human security approach, the 7-point agenda of President Yar’ Adua and its effects on agricultural production and food security in Nigeria, synergy

between agricultural development and food security and production of availability of food in deficit countries. The paper further advocates that a major policy implication of this is that concerted effort should be made by policy makers to increase the level of productivity of agricultural sector in Nigeria by improving expenditure on the sector so as to boost the growth of the economy. Since the agricultural sector is the major contributor to GDP in Nigeria which is capable of changing social indicators of the economy, policies aimed at adequate financing of the sector by government in order to boost its output, may be a way forward.

Keywords: Agricultural Development, food production, food security, poverty, 7-point agenda

Introduction

Since the creation or evolution of man, the society has been on dynamic trends for the preservation of life and the improvement of social relationships through an adequate food production. Therefore, the need for man to have an orderly and a well-structured and organized social system aimed at achieving comfort, harmony and peace has been the pre-occupation of modern states. Much as society tries, fundamental challenges have thwarted man's efforts towards the realization of an egalitarian and just society. For instance, Agabi (2013:19) reported that out of 850 million people suffering from hunger worldwide, 98 per cent are located in emerging markets. That is, the Asia-Pacific region has the greatest number (528 million), followed by sub-Saharan Africa (237million). In 2010, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, 112 million (67 million), people live below the poverty line. A significant number of the poor Nigerians do not have sufficient food or calorie intake for their survival.

The East Asia has reduced the prevalence of undernourishment by more than 3 per cent and South Asia by 1.7 per cent annually, but the failure to reduce the absolute number of people that are undernourished remains a cause for concern. In the 1970s, it is said that 37 million people were removed from the ranks of the undernourished while 100 million in the 1980s, but in the 1990s, only 3 million people. What accounts for these millions of food insecure individuals is that food security depends on adequate and stable food availability, access to adequate/appropriate food and good health to ensure that individual consumers enjoy the full-nutritional benefits of available and accessible food. Availability here is a necessary requirement but not adequate to ensure access for effective use (World Development Report, 2008).

Over the years, Nigeria has emerged one of the fastest growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa, with an annual growth rate of 6 per cent

witnessed between 2001 and 2008. Until the current global economic downturn which began to affect the economy tremendously and yet the country had achieved unprecedented macroeconomic stability (UNDP Nigerian Human Development Report, 2008-2009). In fact, one of the contemporary's major challenges is how to feed the world population, particularly in developing countries. Agriculture, for example, contributes about 42 per cent of the Nigeria's GDP and engages over 65 per cent of the country's workforce. The sector is constrained by enormous challenges and also characterized by low output, inefficient and antiquated production tools and infrastructure. Approximately, about 66 per cent of the Nigeria's total land mass of 92.377 million hectares is suitable for agricultural production but half of that unfortunately is not cultivated. The technological inadequacies in standardization and quality control have stunted natural farm produce, rendering it uncompetitive at the local and international markets (Information Section, 2009). Similarly, a recent study conducted by the National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) for example, reveals that about 75 million Nigerians need micro insurance and invariably most of these people are farmers (Agabi, 2013:19).

Nigeria as a country is at the brink of collapse if food security is not guaranteed for its citizens. According to Ahmed (2011:29), many of the Nigerian farmers toil all the days of their lives, come rain and sun to eke a living and feed the nation but their standard of living is still very poor. In spite all the efforts made by the farmers to attain effective food security. Kantiok (2013) observes that it is unthinkable for Nigeria to be classified as one of the poorest countries in the world with about 70 per cent of its population living below the poverty line and on less than two dollars a day. Similarly, Dorayi (2013) notes that Nigeria has a current population of about 180 million in 2013 projected at 3.16 per cent annual increase based on 2006 census figure of 140 million. However, in 1963, Nigeria's population stood at 56 million while it is estimated to rise to 280 million (i.e. double of 2006) population census figure in 2015. Furthermore, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) according to Adeolu and Taiwo (2004) has consistently listed Nigeria among the countries that are technically unable to meet their food needs from rain fed agriculture due to low level inputs. In fact, the devastating effects of desertification and drought on the dry sub-humid and semi-arid agro-ecological zones of Nigeria have made the Nigerian government to embark on massive investment in small-holder irrigation.

In addition, the rapid growing demand for food coupled with seasonal variations, unpredictability and unreliability that have been characterized the pattern of rainfall in the dry sub-humid and semi-arid agro-ecological zones of Nigeria have necessitated the supplementation of rain-fed agriculture with irrigation. The goal of increasing food production and reducing food import

has elicited many programmes and policies at the various levels of government. The first was the establishment of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) in the early 1970s and by the late 1980s; the development of small-scale irrigation systems in Fadama land areas commenced. In 1993, the Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with the World Bank and State Governments started a new programme referred to as *the National Fadama Development Project*. Many reasons have been advanced for the necessity of supplementing rain fed agriculture with irrigation in Nigeria and hence the current investment in the widely acclaimed small-scale or small-holder irrigation practices (Fadama) by the Nigerian government is one effort in this direction (Kudi, Usman, Akpoko and Banta, 2008).

Numerous genetically altered plants are continually being invented, even for difficult regions such as sub-Saharan Africa these new varieties are being expected to increase food production significantly. The most important issue is how these new plants and technologies should be disseminated in regions where undernourishment and poverty are the main problems. Several scientists (Adeolu and Taiwo, 2004; Agabi, 2013) have discussed this dissemination issue and consider that the East Asia's successful Green Revolution during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s should be the model to follow by other countries. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to discuss the Nigerian government, agricultural development and food security, United Nations Organizations and human security approach, the 7-point agenda of President Yar'Adua and its effects on agricultural production and food security in Nigeria, synergy between agricultural development and food security and production of availability of food in deficit countries.

Nigerian Government, Agricultural Development and Food Security

Food security, considered as the access to food at all times by all peoples, is one of the major concerns of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Food demand grows at the same pace as the population increases but because of the modification of the diet in the cities (increasing consumption of rice and wheat among the cereals); part of the demand would have to be met through food imports. Taking a per capita allowance of about 2,200 calories per person a day to meet basic nutritional needs, and after making some allowances for wastage and conversion of grain into protein. Also, it has been observed that about 1 tonne of grain is equivalent per year to meet the basic needs of a typical family of five in Nigeria (IFPRI, 2005).

The most important component of the food basket of a nation is cereals and tubers, which includes rice, maize, guinea corn, millet, sorghum, yam and cassava. Millet, sorghum and maize for instance are produced under rain fed condition; consequently their production is subject to large annual

variations (IFPRI, 2005). More than 70 per cent of the rice cultivated in Nigeria is grown from irrigated farmland. Nonetheless, its production is also subject to variations since the functioning of the Fadama scheme depends on the level of flood as well as the level of precipitation in the area. For instance, projections by the World Bank suggest that the demand for all types of cereals have increased globally by 2.5 per cent a year between 1990 and 2000. These figures are rather conservative for Nigeria and it was estimated that the demand for cereals (especially rice) rose to about 3.5 per cent between 1990 and 2000 before it dropped to about 2.5 per cent between 2000 and 2025 (IFPRI, 2005).

Consequently, the human food requirement consists of four principal sources namely; water, agricultural crops, livestock and fisheries. Essentially, the demand for food depends on population and the dietary habits/per capita daily calorie intake of the people under consideration. On the other hand, the food requirement of a nation depends on an additional factor like food import and export balance. There are basically three ways to produce this food requirement and these are rain-fed agriculture, irrigated agriculture and food import. In all cases, water is the most important determinant to increase food production and rural development in Nigeria.

In recent times, the global focus has been on food security and poverty alleviation. This is in response to the increasing threats of food evident in the fact that over 70 per cent of the populations live below 1 US dollar per day. To achieve the millennium development goal of halving the proportion of hungry people by 2015, it was projected that about 22 million people must achieve food security every year (IFPRI, 2005). The achievement of this target is important in reducing hunger and poverty (FAO, 2005). The lingering poverty incidence among other things has led to low agricultural production and low productivity among the farmers. This however, has ultimately limited their traditional role in economic development.

United Nations Organization and Human Security Approach

In 1999, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security was established by the Japanese government in collaboration with the United Nations Organization. The goal was to provide funding to projects that seek to enhance human security around the world. Since there was no conceptual framework and guidelines available for the trust fund to follow in the beginning, they adopted a more operational approach and most of the funding was directed towards development projects (Human Security Unit, 2006:1). The trust fund later adopted the definition of human security presented by the Commission on Human Security in their report that it seeks:

To protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhances human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms-freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity (Human Security Unit, 2006:1).

Their understanding of human security had some contributions to the one earlier on presented by UNDP in 1994, one was to supplement freedom from want and fear with freedom to take action on one's own behalf. The concrete human security framework proposed by the commission included two dimensions; *protection* which refers to national and international norms, processes and institutions that shield people from critical and pervasive threats and *empowerment* that emphasizes people as actors in defining and implementing their vital freedoms and the goal is to enable people to enhance their resilience to difficult conditions (Human Security Unit, 2006:1).

In 2003, half of the world population lacked access to sufficient sanitation and one in every fifth person didn't have access to safe water. In effect, it was estimated that 1.7 million people die every year from diseases connected to unsafe water and sanitation. Failure to meet the needs for fresh water imposes great risks on societies, especially in developing countries. There are immense human costs as well as economic, social and political risks if people do not have access to adequate safe water and food security. Therefore, electricity and water scarcity are among the most sensitive public service issues for which members of the public hold governments accountable. The commission has argued that in few decades, the world population requires about 20 per cent more fresh water than today. Any analysis of human security must therefore address this essential matter (Commission on Human Security, 2003:15-16).

It was further noted that, in many developing countries, a large chunk of the population have access to natural resources such as forests for fuel, land for farming and water for fishing. When these resources are threatened because of environmental change, degradation or disasters, the people's security is also threatened. For instance, the Sudanese participants in a Commission on Human Security notes that *one of the root causes of human insecurity is ecological or resource degradation and that without ecological stability people cannot have food security* (Commission on Human Security, 2003:16). While the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade sees *human security* as a freedom from fear and *human*

development is considered as a freedom from want. It is argued that human security plays a central role in Japanese foreign policy. Their definition is broader than the one adopted by Canada which thus holds that:

Human security comprehensively covers all the menaces that threaten human survival, daily life and dignity - for example environmental degradation, violations of human rights, transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, refugees, poverty, anti-personnel landmines and other infectious diseases such as AIDS and strengthens efforts to confront these threats (Commission on Human Security, 2003:16).

Data in Table 1 below show that *economic security* requires a stable basic income from productive and remunerative work. Another possibility could be the income generated from public finance safety net. While *food security* means that all people at all times have sufficient economic and physical access to basic food. This means that people have an ‘entitlement’ to food to either buy, grow or take advantage of a public food distribution system. *Health insecurity* is a major threat to people all over the world especially in developing countries where millions of people die every year of infectious and parasitic diseases. Health security is about providing tools to fight these diseases and ultimately decrease the number of deaths. *Environmental security* means that human beings rely much on a healthy physical environment - sometimes environmental disasters can threaten the environment.

Table 1: Possible Types of Human Security Threats

Type of Security	Main Threats (Examples)
Economic security	Persistent poverty, unemployment
Food security	Hunger, famine
Health security	Deadly infectious diseases, unsafe food, malnutrition, lack of access to basic health care
Environmental security	Environmental degradation, resource depletion, natural disasters, pollution
Personal security	Physical violence, crime, terrorism, domestic violence, child labour
Community security	Inter-ethnic, religious and other identity based tensions
Political security	Political repression, human rights abuses

Source: Adapted from UNDP new dimensions of human security, 1994.

These disasters are often resulted from the degradation of local ecosystem and global system. Environmental security is also about minimizing the strains put on earth and thus the risk associated with natural

disasters as well as severe humanitarian consequences. While *personal security* is understood as that which occur as a result of physical violence and it is the most significant of all the seven types of security presented in Table 1. For instance, threats to personal security can take many forms namely; threats from the state (physical torture), threats from other states (war), threats from other groups of people (ethnic tension), threats from individuals or gangs against other individuals or gangs (crime, street violence). Others include threats directed against women (rape, domestic/gender-based violence, divorce, and gender discrimination), threats directed at children based on their vulnerability and dependence (child abuse/child labour) and threats to self (suicide, drug abuse, prostitution). *Community security* means that people gain security from their membership of a social group whether it is a family, a community, an organization, a racial or an ethnic group. Being a part of any of these groups provides the individual with an identity and a reassuring set of values. Some of these groups can also provide physical and material support such as protection of its weaker members. Threats to community security could be things such as discriminating of specific ethnic groups and thereby limiting their access to resources and opportunities such as social services from the state or jobs. *Political security* is about people's basic human rights and the right to live in a society without state repression. According to UNDP (1994), the priority a government gives to its military and paramilitary personnel is a good indicator for political freedom. Since the state sometimes use them to repress their own people. The ratio between the two can be seen in how much the government of a country spends on the military and paramilitary outfits in proportion to social spending, which will give a good picture of the state's political security.

The 7-Point Agenda of President Yar A'dua and its Effects on the Agricultural Production and Food Security in Nigeria

The 7-point agenda of the Yar A'dua administration are as follows:

1. **Power and Energy:** The infrastructural reform is geared towards sufficient and adequate power supply to ensure the Nigeria's ability to develop as a modern economy and an industrial nation by the year 2015.
2. **Food Security:** This reform is primarily agrarian based. The emphasis here is on the development of modern technology, research, financial injection into research, production and development of agricultural inputs to revolutionize the agricultural sector leading to a 5-10 fold increase in yield and production. This will result to massive domestic and commercial outputs and technological knowledge transfer to farmers.
3. **Wealth Creation:** By virtue of its reliance on revenue from non-renewal oil, Nigeria has not yet develops industrially. This reform focuses on wealth creation through diversified production especially in the agricultural and solid mineral sector. It requires the citizens of Nigeria to work hard.

4. **Transport Sector:** The transportation sector in Nigeria with its poor roads networks is an inefficient means of mass transit of people and goods. With a goal of a modernized-industrialized Nigeria, it is mandatory that the country develops its transport sector just like what the government has already started.
5. **Land Reforms:** While hundreds of billions of dollars have been lost through unused government-owned landed asset, changes in the land laws and the emergence of land reforms will optimize the Nigeria's growth through the release of lands for commercialized farming and other large-scale business by the private sector. The final result will ensure improvements and boosts the production and wealth creation initiatives.
6. **Security:** An unfriendly security climate precludes both external and internal investment into the nation. Thus, security is seen as not only a constitutional requirement but also as a necessary infrastructure for development of the modern Nigerian economy. With its particular needs, the Niger Delta security issue would be the primary focus, marshaled not with physical policing or military security, but through honest and accurate dialogue between the people and the federal government. Although, there is more to this in the contemporary Nigerian society.
7. **Education:** The two-fold reforms in the educational sector will ensure firstly the minimum acceptable international standards of education for all. When it is achieved, a strategic educational development plan will ensure excellence in both the tutoring and learning of skills in science and technology by students who will be seen as the future innovators and industrialists of Nigeria. This reform is achievable through massive support of the educational sector.

For instance, back to memory lane, in May 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo took a radical departure from his predecessors and focused mainly on consolidating democracy. Thereafter, he concentrated on reforms in the banking and telecommunication sectors. He also initiated the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS). These policies, combined together, have been widely acclaimed as successful as they have had some appreciable impact on other sectors of the economy. Another policy reversal was introduced by President Umaru Yar'Adua in May, 2007. His policy package tagged "the 7-Point Agenda" identified aforementioned seven sectors of the economy which are primarily considered as the engine room to the transformation of the entire economy. With his demise, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the then Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria took over as the substantive President and maintained the reform agenda of his predecessor although with some modifications in the long run.

Food use translates food security into nutritional security. Malnutrition has significant economic consequences, leading to estimated individual productivity losses equivalent to 10 per cent of lifetime earnings and gross domestic product (GDP) losses of about 2-3 per cent in the worst affected countries (Nigeria inclusive). Perhaps, malnutrition is not merely a consequence of limited access to calories. Food must not only be available

and accessible, but also be of the right quality (balanced diet) and diversity (in terms of energy and micro-nutrients), be safely prepared and consumed by a healthy body, as disease hinders the body's ability to turn food consumption into adequate nutrition. For instance, lack of dietary diversity and poor diet quality could lead to micro-nutrient malnutrition or hidden hunger, even when energy intakes are sufficient to use by individuals. Hidden hunger can cause illness, blindness and premature death as well as impair the cognitive development of survivors. Consequently, this has implication to the Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda in the country. Undoubtedly, you will agree with this paper that in 2007, the President Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda placed more emphasis on food security in Nigeria. In spite of this, the agricultural sector has failed to keep pace with the country's rapid population growth. Interestingly, Nigeria was once an exporter of food but today relies on imports to sustain its growing population. Although there was an increased in the production of horticulture products and livestock by extension has been agriculture's main avenue to improve the diet quality of Nigerians.

Agricultural Development and Food Security: A Synergy

In the mid-1970s, there was a rapid increased in prices of commodities which caused a global food crisis, therefore food security emerged as a concept of topical discussion. At that time, people attention focused first on food's availability but later moved to food access, food use and most recently to human right to adequate food. It is argued that the commonly accepted definition of food security is thus when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The chronically food insecure never have enough to eat while the seasonally food insecure fall below adequate consumption levels while the transitory food insecure fall below the food consumption threshold as a result of an economic or natural disaster like drought, sometimes with long-lasting consequences (World Development Report, 2008). It is noted that:

Today, the world has more than enough food to feed everyone, yet 850 million are food insecure. Achieving food security requires adequate food availability, access and use. Agriculture plays a key role in providing: food availability (globally, nationally and locally) in some agriculture-based countries, which is an important source of income to purchase food with high nutritional status (WDR, 2008).

Consequently, investment in the agricultural sector is important to food security. The channels are complex and multiple. For instance, rising productivity increases rural income and lower food prices, making food more

accessible to the poor. Other investments such as improved irrigation and drought-tolerant crops reduce price and income variability by mitigating the impact of a drought. Productivity gains are keys to food security in countries with foreign exchange shortage or limited infrastructure to import food like Nigeria. The same scenario applies to households with poor access to food markets. Nutritionally, improved crops give access to better diets, in particular through bio-fortification that also improves crop nutrient content. The contributions that agriculture makes to food security need to be complemented by medium term programmes to raise incomes of the poor as well as insurance and safety nets, including food aid that will protect the chronic and transitory poor (World Development Report, 2008).

Production of Availability of Food in Deficit Countries

The price increases in the mid-1970s world food crisis were exacerbated by low foreign exchange reserves, limiting food imports in many food-deficit countries. This rise in prices prompted some countries to look inward and strive for food self-sufficiency through domestic production. But today with deeper international markets, lower real prices and more countries with convertible exchange rates, trade can stabilize food availability and prices for most countries (WDR, 2008). Furthermore, it is observed that most countries have diversified their export base and increased their capacity to import. However, food availability is still a major concern in some agriculture-based countries whereby many of them have declined domestic production per capita of food staples. For instance, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia all had negative per capita annual growth rates in staple food between 1.0 and 1.7 per cent from 1995-2004 (WDR, 2008).

In addition, staple food production in many agriculture-based countries is largely rain fed and experiences large fluctuations caused by climatic variability. In Sudan, for example, the coefficient of variation of domestic staple food production is 25 per cent. This means that a shortfall of at least 25 per cent of average production occurs every six years. And many other countries like Niger and Malawi at 18 per cent; Rwanda at 15 per cent while Burkina Faso, Chad, Kenya, Uganda and the Republic of Yemen above 10 per cent have similarly high coefficients (WDR, 2008).

Stagnation or decline in domestic production and large fluctuations clearly raise a potential problem of food availability at the national level. It is believed that this problem could be addressed through imports in many countries of the world including Nigeria. On the other hand, in a country, however, the main staples consumption has a low degree of tradability and is hardly traded internationally. Poor infrastructure imposes high costs for food to reach isolated areas, even when the capital and coastal cities are well

served by international markets. Beyond tradability issue with adequate infrastructure and internationally traded staples, low foreign exchange availability often limits the capacity to import. Ethiopia for example would have imported an average of 8 per cent of its staple food consumption (i.e. assuming no food aid) to maintain current levels. Additionally, a 9 per cent shortfall in production occur an average of every six year, which could only be compensated by a doubling of imports. But in the absence of food aid, Ethiopia spent 16 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings on food imports, leaving little scope for the necessary increases in imports (WDR, 2008).

Almost all the agriculture-based countries are net importers of food staples, importing an average 14 per cent of their total consumption in about 10 years, but reaching high dependency levels of more than 40 per cent in Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and the Republic of Yemen. With such levels of dependency and food imports often representing more than 20 per cent of the available foreign exchange, the world price fluctuations place additional strain on import capacity and therefore making domestic food availability. World price variability remains high, with a coefficient of variation of around 20 per cent. Due to the low price elasticity of demand for food staples and the thinness of markets, problems of food availability (from low domestic production or lack of imports) translate into large spikes in domestic prices and reductions in real incomes of poor consumers (many of whom are farmers). Even in countries that engage in trade, transportation and marketing costs result in a large wedge between import and export parity within which domestic prices can fluctuate without triggering trade. Price variability, which is already high even in capital cities with mostly liberalized markets, is exacerbated in inland and more remote regions (WDR, 2008).

But for most of the malnourished, the lack of access to food is a greater problem than food availability. Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen famously wrote that *starvation is a matter of some people not having enough food to eat, and not a matter of there being not enough food to eat*. The irony is that most of the food insecure people live in the rural areas where food is produced, *yet they are net food buyers rather than sellers*. Poverty constrains their access to food in the marketplace. According to the UN Hunger Task Force, about half of those suffering from hunger are smallholders; a fifth are landless; and a tenth are agro-pastoralists, fisher-folk and forest users; the remaining fifth live in urban areas. Today, agriculture's ability to generate income for the poor, particularly women, is more important for food security than its ability to increase local food supplies. Women, more than men, spend their income on food. In Guatemala, for example, the amount spent on food in households whose profits from non-traditional agricultural exports were controlled by women and double that of households whose men

controlled the profits. India has also moved from food deficits to food surpluses, reducing poverty significantly and reaching a per capita income higher than that in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it remains home to 210 million undernourished people and 39 per cent of the world's underweight children (WDR, 2008). However, according to Chitambar (1973:15):

Twenty-four years after India has gained national independence, it encountered tremendous task of development of a widely diverse country in which acute shortage of food was a chief problem. It had to cope with this problem in the face of a rapidly increasing population and a rate of agricultural production which was among the lowest in the world.

It is suffice to state that Bangladesh, India and Nepal occupy three of the top four positions in the global ranking of underweight children. Ethiopia is the fourth, with the same incidence of underweight children as India. Many believe that the inferior status of women in South Asia has to some extent offset the food security benefits of agriculture-led poverty reduction (WDR, 2008).

Recommendations

The paper suggests that the Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda should be resuscitated by successive government in Nigeria for its visionary statements for the country food security sustainability.

It is recommended that when nutrition or calorie intake is enhanced among Nigerians, their capacity to participate in all spheres of political, economic and social life will be guaranteed and they will equally move out of chronic poverty.

The paper further suggests that unequal distribution of food, environmental degradation, natural disasters and conflicts that affect the Nigeria's citizens' access to food should be monitored properly.

The paper also recommends that the Nigerian government should double her entire infrastructure for food production, health services, educational facilities, water supply, housing and energy to maintain today's low standard of living in the country where both abundant mineral and natural resources are found.

The paper advocates that concerted effort should be made by policy makers to increase the level of productivity in the agricultural sector in Nigeria by improving its expenditure so as to boost the growth of the economy. Since the agricultural sector contributes to GDP in Nigeria which is capable of changing social indicators of the economy, while policies aimed

at adequate financing the sector by government at all levels is crucial in order to boost its output.

Conclusion

Conclusively, food security is important to human security because a country's ability to procure and distribute her adequate food resources is to avoid hunger and malnutrition amongst the populace. This is vital as food insecurity undermine a person's dignity and well-being in the contemporary Nigerian society. The President Yar'Adua's 7-point agenda is a suitable policy option in the right direction for Nigeria's food security problem now and in the near future as well as the paper challenged the country to follow the East Asia's successful Green Revolution model during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. This is with the hope that the agriculture sector will continue to play a central role in tackling the problem of food security in Nigeria. The sector can maintain and increase global food production and ensuring food availability in the country. Agriculture is also regarded as the primary means to generate income for the poor and secure their access to food both in the rural and urban areas. Besides, improved crop varieties can enhance diet quality, diversity and foster the link between food and nutritional security. The paper further concludes that if the farmers are happy, their productivity will be improved and Nigeria would also be in a better position to achieve self-sufficiency in food production.

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