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## PUBLIC POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN TARABA STATE

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### **Abstract**

The attainment of food sufficiency and security *vis-à-vis* improving the living standard of the rural dwellers are some of the goals of Taraba Agricultural Development Programme (TADP). This study assessed the impact of TADP on the quality of lives of the rural residents in Taraba State. Data used in this study were basically secondary in nature. Using the Elite theory as a framework of analysis, the study examined the challenges of Taraba policy makers in the area of agriculture for sustainable development and discovered that despite the good intention and policy design of the TADP, the programme has not achieved its set objectives due to poor funding, understaff, corruption and mismanagement of public funds amongst others. Arising from the above therefore, the study suggested the urgent need of the government to increase the funding of the agency; develop a more pragmatic strategy of ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of the State's scarce resources and employ additional extension service staff, so that the agency can attain its goal of food sufficiency and security in the State.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, Sustainable development, Policy, Programme,

### **Introduction:**

The development of Africa, particularly Nigeria has been characterized by economic crisis which is essentially as a result of inadequate policies and programmes that would diversify economic activities, particularly agriculture. The relationship between agriculture and development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. According to Okpaga (2012:1), by the time Nigeria achieved independence in 1960, agriculture was the most preferred, vibrant and promising venture. As of then, agriculture accounted for about two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Suffice to say

that sustained economic development cannot be achieved without economic growth. Colonialism had encouraged the production of cash crops which was needed as raw materials for growing British industries which were greatly devastated by the economic depression of 1930. Today, Nigeria is facing a dual gap in agriculture; inability to meet domestic food requirements and an inability to export surplus for economic benefits which would implicitly improve the well-being of her citizenry, particularly those living in rural areas. This point was made clearer by Otedola and Etumu (2013:3) where they opined that invariably, reducing poverty, improving nutrition and the general well-being of the population would imply improving the livelihood of the majority and hinges critically on the performance of the agricultural sector.

The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in Olibiri, Nigeria in 1968 and the subsequent oil boom gave Nigeria a domineering status in the larger society, so much so that many believed that the oil boom provided the government with an opportunity for revamping the agricultural sector. Unfortunately, within a decade however, agricultural output in Nigeria declined, leaving Nigeria as a major importer of food to augment local supplies which is barely enough for domestic consumption. It is therefore, safe to say that the petroleum sector caused fundamental changes in the development of agriculture in Nigeria.

In 1976, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) programme was declared by the Murtala regime and consolidated by the Obasanjo regime; it was a national agricultural extension and mobilization program instituted as a measure for achieving self-sufficiency in food crop production and to inspire the new generation to return to farming. Since then, several policies have been formulated and implemented by successive governments in order to boost agricultural development. But sadly, these policies have not solved the issue of food scarcity, created employment for the ever growing population, and reduced poverty (especially among the rural dwellers). Policy thrusts and objectives however, are aimed at food security, import substitution, job creation and economic diversification. Regrettably, the aforementioned policy issues have not been addressed. Why is this trend continuing and what needs to be done, who should do what for the agricultural sector to make meaningful contribution to the economy? In an attempt to answer the above questions therefore, this paper intends to clarify the concept of agriculture, corruption, development, incrementalism, policy and poverty. It will also examine policy formulation and decision making theories, discuss the various agricultural policies in Nigeria under different administrations, analyze the failures and adverse effects they have had on agricultural development and finally, suggest measures for the formulation and implementation of new and better policies that would enhance agricultural

development in Nigeria.

### **Problem Statement**

The development in agriculture in Taraba State is characterized by Economic crisis which essentially is the result of inadequate structural transformation aimed at improving rural Economy. The small farmers' holders in the rural area particularly women and youth have not been involved in agricultural activities. There is increase in the number of farm families without a corresponding supports of inputs such as fertilizers, and agro-chemicals. The rural areas are completely cut-off from the basic infrastructural facilities – infrastructures such as motor-roads, irrigation and storage facilities are insufficient. Thus, making it difficult for agricultural products from rural areas to gets to the urban centres. Rural farmers sells produce at the point when poor pricing prevails. This is responsible for the pathetic state of agricultural development in the state.

Worse still, the ₦200, 000 impress and the 3.5% budget allocation to the Taraba Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) over the years is in contrast to the Maputo Declaration of 2003 which recommends allocation of 10% of annual budget to the agricultural sector. The agency staff poor working condition have prevented it from achieving its objectives to reach out to 288,000 farm families with various well researched and proven technologies using Village Extension Agents (VEAs) and adopting the Unified Agro - Extension System (UAEs) approach. Poverty, hunger, unemployment and lack of basic needs of life have been on the increase at alarming proportion. This situation calls for serious intervention by stakeholders.

Several agricultural policies and programmes have been formulated and implemented with a view to addressing this enormous challenge. But unfortunately, these have not remedied the shortages of fund nor improved rural conditions of small farmers' holders in Taraba state.

The Taraba Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) has been in existence for over 31 years now, studies to access the impact of the agency on the quality of life of the rural farmers who are over 75% of the population needed to be explored. It is on this basis that the study will be undertaken.

### **Methodology**

The data used in this study were collected from government publications such as the Central Bank of Nigeria, The National Bureau of Statistic, Journals, Internet Materials and Other relevant publications. The data were analysed using the method of context analysis.

### **Conceptual Discourse**

Policy according to Anderson (1984:9) is a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Dye (1980) had on his part, considered policy as anything the government chooses to do or not to do. This implicitly means everything about government constitutes policy – which cannot be true in real life situation. To Jacob (2010:2), policy is a guide to action or decisions of the people, they are directives issued from a higher authority and provides a continuous framework for the conduct of individuals in the state.

From the above, policies are different levels of government are usually formulated in order to deal with issues affecting the generality of the people, taking into cognizance the availability of resources at the disposal of the policy maker(s).

Policy according to Dlakwa (2009:7-8) however, refers to a legally sanctioned statement of intentions by government following a painstakingly rigorous process of decision making as well as the crafting of an institutional framework through which these intentions could be accomplished so as to meet the yearning and aspirations of the citizenry. Needless is to engage us into the debate as to whether policy is the exclusive property of government or that of the majority of the people. But policies, whether government of people driven, deals with variety of issues that centers on defense, health, education, environment, foreign and agriculture which is the main focus of this study – to examine the sequence through which the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies in Nigeria followed.

The major concern of this paper however, is to look at how political changes that have taken place in the country shaped agricultural policies. To put differently, the paper is concerned with how the formulation and implementation of different agricultural policies affects agricultural development in Nigeria.

### **Concept of Sustainable Development**

There is the tendency of misconstruing what is meant by 'sustainable development and growth'. These two terminologies mean two different things. While growth refers to annual or marginal increases or unit increase, development refers to the quality of living or quality of life as well as standard of living. Development means progress; whereas, growth means incremental measurement with respect to say population, family size, crop or export (Sule, 2000:9). There can be growth without development but there cannot be development without growth.

Development is a process of change, advancement or improvement over a period of

time. A society, according to Adullahi (2012:94) cannot be said to experience development if it cannot provide basic needs for its citizens. Evidently, a global consensus has emerged on the need and rationale for replacing development with 'sustainable development'. This became more urgent since the Burthland report, known as 'Our Common Future' by the World Commission for Environment and Development in 1987.

Sustainable development according to the WCED (1987:43), is any form of development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. Sustainable development therefore, emphasizes that development should lead to;

- Poverty reduction (with people participating in decision making that affects their lives);
- Job creation and sustainable livelihood;
- Women empowerment and effective participation; and
- Environmental protection

In order words, sustainable development promotes any form of development which is pro-poor, pro-job, pro-women, and pro-environment (UNDP/NPC, 1997).

Arising from the above, it is pertinent to note that development, particularly of agriculture whether at the national or global level, will require active participation in order to improve the well-being of the people, address the issues of food crisis, provide job opportunities to the over-growing population, and lastly, reduce poverty.

The next issue that comes to mind is the question of policy formulation and decision making theories as it affects agricultural development in Nigeria. This is discussed in the next subsection.

#### **Theoretical perspective – Elite Theory**

The elite theory has been developed by Gaetano Mosca, Robert Mitchel, Ortega Gasset and Vilfredo Pareto, as a compliment to conflict theory and pluralism.

The theory believes that, contrary to the believe that pluralism has inbuilt mechanism for ensuring equity in the share of power and influence in the society, in reality public policy is by and large the mirror image of the ruling class' (the elites') interest. Vilfredo Pareto in his book "Mind and Society", argued that "persons of ability actively seek to confirm and aggrandize their social position". The elite theory focuses our attention on the role of leadership in policy formulation and the fact that's in any political system,

public policy can be regarded as reflecting the values and preferences of the governing elites.

This, the crux of the argument of the elite theory is that public policy is not determined by demands and actions of the generality of the people but rather, by few individuals whose selfish preferences are carried into effect by public officials and agencies. As would be seen in the next section, the different agricultural policies in Nigeria are elites' driven as inputs, most especially from the rural dwellers are not taken into consideration during policy formulation and implementation. Elite theory seeks to describe the nature and character of power relations in the contemporary society. As Anyebe (2018:27) rightly observed, the citizenry or the masses are apathetic and ill-informed and do not determine or influence policy through their demands or actions.

From the foregoing explanations, we can say that these political elites include the "who is who" in business such as Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Mike Adenuga, multi-national cooperation like Shell, Coca-Cola, PZ, MTN and others. Traditional elites include the high profiled traditional rulers in the country – Emirs, Chiefs, Obas, Ezes, Aku-Uka, Tor-Tiv and so on. Religion elites include the Chief Imams, Bishops, etc; bureaucratic elites comprising of top civil servants and technocrats that are saddled with the responsibilities of implementing government policies and programmes; while academic elites include professors, chief lecturers, doctors and other senior colleagues in the ivory tower, poly technics and other educational institution. Military heads including Generals are not left out; they are regarded as military elites.

The theory posits that this few powerful and influential individuals are the power elites who determine public policies, not the powerless masses. While these claims may not be completely true in developed countries, it is completely true in developing countries, especially in Nigeria where corruption and other undemocratic attitudes are being celebrated at the highest level. We have seen how the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) which is intended to create a linkage between anchor companies and small holder farmers (SHFs) has been ridiculed by corruption. The programme thrust of the ABP is provision of farm inputs in kind and cash (for farm labor) to small holder farmers to boost production (CBN, 2016:1). The small holder farmers are mostly of low income and have been subjected to all forms of exploitation by the large scale processors. This is to day the broad objective of the programme is undermined.

However, in order to create safety for themselves in manipulating public policies to their advantage, the elites permit the gradual movement of non-elites to the elite class, what Gaetano Mosca referred to as "the circulation of elites". The foregoing analysis shows how the elites in Nigeria hide under the guise of religious and ethnic

affiliations in policy formation and implementation so as to pursue their selfish interests.

From the above perspective, it can be implied that there is food crisis in the country as most people especially the low income earners cannot purchase food to satisfy their hunger. There is hunger in the land now, poverty is visible, most especially among the rural dwellers – unemployment is high as shall be seen, all attributed to poor formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and programmes.

### **National Agricultural Policy; An Overview**

Successive governments have attempted to formulate agricultural policies for Nigeria as well as made efforts to eradicate poverty, create employment for the teeming population and ensure that agriculture reclaims its lost glory as the engine room of the Nigerian economy, but unfortunately, poverty incidence and unemployment have remained high as we shall see in our discussion. For convenience, we shall examine the policy thrust of the government from 1999 to date.

Since 1999 Nigeria has embarked on an ambitious reform programmes. The thrust of the policy is to address the issue of poverty by allowing the poor and most vulnerable sections of the society to achieve sustained livelihood. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy was initiated by Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The key elements of this development strategy included poverty eradication, employment generation, wealth creation and value orientation. NEEDS provided help to the agricultural industry, small and medium scale enterprises and the oil and gas sector. Government as at that time wanted to achieve at least a 6% annual growth in agricultural GDP and reach 95% self-sufficiency in food.

Accordingly, the administration established a poverty alleviation fund to boost its poverty programme. Anyebe (2018:182) started this; “a staggering sum of N10 billion was initially committed to this fund that was aimed at creating 6 million jobs, thereby, tackling poverty through employment of the poor. Yesefu, in Anyebe (2018:183) painfully observed; “the amazing initiative was generally well conceived and applauded. But there was no indication of any national plan within which the programme would be executed”. The programme itself was characterized by over-centralization, unsustainable design, irregular payment, lack of monitoring logistics and both high and low-level corruption (Abdullahi, 2008).

Sustainable agricultural development cannot be achieved without a well-formulated policy. The first national policy in agriculture was adopted in 1988 and was expected to remain valid until the year 2020. Agriculture was among the 7 points agenda of the Yar'adua administration – not different from other policies; as it is also designed to

achieve overall agricultural growth and development. The government approved the mobilization of a 200 billion naira bond for the development of commercial agriculture in the country. The bond was to provide credit facilities to farmers at less than 10% interest on the loan to be subsidized by the CBN. This is intended to enhance food security in the country while creating three million jobs in 3 years. The issue of food sufficiency, unemployment and poverty remains unsolved despite the colossal amount of money injected into these programmes.

The Buhari Administration has made some concerted efforts to address the challenges faced by the agricultural sector through banning the importation of some foods that could be produced in the country and has also encouraged farmers, most especially the rural dwellers to increase their production capacity.

Let me briefly examine the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) to see if the said objectives have been achieved. The broad objective of the ABP is to create economic linkage between small holder farmers and reputable large-scale processors. Other objectives include;

- a. Create new generation of farmers/entrepreneurs and employment
- b. Deepen the cashless policy and financial inclusion
- c. Reduce the level of poverty among small holder farmers
- d. Assist small holder farmers to grow farms subsistent to commercial production level.

As laudable as these objectives were, attaining the desired result was stunted. Briefcase farmers who posed as real farmers colluded with some NIRSAL officials to defraud the programme. Farmers association, e.g. All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), and the Nigerian Agricultural Commodity Association (NACA), petitioned the programme for abandoning its main objective. There is also automatic debiting from disbursed loans and non-access to fund (inability to withdraw).

From the foregoing long history of the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies, it shows that despite a plethora of them, the issue of poverty, unemployment and acute food shortage remains unresolved.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 40% of the total population or almost 83 million people live below the country's poverty line. Unemployment rate is currently at 32.5%. The gap between the rich and the poor is alarming.

Between October and December 2020, agriculture contributed to 26.95% of the



total GDP, an increase by almost 1% compared to the same period in 2019. This is just economic growth, not development which is the focus of this paper; because such increase in GDP has not translated to uplifting the living standard of the people, created employment opportunities or reduced poverty.

It may not be necessary to detail all the constraints to the implementation of agricultural programmes in Nigeria but we shall highlight a few of them.

### **Constraints to the Implementation of Agricultural Programmes in Nigeria**

A closer look at the various agricultural programmes in Nigeria indicates certain weaknesses which impede policy formulation and implementation. The following are some of the impediments to agricultural policies in Nigeria;

- a. Lack of synergy between and among MDA's and other non-state actors in respect to the implementation of women and youth programmes.
- b. Political instability
- c. Absence of rural infrastructure to support primary processing
- d. History of non-involvement of LGAs in policy execution due to implicit issues between States and LGAs.
- e. Limited access to finance
- f. Poor management of storage facilities, including silos
- g. Sluggish growth and development of rural economy to support rural development efforts.
- h. Poor and irregular funding for agricultural research and extension
- i. Departure in the programmes of universities of agriculture from their statutory mandate in relation to the programme of FMARD.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

This paper examines the various agricultural policies in Nigeria and concludes that the inability of the policy makers to implement appropriately the agricultural policies they formulated resulted in the crisis of development in the sector. The failure of the policies can be attributed to the neglect of the sector in favor of oil, corruption and failure to actively involve rural dwellers in the process of formulation and implementation of the policies. Agriculture plays a significant role in the economic growth and development process of any nation. Judging from the finding however, the

study or proffers the following recommendations;

- a. Government must as a matter of necessity ensure that the target beneficiaries of any programme are actively involved in the process of policy formulation and implementation.
- b. Government should ensure that there is political stability so as to provide a conducive atmosphere for agricultural activities to thrive.
- c. Agricultural research institutions should be funded for effective implementation of new knowledge, as well as expose younger generations to lofty potentials in the agricultural sector.
- d. There is need for policy reforms to target poor small holder farmers by eliminating middlemen.

On a final note, Nigeria needs political will in order to stem the incidences of policy somersault, mismanagement, inconsistency and corruption, which is the bane of the country's agricultural crisis.

#### **Limitation of the Study and guide for future society**

The research was calculated using the secondary sources of data. Qualitative research need to be conducted to empirically state the challenges of TADP. It is suggested that a similar study should be conducted in other agricultural agencies in the state. The study was also constrained by the accuracy of records in TADP as most their records were destroyed during the '#EndSARS Protest'.

Future studies can make of use of other methods of analysis such as stochastic Frontier production analysis or the linear programming

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