

Mamani Bitrus Moresu, Student Participant
Washington High School, IRIS Exchange Student
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Agriculture in Development: Food Security in an Era of Increased Demand

Introduction

“God never intended for some of his children to live in inordinate, superfluous wealth while others live in abject, deadening poverty, and he has left enough (people) and to spare in this world for that purpose.” These are the wise words of Martin Luther King Jr. The big question is who are the enough people God has left? It is you and I. We have the chance of changing the world, how do I change the world? (What is it that the world needs that I can do?). This is the question that comes to my mind when ever hear the word CHANGE. I believe everyone in the world has a potential that can bring change in the world. How to use it is what many don't know, and they reach death without realizing their potential. Improper use of potential is what is causing problems in the world. Problem of improper use of our potentials is greatly affecting developing countries like Nigeria.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria lies on the Atlantic coast of central Africa and is bordered by Niger and Chad to the north, Benin to the west and Cameroon to the south. The country covers an area of 923,678 kilometer square with more than 130 million inhabitants, with more than 500 indigenous languages. The three large and highly developed ethnic languages are: Hausa (Fulani), Igbo, and Yoruba. The two main religions are: Islam, and Christianity. Both religious and ethnic tensions jeopardize economic and social progress in Nigeria. These tensions are fuelled by the pressure of population, competition, for land and resources, and rising unemployment and poverty.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Nigeria economy accounting for 45 percent of gross domestic products (GDP) and providing employment to over 60 percent of the labor force. Nigeria has plentiful agricultural lands and natural resources, in particular oil and gas. With its wealth of resources, Nigeria has the potential to build a prosperous economy, reduce poverty significantly, and provide health, and education, infrastructure services its population needs. Yet poverty remains widespread and Nigeria is among the 20 poorest countries in the world.

Poverty and violence are closely interconnected. Both religious and ethnic tensions continue to brew in different parts of Nigeria, erupting into outbreaks of violence and leading in turn to a situation of escalating poverty and malnutrition. The move toward political liberation has allowed militants from religious and ethnic groups to express their frustration more freely, and with increasing violence. Thousands have died over the past years in clashes between different ethnic and religious groups and separatist bids for independence.

Neglect of rural infrastructure has also reduced the profitability of producing for the market. The Nigeria road network is one of the least developed in sub-Saharan Africa. The poor tends to live in isolated villages that can become virtually inaccessible during the rainy seasons. When there is a post-harvest marketable surplus, it is not always easy to reach the markets. Limited accessibility has also cut off small scale farmers from sources of inputs, equipment and new technology. Crop yields are low because farmers have to cope with diminishing soil fertility. The situation is aggravated by the fact that

many farmers have access only to small parcels of land for cultivation. Neglect of rural infrastructure has also reduced the profitability of producing for the markets.

Government, groups and individuals have already begun the fight against poverty. Governmental organizations like Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Food Program, World Bank, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's agricultural development program and lots more. Billions of dollars had been spent by these individuals and organization on this fight, and many lives have been saved through that.

Nigeria, at independence in 1960, was largely a producer and net exporter of primarily products. The six major agricultural products then were: cocoa, rubber, palm oil, groundnut, cotton, and palm kernel. Although mining and quarrying activities existed, these were of negligible percentage and never counted for the economy as a whole. In other words agriculture products and raw materials constituted the vast majority of foreign exchange earned for the country. Specifically, Nigeria exported agricultural goods was 69.4 percent of its GDP for the year 1963/1964 comprising the six afore mentioned agricultural commodities.

The trend of having agriculture as the main foreign earner for Nigeria stopped in the early 1970 when the country was suddenly awash with petrol dollars arising from the quadruple increase in the price of oil in the world market. It became the major contributor to the GDP, and also a major foreign earner to the country. There was substantial increase in oil production accompany by a sharp increase in the global market price of high-graded crude oil from a low price of \$38 per barrel in October 1973, to a sky rocketing price \$14.7 per barrel in January 1974. This trend continued till 1981 when the price of crude oil attained a high level of \$38.77 per barrel; within the same period, total revenue from oil rose correspondingly from N1 billion to N 4 billion while external reserves increased from N 18 million to N 3.5 billion in 1975.

The increase in national wealth resulted in the government embarking on rapid expansion of public sector expenditure and squandering of the wealth on expanding distributive instead of productive capacity; and on increase dependence on external goods. By 1978, oil (petroleum and associated components) composed 89.1 percent of Nigeria's export compared agriculture, which had plummeted in its contribution to export by 6.8 percent in the same year. The fact of the matter is that Nigeria's commodity pattern has, since the advent of oil, been a mono-cultural one with the product being the only one the country depends upon for its foreign exchange, creating a situation that has constrained the pace of its development efforts.

Nigeria has to learn from Thailand, in spite of Thailand's advent of high technology, the country has remained deeply committed to its agricultural base and has emerged as one of the world's leaders in agro-business. In general, Thailand has confronted the challenge of globalization by liberalizing its economy, embracing internationalization of capital and opening new markets across the length and breadth of the world. Hence, Thailand products (manufacturing and agricultural) are found all over American, European, Asian, and African countries. Nigeria can tremendously benefit from Thailand's experience. The Nigerian economy must be completely diversified rather than remaining mono-cultured.

Providing Access to Finance; Improving Infrastructure and Institute for Marketing Products; and Addressing Problems Created by Globalization and the Trade Policies for Subsistence Family Farmers.

Improving Infrastructure

About 20 million Nigerians remain “in the dark” without access to electricity. While estimates of the new connections rate per year-financed by the federal and state rural electrification program are difficult to confirm, its connections per year nationally are probably closer to 30,000 per year. Barely 40% of the population has access to safe drinking water. It has been estimated that better access to potable water could relieve the burden of water borne diseases as much as it would improve health care delivery. This is the present rural water access: total unsaved water 61%, protected dug well 17%, boreholes water. 11%, public stand post 8%, spring water 1%, yard tap 1%, and household connection 1%.

Potential Workable Approaches

The various pilot project concepts have encountered different barriers and constraints that challenge their full realization. The following are an over view of potentially workable approaches in removing these barriers and constraints.

Integration approaches to rural electrification. The national policy on integrated rural development made a strong case for a holistic approach to infrastructure provision. Rural electrification needs to go beyond “illuminating poverty” to forming the basis for income generation and poverty reduction. Traditional supply-side arguments for rural electrification in Nigeria are premised on its capacity to stimulate economic growth in local communities. While this might be so, it is increasingly accepted that rural electrification has better chances of increasing rural incomes and its own sustainability, when it is proactively tied to economic and social value creation such as local industries, water supply, food processing, it services, and micro enterprises.

The extraction of water, its treatment and transportation, requires significant amounts of electrical energy. Agriculture and health are critical links between the two sectors. This is even more so when power is needed for irrigation as is the case in northern Nigeria. Presently, electricity for water supply purposes comes from diesel generators. However, solar energy, particularly in the north, is becoming a technology for choice of water pumping.

Addressing the Problem Created by Globalization

The process of globalization has taken the growth and development potential of underdeveloped economies, by establishing laws and principles that in conflict with the requisite conditions of their revolutionary process. Globalization tends to ascribe functions to various economies thereby creating an international division of labor that actuates the disparity between the most developed (industrialized) countries and the underdeveloped ones. This has been detrimental to the effective use of economic resources of the underdeveloped and its concomitants poverty, famine, health hazards, and insecurity, among others.

Lack of effective use of resources by underdeveloped countries means they cannot provide the basic needs of the society through domestic production that could generate positive externalities such as learning-by-doing, spill-over effects, and technology acquisition, which could trigger a process of industrialization, economic growth and development. The negative effects of this situation can spill over to the larger world economy, which operates at suboptimal level. The growth and development of the underdeveloped economies could be of tremendous benefits to the world economy, but globalization encourages the “self-first principle” of competition. However, underdeveloped countries can initiate grassroots production through the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) to meet their basic domestic needs, and tailor their participating in the process of globalization while serving the purpose of this initiative. This will, if properly established and sustained overtime, generate production externalities that could spearhead industrialization, and economic growth and development for a prosperous economic future for the country.

Moreover, it must be stressed that given the nature of Nigeria, with its inherent weak domestic base, globalization certainly has its adverse implications on the nation’s economy. However, in order to minimize the negative effects and harnesses, there is the necessity for a complete restructuring of the Nigerian political economy.

Trade Policies for Subsistence Family Farmers

Farm activities: direct gain if high average budget share for poor consumers. Indirect gain high average budget is shared for non-consumers the poor benefits from expenditure linkage. Indirect gain if high labor content by non-poor, and the poor both benefit from expenditure linkage. Potentially important gains from expenditure linkages, from activities with elasticity of supply, low barriers to entry, and producing goods and services with marginal budget shares. Non-farm activities: apart from mining activities and migrant labor/remittance, unlikely with good communications and strong urban or export marketer, features generally absent from poorest rural area. Limited direct or indirect gains are unlikely to have average budget shares for poor or less poor consumers in rural areas. The illustration above shows how non-farming activities will make you spend a lot of money, and increase exportation of goods

The operation, extent, and terms of access to different markets are then a critical question, which are rightly, being given attention in on-going studies of rural diversification. These issues need to be given much more prominence in our basic conceptualizations of livelihoods. Turn now to examine the question that immediately follows if we accept the importance of market development: how can a pro-poor market be developed? If we accept the importance institutions, in the department for international development (DFID) frame work is sometimes considered the “black box” of PIPs (policies institutions and processes). They key point that emerges from an examination of institutional and economic development using these concepts is that less developed economies are characterized by situations with high transaction cost and risks, weak information flows, and weak institutional environment: actors, particularly those with little power or financial and social capital, face high cost in accessing information and property rights enforcement. This inhibits access to markets and market development. This in turn inhibits economic technological development, and low levels of economic activity lead to thin markets, high transaction costs and risks and high units’ costs for infrastructural development. The result can easily be a low level of development.

Conculsion

Most farmers (if not all) don't have modern farming equipment. Lots have large piece of land but cultivate little because of lack implement. If government would provide modern farming implements to the farmers at rural areas poverty would drastically be reduced. Also chemicals should be provided to the farmers in affordable rate. Moreover government should build modern storage facilities center in villages for the farmers to be able to store their grains after the harvest, which will reduce grains eaten by insects and pests.

The number of extension agents sent to rural areas should be increased. A committee should be set up to ensure that they performed their roles of educating farmers on how to use their land, equipments, and chemicals. Government should buy their products after harvest. Hoarding of grains should be abolished; it should be done only by government, because doing it privately increases poverty. The government should advise its citizens to practice subsistence or commercial agriculture, they should know its importance in their budgeting allocation, and how it would reduce their expenditure and even generate income to the family.

Good road networks should be constructed for the farmers; from urban areas to rural areas, to enable the farmers transport their products to urban areas after harvest.

The Nigerian government should provide qualitative education to its citizens (especially in the rural areas), because education is the back bone of any developed (meaningful) society in the world. Education should be seen as something for a life time not for livelihood. Nowadays people do not care about the progress of their nation; if they would have money for their livelihood they are satisfied with that. There is difference between education as understood by the ancient people and the popular idea of education as understood in our days. To the ancient, education was primarily a training of faculty that should be fit men for exercise of thought and duties of citizenship. The modern world looks rather for acquisition of some skills or knowledge that is needed for a career. It thinks of the product than the process.

Finally, education can only be for life if people learn the way of the ancient people by building a scattered nation not for livelihood. People should understand that it takes strategies to avoid tragedies, and the best way to make investment is on you not on things. People should know that it is probably a fact that:” you cannot become a focus until you have focus; if you want to succeed in life you must be willing to be uncomfortable; and the joy of success outlives the pair of hard work”. People should know that they can be remembered only for two things: the trouble you caused or the problem you solved. People should be worn on the dangers wait the future generation if education turns out to be for livelihood.

Works Cited

www.ruralpovertyportal.com (14th, Sept. 2008)

www.esmap.org (11th, Sept. 2008)

www.econ.can.uk (15th, Sept. 2008)

www.globalization.icaap.org (11th, Sept. 2008)