

Revitalizing Orin Farm Settlement for Food Security in Ido Region, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Ido region in Ekiti State, Nigeria experiences economic shortage specific to food production. This associates with difficulty in food distribution on account of poverty, population growth and inadequate social infrastructure. Personal observation and verbal interview with the residents of the area revealed high level of food insecurity. Majority of the young school leavers and uneducated working class have moved to urban areas due to lack of social infrastructure and fund which represent the economic power to embark on commercial farming. This paper emphasizes the need for Ekiti State Government to propel commercial agriculture by reviving Orin farm settlement for sustainable food production. No doubt, broad based policies are required to diversify the economy of the region through a well-focused food security agenda.

Keywords: Agriculture, Food Security, Farm Settlement, Orin, Ekiti State.

INTRODUCTION

Food security is a multi – dimensional concept with diverse problems which are addressed within the context of agricultural production. Agricultural Production, trade, income, food quality, clean water, sanitation, governance and political stability are all factors influencing food security (FAO 2008). Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996).

Four main dimensions of food security emerge from this definition viz: (i) food availability (ii) economic and physical access to food (iii) food utilization and (iv) stability of all these over time. Food availability relates to the supply side of food security which is determined by the level of food production and net trade access by individuals as required for adequate nutritious diet. In a bid to achieve food security objectives, policies are designed to focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices of food items.

Food insecurity becomes chronic or transitory when households suffer inadequate food consumption for a period of time. Some experience this within a short time and others on a life-long basis. The level of insecurity is acute when food shortage is persistent on long-term such that people hardly meet their minimum food requirements. Transitory food insecurity on the other hand, is short-term and temporary. It manifests with sudden drop in the ability to access enough food to sustain a good nutritional status. Viewed generally, chronic food insecurity is the consequence of extended period of poverty and inadequate access to productive or financial resources. Conversely, transitory food insecurity is caused by tentative fluctuations in

food availability and food access, including year-to-year variation in domestic food production and prices relative to household incomes (Devereux, 2006).

The United Nations Environment Programme UNEP (1992) maintains that human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. In most cases, the continuous deprivation and degradation of natural resources coupled with increase in population growth result in food insecurity. As opined by Ogunlade (2015), causes of non-availability of food to people, especially in the developing countries include hunger, ignorance and lack of education. Many nations strive to achieve food security, but they are faced with various challenges such as water security, land degradation, climate change, agricultural diseases, government policy/political will, population growth, deforestation, loss of biodiversity processing and preservation (Ogunlade, 2015).

Currently, food security is everyone's concern which demands serious attention. The global response to solving challenges of food security accounts for the United Nation initiative of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Reduction in the number of people suffering from hunger to half by 2015 was among the priorities of the eight MDGs. The right to food is a universal right - rights that more than 854million people worldwide do not have (Grassmann and Mannigel, 2008). The focus on Nigeria in this study is because it is one of the developing nations worst hit by food insecurity due to the ever-increasing populations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The economic nexus of rural area is agriculture, which generates employment (both in the agriculture and off-farm sectors), income and provides food security (Von Braun, 2004). Nearly 800 Million people do not get enough food, and about 500 Million people are chronically malnourished. Literature reveals that more than one third of children globally are malnourished (UNDP, 1999). Paradoxically, Nigeria spends so much on importation of rice, wheat and other food despite the abundant human and material resources. Wike (2004) observes that, China, Chile, Thailand and Uganda, for example, have undertaken to invest in the rural area to support agricultural production and provide impulse for private initiatives.

No doubt, adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household food security. As observed by the Food and Agricultural Organization (2008), the Green Revolution in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s with its package of improved seeds, farm technology, better irrigation and chemical fertilizers, was highly successful at augmenting food supplies, but could not automatically translate into improvements in food security for the people. However, successful agriculture and rural development have occurred in parts of East Asia (South Korea, Taiwan and notably Vietman), Central Europe, Latin American Countries (Chile, Brazil and Mexico), India and African Countries such as Ghana and Mozambique (Cleaver 2004).

The challenges of the Millennium Development Goals on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger are obvious. First, over 60percent of Nigerians still live on less than US \$1 per day as a result of the declining oil dependent economy. Second, the agricultural sector is almost ignored indicating the hindrance on hunger reduction. Currently, food costs typically absorb half of family incomes – the main reason why “consumers in many parts of Africa have started turning to locally grown foods as import prices rise” (Fleshman, 2008).

Harsh (2008) observed that the rise in prices of staple foods has been especially sharp and has disproportionately hurt the poor who must spend a bigger share of their meager incomes on food than the better off. The inspiration on World food crisis demands that there should be a

focus on rural development, in terms of technical assistance to strengthen rural dwellers in improving food production capacity. This is very essential because private sector participation in food production holds promising prospects for food security.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Locale

Orin – Ekiti is the research locale. It is a Yoruba speaking community in Ido Local Government Area (LGA) of Ekiti State, Nigeria, that lies between longitude $5^{\circ} 23^1$ and $5^{\circ} 24^1$ East of the Greenwich Meridian and Latitude $7^{\circ} 4^1$ and $7^{\circ} 42^1$ North of the Equator. The 1991 Census in Nigeria records a total population of 107,000 people for the entire LGA which comprises twelve (12) major communities including Ido, Osi, Ayetoro, Usi, Ifaki and Ilogbo. Others are Igbole, Orin, Ora, Aaye, Ilogun and Oke – Ora. The LGA is demarcated into eleven (11) electoral wards inhabited by people who are basically agrarians with specialization in root crops like yams and cassava and grains such as maize, rice etc. There are a few cottage industries in the area devoted primarily to processing of agricultural produce. The researchers made use of secondary data only, specifically on food security and the Youth Commercial Agricultural Development (Y-CAD) Scheme in Orin farm settlement, Orin-Ekiti.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Orin farm settlement was set up by the Ekiti State Government in 2012 to launch the Youth Commercial Agriculture Development (Y-CAD) Scheme that will allow self-sufficiency in agriculture through commercial farming. This was borne out of the joint efforts of both the Federal and State governments to minimize the ₦1.3 trillion Nigeria spends annually on food importation. With this proposal, it was anticipated that the millions of the unemployed Nigerian graduates could be trained in commercial agriculture to be independent.

In 2012, the Ekiti State Government budgeted ₦1.7 billion for capital project in agriculture. It also entered into partnership with the Federal government to expend ₦50 million on improved seedlings and agrochemical subsidies. Subsequently, the electrification project of Orin farm settlement was awarded to realize the Y – CAD target of increase in food production through systematic motivation of Youths into sustainable commercial agriculture. The programme was to generate employment opportunities directly to potential young entrepreneurs by promoting high value crop (HVC) production, processing and marketing, transportation from the point of production to storage and processing centres.

The programme which was expected to provide employment for over 20,000 youths took off with the training of 150 registered young graduates. They commenced farming activities at Orin farm settlement where many acres of land were cleared for operation. There was extension of power supply to the settlement to make life comfortable for the farmers and encourage more youths' participation in the programme. Under the programme, farmers enjoy the opportunities of land preparation, tractor services, necessary inputs and marketing services at subsidized prices on credit but with interest.

The government under its land preparation and investment scheme acquired land and shared among young farmers in blocks to realize the Y-CAD Programme. During harvest, Y-CAD took up the marketing responsibilities and post-harvest losses, while the beneficiaries either sell their produce to Fountain Agriculture Marketing Agency (FAMA) or customers of their choice. In summary, the components of the Y-CAD include:

- Allocation of ploughed land (plots) to participating youth farmers for commercial agriculture with expansion opportunities;

- Supply of inputs such as seeds, agro – chemicals, fertilizers, sacks and services to facilitate marketing of produce by FAMA,
- Supply of agricultural cultivation services such as tractor services, harvesting services and other services on the farm land;
- Development of commercial farm management skills and capacity building services by UNDP – AMSCO team;
- Provision of technical support by Agriculture Extension Staff of the Staff Agriculture Development Programme, FADAMA, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Partner Service Providers;
- Free training of farmers on input usage by service providers and other agricultural enterprise such as poultry, fisheries, aquaculture and bee keeping for supplementary income;
- Structural disbursement of loan through voucher and direct payment system for an organized repayment system with estates and proceeds from farm. (www.latestnigerianews.com/new/218).

In 2012, a credit facility of ₦450 million was released to the first set of 150 participants in the Y-CAD Programme. Government also approved ₦500 million credit facilities at a single digit interest rate to young and emergent farmers within the Y-CAD Co-operative Union. They had the opportunity to access more credit facility of not less than ₦1.4million each to boost commercial production of high value crops such as rice, cassava, oil palm and cocoa. To consolidate management of individual business, government with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) systematized the engagement of business support managers with fund for the purchase of farm equipment such as planters, boom sprayers, seed drills and support in the usage of this equipment for commercial plantation.

The intention of government was to indirectly engage 20,000 youths in commercial farming by 2014. Through the Y-CAD Programme, it also planned to make the State self-sufficient in food production. In a complimentary effort, a robust commercial livestock production and development programme was also initiated and designed to engage youths in poultry, fisheries and piggery production and processing across the State. To ensure a sustainable venture the State government also encouraged the engagement of the private sector institutions in running the livestock out grower scheme with the youths.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The farming population of the State has been reinvigorated through youth participation with adequate exposure to the realities of modernization under improved farm practice. The government had made efforts in reversing the trend at which youths abandon the rural area for old people who depend on simple farming implements with the task of providing food and cash crops for the nation. Agriculture remains a key factor in efforts to turn the fortunes of the state around.

To address the present food insecurity in the state, attention must focus on proper education and awareness drive to engineer strong advocacy for adequate food production. There is need for government to develop broad based policies that would aggressively create an enabling environment for the youth to participate in agro – business to serve as bedrock of government diversification. This should be supplemented by a managerial and entrepreneurship capacity building programme for emergent farmers in the State. Agro – food based industries should also be established to process farm products to finished goods. This will eliminate raw food wastages and create more employment opportunities for the teaming youths in the State.

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