

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background to the Study

The economies of the developed nations has agriculture as the basis for growth and development. Most developing countries have agriculture as their primary (traditional) pursuit and it's the gateway to sustained growth of the economies. Nigeria is greatly endowed with potentials, resources and the wherewithal to provide the basic needs of the citizens. Before discovering oil in commercial quantities, the economic system of Nigeria was agro-based with the sector accounting for about two third of the Gross domestic product (GDP) and during pre independence, it had been the main stay of the nation.

According to (Amaza and Udoh, 2000), "agriculture is the main stay of households in Nigeria and is a significant sector in Nigeria's economy. This explains that a strong agricultural sector has a multiplier effect on any nation's socio-economic and industrial fabric due to its multi-dimensional nature. Until the 1970s the sector provided the basic food of the population, was a major earner of foreign exchange for Nigeria and supplied raw materials required by manufacturing sector to provide adequate employment. The agriculture sector still remains the principal supplier of raw materials for industries. Effort have been geared towards accelerating economic development with the ultimate goal of transforming the economy into an industrialized one, raising the welfare of the population with agriculture acting as the catalyst for the realization of the goals. The traditional role of agriculture in economic development provides the foundation for this position (Obiechina, 2007).

Agriculture also called farming include the cultivation of animals, plants, fungi and other forms of food biofuel, fibre, drugs and other products, used to sustain and enhance human life. In most developing countries, agriculture is the springboard for economic development and a sustained growth of the modern economy. It can be stated here that economic growth goes hand-in-hand with a flourishing agricultural sector, as well a dwindling agricultural sector is the principal factor for poor economic performance of developing countries particularly Nigeria. Abayomi (1997) stated that rising agricultural productivity has been the main concomitant of successful industrialization and among the roles conventionally ascribed to agricultural sector constitutes the major source of employment.

Agriculture is a pertinent sector for reducing poverty and sustaining growth of developing countries. In terms of contribution to Gross Domestic Product, the food and agricultural sector dominates developing nations including Nigeria especially among the rural dwellers. This contribution also includes employment and income, its growth and development are necessary for the overall process of socioeconomic development of Nigeria.

The fundamental roles ascribed to agriculture for development has long been discovered/recognized. It is a major source of contributions that help induce industrial growth and structural development of an economy. Agriculture's multiple functions for development follows triggering economic growth, reducing poverty, narrowing income disparities, providing food security and delivery of environmental services.

Classical theorists viewed economic development as a growth process of relocating factors of production from an agricultural sector characterized by low productivity and the use of traditional/crude technology to a modern industrial sector characterized by high productivity.

In the early stages of development, large share of manufacturing is agriculturally connected. As much, rising

income of household in rural areas is vital to provide market for manufactures and services domestically produced. Moreover, technological change and output growth in agriculture were linked to closed economy model that in turn held down urban wage costs and stimulated competitive exports of industrial products (Hsieh and Sadoulet, 2007). This ideology falls under the structural transformation paradigm. There is however an argument for a broader role of agriculture for development.

In 2000, 191 United Nations members agreed on the central role for meeting the environmental agenda and this was enshrined in the eight millennium development goals. Agriculture is considered as the major user and abuser of natural resources. Agriculture relates to the MDGs and "particularly central to the three of them – poverty reduction and hunger, fostering gender equality and sustainable management of environment". Moreover, agricultural growth remains critical to achieving these goals.

Based upon its substantial base to build upon in view of its abundant natural resources, including 98.3 million hectares of which 74 million hectare is good for farming even though a half is utilized (Omotor, 2009). In view of its climate and agro ecological conditions, Nigeria has potential for producing a wide variety of crops through mechanized farming. Climatic characteristic of the nation from the tropical areas of the coast to the arid zone of the north makes it possible to produce varieties of products that can be grown in the tropical and semi tropical areas of the world. The varieties include sorghum, yam, tuber, cocoa, palm fruit et cetera.

Agriculture suffers from low productivity reflecting reliance on antiquated methods. The economic importance of agriculture cover employment generation of which is a major labour employer, it holds the ace for reducing unemployment. Unemployment is among the threatening problems facing Nigeria.

Records have it that the technological strides of the more developed economies had their root in agriculture. Early development theorists argue that agriculture can offer the much needed output of food and propagate industrialization. The argument/debate is anchored on the raw materials needed by the industries along with the labour that will be absorbed by industries.

The Nigerian economy was positive in 2003. Annual GDP grew by 9.1 percent (NBS, 2007) between 2003 and 2005, 6.1 percent from 2006-2008. The growth can be attributed to the non oil sector, primarily agriculture which has grown rapidly accounting for about 35 percent to total GDP.

Effort to restore the sector has yielded less than optimal result. Potential of the sector is large, considering the capacity of the sector to provide the sustenance for the population through increased output and employment to better the welfare of citizens, providing foreign exchange, stimulating investment and industrialization. Because of poor technology, output and income are low. Consequently, agriculture is caught in a low level equilibrium trap where the rate of return cannot rise among other things in view of the method of operation/practice (Titus, 1996). Developing the sector is crucial to economic development. With soaring poverty, unemployment, importation of basic tools needs agriculture holds, potential for bringing about general development of national economy, therefore, the researcher has embarked upon this study to evaluate the role of the Nigeria's agriculture in development.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

Agriculture is one of Nigeria's real sector capable of fostering economic growth. The sector is a catalyst, that is, it is a propagator of growth which can trickle down to other sectors and thus bring about development. In Nigeria, agriculture has undergone neglect in the form of poor management, poorly implemented government policies and lack of basic infrastructure necessary for better performance. Nigeria's economy can be described as an agricultural economy even before independence and till date, a greater part of the

population is engaged in agricultural practice.

Agriculture employs over 65 percent of the labour force, contributes immensely to gross domestic product and generates revenue for government through export.

Despite these benefits, there is more that can be derived howbeit, there is a dwindling interest in the sector. In 1980, government expenditure (recurrent) in education was N155.81m, N52.79m for health, transport and communications received N27.30m but government recurrent expenditure on agriculture was a meager N17.14m for that period. This amount decreased to N13.03m in the preceding year, N14.80m in 1982, N12.77m in 1983 before rising again to N20.69m in 1986 and N46.15m in 1987 which cannot be compared with N225.01m spent on education.

A further review reveals that in 2000, the federal recurrent expenditure shows that N15.218m was spent on health, N57,956.64m was spent on education, N25, 154.67m on internal security and N6,335.78m was sparingly given to agriculture.

Another problem facing this sector can be seen in the amount of farmland cultivated. In 1990, 82 million hectares of Nigeria's total land area of about 91 million hectares were found arable even though 42% of the cultivated area was farmed.

Nigeria's cocoa output has declined with a potential of producing 300,000 tons per year, but in 1999 145,000 tons was produced. There is how investment in agriculture. The potential of the sector is barely tapped which explains the gap in meeting the increasing demand for agriculture commodities. Credit facility is difficult to obtain. This hinders the shift from crude implement to sophisticated farming machines. These problems necessitated this study to determine the role of Nigeria's agriculture in development.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study includes the following

1. To evaluate the agricultural history of Nigeria.
2. To make meaningful suggestions as remedial measures for solving some of the problems facing agricultural development in Nigeria.
3. To assess the cause of decline in agricultural production in the sector in Nigeria.
4. Ways agriculture can bring about development.
5. Agricultural reforms at revamping the sector for national development.

## 1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The operational hypothesis to support the research work is hereby stated thus;

H0: Agriculture does not have a significant effect on national development

H1: Agriculture has a significant effect on national development.

## 1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A flourishing agricultural sector can offer a lot toward economic development. The study aims to provide answers to what the relevance of agriculture is to economic development, the causes of agricultural decline and how the present agricultural productivity will be improved in order to create more job opportunities, foreign exchange, investment opportunities for overall economic development.

The research is significant as it stands to benefit Nigeria as a whole. The research intends to bring out ways to improve on agriculture for development through increased agricultural investment, research in findings solutions to problem facing agriculture for development in Nigeria.

## 1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is Nigeria and focus on the role of the Nigerian agriculture in development. The originality and reliability of any study or research work is based on the quantity and quality of available data. Hence, this research work is constrained by several factors including availability of data in sufficient quantity, time constraint as well as sufficient finance to complete the project write up.

## 1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are some terms that are used in this study that require an explanation. The meaning of the concepts as it is portrayed in this study is necessary for comprehension.

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the occupation of cultivating land and rearing crops and livestock, farming,. It is also the art or science of cultivating the ground, including the harvesting of crops and the rearing and management of livestock, tillage, husbandry, and farming.

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

Agricultural productivity is the rate of agricultural commodities to the rate of inputs used in production. It is the ratio of output to input in the agricultural production process.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a sustained concerted actions of policy makers and communities that promote the living standard and economic health of an economy. It is also the quantitative and qualitative changes in an economy.

### POVERTY

Poverty according to the United Nations (2010) is the inability of getting choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit.

The World Bank (2010) defines poverty as pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises low incomes and the inability to acquire basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity.

### UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment is the state of being without work but actively seeking or searching for work or waiting to return to work.

Employment is the state of having jobs and performing any paid work.

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF NIGERIA'S AGRICULTURE IN DEVELOPMENT**

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