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ABSTRACT

The study identified strategies for ensuring food security in Taraba State. Specifically, the study was designed to identify the determinants of food security; examine the production patterns of food by farmers, identify the factors responsible for food insecurity; and determine the strategies of ensuring food security. The study was carried out in Taraba State of Nigeria in the year 2011. The population of the study comprises all heads of households in Taraba State. A multi stage sampling technique was used in the selection of respondents. Two agricultural zones were selected using a simple random technique. These were Zing and Bali zones and they were selected using simple random sampling techniques and the process gave rise to the selection of four communities/cells per zone bringing the total number of communities/cells sampled to eight (8). From each sampled cell, a list of farmers was obtained from the farmers' association and from the list of farmers' households. Fifteen (15) heads of households were sampled using simple random selection techniques. The total number of respondents for the study summed up to one hundred and twenty (120). A set of interview schedule and questionnaire were used for data collection out of which 117 were found analysable. Frequency, percentage scores, mean scores, and standard deviations were used to analyse the data collected. Results from the study showed that majority (79.5%) of the respondents were males. The age limit of respondents shows that 56% were between the range of 20-29 years and the mean age was 32 years. The educational level of the respondents reveals that the farmers have enjoyed one form of education or the other with about 53.0% having OND/NCE as their highest educational qualification. Further results show that 65.8% of the respondents were single while 31.6% were married. The mean household size of farmers was 7 persons. The mean years of farming experience of the farmers was 8.4 years. The majority (59.0%) of the farmers had 1-5 years of farming experience. Majority (62.4%) of the farmers engage in trading and their main source of information was through extension agents with 47.9%. Majority (84.6%) of the farmers grew maize grains and some crops like rice, yam, guinea corn, and cassava. The monthly income of the respondents revealed that majority (58.8%) have an estimated monthly income of below N20,000. The food security analysis of the farmers revealed that the availability of food items for the respondents were as follows: maize ($X = 3.09$) cassava flour ($X = 3.09$), and rice ($X = 2.90$) depicting availability of the respondents to a large extent while food items from proteins were perceived to be available to a great extent. The mean scores show that most of these food items are available in Taraba State. On the accessibility of food in Taraba State, majority (76.9%) of the respondents accessed their food items from both farm and market while 18% of the respondents got their food items from farms only. Most (57.3%) of the respondents purchased their food items with money. The prices of the items were moderate (63.2%). The access to food by the respondents as a determinant of food security is not a problem in the entire State. The study also identified some barriers to food access in the state. It revealed that religion (59.8%), culture (64.1%), poor government policies (64.1%), geographical location (60.1%), inadequate market information (61.7%), all have more than half of the respondents agreeing to them as various barriers to their food access. In the utilization of food, carbohydrate food items were not eaten in a higher proportion during the last one day of the interview, while in the case of proteins such as beans, fish, eggs, and milk, they were eaten by the respondents on a 12 – 24 hours basis. The study also showed that the farming pattern which is mostly being practiced among respondents is mixed farming (93.2%) and mixed cropping (82.0%). This could be one of the reasons for high availability of many food items across the various respondents in the state. It is

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Average growth rate	11
Table 2: Federal government capital expenditure in Naira	42
Table 3: Taraba State budgetary allocation to agricultural sector	43
Table 4: Distribution of the respondents by socio-economic characteristics	63
Table 5: Mean and standard deviations of respondents on the availability of food items	66
Table 6: Percentage distribution of respondents based on food items utilized by households	70
Table 8: Mean distribution of factors responsible for food insecurity in Taraba State	73
Table 9: Mean and standard deviation of strategies for ensuring food security in the state	75

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Conceptual framework on Strategies for Ensuring Food Security in Taraba State	51
Figure 2 Taraba state administrative Map	54
Figure 3 Percentage distribution of the respondents based on their monthly Income	64

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nigeria has suffered from food insecurity and poverty as indicated in a recent estimate that put the number of hungry people in Nigeria at over 53 million, which is about 30 percent of the country's total population of roughly 150 million; and 52 percent live under the poverty line (Ajayeoba, 2010). These are matters of serious concern largely because Nigeria was self-sufficient in food production and was indeed a net exporter of food to other regions of the continent in the 1950s and 1960s (Ajayeoba, 2010). He stated that things changed dramatically for the worse following the global economic crisis that hit developing countries beginning from the late 1970's onward. The discovery of crude oil and rising revenue from the country's petroleum sector encouraged official neglect of the agricultural sector and turned Nigeria into a net importer of food. By 2009 for example the Federal Ministry of Agriculture estimated that Nigeria was spending over \$3 billion annually on food imports.

Although agriculture contributes 42 percent of the GDP, provides employment and a means of livelihood for more than 60 percent of the productively engaged population, it receives less than 10 percent of the annual budgetary allocations. Underfunding in this regard is central to the crisis of food production, and food security in Nigeria (Ajayeoba, 2010). This explains the persistence of poverty. According to the author, the loss of food sovereignty and the dependence on food importation is also making the country quite susceptible to fluctuations in global food crisis. This is why Nigeria was also strongly affected by the global food crisis in 2007/2008 leading to food insecurity, thus a need for food security.

Food security happens when all people at all times have access to enough food that is affordable, safe and

healthy and is culturally acceptable, meets specific dietary needs, obtained in a dignified manner and produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just. Food security is not just a poverty issue, it is a much larger issue that involves the whole food system and affects everyone in some way (FAO, 2001). According to the World Bank (2007), the global food security crisis endangers the lives of millions of people, particularly the World's poorest who live in countries already suffering from acute and chronic malnutrition. They further lamented that fundamental considerations are to underscore the human dimension of the crisis, monitor its impact on nutrition, health and poverty, plus its effect on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including providing sound information and analysis to target the most vulnerable groups.

A nation is food secured when food is available and accessible in sufficient quantity and quality for a productive livelihood for every individual. The increasing issue of food insecurity, particularly in Africa has been greatly attributed to wars, conflicts, natural disasters and bad governance.

Globally, there is enough food for all, but more than 780 million people are chronically undernourished (FAO, 2001). Millions of people in developing world simply cannot obtain the food they need for a healthy and productive life. Much of the scholarly debate on agricultural growth and poverty in Nigeria have followed the general trend of regressing measures of poverty against agricultural output per head and a time trend (World Bank, 2009). This is based on the knowledge of agricultural production landscape in Nigeria. These resource poor farmers are also characterized by a strong dependence on agricultural labour market, little or no forms of savings or storage facilities and cultural practices adopted are highly labour intensive (Okuneye, 2002).

The socio-economic and production characteristics of the farmers, inconsistent and unfocused government policies, the poor infrastructural base, all interact in a synergism to asphyxiate the sector, resulting in low production, high prices of food items, inflation, underdevelopment and concomitant poverty. The place of agriculture in an agrarian society cannot be overemphasized given its importance in the life of human beings. Agriculture is expected to ensure adequate supply of food to the people. Millions of people in developing world simply cannot obtain the food they need for a healthy and productive life. Similarly, agriculture is expected to produce a high level of agricultural raw materials for the industries, save the industry and the nation from high costs of importation, produce excess for the local demand (for food and raw materials) for export. Agriculture should continually generate employment for the people as well as a high level of returns for the farmers.

The performance of agriculture in Nigeria has not been able to match the expectation ascribed to the sector in the development process. At independence, agriculture sustained the Nigeria economy and held the promise of a vibrant agrarian economy (Akpan, 2009). In fact, according to Adebayo (1991), agriculture contributed in the 1960/61, 67% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the 1999 – 2000, agriculture contributed between 40 – 42 percent to the GDP. The Civil War (1967-70) and the emergence of petroleum in the early 1970s scuttled the production foundation of agriculture through lack of visionary planning for sustainable development. The sector is yet to regain its central role in the economy. Therefore, based on the voluminous human, material and financial resources expended on agriculture in the last 40 years, the country ought to have done much better to address the fight against the mysteries of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and ill-health.

The Global Hunger Index, published by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) 2004, ranks developing countries according to their performance on three indicators: proportion of undernourished

as a percentage of the population, prevalence of underweight children under five and child mortality .On a scale of 0-100, with 0 indicating the absence of hunger in a given country, Nigeria's 2008 ranking was in the 10-19 range, labelled "serious" The population segments with the highest vulnerability to food insecurity include poor farming households in the Sudan- Sahelian zone of Northern Nigeria and the humid forest zones of Southern Nigeria, and pastoralists scattered over Northern Nigeria. The Sudan-Sahelian zone is particularly drought-prone, the humid forest zones are particularly flood-prone, and pastoralists commonly face fodder and water deficits due to low rainfall situations in the North (World Food Prize, 2010). In 2008, Nigeria introduced its National Program for Food Security (NPFS), laying out dozens of constraints to food security in Nigeria and adopting a "value chain approach" to address these constraints. The vision of the NPFS is "to ensure sustainable access, availability, and affordability of quality food to all Nigerians and to be a significant net provider of food to the global community." Considering Nigeria's current position as a net importer of food products, this vision will take time to be realized. The short-term objectives of the NPFS are doubling the domestic production of cassava, rice, tomato, sugar and cotton, and increasing the production of millet, wheat and poultry by 50 percent. The medium-term objectives include increased processing and storage capacity as well as development of the market and physical infrastructure required to achieve food security (World Food Prize, 2010).

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