

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The importance of food as the requisite condition for the survival of a state, its relevance to human survival cannot be over emphasized. Adequate food or what is commonly known as food security is a fundamental need for human existence. No doubt, food is life hence; food has become an instrument of national power. Food is a negotiating kit in international politics. The security of a state therefore is in danger, if this particular need is not satisfied.

If an individual or a community suffers from food insecurity, to the extent that there is no means of feeding, that society as an aggregate is insecure. Be that as it may, it is an undeniable fact that the survival of a particular state is largely dependent on the survival of its populations. A hungry nation is a weak one, while any region that is prone to famine or starvation is a weak one, while any region that is prone to famine or starvation is an insecure region, no matter how vast and greatly populated it may be. Such a region will continue to be constantly under threats and exposed to external influence, either as a result of foreign aid, relief materials or other forms of assistance presumably put together to alleviate the sufferings of the people, by outside countries.

Food security refers to a secure access to sufficient and affordable nutritious food. It implies access by all people at all time to enjoyed enough food for an active and healthy life. Food security is a multi-faceted concept. At one end of the spectrum, food security implies the availability of adequate supplies at a global and national level; at the other end, the concern is with adequate nutrition and well being of the people.

Therefore, achieving food security is imperative, but the most pressing challenge is how to do this and it has remained an elusive or complex problem in Nigeria. Part of the problem is lack of interest, investment and increased measures in agriculture, since majority of the people have neglected or abandoned the rural areas for a white colour jobs in the major cities. In order to ensure food availability and accessibility of a people at all times, certain public policies and strategies by the national, state and local governments (non-discriminating and non-political laws) must be adopted and implemented to ensure that their population have access to adequate food. According to James Anderson (1979:3), public policy can be defined as a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or concern. In addition, it implies something willed, rather than accidental, incidental, coincidental thing that just happens. It is goal-oriented and goal-directed in the sense that it focuses at achieving a particular objective or target.

Although past and present government have introduced various policies targeted at improving food production in Nigeria, it is important to state that those policies had a bismally failed to achieve the set objectives or results. In fact, government's neglect of the agricultural sector that accounted for more than 80 percent of foreign and domestic earnings to the Nigeria's economy since the 1970's and 80 due to the discovering and exploration of petroleum resources, further complicated the crisis of food insecurity for the teeming Nigerian population.

The mono-cultural oil export-led economy of the country has adversely affected agricultural (food) production in the country. It is important to note that, if Nigeria is to meet her vision 2020, agricultural sector must, as matter of priority, be revived by government through sound policies that will encourage the sector and boost food productive. The most important national priority therefore is to feed its populace because the continuous existence of human beings depends solely on adequate provision of food, it is within that imperatival need for food that this study takes a cursory look at the issues in its entire ramification.

Therefore, emphases will aim at examine how food insufficiency directly affects the political stability of the country. It also explores the success or otherwise of various agricultural programmes or policies aimed at ensuring food security in Nigeria since independence.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

As concerns toward maintaining national security and growing a sound and healthy population, agricultural policies which ensure food security have been pursued vigorously by successive governments. Such policies are made to fulfill the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly which proclaims that the human person has the right to adequate food and to be free from hunger, as set out in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration. This right has been spelt out in various human rights instruments vis-à-vis the concern on economic, social and cultural rights; the convention on the rights of the child and many other instruments (Ojo and Adebayo, 2012).

Food is the most basic of human need and is central to the discussion of human rights and social development. This is why Clover (2003) in Ojo and Adebayo (2012), averred that, 'no human right has been so frequently and spectacularly violated in recent times as the right to food'. To address this problem and ensure that this right is respected, governments since independence have embarked on successive agricultural and food security policies to make food available and accessible to its citizenry.

In addition to the above, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon laid out these sobering statistics as he kicked off a three-day summit on world food security in Rome, when he noted that, 'more than one billion people are hungry... six million children die of hunger every year, 17,000 everyday. In 2050, the world will need to feed two billion more mouths...' (Cited in Ojo and Adebayo, 2012)

Before the civilian administration in Nigeria in 1999, several agricultural policies and programmes were introduced by successive administrations, viz-a-viz Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) under the Olusegun Obasanjo military government; Shehu Shagari's Green Revolution; Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) of Ibrahim Babangida etc. However, with the advent of civilian administration in 1999, greater attention was given to food production. The then Minister of Agriculture, publicly restated government's commitment to combat hunger and malnutrition by providing adequate food for the people and ensure food security for all. To achieve this goal, a number of what he called food security initiatives were launched which include among others: special programme for Food Security for All. To achieve this goal, a number of what he called food for Food Security (SPFS), Root and Tuber Expansion Programme, Fadama Development Project, Community-Based Agricultural and Rural Development Schemes, provision of infrastructures etc. Also international organizations such as the World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has always been giving a lending hand in form of aid to facilitate the development of agriculture.

However, it appears this objective has not been achieved as records, writings and evidence from close observations reveal that people across the world and in Nigeria in particular are malnourished and die of hunger, and the estimated figure is alarming. This is captured in the writings of Ojo and Adebayo (2012) when they noted that "Africa which reversed from being a key exporter of agricultural commodities into being a net importer, has the highest percentage of undernourished people and has shown less progress on reducing the prevalence of undernourishment in the last 30 years. Chronic food insecurity now affects some 28% of the population that is nearly 200 million people who are suffering from malnutrition. Famines are the most visible and extreme manifestation of acute food insecurity". The populace especially those in the rural areas are still suffering from illnesses which are closely linked to malnutrition and hunger. Medical and anthropometric findings shows a very close link between malnutrition and infant mortality, poor growth in children as well as reduced adults' immune system to fight some disease. It is also revealed that 65 percent of the Nigerian population is suffering from lack of food security, 40 percent of children under five are stunted and 25 percent are under weight.

Food demand is not sufficiently met by supply and this has resulted to food insufficiency. This is reflected in the huge sum of money spent on importation of food to offset the food insecurity in the country and is also evident in the prevalence of underweight and

malnourished children under five years of age, and the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption which are adopted as indicators adequate for measuring how well a country is food-secured. Food is life; hence food is an instrument of national power. Food is used to achieve political ends, because if people are well fed, they would be able ready to contribute meaningfully to the effective implementation of government policies. Malnutrition saps the working strength of an economy, cripples and mind and body of children and consequently deprives the society of its greatest potential available and sufficient, but the quality, hygiene and safety conditions to protect the health and well being of the consumers is of utmost importance. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to evaluate agricultural policy as it affects food security in Nigeria.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are formulated to serve as a guide to the study:

Does poor implementation of agricultural policies bring about poor agricultural productivity?

To what extent does inadequate food security endanger national security?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

(a) The main objective of this study is:

To ascertain if poor implementation of agricultural policies affect agricultural productivity.

Specific objectives of this study are:

To determine if overreliance on oil discourage food production in the country.

To suggest measure that can be introduced to improve production of agricultural commodities to make the enterprise attractive to the growing population.

To establish the extent to which inadequate food security endanger national security.

1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses are formulated to serve as a guide to this study:

Lack of modernized mode of production in a society tends to produce an ineffective food security.

Ineffective implementation of rural development policies tends to decrease food security arrangement in a society.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The major significance of this study lies in the fact that it will expand the frontiers of knowledge on the factors militating against the success of agricultural policy which leads to increase productivity. This study will reveal some of the impediments responsible for the non-achievement of food security in the country. The study will be significant in that it will prescribe measures capable of improving agricultural produce and reduce imports which huge sums will be channeled into other productive ventures which will reduce capital flight and the multiplier effect will be felt with in the Nigerian economy.

Generally, the findings, discoveries and recommendations of this study will be relevant to policy makers and also expose the researcher to intricate issues relating to agricultural policies and the poor implementation strategies by various governments. This will enable the researcher understand why reasonable success has not been recorded in the achievement of making food available, accessible and affordable to the Nigerian populace and Akwa Ibom State in particular.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study will focus primarily on agricultural policy as it affects food security in Nigeria with particular reference to Akwa Ibom state. The study will concern itself with how poor implementation of agricultural policies affects food production, inadequate food endangers national security and how over dependence on oil sector affects the agricultural sector. The field survey and data analysis will be based on the data collected through structured questionnaire distributed across the sample population and based on the writings and documented records from extant literatures.

The study was not without its limitations. The most obvious limitation was the time span within which the study has to be completed. The study is also constrained by certain factors like transportation, lack of funding, epileptic electricity supply, poor attitude of respondents in

the filling and returning of questionnaires administered, difficulty of administering questionnaires to illiterate respondents since majority of rural dwellers and farmers are not educated and paucity of data occasioned by official secrecy.

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Agricultural policy: This is targeted at an expanded food production. It describes a set of laws relating to domestic agriculture and imports of foreign agricultural commodities. This has as its goal the consideration of minimum multinational standards that will guarantee food security. While expansive agricultural policy is being pushed, there is also the need for national food policy which seeks to assure all citizens access to food supply that is reasonable priced, relatively safe, adequate in quantity and nutrition. Thus it is any decision, program or project that is endorsed by a government agency, business or organization which affects how food is produced, processed; distributed, purchased, protected and disposed.

Food security: Food security is the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic food stuff to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuation in production. Food security is also defined as access by all people, at all times, to sufficient food for an active, and healthy life, it included at a minimum the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, and as assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (FAQ, 1997). It is a condition related to the supply of food, and individual's access to the people are considered food secure where they have avoidable access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.

Staple foods: To adequately define what constitutes staple food is a difficult thing, as it is hard to know how much of each crop actually ends up being eaten by humans. But according to FAQ, in developed countries, corn is the number one staple food followed by rice, as they provide humanity's major source of carbohydrates; though in Nigeria, yam, cassava, corn and rice are seen as the major staple foods in the country.

Malnutrition: It is the indication of intake of unbalanced diet. It is a condition that results from eating a diet in which nutrients are either not enough or are too much such that the diet causes health problems. Extreme undernourishment known as starvation may have symptoms that include: a short height, thin body, very poor energy levels, and swollen legs and abdomen.

Agricultural productivity: This refers to the output produced by a given level of input(s) in the agricultural sector of a given economy. It can also be defined as the ratio of the value of total farm outputs to the value of total inputs used in farm production.

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