

INTRODUCTION TO VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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LUGARD A. ETUK, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

AGRICULTURE AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: NIGERIA PERSPECTIVE

by

TIMOTHY U. U. EKPO (SENIOR LECTURER)

Agricultural Education Department, Akwa Ibom State

College Of Education, Afaha Nsit

Introduction

The term vocational agriculture refers to the level of agriculture involving semiskilled and experienced farmers who take agriculture as the main occupation. Agricultural lecturers, Agricultural policy makers, Agricultural managers or Administrators and qualified graduates in any agricultural discipline are not included in vocational agriculture. The objectives of vocational agriculture include:

To develop competence in agricultural production, processing, distribution, sales and services among others.

To inculcate the career opportunities in agriculture

To develop those abilities in human relations which are essential in agricultural occupations.

To develop leadership, character, thrift, scholarship, co-operation, citizenship and patriotism by participating in experiences and activities of the Green Revolution

To develop agricultural competence needed by individuals engaged in or preparing to engage in production agriculture

Before the advent of Western education in 1842 and Nigerian independence in 1960, Nigerian agriculture with its poor technology played an important role in the sustenance of Nigeria's economy.

Mallinson (1975) threw more light for public enlightenment that while many nations of the world had set examples of how they used vocational education to arrive at their economic emancipation, the educational system in Nigeria had a tradition of persisting in according vocational education a low priority of the

colonial days and the nation is still at a state of stagnation in terms of manpower development and rapid transformation. Sad enough, many educated Nigerians disdained agriculture; a matter for very serious regret (Denga 1983). However, since 1990 many educated Nigerians and government workers particularly staff of low-paid income make farming a close companion though at subsistence and below subsistence levels with the aim to minimise food insecurity and rising inflation. Such a change is of very serious appreciation.

According to Ukpogson (2000) one of the earliest remarks on the need for an education that would be of more use to the citizens and the nation as a whole was made by a colonial Governor when he said in 1848 that "the school in Africa is so bookish that it had turned out not even one planter of corn". This is an indication that the realisation of vocational agriculture for the building of a nation had long been noted with a serious remark. Therefore this chapter attempts to highlight the place of vocational agriculture in the development of Nigeria.

National Income and Foreign Exchange Earning

The national income is derived from the following sources according to Uguru (1981).

Oil exploration and minerals

Agriculture

Transport and communication

Constructions and civil engineering

Manufacturing and craft industries

Government and others

Revenue accrues from oil exploration and minerals in Nigeria is always higher and faster than from the agricultural sector since late 70s. In the 50s-60s Nigeria earned much of her foreign exchange through the main export crops which were cocoa, rubber, groundnuts, oil palm products and cotton. Apart

from the revenue from the cash crops, it is noted that wildlife and forest products continue to contribute to the government revenue. Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi and Kainji Lake National Park in Kwara State have international standard. Other game reserves with high potentials are Old Oyo National Park, Cross River National Park, and Chad Basin National park. In East Africa the mainstay of the economy is tourism particularly in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. A good example of the economic viability of the park system in the Yankari National Park which under 1993 revenue target of N2 million had by July of that year exceeded it. Revenue is derived from government sales of agricultural produce through taxes on sales of agricultural produce or by-products, export duties and taxes on agriculturally – supported industries. The revenue realised is used to provide basic social amenities such as education, medical services, road construction, etc.

Etukudo, et al (1994) pointed out that over 75% of Nigerians live in the rural area. This population depends mainly on fuelwood for cooking and heating which drastically reduces dependency on gas whose price is still very exorbitant even with the estimated purchasing power of less than 10% of the Nigerian population. Many restaurants are now increasing their demands for fuelwood and this results in the raising of the farmer's income. Any rise in personal income of the farmer also increases the purchasing power of other commodities and the growth of the other industries. Both the industries and the farmers pay tax to government hence raising the government annual revenue. Between 1951-1957 the national income grew from =N=1200 million to over =N=1600 million with a population of about 35 million people, the income per capita or the national income spread over every man, woman and child average about =N=45 in 1957. Between 1957-1963 the national income rose over =N=2240 million, giving per capita income of under =N=90 which Uguru (1981) described it to be still very low. The food crisis worsened the Nigerian Standard of living. In this sense per capita income in the rural areas in Nigeria has also declined from =N=82.00 in 1973 to =N=81.00 in 1979 (ILO, 1982).

The contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Products, GDP declined steadily over the years from 63.3% between 1960 and 1961 to 19.8% in 1978/79, the oil boom era (CBN Report 1982).

In 1962-1963 the contribution of agriculture to Nigeria GDP was 61.2%. The Central Bank of Nigeria annual report for 1990 showed that agricultural export which total 33.9% of all export earnings in 1970 had fallen in 1981 to 1.9%. In 1972 – 1973, it was 27.9% and in 1985 was 23.53% and it has been declining sharply since 1970 as indicated in table 1.

Table 1. Share of Agriculture in total export value between 1964-1983 in Nigeria.

Year	Agriculture as percentage of total Exports
1964	70.80
1965	61.01
1966	51.50
1967	49.00
1968	57.75
1969	40.73
1970	32.38
1971	20.73
1972	13.54
1973	12.67
1974	05.31
1975	05.21
1976	03.87
1977	05.74
1978	07.32
1979	04.60
1980	02.40
1981	01.10
1982	01.10
1983	03.6

Source: (Wale, 1993)

The values above indicate the gradual decline in the contribution of agriculture to total export value. The implications of this predicament are the high cost of food item, food deficit, falling standard of living, poor development, and huge import bill.

Food Supply

The importance attached to food in Nigeria as in other nations of the world can be expressed in many ways for examples

'No food No Nation'

'No food No Future'

'No food No Health'

'No food No Development'

It is only agricultural sector that provides this food for use by man and animal. Without food, the nation starves and the average life span of the citizenry is shortened (Udosen, 2001). It is very clear that the price of food item is used as a measure to judge the inflationary pressures in Nigeria economy, the creditability of government administration and of course the general standard of living.

Government in the realisation of the need for food production has over the decades established several agricultural programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, National Accelerated Food Production (NAFP), Agricultural Development Project (ADP) among others. Agricultural agencies were also established for examples Directorates for Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), Better Life Programme (BLP), Mass Mobilisation for Social and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), among others.

Unfortunately, Nigeria cannot boast of equal footing with her yearly population growth of about 2.5% and food growth of about 2%. This is a common situation in the continent of Africa where the per capita food production level has declined up to 20% between 1965 and 1990. The fourth national plan 1980 – 1985 showed that annual growth rate of food demand was 3.5% while the growth rate production was only 1%. Food inflation has been pervasive throughout the 1970's, it was keeping ahead of

the general price index in a most unprecedented manner, rising more than hundred index points between 1974-1975 (Sano 1983). Neglecting the agricultural sector produces a resultant effect in the huge import bills in Nigeria (Table 2). The spiral increase in the price of food crops faster than the income of the urban occupants explain why food insecurity across the nation has always pushed nearly every labour union to negotiate with government for upward increase in the wages of the Nigerian workers.

Table 2: Payments for food imports between 1970-1981 in Nigeria

Year	Import Bill (=N=million)
1970	57.8
1971	87.9
1972	95.1
1973	126.2
1974	154.8
1975	297.9
1976	440.1
1977	736.4
1978	1020.7
1979	766.5
1980	1091.0
1981	1086.0 between Jan- Sept.

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Annual Report and Statement of Account 1972-1981.

According to Wale (1993), by 1975 Nigeria was producing 280,000 tonnes of rice locally and this rose to 504,000 tonnes in 1979. However, with the establishment of a presidential task force on rice importation in 1980, local production fell to 205, 000

tonnes. In the face of Green Revolution Programme, food importation rose from =N=1.43billion to =N=2.11billion or nearly 50%. It is also sad to note that in 1977 the total rice produced in Nigeria was 250,000 tonnes in the face of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) while 300,000 tonnes of rice were imported in the same year at the cost of =N=93.9million. However with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) rice product jumped from 283,000 tonnes in 1976 to 297,000 tonnes in 1987 and 307,000 tonnes in 1988.

Wheat production in Nigeria is below the country's requirement as only 2.6% needs could be produced under 15,000 hectares of wheat cultivation (Falaki 1984). Yet Nigeria is the greatest producer of wheat in Africa. However, food crops like yam, cassava, sorghum and millet are not yet been imported. The high rate of these food items are due to the high cost of production inputs, cost of substitutes food products, other non food commodities and the general state of the economy.

The point here is that food deficits, food importation and rising prices of food items cannot promote, enhance or foster economic development in Nigeria.

Industrial Development

Federal, State and private industries are usually folded up in the developing nations of the world for three possible reasons namely mismanagement, political conflict and /or lack of raw materials.

Over 60% of the existing small scale industries depend on agricultural raw materials in Nigeria. Table 3 shows the existing industries and corresponding raw materials.

Table 3: Nigerian industries and associated agricultural raw materials.

INDUSTRIES / FACTORIES	LOCATION	AGRICULTURAL RAW MATERIALS
Textile	Kaduna, Kano, Ado-Ekiti	Cotton lint
Sugar	Numan	Sugar cane
Brewery	Port Harcourt, Umahia, Lagos, Uyo	Barley
Bread	All States of the Federation	Wheat
Raffia	Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom	Raffia
Plywood	Sapele	Timber
Cigarette	Zaria, Ibadan, Ilorin	Tobacco
Furniture	All States of the federation	Timber
Soap/detergent/ candles	Aba, Onitsha, Lagos	Palm produce
Feedmills	Calabar, Kano, Kaduna, Aba etc	Groundnut, maize, rice, palm produce
Matches	Port Harcourt, Lagos, Benin	Gmelina
Paper	Jebba and Oku Iboku	Gmelina
Beverage	Ibadan, Lagos	Cocoa
Dyes	Ibadan, Lagos, Benin	Forest herbs
Tomapep	Bauchi	Tomatoes
Plastic rubber	Benin, Uyo, Port Harcourt, Lagos	Rubber
Fruit Juice	All cities in Nigeria	Edible fruits e.g. Pineapple, Orange, Cashew
Wine factory	Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Kaduna	Agricultural fruits
Leather products	Kano, Zaria, Kaduna	Hides and Skin
Flower gardening	All cities in Nigeria	Flowers and Ornamental plants

The growth in Nigerian industries is unstable. According to Olukoya (1993) the country recorded the highest average annual growth rate of 15.1% shortly before and after independence. This rate dropped to 6.7% during the civil war

period, after the war in 1970, it picked up gradually reaching an average of 13.9% by 1980. However, the oil boom of late 1970s contributed to the growth of industries in the country. There was enough foreign currency for importation of raw materials, until 1980s when the country suffered from dwindling oil revenue. Many industries folded up or were operating far below their installed capacity. However, beverages, tobacco, wood products, textiles, wearing apparels, foot wear, leather products and carpets/rugs flourished and survived the hard industrial climate even during structural adjustment programme of 1986. In the same year, the Babangida administration banned the importation of wheat and maize. The primary objective was to encourage the brewery industry to source for substitutes raw material and of course to encourage wheat production in Nigeria. It was also to further encourage the use of cassava for bread making instead of wheat. Sad to note that seven years later, the same government reversed itself and allowed wheat importation into the country. Consequently, accelerated wheat production programme in Kano was helpless and paralysed. Furthermore, the experiments by the brewery scientists on the use of sorghum and maize as local substitutes for barley was discontinued. At present, large mills have been established for more efficient processing and the improvement in quality of agricultural produce for higher income and quality of agricultural products. Government uses a number of local raw materials, for example the excess profit tax was abolished early in 1991 to enable industries which used to pay such tax divert the money into the development of raw materials. The Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) of Nigeria was established to enhance the development of local raw materials.

The more the industries and the associated raw materials the better the economy. The industrialised countries of the world are better off in terms of employment, development and per capita income.

Employment Opportunities

Provision of employment is a remarkable achievement accompanied with agricultural sector in Nigeria. At present the working population that is engaged in Nigerian agriculture is about 65 percent. In the 70s, the population was over 70 percent. The present trend in agriculture is to have larger modern farms and fewer farmers. The larger the number of farmers in the working population of a nation the lesser the manufacturing industries, the lesser the productivity per capita, the smaller the individual farm size and the farming method is mainly traditional.

In the U.S.A. only 4-5% of the population are farmers and the country can feed her citizens and other nations with wheat, maize and rice. In Canada, it is 60% and Canada can supply cow milk to many countries of the world. It is only African countries that farming population swells up to 90 and 95% as in Ethiopia and Tanzania respectively.

The point here is that agricultural sector is the largest industry in Nigeria. Besides, it is more accommodating and very generous considering the rural farming population – skilled, unskilled, illiterates and literate. According to Awa and Uchu (1987) the various broad areas of agriculture which Nigerians take up employment are:

- ◆ Self employment as an owner or tenant farmer
- ◆ On farm employment as a paid employee
- ◆ Farm service occupation
- ◆ Farm machinery sales and service occupation
- ◆ Farm supplies and equipment occupations
- ◆ Livestock industry occupation
- ◆ Occupations in crops, forestry and soil conservation
- ◆ Occupations in ornamental horticulture, wildlife and recreation.

Professional occupations in agriculture e.g. Agricultural professionals in the research institutes, agricultural lecturers in schools, colleges and polytechnics. This category (professional agriculturist) does not belong to vocational agriculture.

However, majority of workers in agriculture are those without special skill but have farming experiences. Professionals in agriculture are relatively very few. At present, the food deficit, sometimes food scarcity and spiral increase in food prices have motivated so many Nigerians who are not farmers to partake in home gardening or livestock production or both at below subsistence level. They are referred to part time farmers. The part time farmers practice rentage and pledging land tenure system. They are mostly found in South Eastern Nigeria, middle belt and Savanna regions of Nigeria. In cities like Lagos, Kano, Abuja, Kaduna, Onitsha, Benin and Aba etc some Nigerians are still involved in part time farming and in the marketing of agricultural produce apart from their main non-agricultural business.

Development Of Rural Communities

The growth of a nation does not only limit to few citizens in towns and cities. The development of rural communities was the emphasis for the creation of local government areas in Nigeria as stated in sections 27 and 28 of 'Local Government' (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Degree No.15 of 1989. It is unfortunate that very few local government chairmen live up to expectation. The location of agro-based industries in local government areas also assist in the provision of infrastructures and basic amenities. Textiles industries in Kaduna and Ado-Ekiti, plywood industry in Sapele, Tobacco company in Zaria also help in the development of the rural communities.

Feeder roads are constructed to the food basket areas in many parts of Nigeria. This road construction is evidenced in some states like Benue, Yola, Cross River, Ogun, Oyo, Yobe, Akwa Ibom, Adamawa among others. Directorates of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI) was established in Babangida administration to establish feeder roads and provide portable water in rural areas among other responsibilities. The Better Life Programme also emphasised on the development of rural women by providing feed mills, oil palm

mills, cassava mills, weaving centres, sewing centres and also established model farms in many rural communities all aimed at improving the lots of the rural dwellers.

Big time farmers for examples Late M.K.O Abiola, Samuel Ogbemudia, and Olusegun Obasanjo provided not only compensation to the land owners but they also demanded for rural electrification and road construction. This is an indication that agriculture in Nigeria also assists in the development of rural communities.

Peace And Unity Development

By estimate, over fifteen different farmers Associations are established in Nigeria. Every food crop or cash crop farmer has an Association. Similarly, every domesticated animal farmer has an Association. Such associations include Farm Management Association of Nigeria, Cocoa Farmers Association, Oil Palm farmers, Pineapple farmers, Cassava farmers, Ginger farmers, Snail farmers, Poultry farmers, Pig Farmers associations etc. The Federal, State, and Local governments provide financial support to each of these registered Associations. This gesture helps to boost the production of each food crop or animal. Consequently the standard of living of the farmers has started to improve.

Most importantly, series of meeting by each of these associations across the Country foster peace and Unity.

In addition, local farmers also have their respective co-operative societies which have gained government recognition and financial assistance. In these Societies the farmers usually pool their resources together to solve their agricultural production problems and increase their productivity. Higher productivity is related to higher income and the higher the income the more the personal tax paid to government for national development.

Environmental Security And Human Health

The development of any nation cannot be achieved satisfactorily in the face of environmental insecurity. Agricultural sector particularly forestry department plans the environmental security against windstorm, desert encroachment, and erosion menace. It is the forestry sub sector that provides seedlings for annual tree planting across the Country. Tree planting and forest reserves are also an investment in the agricultural sub sector for the realisation of national revenue. Neglecting the environmental security in a nation would cause a huge million of Naira for rehabilitation and reconstruction of structures damaged by wind and erosion. However, the bulk of environmental problems are recently addressed by the Ministry of environment.

Agriculture is related to preventive and curative medicine. Today Western medicine is demanded by many Nigerians with the corresponding increase in the prices of drugs and services. Alternative means could only be found in the forestry sub –sector. Medicinal herbs in the form of leaves, barks, seeds, fruits and flower are forest by products. Recent reports in our daily news media and advertisement over the radio claimed that trado-medicine can be used to cure hypertension, Malaria, high blood pressure, jaundice, diabetes, eczema, venereal diseases, tuberculosis, small pox, measles among others. We should remember that a healthy nation is a prosperous nation. The problems of trado –medicines in Nigeria lie on inadequate research, unawareness, ignorance of proper usage and dependency on Western drugs.

SUMMARY

Nigerian Agriculture

Agriculture, the oldest known profession.
The mother of the earth, indeed you are
Your contributions to National growth
Evidence here and there.
Nigerian environment attracts your venture.
Abundant returns the soil provides
Forest products numerous to mention
Oh! Agriculture our good companion.

The climate of my mother land
Crops of various kinds produced
Animal production a success everywhere
The body of waters bring abundant fish.

Agriculture in the independence era
Supplied the nation with all her needs
Crude oil, blinded the nation
Agriculture becomes a wounded sector.

Past government regimes deepened the wound
Operation Feed the Nation, no longer heard
And many programmes, all short lived
And died the death as always is.

Agricultural opportunities are not discriminatory
Illiterates and elites find a refuge
With hoes and machetes, they feed the nation
Lazy citizens only cry of hunger

Oh! Nigeria, our mother land
Sweet and dear, still you are
With fertile land, our ends do meet
On agriculture we'll ever stand
(Ekpo, T. U.U, 2002).

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