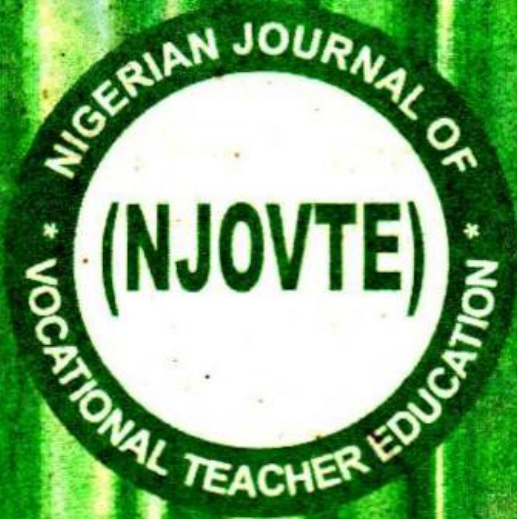


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THE CONSTRAINTS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL AND RELATED POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reveals that technical, administrative, socio-cultural, and political constraints contribute to inadequate implementation of agricultural and related policies and programmes in Nigeria. Formulation of strategies to overcome the identified constraints have been highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural policies are those plans of action emanated from laid down aims by government or political party. Several agricultural policies in Nigeria include:

- (a) Trade policy in which some agricultural crops are banned for importation in order to encourage local production of food crops and raw materials for industries.
- (b) Pricing policy: This enhances stabilization of prices of agricultural commodities and farmer's income and promotes agricultural exports.
- (c) Agricultural land policy: This stipulates that land belongs to the government and thereby discourages the traditional land tenure system.
- (d) Exchange rate policy: This contributes to ensure an equilibrium exchange rate for the Nigerian currency (Naira) under free market conditions.

On the other hand, agricultural programmes refer to those plans set up to achieve the agricultural policies. Some agricultural programmes in Nigeria include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, National Accelerated Food Production programmes (NAFPP) and Agricultural Development Project (ADP).

Related Agricultural Programmes cover those programmes that are partly involved in agricultural production or marketing directly or indirectly. Such programmes

are National Directorate for employment (NDE), United Nations Development Project (UNDP), Better Life for Rural Women and Family Support Programme among others.

Those articulated agricultural policies and programmes are formulated and set up to make Nigerians self-sufficiency in food production and for Nigeria to become food basket for many nations of the world. However, the formulation of agricultural policies emanated from national economic depression and political interests.

Ashanti (1993) advanced the economics crises in Nigeria as one of the reasons for the set up of a number of agricultural policies and programmes to salvage the economy from total collapse.

Most of our agricultural and related programmes are laudable and if they have been adequately implemented they would be inevitable instruments to rapid recovery of agricultural depressions. Sad to note that succeeding governments in Nigeria erroneously believe that the more agricultural programmes the more the food crops and animals production in the country, it is very common to note that the government focuses less interest in the evaluation of the past levels of programmes implementation. Oni (1972) stated that the performance of farm settlement scheme was not impressive and the scheme was formerly declared a failure in 1972.

The objective of this paper is to identify constraints to implementation of agricultural and related policies and programmes in Nigeria. Strategies to overcome the constraints have been adequately highlighted.

THE ROLES OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES IN NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY

They are:

- (1) Educating the farmers on the utilization of agricultural innovations through home to home visits and group discussion on regular basis by Agricultural Extension Agents.
- (2) Enhancing large-scale production of food and cash crops by individual and Government participation.
- (3) Attracting loans at low interest rate to farmers for agricultural expansion.
- (4) Encouraging cooperate farming and farm settlement scheme
- (5) Enticing rural and educated women into agricultural ventures of high profitability
- (6) Inculcating in the farmers the spirit of self reliance through agricultural enterprise
- (7) Assisting to raise the farmers standard of living through self help agricultural project
- (8) Mechanization should be encouraged in agriculture, in terms of creating tractor units nearer to the people.

THE DISCUSSION ON THE CONSTRAINTS TO IMPLEMENTATION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA

1. TECHNICAL CONSTRAINTS:

The efficiency, productivity and quality personnel are grouped under technical constraints. In addition, any physical barrier or problem of quality facilities are considered as technical barriers. Inadequate quality of farm inputs, problem of transportation, ineffective agricultural extension system and rising market price of agricultural commodities are technical constraints.

- a. **Inadequate Quality and Quantity of Farm Inputs:** Despite several attempts to increase food production in Nigeria there has never been a corresponding supply of relevant and adequate farm inputs to the farmers. Among such inputs are fertilizers, improved seeds, herbicides and insecticides. Ashanti (1993) stated that introduction of fertilizer subsidy is one the policies and strategies employed by federal government in the past to boost food production in Nigeria, but statistics indicate that the total quantity of fertilizer demanded by farmers in the country yearly stands at 2.9 million metric tonnes while the government could only supply about 1.5 million metric tonnes yearly. The government subsidy on herbicides, farm tools, and pesticides are periodic events. In Akwa Ibom State such exercise was experienced when Poverty Alleviation Programme was recently launched in the state. Fertilizer procurement and distribution would remain impressive over the radio announcement; while over 70% of the farmers are in total need of even one bag of fertilizer.
- b. **Transportation Problem:** Feeder roads in Nigeria are yet to recover from impassability in South Eastern Zone of Nigeria. Food crops reach Urban centers at high charge of transportation. The mass transportation programme could not meet its objectives because of teeming Nigerian population. Attempts to establish good roads in rural areas were made by Directorates for Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure but in most cases the opening and grading were temporary measures because most of the roads were untarred. Today the situation of road problem is beyond human tolerance in many parts of Nigeria.
- c. **Inadequate Expertise and Local Invention:** Independency of foreign technology is still our common problem. Rainwater in Nigeria can be impounded through irrigation technology for use during the long season. Such technology needs the assistance of foreign investors. Local inventions are grossly inadequate to support several programmes without dependency on government assistance. India can boast of local agricultural inventions, which contribute to improve their agricultural bedrock.
- d. **Ineffective Agricultural Extension System:** Extension delivery system must be kept in place in order to transform new agricultural policies into laudable farm output for the interest of the masses (Njoku, 1991). There is still inadequate link

between researchers, policy makers and the rural farmers. Most of the illiterate farmers require simpler agricultural packages for implementation.

- e. **Rising Market Price of Agricultural Food Crops and Animals:** Agricultural marketing board were set up to stabilize prices of Agricultural commodities and income of farmers. A review of the performance of marketing boards shows that most of them failed to achieve the objective setting them up despite the huge financial expenditure incurred on the board by government. The reason could be emanated from improper technical guidance for successful implementation. Agricultural planners may come up with farm inputs that are not affordable by the poor rural farmers thus contributing to the ineffectiveness of agricultural policies implementation.

2. **POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS:**

Changes in government, inconsistency of government policies, and unavoidably political influence are the political constraints affecting the implementation of agricultural policies and programmes as discussed below:-

- a. **Changes In Government And Inconsistency of Government Policy:** Between 1975 – 1999 Nigeria witnesses various changes in government namely; Murtala Mohammed administration, Obasanjo (1976) administration, Shagari administration, Babangida administration, Shonekan interim government, Abacha administration and Abubakar administration. Each administration came with new style of agricultural policies and programmes except, Murtala, Abubakar and Shonekan administration were short term and could not formulate agricultural policies and programmes. According to Anon (1986) past agricultural policies in Nigeria, have been characterized by frequent changes or instability. This instability also resulted in the instability of agricultural policies. Sad enough, no new government in Nigeria is interested in implementation of existing agricultural programmes to perpetuate their existing personalities. For example, Operation Feed the Nation which was introduced by Obasanjo's administration was replaced by green Revolution in Shagari's regime.
- b. **Unavoidably Political Influence:** Political influence over the siting of cottage industries for utilization of raw materials in Agro-based industries may result in political crises that jeopardize the project. The farms and cottage industries established by Family Support Programme and Better Life for Rural Women were sited by the political authorities without due regards to the nearness of raw materials needed by such industries. Most political influences are selfish oriented, which serve as detriment to the common masses.

3. **ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS:**

- a. **Lack Of Adequate and sincere Personnel In Policy Formulation:** Policy makers do not always understand how rural farmers work and what their problems are, do they necessarily take into account the real needs of the farmers.

Policy formulation requires well-trained and highly experienced staff. On the other hand, programme managers need to be well trained so that administrative work can be organized effectively. Lack of subject master specialist seriously hampers policy implementation, since their part is necessary in formulation of new agricultural policies.

- b. **Inadequate Sectoral Budget Allocation:** The Federal Government Sectoral allocation of Fund for Agriculture Capital Expense in (1975-80) amounts to ₦1,012.6 billion representing 3.9 percent of their Federal Government Capital Allocation. When the allocation to agriculture was compared to other sector, one can simply know that agriculture had not been given the primacy it deserves despite the fact that, Agriculture is the "BED ROCK OF DEVELOPMENT", (Idachaba, 1985).

Table 1: Sectoral distribution of federal government capital allocation in third plan period (1975 – 1980)

Sector	Amount (IN ₦ Bn 1975 – 1980)	Percentage Distribution
Economic Sector	17,468.8.00	66.8
Agriculture	17,012.6.00	3.9
Manufacturing	4,907.2.00	10.2
Power	432.0.00	3.6
Mining and Quarrying	2,680.4.00	18.8
Transportation and Communication	7,613.4.00	29.1
Others	525.9.00	2.4
Social Sector	2,272.9.00	8.7
Education	1,656.2.00	6.3
Health	314.2.00	1.2
Environmental and Development	2,388.6.00	9.1
Administration	4,034.7.00	15.4

Source: Third National Development plan (1975 – 80) Federal office of Statistics. Lagos.

This relative neglect of agriculture has been due to priorities in other commitments. The ultimate release of funds for agriculture affects seasonality nature of agriculture. If fund allocation was not released on the right time for farming activities, then increase in production can be hardly achieved.

- c. **Inadequate Funding:** A careful examination of state Government Annual report shows that inadequate funding of agriculture is almost an annual apology. Poor funding therefore results in streamlining policy implementation

- d. **Poor Work Ethics:** These words summarize the attitude of many Nigerian workers in public employment as well as agricultural enterprises and ministries.

Many arrive late to their places of work, many leave before closing time. In the hours during which the worker is expected to work, the commitment to the job is half-hearted. The idea of "putting in a good day's work for the wages" is yet to have meaning for them. However, poor attitude to work may be caused by late payment of salary. The wrong attitude to work breeds other ills. One of these is corruption.

4. **SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRAINT:**

The land tenure system which deals with ownership of land control over its use as practised in Nigeria impedes the implementation of mechanized agricultural policy.

In 1971, for instance, 59% of all farmers in the Southern states, each had under two hectares of land while corresponding figure for Northern farmers was 35%. The relatively smallholding of the Southern farmer hinders the implementation of tractor hire service policy.

Public Criticism of programme can serve as a constraint to the implementation of such a programme. A Structural adjustment Programme set up in Babagida's regime touched every sector of the economy and played encouraging role in the promotion of vocational agriculture. For example, rice production jumped from 283,000 tonnes in 1976 to 297,000 tonnes in 1987 and 307,000 tonnes in 1988 (Wale 1993). However, public Criticism on the programme by the masses due to a spiral increase in the price of food crops faster than the income of the urban occupants contributed to the poor implementation of the programme (Sano 1983).

Banning of wheat production in Babagida's regime was seriously criticized, as wheat production in the country has been grossly inadequate. Falaki (1984) reports that wheat production could only satisfy 2.5% of the country's requirement, therefore banning of wheat importation should be commensurated with a programme that favours wheat production at the grassroots.

THE EXPECTED ROLES OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES TO SOLVING AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS

They are:

- (1) The problems of the grassroots farmers should be considered in the planning and formulations of agricultural policies and programmes
- (2) Action – force committee on agricultural programmes implementation should be set – up to evaluate and appraise the programmes regularly
- (3) Agricultural workshops and seminars on the utilization of agricultural innovations should be incorporated into the programmes
- (4) Construction and Maintenance of feeder roads for readily food distribution and marketing should be encouraged
- (5) Irrigation schemes should be encouraged to enhance all year round crop production

- (6) Direct production of high valued economic crops should be encouraged
- (7) Production of adequate raw materials necessary for poultry and animal feeds should be intensified
- (8) Fertilizer production and procurement policies should be intensified to make fertilizer affordable for grassroots farmers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION:

The constraints to implementation of agricultural and related policies and programmes in Nigeria emanated from many corrupt tendencies of the personnel, political parties and economic instability. The low and slow developing processes of technological growth and manpower also contribute to poor agricultural programmes implementation. From the various constraints discussed in this paper, it is now understood that success in implementing agricultural policies is a challenge to agricultural policy planners, political parties and Nigerian Government in particular.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to combat the constraints of implementing agricultural and related policies and programmes are highlighted as follows:

1. Agricultural and related programmes should aim at solving pressing agricultural problems in the interest of the masses.
2. In National and State Budgetary Allocation, agricultural sector should be given priority it deserves to ensure adequate funding of the programmes.
3. Experienced and qualified administration personnel and competent technicians should be secured before the plan of action in any agricultural programme.
4. Continuation of agricultural programme by succeeding government should be mandatory except that such programme is not found rewarding to the masses.
5. The land tenure act of Nigeria is embracing. However, government should claim enough land mass in villages in order to make land in rural areas available for less privileged, young school leavers and agricultural graduates who are interested in production agriculture. The impact of land tenure act is not felt in the rural areas hence the traditional tenure system is still very prevalent.
6. A ban importation of agricultural food crops should not be a spontaneous policy. Government should prepare enough ground before the take off of the programme by making such crops or substitute crops production embraced by majority of farmers.
7. Periodical evaluation of agricultural programmes by efficient personnel becomes imperative to viable agricultural programmes.

8. Provision of farm inputs at subsidized price to the grassroots farmers should be intensified.
9. Government and private sectors should also intensify extension service delivery system to the rural farmers without technical constraints.

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