

Entrepreneurship: A Vehicle for Sustainable Food Production in Nigeria

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Abstract

Agriculture has been with mankind since the creation of the entire world and is as old as man himself. The developed countries have made great improvements in its practices, whereby few farmers conveniently feed their nations unlike in Nigeria where commercial farming is still at its infancy. One of the goals of the millennium development goals (MDGs) is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger using agricultural machinery and rural transformation. Adequate and sustainable food will enhance better income through commercialisation of agriculture and agricultural entrepreneurship. Agricultural enterprise accommodates over 70% of labour in Nigeria, contributing to GDP after petroleum. The ecological diversity, teeming population and production potential of various agro-ecologies offer the best platform for entrepreneurship in agriculture for sustainable food production and agro- raw materials. This paper focuses on harnessing agricultural potential of Nigeria for sustainable food production and food security for economic well-being of an average Nigerian. The methodology adopted in this paper which is a review include: the narrative – textual case study (NTCS), a social science research methods that relies on, and sources the needed information from empirical data of relevant authors. Our findings among others include list of different agricultural entrepreneurship that can bring good income, attitude require for desirable result and rural transformation needed that can promote agricultural enterprises in Nigeria. The paper posits that when an agricultural practice in Nigeria is approached from entrepreneurial angle, it would help solve the problems of unemployment, food scarcity and malnutrition, and poverty among the rural dwellers in Nigeria. This will consequently increase per capita income, and standard of living of people in Nigeria and her sub-region.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Vehicle, Sustainable, Food Production

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, sustainable economic growth and development experienced by the advanced nations of the world like United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, France et cetera spilled over to other parts of the world including Nigeria through the power of globalisation which has led to four identified global threats that has four significant implications for the food securities of cities according to Kenneth Dahlberg (1998) as reported by Ojo and Adebayo. These four threats are (1) incipient population explosions human, livestock and cars. According to them, the threat of increasing human number and urbanisation is clear but less often considered is the explosion since World War II is livestock. (2) Global warming which is an issue beset by uncertainty and confusion (3) the loss of biodiversity is a long term threat to global sustainability. (4) While the last is the threat of global poverty and globalisation of injustice.

According to (FAO 2008), approximately one billion people worldwide are undernourished, many more suffer from micronutrients deficiencies and the absolute numbers tend to increase further, especially in sub Saharan Africa.

Achievement of food security in any country is typically an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which hinder economic development (Davies, 2009). According to (Gebremedhin, 2000), food insecurity and hunger are fore runners to nutritional, health, human and economic development problems. This connotes deprivation of basic necessities of life. As such, food security has been considered as a universal indicator of households and individual personal wellbeing, the consequences of hunger and malnutrition are adversely affecting the livelihood and wellbeing of a massive number of people and inhibiting the development of many poor countries.

Food is an important weapon in international diplomacy. The importance of food can be seen from two points according to Bamisaye (1987), (1) food is life, hence food is an instrument of national power and (2) food is used to achieve political ends, because if people are well fed, they would be able and ready to contribute effectively to the implementation of government policies because a hungry nation is a weak one while a region subjected to famine and starvation is an insecure one. Achievement of food security in any country is typically an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which hinder economic development (Davies, 2009) which is why all developed and some developing countries make concerted effort to increase their food production capacity as according to FAO (2008).

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this paper is to explore the means through which agricultural practices can be engaged in lucratively. The specific objectives are

- (i) To highlight steps that can be taken to improve agricultural productions.
- (ii) To highlight steps to be taken to make food supply sustainable in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in this paper is the narrative-textual case study (NTCS) method. NTCS is a social science research method that employs intensively, the information, data and academic materials made available and by information communication technology facilities such as intranet, internet, worldwide web, online databases, e-libraries et cetera (Abouzeedan and Leijon, 2007). The choice of this method is informed by the fact that NTCS combines the use of quantitative and qualitative observation, text content analysis and available official statistics in different proportions for problem solving or problem-identification depending on the objectives of the research (Ibid). This method also allows opinion of various workers from diverse back ground.

CONCEPTUALN FRAMEWORK

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, as the profile of the country with its diverse resources encouraged entrepreneurial education, culture, attitude and behaviour (Raimi, Shokunbi and Peluola, 2010). When viewed as an academic endeavour, Entrepreneurship can be defined as a specialised knowledge that entails teaching learners the skills of risk-taking, innovation arbitrage and co-ordination of factors of production in the creation of a new products or service for new and existing users in human society for economic ends (Acs and Storey 2004, Minniti and L`evesque 2008, Naude'2007 Kanothi, 2009). The essence of entrepreneurship lies in the perception and exploitation of opportunities in the realm of small, medium and large businesses. It has to do with bringing about a different use of national resources to new combinations (Filion, 1997). Since the aim of an individual for engaging in an occupation is to be successful and as well make money, entrepreneurship is the vehicle that will enable him achieve this objective and as well make the product of the farmer available to the general populace through network of distribution.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is defined by the world commission on economic development as follows 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. (WCED, 1987). The concept of sustainable development requires balancing environmental, societal and economic considerations in the pursuit of development. Sustainability includes generation of equity, natural resource conservation, environmental preservation and restoration.

With the above definition, the WCED aim to address the growing concern 'about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.' Min essence, it is to reduce negative environmental impact and improve the quality of life of people.

FOOD SECURITY/FOOD SUPPLY

Food security has a long history as an organising principle for social and economic development (Maxwell and Frankenber, 1992). The declared aim of the federal government of Nigeria's agricultural policy for vision 20:20:20 are to (i) attain food security, (ii) increase production and productivity, (iii) generate employment and income, and (iv) expand exports and reduce food imports thereby freeing resources critical infrastructural development and delivery of social services'.

The idea of food security was first presented at the world food conference in 1974 and it is viewed solely from the perspective of having adequate availability of food on a national scale. Today, it is a condition in which all people have access at all times to enough food of an adequate nutritional quality for a healthy and active life. (World Bank, 1986; as cited in Tollens, 2000). There are four dimensions to this: (i) availability of sufficient amount of food which is a function of food production (ii) stability of supply overtime which depends on the ability to preserve/store produced food and supplement available food through imports if necessary (iii) access to the available food which depends on income levels and its distribution and (iv) food utilization which encompasses procurement, ingestion and digestion all of which are dependent in nutritional quality, education and health (Tollens, 2000).

According to Adebayo (2010), food security exists at both the macro and micro levels. National food security, the macro dimension, is possession by a nation of the capacity to procure enough food through production or imports to feed its population. This according to him is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for household food security and individual food security since food availability on a national scale does not preclude the lack of adequate access to such food by many of the inhabitants due to weak markets, poor infrastructure and information system, and inequality in resource and income distribution.

CHALLENGES OF FOOD SECURITY/SUPPLY

Nigeria blessed as it is, with abundant agro-ecological resources and diversity, has become one of the largest food importers in sub-Saharan Africa. (Idachaba, 2009). Nigeria has about 79 million hectares of cultivable land out of which 32 million hectares are cultivated. It is on record that agriculture used to be the most important sector of the Nigerian economy from the standpoint of rural employment, food production and fibre, and export earning prior to the discovery of oil. However, with the advent of petroleum, this country's major foreign exchange earner and became grossly neglected (Oni, 2008). Agriculture generates employment for about 70% of Nigeria's population and contributes about 40% to the gross domestic product (GDP).

The neglect of agriculture due to oil boom has created disillusionment in agricultural activities that has manifested in massive rural-urban migration and this has reduced the output of food per capital, thus making Nigeria one of the least in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore there is the threat of hunger and poverty as 70% of the population lives on less than N100.00 (US\$0.7) per day and youth unemployment is very high (Oni, 2008). The population of Nigeria is a challenge to meeting the food supply requirement of the nation as Nigeria's population as at 2011 stands at 162 million people and it is expected to be between 230 and 430 million people by 2050.

Over 90% of agricultural practices in Nigeria are rain dependent which leaves them to the vagaries of the weather. Most Nigerian farmers are subsistent farmers with small farm holding, and they account for 80% of all farm holdings. Access to high quality and pest resistant seed as well as agrochemicals at reduced rate is a problem.

Food production cannot match the population growth which made the population to depend on imported staple foods with the attendant effect of rising import bill. Rural-Urban drift by the youths is a challenge to retain them, educate them and employ them productively. Policy somersault, i.e. frequent changes in government policies which results in starting another programme without completing the first one.

People's orientation regarding agriculture as a vocation for the illiterate is also a challenge to sustainable food supply as the educated ones do not plant staple foods but for export. e.g. Pineapple plantation, planting of mushrooms and other exotic crops that add nothing to our quest for food security/supply.

Farmers are not well remunerated which discourages people from going into farming. For instance, Nigeria's cassava is being exported to China, yet the effect of the income is not felt by the average farmer. Corruption has been the bane of Nigerian society and agriculture is not left out. Effect of corruption can be felt in the fertilizer contract, River Basin Authorities etc.

Climate change is also a challenge facing food supply in Nigeria. This affects the volume of rainfall, temperature changes and often led to extremes in some cases as a result of global warming.

CONSEQUENCES OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity and hunger are fore runners to nutritional, health, human and economic development problems. They connote deprivation of basic necessities of life. As such, food security has been considered as a universal indicator of households' and individuals' personal well-being. The consequences of Hunger and malnutrition are adversely affecting the livelihood and well-being of a massive number of people and inhibiting the development of many poor countries (Gebremedhin, 2000). The effect of food insecurity i.e. hunger and malnutrition targeted by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is illustrated by Diouf(2005) as follows.

- (i) Hungry children starts school later, if at all, drop out sooner and learn less while they do attend, stalling progress towards universal primary and secondary education (MDG 2).
- (ii) Poor nutrition for women is one of the most damaging outcomes of gender inequality. It undermines women's health, stunts their opportunities for education and empowerment and impedes progress towards gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG 3).
- (iii) As the underlying causes of more than half of all child deaths, hunger and malnutrition are the greatest obstacles to reducing child mortality (MDG 4).
- (iv) Hunger and malnutrition increase both the incidence and the fatality rate of conditions that cause a majority of maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth (MDG 5).
- (v) Hunger and poverty compromise people's immune systems, force them to adopt risky survival strategies, and greatly increase the risk of infection and death from HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases (MDG 6).
- (vi) Under the burden of chronic poverty and hunger, livestock herders, subsistence farmers, forest dwellers and fish folk may use their natural environment in unsustainable ways, leading to further deterioration of their livelihood conditions. Empowering the poor and hungry as custodians of land, waters, forest and biodiversity can advance both food security and environmental sustainability (MDG 7).

GOVERNMENT EFFORT SO FAR

The Nigerian government is not oblivious of the fact that food has become a very important tool in international

diplomacy and so has taken several steps in order to be able feed citizens, these includes;

- (i) The General Olusegun Obasanjo regime in 1976 started Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). An agricultural revolution aimed at encouraging every Nigerian to plant something anyhow, anywhere including their backyard.
- (ii) Alhaji Shehu Shagari regime in 1979 embarked on his own named Green Revolution which was a mere change of name without any meaningful change from Obasanjo's own in terms of policy direction, content etc.
- (iii) The second coming of Obasanjo as a civilian president in 1999 brought the introduction of the 'cassava initiative'. This programme was to promote the productivity and exportation of cassava even though it resulted into a glut
- (iv) In 2003 Chief Olusegun Obasanjo again introduced the 'Rice Initiative' which did not succeed due to the fact that grant was not released to match up with the intent of the initiative.
- (v) The Food and Agricultural Organisation assisted Special Programme for Food Security is to assist 109 farming communities across the country to enhance food production to substantially increase the level of income of the farmers.
- (vi) Root and Tuber Expansion Programme: This programme is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development which made available to farmers the necessary information on improved processing technology and expansion technique for cassava and cassava products.
- (vii) Fadama development project which is to ensure all season farming through irrigation system or naturally flooded areas for some crops and plants especially vegetables.
- (viii) River Basin Authorities were established during Shagari regime also to encourage the use of irrigation by constructing dams to store waters to irrigate farms to ensure all season farming.
- (ix) Policy instrument and direction by the government in the form of :
 - a. Outright ban of some items. E.g. imported chickens which "has unleashed boundless energy in the areas of livestock production and agriculture" (Presidential National Day Broadcast, Nigerian Tribune, October 1,2004).
 - b. Selling of fertilisers to farmers at subsidised rate
 - c. Provision of credit to farmers through strengthening of state own agricultural banks and also through the bank of Agriculture.
- (x) Establishment of a National Food Crisis Response Programme (NFCRP) as a response to the recent food crisis in the country.
- (xi) The Food Security Thematic Group (FSTG) was also established in 2009 to which Food and Agricultural Organization was invited for guidance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the paper Nigeria cannot be said to be food secure, what, with the looming population explosion as seen from the paper. It should be noted that a country that cannot formulate and effectively implement agricultural and food policies may find it difficult use its citizens as catalyst for sustainable development.

In order to eliminate the increasing reliance on food import, the following recommendations are suggested.

- (i) Integrated rural development: This is to uplift the standard of living of rural dwellers through the provision of infrastructures like roads, schools electricity and stem the urban-Rural drift by the youths.
- (ii) Easy access to farm inputs by the farmers: This is important since 45% of GDP is generated from agriculture and 70% of the poor live in the rural areas and derive their livelihood primarily from small-scale agriculture and rural activities.
- (iii) Adequate budgetary Allocation: Government allocation to agriculture at all levels of governance should reflect the importance of food supply to the nation and it should meet up with 10% allocation recommended by Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).
- (iv) Appropriate policy for the food sub-sector: While an expansive agricultural programme is being pursued, there is also the need for a national food policy which seeks to assure all citizens access to food supply that is reasonably priced, relatively safe, adequate in quantity, and nutritional in quality (Claffey and Stucker, 1982 Nyangito, 1999).
- (v) Political Stability: This is necessary to ensure peace of mind in terms of production and distribution of farm produce. The killing and maiming in farming communities of the Northern part of Nigeria and as well as the killing of food products merchants from the Southern part is still fresh in our memory. This should stop if government is serious about achieving food security.
- (vi) Embracing biotechnology in agriculture in order to :
 - (a) Increase crop yield
 - (b) Improve crop quality
 - (c) Reduce production cost.

It is our believe that all hand must be on deck if agricultural entrepreneur will provide the desired results to food security, job, wealth creation and enhanced standard of life.

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