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Chapter

Agricultural Sector Policy Periods and Growth Pattern in Nigeria (1960–2020): Implications on Agricultural Performance

Ufedo M. Shaibu

Abstract

This study examined agricultural policy periods in Nigeria (1960–2020) and the sector's growth pattern during the period. Three specific policy periods were introduced: the independence and first decade (1960–1969), oil boom and policy reconstruction (1970–1985), and policy stabilization era (1986–2020). Trend analysis was carried out to establish the pattern of agricultural output during these policy periods. The overall share of agriculture to Nigeria GDP has a steady downward trend in the first policy period (1960–1969). However, the agricultural sector of Nigeria significantly contributed to its GDP, especially in the early 60's. The country experienced stagnated pattern of growth in the agriculture sector within the oil boom and policy reconstruction period. There was an increasing trend in the era of policy stabilization (1986–2020) associated with the availability of a national policy document on agriculture which propelled the rolling out of various programmes and strategies targeted at massive agricultural production.

Keywords: agricultural performance, agricultural policy, growth pattern, rural development

1. Introduction

The important role of the agricultural sector in contributing to Nigeria's economy is reflected in various agricultural policies which birthed reforms under both the military and civilian regimes. Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa started implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes in the late 1970s and by the 1980s, this is sequel to the belief that the implementation of reforms had become a condition to receive loans from international donor agencies such as the World Bank [1].

In Nigeria, Operation Feed the Nation was launched by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration in 1976, with the aim of encouraging self-sufficiency in food production and participation in agricultural production [2]. Between 1976 and 1980, the country also launched the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Schemes, established agricultural commodity marketing and pricing boards, and promulgated the land

use policy. An agricultural extension and technology transfer policy, input supply and distribution policy and an agricultural research policy were also established. Furthermore, the regime established the River Basin Development Authorities, agricultural cooperatives policy and agricultural mechanization policy [3].

There was the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (1980–1989) introduced as suggested by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [4]. The essence of SAP was to transform agriculture from the peasant level of production to commercial or large-scale production in order to increase its contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while using it as a tool for employment creation and food self-sufficiency. In addition to the establishment of the Green Revolution policy, the government also embarked on the creation of several agricultural research institutes such as the: National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI); National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service (NAERLS); Veterinary Research Institute (VRI); Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria (CRIN); Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN); and Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN); with the aim of increasing agricultural research and encouraging the study of agriculture in tertiary institutions.

Evidence revealed that Nigeria did not have an explicit statement of National Agricultural Policy document prior to 1988 [3]. At independence in 1960, national planning and policies were formulated to achieve economic growth and development. Nigeria used unarticulated administrative and political pronouncements to guide, support, and facilitate the operations of agricultural activities [5].

The 1988 National Agricultural Policy document produced by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (FMARD) was decreed by the Federal Government of Nigeria to be operationalized for a minimum of fifteen (15) years with the aim of improving agricultural production and creating export markets. The 1988 policy document which became operational in 1989 [6, 7] was reviewed and the country came up with a new Agricultural Policy document of 2001 with the broad aim of achieving food self-sufficiency and food security [8].

In 2011, there was the formulation of the Nigerian Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) to revitalize the agricultural sector [9]. The goal of ATA was to achieve a hunger-free Nigeria through an agricultural sector that drives income growth, accelerates the achievement of food and nutritional security, generates employment and transforms Nigeria into a leading player in global food markets to grow wealth for millions of farmers [9]. The Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) of 2016–2020 (Green Alternative) was developed by the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari as the national agricultural policy framework to drive the growth and development of agriculture in Nigeria. It builds on the successes of ATA and it is specifically aimed at producing enough fresh and high-quality foods to the Nigeria market while ensuring food security [10]. The loftiness of the outcome of these policies – reforms and programmes and their goals notwithstanding, Nigeria is not self-sufficient in food production and the majority of her citizens are poor and food insecure [11, 12]. What then, is the agricultural growth pattern during various policy periods?

2. Government policies and plans in Nigeria (1960–2020)

Nigeria has over the years, experienced four officially recognized planning phases preceding the Structural Adjustment phase since independence geared towards food self-sufficiency vis-à-vis food security. These are the first National development

plan 1962–1968, the second National development plan 1970–1979, the third National Development plan 1975–1980, and the fourth National development plan 1980–1985.

The First National Development Plan of 1962–1968 was Nigeria's first official planning where deliberate efforts were made to quantify national objectives. This phase primarily focused on export development but could not meet its expectations due to poor planning, poor feasibility studies, improper valuation, political interference, and low academic input. Food production was also neglected during this planning phase [13].

The second development plan (1970–1979) was aimed at reintegrating, reconstructing and rehabilitating (3Rs) the economy after Nigeria's civil war. The plan did not give agriculture the much-needed priority. The sector only had 12.9% allocation when compared with transportation and communication sectors which got 28% each of the funds budgeted for the plan. This period was the era of Nigeria's oil discovery.

The oil boom of the 1970s caused a decline in agricultural production as attention tilted to other sectors of the economy. While the manufacturing sector grew at 13.3% in 1975 and 1976, agriculture recorded a growth in the reverse order (–2.3%). Consumption increased at a geometric rate, driving massive food importation, capital equipment, and raw materials. The country's importation overshoots its ceiling by 46.5%. Food production could not match with the expanding economy and the food crisis also became evident as food importation grew by almost 400%.

The third National Development plan (1975–1980) and the fourth National development plan (1980–1985) witnessed some level of agricultural growth. The growth could be associated with an increase in Nigeria's revenue as a result of the oil boom. The third national development plan allocated N2.201 Billion to the agricultural sector which was split among the sub-sectors: crop (74.5%), livestock (15.6%), fisheries (4.6%), and forestry (5%). This phase of national development made concerted efforts to revamp the agricultural sector through various sectoral programmes and reforms targeted at food self-sufficiency. The plan however performed below expectations.

Oil production in Nigeria was at its peak before the Fourth National Development Plan. Oil production was at a record high of 2.3 million barrels while the price had risen from 3.56 USD per barrel in 1973 to 13.69 USD. Following this, the fourth plan became ambitious and production was estimated to grow to 3 million barrel per day. The price per barrel, however, crashed to 12 USD due to demand by major oil buyers; this led to a reduction in production by 50% of the projected quantity. This phase experienced massive borrowing by the government due to a fall in oil price and quantity. However, increased consumption associated with a geometric rate of population growth propelled importation [3].

Interventions in the fourth Plan were essentially aimed at consolidating the gains made in the earlier Plans, especially the third. During the fourth Plan, progress in the agricultural sector and indeed many sectors was slow. The agricultural sector was particularly vulnerable to the recession of that period which led to massive food import with available scarce foreign exchange resources. The floating of the naira, as far as the agricultural sector was concerned, was aimed at stimulating local food production by making import expensive. However, this has not happened in the dimension expected [14].

The shortfall in Nigeria's economic development before the mid-1980s led to a comprehensive economic recovery plan – the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The economic situation before SAP was characterized by bureaucratic challenges which the SAP policy sought to remove. SAP was eventually introduced in

1986. The main elements of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) can be summarized to include: diversification of the productive base of the national economy to minimize the dangers of dependence on a few sectors; diversification of the export earnings to reduce the predominant role of oil in Nigeria's export earnings; minimizing and eliminating domestic and external imbalances regarding budget deficit and restore balance of payment equilibrium; streamlining public expenditures; reducing import dependency and unviable import patterns; and moving the economy away from extensive and strangulating administrative controls to a more viable system that relies more on prices that reflect the underlying structural forces of supply and demand [3].

3. Nigeria rural development strategies and agricultural Programmes

Nigeria has established different agricultural development programmes since its independence in strategizing rural development and food security-related issues. Some of these programmes are discussed briefly.

National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), introduced in 1973 to induce farmers to increase the production of food by encouraging the use of modern agricultural practices. The programme commenced in 1974 and operated through the national crop centers, while the agro-services centers provided the needed infrastructure. NAFPP was aimed at inducing farmers to adopt those seed, fertilizer and cultural practice packages best suited to particular environments. According to Idachaba [3], the programme went through what he called the *Mini-kit* and *production kit* in eight pilot states and was to vigorously move on to the mass adoption phase. By 1976, NAFPP was de-emphasized and replaced by the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN).

There was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), in launched 1976 to steer Nigeria away from excessive dependence on oil. It encouraged Nigerians to produce the food they consume individually or in groups. It was administered by a national council at the Federal level, State, and Local Government Areas (LGAs). During OFN, fertilizer was imported and sold to farmers at subsidized rates, storage facilities were constructed at strategic places all over the country; land clearing and land preparation were subsidized and subsidy was introduced on agro-chemicals. Generally, OFN tried to increase the number of farmers and raise people's awareness of the key role agriculture could play in the country. Everybody was enjoined to farm the land near him. However, for various reasons, these efforts did not produce the bumper harvest as expected and were latter branded, Operation Fool the Nation [15]. Idachaba [3] noted some of the drawbacks of OFN to include: incomplete and inadequate conceptual underpinnings, operational drawbacks, lack of an overall food strategy, and lack of monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The National Green Revolution Programme (NGRP) was also launched in April 1980 by the administration of Shehu Shagari to conquer food insecurity in Nigeria. To enhance the implementation of the NGRP, the government named the National Council on Green Revolution to work hand in hand with the State committees to ensure that all barriers to agricultural input supply were removed. Idachaba [3] highlighted the objectives of the NGRP to include; increase food production and other raw materials, increase livestock and fish production, and increase the production and processing of export crops. But unfortunately, the programme's aim was defeated due to the high level of corruption. The programme was suspended when the military took over in 1984.

In an attempt to enhance the flow of agricultural loans to the agricultural sector, the government through the Central Bank of Nigeria introduced the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) in 1978. However, by the late 1980s, it was obvious that a major setback of the ACGS was the non-performance of loans guaranteed under the scheme. The high rate of loan default among farmers discouraged banks from extending more credits under ACGS.

The River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) was introduced in 1973 and commenced trials at Sokoto-Rima and Chad Basin in 1974. This was extended to other areas in 1976 and formally launched on the 26th of May 1977. Nigeria has 11 RBDA created in 1976 by the federal government to harness the country's water resources and optimize Nigeria's agricultural resources for food self-sufficiency.

Directorate for Food, Road, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) was established in 1986 to provide rural roads and support food production. By 1987, the DFFRI embarked on the construction of more feeder roads, commenced implementation of the national water supply scheme, launched the national rural markets and electrification programmes to enhance crops and livestock production. The programme was planned as a comprehensive integrated food production and rural development agenda across all the States of the federation. However, DFFRI failed due to a lack of funds and commitment. On paper, it was great but in actual practice, the programme was invested with massive corruption and eventually frustration [16].

There were also the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) which is an integrated approach that came into being as a result of the failure of special crop programmes to achieve rural development and food security objectives of government in Nigeria [17]. According to Okolo [14], the ADPs were a powerful tool in the modernization of the agriculture of rural communities. The successes achieved in Funtua, Gusau and Gombe projects, and later in Lafia and Anyigba projects led to the establishment of full-blown state-wide ADPS. Up to date, it has continued to provide extension, technical support, and training for the large farm-household population in all the states. Its activities are currently being held down by a lack of funds.

The advent of civilian administration in 1999 propelled greater attention to food production. The Nigerian government made some commitment to combat hunger and malnutrition by providing adequate food for the people and ensures food security for all. To achieve this goal, therefore, various food security initiatives were launched [16, 18]; they include:

Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS): This is a programme by which the government sought the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in disseminating information on proven and accessible technologies to 109 farming communities across the country to enhance food production and substantially increase income levels of the farmers.

Root and Tuber Expansion Programme: This is an agricultural programme supported by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which made available to farmers the necessary information on improved processing technology and expansion technique for cassava and cassava products.

Fadama Development Project: The Fadama project is for ensuring all-season farming through large scale irrigation systems or naturally flooded areas (*Fadama*) of arable crops, plants, fruits, and vegetables.

Community-based agricultural and rural development schemes: This comes under different names such as farm settlement or back-to-land programmes. In this type of schemes the participants who are usually men, are encouraged by the government to take to farming by providing them with material and financial support.

Provision of infrastructures: Such as linking up the rural areas through new access roads and grading the old ones; supplying energy through rural electrification; distributing farm inputs like seedlings and fertilizer; selling or leasing tractors and harvesters to farmers to encourage mechanized farming and providing improved storage facilities to reduce post-harvest loss of agricultural products, put at between 25 and 30% [16].

As part of a government initiative to reduce poverty, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) initiative was introduced in 2003. The initiative which gave priority to agriculture and peasant farmers was meant as a medium-term strategy by the federal, state and local government. NEEDS identified the need for private sector participation and the constraints inhibiting such participation with a view to tackle them. Among other initiatives, NEEDS developed new agricultural policies based on targets set to achieve the effective implementation of an export-driven agricultural sector as well as an increase in the cultivation of arable land through private sector participation, using adequate incentive schemes [4].

4. Agricultural sector policy periods in Nigeria (1960–2020)

4.1 Study area and data collection

The study area is Nigeria; a West African country which has a population of more than 200,000,000 people (growth rate of 2.58 per cent by the National Population Commission, [19]). The country has spatial population distribution with about 63 per cent dwelling in rural areas and 37 per cent in the urban areas [20]. Nigeria is located between 3^o and 14^o East Longitudes and 4^o and 14^o North Latitudes [21]. The two major seasons are; the wet season which lasts from April to October, and the dry season which lasts from November through March.

Secondary data for 1960–2020 on Nigeria's agricultural sector policy, agricultural output and other relevant data in this study were gotten from the publications of the World Bank's World Development Indicator (WDI). Data obtained were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively – using graphs.

4.2 Agricultural policy periods

In establishing the agricultural sector policy and programmes, three specific periods were introduced in this study, these are: the independence and first decade (1960–1969), oil boom and policy reconstruction (1970–1985), and policy stabilization era (1986–2020).

4.2.1 Independence and first decade (1960–1969)

Prior to Nigeria's independence, about 50 percent of agricultural programmes or 'policies' (e.g. the Forest Policy, 1937; Forest Policy, 1945; Policy for the Marketing of Oils, Oil Seeds and Cotton, 1948; Forest Policy for Western Region, 1952; Policy for Natural Resources, 1956; and Western Nigeria Policy of Agricultural and Natural Resources, 1959) were focused on forest and natural resources with little or no emphasis on food and animal production. In the early 1960, Farm Settlement Scheme was the only documented agricultural scheme or programme that evolved. During this period, Nigeria basically adopted the export driven policy system to produce raw

materials for the export market in servicing foreign industries and markets (Britain and Europe). The period also witnessed the establishment of several agricultural research institutes and extension research liaison services; Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service (AERLS) at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria established in 1963; The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) established in 1967, and International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA).

4.2.2 Oil boom and policy reconstruction (1970–1985)

This period was characterized by oil revenue boom and high levels of public expenditures by the Federal Government. During this period, the national government initiated and implemented various agricultural specific policies (though there was no national policy document for the agricultural sector), programmes and projects. According to Okuneye and Ayinde [22], the specific agriculture sector policies were meant to facilitate agricultural marketing, reduce agricultural production cost and enhance agricultural product prices as incentives for increased agricultural production. Major policy instruments during the oil boom and policy reconstruction include: Agricultural Commodity Marketing and Pricing Policy; Input Supply and Distribution Policy; Agricultural Input Subsidy Policy; Agricultural Mechanization Policy; Water Resources and Irrigation Policy; and Agricultural Extension and Technology Transfer Policy ([3, 22]; and [13]). The Federal Government of Nigeria also implemented the following agricultural specific programmes during this period for effective production activities; National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), launched in 1973; Operation Feed the Nation, launched in 1976; River Basin and Rural Development Authorities, established in 1976; the promulgation of a Land Use Decree in 1978 which nationalized all land, and established new Commodity Boards; and Green Revolution Programme, inaugurated in 1980.

4.2.3 Policy stabilization era (1986–2020)

This period witnessed the development of national policy documents for the agricultural sector. The first national policy document of 1989 was designed to prioritize agriculture beyond the first four national development plans (1962–1968, 1970–1974, 1975–1980, and 1981–1985). The 1989 document produced by the FMARD was decreed by the FGN to be operational for at least fifteen (15) years. The 1989 policy document was reviewed and Nigeria developed the 2004 new agricultural policy document – a more detailed as it includes important areas of agriculture which were not emphasized in the 1989 document with the aim of achieving food self-sufficiency and food security. The new agricultural policy document of 2004 covers; agricultural resources, livestock, fisheries, agroforestry production, pest control, mechanization, water resources and irrigation, rural infrastructure, agricultural extension and technology transfer, research and development, insurance, agricultural statistics and information management, among others. In 2011, Nigeria produced the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) on three pillars – grow food, create jobs, and ensure food security. Among other things, ATA was developed to: reposition agriculture to drive Nigeria's economy; make Nigeria an agriculturally industrialized economy; treat agriculture as a business; integrate food production, storage, food processing, and industrial manufacturing by value chain; focus on value chain where Nigeria has comparative advantage; and design new policies, Institutions, and financing structures to drive sector growth. The Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) or Green Alternatives

of 2016 was developed by the present administration to build on and overcome the shortcomings (input supply, financing, infrastructure and logistics, production, and market access) of ATA 2011. The overall aim of APP 2016 was to unlock the potential for Nigeria's agricultural value chain – produce enough fresh and high quality foods, and serve the export market successfully and earn foreign exchange.

Some of the specific policy instruments put in place during policy stabilization era included: fiscal policies (a five year tax-free period for profits earned by companies engaged in agricultural production and agro-processing was provided), monetary policies, trade policies, agricultural support service policies, and rural development policy. The civilian regime was characterized with specific programmes and interventions such as: special programme on food security of 1999, Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) of 1999, integrated rural development strategy of 2000, the presidential initiatives on selected commodities (rice, vegetable oil, and cassava) of 2001, FADAMA II and III programmes of 2003 and 2009, respectively, cocoa rebirth programme of 2003, NEEDS of 2004, national fertilizer policy for Nigeria of 2006, the 7 – point agenda of 2007–2011 (food security and land reform inclusive), and the 5-Point Agenda of Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (FMAWR), 2007–2011. The 5 – point agenda include Developing Agricultural Policy and Regulatory Systems (DAPRS), Food Systems Network (FOODSNet), Rural Sector Enhancement Programme (RUSEP), Developing Agriculture Inputs Markets in Nigeria (DAIMINA), and Maximizing Agricultural Revenue in Key Enterprises (MARKETS).

4.3 Agriculture growth pattern under the identified policy regimes

Graphical illustration was utilized to compliment findings on the identified policy periods within the period under study. It was further used to familiarize with general pattern or trend of the data. Trend analysis was used to spot any pattern or trend, for example, by observing whether the percentage shares of agriculture were trending up, trending down or constant in relation to GDP. The goal was to see if there are any systematic patterns over time.

It could be observed in **Figures 1** and **2** that the overall share of agriculture to Nigeria GDP has a steady downward trend in the first policy period or regime (1960–1969). Despite the observed downward trend, the agricultural sector of Nigeria significantly contributed to its GDP, especially in the early 60's. This observation is consistent with earlier findings by Anyanwu et al. [23] which showed the dominance of agriculture share of GDP [24] in the 60's, though at a declining rate.

During the oil boom and policy reconstruction period (1970–1985), the agricultural sector of Nigeria experienced a general decline. The sharp decline was basically observed in 1970–1981. The observed trend within this period was however not surprising as there was massive commercial exploitation of oil resources, which turned the trend against agriculture and its associated sectors (e.g., the industrial sector). The oil boom of Nigeria was supposed to have favored the agricultural sector, especially with regards to mechanization and rural development. However, the oil boom portended serious decline in agriculture and its overall contribution to the economy. The graphical trend agrees with Ahungwa et al. [25] when they found an undulating trend, intertwining with the industrial sector of Nigeria within 1970–1989. The findings of this study further corroborate the United States Department of State (2005) report and Sekumade [26] that the oil boom era, which resulted in extensive exploration and export of petroleum and its products led to neglect of agriculture and light manufacturing bases in favor of an unhealthy dependence on oil.

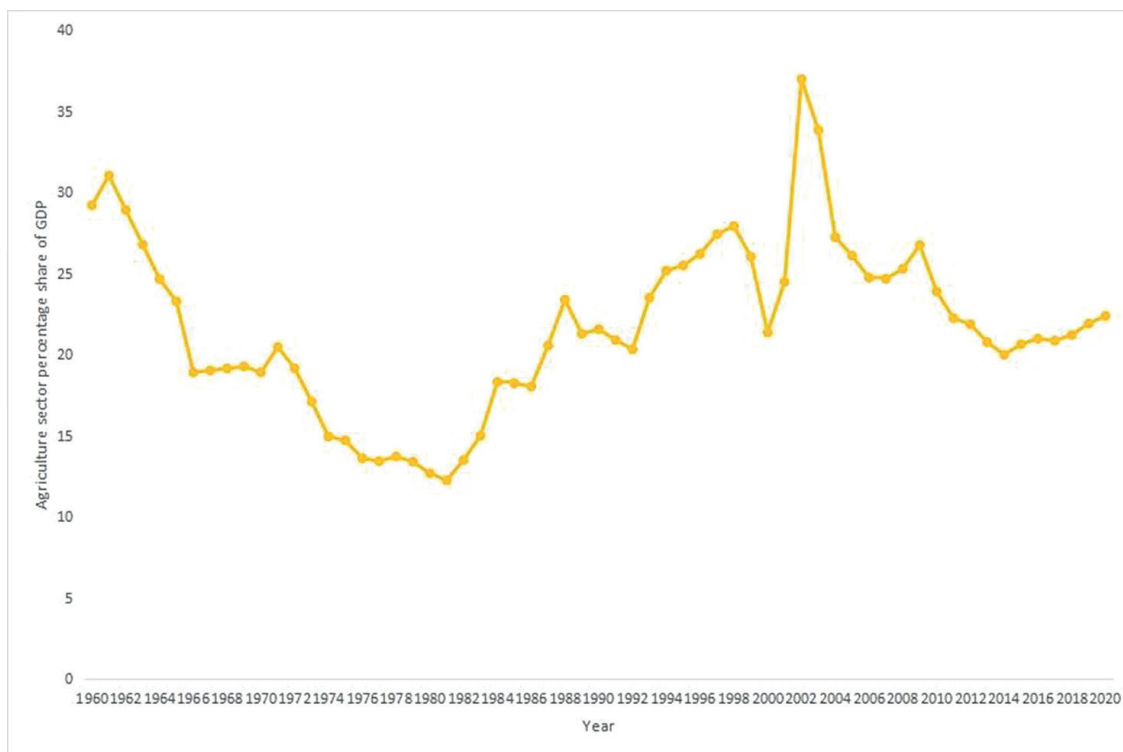


Figure 1. Trend of agriculture sector percentage share to Nigeria GDP, 1960–2020. Source: Researcher’s computation using FAO and WDI data, 2021.

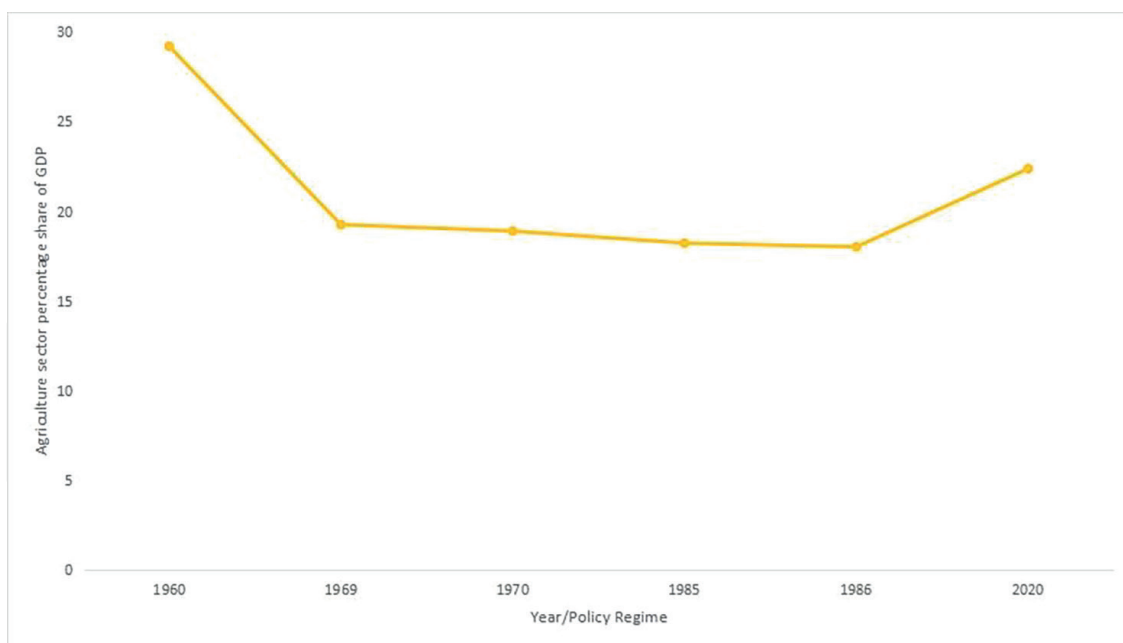


Figure 2. Trend of agriculture sector percentage share to Nigeria GDP under policy regimes. Source: Researcher’s computation using FAO and WDI data, 2021.

The country experienced a visible sharp decline in 1973 and 1974 despite the prioritization of food production in Nigeria’s Second National Development Plan of 1970–1974. The prioritization was necessitated by the Nigerian civil war which created economic hardship and hunger due mainly to food shortages [27]. Shimada [28] however criticized this strategy stating that government’s pretense towards

agriculture was obvious, considering the budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector which did not reflect the claimed priority (7.7% against the 23.1 per cent expenditure on transportation sector).

Figures 1 and **2** further shows that the percentage share of agriculture sector to Nigeria's GDP generally experienced an increasing trend in the era of policy stabilization (1986–2020). The increasing trend could be attributed to the availability of a national policy document on agriculture which propelled the rolling out of various programmes and strategies targeted at massive agricultural production for food self-sufficiency. The period also marked the beginning of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and a deregulated economy. Exchange rate deregulation was the major policy instrument during the SAP of 1986. Ahungwa et al. [25] associated the increasing trend to the involvement of Federal Government in direct food production, provision of subsidies to smallholder farmers and creation of more commodity boards for various agricultural and food products under programmes like Operation Feed the Nation. Government programmes, interventions (during the democratic dispensation) and subsequent national policy documents on agricultural production could further be associated with the growth pattern experienced in the third policy era.

5. Conclusion


Three specific policy periods were introduced in this review: the independence and first decade (1960–1969), oil boom and policy reconstruction (1970–1985), and policy stabilization era (1986–2020). Trend analysis was carried out to establish the pattern of agricultural output during these policy periods. The country experienced stagnated pattern of growth in the agriculture sector within the oil boom and policy reconstruction period; while there was an accelerating growth pattern during the policy stabilization era. The agricultural sector must be consciously prioritized if national food security is to be achieved. This can be done through deliberate policy approaches and implementations that guarantee self-sufficiency in food production.

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