

**AGRICULTURAL POLICIES IN NIGERIA: A FOCUS ON THE
ADMINISTRATION OF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, 1999 -2007**

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Abstract

This study assesses the different agricultural policy programmes in Nigeria during President Olusegun Obasanjo Administration, 1999-2007. The study is concerned with the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies and programmes as well as their achievements in the agricultural sector in Nigeria in the period under review. The findings show that government's agricultural policies over the years in Nigeria recorded partial success going by the fact that the country still faces challenges of food security, malnutrition and hunger, low earnings from agriculture as the GDP from agricultural sector declines. The data used in this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. This study adopts the qualitative research approach which prioritizes critical investigation and description of collected data. The study recommended that the implementation strategies of agricultural programmes should be broadened to surmount some implementation challenges that affect the achievement of the objectives of agricultural policies.

Keywords: Agriculture, Policies, Programmes, Administration, Nigeria

Conceptual Clarifications

Certain Concepts have been used in the course of this study. It is therefore important that these concepts are clarified in the sense they were put to use in this study. These concepts are:

Agriculture

Agriculture is the science of cultivating the soil, harvesting crops and raising livestock. It is the science or art of production of plants and animals useful to men and in varying degrees, the preparation of such products for man's use and at their disposals.¹

Agriculture is practised for the purpose of production of food and other human needs such as clothing, shelter, medicines, weapons, tools, ornaments and indefinitely many more. It is likewise practiced as a business for economic gain.

Policy

Policy is the basic principles by which a government is guided. It is the declared objectives that a government seeks to achieve and preserve in the interest of a nation or community.²

A policy is a deliberate system of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. It is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure.

Agricultural Policy

Agricultural policy describes a set of laws relating to domestic agriculture and imports of foreign agricultural products. Governments usually implement policies with the goal of achieving a specific outcome in the domestic agricultural product markets. Outcomes can range from guaranteed supply level, price stability, product quality, product selection, land use or employment. Governments pay subsidies to encourage domestic production of goods. Such subsidies are necessary when a government wants to alter the free-market outcome in product markets. The subsidies transfer some cost of production from producers to the government, allowing production at above market costs.

Theoretical Framework

Modernization Theory

Modernization theory is used to explain the process of modernization within societies. It refers to a model of progressive transition from a traditional to a modern society. This is a historical, social and economic model that explains the relationship between the world's Npeoples (especially the so-called third world and the industrialised west) in terms of differing levels of technological development among societies³. The modernization theory explains that there is no development without first modernizing the society. As such, the Agricultural policy and programmes in Nigeria has not been fully effective to the development of the agricultural sector because of poor mechanization system in the sector. It is for this reason president Obasanjo during his regime, embarked on different agricultural policies and programmes for the development of the sector.

Introduction

Nigeria is blessed with huge physical, human and natural resource endowments yet the majority of its population live below the poverty lines. This poverty situation is worse in the rural areas where the majority of the people reside and earn their living through agriculture. Indications of problems in the Nigerian agriculture, however, started to emerge as from the first decade of the country's independence (1960-1969). These indications were clearly evident from increasing food supply short-falls, rising food prices and declining foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exports⁴. Agriculture is a key sector capable of affecting the majority of Nigerians in diverse ways. Thus, the persistence of hunger and poverty in Nigeria must be, to a large extent, the failure of the agricultural sector to fully impact positively on the people. Although small scale farmers dominate agricultural production in Nigeria and individually exert little influence; collectively they form the foundation upon which the economy rests. Unfortunately, these small-scale farmers are subsistence farmers and use crude and traditional production techniques. This has contributed to the poor performance of the sector.

Olusegun Obasanjo became Nigeria's second elected executive president on May 29th 1999, following the handover of power by Abdulsalami Abubakar, after sixteen years of Military rule. Obasanjo in his inauguration speech sought to rekindle hope among Nigerians, saying the people can henceforth look forward to progress, justice, harmony and unity in the country. He solicited the support of all and sundry to ensure the success of his administration. According to him, Nigerians have been asked many times in the past to make sacrifices and to exercise patience. The difference will be that, in the past, sacrifices were made and patience exercised with little result. This time however, the results of your sacrifices and

patience will be clear and manifest for all to see⁵. This promise of President Olusegun Obasanjo was exemplified in his agricultural policies and programmes alongside other achievements. The purpose of agricultural policy is the development of favourable and sustainable guidelines for the promotion of efficient agricultural practices that will guarantee food security, provide employment for the citizens, raw material for all agro-based industries as well as to earn foreign exchange. It is the synthesis of the framework and action plans of government designed to achieve overall agricultural growth and development⁶. This usually entails the upgrading of infrastructures and infusion of technology to advance production from the primitive farming stage to fully mechanised systems through an appropriate policy framework so as to discharge constitutional duties to the populace. Although agriculture has remained the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, there has been declining contributions of agriculture to the gross domestic product [GDP] in the past the decades. This could be associated with the gross neglect of the agricultural sector and over dependence on the oil sector. This problem prompted President Obasanjo to embark on different development programmes in the sector.

This study examines the agricultural policies and programmes adopted By President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime (1999-2007). It assesses the performance and the impact of these government policies and programmes on the agricultural sector. This is considered important because most studies on the discourse have been written from the lens of economics and science. This work hopes to look at agriculture from the historical perspective.

Agricultural Policies under President Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999-2007

Agricultural policies began to be crafted in Nigeria since colonial times. The first of these was the Forest Policy of 1937. Throughout the post second world war years, several agricultural policies were put in place; postcolonial Nigeria too had several of them. Their histories and achievements have been chequered. Our primary effort in this section is an examination of those agricultural policies contrived by the Olusegun Obasanjo Administration, 1999-2007. Perhaps the most crucial of these was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). This was initiated by Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. The key elements of this development strategy included poverty eradication, employment generation, wealth creation and value reorientation. NEEDS targeted the creation of seven million jobs between 2004 and 2007. To achieve this, the administration introduced several employment initiatives that have accounted for the decline in unemployment rate from 17 per cent in 2004 to 10 per cent in 2006.⁷ NEEDS provided help to agriculture, industry, small and medium scale enterprises and oil and gas. It set up a series of performance targets that government wanted to achieve by 2007. These include a 6 percent annual growth in agricultural GDP of US \$ 3 billion per year on agricultural exports and 95 percent self-sufficiency in food.⁸ NEEDS offered farmers improved irrigation, machinery and crop varieties which would help to boost agricultural productivity and tackle poverty head on since half of Nigeria's poor people are engaged in agriculture. Its activity with States 'Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS) would help to implement integrated rural development programme to stem rural-urban migration.⁹ NEEDS differ from other reforms by its participatory process that ensured ownership, sustainability, encompassing scope, coordination, attractiveness, problem solving and achievement oriented. The strategies to achieving the NEEDS agriculture objectives include such programs as the Presidential Initiatives on chosen competitive commodities and taking advantage of concession arrangements in bilateral and multilateral agreements (WTO, EU-

ACP, US-AGOA, and ECOWAS). Others include strengthening agricultural research, training and extension institutions and frameworks. It also seeks a sustainable development of a private sector-input supply and distribution system, an integrated agriculture-led rural development and the growth of agricultural credit access windows for farmers.

Another significant agricultural policy in this period was the National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS). NSPFS was launched in January 2002 in all the thirty six states of the federation during the Olusegun Obasanjo's administration.¹⁰ The broad objective of the programme was to increase food production and eliminate rural poverty. Other specific objectives of the programme were: assisting farmers in increasing their output, productivity and income; strengthening the effectiveness of research and extension service training and educating farmers on farm management for effective utilization of resources; supporting governments efforts in the promotion of simple technologies for self-sufficiency; consolidating initial efforts of the programme on pilot areas for maximum output and ease of replication; consolidating gain from ongoing for continuity of the programme and consequent termination of external assisted programmes and projects.¹¹ The major aim for implementing NSPFS was to assist farmers in achieving their potentials in increasing output and productivity and consequently their income on a sustainability basis.

The Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) was also a critical component of the agricultural policies in the period under review. It was launched on 16 April, 2003 under Olusegun Obasanjo's administration.¹² It covered 26 states and was designed to address the problem of food production and rural poverty. At the local farmers' level, the programme hopes to achieve economic growth, improve access of the poor to social services and carry out intervention measures to protect poor and vulnerable groups. At the national level the programme was designed to achieve food security and stimulate demand for cheaper staple food such as cassava, garri, yam, potato, etc as against more expensive starchy such as rice.¹³ Small holder farmers with less than two hectares of land per household were the targets of the programme while special attention is being paid to women who play a significant role in rural food production, processing and marketing. RTEP also targeted at multiplying and introducing improved root and tuber varieties to about 350,000 farmers in order to increase productivity, commercialize root and tuber crop production and improve living conditions, income, food security and nutritional health of the poorest small holder households.¹⁴

Furthermore, in a bid to avoid economic turmoil, Olusegun Obasanjo called for a balance between local and international trade policies. He also emphasized patronizing made-in-Nigeria goods, as well as raising their quality and packaging to ensure favourable competition at the international market. The Agricultural Trade Policy sought to exploit all the trade potentials of agricultural products both within the domestic and external market opportunities. This, it sought to achieve by encouraging sector specialization in terms of commodity-based comparative advantage in production and ecological endowment for cheap and adequate supply of agricultural raw materials necessary for inter-sectorial trade. It also pursued the achievement of competitive quality and standard certified products to satisfy local demands and attain export competitiveness' capacity to this end, it makes demands on export value and linkage with the industrial sector to enhance export promotion and technology application objectives of the policy.¹⁵

National Fertilizer Policy was reframed by the administration. Before 1976, state governments were responsible for fertilizer procurement and distribution. With the establishment of the Federal Fertilizer Procurement and Distribution Department, the government established fertilizer plants to develop domestic production capacity in order to meet increasing demand. Overtime, however, the public sector control of fertilizer manifested leakages and transit losses, late and non-deliveries as well as artificial scarcities, and ultimately unsustainable subsidy benefiting unintended groups - middlemen. The sector reform started in 1994 and produced a fertilizer liberalization policy in 1996 by which the Federal Government withdrew from involving in fertilizer procurement and distribution and discontinued subsidy on it and graduated import reliefs at 100/o (1996), 50/o (1997) and 0% (2000) while abolishing VAT and exercise duty, all of which effects were-to be passed on to farmers. This also failed to stabilize the fertilizer sector, as fertilizer use decreased from 500,000 nutrient ton (1996) to 100,000tons by 1999.¹⁶This necessitated the institution of another reforms process in the sector.

The reforms produced in 2006 another National Fertilizer Policy. The objectives of the policy include a production of fertilizers open to both the public sector and private national and international investors in a manner compliant with the requirements of the National Policy on Agriculture. Under the policy, the Federal Government would encourage domestic production of fertilizers through appropriate targeted base relief and tariff, regime, stable exchange rate, controlled inflation and favourable and reasonable expatriate quota and income repatriation.¹⁷ It would also encourage the exploration and development of the country's raw material potential for fertilizer production and in collaboration with financing institutions; endeavour to reduce the risk associated with the provision of and access to the fund available for investment in fertilizer production and raw material development.

Importantly, the National FADAMA Development Project (NFDP) played a significant part of the policies under review. FADAMA is a Hausa word for low lying flood plains usually with easily accessible shallow groundwater. It is a major instrument for achieving the government's-poverty reduction objective in rural areas of Nigeria. The beneficiaries are meant to come as a group known as FADAMA Community Association to the National FADAMA Development Programme. The programme empowers the association with resources, training, and technical assistance support to properly manage and control the resources for their own development. FADAMA adopts a socially inclusive and participatory process in which all FADAMA users will collectively identify their development goals and pursue it when assisted. The phase 1 of the project launched in 1988 financed by the World Bank at the cost of \$45 million was implemented in the northern states and provided support for dry season farming through the supply of small scale irrigation implements and construction of dams for crops and livestock farming.¹⁹ The second phase started in 2004 covering 12 states and incorporating poverty alleviation and farmer income generation strategies as targets. It seeks to address factors in production glut in some parts of the country and sought to raise the capacity of producers through production infrastructure, inputs and advisory services.²⁰ The programme covered twelve states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna; Kebbi, Lagos, Niger, Ogun Oyo, Taraba including the Federal Capital Territory (GCT). NFDP adopted community driven development (CDD) approach with extensive participation of the stakeholders at early stage of the project. This approach is in line with the policies and development strategies for Nigeria which emphasize poverty reduction, private sector leadership and beneficiary participation. The problem associated with the project lies

on the fact that unskilled handling of water application through irrigation can degrade and deplete the soil of its productive capacity.

The last but not the least was National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) was established by the Federal Government in 2001. The mode of operation is tailored towards directed (subsidized) credit to farmers. The programme consisted of four schemes namely, Youth Employment Scheme which involves skill acquisition, mandatory attachment, and credit delivery; Rural Infrastructures Development Scheme which involves the provision of portable water, rural electrification, transportation and communication development. Social Welfare Services Scheme which is involved with qualitative education, primary health care, farmers employment and provision of social services, provision of agricultural input and credit delivery to rural farmers.; an Natural Resources Development and Conservation Scheme which contains programmes for environmental protection through conservation of land and space, development of agricultural resources, solid minerals and waters resources. The programme was introduced in 2001, to prosecute the Obasanjo administration's crusade against poverty in line with the central objective of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal, MDGs.²¹ About 1,000,000 unemployed graduates were registered under the Mandatory Acquisition Programme, MAP. of NAPEP. Another group of about 140,000 unemployed youths were trained in over 190 different local government under the NAPEP's MAP, 40,000 graduates were attached to manufacturing industries, construction companies and financial institutions since 2001.4 total of 2,000 units three-wheel vehicles, known as keke-Napep, were distributed throughout the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory for mass transportation on a credit- owner operator basis.²² With a take-off of 6 billion naira approved for it in 2001, NAPEP established structures at all levels nationwide. Under its Capacity Acquisition Programme, it trained 100,000 unemployed youths just as 51,000 others who received training as Tailors and Fashion designers were resettled. A total of 50,000 unemployed graduates have all benefitted from NAPEP's Mandatory Attachment Programme also an aspect of CAP. The programme also established a data bank of all unemployed youths in all the 36 states of the federation and the FCT. The difference between NAPEP and past poverty eradication or reduction agencies is that it is not sector implementation agency but a co-ordination facility that ensured that the core poverty eradication ministries were effective. It only intervened when necessary under its secondary mandate which gave it the right to provide complementary assistance to the implementing ministries and parastatals nationwide.²³

Achievements and Failings of Olusegun Obasanjo's Agricultural Policies and Programmes

On assumption of office in May, 1999, the Obasanjo administration immediately took decisive steps to put in place an enabling environment for the thriving of democracy, regaining international respectability and credibility and putting the economy on the path to sustainable growth and development. The increase in agriculture production in the preceding five years (i.e. from 1995) was sustained in 1999. During this period, the aggregate index of agricultural production rose by 3.3 percent, compared with 3.1 percent recorded in 1998 while the performance has been highly unimpressive in the later part of year 2000. Consequently, this shoot up prices of agricultural commodities. Also, while the prices of agricultural commodities went up at home, the prices of Nigeria's major agricultural commodities in the world market declined substantially in 1999 relative to their levels in

1998. According to Central Bank of Nigeria's report, the dollar prices of all the commodities recorded declined during 1999. The decrease in prices ranged from 16.9 percent for soya beans to 30.8 per cent for cocoa.²⁴ This was attributed to increased supply and reduction in demand.

Table 4. Sector Growth Rates

| Induction | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|
| Real GDP Growth (%) | 9.6 | 6.6 | 6.5 | 6.0 | 6.2 |
| Oil Sector | 23.9 | J.J | 0.5 | -4.15 | -5.9 |
| Non-Oil Sector | 5.2 | 7.8 | 8.6 | 9.4 | 9.6 |
| Sectoral Growth (%) | | | | | |
| Agriculture | 6.6 | 6.5 | 7.t | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| Industry/Manufacturing | 21.3 | 4.2 | 1.7 | -2.5 | -3.5 |
| Services | 0.4 | 8.8 | 8.0 | 9.2 | 9.8 |

The agricultural share of National Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been hovering around 40-41% annually since 2003. The largest subsector contribution to this national output is from the crops subsector which annually ranged between 36% (2003, 2004 and 2005) and 37% (2006 and 2007) in an increasing manner. The livestock subsector share of GDP is almost constant at 2.60% while the fishing subsector at 1.37% contribution.

Table 3.1 shows the contribution of Agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (2001-2006).

| Period | Total GDP (# billion) | Agric share of DGP | % Share of Agric in Total |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 2001 | 431.78 | 182.66 | 42.30 |
| 2002 | 451.71 | 190.37 | 42.14 |
| 2003 | 495.01 | 203.0t | 1.01 |
| 2004 | 527.58 | 216.21 | 40.98 |
| 2005 | 561.83 | 23t.46 | 41.19 |
| 2006 | 595.82 | 248.60 | 41.72 |

Source: CBN (2005, 2007) GDP is at 1990 constant price

The agriculture sector GDP growth rate is the highest contributor to non-oil GDP growth rate. After an initial dip from 6.64% in 2003 to 6.50% in 2004, the growth rate appreciated per annum from 2004 (7.06%) to 7.43% in 2007. Sustainable agricultural development is propelled by agricultural policies. The Olusegun Obasanjo administration policy document has most of the features of the old ones, but with more focused direction and better articulation. Agricultural policies are supported by sub policies that facilitate the growth of the sector. Implementation of agricultural policies is agriculture to grow paripassu with the other sectors. These policies usually have major impact on profitability of the agricultural system and the welfare of farmers as they affect the flow of funds to the sector in terms of budgetary allocation, credit, subsidies, taxes and therefore, must be in harmony and mutually

reinforcing with the agricultural policies. The macro-policies comprise the fiscal, monetary, trade budgetary policies and other policies that govern macro-prices²⁵.

Agriculture contributes immensely to the Nigeria economy in various ways, namely ,in the provision of food for the increasing population, supply of adequate raw materials (and labour input) to a growing industrial sector, a major source of employment; generation of foreign exchange earnings, and, provision of market for the products of the agrarian sector².Support for agriculture is widely driven by the public sector, which has established institutional support in form of agricultural research extension, commodity marketing, input supply and land use legislation, to fast-track development of agrarian sector to achieve the aim of economic development.

Challenges/ Shortcomings

Role conflict between different programmes and projects

As a result of different administrations coming in and out of government, there has been role conflict which as affected agricultural policies and programmes in the Nation. There was role conflict between FSP and FEAP while that of DFRRRI and ADP in many states like in Ogun State where it was most pronounced. Report has it that DFRRRI merely removed the sign post of some ADP's and replace it with its own to lay claim to the construction of certain rural roads and borehole.²⁶ Also before the streamlining of RBDAS to the original eleven, much resource wastage had occurred in time of role confusion and role conflict with ADPS as well as inefficient direct production activities.

Short duration of agricultural policies and programmes

There has not been continuity of existing programme by incumbent and new administration so that impact of the policy/programme will be realized. Examples FSP (1994) and FEAP (1996), OFN and RBDAS were initiated almost the same time (1976) and initiation of NAFPP in 1972, OFN in 1976 and GR in 1980. All these changes retard development progress and do not allow the development policies and programmes to fulfil their mission and mandate to overcome the Nigeria food crisis.²⁷

Lack of adequate skills to deliver services effectively

Most of the credit institutions undertook lending to agriculture without the use of trained agricultural credit officers vested with knowledge of agriculture and the constraints to farmer performance. Additionally, supervision of credit programmes has often been below acceptable standards. Invariably, the schemes fail due to poor repayment performance.

Lack of management capacity of farmer-clients

Most farmers who should benefit from the financing policies, especially the financing schemes, lack the basic skills of farm management, including record keeping. And when these are called up as requirement for accessing facilities, as is always the case, they become ineligible.²⁸

Undue political interference in lending operations

Any time Government initiates a credit policy, most beneficiaries are those close to corridors of power. The result is diversion of the fund and default in repayment Government belief that the appropriate interest rates for agricultural loans be kept low to promote agricultural development and to assist small farmers, ends up in the hands of big farmers who now invest

this fund in their business leaving their own funds free for investment outside farming thereby negating the intention of government to increase agricultural output and encourage adoption of new technologies as well as develop the rural areas.

Conclusion

Agriculture in the context of the economy is tied to the various sectors and is essential for generating broad based growth necessary for development. Agriculture is fundamental to the sustenance of life and it is the bedrock of economic development, especially in the provision of adequate and nutritious food so vital for human development and industrial raw materials. Sustainable agricultural development is propelled by agricultural policies. The Olusegun Obasanjo administration policy document has most of the features of the old ones, but with more focused direction and better articulation. Agricultural policies are supported by sub-policies that facilitate the growth of the sector. Implementation of agricultural policies is however moderated by macro-economic policies which provide the enabling environment for agriculture to grow paripassu with the other sectors. These policies usually have major impact on profitability of the agricultural system and the welfare of farmers as they affect the flow of funds to the sector in terms of budgetary allocation, credit, subsidies, taxes and therefore, must be in harmony and mutually reinforcing with the agricultural policies. The macro-policies comprise the fiscal, monetary, trade budgetary policies and other policies that govern macro-prices²⁹.

Agriculture contributes immensely to the Nigeria economy in various ways, namely, in the provision of food for the increasing population, supply of adequate raw materials (and labour input) to a growing industrial sector, a major source of employment; generation of foreign exchange earnings, and, provision of market for the products of the agrarian sector³⁰. Support for agriculture is widely driven by the public sector, which has established institutional support in form of agricultural research extension, commodity marketing, input supply and land use legislation, to fast-track development of agrarian sector to achieve the aim of economic development. The role of agricultural sector in diversification of economy cannot be over emphasized, given that it guarantees food security of any nation. Public expenditure on agriculture has, however, been shown not to be substantial enough to meet the objectives of Government agricultural policies. The key feature of the policy and programmes of the sector disparate document of policy instruments, policy inconsistency and programme poor implementation which often led to attrition. From the fore going, it can be seen that over the years little in term of policy guidelines have been formulated to achieve the objectives of effective agricultural mechanization process in the Country. This notwithstanding, the Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999-2007) created several programs and projects to improve agricultural productivity each with different implementation challenges. As a consequence of this, peasant farmers using primitive tools still constitute the bulk of producers of the food crops consumed in the country.

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