

Food Tension Drop through Reinforcement Millennium Development Goals (Mdgs) Programmes in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper focused on Nigeria agricultural policies overtime and run an impact analysis with existing realities towards using the food question as the country's development tool to determine the attainment of Millennium Development Goal for eradicating extreme hunger in 2015. Government should set the right machinery towards reducing leakages noticed in the funding of food importation which would enhance good governance and government should always be mindful that its monetary and fiscal actions should not be counteractive to the country's agricultural strategies. The regulation of markets by setting prices of goods is critical in creating the requisite encouragement for local farmers to increase production as well as enhancing equitable distribution and consumption of staple foods which can reduce importation of food.

KEYWORDS: MDGs, food tension, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Economics thought principle based on classical assumptions explained the Malthusian view about the population issue. Malthusian economics has uttered an arithmetic progression in food production given that the world population growth rate would be in geometric quantum. This view presupposed a dis-equilibrating scenario of shortages in food production to meet up the ever increasing population growth rate. This dis-equilibrating scenario was further articulated by the Marhsalian economists who linked supply and demand in the context of time, which explains why some economists have argued that with the advent of technological improvements the gloom story as painted by Malthus would be far from achieving its postulates (Adapted from JM Keynes Book).

The aim of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in Nigeria is to reduce an extreme hunger among the households by 2015. The question however is, to what extent has Nigeria agricultural policies overtime with the existing realities been able to address the food question in the country, as well as using it as a development strategy towards the attainment of Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme hunger in 2015. In articulating an answer to this question, the work was situated within the Malthusian theoretical framework.

Food security policies and programmes have the potential to play a role in reducing acute health care costs through preventative measures, support economic development and create jobs by developing local agric-food industries, raise the quality of life of residents by increasing access to safe, nutritious food, and promote environmental wellbeing through sustainable agriculture techniques.

Report of the Food and Agricultural Organization (2012) has tracked the incidence of hunger highest in the sub-Saharan Africa, where one in every three persons suffers from chronic hunger and the greatest number of under nourished is in South Asia measured at about 499 million and closely followed by East Asia at 455 million people. In essence, in Nigeria with a population of 140 million, about 65 million people suffer from extreme hunger. The report further revealed that, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia all have negative per capital annual growth rates in staple food of between -2.0 to -4.7% from 2004-2012.

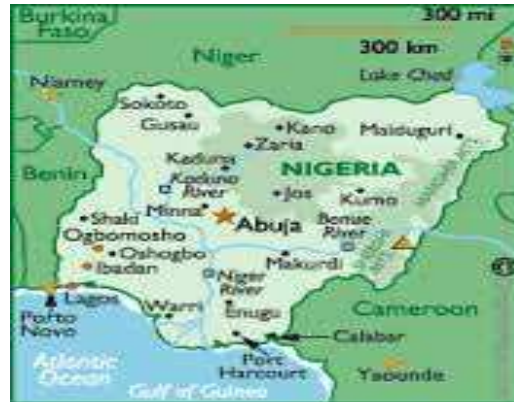
Olayiwola 2013 explained that stability of access to food in Nigeria is poor, as evident from the wide seasonal, annual and spatial fluctuations observed in food production, supply and consumption. As at now, the capacity of the country and of a high percentage of households to sustain food security on a long-term basis is very low wide range of policy and programmes options have been discussed in this study to reflect the wide diversity in the factors that determine food security. Poverty and food insecurity are closely related, and both are by-products of underdevelopment or maldevelopment. Furthermore, there is no illusion that most or even many of the suggested policies and programmes are new in Nigeria. Nigeria is known to be rich in socio-economic policies and programmes but very deficient in effective implementation. This is a persisting problem which only a fundamental reorientation in the concept and purpose of government, purpose of policies and the essence of development can be rectify.

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Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) started with only three enclave project in 1975 has now been increased to 31(one per state and Abuja federal Territory).The network is jointly financed by the World Bank (through a loan agreement), Federal Government and State Government. Commodity Exchange Market was proposed under the 2000 budget and the objective is to fill the vacuums created by the abolition of commodity boards (Okunmadewa, 2010).

The pre and post structural adjustment programme period has recorded government concerted efforts through fiscal plans to enhance sustainable investment in agriculture via suasion to banks to support agricultural lending at reduced interest rates; tax reduction and subsidization of agricultural inputs. Trailing behind the aforementioned point is a matter of throwing light on impact of Millennium Development Goals under the changing scenarios of food security situations in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY



Map of Nigeria (source: www.google map)

The study focused on Nigeria potential toward attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in junction with the effect of MDGs on food security scenario in Nigeria. The data was obtained from statistical bulletin of CBN and Bureau for Statistics covering variables such as staple food production, population growth rates, inflationary rate, and Minimum rediscount rate, values of the agricultural guarantee loans, food import bill, total import bill and Real GDP computed at 1990 factor prices. These variables were estimated with the following exponential model using least square techniques which are given below:

$$Y_t = b_0 e^{bit} \text{ where:}$$

Y=Variable with growth rate

e =Euler's constant

t =Time trend variable (source: Adopted from CBN report)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The trend analysis has showed negative implications for the Nigerian economy and population has continued to rise steadily at an annual growth rate of 3.63 per cent since independence, when juxtaposed with the average growth rate of staple food production which stands at 3.72 per cent, there exist a variance of 0.41 per cent, which is eroded by the stop-gap strategy of food importation expenditure which averages a growth of 1.55 per cent, (this transcends to about N22.5billion per annum in expenses for the past 10years according to the 2008 Report of the International Food Policies Research Institute.) It is worthy to note that the growth rate of food import bill on the country's total import bill has continually grown at an average of 2.14 per cent. From the foregoing it is worthy of note that the country is spending on food importation more than its requirement. This finding is in line with okunmadewa (2010) findings.

The study found out amongst others that constraints militating against agricultural productivity in Nigeria are structured along sector wide constraints and commodity specific constraints. That in Nigeria staple food production is experiencing a downward trend, with Adhoc agricultural policies counteracted by government monetary and fiscal policies. The study recommends that improvements are required in these diverse and complex factors leading to food crisis, and that government should always be mindful in its monetary and fiscal actions, which are counteractive to agricultural strategies put in place. It is imperative to conclude that Nigeria and other developing countries should see Agriculture as the gateway to several desired ends which includes poverty reduction, rural transformation, employment, food security and improved national health profile of the citizenry (Olayiwola 2012).

Table 1: Trends of simple growth rate for variables interaction

Variables Trends Interactions(exponential log form)	Simple Growth Rate
Change in Staple Food Production	-1.55
Changes of Value of Government	+2.14
Changes in Inflationary Rate	- 3.72
Changes in Consumer Price Index	+2.24
Changes in Minimum Rediscount Rate	-2.81
Changes in Population.	+3.63
Changes in Gross Domestic Product	+4.82
Changes in GDP of Crops	+3.94
Changes of Contribution of GDP of Crops	+0.41
Food Import Bill as a % on Total Import bill.	- 9.62
Changes in Food Import Bill	+2.61

Source: Adapted from CBN Report

In addition, the analysis reveal that government efforts to boost agricultural production, (which is a critical variable in national development) via the operations of the guaranteeing loans scheme over the years, has recorded a declining growth rate of 2.81 per cent, this has been further counteracted by government monetary policies resulting to increasing growth rate of 3.94 and 4.82 per cent for inflationary rates and high cost of borrowing respectively.

The foregoing analysis in tandem with the ever growing food import bill (which has capital flight connotations) have contributed to the negative discourse of the nations development strategy as poverty levels have reached alarming rates. This gloomy picture is further painted by FAO report on world food challenges (2012), they states that agricultural contributions to the nation's development strategy in Nigeria is insignificant and with a continuous decline from 10.8 per cent in 2003 to as low as 2.6 per cent in 2009. However, update statistics as at 2012 are reflective of a declining growth rate of 9.9 per cent of staple food production contribution to the nation's GDP that is growing at a rate of 3.84 per cent.

Moreso, it is also worthy to mention that GDP for crops is at a growth rate of 0.7 per cent. This further explanation on the widespread degree of poverty, which Okunmadewa (2010) articulates that the proportion of people living below poverty line in Nigeria rose drastically from 27 per cent to about 68 per cent with an annual per capita expenditure below N7, 146. He further expounded that based on the Consumer expenditure Survey conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics, it indicated a widespread poverty in rural areas, in spite of the fact that these people engage in subsistence farming.

These existing negative scenario trickles down to urban areas and thus the manifestation of social vices which heats the nation's polity according to World Bank 2012 document. The same world bank report also captures this more succinctly as they states that "It is important to note that about eighty per cent of the population reside in the rural areas and are basically engaged in food production as the basis of their livelihood, therefore, failed food policies are bound to have boomeranging effects on them.

The seizure of massive hectares of land under the Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Agricultural Development Programme, River Basin Development Authorities etc. seriously led to the ruination and pauperization of the peasants. Land alienation also led to rural- urban drift, unemployment, prostitution, robbery etc. since the food crisis of the late 60's and the collapse of the oil boom of the 70' s there has been a dramatic increase in the depth of poverty unarguably because of the failure of various strategies adopted and aimed at ensuring food security in Nigeria".

It becomes imperative to give agriculture a place of priority in the national discourse for the country's development strategy to be achieved speedily via the efficient release of food import funds as well as curtailing on the leakages noticed during the process which should be channelled into other productive areas in the economy. In this connection, Nigeria and other developing countries should see Agriculture as the gateway to several desired ends which includes poverty reduction, rural transformation, employment, food security and improved national health profile of the Nigerian citizenry.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staple food production is growing less than proportionate to population, as such the MDG goal of halving extreme hunger by 2015 given the Nigeria scenario is but a mirage. This gloomy scenario is painted via the low numbers recorded in GDP of crops and its declining contribution to the nations GDP. This growth rates are given as 0.41 per cent and 9.62 per cent respectively. It is ironic that staple food production which is growing at a declining rate than population has its effects worst hit at the rural areas, which have recorded extreme hunger conditions. Government monetary action tends to send the wrong signals which are counteractive to its agricultural strategies.

In addition, this explains the galloping inflationary rates and high cost of borrowing, which further explanations on the nation's viscous circle of poverty. Gloomy performance of government operations on

guaranteed loans to farmers is a good pointer. Therefore, the attainment of one of the objective of the MDG, which is the halving of hunger in Nigeria, can only be achieved, if the right structural framework is laid. In other words, if the Nigerian government can harness its resources properly by driving critical improvements in areas of irrigation systems, better agricultural institutions and agricultural extension services, as well maintaining consistency in its policies, would not only bring about increased staple food production but also its equitable distribution to the generality of the Nigeria citizenry. It is based on the foregoing that, for the Nigeria government to articulate its MDG objective towards halving hunger by the year 2015, the following are recommended;

- The regulation of markets by setting prices of goods is critical in creating the requisite encouragement for local farmers to increase production as well as enhancing equitable distribution and consumption of staple foods which can reduce importation of food. This would therefore entail the establishment of regulatory institutions to assist in the actualization of this objective. It is further suggested that the general public apathy towards consumption of food produced in the country against foreign foods as a habit should be discouraged. In addition, NGOs and civil organizations aside providing agricultural extension services to farmers on educating them on the right use of agricultural loans should also not rest on their oars of ensuring that people entrusted with public offices are sensitive and responsive to the agricultural needs of the Nigerian citizenry.
- The country should adopt the new combined weather and crop forecasting system as developed in advanced economies. This allows for information from the most current climate and weather forecasting models to be used directly to stimulate crop harvest. With this system, one can begin to represent crop/atmospheric interactions in a realistic manner. Also, since factors leading to increased prices and resultant food crisis are diverse and complex, improvements are required in the factors which impact on food supply and demand, this include, land and water constraints, under investment in rural infrastructure and agriculture, inaccessibility by farmers to fertilizer and good irrigation systems, poor trade policies; to reduce waste in staple food production by the provision of storage facilities, minimization of the rising energy prices and thus conversion of crop land to bio fuel production, reduction of population growth, globalization of food markets, and the minimization of the ever changing diets of the citizenry.
- That government should set the right machinery towards reducing leakages noticed in the funding of food importation which would enhance good governance and government should always be mindful that its monetary and fiscal actions should not be counteractive to the country's agricultural strategies.

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