

Global-Local Actors and the Political Economy of Food Policy in Nigeria

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Abstract: Since independence in 1960, there have been several policies on food and agriculture in Nigeria. Each of these policy decisions with other associated initiatives and programmes were aimed at achieving food self-sufficiency and hence propel the country towards a food economy that is dependable and sustainable; which is a sine qua non for food security. However, lots of ambiguities and gray areas are imbedded in the Nigerian Agricultural and food Policies due to the inherent political and economic interests of the many actors involved in the policy making and implementation processes; in practical neglect of the people's desires and food preferences. This paper argues that actors at both global and local levels have had influences in the food policy making process in Nigeria with attendant unpleasant consequences on the country's food security. The identified actors within the context of this paper include: The World Bank, The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and other transnational agri-business on one hand, and the government, political elites, and some influential farmers, on the other. The economic and political interests of these various actors had been a major stumbling block in the accomplishment of the food security in Nigeria.

Keywords: Global-Local Actors, Political Economy, Food Policy, Food Security, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

It is not a misplaced line of argument to say that hunger and the food issues can no longer be fully explained in terms of national influence as the determinant factors in today's world. This is because trade liberalization, the inability to effectively regulate the power of TNC and burdensome external debt servicing obligations, have strong hold on state's capacity to determine or formulate appropriate policies on food and agriculture for their citizens (Shiva, 2002). Hence, it is noticeable that many of the policy initiatives and programmes in developing countries of the world usually derived 'inspirations' from abroad instead of such inspirations to come from the socio-cultural and domestic milieu peculiar to these countries. The Nigerian experience is not an exemption in this regard. Most of the popular programmes that were meant to address the food problem in Nigeria were practically influenced by the desire to formulate liberal political economic-agriculture focused policies in line with the preferences of international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank), Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations and other Transnational Agro-based Corporations.

In their bid to support the Nigerian governments efforts to "promote agriculture and rural development", external actors or donors have invested in both operational and policy initiatives. In most cases these external actors made major inputs into the policy formulation process by providing ideas, funds and technical know-how. For instance, the World Bank and DFID financed the development of a new Rural Development Strategy, which was adopted in 2001 under the democratic government of Olusegun Obasanjo. In line with the new strategy of the Nigerian government in 2001 to boost rural development, the World Bank Group Country Strategy papers on Nigeria for the periods 1991 – 2001 and 2002 – 2004 place emphasis on smallholder agricultural development and also encouraged increased beneficiary participation in the effort at food security (African Development Fund, 2003).

At another level of involvement, IFAD has supported the project of Community Based Agricultural and Rural Development Project (CBARDP) in some states in Nigeria which include: Gombe, Adamawa, Bauchi, Niger, Kaduna and some other eight states in Northern Nigeria. As the ADF 2003 report also confirmed:

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Among the most recent initiatives to assist the government implement this new strategy (for rural development), in 2002 the ADB together with the World Bank and IFAD funded a review of agriculture sector institutions carried out by the FAO (African Development Fund, 2003: 11).

Furthermore, as the IFAD has continued to finance the Roots and Tuber expansion project in 26 states of the Nigerian federation, focusing on improving agricultural extension services and on processing and marketing of farm produce; the UNDP is funding a natural resources management project seeking to promote sustainable agricultural, environmental and rural development in Nigeria. Also, the UNICEF is supporting a programme providing community based nutrition services. DFID is involved in “enhancing wetland livelihoods in Jigawa State while the USAID is making effort at promoting the marketing of inputs and rural enhancement projects” (ADF Report, 2003: 12). A detailed examination of the key external actors and their roles in determining the way forward in the Nigerian food situation will suffice at this point.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organisation could be regarded as the “twin brother” of the World Bank – IMF, in the food and agricultural policy process in Nigeria. These organizations have played significant and prominent roles in Nigeria’s effort at food security, particularly from the 1970s till date.

Under the auspices of the New National Agricultural Policy of the Federal Government which it played significant role in inputting ideas into the process of formation, the food and agriculture organization collaborated with the Nigerian government to launch an ambitious National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) in 2002. The aim of the programmer is to attain sustainable food security generate employment and eradicate rural poverty in Nigeria through the mechanism of improved technology, which is meant to boost production, strengthen research and extension services, effectively utilize land and water; develop the Nigerian aquacultural potentials, small ruminants and to effectively manage post-harvest challenges.

The food and agriculture organization adjudged the Nigerian version of the special programme on food security a success. Consequently a high-level visit of Honorable Ministers of Agriculture from the Food and Agriculture (FAO) member state took place in April, 2004 to encourage other member states to learn from Nigeria.

Furthermore, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) also signed a Tripartite South-

South Agreement with the Federal Government of Nigeria and China to build and rehabilitate small-scale water control irrigation schemes. The South-South Agreement, which was initiated within the framework of the National Special Programme for Food Security, has the main objective of allowing member states to emphasis or concentrates on each other’s areas of excellence in agriculture for the purpose of achieving food security, and improves farmer’s productive capacity and income.

The programmer is believed to have positively contributed to Nigeria’s effort at food security. More than 375 Chinese technicians including seven experts and a coordinator have been deployed to various states of the federation according to need (Okunmadewa, 2009: 65). In the various states they have been deployed to, these foreign (Chinese) experts and technicians have commenced small scale earth dam construction and rehabilitation, fisheries, irrigation, agro-processing, agricultural mechanization and livestock production (Okunmadewa, 2009: 65).

There are other areas that the food and agriculture organization of the United Nations had influenced food and agricultural initiatives and programmes in Nigeria. The organization has remained a major actor in the food policy making process in Nigeria. It could be argued that FAO and the World Bank are perhaps the most prominent external actors in the process of initiating food policies in Nigeria. The Food and Agriculture Organisation has over twenty programmes and projects in Nigeria. One of these programmes is the National Special Programme for Food Security.

THE WORLD BANK

The World Bank is perhaps more decisive and committed to the Nigerian effort at food security, in terms of policy advice, initiatives, assistance, grants and loans. Starting with the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) under the Gowon administration in 1975, the World Bank has become a key actor in the food and agricultural policy making process in Nigeria. The ADPs was partly financed by the World Bank. As a matter of fact the ADP is:

Another instrument for implementing the agricultural policy is the World Bank Assisted Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). The overall objective of an ADP is to increase food production and the incomes of small-scale farmers (Eminue, 2009: 387).

This World Bank Assisted Integrated Agricultural Project has been domesticated by all the states of the Nigerian federation.

Also very central and germane to the Nigerian food effort is the National Fadama Development Project (NFDP). Under the Fadama Project, the World Bank

had expended a huge amount of Dollars in Nigeria. It started with Fadama I, then Fadama II and now Fadama III. The word "FADAMA" derives from Hausa language and it means irrigable land and flood plains in low-lying areas, underlined by shallow aquifers, which are found along Nigerian river system. However, the word (FADAMA) has now become a household name in the study of agriculture and food security. It has become a technology not unknown to agricultural practitioners in many parts of the world. This means that Fadama has gained international acceptability of some sort.

The Fadama project in Nigeria is economically justified because of the place of agriculture in the Nigerian economy, particularly in the area of employment generation. As much as sixty-five (65) percent of the Nigerian labour force comes from Agriculture. The funding of FADAMA is multi-lateral in nature; consisting of efforts by the trio of World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Federal Government of Nigeria. The World Bank is believed to be the highest donor to the Fadama project. Hence, the World Bank has remained the major

designer of the project which has the following components:

- Capacity building.
- Rural infrastructure investments.
- Pilot asset acquisition support.
- Demand responsive advisory services.
- Project management, monitoring and evaluation.

May it be recalled that the National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) started in February, 1993. (Ingawa, 1988) and was designed to replace the archaic shadoof system by providing credit to the farmers to acquire petrol-engine-driven centrifugal pumps for lifting water from shallow wells. As many states in Nigeria continue to employ the Fadama irrigation which is no doubt playing a prominent role in Nigeria's food security, the World Bank (1992) estimated that it would take about 30 years before the full potentials of the Fadama scheme could be fully realized. However, the nation-wide Fadama potentials in the Federal Republic of Nigeria are put at over Four Million (4m) hectares (Babalola, 2002: 16).

Table2. Fadama Potentials of the FCT and States Benefiting from the National Fadama Development Programme (NFDP)

No.	State	Potential area available for development using ground-water (ha)	Irrigable land under surface (direct) pumping (ha)	Total potential (ha)
1.	Abuja – FCT	21,041	120,000	141,041
2.	Osun	12,000	50,000	62,000
3.	Delta	133,812	120,709	254,521
4.	Ondo/Ekiti	20,503	126,252	146,755
5.	Edo	22,837	58,063	80,900
6.	Ogun	19,185	117,867	137,052
7.	Niger	395,000	100,000	495,000
8.	Abia	15,000	42,000	47,000
9.	Anambra	25,761	119,221	144,982
10.	Akwa-Ibom	27,500	45,500	73,000
11.	Cross River	37,081	18,300	55,381
12.	River/Bayelsa	22,917	24,820	47,900
13.	Oyo	25,094	14,000	39,914
14.	Kwara	150,000	90,000	240,000
15.	Kogi	160,000	70,000	230,000
16.	Lagos	44,000	30,000	74,000
17.	Adamawa	299,000	330,000	625,000
18.	Taraba	130,000	220,000	350,000
19.	Imo	30,000	75,000	105,000
20.	Enugu/Ebonyi	15,000	70,000	85,000
21.	Borno	240,000	60,000	300,000
22.	Yobe	332,000	33,000	356,000
23.	Plateau/Nasarawa	52,000	14,000	66,000
24.	Sokoto/Kebbi	-	-	-
25.	Zamfara	140,000	24,000	164,000
26.	Bauchi/Gombe	71,000	110,000	181,000
27.	Kano	219,000	37,000	256,000
28.	Jigawa	26,000	106,000	132,000
29.	Katsina	20,000	6,000	26,000
30.	Kaduna	25,000	10,000	35,000
31.	Benue	12,000	45,000	57,000
	Total	2,742,731	2,287,716	4,573,446

Source: Babalola (2002)

Other actors in the Nigerian food policy process could be identified but the aforementioned could be referred to as the key actors in terms of globalism. However, the proper process of policy pronouncement and implementation rest with local actors. Within the context of the Nigerian food process, the local actors include the government, political elites, influential farmers and some private companies.

THE GOVERNMENT

The Nigerian government since independence has been playing very prominent and leading roles in determining the direction of the country's food policies. The federal government had initiated many agricultural policies with the aim of arresting the food situation problems in Nigeria. As presented in chapter three of this study, there is a general situation of inconsistency in policy making in Nigeria. Virtually all regimes either in a military or civilian era in Nigeria had introduced new policy on food and agriculture as they came to position of authority in the country.

This system of government's dominance in the area of food supply and food security is not peculiar to Nigeria alone but has continued to be the situation in poor countries where hunger problems are most acute (Paarlberg, 2002: 3); Food and farm production systems and development policies tend to be shaped by national authorities. As Paarlberg, (2002: 6) observed:

The public sector export crop production and trade systems set up colonizing powers in much of Africa and Asia did not disappear following independence. These national commodity production and marketing systems, dominated by state-owned corporations and state monopoly marketing boards, in most instances, were simply taken over by the newly independent national government and run for the purpose of generating state revenues.

The implication of this is that farmers in developing economies are usually made to suffer the effect of overbearing government's interventionism. At times, these developing countries governments taxed the farm sector so heavily as to impair agricultural productivity. National governments in the developing countries may appear weak in some respects, but not in their ability to extract resources from their own farmers. A study conducted by Schiff and Valdes, 1992, revealed that between 1960 and 1984, the net effect of direct and indirect state policy interventions in 18 developing countries was an enormous income transfer out of the

farm sector. This amount averaged 46 percent of the agricultural GDP per year of these countries.

Like any other developing country, Nigeria had formulated several policies on food and agriculture since 1960 but the major problem with these policies and the reason why the country is far from solving its food problems can usually be seen not in the relative strength of these national food and farm policies, but rather in the pro-farmer versus anti-farmer bias of these policies. This means that the government of Nigeria has been coming up with various and different policies in the food sector of the economy without particular consideration for the preferences, input and interests of the farmers who are supposed to be major stakeholders in the processes of making and implementing these policies. It is this lack of recourse to the central importance of the farm sector in the process of making food policies in Nigeria that informed the notable inadequacies, inappropriateness and the inconsistency in food policies in Nigeria. Every new regime and government always initiates and/or establishes one programme (or policy) or the other, in order to address the problem; yet the problem has continued to remain with us.

The role of the government of Nigeria in the food policy making process of the country since the departure of the colonial lords could be described as burdensome. Instead of many government's efforts to serve as palliative measures they had aggravated the problem of food production and distribution by constituting largely, a burden to the Nigerian farmers. As reported by a World Bank study in 1994, many sub-Saharan African countries also have this problem, especially those countries that had one time or the other undergone the structural adjustment programme. Seventeen (17) out of twenty-nine (29) African countries that were studied in 1994, did reduce the overall tax burden on farming. But in actual sense, the persistent overvalued exchange rates made the burden to increase. The World Bank report ended on the note that no country (in Africa) has good macro-economic policies and good agricultural policies (World Bank, 1994: 1-2; 76-88).

Furthermore, partial and in some cases improper and insincere implementation of policies reveals the inadequacy of governments effort at food security and further confirm the dominant role of national government in the food policy process as against the farmers and the mass of the people that such policies were actually meant to serve. The argument is that "many governments liberalized internal trade but maintained a state monopoly over external trade"

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(Mongues et al, 2008). In the Nigerian case, the process and systems of implementing agricultural policies had been over politicized. There are whole lots of dimension to the politicization of the process of implementing food policies in Nigeria but the major ones that had constituted a bottleneck to the Nigerian food issue are to form the focus of analysis.

Aside from the fact that the Nigerian government over the years have embarked on food policies without proper consultation with the ordinary citizens or farmers associations (who are the major stakeholders), the implementation of these policies had also be met with serious bottlenecks all pointing to the strong impact of political and economic interests in the entire food policy process in Nigeria. Perhaps, the political dimension to the whole problem was more noted in the wake of the food shortages that resulted into global high prices of food items in the end of 2007 and the early parts of 2008. The Nigerian Government responded with an order that food be released to the general public from the nation's strategic grains reserves, with the aim of cushioning the effect of the food crisis ravaging the world at the time.

However, the cumbersome process of obtaining allocation papers from the ministry of agriculture in Abuja before one could qualify to buy from the grain reserves that are situated in various parts of the country, made the intention of government's decisions and order meaningless. It was practically difficult for the ordinary citizens of the country to access the food items. It was found out that only the rich and a handful of contractors who could travel to Abuja to obtain allocation papers that were further processed bureaucratically, bought food from the grain reserves.

Furthermore, the situation was worsened by the drive for profit maximisation of the food contractors who bought the items with the claim of selling to the ordinary Nigerian citizen in their localities; but went ahead to sell these food items to companies or agro-allied industries that needed them for production and manufacturing purposes. The process of procuring allocation papers was so politicized to the extent that even the contractors that were highly favoured in the process were those with proven political and economic lineage to the powers that be in the country. Many items were claimed to have been bought by political loyalists whose godfathers are stakeholders in the Agricultural business and also part of government or at least close to the corridor of power. This practical abuse of the process truncated the implementation of that government's response policy as a palliative measure to the resurgence of food crisis in Nigeria.

The inability of farmers to have access to fertilizers has always been cited as one of the major reasons for the increase in the price of some agricultural

produce in Nigeria. Government plays a central role in the process of fertilizer procurement and distribution in Nigeria. However, the abysmal outcome of the fertilizer policy has been accentuated by sharp practices of fertilizer diversion by government officials and highly placed individuals in the Nigerian society. Middlemen and most of the time government officials place additional price on the fertilizers that were meant to be given to farmers at a government subsidized rates. This has created serious problem of inaccessibility and unaffordability of fertilizers by the Nigerian farmers.

More problematic however, is the deliberate diversion of large tones of fertilizer for other purposes, both personal and official in many parts of the country. The case of Hilary Ede Oga, a former Commissioner for Agriculture in Enugu State readily comes to mind here. In 2009, the government of Governor Chime publicly announced the removal of the Commissioner for Agriculture for unilaterally diverting large kilogrammes of fertilizer that was meant for the farmers of the state to another route. Nine trucks loads of fertilizer had been intercepted by men of the 82 division of the Nigerian Army on the 30th of July, 2009. Upon investigation, it was discovered that the fertilizers were been diverted to the northern part of the country but were originally parts of the consignment for the use of Enugu farmers. When it was later revealed that the then Agriculture Commissioner was the main architect of the whole scenario, the governor pronounced his sack after subsequent executive council meeting of the state.

Generally, the issue of farm implements and the associated problems have adversely affected the activities of Nigerian farmers, and hence the attendant consequence on the state of food security in Nigeria. The foregoing fertilizer issues for instance have even be made worse by the fact that the Nigerian government's policy on fertilizer is practically to the disadvantage of farmers. Since the two main fertilizer plants in the country has collapsed, the farmers have been left at the mercy of merchants and unscrupulous middlemen, whose main preoccupation has been to manipulate the process of procurement and distribution of fertilizers in the country to their own advantage.

The federal government of Nigeria has claimed that over the years over sixteen(N16b) billion naira has been spent annually to subsidise fertilizer for food production and the farmers are claiming lack of access to fertilizer and the country is relying on importation as a panacea to the food problem. One, therefore, wonders what the situation would look like when the sector is completely deregulated as threatened by government. Farmers are still buying fertilizers at exorbitant market prices between 6,000 and 7,000 naira per 50 kilogram bag.

The foregoing analysis is a corroboration of the position of Idachaba and Olatunbosun (2009) that

fertilizer procurement and distribution in Nigeria has become a business reserved for political party loyalists and associates. They agreed that fertilizers hardly get to the farmers at the right time and when it does, it is usually at unaffordable prices. Consequently, the rich and powerful benefit at the expense of the real users of fertilizer in Nigeria because of the abysmal policy of procurement and distribution (Idachaba, 2009). The situation has become so cumbersome to the extent that in the country today only men and women close to the corridor of power could get license and allocations to import fertilizers. These products are subsequently sold to middlemen who in turn sell the products at exorbitant prices to the end users. In most cases only politicians are allowed to do the job of importing fertilizers and in case such jobs are not executed, they were never queried because they are card carrying members of one political party or another, and not necessarily farmers or farm owners. It is in this sense that fertilizer importation and distribution has turned federal and state ministries of agriculture into money pots to which favoured candidates are sent to have a taste (Idachaba, 2009).

The fertilizer plants we have in Nigeria are not working because effective operations of the plants would negate the political and economic interests of the middlemen and government officials who have been benefiting from fertilizer importation. To get out of these problems, Olatunbosun (2009) believes that farmers would do themselves a whole lot of good by combining efforts to collectively order the product directly instead of hoping on government’s subsidized fertilizers which as he puts it, are even more expensive”. Olatunbosun(2009) further argues that the Nigerian government’s policy of procuring fertilizers “passeth all human understanding”. As he observed:

You buy fertilizer at N4,333 per 50kg bag, subsidise it a 25 percent, and then sell it at N3,250 when any individual can import the same fertilizer of even superior quality for N1,800 ... what the government had been subsidizing is corruption.

Contact with several stakeholders concerned, reveal a rather astonishing process and system of resource allocation to the various states of the federation through budgetary allocations. It was gathered that instead of the government to allocate evenly or according to the needs of each state of the federation, there is a huge politics behind the allocations.

Assessment of government’s role in the food policy making process in Nigeria will not be complete without mentioning the lamentation of farmers all over the country regarding the sharp and fraudulent practices that saw the light of the day since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in may, 29, 1999. The

pedigree of Olusegun Obasanjo and Umoru Yar’Adua, as notable farms was expected to signify a joy and good omen for the Nigerian farmers, but practically and in reality the reverse became the case. The Goodluck Jonathan agricultural transformation agenda with all the associated paraphernalia could not help matter until the advent of the Buhari administration in May, 2015 with the strong will to discourage food importation at all cost. Particularly the ongoing policy to close all land borders to the Nigerian state.

Moreover, in his presentation of the Handbook on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) in Nigeria at the Non- State Actors Orientation workshop on CAADP/2014 Malabo Declaration, Joint Sector Reviews and National Agricultural Investment Plans, Ken Ukaoha, the President of National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS), revealed that government investment and funding of the agricultural sector was very low as against the Maputo/Malabo commitments of at least 10 per cent public investment into the sector (Emejor, 2018). As a matter of fact between 2011 and 2017, the percentage budgetary allocation to agriculture has been less than two (2%).

Table 1. Budgetary Allocation to Agriculture in Nigeria (2011- 2017)

S/n	Year	Percentage Allocated
1.	2011	1.8
2.	2012	1.6
3.	2013	1.7
4.	2014	1.4
5.	2015	0.9
6.	2016	1.3
7	2017	1.8

Source: Emejor, 2018.

The report also noted that Nigeria’s Hunger and Nutrition Political Commitment Index (HANCI) of 37 in 2014-2016 was low, indicating that the political commitment to reducing hunger and malnutrition was low; besides, no remarkable progress had been made in this regard since 2015. With regard to access to agricultural funding, there was an improvement in the level of funding by the formal banking sector as the share of loans advanced to the agriculture sector by deposit money banks increased from 1.7 per cent in 2010 to 3.3per cent in 2016. The report further revealed that although agricultural sector had been a significant source of foreign exchange, which is about 75 per cent of non-oil export earnings, farm productivity has been very low in terms of yield per hectare. The report said: “Nigeria is one of the largest producers of rice in Africa and at the same time, one of the largest importers of rice in the world”. The figures on rice importation has however, practically reduced in recent times in Nigeria. Government’s determination to keep all land borders closed is also significantly improving local production

contributing in no small measure to the national economy.

CONCLUSION

Nigerian food policy making formulation and implementation has continued to be dominated by external forces, the government and powerful political elites. These actors play decisive roles in the food and agricultural sectors of the Nigerian economy. The farmers and consumers of agricultural produce are often not duly consulted or involved in the food policy making process Nigeria. This, of course has been the pattern of operation in post-colonial Nigeria where the citizenry is sidelined in most of the developmental plans of the country; as policies are just imposed on the people by the government. This is the case in the process of making food and agricultural policies in Nigeria. The people who bear the social cost of many of these food and agricultural plans, initiatives, programmes and policies are, in most cases not consulted or carried along in any of the critical decision making phases; from planning, implementation and even evaluation. Awachie, (2009) called this practice, “the development from above” syndrome and has continued to be a major set back to the accomplishment of genuine food security in Nigeria.

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