

## LESSONS FROM IMPLEMENTATION OF NIGERIA'S PAST NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION AGENDA

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### Abstract

There have been numerous national agricultural programs in Nigeria in the past fifty years. These programs were aimed at creating jobs as well as bringing about economic and national development, among other objectives. However, the implementation of these programs led to results that were either unsatisfactory or unintended. The present study assesses the implementation of these past national agricultural programs in order to bring out valuable lessons that could be learnt. The paper reviews national agricultural programs in Nigeria since independence and seeks to highlight the role of agricultural extension in the implementation of the programs. The programs are considered within the context of certain defined periods within which they were implemented, beginning with independence in 1960. Constraints to effective implementation of the programs have been identified and suggestions made concerning better implementation of future national agricultural programs.

**Keywords:** Assessment, Implementation; Past national agricultural programs: Rural development.

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## **Introduction**

### **Background to the study**

Agriculture is one of the most important sectors of the economies of developing countries of the world. The growth of this sector is, however, not in consonant with its strategic importance in the economies of various countries (Ogbonna, 2011). For example, in Nigeria, the growth of the agricultural sector has declined drastically since independence with the contribution of agriculture to the national economy dropping from 80% in the 1960s to a mere 34% in 2003 (Chigbu, 2005).

Conscious of the strategic importance of agriculture in the economy, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has formulated and implemented national agricultural programs aimed at boosting agricultural production since independence in 1960. The effectiveness or otherwise of the implementation of some selected past national agricultural programs shall be used as lessons for the implementation of the present national agricultural transformation agenda of the Goodluck Jonathan administration.

A program is a comprehensive plan that includes objectives to be attained, specifications of resources required and stages of work to be performed (Asiabaka, 2002). Olatunji (2005) defines a program as a collection of coordinated activities that are mutually directed towards the

attainment of a definite goal and made up of several segments or projects which can be separately pursued as components of the whole.

National agricultural programs, in the present study, are those programs that were initiated and implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) either singly or in conjunction with the World Bank, other financial agencies, foreign donor agencies, state or local governments, among other bodies. Such programs usually started as pilot projects and then were expanded to cover all or most states and or local governments in the country to make them 'national' in outlook. There have been numerous national agricultural programs in Nigeria in the past fifty years, especially since the country became independent in 1960. While the agricultural programs conceived, planned and implemented by the colonial masters were geared towards the production of agricultural raw materials for industries in their home country, during the pre-independence era, the post-independence period, on the other hand witnessed the conception, planning and implementation of agricultural programs that tended to focus on, among other things, job creation, agricultural and rural development and food security for the country (Agber, Ishuwa and Akaaimo, 2003).

### **Statement of the problem**

Between the colonial times and more than half a century after independence, Nigeria is still grappling with the issue of implementation of national agricultural programs. Numerous national agricultural programs have come and gone and yet more are on the way. There is, however, very little tangible practically useful result that has emerged from the implementation of the past programs, since according to Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2012) changes in Nigerian agricultural policies and programs vary only in nomenclature and organizational network. According to them, the new policies and programs emphasize almost same objectives like the provision of

food for the inhabitants of the nation (food security and sufficiency) and exportation of the anticipated excess food to other countries; the provision of rural dwellers and farmers with extension services, agricultural support and rural development services, concluding that agriculture has continued to suffer from inertia associated with these policies and program reformation that pervade Nigeria.

The aim of this study is therefore to identify lessons that could be learnt from implementation of past national agricultural programs for better implementation of the current agricultural transformation agenda.

### **Study questions**

The questions that arise are: what were the objectives of the past national agricultural programs? what were the factors that led to the success or failure of the programs? what role, if any, did agricultural extension played during the implementation of the programs? and what lessons can we derive from the implementation of these past programs that can help develop agriculture in Nigeria, especially during the transformation agenda of the present regime?

### **Significance of the study**

The present work is significant in that the findings of the work shall help make the implementation of the agricultural transformation agenda of the Jonathan regime more successful and beneficial to farmers in particular and the Nigerian economy in general.

### **Purpose of the study**

The main objective of this study is to look at the lessons from implementation of past national agricultural programs for the transformation agenda of the present federal Government of Nigeria. Specifically the objectives of the study include:

- (a) a brief history of some past national agricultural programs; and
- (b) the identification of the factors that led to the success or failure of the programs.

## **Review of related literature**

### **A brief history of some past national agricultural programs**

The national agricultural programs under review below concern those that were sponsored by the government. The study shall use related literature to describe and draw lessons that would be of benefit to the on-going national agricultural programs, in particular and the Nigerian economy in general.

According to Jibowo (2005) some national agricultural programs that were established and implemented following Nigeria's political independence in 1960 and the subsequent establishment of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture in 1970 included:

- (a) Programs established between the end of the Nigerian civil war and the year 1980 included: National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP, 1972), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA, 1973), Agricultural Development Project (ADP, 1975), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN, 1976) and the Green Revolution Program (1980);
- (b) Programs established after 1980 to 2005 included: Accelerated Development Area Project (ADAP, 1982), Multi-state Agricultural Development Project (MSAP, 1986), Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS, 1987), National Fadama Development Project (NFDP, 1992) and the National Special Program for Food Security (NSPFS, 2003).

**The National Accelerated food production program (NAFPP):** This program was established in 1972, following the end of the Nigerian civil war and the need to end the food crisis that engulfed the nation at that time. The program was designed with the basic aim of increasing food production in the country, through: Education of farmers on methods of increasing their productivity in the area of food crop production and the organization of workshops, seminars and conferences for farmers to enhance their education for greater agricultural productivity. The main problems that caused the program to fail were: the cost-sharing arrangement that involved the farmer in the last two phases of the program; since cooperative societies were the main organs through which money was disbursed for on-lending to farmers, farmers who were not members of cooperative societies were left out; unceremonious withdrawal of funding from the cooperative societies by the Federal Government; and demonstration trials that did not give a true reflection of the technology that was introduced (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012)

**River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs):** This was another national agricultural program that came into existence in 1973. Its aims and objectives included the provision of irrigation facilities through construction of dams for all year-round agricultural production, provision of potable water to people in the rural areas for increased agricultural production, assisting to bring more land under cultivation by increasing the farm size of the small scale farmers through the provision of land clearing services using government tractor hiring services at minimum charges, increasing the total output per farmer with increased net returns, construction of feeder roads to the rural areas for good transportation, improving the rural infrastructures generally to help stem the rural-urban migration, and the construction of fish ponds to enhance the distribution of fingerlings to farmers. Some of the river basin and rural

development authorities included: Lower Benue River Basin and Rural Development Authority; Upper-Benue River Basin and Rural development Authority; Sokoto-Rima River Basin and Rural Development Authority; Lake Chad Basin and Rural Development Authority; Kano-Ja'amare River Basin and Rural Development Authority; Benin-Owena River Basin and Rural Development Authority; Niger River Basin and Rural Development Authority, among others(Decree 25 of 1976). According to Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2009) problems found in the program were: a number of the authorities grew out of proportion and the operations of some suffered from intensive political interference. Also, substantial public funds were wasted to streamline sizes and functions of RBDAs through the disposal of their non-water assets.

**Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs):** The Agricultural Development Projects came about in 1975, after a bilateral agreement between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the World Bank. The two basic aims and objectives the ADPs were meant to achieve included increased food production and the raising of income of the small scale farmers; with the ultimate goal of improving their living standard and welfare.

Initially, nine pilot (enclave) ADPs, covering a few local government areas, were established in Funtua, Kaduna state (1975), Gusau, Sokoto state (1975) Gombe, old Bauchi state (1975), Ayangba, old Benue state (1978), Lafia, old plateau state (1979), Bida, Niger state (1980), Ilorin, Kwara state (1980), Oyo-North, Oyo state (1981), and Ekiti-Akoko, Ekiti state (1982).

Upon assessment, five years after their establishment, the ADPs were found to be successful. This gave rise to the establishment of state-wide ADPs that covered all the states of the federation at the time and additional ADPs were created in newly created states, soon after creation. The enclave ADPs were converted to state ADPs of their various states.

The ADPs program were made up of Adaptive research, Extension/technology transfer, input supply and rural infrastructure provision. Other major operational components of the ADPs include the Training and Visit as well as the Unified Agricultural Extension System.

The World Bank, federal Government of Nigeria, state and local governments all play one role or another towards the success of the ADPs (Amalu, 1998). Some problems that occurred in the implementation of the projects, according to Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2009) were; Shortage of funds; , ADP emphasized the technologies they wanted to introduce. For example, the program over-emphasized modern/ high-input technology like sole cropping while majority of the farmers practiced mixed/relay cropping; untimely supply of the subsidize inputs; high labor mobility; limited involvement of input agencies; dwindling funding policies and counterpart funding problems, as well as intricacies of technology transfer.

**Operation Feed the Nation (OFN):** The Operation feed the Nation was launched in 1976. The aims and objectives of the program included, among others: the creation of a lasting awareness in all Nigerians that the population of the country was growing much faster than food production; to convince Nigerians that farming was not a dirty job as some people thought; to reduce the escalating cost of bread basket for the average family unit in Nigeria, by cutting down on the demand for certain food items and increasing the supply and consumption of certain others; to put into effective use some of the findings that have accumulated in our universities and research institutes over the years; to promote a lasting and meaningful practical opportunity to all university and secondary school students to experience methods of problem solving before graduation; to encourage domestic food production by traditionally non-food producing sectors of the economy; to encourage the spirit of self – sufficiency and national self-reliance in food



production as well as improve the feeding habits of Nigerians by encouraging good nutritional habits.

The use of such inputs as fertilizers, improved seeds, weeds, disease and pest control was encouraged. The government established agro-service centers, price support system for agricultural products and guaranteed minimum prices for various agricultural commodities. The above measures were aimed at ensuring that what was produced under the operation Feed the Nation program was cheaper than imported food, which had killed domestic agriculture, but such that farmers could earn a comfortable living on income from their farms. Some of the problems of this program had were: indiscriminate use of land for farming activities; most of the participants were very young and inexperienced and without the fundamental knowledge of farming; hired labor was the main source of labor employed by participants; there was absence of readily available markets for the produce of the program and livestock diseases caused havoc on farms of the novice farmers.

**Green Revolution:** The Green Revolution took off in 1980. This program was more or less a continuation of the Operation Feed the Nation program. The aims and objectives were also not much different from those of the OFN. Using subsidy of the prices of agricultural inputs and machineries, including improved seeds, agro-chemicals, among other incentives, the government encouraged farmers to produce food, cash crops, as well as livestock, massively. The programme did not achieve its objective of increasing food supply because there was delay in execution of most of the projects involved in the program as well as no monitoring and evaluation of the projects for which huge sums of money were spent (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, 2012).

**Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI):** The Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure, which was one of the cardinal agricultural programs of the Babangida regime, was established in 1986. The aims, objectives and functions of the directorate included to: identify, involve and support viable local community organizations in the effective mobilization of the rural populace for sustainable rural development; identify and support the production of food and fiber crops; construct, rehabilitate and maintain rural feeder roads to facilitate food production and rural development; support rural water supply and on-farm storage in cooperation with the local people; identify and promote other programs for improving the quality of life of rural people; encourage contributions of labor, time and materials from local communities, to be complemented with grants from the Directorate, Local and State governments. The problems of the program included poor quality of infrastructures provided by the directorate; mismanagement of funds; lack of proper focus and program accountability (Idachaba, 1988).

**National Fadama Development Project (NFDP):** In 1992 the Federal Government of Nigeria in conjunction with the World Bank established the National Fadama Development Project. The initial project (Phase1) covered the old Bauchi, Kano, Jigawa, old Sokoto, and Kebbi states. The scheme was designed to improve the flooded plains of the savannah (Fadama). This led to the development of small irrigation pumps and shallow tube wells for small scale irrigation farming system (SSIFS). The relative success of Fadama 1 led to the establishment of Fadama 11 and the current Fadama 111. 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(<http://www.fadama.org/>). Overall appraisal of the first and second phases of the project show remarkable success, hence the invention of the current third phase. The main problem associated with the project was the unskilled handling of water application through irrigation (Afolayan, 1997).

**National Special Program for Food Security (NSPFS):** This is a program that was officially launched in 2003. The aim of the program was to attain food security and alleviate rural poverty in Nigeria. It aimed at helping farmers to increase output and income, strengthen extension service delivery, promote simple farm technologies, utilize land, water, and other resources for food production. Setbacks associated with the programme were seen in the inability of majority of the beneficiaries to repay their loan on time, complexity and incompatibility of innovation and difficulty in integrating technology into existing production system. Others include: insufficient knowledge of credit use, poor extension agent- farmer contact, unavailability of labor to carry out essential farming activities, lack of modern storage facilities and high cost of farm input (Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe,2012).

### **The role of agricultural extension in the implementation of the past national agricultural programs**

According to Madukwe, the dismal performance of the Nigerian extension system and its inability to live up to expectation is because of : a weak foundation that has led to the sustained and enduring weak linkages between research and extension (Madukwe, 2008); its ambiguous position in the administrative machinery of the Federal Ministry of agriculture; weak agricultural extension research efforts (Obibuaku and Madukwe, 1992); dependence on external funding; dependence on external knowledge, lack of data about the farmer and the farm,

existence of poor coordination and linkage mechanisms, poor financial base and donor dependence, weak policy-making capacity within government and fear of loss of autonomy, among other factors (Madukwe , 2008). Dayo , Nkonya, Pender and Oni (2009) on the other hand have outlined the lessons involving the agricultural extension system in the role of extension in the implementation of the past national agricultural programs as stated below.

1. There is need for better funding of the extension system: The approval for adoption of Unified Agricultural Extension (UAES) in 1992 by the National Council on Agriculture (NCA) to ensure a single line of command and delivery of unified extension messages to farmers has failed to yield the desirable fruits because of poor funding, as most of the state ADPs stopped functioning after the cessation of World Bank funding.
2. Inadequacy of extension staff: The agricultural extension staff is inadequate in number and quality, with the northeast zone having, for example, an estimated extension worker to farmer ratio of 1:1,700 (NARP 1995). This indicates a low level of extension service to farmers in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular (Swanson, Farner, and Bahal 1990).
3. The agricultural extension services in Nigeria also suffer from inadequate facilities and input supply with the field workers routinely lacking transport facilities, audiovisual aids and needed technologies that they are supposed to promote among the farmers (NARP 1995).
4. The agricultural extension staff is poorly paid. This is known to negatively affect performance.

### **Lessons from the implementation of past national agricultural programs**

Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe (2012) have correctly spelt out those lessons that needed to be learnt from the implementation of past national agricultural programs in Nigeria. If and when these gaps are filled/corrected and the recommendations outlined implemented the success of the present agricultural transformation agenda will be guaranteed.

- (a) Involvement of all stakeholders: There should be proper interaction between all stakeholders both at the time of planning and implementing national agricultural programs. Agriculturists, scientists researchers and more importantly the farmers/rural dwellers who are normally ignored during planning and implementation of agricultural/rural development policies and programs should all be taken on board. These stakeholders are in a better position to identify the policies and programs that will be tailored to the need of the farmers/masses: Their non-participation has led to failure of intervention programs, increased poverty and inaccessibility of basic social amenities with dwindling economic fortune.
- (a) Weak agricultural policy: Agricultural policies should be specific and spelt out for the masses and the world to know. Also a policy should have strategy, targets, goals, specific objectives and most importantly programme or projects geared towards accomplishment of the goals.
- (b) Role conflict between different programs and projects.
- (c) Short duration of agricultural policies and programmes: There should be continuity of existing programme by incumbent and new administration so that impact of the policy/programme will be realized.

- (d) Inconsistency/incompatibility of regional policies/programs with the national policies/programs: New policies and programs should be consistent, work in harmony and closely with regional/state and national policies and programs. The good rapport /relationship and peaceful atmosphere will always ensure success of agricultural policies and programme and consequent agricultural development.
- (e) Emphasis on mainly food and animal production: Agricultural growth and development need diversification into different sectors like manufacturing and services. Relying exclusively on farm output as most agricultural policies and programmes emphasize means subjecting the inhabitants of the nation to chronic poverty, marginalization and stagnation.
- (f) Delay, embezzlement, misappropriation and lack of fund to pursue specific policy/programme to anexpected end: Government may need to channel funds from the informal sector to the formal sector of the economy to make developed policies and programmes both workable and more effective.
- (g) Inadequate technical advisory/extension services: There should be systematic, timely technical advisory services provided within the ambit of the university based or Land Grant colleges of Agriculture.
- (h) Lack/inadequate monitoring and evaluation of programme/project: Evaluation is purposely done to determine achievements of rural development programme vis a vis the set aims/objectives. Evaluation techniques can serve to improve implementation and efficiency of programs after interventions have begun, provide evidence as to the cost efficiency and impact of a specific intervention within and between policy sectors (FAO, 2004).

### Conclusion/Recommendation

The past national agricultural programs have failed to improve the lot of millions of Nigerian farmers as well as the economy of the country. One of the most important reasons for this failure is the way the programs were implemented. The recommendation here is that all the stakeholders need to cooperate in the planning and implementation of future national agricultural programs, including the agricultural transformation agenda for the desired success.

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