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Five Decades Of Agricultural Policies In Nigeria: What Roles Has Statistics Played?



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ABSTRACT
All over the country and internationally, the publications of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) such as the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, the Statistical Bulletin, Economic and Financial Review, the Bullion and Nigeria: Major Economic and Banking Indicators and those of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) have become a veritable source of data and reference materials on Nigeria. Without basic information on economic developments, it would be very difficult for policy makers to assess economic performances. The formulation of appropriate macroeconomic policies to address the problems of inflation (food shortages), balance of payments disequilibrium, sluggish economic growth and inequitable income distribution requires adequate, reliable and up-to-date data. Agriculture constitutes one of the most important sectors of the Nigerian economy. Despite Nigeria's rich agricultural resource endowment and the various policies instituted by successive administrations, the sector has been growing at a very low rate and this has increased the incidence of poverty in Nigeria especially in the informal sector. President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua realized this fact when he made 'Food Security and Agriculture' one of the pillars in the Seven Point Agenda of his administration. However, in the last forty-nine years, the sector which suppose to be the main driver to economic growth has not perform this role adequately in terms of foreign exchange earnings and better linkages with other sectors of the economy. To redress this enigma and to bring back the old glory of the sector, there is the need for adequate planning in terms of human and material resources, and these cannot be divorce from adequate, reliable and consistent statistics.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges facing mankind is to provide an equitable standard of living adequate food, clean water, safe shelter and energy, a healthy and secured environment, an educated public, and satisfying work- for this and future generations. Of all these necessities, the first and most basic to human life and survival is enduring food security, which may be described as a situation in which majority of the populace of a country have access to domestically produced food at affordable prices at all times. It is not an overstatement to assert that the growth and development of any nation depend, to a large extent, on the development of agriculture. This is so because even industrial enterprises rely on agricultural undertakings to produce the raw materials that are transformed, using human resources, into capital goods. With the discovery of oil at Oloibiri (Bayelsa State) in 1959, agricultural productivity continues to lag far behind as a source of foreign exchange earnings to the nation. Agriculture is generally believed to propel economic growth and facilitate the achievement of structural transformation and diversification of economies. It empowers a country to fully utilize its factor endowments and thus reduces dependence on the oil for sustenance. If the agricultural sector is well developed, the economy would gains as the standard of living of its people would improve. To address this enigma, successive administration from 1960 to date put in place several food policies aimed at making the sub-sector takes its rightful place. Food policy may be seen as an integrated approach to issues that concern basically the food sector of an economy, but which is influenced not only by the linkages within the sector but also by the linkages among the rest of the economy and the international economic system. Food policy therefore involves not only activities in agricultural production but also includes feeding the industries, food processing and manufacturing, distribution and marketing, trade and consumption with the output from the agriculture sector. Besides being the major employer of labor, the sector raises the level of industrialization by providing food for the labor force. This is true because a poorly fed worker cannot supply efficient labor services which high level industrialization entails. This is elaborately manifested especially when viewed against the background that food is the source of energy and energy by definition is the ability to do work. Against this background, President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua realized this fact when he made "Food Security and Agriculture" one of his cannons in his Seven Point Agenda.

Over the years, the various governments of the country have enunciated and implemented a myriad of agricultural policies and programmes in an attempt to stimulate the sustainable growth and development of the agricultural sector. Till date, the achievements of these remains a subject of discuss both at the public and private fora. The paper examined the role statistics has played in the developments of the agriculture sector since 1960 with a view to gaining an insight into the extent of the transformations of the sector, particularly its contribution in ensuring food security. Structurally, the paper is organized into five sections including the introduction.

Section 2 presents the conceptual framework while section 3 examines the agricultural policies and programmes in Nigeria from 1960 2007 as well as show an appraisal of the policies by successive administrations. In section 4, the focus is on the on-going Seven Point Agenda crusade with emphasis on agriculture and food security while section 5 contains the summary, recommendations and conclusion.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Agriculture is the production of food, feed, fiber and other goods by the systematic growing and harvesting of plants and animals. It is the science of making use of the land to raise plants and animals. It is the simplification of nature's food webs and the rechanneling of energy for human planting and animal consumption. Until the exploitation of oil reserves began in the 1980s, Nigeria's economy was largely dependent on agriculture. Although only a tiny proportion of the population benefits from the oil boom, investment in agriculture has been allowed to decline to the extent that its productivity lags behind even some of the poorest countries in the region. Nigeria's wide range of climate variations allows it to produce a variety of food and **cash crops**. The staple food crops include cassava, yams, corn, coco-yams, cow-peas, beans, sweet potatoes, millet, plantains, bananas, rice, sorghum, and a variety of fruits and vegetables. The leading cash crops are cocoa, citrus, cotton, groundnuts (peanuts), palm oil, palm kernel, benniseed, and rubber. They were also Nigeria's major exports in the 1960s and early 1970s until petroleum surpassed them in the 1970s. Chief among the export destinations for Nigerian agricultural exports are Britain, the United States, Canada, France, and Germany.

2.1 The Role of Statistics in shaping Policy Formulations

The first president of the European Monetary Institute (EMI), Baron Alexandre Lamfalussy, wrote in 1996: Nothing is more important for monetary policy than good statistics. Statistical information is necessary to decide what policy actions to take, explain them publicly, and to assess their effects after the event. Unless policy can be justified and explained, it will not be understood and the institution carrying it out will lack credibility. We cannot think of a better way to put the role of statistics for monetary policy purposes. What is especially important in this statement is that good data are not only required for the decision-making process , per se, but also especially for the communications aspects of monetary policy. Good statistics are not only needed for an open market policy, but also for an open mouth policy. As monetary policy works to a large extent via expectations, this is crucially important.

2.1.1 Statistics for managing government: Governments need statistics to run a country efficiently, both for day-to-day administration and for policy making in the longer term. They need statistics to manage the economy, to 'balance the books' maintaining a balance between revenue and expenditure and ensuring macro-economic stability.

2.1.2 Data for managing the economy: One of the most important tasks all governments have is to manage the domestic economy and its interactions with the rest of the world. The actions governments take vary from country to country, but include maintaining an appropriate balance between supply and demand in the domestic and external economy and creating the right environment for investment, economic growth and poverty reduction.

2.1.3 Data for Long-term Policy-Making: Gross domestic product (GDP) and other measures of economic activity such as Gross National Income (GNI) areÊkey indicators for governments. Together with their individual components, they show how the economy is responding to government policy and other influences. Money and Banking statistics are very important for the purposes of formulating monetary policy and monitoring its implementation.

2.1.4 Statistics for Business Growth: Economic and financial statistics give the background to a country's economic health. Import and export data will offer clues on the international dimension of your chosen market sector. Figures on household consumption and spending patterns might indicate levels of demand forÊgoods and services, while those on retail or consumer prices (inflation) and retail sales ('factory gate' prices) will also yield useful business intelligence.

2.1.5 Using data to Improve People's Lives: In addition to managing the economy, official statistics are also needed to monitor the welfare, or well-being, of people. All governments have a concern on the status of their citizen's health, education and other areas of welfare. All countries have signed up to the United Nations' Millennium Declaration that requires actions to improve welfare and sets out specific indicators to be tracked between now and 2015.

2.1.6 Statistics to Attract Foreign Investment: Statistics are a crucial guide for firms considering investment in other countries, and for international organisations providing development assistance. The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) General Data Dissemination System Site was established in 1997 to provide a framework for evaluating needs for data improvement and setting priorities in this respect; and to guide member countries in the dissemination to the public, comprehensive, timely, accessible, and reliable economic, financial, and socio-demographic statistics. The website provides information on data produced and disseminated by member countries that participate in the GDDS.

3.0 AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA (1960 2007)

3.1 Rationale for Agricultural Policies in Nigeria:

In Nigeria's political history, the agricultural sector like other sector was bedeviled with series of problems which was due largely to poor planning. This planning or what was described as policy summersaults cannot be divorced from deviation from what the data says. As elaborately discussed in the literature by

Olayemi and Dittoh (1989) and Okunmadewa (1993). The major constraints identified are summarized as follows.

3.1.1 Technical Constraints: Technical constraints include the high incidence of pests and diseases, inadequate infrastructural facilities, dependence on unimproved inputs and rudimentary technology. Others are inadequate extension services, inefficient inputs supply and distribution system and high environmental hazards.

3.1.2 Resource Constraints: A major problem of agricultural labor supply arises from the increasing migration of able-bodied youths from rural to urban areas. The consequence of the massive migration of youths is seasonal labor shortage, especially at the peak periods of labor demand (during land preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting). There is also the problem of low agricultural labor productivity. There is an increasing population pressure on land as well as a declining quality of land. Rate of land improvement is low because of a low rate of capital investment by the predominantly traditional farmers.

3.1.3 Socio-Economic Constraints: The socio-economic problems that constrain Nigeria's agriculture include scarcity and high cost of improved farm inputs, inefficient marketing arrangements characterized by high marketing margins, lack of grades and standards, and lack of legally enforceable ownership and control rights over land which serves as a disincentive to investing in agriculture and which arises from the lack of appropriate land tenure system. Other socio-economic factors are inadequate extension services and credit facilities, low rate of growth in the demand for primary export commodities arising largely from competition with synthetic products; and low income elasticity of demand, and increasing food deficit and high dependence on food import arising from the disequilibria in national agricultural resource base, a largely traditional agricultural production system and some domestic population dynamics.

3.1.3 Organizational Constraints: Agricultural production is predominantly in the hands of a multitude of small scale unorganized farmers, scattered across the country. Lack of organization, coupled with the dispersed nature of farm settlements; hinder the participation of farmers in agricultural and rural development. It particularly hinders the supply of extension services, farm credit and other vital inputs to farmers.

3.2 AGRICULTURAL POLICIES IN THE LAST FIVE DECADES

It was in realization of these that successive government embarked on policy measures aimed at improving the sector to serve as the engine of growth for other sectors. The policies since independence under successive administration are as indicated below.

Table 1: Administration and Agricultural Policies/Programmes in Nigeria since Independence (1960-1999)

No	Period	Duration (Years)	Head of Government	Type	Programme/Policies	Date	Aim
1	Oct. 1960 to Jan. 1966	6	Tafawa Balewa	Civilian	Nigerian Research Institute Acts	1964	To promote researches in agricultural and other areas
2	Jan. 1966 to July 1966	½	Aguiyi-Ironsi	Military	-	-	-
3	July 1966 to July 1975	9	Yakubu Gowon	Military	(i) Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria Decree	1971	To coordinate all agricultural research
					(ii) Agricultural Research Institute Decree	1973	To establish institute to conduct research in any field of agriculture
					(iii) National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP)	1973	To accelerate Production of major staples
					(iv) Integrated Agric. Development Projects	1973	To enhance adoption of new agric. Technology by farmers
					(v) Nigerian Agric. and Cooperative Bank	1973	To make credit available to farmers
					(vi) Specialized Marketing Boards	1975	To fix commodity prices.
					(vii) National Grains and Roots Cultivation Programme	1975	To accelerate production of grains and root crops.

Table 1: Administration and Agricultural Policies/Programmes in Nigeria since Independence (1960-1999)

No	Period	Duration (Years)	Head of Government	Type	Programme/Policies	Date	Aim
4	July 1975 to Feb. 1976	½	Murtala Muhammed	Military	-	-	-
5	Feb. 1976 to Oct. 1979	3	Olusegun Obasanjo	Military	(i) Operation Feed the Nation	1976	To mobilize the public to participate in agricultural production
					(ii) River Basin Development Authorities	1977	To develop the country's land and water resources
					(iii) Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme	1977	To reduce the risk borne by commercial banks and make credit available to farmers.
					(iv) Rural Banking Scheme	1977	To encourage rural banking habit.
					(v) Land Use Act	1978	To make land available for agricultural purposes, etc.
6	Oct. 1979 to Dec. 1983	4	Shehu Shagari	Civilian	Green Revolution Programme	1980	To increase agricultural production
7	Dec. 1983 to Aug. 1985	1	Muhamadu Buhari	Military	Increase in the number of River Basin Authorities from 11 to 18	1984	
8	Aug. 1985 to Aug. 1993	8	Ibrahim Babangida	Military	(i) Directorate for Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure.	1986	To promote rural development.
					(ii) Reorganization of the River Basin Authorities	1986	
					(iii) Abolition of the Marketing Board	1986	To enhance the earnings of farmers
					(iv) Trade Liberalization Policy	1986	To encourage export employment
					(v) National Directorate for Employment.	1986	
					(vi) National Agric. Insurance Scheme	1987	To reduce the risk burden on farmers
					(vii) National Land Development Authority	1991	To develop agricultural land in the country.

Table 1: Administration and Agricultural Policies/Programmes in Nigeria since Independence (1960-1999)

No	Period	Duration (Years)	Head of Government	Type	Programme/Policies	Date	Aim
9	Aug. 1993 to Nov. 1993	¼	Ernest Shonekan	Civilian	Merger of the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure with Federal Ministry of Water Resources	1993	-
10	Nov. 1993 to June 1998	4¾	Sani Abacha	Military	Continuation of Babangida programmes	-	-
11	June 1998 to May 1999	-	Abdulsalami Abubakar	Military	-	-	-
12	May 1999 to 2007	-	Olusegun Obasanjo	Civilian	A series of initiative of the President targeted at particular commodities to increase food production in line with Vision 2020, with a view to attracting the attention of the highest political authority for special intervention in the commodity sector.	-	-

Source: Agricultural Policies in Federal Government Budgets:
(1)Federal Ministry of Agriculture
(2)National Planning Commission

3.3 AN APPRAISAL OF THE POLICIES

Within the 49 years of political history, (October 1960 to 2009), the government of Nigeria changed hands thirteen times, some regimes lasting less than one year. The instability in the political structure or leadership of the country has also resulted in frequent changes in the thrust of agricultural policy. In the face of all these, one would be tempted to ask if policy makers ever make use of data in their planning purposes. William Stopper during the early days of the country development plan summarized the bane of Nigeria policy making as "Planning without facts". Some policies were introduced without any genuine political or economic reasons, but merely because they sounded different from previous ones.

The regime under Tafawa Balewa (1960-1965) was characterized by very limited policies as far as agricultural development was concerned. The regional administrations simply continued with the colonial policies of plantation agriculture. During these period statistics and data storage for planning purposes were at its rudimentary stage. However, there was instability of the Research Institutes as a result of constant movement of the agriculture research institutes from one Ministry to another. There was also a major problem with funding of these Institutes.

The period 1966-70, marked the 30 months of civil war that climaxed the turbulence in the Nigerian political scene. This hardly provided an enabling environment for reasonable policy formulation nor the use of data for any meaningful purposes as the Aguiyi-Ironsi-led administration which lasted for only 6 months could not formulate or implement policies.

The Gowon administration succeeding the war years, however, saw a number of agriculture-related decrees. This era also witnessed the introduction of the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) in 1973, the establishment of the Nigerian Agricultural and Co-operative Bank (NACB) in 1973, the introduction of the Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) in 1975 and the National Grains Reserve Programme (NGRP) in 1975. The NAFPP was designed to accelerate the production of major staple crops. There were also the National Grains and Root Crops Cultivation Programmes which were aimed at increasing the production of its mandate crops. However, most of the programmes started very well but the withdrawal of political support and lifting of the ban on wheat import affected the

policy.

The Murtala-Obasanjo (February 1976 - October 1979) witnessed the emphasis on modern technology in the ADPs led their agricultural research and extension services. This administration introduced quite a number of policies and programmes. In 1976, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was launched to mobilize the public to take active part in agricultural production. Under the programme, agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, credit and bush clearing activities were highly subsidized. The River Basin Development Authorities, Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme and Rural Banking Scheme were introduced in 1977. The River Basin Development Authorities were aimed at developing the various river basin areas in the country while the Agricultural Credit Scheme was meant to reduce the risk borne by commercial banks by extending credit to farmers and the rural banking scheme to encourage the rural banking habit. Latter, programs for multiplication of improved seeds generally fell short of goals. Supplies of fertilizers were erratic largely due to centralized government control of international procurement and a very heavy subsidy program.

During the Shehu Shagari administration (October 1979 - December 1983) the only agricultural programme of note introduced was the Green Revolution. The programme involved the provision of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, irrigation, water, credit, appropriate mechanization, agroservice centres, improved marketing system and pricing policy as well as other incentives necessary for farming. The target was to make the country self-sufficient in basic food production within five years and to rehabilitate and restore the production of export produce in seven years.

The regime succeeding the administration (Buhari-Idiagbon) did not introduce any reasonable agricultural programme except the increase of River Basin Authorities from eleven to eighteen in 1984. Although the increase was aimed at decentralizing the authorities and bringing her functions and activities close to the rural populace, the number was returned back to the former 11 with the coming of another regime. In the face of these, the relegation in the use of statistics/data cannot be overemphasized.

From August 1985 to August 1993, Ibrahim Babangida headed thie administration of this nation, a regime that lasted longer than any other one since independence. He introduced Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. The adoption of SAP was a fall-out of the crisis in the Nigerian economy which arose from the collapse of oil prices in the world market. Among the programmes and policies of his administration was the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), which were both established in 1986. The river basin authorities were reorganized and trade liberation policies were adopted in 1986. The government rural infrastructural programmes were embarked upon with limited programme of action and appropriate institutional arrangements for their execution. For instance, government established DFFRI at the Federal Level and only uses the states and the local governments for the disbursements of funds for the implementation of its programmes. The lack of spatial focus in rural development planning which can be traced to care-free attitude to handicapped the rural infrastructural programmes. The Shonekan administration which lasted for only four months in office only succeeded in merging the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure with the Federal Ministry of Water Resources.

The Abacha regime which brought some modifications, the 'guided deregulation' policies had no major programme except that there were two exchange rates during this period. The NALDA approach increased rather than reduce the direct public provision of goods and services which could have been provided by the private sector instead. Many of NALDAs services were duplications, albeit on a more intensive basis of services provided by ADPs.

The third Republic (Obasanjo 1999 - 2007) initiated several food policies. However, inadequate funding and lack of institutional arrangements especially deviant for database policies for implementation hampered some of them. The initiatives generated interest and production increased but there were no concurrent provisions for storage and processing resulting in large post harvest losses and apathy on the side of the farmers.

4.0 FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE WITHIN THE SEVEN POINT AGENDA (2007 DATE): IS POLICIES BASED ON STATISTICS?

At the inception of his administration, President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua who succeeded Chief Olusegun Obasanjo earmarked on a Seven-Point Agenda so that the nation can move forward and be among the 20 largest economies by the year 2020. Briefly, the Seven-Point Agenda include Energy and power, Food Security and Agriculture, Wealth Creation, Education, land Reforms, Mass Transit and the Niger Delta issue.

4.1 THE SEVEN-POINT AGENDA: AGRICULTURAL POLICY THRUST:

Like the Obasanjo administration (1999 2007) the thrusts of the policy direction for agriculture and food security within the seven point agenda include:

- creating the conducive macro-environment to stimulate greater private sector investment in agriculture so that
- the private sector can assume its appropriate role as the lead and main actor in agriculture
- Rationalizing the roles of the tiers of government in their promotional and supportive activities to stimulate growth
- Reorganizing the institutional framework for government intervention in the sector to facilitate smooth and integrated development of agricultural potentials

- Articulating and implementing integrated rural development as a priority national programme to raise the quality of life of the people.
- Increasing agricultural production through increased budgetary allocation and promotion of the necessary developmental, supportive and service-oriented activities to enhance production and productivity and marketing opportunities
- Increasing fiscal incentives to agriculture, among other sectors, and reviewing import waiver anomalies with appropriate tariffication of agricultural imports
- Promoting increased use of agricultural machinery and inputs through favorable tariff policy.

Arising from the redefined role of the Federal Government, its thrust of activities will be directed to obviate the technical and structural problems of agriculture in the following aspect:

4.1.1 Development Activities: The effort in this direction is to finance agricultural research including bio-technology and breeding of predators for biological control of pests which the private sector may not be willing to invest in due to the high capital outlay and the prevailing low return on agricultural investment.

4.1.2 Animal Vaccine Production : The objective is to raise the level of vaccine production in Nigeria to self-sufficiency status and also to cater for the entire West Africa sub-region. Towards this end, the premier institution for animal vaccine production in the sub-region, the Nation Veterinary Research Institute (NVR) at Vom, would be strengthened, enlarged and modernized to actualize this objective under a three-year programme.

4.1.3 Veterinary Drug Manufacture: In order to boost livestock production through enhancing animal health, a veterinary drug manufacturing outfit with the capacity to meet the needs of the West Africa sub-region would be established.

4.1.4 Agro-chemicals Manufacture: Pest control is generally an all-year-round activity due to the continuous emergence of pests during the different seasons of the years. A major constraint hampering the use of agro-chemicals for agriculture is the limited availability and their high cost and therefore not easily accessible to farmers.

4.1.5 Water Management: Nigeria is blessed with abundant water resources, the potentials of which are yet to be fully tapped. Currently large dams constructed in the country have impounded a lot of water with high fisheries and duck farming potentials and have the capacity for irrigation in agriculture.

4.1.6 Agricultural Development Fund: A minimum statutory allocation of 5 per cent of the National Budget should be allocated to the agricultural sector. States and Local Governments should make adequate provision for funding agriculture in their annual budgets. The Fund will be built from: Saving from subsidy withdrawals on fertilizer, 5 per cent of the proceeds of the privatization of government enterprises, Funds from International Commodity Organizations, 2 per cent levy on the profits of Agro-based Industries, 50 per cent of Sugar Development Levy, 1 per cent levy on profit of Oil Companies, 2 per cent levy on all dutiable imports and Appropriation from annual budget of not less than 2 per cent of total budget.

4.1.7 Supportive Activities: The support for inputs is hoped to be administered in a cost effective and focused manner to ensure that the intended beneficiaries derive full benefit from the distribution of: seeds, seedlings fingerlings, broodstock, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, tractors and implements, vaccines, veterinary drugs, interest rate on credit. State and Local Government are to be encouraged to subsidize these inputs, as additional support to agriculture.

4.1.8 Commodity Marketing and Export: The marketing system through its pricing mechanism is paramount in sustaining production. The desire to satisfy the demand of the market should be the driving force for production. The development of an efficient agricultural marketing system is hoped to be promoted through the provision of adequate marketing information.

4.1.9 Input Supply and distribution: Timely availability of inputs is basic and critical to agricultural production. Government in recognition of this has strongly in the agenda mission statement promised to ensuring regular supply of agricultural inputs to the Nigerian farmers. In this regard, government is creating a conducive environment for profitable investments in the production and distribution of inputs such as improved starter materials, animal health drugs, fertilizers, etc.

4.1.10 Credit and Micro-credit delivery: Within the agenda initiative, the government has taken a major initiative to improve credit delivery to Nigerian farmers and rural dwellers. The emerging economic environment with institutional streamlining and restructuring is expected to create an enhanced financial system within which the rural financial institutions will develop and perform efficiently and effectively. Such a situation will, invariably, create the opportunity for the emergency of innovative ways of mobilizing local savings and providing support for local banking services. Strategies to be adopted will include: Provision and improvement of rural infrastructure to attract investment and financial services; Integration and linkage of rural financial institutions to the formal banking sectors; Regulating and supervising the growth of non-bank financial institutions with emphasis on saving mobilization at the grassroots; Expanding the mandate of the restructured Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank to include savings mobilization; Promoting Self Help Groups for Savings Mobilization and Credit Delivery, Modification of the credit delivery modality to include the cooperatives and

community-based organization as delivery channels to reduce transaction costs; Modification of terms of credit such as interest rate, eligibility criteria, legal requirement etc to enhance access; Simplification of operational procedures to reduce transaction cost. These strategies are expected to lead to the development of a viable micro and rural financial market that will assure self-reliance, viability, sustainability and better outreach with a greater impact on the rural economy.

4.2 THE NEED FOR RELIABLE DATA TOWARDS AN AGENDA FOR RESUSCITATING AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO BOOST FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS

Getting incentives right for farming in general and in particular for export crops production holds the key to resuscitation of exports. The focus should not be mainly on reviving the dwindled fortunes of traditional export commodities, but also to target new commodities, add value to traditional ones and new markets through appropriate pricing and marketing incentives and through the provision of an enabling environment that can spur agricultural development. These cannot be done without reliable statistics. Among the principal policy measures required are the need to:

Ø Mobilize the private sector through appropriate pricing and market incentives for all classes of farmers, fostering rural savings and credit schemes and through improving rural infrastructure so as to stem the rising rural-urban drift and market transaction costs. Market incentives could include price support schemes at the onset as a veritable instrument of spurring production beyond domestic markets.

Ø Harnessing technology through the search for higher-yielding varieties, expanding fertilizer use, controlling pest and diseases, irrigation water availability and control, agricultural equipment, livestock, measures to promote fisheries, better agricultural research, improving agricultural extension and the supply of inputs and reorienting agricultural education. In particular, effort should be made to bridge the missing link in technology as well as shift away from undue emphasis on mechanical technologies to biological and chemical ones that are scale neutral and have extensive application scope.

Ø Protect the rural environment through reforestation schemes, avoiding cultural practices that results in land degradation but stresses soil and water conservation

Ø Providing rural infrastructure: roads, water, electricity and cheap source of mechanical energy. These are important for curtailing production and transactions costs as well as fostering appropriate link with urban markets for sales of produce and purchase of necessary inputs.

Ø Developing farmers' associations and recognizing the role of women. These would empower the people to collectively take advantage of capital and other intensive resources required for production.

Ø Redefining land rights to grant access to new investors, women and make the current traditional system amenable to modernization.

In conclusion, the key to resuscitation of agricultural exports is to make the farm sector more productive through better policies and stronger institutions, and most of all, developing and empowering the people.

Ø Protect the rural environment through reforestation schemes, avoiding cultural practices that results in land degradation but stresses soil and water conservation

Ø Providing rural infrastructure: roads, water, electricity and cheap source of mechanical energy. These are important for curtailing production and transactions costs as well as fostering appropriate link with urban markets for sales of produce and purchase of necessary inputs.

Ø Developing farmers' associations and recognizing the role of women. These would empower the people to collectively take advantage of capital and other intensive resources required for production.

Ø Redefining land rights to grant access to new investors, women and make the current traditional system amenable to modernization.

4.3 SYNERGY BETWEEN STATISTICS GENERATING INSTITUTIONS FOR BETTER POLICY: The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) occupies a premier position in the Nigerian Statistical System. However, in view of heavy demand and timely release of CBN financial data which are veritable tools for policy formulation, its Statistics Department forged ahead to collect, collate and disseminate statistical data relating to various aspects of the economy including manufacturing, public finance, agricultural production, energy production, foreign investment, prices, money and banking, capital markets, balance of payments, etc which are the necessary input for policy analysis and decision making. All over the country and internationally, the publications of the CBN such as the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts, the Statistical Bulletin, Economic and Financial Review, the Bullion and Nigeria: Major Economic and Banking Indicators etc have become a veritable source of the most current data and reference materials on Nigeria. *Without basic information on monetary and economic developments, it would be very difficult for policy makers to assess economic processes. The formulation of appropriate macroeconomic policies to address the problems of inflation, balance of payments disequilibrium, sluggish economic growth and inequitable income distribution requires adequate, reliable and up-to-date data. Even when the*

policies have been formulated, statistical data are also required in the implementation and evaluation of the policies to ensure that the objectives are achieved. It is in realization of the growing importance of data in the formulation of economic policies that governments all over the world and Nigeria in particular are showing increasing interest in the systematic collection and analysis of data on virtually all aspects of the economy.

4.4 STATISTICS VS POLITICS: THE AGRICULTURAL GROWTH PACT

It is widely believed that despite the efforts by those in charge of statistical data (as detailed in the Nigerian Statistical System) such data required by government, legislators and institutions ended up being partly ignored by policy-makers. According to Charles Freedman…"one should keep an eye on all variables that are known to contain information about inflationary developments. We need to turn on every stone and look behind every bush, cross-checking information room and the other pillars to detect or predict inflationary tendencies. The art of governance thus lies in the careful assessment of the different pieces of information and their proper weighting, especially if they happen to send conflicting signals……." In the light of the above, it is necessary to highlight those data needed for policy decision making. First of all, the policy makers need reliable and timely information on the achievement of the ultimate goal, price stability. The quality of the national integrated survey of household (NISH) is very good, as it covers all household consumption expenditures as well as adjustments to account for quality improvements. To understand the dynamics of inflation better, we also need information on core, non-core as well as other underlying inflation trends. A detailed real sector (agriculture, manufacturing, mining and quarrying, wholesale and retail etc) analysis is key for all the world's major policy makers. Owing to the medium-term orientation of policy makers, the Nigerian government primarily needs to monitor the trend of inflation, exchange and money growth. It is not the short-run fluctuation that are relevant but the underlying longer-term trend. Therefore, the Nigerian policy makers need to extract from the real sector as well as monetary data the information relevant for long-term price developments. In order to understand fully the developments in prices, they need a comprehensive evaluation of the developments both at the primary as well as secondary situation in the Nigeria informal economy. In understanding the real sector especially agricultural sub-sector, special attention should be paid to credit growth, as it is very significant for crop plantation and also for important parts of segments of the sector. Here, we ask the salient question that, do the insecticides, herbicides etc get to the farmers in bulk, through middlemen or they are purchased across the counter? Therefore, it might represent a better early indicator for policy decision making. An analytically interesting concept relevant for policy is the price-gap (bulk/retail purchase), which helps guage the level of agricultural products in the economy.

There is a need for all kinds of different indicators of input costs, such as wages, the spot and futures prices of important commodities such as oil, but also asset prices or exchange rates. Indicators of aggregate demand, such as consumption, investment, government spending -fiscal policy- or external demand -balance payments-, are also needed to shed light on real economy as well as to serve as input for measuring potential output and for estimating the output gap. These need to be monitored in order to identify demand pressures on the economy relative to its production capacity. A well detailed statistics in this area will in no small way help the policy makers to mirror the economy. Nigerian policy makers need to emphasize the influence of forward-looking expectations on economics decision, a special role is played by market prices that can reflect expectations, such as the stock market indices or the prices of inflation-indexed bonds. There is a considerable amount of information embedded in interest and exchange rates and in financial market prices, which needs to be taken into account by policy-makers.

"As Alan Greenspan once put it, "the success of monetary policy depends importantly on the quality of forecasting". Therefore, available forecasts, different sentiment indicators as well as macroeconomic projection play an important role in policy-making, and serve to anticipate future developments"

4.5 MUST WE USE ESTIMATES FOR POLICY DECISION MAKING?

It has been argued that it was because the data are not available or when they are available they become stale and cannot justify the purpose for which they are meant for. On the basis of this, protagonist submitted that policy makers make use of estimates or just a rule of thumb in taking decisions. Why one might be tempted to agree with the use of estimates in policy formulations (in view of time lag in data collection), politicians more often than not use political rule and not statistical rule in decision making. **In a word of uncertainty in which policy policy-maker have to act decisively, more information always seems preferably to less information. Wim Duisbenberg once stated that, "one of the few things we economists know with certainty is that we know little without uncertainty". Alan Greenspan echoed that "uncertainty is not just a pervasive feature of the economic landscape: it is the defining characteristic of that landscape"**

As statisticians, we know that there is an infinite demand for any given good, which is free to users. Collecting new statistics, however, is resources-intensive and expensive. It carries a heavy burden for respondents as well as a burden on the compilers. In addition, we live in times of increasing resources constraints in which all public expenditures need to be justified. We therefore have to set priorities so as to meet our data requirements. One important feature that is worthy of note is that we should

review regularly whether the data collected and compiled are still needed, whether they are used efficiently, and whether they are still required at the same frequency.

5.0 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

It must be emphasized that in other to ensure adequate food security in Nigeria, the nature of governance counts in the growth and development process. Good governance and societal peace are sine qua non for the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic development. The opposite of good governance is known to impact severely on all facets of the society and ultimately on the economy as a whole. The destructive manifestations of bad governance include poverty, corruption, conflict, and changes in government, but these can be reversed by good governance. As encapsulated in the Seven point Agenda Mission statement… "We need to provide the correct leadership, we need to ensure the correct conduct and the correct attitude and we need to plan well towards our objectives so as to lay a solid foundation for building a modern industrialized nation that will meet the developmental needs of our people, their educational needs, their health needs and their psychological needs and develop the environment for them to grow and develop their potentials" . The level of poverty, corruption and conflicts are some of the barometers for measuring the development of a country. **The challenges for the policy makers in the area of statistics are many and varied. Some of them include the grey areas that government should address:**

1. Close the policy-relevant gaps in agricultural statistics;

2. Keep track of possible changes in the economic environment that impact negatively on agricultural production;

3. Keep track of artificial and cultural changes that might have repercussions on the production of agricultural commodities;

4. Make the facts and analyses underlying the decision-making process clear, i.e. show which decisions were taken based on which statistics;

5. Defend and enhance the independence of statistics in policy making; and

6. Ensure adequate resources for statistics to meet both present and future challenges so as to boost agricultural production.

It is accepted world wide that food is the ability to do work. A poorly fed populace cannot supply the needed labor necessary to move the nation forward. In doing this, there must be reasonable policies while the policy makers must inculcate the spirit of good leadership; execute viable policies which must be based on reliable statistics.

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