

Research Article

Crop Production in Nigeria since 1914: Geo-Historical Analyses of Progress and Retrogress

Adam M Abbas

Department of Geography, Federal University, Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria.

I N F O

E-mail Id:

dradamabbas28@gmail.com

How to cite this article:

Adam M Abbas. Crop Production in Nigeria since 1914: Geo-Historical Analyses of Progress and Retrogress. *J Adv Res Agri Sci Tech* 2019; 2(2): 15-24.

Date of Submission: 2019-11-25

Date of Acceptance: 2019-12-10

A B S T R A C T

The main branch of agriculture is crop cultivation/ production, which in Nigeria is one of the mainstreams of the economy as it provides food security, employment and income for over 90% of indigenous population. However, in most parts of the country, agricultural holdings have been small and scattered, and *farming* is carried out with simple tools. The paper tries to portray the dotted and sporadic attention given to the sector both spatially and temporally as a result of differential federal, regional and state governments' priority interests as well as inconsistent federal government's agricultural policies and programmes and a host of other reasons. Large-scale food crop production is not common. Literature (secondary data) and content analysis were mainly used for the production of this paper. The study indicates that since 1914, progresses and retrogresses have been experienced by the crop production system all over the country. This paper therefore shows that right from the period of colonial administration, the crop production sector in the country has suffered from sporadic attention in its development. Incapacity of food production to meet the needs of the rising teeming population and inability of producers to re-invest in land has been the resultant effect. The federal government's effort to play a leading role in the nation's agricultural modernization still remains the problem if not for some state governments' efforts. Among others, this paper concludes by suggesting that issues of crop production should be considered as security issue and non-partisan. Under the present dispensation of a change mantra, a boost in the agricultural production as an element of the diversification is expected to be given much more priority.

Keywords: Agriculture, Crop Production, Diversification, Modernization

Introduction

Nigeria began as a single country in 1914 and then it was further subdivided into three protectorates with definable and clear boundaries. It was still further subdivided into 12, 19, 21 and then finally to 36 States and Federal Capital Territory (Adedokun, 2013). All the states are sufficiently

populated, have some portions of arable land and therefore practice some forms of agricultural activities.

Agriculture in Nigeria is one of the mainstreams of the Nigerian economic as it provides mass employment and income for over 90% of the indigenous population. At independence in 1960 it was the major source of

government revenue, which accounted for over 60% of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP). Soon after independence, government adopted a plan of approach to develop a specification of the expected roles of the various sectors of the economy. As the population increased, the food supply was not always sufficiently stable or plentiful to supply the needs. This probably led to the practice of crop production in earnest. Therefore, crop production began at least nine thousand (9,000) years ago when domestication of plants became essential to supplement natural supplies in certain localities. Man's production of food crops has a long history but its characteristic features have remained almost unchanged (Adesina, 2012).

Crop production is an intricate enterprise that requires vast knowledge about the Agronomy, environmental interactions and the application of available technology to achieve food production (Adeniyi, 1986).

The country's crop products fall into two main groups namely: food and cash crops. Before 1967, i.e. prior to the Nigerian civil war, there was sufficiency in food supply in the country, but after 1973 it seriously decreased. Domestic crops were replaced by foreign foods e.g. bread made from American wheat as the cheapest staple food (Wikipedia, 2018). Nigeria is the largest importer of US hard red and white wheat worth N635 billion annually; world's number two (2) importer of rice at N356 billion; N217 billion on sugar and N97 billion on fish. "Nigeria spends over N1 trillion on the top four food imports annually (Adeniyi, 1986). And in the words of Adesina (2012), farmers have limited capacity and use techniques that adversely affect soil fertility, water and biodiversity. Human-induced climate change compounds the issue."

For their daily meals and sustenance, the entire Nigerians depend on staple foods and other items produced from farms and more than three quarters of them buy the Farm Produce from the market (Adeniyi, 1986).

Nigeria land area is about 910,770 sq km and most of its fertile farmlands lays fallow for nothing. The land area of any country is the country's total area, excluding areas that are considered to be water bodies. So, Nigeria has one of the biggest expanses of land in Africa of which 70 percent is available for Farming (Areola, 1991).

Nigerian Government in an attempt to boost food productions and minimize food importation pays a lot of attention to the promotion of farming. The government is willing to assist any would be farming entrepreneur/ investors with the necessary supports and logistics. Generally, agriculture has undergone a series of studies, as regards to problems and solutions (Adesina, 2012). However, very little attention has been paid to the magnitude of its growth or otherwise, spatio- temporally.

In fact, little is known of the history of agriculture in Nigeria, due to an absence of archaeological data, reports on progresses made so far or even contemporary descriptions of farming systems in different parts of the country.

The paper is a preliminary attempt to outline such a spatio-temporal agricultural, particularly crop production development, providing a narrative that links hypotheses about prehistory with documented changes in the present era and preview the impact of agricultural policy and recorded consequent progresses and retrogresses.

In fact, various studies in Nigeria have examined several aspects of agriculture, agricultural history, environmental change, particularly land cover dynamics (Adeniyi, 1986; Usnan&Ifabiyi, 2012; Adedokun, 2013; Ufiobor, 2017), while recent and up-to-date studies on the effects of rapid environmental change on agricultural resources appear limited. A study of the historical stratification of food plants among the Nupe people was published in Blench (1986).

This study is therefore aimed at analyzing the spatio-temporal changes in crop production in Nigeria since 1914 using documented (secondary) data. The objectives of the study are identification and observation of:

- The status of crop production in Nigeria during pre-colonial period.
- The status of crop production in Nigeria during the colonial period.
- The current status/ post-colonial period of crop production in Nigeria: progresses and retrogresses.
- The assessment of the impact of agricultural policies on crop production in the study area since independence
- To offer suggestions to improve local production and reduce importation.

This paper will not attempt to serve as a general review of the literature on crop production or of general agricultural practice in Nigeria. Rather, it is an attempt to crystallize my own knowledge on the subject and to present a somewhat review of the sporadic attention given to crop (food and cash) production by the two tiers of Nigerian government (federal and state). The ideas presented here are an extension of geo-history of crop production in Nigeria.

Multiple agricultural production initiatives and programmes in Nigeria are clear indications of the Federal Government (FG's) attitude towards a successful food security plan. And considering the enormous expenses on these initiatives and programmes which are expected to have positive impact in the overall food production efforts of farmers, the level of importation of food is therefore, not expected.

Study Area, Materials and Methods

The Nigerian Geographical Space

Nigeria is located on the gulf of Guinea in West Africa

with an area of 923, 773 sq km contained within latitudes 4° and 14° north of the Equator; and longitudes 2° 20' and 14° 30' east of the Greenwich Meridian. To the north of the country are the Republics of Niger (north) and Chad (northeast); and to the east, is the Republic of Cameroon. On the south side lies the Atlantic Ocean, while to the west and north is the Republic of Benin. It has a population, growing at about 3.2% per year, with well over 170 million projected population, making it the 8th most populated country in the world. Virtually every one out of five Africans is a Nigerian. The country is characterized by the most productive tropical climates: humid tropical and tropical wet and dry. These produce five vegetation types: the swamp forest, the Equatorial rain forest, the deciduous/ Guinea Savanna, the Sudan Savanna and a bit of the Sahel Savanna, in a south-north direction (Adeniyi, 1986).

Most parts of the country have an equatorial monsoonal climate. A damp southwesterly summer monsoon influences the climate in the southern regions and the northern regions are similarly affected by a dry northeasterly winter trade wind (harmattan). Between December and March, when the harmattan prevails, temperatures rise sharply and dust storms are frequent. With the onset of spring, almost the entire country experiences a rainy season. The Niger delta and the eastern part of the coast receive the greatest rainfall, up to 4,000 mm per year. In central Nigeria the annual precipitation totals 1,000-1,350 mm, increasing to more than 1,500 mm on the Jos Plateau. The smallest amount of precipitation (500 mm) occurs in the far north and the northeast. In the interior the average temperature during the hottest month (April or May) ranges from 25° to 33°C and during the coldest month (December or January) it varies from 20° to 27°C. In the coastal plain the average temperature is about 28°C during the hottest month (March) and about 24°C during the coldest month of August (Labour Force Statistics, 2010).

Nigeria's Agricultural Land Area

Nigeria is endowed with substantial natural resources which include millions of hectares of arable land, water sources, coast line and an ecological diversity which enable the country to produce a wide variety of crops and livestock, forestry and fisheries products, backed by an oil wealth which position Nigeria to the strongest agricultural economies in the continent of Africa.

Of the Nigeria's total land area of 92.4 million hectares, 91 million hectares is identified to be arable land, approximately half of it is effectively under permanent and arable crops, while the rest is covered by forest wood land, permanent pasture and built up areas (Adeniyi, 1986). Among the States which have the most abundant land areas are Niger and Borno states with 7.6 million hectares and 2.8 million hectares respectively (Figure 1).

NIGERIA



Figure 1. The Study Area, Nigeria

Source: Wikipedia, 2018

Materials and Methods

This type of agricultural geo-history essentially depends on three types of source materials: archaeology, literature, historical records and current ethnographic research. Agricultural policies at different times and their implementations in various parts of the country also serve as an important of information regarding progress in the sector. Names of plants, tools and systems can uncover historical stratification of agricultural innovation once correctly interpreted. Based on the foregoing, some of these many secondary sources were tapped.

Other Secondary data were also sourced to meet the requirements of this study. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) was visited to collect the data. Complementarily, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s records were also consulted. Other information resource avenues of the some agencies such as federal ministry of agriculture and rural development were equally contacted for available data. Time-series and Content analyses were therefore used for this study.

Discussions

The Phases of Nigerian History and Crop Production

The agricultural history of Nigeria is intertwined with its political history (Akinyemi, 2013). Thus, the complex political-economic history of Nigeria can be considered

in three distinct periods or phases that are identified as pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial otherwise known as independent Nigeria.

The following section of the paper discusses the general nature of crop production during the three phases of the Nigerian Government:

It is believed that in the pre-colonial days, all the parts of the country were self-sufficient in food crop production and there was inter-regional trade in several agricultural products. First, a botanical research station established in Lagos by Sir Claude McDonald in 1893, then the acquisition of 10.4 km² of land in 1899 by the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) for experimental work on cotton and named the experimental area Moor Plantation in Ibadan. A Department of Agriculture was established in each of the then Southern and Northern Nigeria, in 1912 but the activities of the Department were virtually suspended between 1913 and 1921 as a result of the First World War and its aftermath (Olomola, 2007).

And it must be stressed that the economic base of Nigeria during the colonial period still remained agriculture. However, the emphasis shifted from food crops and the production of what is needed within the local trade links to export crops and the requirements of manufacturers in England. Agriculture in Nigeria is one of the mainstays of the Nigerian economy as it provides mass employment and income for over 90% of the indigenous population. At independence in 1960 it was the major source of government revenue, which accounted for over 60% of the Gross Domestic Products (GDP). Soon after independence, government adopted a plan of approach to develop a specification of the expected roles of the various sectors of the economy.

During the post-colonial period: The period of the colonial administration in Nigeria, 1861-1960, agricultural development was punctuated by more or less sporadic attention to (Olomola, 2007). During the era, considerable emphasis was placed on research and extension services and from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s, there was a resurgence of activities and this period has been called the "Faulkner Strip Layout". Intensification and expansion of research activities and extension and training programmes of the Agricultural Departments were sufficient in the late 1930s to the mid-1940s.

The role of educational advancement in agricultural development in Nigeria was given prominence at an earlier stage. The value of an elementary education in the three Regions to farmers was appreciated and it was suggested that the introduction of a new interest into farming, such as the production of livestock in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, would attract more educated youths into

agriculture. A scheme was started in Katsina Province for teaching sons of farmers the best husbandry methods. Instructions were essentially practical in nature and were centred on mixed farming.

Fodder and browse plants were introduced into Nigeria (especially at the Veterinary Station, Vom and the Agricultural Station at Samaru and at the Stock Centre at Shika) in between 1924 and 1938. By 1938, three Conferences of West African Agricultural Officers had been held. The need for concerted effort at pasture and grassland management and improvement was adequately documented and a call for more co-operations between the livestock farmers and the traditional agriculturists was made. This was the beginning of organised efforts towards range management for livestock improvement in Nigeria.

The intensification of hostilities during the Second World War (1939-45) led to the slowing down of activities and the call to Departments of Agriculture to play increasing roles in the production of food for the army and civilians in the country and the Empire. The introduction of wheat cultivation in the more northern parts of the northern provinces, the development of "Alien Cotton" in the south; rice cultivation in the Sokoto, Niger, Ilorin, Abeokuta Colony and Ondo provinces; the expansion of production of such export crops as cocoa, oil palm and groundnut; development of agricultural implements as well as designing farm buildings; intensification of horticultural activities; the development of a marketing section of the Department; the extension of the Produce Inspection Service to cover all principal export crops; investigations into the possibilities for organized land settlement schemes; and investigations into the possibilities of irrigation in northern Nigeria marked the achievements of the period (Pasquini & Alexander, 2005).

The period of Internal Self Government, 1950-60 began with the regionalization of the Departments of Agriculture in 1951, with a Director and an Inspector-General of Agriculture in each region. By October 1954, the post of Inspector General of Agriculture was abolished as a result of constitutional developments which led to independence of the Regional Departments. The Federal Department of Agricultural Research was retained since constitutional provisions placed agricultural research on the concurrent legislative list, while extension work remained a regional responsibility. The research findings of the Federal Research Stations were to be transmitted through Regional ministries responsible for agriculture and natural resources.

In 1955, a Technical Committee of the Council of Natural Resources made up of Federal and Regional Ministers and officials for the formulation of national research programmes as well as the co-ordination of Federal and Regional research activities was set up. A great awareness of the need for intensification of activities in both the

research and extension fields was created as a result of the regionalization of agriculture. Hence, considerable expansion of research and extension activities in agriculture in the region (Adeniyi, 1986).

The post-1960 was the period of extensive planning and regional competition in agriculture. The official agricultural policy then was the belief that food crop production could take care of itself without any governmental intervention. More attention was paid on commodity exports, the utilization of taxation policy by the Marketing Boards as an instrument of development finance. Under regional independence, the agricultural history of the nation entered a new phase of modification of traditional practices, in view of the incapacity of food production to meet the needs of the rising population and the inability of producers to reinvest in land (Pinto, 1987; Mortimore, 1988).

These maladies were worsened by the inability of the then Federal Government to play a leading role in the nation's agricultural modernization. Before the middle of the 1960s, a Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources was set up and a phase of consolidation and co-ordination of projects for agricultural development began. With the creation, in 1967, of 12 States there were increased efforts to evolve a co-ordinated perspective for agricultural development in Nigeria. That started happening in 1966.

The Western Nigeria Development Corporation (WNDC) established the Upper Ogun Ranch for the commercial production and distribution of cattle. In the Eastern Region, South Devon cattle were introduced at the Obudu Ranch. Friesian bulls were imported to the farm at Agege in Lagos; the Teaching and Research Farm at the University of Ibadan obtained foundation stock of cattle from Shika. Extensive facilities were also established for research in piggery and poultry. The administrative machinery for agricultural development and co-ordination was also modified.

Since the realization that crop production has lost its past glory, every government has been trying to correct the problem. There was the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) by General Olusegun Obasanjo (OBJ), the Green Revolution by Alh S. Shagari, the Back to Land and others under General Muhammadu Buhari, The Accelerated Wheat production Scheme by Gen. Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida with support institutions such as DFRRRI and NALDA and numerous agriculture related projects under the regime of Gen. Sani Abatcha.

Agriculture, which was given priority in all the plans, could not help the country to achieve self-sufficiency in food production and provide raw materials for industrialization.

As consequences of these inconsistent policy, unstable political economy in the sector and number one farmer who in most cases not an experienced farmer, the crisis

still remains because as in the words of Adeniyi (1986), old peasants are still the ones mostly engaged in the sector-more than 70% are poor peasants;-crude implements are still in use to till small holdings-hoes, cutlasses (machetes), sickles etc;-rural-urban drift still occurs with increasing number of growth poles following changes in spatial arrangements in political entities; and-those mostly engaged in the sector lack appropriate knowledge to apply modern technology adequately;- Government leadership of agriculture still not experienced both at state and federal levels.

Current Situation: The New Nigerian Agricultural Policy

In year 2001, a new policy document which was more focused direction and better articulated was launched to replace that of 1988 and was supposed to remain operative until the year 2000. most of the features of the old one were retained (Nigeria Agricultural Policy, 2001).

Objectives of the New Agricultural Policy

In a broad sense, the objectives of the new agricultural policy include:

- The achievement of self-sufficiency in basic food supply and the attainment of food security.
- Increased production of agricultural raw materials for industries.
- Increased production and processing of export crops, using improved production and processing technologies.
- Generating gainful employment.
- Rational utilization of agricultural resources, improved protection of agricultural land resources from drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and flood and the general preservation of the environment for the sustainability of agricultural production.
- Promotion of the increased application of modern technology to agricultural production.
- Improvement in the quality of life of rural dwellers.

Source: The new agricultural policy, 2001.

The policies are so numerous, so competitive and conflicting with themselves than farmers who were still confused as to the intent of the government and which of the policies to trust. The inability of the Nigerian government to come up with the appropriate policies and programmes that can stimulate farmers for increased production is a major constraint to Nigerian agricultural production (Falola, 2007).

Cash crops economy was introduced to Nigeria by the British colonial administration. That however, discouraged self-sufficiency in food and other socio-economic needs for each family based on the indigenous economic system. This was because of the British colonial policy of providing raw materials for the industries of the metropolitan power

back home. Thus, production of raw materials (cash crops) needed by British industries through a deliberate policy of discouraging food crop cultivation using local governments was the order of the day. That introduced most populace introduced into chronic hunger because food supplies were gradually rid (Falola, 2007).

The development of agriculture in Nigeria, according to Atser (2007) was seriously hampered by the weak infrastructure and inconsistency in government policies. Some of the resultant effects of the inconsistent agricultural policies in Nigerian included: high apathy on the part of the farmers regarding anything from government because of the uncertainty of their durations. In this light, Pinto (1987) stated that erratic import policies characterized by frequent changes in both import tariffs and quantitative import restrictions create much uncertainty for producers; and failure to set up a satisfactory credit system for farming and agro-processing.

Government Programmes/ Reforms and Policies for Agricultural Development

It has been argued that the poor performance of the agricultural sector can hardly be blamed on total neglect by the government. Rather, it has “resulted from the failure of government policies and programmes and the uneven distributional effects of the oil boom” (Nwosu, 1991). Some of the agricultural policies and measures adopted by government since the 1970s have been well discussed (Okuneye, 1985 and Idachaba, 1985; Idachaba, 2000; 2003; Idachaba, Ezedinma, Talabi, & WoleEdun, 2005). Such policies and measures have ranged from direct involvement of government in the production and distribution of products to mere provision of supports to the producers. We here offer a brief summary of the policies and measures.

The National Accelerated food Production Programme of 1973 was aimed at accelerating the production of six food crops: rice, maize, millet, sorghum, cassava and wheat.

River Basin and Rural Development Authorities was established in 1975 in order to make water available for irrigation where there is rainfall deficiency; and to organize effective use and control of water resources generally.

The Operation Feed the Nation programme (OPN) of 1976 has been described as an emergency national campaign aimed at stimulating the interest of all Nigerians in farming in order to produce food enough to feed the population. This campaign was supported with technical and other essential farm inputs.

Guaranteed Minimum Price Scheme was introduced during the 1975-80 national development plan period and targeted at food crops farms to provide the farmers with so-called “benefits” that the export farmers had “enjoyed” under

the former marketing boards. The guaranteed minimum prices of government were often below the free market prices. When prices were higher, farmers did not have access to the government outposts as products were bought through appointed agents since government lacked the personnel and the infrastructure to reach the myriads of small farmers spread over the operating areas of the agencies (Falola, 1992).

Marketing Boards’ re-organisation which was carried out in 1977 transformed the boards from being regionally-based to ones with a national outlook. From the time of the reorganization, the marketing boards covered seven groups of products such as cocoa, rubber, cotton, groundnut, grains, roots and palm produce. With the set objectives of promoting the production and marketing of these products, the boards made funds available for lending to licensed produce buying agents with view to guaranteeing steadier payments to farmers. Similarly the boards were expected to purchase and distribute relevant inputs to farmers through the licensed produce buying agents at government subsidized prices (Rilwani & Gbakeji, 2009). The appointment of licensed buying agents as an agency through which to accomplish all transactions in itself prepared the grounds for the failure of the re-organisation exercise. It was not, therefore, surprising that the boards were all-together abolished in 1986 in order to allow the free market to dictate product prices. At no time of the abrogation of the boards, farmers had boycotted the boards in view of better prices for the products in the free market and in view of the growing and uncontrollable illicit trade across the boarders.

Land Use Act of 1978 was aimed at facilitating the development of large-scale farming through “improved access” to arable farm land. Several academic theses have been written about the fact that the decree was not far reaching enough and it has done little or nothing about the problem of small size and fragmentation of holdings which are the main problems of the peasant production sector, which controls over 80% of the food crop sector (Idachaba, 2005).

Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme was introduced in 1978. The scheme was again targeted at producers of food crops in which the country had experienced short falls in supplies. Several other institutional arrangements were made both at the federal and at the state levels to facilitate farmers’ access to farm credit.

Green Revolution Programme of 1980 which was essential an accelerated programme of agricultural production. It was backed with large-scale imports of fertilizers. But as in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria’s experiment has failed to successfully transform the country from food deficit to food secure economy. The point has been made

that the Asian green revolution was not only a matter of technology it involved political and institutional reforms aimed at facilitating and sustaining technology adoption, credit, extension, price policies, infrastructure investments, market support and most of all, government's process was very much driven by the state (Idachaba, 1985). I could be concluded that there was no green revolution in Nigeria.

School Leavers Scheme was introduced in the late 1980s for secondary school leavers and polytechnic and university graduates. But where are their farms.

Agricultural Research, Training and Extension: Research and extension have a long history in Nigeria, dating back to the colonial era of export crops. There are eighteen agricultural research institutes and a wide range of agricultural training facilities in the country. Idachaba (1985: 46) has noted that "limited dispersion of research facilities across different ecological zones hinders the evolution of research results that are applicable to particular environmental niches." On the other hand, however, the spread of training facilities ranged from none in many states to as many as eighteen in one state. Probably more worrisome is the lack of linkage between research and extension on the one hand and between extension and farmers on the other hand. Thus extension services have remained poor. Apart from the low extension-farmer ratio: ranging from 1:820 in Benue to 1: 17055 in Borno (ibid.56), the services provided by them have been observed to be supervisory rather than participatory and advisory rather than participatory and advisory rather than extension-based. Even in the localities of agricultural projects such as the Agricultural Development Projects, where there is a relatively high concentration of extension personnel, farmers' access to them is greatly unequal.

The Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Beginning with the General Ibrahim Babangida Administration, there have been a number of fiscal and institutional reforms aimed at promoting increased production of food and industrial raw materials. These measures were set within the context of SAP. The measures include:

The severe restriction imposed on the importation of food and other agricultural commodities and the prohibition of exportation of food and other cash crops..., abrogation of the commodity boards, the reduction of the number of the RBRDAs from 18 to 11 and the decision to shut down or privatise eleven companies involved in direct agricultural production. Government agencies (including the ADPs and the RBRDAs) were to discontinue direct agricultural production and the government was to withdraw from the importation, transportation and distribution of fertilizers. The directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DIFRRI) was created to facilitate the channeling of resources into the rural areas (Nwosu, 1991).

With the restrictions imposed on the importation of agro-based industrial raw-materials, some manufacturers and processors have resorted to large-scale production of the agricultural commodities which are needed as inputs into their production. In addition, some oil companies, many civil-servants, retired army officers and other businessmen hitherto not engaged in agriculture; appear to be taking a more active interest in agriculture. However, it would appear that the overall impact of the adjustment policies has been minimal as other problems such as the very high costs of inputs have impacted negatively on production efforts and, therefore, outputs.

Although these policies were put forward with good intention they had not made much impact on the agricultural development of the country having neglected the empowerment and thus, the productive capacity of the country's small-scale farmers. It is thus necessary to explore alternative approaches to sound agricultural policy. One way of doing this is to re-examine how to forge a true cooperation among the farmers and how cooperation among the farmers and how cooperatives may be linked with other institutional structures to achieve agricultural development.

Progresses

The main branch of agriculture is crop cultivation. The principal food crops in Nigeria are millet, maize/corn, sorghum, guinea corn, rice, yam, cassava and beans. Yam and cassava (food crops) and cashew nuts, cocoa and sesame (cash crops) are raised in the south, where rainfall is abundant and drought-resistant millet and sorghum are grown in the north. Others include, groundnuts, gum arabic, kolanut, melon, palm kernels, palm oil, plantains, rubber, soybeans, bananas and yams.

Agricultural crops in Nigeria are grouped into the following:

- (i) Cereals (guinea corn "Sorghum spp", millet, maize "Zea mays" and rice "Oryza sativa")
- (ii) Root and tuber crops (cassava "Manihotesculenta", yam "Dioscorea spp", cocoyam and potatoes (sweet and irish))
- (iii) Grains legumes and other legumes (cowpeas "Vigna unguiculata", locust bean "Parkia clappertoniana", soyabean "Glycine max" and other beans such as groundnut "Arachis hypogaea", pigeon pea "Cajanus cajan", bambaranuts "Voandzeia subterranean". Vegetables and sugarcane are also important.

The years since the early 1960s have also witnessed the establishment of several agricultural research institutes and their extension research liaison services. Some of the major institutions are:

- Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service

(AERLS) at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria established in 1963;

- The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), at Ibadan and;
- International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA).

Rice production (350,000 ha, 600,000 tons in 1972) has been increasing; the valleys of the Sokoto River and its tributary, the Rima River, are being developed to increase the rice output.

In 1996, a total of 33 million hectares were cultivated to crops generally; out of which 17.7 million hectares were for staples and 4.9 million hectares were for industrial crops (Rilwani and Gbakeji, 2009).

The chief export crops are oil palm, cocoa, peanuts and rubber-bearing plants. Oil palms grow profusely along the left bank of the Niger River, chiefly in natural groves (1.6 million hectares). Palm kernels are exported in large quantities (185,000 tons in 1970), but most of the palm oil is used locally. In 1970, Nigeria supplied about 40 percent of the world's palm kernels. Cocoa is grown chiefly in Western State, mostly on small peasant farms (Olukunle, 2013).

The usage of inorganic fertilizers was promoted in the 1970s by Nigerian government and as a result of that in 1990 an arable land amounting to 82 million hectares out of Nigeria's total land area of about 91 million hectares was discovered. Out of the arable land, 42 percent was cultivated, larger part of this land was cultivated under the bush fallow system and 20 million hectares covered was by forests and woodlands and 18 million hectares classified as permanent pasture both had agricultural potential (Wikipedia-Agriculture in Nigeria, 2018).

However, in 2001 Agriculture contributed 32% to GDP because of the absurd characteristics of having small and scattered agricultural holdings as well as usage of simple tools in farming which limited large-scale agriculture.

An Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) was launched and placed under the management of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2011 by the Jonathan's administration. Promotion of agriculture as a business, integration of agricultural value chain and making agriculture a key driver of Nigeria's economic growth were the aim of the agenda. To achieve the agenda, some new measures were put in place by the government.

In Nov. 17, 2015, president Buhari launched the Nigeria Agriculture Promotion Policy 2016-2020 which was build on the successes of ATA. The intention was to create linkage between anchor companies involved in the processing and small holder farmers SHFs of the required key agricultural products. The programs include the Anchor Borrowers Program (ABP), the Presidential Fertilizer Initiative (PFI), the Youth Lab, the Presidential Economic Diversification

Initiative (PEDI) and the Food Security Council. The ABP for example, was created by the Central Bank of Nigeria and works in partnership with state governments and several private sector groups to provide farm inputs in kind and cash to small holder farmers to boost production of agricultural commodities. At harvest, the farmers supply their produce to the agro-processors (anchor) which pays the cash equivalent to the farmers' account. According to government reports, under the ABP initiative, a cumulative amount of over 150 million dollars had been disbursed to more than 250,000 small farmers who cultivated almost 300,000 hectares of farmland for rice, wheat, maize, cotton, soybeans and cassava. This growing trend of agricultural activity is expected to continue, thus creating demand for agricultural inputs (FMARD, 2019).

Retrogresses

The oil boom in Nigeria in the early 1970s brought about a decline in agricultural production and problem in the labor market. This problem coupled with the Government's action of paying low prices for farm products in the domestic markets over the years in order to satisfy urban demands for cheap basic food products made Agricultural work to be very unattractive. The production levels of both food and cash crops were seriously affected. Massive rural-urban migration was the resultant effect of this policy. Other factors which contributed to the low productivity include: inadequate technology, drought, floods, poor transportation and infrastructure, problems of storage facilities and trade restrictions.

Thus, between 1970 and 1982, agricultural production stagnated at less than one percent annual growth rate, at a time when the population growth was between 2.5 to 3.0 per cent per annum. There was a sharp decline in export crop production, while food production increased only marginally. Thus, domestic food supply had to be augmented through large imports. The food import bill rose from a mere N112.88 million naira annually during 1970-74 to N1, 964.8 million Naira in 1991.

Since the late 1970s governments made serious efforts to revitalize agriculture in order to make Nigeria food self-sufficient again and to increase the export of agricultural products. That, has yielded very little positive results. However, the Obasanjo administration has made agriculture the highest priority of its economic policy (Falola, 2007).

Prior to the Nigerian civil war, the country was self-sufficient in food, but increased steeply after 1973 various food commodities were imported into the country on an annual basis. Nigeria's imports against disappointing rising global food prices, soaring inflation, food insecurity, high level of poverty and hunger among millions of poor farmers and rural dwellers, in the main, should be discouraged.

The Position of Crop Production in Nigeria: Brief History

The agricultural history of Nigeria is intertwined with its political history (Falola, 1992). This can be assessed from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Before the British conquest the pre-colonial society strived on agriculture as the main stay of the traditional economy. The period of the colonial administration in Nigeria, 1861 - 1960, was punctuated by rather ad hoc attention to agricultural development. During the era, considerable emphasis was placed on research and extension services. But of importance to the writer is the post-colonial period.

Nigeria's first national development plan was launched in 1962-1968. Introduction of more modern agricultural methods through farm settlements, co-operative (nucleus) plantations, supply of improved farm implements (e.g. hydraulic hand presses for oil palm processing) and a greatly expanded agricultural extension service was made. Also, launched in 1972 were some of the specialised development schemes initiated or implemented during this period which included: Farm Settlement Schemes; and National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP).

In 1976, a number of agricultural development intervention experiments, notably Operation Feed the Nation, River Basin and Rural Development Authorities were established in Green Revolution Programme which was inaugurated in 1980. Such Programmes include: the World Bank-funded Agricultural Development Projects (ADP), which represented the major practical demonstration of the integrated approach to agricultural development in Nigeria.

In spite of the growing importance of oil, Nigeria has remained essentially an agrarian economy, with agriculture still accounting for significant shares in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and total exports as well as employing the bulk of the labour force. Available data show that at independence in 1960 the contribution of agriculture to the GDP was about 60%, which is typical for developing agrarian nations. However, due to phenomenal growth of the mining and manufacturing sectors during the period and partly as a result of the disincentives created by the macroeconomic environment it declined to only about 25% between 1975 and 1979. (Ingawa, 2004).

Agriculture played a significant role in foreign exchange earning in the pre oil boom era and even now agriculture remains the major economic activity in Nigeria, especially in the rural areas. That there is problem of food security in Nigeria is essentially a consequence of a neglect of the agricultural sector by successive governments largely due the apparent gains in the oil sector. However, a fundamental issue that needs to be adequately addressed

is the role of data collection analysis and management in the quest for agricultural improvement. Relevant and timely information is needed for programmes conception, planning, implementation, management and monitoring. Information is required to guide current decision-making.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The foregoing reveals that Nigeria has experienced both progress and retrogress throughout the country's history in terms of crop production. The inability of the Nigerian government to come up with the appropriate and consistent policies and programmes that can stimulate farmers for increased production is a major constraint to Nigerian crop production.

When all is said and done, it may be concluded that Nigeria being microcosm of Africa has all it takes in terms of arable land and human resources to forge high crop production and achieve a viable food security.

Recommendations

To achieve this goal of boosting crop production, we need to have:

- Consistent policy on agriculture and leadership in the agricultural sector has to be entrusted into experienced hands
- Food importation poses both emergency and significant threats to any nation a proactive and sustainable Food Production Stimulus Plan should therefore, be evolved to mitigate importation dependency.
- Promoting made in Nigeria food abroad. This is on but should be given greater emphasis. These calls especially for more investments and support to value chain activities that will enhance the quality of the proposed commodities for international

References

1. Adedokun OM. Elements of political geography. In Perspectives of Geography, E. Eno J. Effeh, Samuel Yakubu and Gregory Jamu (eds). 2013; 195-215.
2. Adeniyi PO. Agricultural Land use Inventory and Mapping in Nigeria: The application of Remote Sensing. In MJ Eden & JT Parry (Eds.). *Remote sensing and tropical land management* 1986; 175-187.
3. Adesina A. Agricultural Transformation Agenda: Repositioning agriculture to drive Nigeria's economy. 2012. Retrieved from http://www.emrc.be/documents/document/20121205120841-agri2012-special_session_tony_bello-min_agric_nigeria.pdf
4. Areola O. Ecology of Natural Resources in Nigeria. London: Avebury Studies in Green Research. 1991; 112- 113
5. Atser G. Stakeholders Demand Scrutiny of 2007 Budget.

2010. from <http://www.budgetmonitoring.org/>
6. Blench, Roger M. A history of agriculture in Northeastern Nigeria. 1996.
 7. Afolabi FJ. 'An alternative strategy for the organization of grain storage and marketing in Nigeria.' A research paper presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the postgraduate Diploma in Rural Policy and Project Planning, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague. 1992.
 8. Afolabi FJ. Agriculture in Nigeria 'Today and Tomorrow'. In Nigerian *Geographical Journal* 2007; 5(1): 82-101.
 9. Federal Ministry Agriculture & Rural development (FMARD) (2011). Annual Report. 2010.
 10. FMARD. The Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020). *Building on the Successes of the ATA, Closing Key Gaps*. Policy and Strategy Document. 2019. Retrieved from https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/2016-nigeria-agric-sector-policy-roadmap_june-15-2016_final1.pdf
 11. Idachaba FS. *Desirable and workable Agricultural Policies for Nigeria*. Topical Issues in Nigerian Agriculture, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, University of Ibadan. 2000.
 12. Idachaba FS. *Can Nigerian Agriculture Compete?* In the Report of the 2nd NESG Agriculture Summit.
 13. Idachaba FS, Ezedinma CI, Talabi S et al. Review of National Agricultural Policy: A Private Sector Perspective, NESG-Better Business Initiative Report (in Promoting Nigeria's Non-Oil Private sector: Evidence and Recommendations ed. Eric Eboh). 2005.
 14. Ingawa SA. The Role of Data in Food Security in Nigeria. Paper presented at the 1st National Workshop on Satellite Remote Sensing (Nigeria Sat 1) and GIS: A Solution to Sustainable National Development Challenges, which held at Abuja, Le Meridian Hotel, Nigeria: GEOSON/NARSDA, 2004.
 15. Labour Force Statistics. Nigerian Bureau of Statistics. 2010. Retrieved 22 June 2015.
 16. Nigeria agriculture Archived copy. Archived from the original on 2015-12-19. Retrieved 2015-11-11.
 17. Mortmore M. Adapting to drought, Cambridge University Press. Nigerian Agricultural Policy. 2001.
 18. Nwosu AC. Private Sector Initiatives in Agricultural Development in Nigeria in Nnanna et al eds: Enhancing Private Sector-Led Growth in Nigeria. Proceedings of the 13th Annual Conference of the Regional "Determinants of traditional agricultural exports in Nigeria: an application of Co-integration and error correction model. Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture, Research Units. Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. 2004; 43(4).
 19. Olomola Ade S. Strategies for Managing the Opportunities and Challenges of the Current Agricultural Commodity Booms in SSA. In Seminar Papers on Managing Commodity Booms in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Publication of the AERC Senior Policy Seminar IX. African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Nairobi, Kenya. 2007.
 20. Olukunle OT. Challenges and Prospects of Agriculture in Nigeria: The Way Forward in the Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research (NISER). 2013; 4(16): 37 (Online).
 21. Pasquini MW, Alexander MJ. Soil fertility management strategies on the Jos Plateau: the need for integrating 'empirical' and 'scientific' knowledge in agricultural development. *Geographical Journal* 2005; 171 (2): 112-124. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4959.2005.00154.x. Countries studies, Nigeria.
 22. Pinto B. Nigeria during and after the oil boom: A policy comparison with Indonesia. *World Bank Economic Review* 1987; 1(3): 419-45.
 23. Rilwani ML, Gbakeji JO. Geoinformatics in agricultural development: challenges and prospects in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Science* 2009; 21(1): 49-57.
 24. Ufiobor KA. Nigeria Agriculture and Sustainability: Problems and Solutions. Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis submitted for Sustainable Coastal management degree programme at Raseborg.