

Leadership and Governance: Dilemma of Agricultural Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Agriculture contributes immensely to the Nigerian economy in various ways; namely, in the provision of food for the increasing population; supply of adequate raw materials to a growing industrial sector; a major source of employment; generation of foreign exchange earnings; and provision of a market for the products of the industrial sector among others. It has been observed that African agriculture remains largely traditional and concentrated in the hands of smallholders and pastoralists, and the neglect of agriculture has resulted to the mass exodus of rural dwellers to urban, thereby qualitatively and quantitatively depopulated rural areas making it less attractive for socio-economic investment. This paper reviews the roles of leadership and governance in agricultural development in Nigeria. It discusses the problems and challenges posed by these and government responses to leadership and governance dilemma in agriculture in the country. The paper concludes that good leadership and governance are important for agricultural growth and development. Reversing the current state of Nigeria's agriculture is more than just a technical issue, but structural change and better way of managing our resources. There is also the need for a sound political climate to generate a strong and collective political will. The political leadership must also change and must be armed with the right mental capacity, discipline, integrity and positive political will.

Keywords: good leadership, governance, agricultural development, investment and growth

Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in the continent of Africa, with abundant economic resources, which, if properly harnessed, may enable the country to

achieve the status of a rich and developed nation. Prior to the discovery of oil in Nigeria, agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. This is evident in its contribution to rural employment, provision of food and export earnings (Nchuchuwe and Adejuwon, 2012; Olufolabi, 2009). Agriculture, apart from its contribution to employment creation, poverty and hunger reduction as well as reduction in rural-urban drift was also a source of major foreign exchange earnings of Nigeria and a major contributor to economic development (Adebayo *et al.*, 2009). Before the oil boom of the 1970s, there was sustained emphasis on agriculture to the extent that Nigeria was a major exporter of such agricultural products as palm produce, cocoa, groundnut, cotton and rubber. In addition to these cash crops, the national agricultural system was able to produce enough food crops like yam, cassava, maize, millet, sorghum and soya beans to the extent that there was almost no need for food importation. Hitherto, agriculture accounted for over 60% of the Nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, with the advent of petroleum in the early 1970s, petroleum became the country's major foreign exchange earner and agriculture became grossly neglected (Oni, 2008). Agriculture in Nigeria suffers set back as a result of certain impediments which are hinged mainly on government neglect following the discovery of oil and its subsequent boom. The neglect became so detrimental in such a manner that farming is left in the hands of local farmers with their crude use of farming implement, which depends mostly on manual application as well as resistance to using of improved seedlings and techniques that would have earned them abundant harvest.

Statement of the Problem

Good governance and effective leadership are necessary for sustainable development. Studies such as Ogbeidi (2012), Ojukwu and Shopeju (2010) and Ogundiya (2009) on the Nigerian economy have shown leadership problems as a major cause of the country's inability to effectively mobilize her resources. Leadership problem has hampered the country's progress in the political, economic, military and socio-cultural sectors. At independence, expectations throughout Nigeria were high and the possibilities for greatness were almost limitless. Considering her vast resources, the country appeared set for good attainments and fulfills what the international community saw as her destiny to lead the black race into the main stream human and technological civilisation. Regretably, the Nigerian economy has hit an all time low as a result of massive under utilization of resources. Leadership and lack of transparency in public spending have resulted in massive looting of the national treasury and gross mismanagement of public enterprises.

In the period immediately following independence, the agricultural sector played its expected roles in national development. Agriculture contributed the largest share of the national gross domestic product (GDP). However, over the years, the sector has witnessed a tremendous decline in its contribution to national development. The near eclipse of the sector in the era of the oil boom

(1972–1975) and inconsistent and unfocussed government policies have been cited as the main challenges to food security in Nigeria (Okuneye and Adebayo, 2002). Instead of the oil wealth transforming the country into one of the most successful states in Africa, it has led to worsening levels of poverty and underdevelopment (Ogbeidi, 2012; Ogundiya, 2009).

Over the years, the percentage of people living in poverty in Nigeria has been increasing. While this percent stood at 28.1 percent in 1980, by 1996 it had reached 65.6 percent and as at 2012 it stood at 70 percent (Ogbeidi, 2012; Kraxberger, 2004). The bulk of the oil revenue, which is distributed to the central government, is dissipated through corruption involving political leaders and government officials (Urien, 2012; Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010). Despite these challenges, agriculture remains the major sector upon which the majority of the rural poor in Nigeria depend. It provides 70 percent of the active labour force with employment and contributed 23 percent of the GDP in 2006 (CBN, 2007). The Federal Government of Nigeria has identified agriculture as the key development priority in its efforts to halve poverty by 2015 and to diversify the economy away from the oil sector (Soludo, 2006).

There is an organic interconnection between quality of governance and capacity to drive a sustainable development. Good governance was seen as the bedrock of all development initiatives in Nigeria and a fundamental prerequisite to any form of sustainable growth or meaningful development in the country. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's history has been characterised by years of poor governance, mostly under dictatorial military and corrupt civilian rule. Over the decades, this history of poor governance created a volatile polity with sporadic eruptions of violence around issues of ethnicity, religion, political power and resource control. A regular series of coup d'états between the mid-seventies until the early nineties, ushered in the imposition of successive military regimes, each with its own agenda and policy direction. This inconsistency and instability in government birthed a culture of policy inconsistency in so far as national development was concerned. As such, inconsistency and disjointed policymaking presided over by kleptocratic and dictatorial governments led to the rapid deterioration in public service delivery and the dilapidation of public facilities such as roads, schools, sewage systems and hospitals.

Resultantly, there were significantly reduced social and economic development opportunities for majority of the country's population and the potential of the country to be a high performer within Africa, was undermined. Irrespective of revenue generated through its oil wealth (eighty per cent of its export revenue), majority of Nigerians continued to live in poverty and social conditions worsened, essentially due to corruption, poor management, inefficient government institutions and lack of equitable distribution of resources. However, with the return to civil rule, new economic reforms and

more robust efforts to tackle corruption began to improve the quality of governance and the country's economic growth trajectory.

This paper reviews the roles of leadership and governance in agricultural development in Nigeria. It discusses the problems and challenges posed by these and government responses to leadership and governance dilemma in agriculture in the country. It also discusses the agricultural policies of various governments in Nigeria since independence and analysis budgetary allocation to agricultural sector over these years and compares it with other sectors of the economy.

Problems and Challenges of Leadership and Governance in Nigeria's Agricultural Sector

So many factors could be associated with the collapse of agricultural sector in Nigeria but the most important one is the conflicting political decisions. Leadership, whether bad or good, will reflect either negatively or positively on a state's socioeconomic and political environment. Yuki (2010) defines leadership as a "process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives". Similarly, Daft (2002) views leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purpose".

According to Ademola (2008), leadership in public service have hitherto been engaged in reckless use of government properties and as a result have become channels of corruption. Good governance has been equated to political and institutional processes and outcomes that support the exercise of legitimate authority by public institutions in the conduct of public affairs and management of public resources, so as to guarantee the realization of sustainable human development. It was seen as the bedrock of all development initiatives in Nigeria and a fundamental prerequisite to any form of sustainable growth or meaningful development in the country. The true test of "good governance" is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. As a result of bad leadership in the country, most of the leaders have no sense of commitment to development. Mimiko (1998) captures the situation this way, "The decolonization allowed the crop of leaders that aligned with colonial power to take over Nigeria. This ensured the sustenance of a neo-colonial economy even after political independence. These leaders on assumption of power quickly turned up the repressive machinery of the colonial state rather than dismantling it.

Significantly, they have no vision of development to accompany the efficient instrument of repression they inherited. All they were interested in was access to power and privileges and not development. Many factors were associated with the collapse of agricultural sector in Nigeria but the most important one is the conflicting political decisions. The problem of lack of continuity and frequent change of government policies affect the nation's agricultural sector. There were several attempts at encouraging productivity in

the agricultural sector, but the frequent changes in government and subsequent government policy changes brought agriculture finally to its knees. Efforts must therefore, be put in place that will help in the turning around of the sector for optimal performance. Political decisions in Nigeria's agricultural industry are meant to provide steps to assist this very important industry on its upward journey from the bottom of the valley.

Despite the strategies adopted by various governments in Nigeria to address agriculture and rural underdevelopment problem, the story remains the same. There are still inequality and poverty particularly in the rural areas. There are a lot of public complaints on the underdevelopment situations of many rural areas, which constitute a threat to Nigeria's vision of becoming one of the twenty strongest economies by the year 2020 (Vision 2020). A lot of resources (financial) have been injected, but all in vain (Yakubu, 2009).

Agricultural Development in Nigeria

Agriculture contributes immensely to the Nigerian economy in the provision of food for the increasing population, supply of adequate raw materials to a growing industrial sector, a major source of employment, generation of foreign exchange earnings, and provision of a market for the products of the industrial sector (Okunmadewa, 1997; FAO, 2006). The sector is therefore critical both for economic development and poverty reduction (Dethier and Effenberger, 2011). For a country with natural capital like Nigeria, the development of the sector is critical to overall structural balance of the economy since it provides nexus for growth in other sectors of the economy. A key aspect of improving the quality of public finance is the efficiency with which inputs, mostly in the form of public spending, are transformed into desired social outcomes (Ebejer and Mandl, 2009). This explains the importance of agricultural spending in acting as a catalyst for rural development and poverty reduction; hence, the annual budgetary allocation represents the one of the key inputs, while the overall development of the rural sector represents the outcome.

Nigeria's agricultural economy reflects the dynamics of its political economy since independence (Eboh, 2011). Prior to attainment of her political independence through the present regime, most government policies have been directed towards accelerating economic growth and development with the ultimate aim of transforming the economy. Development is critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of any nation. In order to successfully enhance meaningful development, effective strategies must be evolved. Gboyega (2003) captures development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not imperil the future, it also demands that poverty and inequality of access to the good things of life be removed or drastically reduced.

Agricultural Policies Review in Nigeria

A review of agricultural production policies in Nigeria can be dated back to the independence of Nigeria. The pre-Structural Adjustment Programme era reviewed showed some trace of attention paid more to industrialization policies than agricultural policies due mainly to the discovery of oil. This was evident in the First National Development Plan of 1962-1968 which trumpeted industrialization and the exploitation of the nation's abundant natural resources to improve living standards as against the mere setting of a GDP growth target of 4% per annum for agriculture (Federal Ministry of Economic Development, 1963). In essence, investment into the primary sector which agriculture belonged to was not the focus of development, but the provision of infra-structural facilities which was to be the pivot of development, with a share of 50% share of the nation's investible funds.

The Second National Development Plan (1970-74) spelt out a more defined approach towards food production as the main nexus of the plan because of the Nigerian civil war which created hardship due mainly to food shortages. But Shimada (1999) criticized this arrangement stating that government's pretence towards agriculture was obvious since real budgetary spending on agriculture was a mere 7.7% against the 23.1% expenditure on transportation sector alone. Shimada (1983) further stated that government chose to rely more on food importation rather than address measures to strengthen the capacity base for food production.

However, Okuneye (1992) opined that the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) which started in 1974 had a focus of assisting the supply of agricultural inputs and education of farmers could not achieve its objectives due to poor planning and the un-timeliness in the provision of these extension services to farmers. The failure of this program led to the birth of the Agricultural Development Program (ADP) in 1975, which was a more comprehensive outlook of the NAFPP. This saw to the setting up of 470 agro service centers all over the country by 1985 to meet the challenge of extension services provision to farmers that was difficult in the NAFPP days.

While the ADP was diffusing into rural areas, other functional agricultural programs were initiated such as the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976 and the Green Revolution in 1980 which were the agricultural policies captured in the country's third nation development plan (1975-1980). These programs at their nexus pursued a policy shift of joint government and citizenry participation in food production to build a stable and self-sufficient socio-economic system, where there would be a lowering of the food import dependency ratio existent as at then. These policy shifts advocated the issuance of various types of subsidies and incentives to farmers and citizenry alike towards boosting food production. These prescriptions according to Shimada (1999) were a mirage based on results. This was due to the ad-hoc nature of planning and principally bad governance.

The Fourth National Development Plan (1981-1985) taking cue from the precedents of the previous years, sought to strengthen the self sufficiency in

food production via the Green Revolution Era of 1985 as such ascribed 13.5% of budgetary allocations to agricultural sector development, which had the largest share of designated priorities of the plan. This plan was to be achieved through partnership of agencies such as the Ministries of Agriculture, that of Water Resources, Labour, and Commerce, the River Basin and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDA).

Nigeria has also consistently failed to reach the 10 per cent agriculture budget standard of the Maputo declaration, which has led to negative implications for food security (Ochigbo, 2012). Ogunyemi and Adedokun (2011) examined budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector between 1985 and 2005 and compared the percentage of total budget allocated to agriculture with the recommended percentage allocation by multilateral institutions. They discovered that Nigeria budgetary allocation to agriculture has been inconsistent, and this has partly contributed to slow and inconsistent planning and policy implementation. The total expenditure of the government and the percentage of total expenditure on some sectors of the economy are presented in Table 1. The sectors include agriculture, education, health and transport. The table shows that agricultural sector lagged behind the other three sectors (Education, Health and Transport Education, Health and Transport) in terms of government expenditure. For example, in 2001, 7.1% of total expenditures went to agriculture compared to 10.3% for education, 8.8% for health and 9.7% for transport sectors. The table showed that there has never been a year when agriculture had up to 10% of total budgetary allocation despite the contribution of agriculture to the national economy. In spite of the enormous problems confronting agricultural sector coupled with rather low budgetary allocations, it has a commendable contribution to the national economy.

The percentage of government expenditure on the agricultural sector on the average toward the end of military era in 1999 was 3.4%, but allocation increased to the highest (6.7%) in the history of the country in 2008, before it started declining to 1.5%, 1.7% and 0.9% in 2011, 2012 and 2015 respectively. The table shows the failure of Nigerian government to allocate 10% of the national budget to agriculture sector in line with the recommendation stated in the Maputo declaration of 2003 that member nation's signatory to the convention and the minimum of 15% of the Federal Government Budget allocation to agricultural sector stipulated by the House Committee on Agriculture. The fluctuation of total expenditure on agriculture, as a percentage of overall government expenditure reflects intensified efforts by government to reduce its size (Usman *et al.*, 2011). The result depicted that more proportion of the total expenditure was allocated to the agricultural sector during the civilian regime than during the military regime, implying that civilian government paid more attention to agriculture than the military government. This finding supports Ogunyemi and Adedokun (2011) and Ehigiamusoe (2012) that Nigeria's budgetary allocation to agriculture has been inconsistent

and has partly contributed to slow and inconsistent planning and policy implementation.

The budgetary annual growth rate was negative in 1986, 1987, 1991, 2000, 2002, 2010 2011, 2013 and 2015 of the values -9%, -57%, -66%, -20%, -85%, -72%, -31%, -19.1%, -63.8%, 2.4% and -37.5% respectively, while it was positive for other years. It therefore follows that if agriculture is properly funded there will be enough resources to develop simple farm implements for tillage, harvesting, processing and storage of farm produce, most especially in the rural areas. As a result of this, small scale industries would develop and the issue of unemployment and poverty would be invariably addressed.

Table 1: Proportion of the Nigeria’s Annual Budget in Agriculture: 1985–2015

Year	Total Budget (₦'m)	Allocation to Agriculture (₦'m)	% Allocation to Agriculture	% Allocation to Education	% Allocation to Health	% Allocation to Transport	Growth Rate (%)
1985	198,901.00	1,018.10	0.50	3.69	2.72	2.09	-
1986	33,245.40	925.40	2.70	3.31	2.52	2.01	-9.11
1987	53,114.30	394.30	0.70	3.47	2.64	3.27	57.39
1988	71,753.90	650.00	0.90	7.17	3.44	2.74	64.84
1989	97,254.00	1,062.60	1.00	9.58	3.64	2.96	63.47
1990	129,164.00	1,966.60	1.50	5.43	2.28	1.92	85.07
1991	109,008.40	672.30	0.60	3.08	2.11	1.54	-65.81
1992	156,107.10	924.50	0.50	0.94	0.79	1.22	37.51
1993	394,104.90	2,835.30	0.70	7.04	4.42	3.46	206.60
1994	371,900.00	3,719.10	1.00	8.79	5.51	4.49	31.18
1995	515,488.90	6,927.70	1.30	8.25	5.67	4.77	86.25
1996	594,260.50	5,574.00	0.90	12.14	9.63	9.34	-19.54
1997	794,330.00	7,929.60	0.90	13.37	10.81	10.27	42.26
1998	1,176,289.30	1,184.40	1.00	13.09	10.70	10.91	-85.06
1999	1,140,911.00	38,259.80	3.40	13.14	10.29	9.71	3130.31
2000	1,190,597.20	10,596.40	0.50	12.24	6.15	4.41	-72.30
2001	2,632,171.70	64,943.90	2.50	10.29	8.79	9.71	512.80
2002	3,770,106.50	44,803.80	1.20	13.19	9.28	8.17	-31.01
2003	3,056,965.00	16,045.20	0.50	7.28	4.71	3.85	64.18
2004	1,971,752.50	59,773.40	3.00	8.56	5.50	3.61	272.50
2005	4,662,483.70	90,798.20	1.90	8.56	6.99	4.26	51.90
2006	1,900,000.00	107,463.90	4.53	10.02	6.94	4.09	18.35
2007	2,300,000.00	126,600.00	5.29	10.34	7.40	5.29	31.00
2008	2,878,000.00	171,400.00	6.65	10.07	7.79	6.72	35.39
2009	2,900,000.00	184,500.00	4.80	4.09	6.98	6.97	7.64
2010	4,070,000.00	149,900.75	3.59	6.95	5.49	7.47	-19.06
2011	4,480,000.00	54,218.28	1.50	8.00	5.11	1.30	-63.83
2012	4,749,000.00	78,980.00	1.66	8.43	5.95	1.15	6.00
2013	4,920,000.00	83,370.00	1.70	8.91	6.42	1.91	2.41
2014	4,690,000.00	66,640.00	1.44	9.32	5.60	1.82	-99.21
2015	4,493,000.00	39,151.90	0.90	11.29	5.60	1.11	-37.50

Source: *National Bureau of Statistics’ Annual Abstract of Statistics (2009), Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin (2010) and Federal Government of Nigeria Budget, 2011 and 2015*

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Agriculture accounts largely for the food needs of the country, and its contribution to employment is overwhelming as it account for over 60% of employment opportunities in the country), and yet, the sector suffers neglect, which is expressed in terms of the fluctuating and low percentage allocation to the sector from the national budget.

The paper concludes that good leadership and governance are important for agricultural growth and development. Reversing the current state of Nigeria’s

agriculture is more than just a technical issue, but structural change and better way of managing our resources. There is also the need for a sound political climate to generate a strong and collective political will. The political leadership must also change and must be armed with the right mental capacity, discipline, integrity and positive political will. The much needed political will has to be strong enough to tackle the issues of corruption and climate change. Also, Nigeria agriculture has to be re-packaged and properly promoted just like an attractive product for the investors to buy. It must have the right price and must be sold to the right people and at the appropriate places.

The paper also revealed several perspectives on the issue of agricultural funding and relevance of agriculture to any meaningful national development. In the light of these, it becomes very obvious that agriculture has been neglected and needs to be strengthened in terms of increased budgetary allocation, in order to enhance the quality of lives of the teeming population of the rural dwellers and also to enhance the quantity and quality of agricultural output, thus, enhancing and improving national development as a whole. Nigerian government also needs to place agriculture on top priority position within the sectoral allocation in its yearly budget spending. Furthermore, such allocation when released must be properly monitored to ensure its being expended on the purpose for which such money has been released.

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