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Agricultural Policies, Schemes and Funding: Media Responsibilities to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural policies and schemes are some of the measures through which the Nigerian government has attempted to address some of her challenges in the agricultural sector. Despite the MDGs/SDGs programs, Nigeria is still faced with extreme poverty, hunger, and poor education. Nigeria's budgetary allocation is still far from meeting international recommendations of 25% by FAO. Laudable and well thought out agricultural schemes such as "Operation feed the nation", "Green Revolution", "River Basin Development", "Agricultural Development Project" etc were government policies and schemes geared towards the provision of agricultural solutions. If objectives of the SDGs be realized in the country, issues of corruption, insecurity, proper education, and awareness creation etc., must be addressed by all stake holders ranging from the financial sector, the government as well as the mass media. The media are faced with challenges of news policies, brown envelops, loss of job opportunities etc., while most youths lack awareness and proper education about agricultural schemes and funding in Nigeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in Nigeria can be traced to the precolonial era, with subsistence agriculture as the dominant practice amongst farmers. During this era, there was sufficient food supply as the major crops cut across rice, cashew, cassava, oil palm, rubber, soybeans, bananas, maize etc [1]. This sector of the country has gone through levels of metamorphosis as it started developing from a very peasant majority system to commercial agriculture among few farmers. The sector accounted for 85% of the foreign exchange, 90% employment generation and about 80% of the gross domestic in the 1960s [2]. The phases of agriculture in Nigeria are largely influenced by the policies of the state and federal government at several instances. These policies at the long run have affected agriculture output perception in Nigeria. The effect of an effective Nigeria cannot agricultural policy in overemphasized. Beginning with the provision of food, shelter and clothing which are basic needs. agriculture also affects the supply of raw material to industries, provision of employment and generation of profitable returns from foreign exchange of cash products. The sustenance of life and development in any nation largely depends on agriculture. It serves as the source for the provision of adequate nutrition through availability of quality food and the foundation of economic development in many countries [3]. It is clearly known that the earlier years of Nigeria experienced a vast level of progressive development due to the role of agriculture which served as the major source of livelihood. The country is reckoned to have large arable land space, vast agricultural resources, favourable temperatures, and adequately distributed rainfall

system to support the growth of crops and rearing of animals [1]. Despite the passing of several agricultural policies in Nigeria, her economy does not largely depend on agriculture since the boom of crude oil. However, this ought not to be as several challenges ranging from eradication of extreme poverty and hunger which constitute a core of the millennium development goal (MDG) are far from being met. It is therefore plausible to say that the bane of agriculture in Nigeria was the oil boom [4,5]. It is now obvious that there is a sum of federal government budgetary allocation to agricultural sectors every year. This allocation is far away from meeting the standard requirement by Food and agricultural organization (FAO) and other internationally recognised agricultural organizations for a sustainable development for Nigeria.

Considering the contribution of the sector to the GDP each year, the government is expected to be aware about the potential of the sector to help achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of eradication of hunger and extreme poverty in Nigeria and improving the average standard of living. However, most of the public seems to be aware about how the funds that are allocated to this sector is being spent. To what extent has the media helped in the bridging of this gap? What are the militating factors to proper awareness creation especially among the youths that form the major percentage of the labour force of the What percentage of **Nigerians** country? eventually benefits from these policies? These issues and how they affect the actualization of the millennium development goals, will forms the scope of this article.

Table 1. Seven years budgetary allocation, contribution to GDP and FAO recommendation to Nigeria's agricultural sector

Year	Budgetary allocation (%)	Contribution to GDP (%)	FAO Recommendation (%)
2011	1.8	22.3	25
2012	1.6	21.9	25
2013	1.7	23.3	25
2014	1.4	22.9	25
2015	0.9	23.1	25
2016	1.3	24.5	25
2017	1.8	25.1	25

(Chibuzor, 2018, Taiwo [6] and Aderemi [2]).

2. AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND SCHEMES IN NIGERIA

Policy is a course of action or intervention taken by the government, organizations, or a group of people to influence and arrive at a predetermined outcome. Policy can also be termed as a deliberate plan of action to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. Various policies have been formulated for various sectors to improve the efficiency and productivity of which the agricultural sector is not side-tracked. Agricultural policy is termed to be a statement of action and a basic tool employed in achieving agricultural development [7]. The government has put certain agricultural policies in place for various reasons such as improving agricultural financial market, ensuring food security, achieving favourable balance payment, promoting foreign exchange earnings from agricultural products and enhancing socioeconomic issues [8]. Some of the agricultural policies and schemes in Nigeria includes the following:

Operation Feed the Nation 1976 was jeered at improving local agricultural productivity in the nation by the encouragement of citizens' participation in agriculture to reduce importation of food [9]. Before 1960 Nigeria was known for large production of cash crops. This robust

production by farmers made the government depend largely on agriculture to run their administration briefly after her independence. However, following the mass exodus of educated youths to urban cities in search of paid civil service jobs following the oil boom etc., there was soon a drop in the quantity of food produced, an increment in the price of food stuffs and importation of food to meet the increasing demand of food in the country as well increased. Military government, in then announced the operation feed the nation policy. The policy encouraged educational institutions to be independent in food production by farming and generating funds from excess produce. Farming was soon introduced into Biology and Agriculture curriculum in secondary schools as a way of encouraging students to buy the idea. The government played significant role by providing agricultural loans at very affordable conditions through the Nigeria Agriculture and Cooperative Bank. The government provided agricultural extension services, subsidized the prices of to support commercial farming, established agricultural estates and purchased aircrafts for spraying of pesticides. Poultry farmers received poultry chicks for free from the government, the masses were encouraged to farm any empty piece of land while urban dwellers were encouraged to own garden around their houses [10-12].



Fig. 1. Operation feed the nation Source: [13]

2.1 Green Revolution

Agricultural is an integral part of the objective of any government because of its importance to man. By 1980, the Shehu Shagari introduced the green revolution policy. This policy was geared towards increasing food production to ensure food security of stable food in Nigeria. The policy desired to meet the nations need of foreign exchange through sufficient production of meat to meet home need and export of surplus [2]. practice will bring some level diversification of agricultural practice in the country. Government provided agrochemicals, seedlings, seeds, farm machines and credit facilities to support farmers. Food was to be made affordable for the masses and encouraging for the farmers by ensuring the farmers dose not experiences loss. The government ensured this by subsidizing of food, drawing of food production plan, special commodity development program, increment in resource allocation etc [2].

2.2 Agricultural Development Projects

The Agricultural Development Projects was established in the year 1972, just about two years after the civil war ended. It was established in a period when Nigerian was going through food shortage crises caused by various factors. The Agricultural Development Projects' primary focus was to increase the production of food amongst small scale farmers. The project was funded by the State government, Federal government, and the World Bank. The two major objectives of the Agricultural Development Projects were to increase food production by peasant farmers and to increase the income of these farmers thereby reducing poverty. The scheme started an initial prototype in 1975 in just three states in Nigerian, but by 1984, it had already been implemented in all the states of the federation.

Some of the approaches through which the Agricultural Development Projects set to achieve its goals and objectives include the following:

- Create smooth channels for transmitting and exchanging information between farmers and researchers.
- Reviving, planning, and organizing an agricultural system that will effectively train extension workers.

- Establish Farm Service Centers (FSC) that will be saddled with the responsibility distributing necessary farm inputs to farmers.
- Establish an independent Agricultural Development Projects Management Unit that will be completely free of the usual civil service bureaucracy, to take prompt action quickly and easily when and where necessary in favour of the scheme.
- Create a management system that will effectively manage, monitor, record and transmit data and research results to the end that certain farming errors should not be repeated.
- Support and motivate a full cooperation between the Federal government and the State government, geared towards the realization of the Agricultural Development Projects' goals and objectives.

However, the Agricultural Development Projects was faced with several challenges which eventually crippled its effectiveness. Some of these challenges includes:

- Lack of sufficient funding.
- Unavailability of sufficient qualified extension workers.
- 3. High cost of farm inputs.
- 4. Adulteration/unavailability of original farm inputs.
- 5. Inadequate processing equipment.
- 6. Engagement of crude and obsolete extension approach.
- 7. Terrible condition of roads between farms and markets.
- 8. Insufficient training programs for extension workers.
- Non-payment of extension workers' salaries and dues.
- Unavailability of vehicles and machines and so on.

Until 1996, the Agricultural Development Projects was progressively functional in all over the federation. However, nothing much is left of the scheme today except the shadow of its past glory [7].

2.3 The River Basin Development Authority

The potential of the abundant water resources in the country to increase agricultural production led to the establishment of the River Basin Development Authority [14]. Its establishment can be traced back to the British colonial era in Nigeria. It was established in response to the shortage in rainfall, particularly in the northern part of the country. However, in 1963, the Lake Chad Basin Commission was established and between 1973 to 1974, work had begun in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sokoto River Basin. According to Njoku, the promulgation of decree 73 in 1973, extended the RBD project Nationwide, therefore, based on this decree, eleven more river basins were established in addition to the already existing Sokoto River Basin. The river basins and their headquarters are listed below:

- Upper Niger River Basin Development Authority- Abeokuta
- Upper Benue River Basin Development Authority- Yola
- Niger Delta River Basin Development Authority- Port Harcourt
- Lower Niger River Basin Development Authority- Ilorin

- Lower Benue River Basin Development Authority- Makurdi
- Anambra-Imo River Basin Development Authority- Owerri
- Benin Owena River Basin Development Authority- Benin
- Chad River Basin Development Authority-Maiduguri
- Cross River Basin Development Authority-Calabar
- Hadeji-jama-are River Basin Development Authority- Kano
- Ogun-Osun River Basin Development Authority
- Sokoto Rima River Basin Development Authority- Sokoto

As a way of driving home their primary focus, which is to facilitate rapid economic development in Nigeria through harnessing and managing the country's water resources for agricultural production and hydroelectric benefits amongst others, the authorities set the following injunctions in their different functioning domain.



Fig. 2. Map showing study location Source: (Dau et al. [12])

- creating of agro-service centre with tractor hire service.
- 2. Large scale multiplication of improved seeds for distribution to farmers
- 3. Training of junior staff for oral development project
- 4. Contribute to overall security through food production and distribution.
- 5. Creating of large-scale forestation scheme
- Large scale rearing of improved livestock and poultry for distribution to farmers.
- Creating of grazing reserve for nomadic cattle breeders.
- 8. Rural electrification and construction of feeder road.
- Construction of boreholes and dams for irrigation and rural water supply.
- 10. Large scale mechanized clearing and cultivation of various land forms [15].

The establishment of large-scale irrigation facility promoted more multi cropping pattern as against the single cropping pattern that was because of shortage in rainfall. It also led to more large-scale cultivation, livestock, and fish production. By the activities of the River Basin 1998. Development Authority have increased with evident success in agricultural production. It was also noted that the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin and Tiga Challawa dams located in former Kano State could save enough water that can produce over 50% of the nation's need for wheat, 30% of its need for rice, cotton and sugar cane. It could also produce several thousand tons of fish, developed livestock and poultry, hydroelectric power generation [14].

Nevertheless, the authority have not been able to fully apprehend the core purpose for its establishment, which is to harness and manage water resources for agricultural production, domestic use, and industrial development. This failure in attaining their core goals and objectives is accrued to certain challenges faced by the scheme, which include.

- Non-inclusion of local communities in the decision-making phases of project planning, implementation, management, and evaluation.
- Discontinuity of programs and policy by various incumbent government.
- Inadequate funding due to government's dwindling revenues
- Lack of proper understanding or misunderstanding the commission's

primary purpose by its various administrators and so on [15].

3. AWARENESS AND EDUCATION; THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ACHIEVING THE MELLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Following series of conventions and conferences in the 1990s, after the cold war ended, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was established in the year 2000. The Millennium Development Goals are set of eight international development goals that were to be realised on and before year 2015. These international development goals were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, after the adoption of the United Nations Declaration. Millennium The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set to be achieved by 2015 by all 191 member states of the United Nations, and about 22 international Although organizations. the Millennium (SDGs) Development Goals have been succeeded be the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the year 2016, should the media er the wishes of the masses it will be obvious that the realization of these goals in Nigeria is beyond doubt the desire of every patriotic citizen. Should the media play their roles in the society, they could have enormously contributed to the eradication of hunger and provision of education to the masses. According to National Bureau of Statistics, as of the year 2019 any Nigerian living with less than 137,400 Nigerian Naira was poor. In rural communities about 52.1% (NBS) and 51% (World Bank) were poor and 18% (NBS) and 17% (WB) were poor in urban centres. About 39.1% of Nigerians could not afford \$1.90 per day as of 2018 and 2019 (World Bank).

The media as the eye of any society are charged with the responsibility of educating the public, awareness creation and sensitization important societal, government or global objectives like the MDGs now SDGs. Information, the wings on which knowledge thrives, is the progenitor of awareness. The media has been saddled with the responsibility to detects what is important to any society. They have the responsibility of creation of awareness about government agricultural policies that serves as a yardstick for the realization of goals like "complete elimination of extreme poverty and hunger" and "achievement of universal basic education" [16]. Should the public benefit from government agricultural policies and funding, then the media are required to sensitize the Nigerian society on the available policies, funding, and programmes that the government has budgeted from the annually increasing budgetary allocation to agriculture.

4. CURRENT CHALLENGES MILLITATING THE ACHIEVMENT OF AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND THE MDGs/SDGs

4.1 Lack of Awareness

The only and reliable way to effectively create awareness in most modern society is through the media. In Japan it was reported by Yoichi, [17] about the effectiveness of Japanese media in the creation of awareness about the SDGs. It was said reported that the media has successfully convinced the public to an extent of having citizens wear the sustainable development Pin labels. This result was specifically tied to their relentless effort in covering topics in environmental sustainability and education of the masses on the need for individualized action on the fight against climate change [16]. This scenario is different from the experience in Nigeria. The major topics in Nigerian media do not bother on pressing issues like agricultural opportunities and realizing SDGs. Areas that generate funds like advertisements and Promotions for the media institutions and houses are determinant of topics that are covered. Creating awareness on topics that affects the public like agriculture MDGs/SDGs are usually not prioritized. The media policy in Nigeria, cash inducement journalism and embarrassment from government has largely influenced the media from creating awareness and sensitizing the masses [12,18].

4.2 Oil Boom

As earlier stated, the history of agriculture and policies could be traced before the oil boom in Nigeria of 1977 to 1983. This period gave birth to the negligence and loss of value for agricultural activities. It marked the beginning of insufficient food production and raw materials demand f from the fast-growing population. Consequently, some of the country's industries like the textile, flour mills and other agro-based industries couldn't operate full capacity, stopped exportation of products and some were forced to shut down due to insufficient supply of raw materials and diversion of attention to oil and gas industries in the country [5]. Although some authors dare to

debate the fact for reasns such as increment in allocation to agricultural sector during and after oil boom compared to the period before the oil boom [5]. This fact, however, may not necessarily count because increment in budget for capital expenditures and allocation without proper implementation strategies will result to loss of budgetary purposes. According to Samson [19], the newfound wealth during the oil boom resulted to fiscal recklessness that gave birth to untold indolence, corruption, and poor implementation strategies very good government agricultural policies.

4.3 Corruption

In the western world, there is an established correlation between economic development and the mass media [20]. The mass media in Nigeria has successfully influenced the social, economic, agricultural, political, and marital development of the country. The media has been reckoned to face the challenge of inducement to water down issues of public importance because of sociopolitical interest and acquaintances. Some who have refused such offers and decide to hold on to their professional ethics of the being an independent neutral entity has paid the ultimate price of death for practicing true journalism [12]. Issues on agricultural funding opportunities are not publicized and advertised to capture the interest of the youths. The media rather spend more time in the publicizing of political campaigns and miniature achievements of their political allies in public offices to create a falsepositive impression in the hearts of the citizens. Funding from International organizations and federal allocations are not disbursed to the target farmers. The cases of diversion of public funds including agricultural funds and aids are no longer news in the ears of many Nigerians as they are stories that are only revealed after the emergence of new political appointments of the opposition parties [21].

4.4 Loss of Interest

Nigeria is naturally endowed with good land space and manpower to drive her agricultural dreams and aspirations. However, the poor awareness and limitations in the Nigerian education system has resulted to a lost of interest of the able-bodied men and women in this sector. Many of the Nigeria youths see agriculture as a sector were individuals with very low self-esteem and opportunities should spend their time and effort. The government has failed

to provide the necessary aids and education for her youths to develop interest in this sector. The bulk of agricultural activities in southern Nigeria are driven by low class women and few men with little or no government assistance. There are few reports of financial aids and grants to farmers in the northern part of Nigeria. However, the few who get these aids in the present Nigerian society are a minority of the entire farmers in and demands Nigeria. The rigor government officials who occupy certain public office where farmers through which farmers have access to their funding has resulted in the los of interest by many farmers.

4.5 Social Vices and Unrest

The issues of insecurity in Nigeria in quite alarming and no longer news in the ears of many persons. Many Nigerians have been killed in the rural communities of Benue, Enugu, Nassarawa and many other Northern communities with the majority of the diseased as farmers. The cattle headers in Nigeria have become a threat to many farmers in several states. Headers have been consistently accused of crushing crops of poor farmers and killing some of the farmers who tent to oppose the destruction of their crops by cows feeding on them or trampling on them to pass through their land. There are also cases of kidnapping and murder of farmers who were either in their farms or on their way to their farms. The effect of social vices against farmers in Nigeria has largely affected the availability some food commodities at certain intervals of the year. There are also cases of rape, sexual harassment to individuals who work in lowly areas like farms since most of the Nigeria farmlands are in sparsely populated areas of the community [21].

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TION

The points discussed in this review as the factors militating the development of the Nigeria agricultural sector despite the availability of land and manpower in a country with high percentage of unemployment and over 200 million persons are not finished yet. However, we have presented some of the major challenges of public interest. Other issues like power succession (change of administration), shortage of power supply, lack of social amenities, political instability, poor budgetary execution etc are also pressing issues that can be addressed through public discussion in media houses and new papers. Time allotted to issues that do not have

firm arip on the development of most of the Nigerian people should be deprioritized in media communication. Frantic efforts should be made to ensure the independence of the media by avoiding policies that limit their freedom of practice especially in a democratic society. The punishment for corrupt practices should be put into practice even among the elites and not only among the common citizens; there should be equality before the law. The achievement of the MDGs now SDGs should be prioritized by the government and media at all levels. Sufficient budgetary allocation should be given to issues of public importance. Agriculture, power generation and education should be given more budgetary allocation as not up to 2% of Nigeria's budgetary allocation has been given to agriculture from year 2011 to 2017 [22].

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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