

The Significance of Agricultural Policy Implementation for Rapid Agricultural Development

Agriculture is regarded in Nigeria as the major employer of Labour for its citizens. A significant number of Nigeria's citizens are engaged in one form of Agricultural production or the other, be it crop, animal, fishery etc, even though most of this productions are carried out at subsistence levels or rather low scale, it is mostly affected by inconsistent government policies on agriculture.

Most often than not these policies if not implemented properly affects the small scale farmers who are the major producers of Agricultural products that are supplied in our markets.

For a nation to achieve self sufficiency in food production it has to have a viable agricultural policy in place, not only that but be properly implemented.

Some States have been identified with rain fed and /or irrigated agricultural production, which has in no small measure provided food for the teeming population, improvement of economic well being as well as provision of employment to the populace especially during the dry season, in addition to provision of raw materials and export crops for foreign exchange.

Constraints to Agricultural Production

- a) Due to **high resource contents of the Agricultural policies**, it has become difficult for the government to sustain most of its policies or implement them properly, of which at the end they could not yield positive results.
- b) **Poor credit facilities to farmers**: Government policies towards provision of small and medium levels farmers with loans which attracts low interest is usually inaccessible to the small holder farmers, due to either non provision of the loans or inadequate provision, thus leaving them with the option of going to money lenders and friends which could attract 40-45% interest. Going to commercial banks by the small holder farmers for loans is also hindered by the collateral requirements from the banks.
- c) **Inadequate supply of agricultural inputs**: If at the beginning of a season a farmer cannot get the required input in sufficient quantity, then his problem for a successful production has begun. Most of these inputs (fertilizers, herbicides, seeds etc,) are either

- in short supply or not at all. Even if it is being provided, the method its distribution to reach the targeted consumers is hindered along the way due to poor distribution system.
- d) **Lack of adequate extension service:** If a proper network of agricultural extension service could be put in place, agricultural production will get a boost in no small way. That is to say, the near absence of this fundamental service to farmers is affecting their production output. Some developing nations have so much emphasis on this issue which has yielded positive results.
 - e) **Natural conditions (biotic and edaphic conditions):** Due to the proximity of some states in the northern part of Nigeria to desert, it has made some agricultural lands vulnerable to desert encroachment as well as low precipitation in some parts of the states, it has become inevitable that some parts will experience low agricultural output and experience prevalence of animal diseases and pests.
 - f) **Insufficient infrastructure and institutional support:** Inadequate numbers of cottage industries, poor transportation system and poor marketing arrangements especially for export produce affects agricultural production in no small measure.
 - g) **Lack of modern /adequate storage facilities/technology:** Most products, especially the easily perishable commodities, cannot be stored for a long period of time due to inadequate/less technological storage facility. Therefore the farmers will be discouraged to produce such products.

Strategies for Achieving Results on Formulated Agricultural Policies

If the Federal and states' governments are set to boost Agricultural production it is imperative for them to ensure the following:

- 1) Timely supply of subsidized inputs to farmers and improve the services of fertilizer blending plants and possibly establish new ones.
- 2) Enhancement of agricultural extension service to farmers.
- 3) Provision of incentives to staff in the agricultural sector for greater productivity and ensure adequate funding of the state

agricultural supply company for the supply of agricultural inputs as well as provide a conducive operational environment for international agricultural organizations.

- 4) Purchase of additional and rehabilitation of agricultural machineries and implements.
- 5) Improve the micro credit finance.
- 6) Provide technologically sound and adequate storage facilities for the farmers
- 7) Provide basic rural infrastructure to the farming communities.
- 8) Provide an avenue for easy marketing of farm produce or by making a special arrangement to buy the surplus.
- 9) Create a conducive environment for establishing agricultural processing companies.
- 10) Assist the farmers to establish cottage agricultural industries via their cooperative unions.

It is globally agreed that in most developing nations like Nigeria, it is the small-holder farmers that feed its population or rather provide most of the agricultural products in that country, even if they can not meet 100% food production for its citizenry.

In many countries across the globe, it is the peasant farmers that provide most of food and other agricultural needs of their population due to proper implementation of sound agricultural policies. If it can be done else where, why not here where we also have all the available resources to attain self sufficiency in food production and exports for foreign exchange earnings? It is therefore very crucial and of immense importance for the governments at all levels as well as the stakeholders to put hands on deck and ensure proper implementation of these policies so as to achieve greater results.

Nigeria has all the potentials to be self sufficient in food production, and once a country is able to produce adequate food and other agricultural products for its citizens, certainly a lot of social ills will be eliminated and that country will definitely achieve a rapid industrial growth.

Umar Danladi Dahiru

Executive Director

Africa Desertification Control Initiative (ADCI)