EVALUATE NIGERIA AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT HISTORY FROM 1960 TO DATE: CONSIDERING SUSTAINABILITY INDICES

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Abstract
This paper discusses History of Nigerian Agriculture, Importance of agriculture, Past and Present Agricultural development programmes in Nigeria and its policy goal, and reasons why agricultural development intervention and programmes were formulated, and weakness faced by various agricultural programmes in finding solutions to people’s problems and economic development. This paper also discussed sustainability, sustainability pillars and sustainability indices. This paper also measured agricultural programmes vis a vis with sustainability indices. The paper reveals, among other reasons that top-down approach in project design and implementation and acceptability issues, non-continuity and functionality issues, bureaucratic bottlenecks and operability issues, durability issues of most agricultural programmes are partly responsible failures in Nigerian agricultural development. In order to avoid agricultural programme development failures, beneficiaries must be involved at every stage of programme design and implantation and recurrent changes in programme as a result of change in government and administration must be addressed to ensure sustainability of programmes and full actualization of intervention goals and objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is very blessed with agricultural resources, without any doubt agriculture remains one of the necessities for the growth and development of any particular country. At independence, agriculture dominated Nigeria's economy contributing 63.49 percent to Gross Domestic product in 1960 (CBN, 1980) and was the major source of funds for implementing the first national development plan, 1962-1968. Currently, Nigeria has 75 percent of its land suitable for agriculture, but only 40% is cultivated. That indicates there is much room for the county to focus on (Ogen, 2002). This addresses the food security and agriculture component on development plan along with the focus on employment for all. However, to move forward, the country must increase the low productivity of current agricultural companies, engage competition within the agricultural sector, develop domestic policies and increase agricultural funding (Ayodele, Obafemi and Ebong, 2013). The sector is primarily important, given its employment generation potential and its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and export revenue earnings (Ogen, 2002). A vibrant agricultural sector is capable of ensuring the supply of raw materials for the industrial sector as well as providing gainful employment for the teeming population (Ukeje, 2007).

The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantities in Nigeria in 1968 and the subsequent oil boom of the 1970s culminated in the displacement of agriculture as the driver of the nation’s economy (NISER, 2015). The emergence of the petroleum sector in the early 1970’s resulted in significant structural changes in the Nigeria economy which negatively affected the agricultural sector. In response to the oil boom, public expenditures grew, fostering many other economic activities, including infrastructural development, creation of new institutions and expansion of existing ones, and importation of all kinds of consumer goods (Ukeje, 2007). Earnings from petroleum resources favoured these developments, but tradable agricultural commodities did not experience similar growth. The share of the oil sector in the total value of exports, which was under 60 per cent in 1970, rose to over 90 per cent after 1973. The non-oil exports declined from about 30 per cent in 1970 to less than 10 per cent by 1980 (Ojo, 1992). Agricultural productivity estimates for Nigeria showed a decline in productivity growth from the 1960s to the 1980s. Agriculture has traditionally been characterized as the “mainstay” of the Nigerian economy with many assigned roles to perform in the course of the country’s economic development. Among the roles conventionally ascribed to the agricultural sector in a growing economy are those of

(i) Ensuring adequate food availability for an increasing population

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The Concept of sustainability is a relatively new idea, the movement as a whole has its roots in social justice, conservationism. Sustainability means meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is also defined as the process of living within the limits of available physical, natural and social resources in ways that allow the living systems in which humans are embedded to thrive in perpetuity. Ensuring that projects are stable and the beneficiaries sustains and ensures other generations also benefit from same project. Sustainability can also be regarded as a state that can be maintained at a certain level indefinitely. As an environmental concept, the term sustainability refers to the potential longevity of vital human ecological support systems such as the planet’s climatic system, systems of agriculture, industry, forestry and fisheries. According to KLD (2008), sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. In addition to natural resources, we also need social and economic resources. Sustainability is not just environmentalism. Embedded in most definitions of sustainability we also find concerns for social equity and economic development.

2.1 Three pillars of sustainability

The three pillars of sustainability are:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Economic Sustainability
- Social Sustainability

Environmental Sustainability ensures that ecological integrity is maintained, all of earth’s environmental systems are kept in balance while natural resources within them are consumed by humans at a rate where they are able to replenish themselves. Economic Sustainability emphasis’s on Human communities across the globe been able to maintain their independence and have access to the resources that they require, financial and other, to meet their needs. Economic systems are intact and activities are available to everyone, such as secure sources of livelihood. Social Sustainability this emphasis on the universal human rights and basic necessities are attainable by all people, who have access to enough resources in order to keep their families and communities healthy and secure. Healthy communities have just leaders who ensure personal, labour and cultural rights are respected and all people are protected from discrimination.

2.2 Sustainability Indices

- Acceptability
- Functionality
- Operability
- Durability

Acceptability: Acceptability as a sustainability indices focuses on the people themselves who are seen as the beneficiaries accepting the intervention because they were part in the design and development of the introduced technology. Functionality: functionality as a sustainability indices focuses on the ability of projects and interventions to continue to address the need of the people whereby it was implemented. Operability: this focuses on granting opportunities to the beneficiaries been used in maintenance of introduced programs and interventions.Durability: This is the ability of project to stand the test of time.

2.3 History of Nigerian agriculture

The history of the Nigerian agriculture dates back to the colonial era when the Colonialists had the objective to orientate the Nigerian farming systems towards meeting and serving the demands of their home companies and creating jobs in their countries. Consequently, structures put in place were basically to enhance the transportation and evacuation of high valued and exportable commodities (Cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel, cotton, groundnuts, rubber, etc) to the sea ports. The rail system and major roads were constructed to achieve these goals running from Lagos to the North and the Eastern parts of the country, (Lagos, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Jos, and Maiduguri, to Enugu). Nigeria was famous for the export of groundnut and palm kernel oil, but, over the years the rate of export of these products has reduced. A few years back local Nigerian companies have commenced exporting groundnuts, cashew nuts, sesame seeds, moringa seeds, Ginger, cocoa, etc.
Before the colonial masters arrived on Nigerian soil, our forefathers engaged primarily in farming as a major occupation and means of sustenance using crude farm implements and despite the crude implements used, enough food was produced to feed themselves and cash crops were produced and used for barter system of trade across the Sahara and the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria is very blessed with agricultural resources, a large expanse of land estimated at 91 million hectares (1990) of which 81 million hectares are arable. Most parts of the country experience-rich soil, well-distributed rainfall, not to mention the warm year-round temperatures. And 18 million hectares of land classified as permanent pasture, for livestock production. Agricultural commodities commonly produced represented about 60% of the total foreign exchange earnings of the nation and the sector was employing as much as about 90% of the economically active labour force. During the early period, level of agricultural technology was dominated mainly by hoes and cutlasses and the use of little or no external inputs. It was common for the farmers to rely almost absolutely on seeds saved from previous harvests and subsistence farm practices. These invariably led to minimal yield and poor level of productivity of the factors of production in Nigeria’s agricultural sector. Nevertheless the sector was able to meet about 90% of the food needs of the population and substitute for some imports. Rapid growth in population put pressure on the sector and thus was not able to meet the yearnings of the people. Food prices were on the increase, food imports on the rise, rural urban migration started to explode and the centre cannot hold as things started to fall apart in the sector.

During the 1960s and after the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the 1970s, Nigerian agriculture started to perform poorly. It took a very long period before its growth picked up. Even with this, the growth has been due largely to smallholders increasing their cropped areas. This is because yields have declined for many crops and other enterprises. Furthermore, higher protection spurred growth masking the huge gap in productivity and competitiveness that has opened up between Nigeria and international competitors. Consequently, agriculture is not playing the expected role of increasing productivity and stimulating growth in the economy as a whole. It should however be stated that, Nigeria has a highly diversified agro-ecological conditions, which makes possible the production of a wide range of agricultural commodities. Hence, agriculture constitutes one of the most important sectors of the economy. The sector is particularly important in terms of its employment generation (approximately 43 percent of Nigeria’s labour force was employed in agriculture, contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and export revenue earnings (World Bank, 2006).

Despite Nigeria’s rich agricultural resource endowment, however, less than 50 percent of the country’s cultivable agricultural land is under cultivation. Even then, smallholder and traditional farmers who use rudimentary production techniques, with resultant low yields, cultivate most of this land. To date, the Nigerian smallholder farmers are faced with many growth constraints, including those of poor access to modern inputs and credit, poor infrastructure, inadequate access to markets, land tenure rigidities and environmental degradation, inadequate research and extension services. Agriculture as an indigenous occupation in Nigeria has gone through various phases of development. This development spans three phases from pre-colonial, post-colonial and development till date.

2.4 The Pre-Colonial and Colonial Periods

Long before the advent of Nigeria’s colonizaton, our ancestors were sustained primarily on farming as the major occupation with the use of crude implements compared to what is obtained today. Yet, they produced enough food crops to feed themselves like most other Africans and also produced cash crops which used for trade by barter system, across the Trans Saharan trade to the end of the Atlantic trade and responding accordingly to the demands of their time. The period of the colonial administration in Nigeria, 1861-1960, was punctuated by rather an ad hoc attention to agricultural development. During the era, considerable emphasis was placed on research and extension services. The first notable activity of the era was the establishment of the Department of Botanical Research in 1893 in former Western Nigeria; saddled with the responsibility of conducting research in Agriculture (Williams, S.K.T. 1978). In 1905, the British Cotton Growers Association acquired 10.35 square kilometres of land at the site now called Moor Plantation, Ibadan for growing cotton to feed the British Textile Mills. In 1910, Moor Plantation, Ibadan became the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture in Southern Nigeria, and a Department of Agriculture was established in the North in 1912. In 1921, a unified Department of Agriculture was formed in Nigeria, after the amalgamation of the North and the South. The major policy of the Central Department of Agriculture was to increase the production of export crops for the British market which was ready to absorb it for its industrial growth. Extension activities were therefore directed towards increasing efficiency in crop production and marketing. Regulations were made to set and enforce standards in export crop production. The colonial period also witnessed the establishment of the Niger Agricultural Project in 1949 with the aims of producing groundnut for export and guinea-corn for local consumption. It was also meant to relieve world food shortage, demonstrate better farming techniques and increase the productivity of Nigeria’s agriculture.

2.5 The Post-Colonial Period

New policies were formulated in the post-independence era to actualize more equitable growth in agriculture. The earlier surplus extraction policies were quickly translated into the pursuit of export-led growth (Ayoola, G.B. 2001), this led to the demarcation of the country into the Western Region (cocoa), Northern Region (groundnut) and Eastern Region (oil palm).
The 1962-1968 development plans were Nigeria’s first national plan. Among several objectives, it emphasized the introduction of more modern agricultural methods through farm settlements, co-operative (nucleus) plantations, the supply of improved farm implements (e.g. hydraulic hand presses for oil palm processing) and a greatly expanded agricultural extension service.

Specialized Agricultural development and interventions initiated and implemented from the period 1960 to date includes:

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:

1. Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service (AERLS) at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria established in 1963
2. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) established in 1967
3. International Livestock Centre for Africa (ILCA).

In an attempt to address the dwindling resources accrued from Agriculture, the successive government implemented programs aimed at increasing food production, reviving Agriculture and ensuring development of Nigerian agricultural sector. These are:

2.5.1 National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) (1972-1973)

The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) was set up by in 1972 by the Federal Department of Agriculture during General Yakubu Gowon’s regime in order to increase food production and eliminate rural poverty, also at the national level, the aim of the programme was to achieve food security and to increase the demands of staple foods such as cassava, garri, yam, potato etc, against more expensive carbohydrate food such as rice. Mini –kit, production-kit and mass adoption phases were the three phases of the programme.

Policy Goal: The policy goal of NAFPP was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. Consequently, land reform and mass literacy policies were recommended for farmers. Weakness found on the programme are attributed to inability of farmers to form co-operatives which made them left out in the programme as the programme relied on disbursement of credits and farm inputs through co-operative societies. Abrupt/premature withdrawal of funding by the Federal Government due to the introduction of another programme termed Operation Feed the Nation caused a major blow to the continuation of the programme. Demonstration trials done on some selected farmers’ plots by the research and extension personnel did not give a true/good representation of the outcome of the technology or programme. In other words, it lacked farmers’ participation.

2.5.2 Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) (1976-1980)

The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was an Agricultural development program set up by the then military government of Nigeria in an effort to achieve food security. This programme evolved on 21st May 1976 under the regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo and remains one of the most widely-publicized agricultural programmes. The programme was launched in order to bring about increased food production in the entire nation through the active involvement and participation of everybody in every discipline thereby making every person to be capable of partly or wholly feeding him or herself. Under this programme every available piece of land in urban, sub-urban and rural areas was meant to be planted while government provided inputs and subsidies (like agrochemicals, fertilizers, improved variety of seed/seedlings, day olds chicks, matchets, sickle, hoes etc) freely to government establishments. The OFN programme attempted to mobilize the general public to participate actively in agricultural production and ensure self-sufficiency in food production. The programme stimulated Nigerians to farming through the strategies used. Some of these strategies included subsidized production inputs, increased bank credit to farmers, establishment of commodity boards and fixing of attractive prices for agricultural produce. Policy instruments include mass media, centralized input procurement, massive fertilizer subsidy and imports.

Policy Goal: The policy goal of OFN was to increase food production on the premise that availability of cheap food would lead to a higher nutritional level which, in turn, would affect national growth tremendously.

i. Participants in the programme had little or no farming background and there was no formal or informal preparatory teaching or advice given to them on how to manage their farms.

ii. Farming was done on any available piece of land irrespective of its suitability for agriculture.

iii. They practiced mono cropping instead of mixed/ relay cropping and relied on hired labour to carry out their farming activities, which resulted in high input and low output /yield per unit of land.

iv. Preference was given to government establishments and individuals in authority/administration over the poor farmers (real producer of food) in terms of input supply.

v. There was abundance of food in the market and less demand for the food because many people produced part or almost whole food they consumed.

vi. The Programme addressed the problem of rising food crisis, rural-urban migration and escalating food import bills.

vii. They practiced mono cropping instead of mixed/ relay cropping and relied on hired labour to carry out their farming activities, which resulted in high input and low output /yield per unit of land.
2.5.3 Green Revolution Programme (GRP) 1981-1983

The programme was inaugurated by Shehu Shagari in April 1980 to increase production of food and raw materials in order to ensure food security and self-sufficiency in basic staples. The programme aspired to boost production of livestock and fish in order to meet home and export needs and to expand and diversify the nation’s foreign exchange earnings through production and processing of export crops. The federal government ensured the success of the programme by providing agrochemicals, improved seeds/seedlings, irrigation system, machine (mechanization), credit facilities, improved marketing and favourable pricing policy for the agricultural products. Policy instrument include food production plan, input supply and subsidy, special commodity development programme, review of Agricultural credit guarantee scheme, increased resource allocation to RBDAS etc.

Policy Goal: The policy goal of GRP had the dual purpose of curtailing food importation through boosting crop production, and promoting big mechanised farming.

Weakness and lapses found in the programme includes:

i. There was also no monitoring and evaluation of the projects for which huge sums of money were spent.

ii. The programme did not achieve its objective of increasing food supply because there was delay in execution of most of the projects involved in the programme.

2.5.4 Back to Land Programme 1983-1985

The back to land programme was an Agricultural programme that was established by the military government of President Buhari. This initiative was spearheaded by Idiagbon in 1984, the aim of the back to land programme was to implement a policy that will encourage massive agricultural food production and also to alleviate poverty.

2.5.5 Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) 1986

In 1986, Ibrahim Babangida established the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), with the aim to identify, involve and support viable local community organisations so as to ensure effective mobilisation of the rural populace for sustainable rural development.

Policy Goal: identify, involve and support viable local community organisations so as to ensure effective mobilisation of the rural populace for sustainable rural development.

i. to encourage contribution of labour, time and materials by local communities to be complemented by a system of matching grants from the Directorate, local and state governments;

ii. to support the development of an information gathering, maintenance and evaluation culture in rural development programming, with emphasis on utilization of existing agencies with demonstrated competence in the area of management information systemsm agricultural extension, including the continuous generation of basic data in rural infrastructure in each of the Local Government Areas in Nigeria.

iii. to commission and support studies and research projects that will facilitate the execution of the functions of the Directorate

iv. to supervise and monitor, on a continuous or regular basis, the entire range of rural development activities carried out by the local government areas.

v. to liaise with Federal Government Ministries and Agencies in the design and implementation of programmes and projects in the field of food production and processing, rural water supply, road construction and maintenance and the provision of rural infrastructures, and any other rural development activities.

vi. to measure the achievements of the Directorate in the area of food production, rural water supply, road construction and repair, rural infra-structural development and other rural development activities; and to do all such other things as will enable the Directorate more effectively perform its functions.

National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS) 2003

This Programme was launched in January 2002 in all the thirty-six states of the federation during the Olusegun Obasanjo’s regime. The broad objective of the programme was to increase food production and eliminate rural poverty.

Policy Goal: It was aimed at helping farmers to increase output and income, strengthen extension service delivery, promote simple farm technologies, utilise land, water and other resources for food production.

Weakness and lapses found in the programme includes:

The major setbacks associated with the policy were seen in the inability of most beneficiaries to repay their loans on time, complexity and incompatibility of innovation, coupled with difficulty in integrating technology into existing production systems.

Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP):

RTEP was launched on 16th April 2003 under Olusegun Obasanjo’s administration. It covers 26 states and was designed to address the problem of food production and rural poverty. At the local farmer’s level, the programme hopes to achieve economic growth, improve access of the poor to social services and carry out intervention measures to protect poor and vulnerable groups. At the national level, the programme is designed to achieve food security and stimulate demand for cheaper
Staple food such as cassava, garri, yam, potato etc. as against more expensive carbohydrate such as rice. Smallholder farmers with less than two hectares of land per household were the targets of the programme while special attention is being paid to women who play a significant role in rural food production, processing and marketing. RTEP also targets at multiplying and introducing improved root and tuber varieties to about 350,000 farmers in order to increase productivity and income.

**National Food Sector Plan (NFSP)**

This policy was launched under Umaru Yar’Adua’s seven-point agenda, the National Food Sector Plan (NFSP) was launched to ensure food security. During this period, the contributory level of agriculture to GDP fell in the average, but remained among the highest since 1999. Mr Yar’Adua’s administration recorded an average agricultural contribution to GDP of 25.31 per cent in three years.

**Policy Goal:** The aim was to ensure ensure food security and the programme included the counterpart funding for FADAMA III; IFAD and ADB projects, as well as rehabilitation and construction of dams.

**Agricultural Transformation Agenda 2011**

The ATA was launched in 2011 the administration of President Jonathan which was managed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The intended outcome of the agenda is to promote agriculture as a business, integrate the agricultural value chain and make agriculture a key driver of Nigeria’s economic growth. To achieve this policy, the government put in place some new measures:

- i. New fiscal incentives to encourage domestic import substitution.
- ii. Removal of restrictions on areas of investment and maximum equity ownership in investment by foreign investors.
- iii. Currency exchange controls – free transfer of capital, profits, and dividends.
- iv. Constitutional guarantees against nationalisation/expropriation of investments.
- v. Zero percent (0%) duty on agricultural machinery and equipment imports.
- vi. Pioneer tax holiday for agricultural investments.
- vii. Duty waivers and other industry related incentives e.g., based on the use of local raw materials, export orientation.
- viii. Shortly after the election of Muhammadu Buhari came in 2015, he launched the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP), which was to consolidate on the already established ATA policy.

**Policy Goal:** The new Agricultural Promotion Policy was geared towards the provision of a conducive legislative and agricultural framework, macro policies, security enhancing physical infrastructure and institutional mechanisms, so as to enhance access to essential inputs, finances, information on innovation, agricultural services and markets.

**Weakness and lapses found in the programme includes:**

The weakness and challenges of achieving the Agriculture Promotion Policy

- i. The economy rural areas in Nigeria are confronted with subsistent farming as a challenge.
- ii. Soil erosion primarily caused by wind and water, a deficiency of development and a heavy reliance on foods imported serves as a hindrance in the development of the agricultural sector in Nigeria.
- iii. The lack of proper water system management.
- iv. Some soil in Nigeria lack proper soil fertility and the use of fertilizers are required.
- v. Nigeria is predominantly an importer of food items and this has affected the growth of various cottage industries across the country.

2.6 Evaluation of Programs on Sustainability Indices

Nigeria agricultural development interventions are traceable to the policy and agency based development initiatives of successive governments in Nigeria over the last decades. While it cannot be said that these policies are not vibrant enough for agricultural development and transformation, lack of continuity and eagerness to be identified with a named policy intervention of successive government in our country has been the bane of the much desired rural and agricultural development and transformation to guarantee self-sufficiency in food and fibre. Nigeria’s agricultural development programs has its general limitations, general lack of coherence, issues of programme continuity, issues in relation to other sectoral policies, and implementation issues at various institutional levels.

However, in Nigeria, Agricultural development polices most often, are either meant to fail from the beginning or failed midway for so many reasons. Nigeria’s recurrent failures in Agricultural development interventions have left the country to become one of the underdeveloped countries of the world. A critical examination of the Agricultural development interventions/policies and their implementation over the years show that policy instability, policy inconsistency, lack of policy transparency, poor coordination of policies as well as poor implementation and mismanagement of policy instruments constitute major obstacles to the implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of these policies.

It is clear that in spite of the intended positive impact of some of the rural/agricultural development strategies adopted in Nigeria, noticeable limitations and problems still persist and are evident. Evaluating the programme success and failures to sustainability indices common to all programmes. These include the following:
2.6.1 **Top-down approach in project design and implementation and Acceptability Issues**

In many of the Agricultural development programmes, development planners often time forced acceptance of programmes on the target beneficiaries whose programmes are often times at variance with the needs of the people. The top-down approach which apparently neglects the needs, knowledge, skills, demand, perception and contribution of the ultimate beneficiaries of programme in the design and implementation stage of most program often lead to programme failure. Once the beneficiaries are not consulted, interest in the programme is delayed, and the tendency to abandon or discontinue often persist. Agriculturists, researchers and more importantly the farmers/rural dwellers that are normally ignored during planning and implementation of agricultural/rural development policies and programmes should all be taken on board since they are in a better position to identify the policies and programmes that will be tailored to the need of the farmers/masses. Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research Approaches for planning and implementation of development intervention programmes remain a viable tool towards programme acceptance. Lack of full participation of the beneficiaries at the design and implementation stages of most development programs has led to failure of intervention programmes, increased poverty and inaccessibility of basic social amenities with dwindling economic fortune and failure of most agricultural development policies. This often results in conflicts, wasting of scarce resources, time and energy and sad enough the affected people at the end of it all are worse off. There should be proper interaction between all stakeholders both at the time of planning and implementing national agricultural programmes in the country to ensure acceptance of programmes by the beneficiaries of programme.

2.6.2 **Non Continuity and Functionality Issues**

Often times when a new government comes into power, they discard already existing agricultural development intervention, policy and program leading to programmes short lived and failure in addressing the need of the people. For example, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), the federal government abruptly withdrew funds because of the introduction of Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). The previous program then to exist. For programme to continue to address the need of its beneficiaries, continuity and continual implementation of previous agricultural programs by the future government in order to see the full and positive impact on the economy and on the beneficiaries of interventions. Most governments are eager to have a new program or initiative to their names and thus discard already existing ones even when the newly conceived program is just the beginning stage and same as the old one. This is a major hindrance to the success of agricultural programmes and inability of programmes to address the need on its beneficiaries.

2.6.3 **Bureaucratic bottlenecks and Operability issues**

Nigeria Agricultural development agencies most often erroneously subjected most agricultural development programme to unintended failure due to its failure in the training of people and benefactors of interventions, manpower development and less integration of beneficiaries to serve in maintenance capacity and maintenance processes of programs. It is very important to stress the need for sustainability, manpower development at the onset of the development initiatives and during the process of programme implementation. This is necessary if the entire effort must stand the test of time. This could take the form of accountability not only in terms of financial or running cost but also in terms of impact. This is in recognition of the need for continuity of programme of activities and what the people stand to benefit from the project.

2.6.4 **Durability issues of most Agricultural Programmes**

Most agricultural development strategies and programmes are short lived due to change in administrations by past and present governments. For Example OFN and RBDAS were initiated almost the same time (1976) and initiation of NAFPP in 1972 and GR in 1980. Recurrent changes in programmes slows and retard development progress and do not allow the development policies and programmes to fulfil their mission and mandate to overcome the Nigerians food crisis. Agricultural development programmes should be made to stand the test of time in other monitor, evaluate and determine rural development program vis-à-vis the set aims/objectives.

2.7 **Potentials of Nigerian Agriculture**

Nigeria like most African economies, is still an agrarian nation and has huge agricultural potentials. With an arable land potential of 98.3 million ha, only 34.2 million ha (48 percent) is cultivated while 52 percent is yet to be exploited. In the 1960s, Nigeria agriculture contributed significantly to the nations GDP (see figure 1) and played major roles in the global community. It accounted for 42 percent of the world’s export of shelled groundnut in 1961; 27 percent of the global export of palm oil in 1960 and 18 percent global export of cocoa in 1961. Nigeria was also the largest exporter of cotton in West Africa. Today, Nigeria has lost its glory. The decline in agriculture contribution to GDP from 63 percent in 1960 to 34 percent in 1988 was due to the neglect of the sector and not because of increased share of the industrial sector (Ekpo and Umoh, 2012). Coupled with the dominance of largely subsistence production, 90 percent of which is undertaken by tradition-bound small-holder farmers, the potentials of the agricultural sector have not been optimally tapped. Yet, agriculture has unique power in reducing poverty. World Bank (2008) noted that GDP originating in agriculture is at least twice as effective in reducing poverty when compared to GDP originating from none—agricultural sectors.
This has been the historical experience of China, India, Latin America and recently Ghana. This should encourage an economy like Nigeria with huge agricultural potentials to develop its agricultural sector rather than continue to depend largely on monolithic sector characterized by resource depletion and oil shock vulnerabilities. Umo (2012) identified two reasons why agriculture can serve as a leading growth sector in an agro-based economy. First, the presence of non-tradable staples like root crops, tubers and local cereals, offer the much needed food security. Second, it offers comparative advantage which is in primary activities. Until improvements occur in the environment for manufacturing, current comparative advantage is to be found in agriculture (Ibid). As has been noted by Wit and Crookes (2013), Nigerian manufacturing sector remains undeveloped. It contributed only 3 percent of GDP annually between 2002 and 2007 (World Bank 2012).

The relevance of Nigerian agriculture to wealth sustainability is summarized using the ‘diamond policy’ The diamond policy centres on labour mobility and migration resulting in: (1) self-employment and entrepreneurship in agricultural pursuits; (2) small holder subsistence farming for food security; (3) offer of formal/paid employment in medium to large farm enterprises; and (4) engagement in non-farm activities within the rural area. Umo (2012) however noted that the critical success factors (CSF) for the diamond-based policies include: good governance, sound macro-economic fundamentals and conducive socio-political environment. These CSFs are essential in Nigerian because of the different constraints/challenges facing agriculture in the country.

2.8 Challenges of Nigerian Agricultural Development

Nigerian poor performance in agriculture despite its huge agricultural potentials stems from the various challenges that have undermined the development of the sector over the years. The major challenge to agricultural development since independent has been the neglect agriculture suffered as Nigeria discovered oil in commercial quantities in the late 1960s and the oil boom of the 1970s (Dim & Ezenekwe, 2013). This declined agricultural output led to massive importation of food and other agricultural products. Unfortunately, food imports contributed negligibly to food security in Nigeria as Akpa (2009) found out that 85 percent of Nigeria’s food security would be reversed through an increase in domestic food production. Moreover, the distribution of infrastructure and employment opportunities in favour of urban areas using the ‘affluence’ of the oil revenue led to the exodus of young people from the rural areas – ignoring agriculture and creating more urban poor.

Another factor that has impeded development of agriculture in Nigeria is low investment in agriculture and absence of market institutions. Poor transport system creates mobility problems in Nigerian rural areas and deny farmers better market access. Moreover, the absence of functional marketing institutions has confined to expose the small holder farmers to unpleasant market conditions. In addition, small holder farmers in the country lack incentives for greater output. Access to credit, improved seedlings, research and extension education, is limited to the farmers. Worsesfill, the government’s subsidized agricultural inputs such as fertilizer do not target genuine farmers due to high level of corruption that has eaten up the fabrics of the whole sectors of Nigerian economy. This has greatly reduced outputs in the sector. Another constraint on agricultural growth in Nigeria is tradition – bound practice and inappropriate technology. Small holders constituting over 90 percent of farmers rely on simple crude rudimentary tools and cultural practices depending absolutely on nature to produce water and fertilizers for feeding the crops or animals.

There has been great decline in yields of output, which aggravates hunger in the land, weak agro business linkages, political instability, and rapid population growth.

3. CONCLUSION

The past national agricultural intervention and development programmes have failed to improve the lot of millions of Nigerian farmers as well as the economy of the country. One of the core reasons to programme failure is the way they were planned and implemented with the beneficiaries not properly consulted. There is need for close cooperation in the planning and implementation of programmes, accommodating bottom-top approach at every stage of programmes. Various stakeholders including farmers/rural people should be involved in planning and execution of agricultural programmes. The philosophy of programme/policies consistency should be adopted in Nigeria as this will promote agricultural development. To ensure sustainability and full actualization of Nigerian agricultural programmes goals and objective, is it important that to measure them based on sustainability litmus test. This is the easiest way to streamline, direct and focus to agricultural development. This philosophy should be a critical issue our future policies and programmes should address.

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