



## EXPLORING FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION IN NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** *Most Nigerians are perpetually hungry, unemployed and have limited access to good healthcare; education, amenities for safe drinking water and sanitation among others. The increasing rate of poverty in Nigeria is becoming alarming. Nigeria is ranked among poorest nations of the world. This is so distressing considering the fact that the nation is endowed with vast human and natural resources. Famine and hunger is the most crucial dimensions of poverty. Governments at all levels are continuously striving to ensure that millions of households living in poverty have access to enough food. Despite the Federal Government's policies and measures to reduce poverty and food insecurity menaces, Nigeria is still facing the problems of hunger and low standard of living. Thus, the paper started with introduction and discuss the key concepts related to the title. Different polices measures embarked upon by Federal Government of Nigeria to reduce food insecurity and poverty was reviewed. Most importantly, an in-depth examination of nexus between food security and food security was carried out.*

**Keywords:** Food Security, Poverty Reduction, Programme, Nigeria

### Introduction

Poverty is a serious problem in Nigeria despite being endowed with vast resources. It is a situation where the means of livelihood of individuals are insufficient to provide for their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. It also depicts a situation where households have limited access to education, good health care system, potable water and employment opportunities among others. Akinmulegun (2014) stressed that the fact about poverty in Nigeria boils down to the point that many Nigerians are living below the normal standard of living and are lacking basic needs and necessities. Omoniyi (2013) noted that poverty is more pronounced in Nigeria especially in rural areas where roads are bad, women and children walking barefooted and trekking

long distance to get water and firewood, pupils studying under trees, dilapidated and ill equipped health centres, poor education, lack of facilities and opportunities, natural disasters and economic upheaval as well as crime and violence.

Poverty in Nigeria has many dimensions and manifestations, including joblessness, over-indebtedness, economic dependence, lack of freedom, inability to provide the basic needs, or own assets (Olarinde, Abass, Abdoulaye, Adepoju, Fanifosi, Adio, Adeniyi & Wasiu, 2020). Asaju and Adagba (2014) stressed that in Nigeria where about 70 percent of the populace still wallow in poverty; income inequality gap is still widening from 0.429 in 2004 to 0.4471 in 2010, unemployment rate is still high (54%) at 2012, maternal mortality rate is high,

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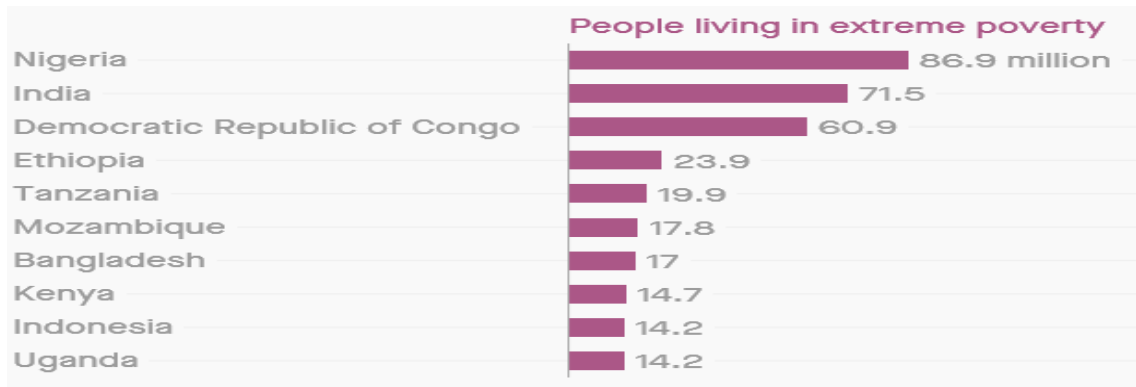
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and life expectancy at birth is put at 52 years (Information Nigeria, 2013, Premium Times, 2012 cited in Asaju &

Adagba, 2014). The world ranking of poverty in Nigeria is presented in the graph below.



Source: World Poverty Clock cited in Yomi (2018)

The 86.9 million Nigerians now living in extreme poverty represent nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million population. This is an indication that Nigeria has become the poverty capital of the world. Fadipe, Amolegbe and Afun (2013) stressed that there is threat of hunger and poverty, 70% of the population live on less than 100 (U.S Dollars 0.7) per day. In the same vein, Saheed and Isa (2017) noted that not less than 70% of the Nigerian population is surviving on less than a dollar per day while food insecurity prevalence in the low income urban house-holds and rural areas respectively stands at 79% and 71%. Duke and Okafor (2020) stressed that poverty is a social problem and its eradication has been one of the major issues that occupy a significant place in the scale of preference of developmental policies of several nations. In Nigeria, governments at all levels are struggling to ensure food security for all households.

Food security is a situation whereby household can access affordable safe and nutritionally adequate diet at all times. Some households in Nigeria cannot afford food at all times. The situation where household cannot afford nutritious food at all time is known as food insecurity. Food insecurity leads to hunger, malnutrition, poverty and increasing crime rates in Nigeria. Rika

(2020) stressed that food insecurity at the households level can happen because of the bad condition of the availability of food, distribution and inadequate consumption of food as a result of insufficient purchasing power. The insufficient food supplies and increasing prices of the available food items have plugged many Nigerian populaces in to hunger and poverty.

### Conceptual Clarifications

#### Food Security

Food security entails availability of adequate, safe affordable and nutritious food for all households in all times. Nwozor, Olanrewaju and Ake (2019) conceptualized food security as the availability and adequacy of food supplies to sustain a steady expansion of consumption and accessibility by vulnerable people for active healthy life. The absence of famine, starvation and malnutrition is an indication of food security. According to Rika (2020), food security means enough nutrition in food that is eaten to produce sufficient energy for life. Food security improve calorie intake needed to maintain a minimum acceptable weight and height among individuals. According to Hyacinth (2020), food security exist when individuals and households in a country have access to sufficient, nutritious and safe food that can keep



body and soul together for a healthy life style. Food security is unlimited access and utilization of food to meet the dietary requirements for a productive and healthy life. In conceptualization of Akinyetun (2018), food security a situation in which all households have both physical and economic access to adequate food for all members and households are not at risk of losing such. According to Nzabuheraheza and Nyiramugwera (2017), food security is the state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food for households at all times.

Food security captures sufficient supply of nutritious food stuff and purchasing power to access it at all times. Fasoyiro and Taiwo (2012) defined food security as physical, social, and economical access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It is implicit in the definition is that the availability of food alone is not an indicator of food security in a country. Arguing in the same line, Eme, Onyishi, Uche and Uche (2014), stressed that food security is not simply having sufficient and adequate quantities of our various staple foodstuffs but it also entails access to the entire citizenry to these food items at affordable prices. Continuing, Eme et al added that it means that not only must we engage in mass food production, but also we need to ensure that most Nigeria have sufficient purchasing power to acquire food items that guarantee good feeding and nutrition. The food components of food security are availability, access, stability and utilization. According to Ogello and Munguti (2016), the ‘utilization’ dimension, embody the food and care related aspects of good nutrition.

### **Poverty**

Poverty is a state of deprivation of the basic necessities of life. Ewruhdujakpor (2017) defined poverty as a state of persistently and unchangeably lacking in basic necessities of life (food, shelter, clean water, clothing, medicine, education, knowledge, electricity). Poverty is a state where household has limited access to food, shelter,

health care system, portable water and employment opportunities. Anumudu, Umar and Madu (2013) stressed that poverty is an indication of insufficient access to education and skills, poor health, malnutrition, lack of political freedom and voice, lack of shelter, poor access to water and sanitation, vulnerability to shocks, violence and crime, political discrimination and marginalization. Akinmulegun (2014) defined poverty as the economic condition of lacking predictable and stable means of meeting basic life needs. Akinmulegun also added that corruption, low productivity, exploitation, drought, flood and water logging, earthquakes, illiteracy, increased population, indebtedness, poor management and lack of credit facilities can be identified as major causes of poverty in Nigeria.

Poverty is an indication of illiteracy, inequality, violation of basic human rights, social deprivation, poor nutritional levels and poor life expectancy. According to Wujung and Mbella (2014), poverty is reflected in developing countries in various forms including low nutritional status, low level of education, decline in spending on social services by the government, high percentage of household income spent on food, high infant mortality rate, low level of savings, low level of investment, low absorption capacity, poor stage of quality and quantity of infrastructural development and low level of productivity. Wujung and Mbella (2014) asserted that absolute poverty is a situation where an individual or household is faced with limited financial resources and as a result, unable to meet his/her or its basic necessities of life such as food, clothes, shelter and health whereas, relative poverty is a situation where an individual's or a household's income is less than the average income of the population in the society being considered.

### **Federal Government of Nigeria Programme on Food Security and Poverty Reduction**

Prior to Independence in 1960 and few years, Nigeria is an agrarian economy producing its food need and exporting the surplus. Adegbola, Bamishaiye and Daura



(2011) stressed that agriculture production was the mainstay of Nigerian economy and a source of food; in the colonial Nigeria, and briefly after independence agriculture played a dominant role in the nation's economy from the standpoint of adequate food for its population, rural employment, raw materials for its industries, source of public revenue, source of foreign exchange and internal market for agricultural related tools. During the period, Nigerian farmers produced more than 70% of the food needs and export the surpluses. The agricultural sector was neglected in the early 1970s as a result of oil boom. However, Ogbalubi and Wokocha (2013) stressed as food production could not keep pace with its increasing population, Nigeria began to import food. Ogbalubi and Wokocha added that it thus lost its status as exporter of such cash crops as cocoa, palm oil, and groundnuts. Amaechi (2018) pointed out that it was after the discovery of oil that the agricultural production gradually dropped and lesser attention given to it by the federal government; this led to the challenge of food insecurity, unemployment and youth restiveness. As a result of the problems, Government made some interventions in forms of policies and programmes to improve food security in the country.

National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) was initiated by Gen. Yakubu Gowon led-Military Government in 1972. The aim of the initiative is to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. The policy strategies of NAFPP include the improvement of; crop varieties, pest and disease control measures as well as supply of fertilizers to farmers. The programme focused on bringing about a significant increase in the production of maize, cassava, rice and wheat in the northern states through subsistent production within a short period of time (Iwuchukwu & Igbokwe, 2012).

Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) was established in 1977. Its original share capital and paid-up capital were N100 million and N85.6million

respectively (Ogbalubi & Wokocha, 2013). The author added that the Federal Government holds 60 percent and Central Bank of Nigeria, 40 Percent of the shares. However, the access to the credit requires collateral which small-scale pleasant farmers cannot make available. This is an indication that the scheme favour large scale-farmers who can meet the requirement to access the credit.

Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) was launched by General Olusegun Obasanjo's-led Federal Military Government on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1976. The agricultural programme was initiated to boost food production in order to lead the nation to path of self-sufficiency and reliance in food security. The aims and objectives of the program included, among others: to reduce the escalating cost of bread basket for the average family unit in Nigeria, by cutting down on the demand for certain food items and increasing the supply and consumption of certain others; to put into effective use some of the findings that have accumulated in our universities and research institutes over the years; to encourage domestic food production by traditionally non-food producing sectors of the economy; to encourage the spirit of self-sufficiency and national self-reliance in food production as well as improve the feeding habits of Nigerians by encouraging good nutritional habits (Agber, Iortima & Imbur, 2013). Obasanjo's-led Federal Military Government pursue the objective through fertilizer distribution, pest control and distribution of improved seeds for cultivation. The government established agro-service centers, price support system for agricultural products and guaranteed minimum prices for various agricultural commodities (Agber, Iortima & Imbur, 2013). Agber et al added that the above measures were aimed at ensuring that what was produced under the operation Feed the Nation program was cheaper than imported food, which had killed domestic agriculture, but such that farmers could earn a comfortable living on income from their farms.



In the early 1977, during the military regime, General Olusegun Obasanjo's government initiated the Agricultural Development Project and Agricultural Credit guarantee scheme fund to eradicate the effect of food shock caused by the Nigerian civil war. The Scheme was established to provide guarantee on loans granted by banks to farmers for agricultural production and agro-allied processing (Nwosu, Oguoma, Ben-Chendo & Henri-Ukoha, 2010). The projects were to be funded under a tripartite agreement involving World Bank 66%, Federal government 20% and State government 14% in addition to payments of salaries of local staff (Auta & Dafwang, 2010). The Scheme which became operational in 1978 provides 75 per cent guarantee cover for lending banks on outstanding loan balance in event of default (Okon & Nkang, 2009). Continuing, Okon & Nkang stressed that the introduction, over the years, of Self Help Group (SHG) Linkage Banking, Trust Fund Model (TFM) and Interest Drawback Programme (IDP) into the scheme by the CBN was to make the scheme more appealing to both the lenders and the borrowers and, above all, meet the ends of increased agricultural productivity and economic development. Auta and Dafwang posited that the two main objectives of the ADP s were to increase food production, and to raise the income of small-scale farmers. Nwosu et al (2010) pointed out that the ₦20, 000 loans which the scheme allowed to be collected through "Personal guarantee" can not do much for any farmer in his farming activities. Nwosu et al further observed that from various studies on the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund in Nigeria, it is evident that the scheme has increased the flow of funds to agriculture. In 2012, Orok and Ayim (2017) observed that there was a drop in the fund from N10, 028,988.81 of 2011 to N9, 332,484, and a further drop to N9, 256,676.8 in 2013. The authors added that the fund witnessed an increase of 34.5 percent in 2014 to N12, 456,250.87, N10, 857,380.83 in 2015 and N4, 839,800 in 2016.

When Shehu Shagari took over as civil President in 1979, he initiated a programme called Green Revolution in April, 1980. The programme was to strengthen the availability and accessibility of modern agricultural equipment/machinery, credit to peasant farmers and financial incentives for commercial farmers to boost food supply in the country. The objective of Green revolution was to ensure adequate, accessible, reliable, stability and safe food supply to the populace and improve the nutrition status of Nigerians. 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 (Iwuchukwu & Igbokwe, 2012). Iwuchukwu and Igbokwe, further stressed that 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 program as well as no monitoring and evaluation of the projects for which huge sums of money were spent. Unfortunately, it failed because the same government that instituted Green Revolution with the aim of making Nigeria self-sufficient as at 1985, embarked on a large-scale importation of rice from India and Latin America, and essential food items for survival and sustenance (Otohogua cited in Oshinfowokan, 2018).

In 1986 the Directorate of Food, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI) was established by the then President, Ibrahim Badamasi Babanigida to alleviate rural poverty through sustained agricultural transformation to attain national food security. Babanigida's administration lays emphasis on improvement of water supply and road rehabilitation to boost agricultural production. The aims, objectives and functions of the directorate included to: identify, involve and support viable local community organizations in the effective mobilization of the rural populace for sustainable rural development; identify and support the production of food and fiber crops; construct,



rehabilitate and maintain rural feeder roads to facilitate food production and rural development; support rural water supply and on-farm storage in cooperation with the local people; identify and promote other programs for improving the quality of life of rural people; encourage contributions of labor, time and materials from local communities, to be complemented with grants from the Directorate, Local and State governments (Agber, Iortima & Imbur, 2013). The target of the directorate was to strengthen feeder roads in a bid to boost massive food production and agricultural self-sufficiency in the country.

Nigerian Agricultural, Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) was established in the year 2000 and tasked basically with financing at both the micro and macro levels, it was mandated to meet the funding requirements of Nigerians in the agricultural sector to foster increase food production and subsequent food security (Adegbola, Bamishaiye & Daura, 2011).

National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) was established in 2002 under President Olusegun Obasanjo led-civilian government. The broad objective of the programme was to increase food production and eliminate rural poverty (Iwuchukwu & Igbokwe, 2012). Iwuchukwu & Igbokwe stressed that other specific objectives of the programme were: assisting farmers in increasing their output, productivity and income; strengthening the effectiveness of research and extension service training and educating farmers on farm management for effective utilization of resources; supporting governments efforts in the promotion of simple technologies for self sufficiency; consolidating initial efforts of the programme on pilot areas for maximum output and ease of replication; consolidating gain from on-going for continuity of the programme and consequent termination of external assisted programmes and projects. This is a programme by which the government sought the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in disseminating

information on proven and accessible technologies to 109 farming communities across the country to enhance food production and substantially increase income levels of the farmers (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012).

Root and Tuber Expansion Programme was initiated by the then president, Olusegun Obasanjo on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2003. This is an agricultural programme supported by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which made available to farmers the necessary information on improved processing technology and expansion technique for cassava and cassava products (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012). The programme was designed to tackle the challenges of food production in order to reduce poverty in the country. The policy strategies were the supply of improved technology for food production to farmers to attain food security.

#### **Nexus between Food Security and Poverty Eradication Reduction in Nigeria**

Food security helps households to generate income from the sales of their food products. Adekunle (2013) noted that food security is important to families because they provide income and sustenance throughout the year. Metu, Okeyika and Maduka (2016) posited that food security leads to sufficient income needed to meet household basic needs in Nigeria. The income generated by individuals involve in agricultural activities to attain food security can be used to meet their basic necessities, raise the living standard and also reduce poverty.

Unemployment has strong association with poverty. Some people live in poverty because they are unable to get a gainful employment. Unemployment put households in a situation of insufficient money to meet basic human needs such as food and shelter. One of the benefits that are attained from engaging in agricultural activities to attain food security is employment creation. Nesengani, Mudau and Netshandama (2016) asserted that the contribution of food security towards poverty eradication is the creation of employment opportunities. Individuals' efforts to attain food security generate more



employment opportunities through involvement in food production, distribution and transportation.

Rika (2020) asserted that people cannot work properly when they do not have sufficient energy from the food they eat. Rika added that consequently, they trap in poverty and cannot buy nutritious food to sustain their life. Food security eradicates hunger and malnutrition which enable people to gain sufficient energy to improve their productivity and get out of poverty cycle. Nur, Shaufique, Ahmad and Normaz (2015) asserted that food security has a strong relationship with food production which can reduce famine and hunger problem. Food security increases nutrition which has positive impact on health, productivity and gradual contribute to poverty reduction.

Food security ensures that food is well-preserved to retain its nutritious contents from production to consumption to improve the welfare of people in the society. A country with abundant and accessible food indicates high living standard among her citizens. Food security improves the living standard of people, reduces social ills and improves health condition of people especially the children and vulnerable ones in the society (Amaechi, 2018). Adewuyi and Hayatu (2011) stressed that poverty eradication is equivalent to reduction of hunger and improvement in household food security. Adewuyi and Hayatu also added that the welfare of people can be positively influenced by placing priority on increased food production and regulated prices of foodstuffs.

Food insecurity is associated with rising food prices. Rika (2020) asserted that rising food costs can be vulnerable to households as it decreases the household's ability to produce food and nutrition and bring them into poverty. When a family traps in this situation where they cannot buy adequate food for the family, they will family assets to cover their daily need, which is food that can cause worse poverty (Gustafson, 2013). Food security reduce price of food stuff which enable the availability

and accessibility of food to low income and poor households in a country. To buttress this, Ahmed, Ying, Bashir, Abid and Zulfiqar (2017) stressed that food security improve the availability of cheap food products which increase household purchasing power.

### **Conclusion**

It is established that food security contributes in myriad ways to poverty reduction. The greatest contributions are through income generation, employment creation, improve welfare and living standard of people of a country. No meaningful poverty reduction can be achieved by any nation without food security which is an offshoot of the nature of her agricultural system. Poverty is not new globally and in Nigeria but requires government commitment to the agriculture to ensure food security that could take the bull by the horn and stir this nation back on the right as a fast growing and developing nation of the world.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. Government should encourage mechanization of agriculture to improve mass production, food security and poverty reduction through subsidizing modern farming machines.
2. Government should credit facilities to farmers through the agricultural banks located across the country to improve their food production.
3. Government should provide infrastructural facilities such as good feeder road, water and electricity facilitate food security and poverty reduction.
4. Agricultural extension workers should visit farmers in rural areas and educate them on the use of agricultural machinery and equipment including fishing boats, agro-chemicals as well as pesticides can encourage food security to eradicate poverty

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