

# Repositioning Food Security: A Panacea for Food Insecurity in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Food security is indispensable prerequisite for the survival of mankind and his economic activities including food production. Food is different from other commodities because it is inevitable for survival and existence. In Nigeria, there are high levels of food insecurity for the past four decades as a result of neglect in food production, when oil had become the major export product and the adoption of neo-liberal economic policies such as devaluation of Naira, trade liberalization and withdrawal of religious conflicts, disasters such as flooding and drought have also contributed to food insecurity in Nigeria. Food are different from other commodities because everybody needs it for survival. It is an indispensable factor in nations quest for economic growth and development. Unfortunately, most of the food needed in Nigeria was produced by peasant farmers who needed capitals, skills, energy and other variable ingredients to produce large quantity that will meet the requirement of the growing population. Thus, food insecurity in Nigeria is a recurrent and double-digit problems, this paper however, proffers workable solution to these problems; that small-scale farmers ought to be supported, encouraged informed and educated. More so, Farmers across the country should be taught modern farming techniques.

**Keywords:** Food Security, commodities, food insecurity, Neo-liberal economic policies, export products and peasant farmers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Food security refers to the availability of food and one's access to it; and it is considered secured when its occupant do not live in hunger or fear of starvation (FAO, 2004). Food security exists when all people, at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Idachaba, 2006).

Food security for house hold means access by all members at all times to enough for an active healthy life (Idachaba, 2006). Food security condition relates to the ongoing availability of food concern which have existed throughout history. There is evidence of granaries being in use over 10,000 years ago, with central authorities in civilization including Ancient China and Ancient Egypt, known to release food from storage time of famine. Yet, it was only at the time of 2008 world food conference that the term "food security" was established, to apply at the national level, with a state, being food secured when there was sufficient food to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuation in production and price.

The first essential component of social and economic justice was inadequate food production, even if a nation cannot send losmonauta to the moon, it should be available to feed the population, only then can it occupy a place of pride in the

nations of the world. Nigeria is a country richly blessed with abundant natural and human resources that if properly harnessed to other countries, yet it is experiencing persistent food crisis both in terms of quantity and quality. Cases of malnutrition and under-nutrition are growing by the day. The food intake requirement of majority of Nigerians have fallen far bellow the international standard. Past effort at improving food supply through agriculture production has not yielded successful result. The program that were introduced only helped to alienate the peasant farmer who are the major producers of food in Nigeria. Some of the companies that had something to do with food production include:

1. The national grains production companies
2. National root crop production companies
3. North-East, Western and National Production Companies
4. The Nigerian National Shrimp Company
5. The Nigerian National Fish Company

FAO (2004) These companies were set up by the federal government in 2001 to participate in direct production of food. The major crops target includes maize, rice, millet, wheat, sorghum and cassava. One should mention in passing the establishment of 11(eleven) rivers basin development authorities. They are set up to develop river basin for (OFN) and green revolution were other short-lived national campaign launched to give agriculture a good image and to encourage land owners to

take to farming not only as an occupation but also way of life. Four distinct issues impact food security; they are the availability, stability, utilization and access to food.

Everybody is affected by food quality and availability from the food producers to the food consumers, but some people are more affected than others, for instance, children, people suffering from poverty and the disabled are more likely to experience food insecurity due to lack of access to sufficient food as well as to nutritious food. Food unsecured people are those whose food intake falls below the minimum energy requirements as well as those who exhibits physical symptoms caused by energy and nutrient deficiency resulting from an inadequate or unbalanced diet or from the body's inability to use food effectively because of infection or disease.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The ultimate aim of agriculture production is to get agricultural products to the consumers in the form that will be useful to them. Food items including meat, fish, millets, and products, eggs and products, fruits, vegetables, cereals, legumes, roots and tuber are some of the common agricultural products. Food has been defined as something good to eat. It could be in liquid, semisolid and solid forms and are necessary to carry one or more of the life function of the body in terms of health, growth and normal function of living organisms (Ricketts, 2009).

The greatest world major problem today is how to eliminate hunger and overcome poverty. This challenge is greatest in the developing countries where people starve for lack of adequate food and nourishment and where starvation and poverty go hands in hands. The common strategy adopted has been increasing output of food in tonnage per a year through land clearing, improved machinery, better cultivation methods, improved quantity and quality of the agriculture products (food) that get to the ultimate consumer (Joseph, 2008, 2010; Omotesh 2009). To say the least, the roles of the most active participants, women, in food production, processing and preservation are relegated to the background.

### Conceptual Framework: Food Fundamental

Food is necessary for health, growth and normal function of living organisms. It is the material that enables man to grow and reproduce himself (Lapades, 2011). Essentially food is a mixture of chemicals which could be separated into different components having different functions in the body. The major constituents of food are water, protein, carbohydrate, fats, vitamins, and mineral. Based on the knowledge they are classified either as proper foods (water, inorganic salt and vitamins) which are essential for life but do not supply energy (Franson, 2008).

In order to fully understand the importance of food to man the individual chemical of food are examined as follows: water, carbohydrate, fats, protein, vitamins, minerals

### Concept of Food Security

Food security refers to the availability of food and one's access to it, a household is considered food secured when its occupant does not live in hunger or fear of starvation (FAO,2004). Food security exists when all people, at all time have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Idacaba, 2006). Food security for a house hold means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. A new definition of food security emerged at 2014 world food summit, this time with the emphasis being on individuals enjoying food security relic than the nation. The united states department of agriculture defined adequate and safe foods as limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable food in socially acceptable way.

National food survey are the main survey tools used by the USDA to measure food security in the united states based on respondents' answers to survey questions, the house hold can be placed on a continuum of food security defined by the USDA. This continuum has four categories: high food security, marginal food security, low food security and very low food security. Economic research service report number is 155 (ERS 155) estimates that 14.5 percent (17.6 million) of us household were food unsecured some point in 2012. The prevalence of foods insecurity has been relatively in the united states the economic recession 2008.

- 49.0 million people lived in food insecure household
- 12.4 million adults lived in house hold with very low food security
- 8.3 million children in food insecure household in which children along with adults were food insecure
- 977,000 children lived in households in which one or more child experienced very low security

### Pillars of Food Security

In 2009, the world summit on food security stated that the four pillars of food security are availability, access, utilization and stability.

#### Availability

Growth in food production has been greater than population growth per person increase during the 2003-2005 period. They exist in percent of 2006-2008 average food production per capital.

Food availability relates the supply of food production, distribution and exchange. Food production is determined by a variety of factors including land ownership and use, soil management, and harvesting crop production can be impacted by changes in rainfall and temperatures. The use of land, water, energy to grow food often competes with other uses, which can affect food production. Land use of

agriculture practice, crop production is not required for a country to actuate food security.

Nations don't have to have the natural resources required to produce crops in order to activate food security, as seen in the examples of Japan and Singapore.

**Access:** Food access refers to the affordability and allocation of food as well as the preferences of individuals and households. The UN committee on Economics, social and culture fight noted that the causes of hunger and malnutrition are often not a scarcity of food but an inability to access available food, usually due to poverty. poverty can limit access to food and can also increase how vulnerable an individual or household is to food price spike. Access depends on whether the household has enough income to purchase food at prevailing prices or has sufficient land and other resources to grow its own food. Households with enough resources can overcome unstable harvests and local storage and maintain their access to food.

**Utilization:** The final pillar of food security is food utilization, which refers to the metabolism of food by individuals. Once food is obtained by a household, a variety of factor impact the quantity and quality of food the reach members of the household. In order to achieve food security, the food ingested must be enough to meet the physiological requirements for each individual. Food safely impacts food utilization, and can be impact by the preparation, processing and cooking of food in the community and household. Nutritional value of the household determined food choice. Access to health care is another determinant of food utilization, since the health of individuals controls how the food metabolized.

### Causes of Food Insecurity in Nigeria

The major causes of food insecurity in Nigeria is underdeveloped agricultural sector. This is characterized by over reliance on primary agriculture low fertility solid, minimal use of external input, environmental uses of external farm input, environmental degradation significant food crop less both- per end post harvest. Minimal value and production differentiation and inadequate food storage and preservation result in significant commodity price fluctuation. According to Ngoddy, the causes are identified as

- Lack of working capital
- Inadequate farm input
- Inadequate capital expenditure
- Low level of education
- Environmental hazards
- Poor preservation and storage

### Consequences of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity and hunger are fore-runners to nutrition, health, human and life. As such, food security has been considered as a universal indicator to households and malnutrition are adversely number of people and inhibiting the development of many poor countries. Malnutrition

affects one out of every three preschool age children living in developing countries. This disturbing yet preventable state of affairs causes untold suffering and presents a major obstacle to the development process. It is associated with more than half of all child deaths worldwide. It is therefore bane of a major waste of resources and loss of productivity which are common occurrences in developing countries. As such, malnutrition is a violation of child's human rights. More than 500 million people have too little to meet their duty energy needs. Most of the world hungry people live in rural areas and depends on the consumption and sale of natural production for both their income and food. It tends to be concentrated among the landless or among farmers whose plots are too small to provide for their needs. For young children lack of food can be perilous since it retards, the physical and mental development and threatens their very survival. Over 150 million children under five years of age in the developing world are under-weight children increased from 29 million to 37 million between 2002 and 2003 (United Nations, 2005).

Further more, poverty, hunger and malnutrition have been identified and some of the principal causes of increasing and accelerated migration; from rural to urban areas in developing countries unless these problems are region it will be seriously affected, perhaps even compromising world peace. This is because hunger and poverty can provide a fertile ground for conflict especially when combined with major causes of development goals (NIDGS). This is illustrated by Diouf (2005) as follows. Hungry children start school later, if drop out sooner and learn less while they do attend, stalling progress towards universal primary and secondary education (MDG 2).

### Repositioning Food Security as Panacea to Food Insecurity

The concept of food problem is complex and goes beyond the simplistic idea of a country's inability to feed its population. Though, the issue of serious food and nutrition problem is associated with less developed countries, have however not been subjected to serious analysis. This has encouraged misleading generalization about the causes, effect and remedies for the problem. The fight which simultaneously address the cause of food insecurity (committee on world food security CFS, 2005).

The problem of inadequate access to food is poverty, this is the sense of the failure of the economic system to generate sufficient income and distribute it broadly enough to meet household's basic needs. The problem can be addressed by either giving food directly to the poor (non-marketing distribution of aid), increasing their income so that they have greater entitlement to food through the market (given existing marketing costs), and/or reducing the costs of food delivered through markets by fostering technical and institutional innovations in farm level production and the market system.

The 2008 world food summit reaffirmed that a peaceful, stable and enabling states to give adequate priority to food security and poverty eradication. Democracy, promotion and protection of all human rights for development and full equal participation of men and women are essential for achieving sustainable food security for all (FAO, 2004). Attaining food security is therefore a primary responsibility which resets with individual governments. Access to the components of nutrition security, over a challenge that must be addressed. Investments in education, sanitation and access to health care must continue and be increased if the advances required in nutrition security for all lies with national government who have the duty of establishing the conditions and institution necessary to enable their citizens bank access to the basic requirement of food and nutrition security. The basic determinants of food and nutrition security in any one African Country will never be exactly the same as those of another. This is because of the different historical factors, agro ecological condition, economic comparative disadvantage and institutional structures at play in each of the countries as such a single detailed policy and action prescription will not enable national governments in different countries to effectively, address malnutrition. It must however be recognized that all African countries can attain nutrition security if sufficient commitment exists.

Political will must be applied and dedicated efforts made to marshal the human, institutional and material resources necessary for the task (Benson, 2004). For there to be improvement in food and nutrition security situation of a country, national government must address a number of issues including the following:

- Provision of access to sufficient quantities of food items. This may required formulation of policy for sustained, broad based, economic growth. It is estimated that to end hunger in sub-Saharan African by 2050; a 2.5 percent annual average growth rate in per capital Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is necessary in the region.
- Direct nutrition intervention to provide food to those suffering from acute hunger and malnutrition and nutrition information and supplements to women of child bearing age and young children are necessary. Such interventions are a vital component of any effort to build the quality of human capital, encourage economic growth and improve standard of living to productive resources. Considering the importance of agriculture as a source of income to rural households, there is need for improvement in their agricultural production. The effectiveness of on-farmer production determines the level of access to food enjoyed by both farmers and the broader population to whom they are linked through the market. Increased food supplies simultaneously increase the income of farming households and reduce the price people pay for food in the market place, both of which enhance nutrition security.

Moreover, increase in the production of both food and non-food crop contribute to the broader economy, both in rural areas and in urban manufacturing centers.

- Locally conceived and implement action has been shown to be the most effectively way to improve food and nutrition. National government should give broad direction to local efforts and facilitates the success of such efforts through resource allocation institutional support.
- Dedicated advocacy should be used to inform marketers at all levels of the critical role that improved nutrition plays in development and poverty alleviation without thus, it is unlikely the malnourished will receive any attention in any planning and resource allocation decision made in the democratic, decentralized bottom up political system emerging across African. The need to improve and understood widely, it is significant for the welfare of all members of society must be recognized. Ultimately, advocacy must build the political will needed to ensure that resources are provided to help individual and house hold attain food and nutrition security.

### **Solution to Food Insecurity in Nigeria**

It is widely accepted that Nigeria is not poor country except that it has been poorly managed by those trusted with its development. It is also widely accepted that Nigeria is rich enough to feed herself and the rest of Africa, the major hindrance to this are:

1. The ethnics and religious conflicts which claimed many lives and the destruction of food crops with able men and women staying in refuge campus for two or three years.
2. Those who rule Nigeria do not believe in Nigeria because of that, they lack political will and patriotic zeal to deal with the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria, hence they adopt all forms of neo-liberal economic policies as recommended by the world bank and information for personal profits.

These are the man-made problems, so that if properly addressed and sanity will return and people's confidence in food production will be restored. The other solution to food insecurity lies with paying attention to the natural disasters such as flood, drought and paste control.

Fortunately, we are going to have new generation of leaders who will have faith in Nigeria and strongly believe that Nigeria must take responsibility for its own destiny, that Nigeria will help lift herself only by her own efforts in partnership with those who wish her well (Otana, 2013).

### **3. CONCLUSION**

The prevailing low productivity in agriculture gives cause for much concern. Looking inward to increased agricultural product remains an absolute necessity for ensuring satisfactory food supply to the citizenry to this extent farmers, policy makers, government and non-government



agencies concerned with agricultural development must respond positively to the considerable challenges of activating self sufficiency food production and providing agricultural raw materials for industrial use. The realization that the resource poor farmer from the core of the Nigeria agriculture brings this group to the centre stage of efforts to move the agricultural sectors forward. Food is the fuel that energizes the body for effective routine performance and the lack of food makes an individual lethargic, indolent, cheeky and haughty, it often leads to swinging emotion. Unfortunately, the important pivotal advantage of food to life and to a country's economy have been badly down played, especially in develop ignitions. Remarkably, the united nations world food program has predicted that 925 million people do not have enough food to eat and 98 percent of this live-in emerging economics.

The food insecurity currently experienced by several of their economics, according to the 2004 world food summit, as the all-time access to sufficient safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy living. This coherent definition aids in determining whether a country is food secure or otherwise.

Food security in Nigeria: way forward eradicating hunger and poverty requires an understanding of the ways in which these two in justice interconnected. Hunger and the malnutrition that accompanies it, prevent poor people from escaping poverty because it demises their ability to learn, work and care for themselves and their family members. Food is not like other commodities, it is an indispensable and an important factor in nation's quest for economic growth and development been an inevitable commodity all efforts must be geared towards ensuring its adequate supply for sustainable economic development and human survival. In Nigeria, most of the food needed is produced by peasant farmers who are scattered all over the rural areas and not multinational companies who produce on large scale for export and profit. For the dream of food security to be realized, agricultural policies must target these peasant farmers and their rural environments.

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Food insecurity can not be effectively combated if the government continues to pay lip service to agriculture.
2. Small scale farmers ought to be supported, encouraged, informed and educated. They should be given incentives in the form of interest free loans and monitored so that the loans are invested judiciously.
3. Also, farmers across the country should be taught modern farming techniques, agriculture or farm sectors should be attached to these farms to educate the farmers.
4. In addition, tax should be granted to importers of farm machinery.

5. Furthermore, the youths must understand that agriculture is every body's business. The truth is except the youth are compelled to take up agriculture, we would Keep running away while the second next should be dedicated to crops members sent to farms.
6. Without satisfying these criteria, they will be allowed to pass out, parents should also introduce their children or ward to farming by engaging themselves in farming too, children easily learn from their parents. As part of their social responsibility, cooperative organizations must adopt farms and support farmers financially for better output.
7. Nigeria must shelve the idea of planning the big brother by feeding other countries while her citizens go hungry. Sooner or later, the outrageous prices of food stuffs would start getting to the problem. Let us hope and pray that it does not trigger turbulent crises in the country.

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