

FOOD SECURITY: A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines food security as a bedrock for achieving national development in Nigeria. Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa with more than 200 million people but food insecurity has remained a constraining factor in the realization of its national development. Despite its huge natural resource endowment, Nigeria still faces hunger, malnutrition and poverty. In spite of the various agricultural policies and projects embarked by the government to boost agricultural productivity, achieving food security has remained a major challenge. One of the indices used in measuring a nation's development is the level of food and nutrition available to its citizens. The qualitative approached method was applied and, materials were analysed through the content approach. Data for the study was sourced through secondary means while relevant information was gathered from textbooks, government publications and other articles. The study reveals that it will be difficult for Nigeria to achieve its national development goals if food insecurity is not addressed. Amongst other recommendations, this study recommends the strengthening of anti-corruption agencies and the introduction of modern digital technology to revamp the agricultural sector and make farming attractive to young people.

Keywords: Food Security, Agricultural Development, Agricultural Productivity, Nutrition

INTRODUCTION

Food is very relevant and significant to man's existence; thus, its availability and steady supply gives stability to individuals, households, nations and the world at large. The number of people without enough, adequate and safe food to eat on a regular basis remains stubbornly high, at over 900 million (Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2010). In 2019, FAO estimated that more than 1 billion of the world's population did not have enough food to lead healthy and productive lives, this number suffers from malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency. Malnutrition saps the working strength of an economy, cripples the mind and body of children and consequently deprives the society of its greatest potential, that is, its future productive human resources (Salvative & Dawlins, 1977).

Generally, a country is said to be food secure when a majority of its population has access to food in sufficient quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (Idachaba, 2014). According to FAO (2002), food security is defined as the condition in which all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food which meets their

dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Attaining this level of food security requires that the food supply be available, adequately accessible, appropriately utilized and stable.

The food security situation in Nigeria is now a matter of grave concern showing clearly that Nigeria is far from being self-sufficient in food production. Despite Nigeria's position as one of the leading economies in Africa, and the potential of its agricultural sector to transform the economy towards attaining food security, the sector still performs below expectation. The poor performance of the sector is manifested in the acute food insecurity experience across the country as a result of official neglect and endemic corruption by government officials in departments, ministries and agencies saddled with the responsibility of implementing policies and programmes aimed at ensuring the attainment of food security in Nigeria. Before the 1950s and 1960s, Nigeria did not have to contend with the issues of food security because, the agricultural sector produces enough food for local consumption and for export. But today, Nigeria is experiencing a decline in exports and is a net importer of food. By 2012, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture estimated that Nigeria was spending over \$3 billion annually on food imports which is about ₦450 billion. According to Akinwumi (2015), Nigeria spends over \$4.2 billion (₦638.4 billion) annually on food importation. For instance, despite having tomatoes in abundance that frequently goes to waste, Nigeria is the highest importer of tomatoes from China and Italy.

Recently, estimates put the members of hungry people in Nigeria at 53 million, which is about 30% of the country's total population of about 200 million and 52 percent live under the poverty line, the figures would have been higher with the naira redesign policy (2022) and the subsidy removal (2023). According to Eze (2013), 70 percent of Nigerians live on less than N100 a day (US \$ 0.7/day) while youth unemployment is close to 90 percent. The poverty syndrome is a bit difficult to understand, with Nigeria being the sixth world highest producer of crude oil and earning upwards US 15 billion annually (CBN, 2010). In other to meet the food security challenge and rising demand for food with an ever-growing population, there is need for increase agricultural productivity.

Conceptual Clarification

Over time, the idea of food security has changed from one primarily concerned with food supply to one that also considers physical, social and economic access, safety, and nutritional issues as well as food preferences (Engler-Stringer, 2014). Food and Agricultural organization (FAO; 2002), defined food security as the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This explains the state at which individuals have sufficient food to generate about 2,400-3,000 calories requirement per day for adult males and 2,200-2,300 calories per day for adult females, while children require a lower calorie level to maintain adequate health. To attain this level of food security, it requires that food be available, accessible, appropriately utilised and stable at all times. The availability of food supply ensures that sufficient food is available through production or through sufficient purchasing power to purchase food. Food supply accessibility is a function of available income and the price of food. Food utilization depends on optimal uptake of nourishment, which depends of sustaining diet, child care, clean water, proper and adequate sanitation and health care. Food supply stability means that household should not risks losing access to food as a consequence of sudden shocks such as climate crisis or cyclical events such as seasonal food

insecurity. As a result, food security has a number of components, including food availability, access, use, and stability (i.e. food security should not be dependent on the absence of abrupt shocks or cyclical occurrences but should endure despite them) (FAO, 2006). A country that is unable to meet these criteria is faced with food insecurity.

Food insecurity on the other hand is a situation where people are unable to access basic food intake that will provide the energy and nutrients they need for their daily productive lives. According to Engler-Stinger (2014), there are four aspects of food insecurity at the household level: qualitative, quantitative, socially acceptable, how food is acquired (charity can occasionally result in feelings of loss of dignity), and psychological, which refers to the worry of not having enough to eat.

The World Bank (1986) defined food security by broadening the emphasis from food availability to include access to food and narrowed the focus from global and national to household and individual access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life (World Bank, 1986). According to the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS; 2008), this definition has different but interrelated components; food availability: the effective continuous supply of food at both national and household levels which is affected by inputs and output, market conditions as well as production capacities of the agricultural sectors; food access or effective demand: the ability of nations and households to acquire sufficient food on a sustainable basis and address issues of purchasing power and consumption behaviour, reliability of food, the utilization and consumption of safe and nutritious food and food distribution.

It is worthy of note that food availability both in quantity and quality is not sufficient for a nation or household to attain food security. In order to protect the health of the people, food hygiene and safety should be given due consideration. For instance, food may be available, but the sources of production and processing may not be hygienic or chemical substances applied during production and preservation of food may lead to health hazards. In food security, therefore, health and safety concerns are taken into consideration. For instance, given the likely general misuse of chemicals due to illiteracy and ignorance particularly in Nigeria, some harmful chemicals used to store and preserve grains like maize, guinea corn, millet, and beans, ripen fruits like banana and mangoes, treat livestock diseases, treat crop diseases and control and other agricultural parasites, may be harmful to humans much later after consumption of the agricultural product. In essence, a country should be considered as food secure when food is not only available in the quantity needed by the population consistent with decent living, but also when consumption of food should not pose any health hazards to the citizens (Davies, 2009).

According to FAO (2016), the interplay of food security variables impacts a person's, household's and state's level of food security. Food security at the national level does not always equal to sustainable food security at individual and household levels. Food security is stated to exist when food is produced and distributed in an amount, quality, and variety that is richly available, accessible, utilized and stable enough to allow for individual desire.

New studies on food security have come to explain the connection between the concept and human rights. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the 10th December, 1948 and considered it a common standard of achievement for all people and nations. One of these rights is 'the right to adequate food and

to be free from hunger', which is set out in the Universal Declaration (Article 25), in the Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 11), in the Convention of the Right of the Child (Article 24 and 27), and many other instruments. The right to adequate food and to be free from hunger are assumed to be universal, though they are not yet globally enjoyed. About a billion people worldwide suffer from severe hunger and malnutrition, for these people; food security does not exist. This represents a severe weakness in existing human rights policy (Eide, 1999). Food, the most basic need of humans is central to the discussion of human rights and social development. It is in this contest that Clover (2003), asserted that "no human right has been so frequently and spectacularly violated in recent times as the right to food".

Today, most common definitions begin with individual entitlement, though recognizing the complex inter-linkages between individuals and the international community (Clover, 2003). In the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security, food security is defined as food that is available at all times, to which all persons have means of access that is nutritionally adequate in terms of quality and variety and is acceptable within a given culture (cited in Clover, 2003).

Three pillars of food security have been identified as availability, accessibility and affordability which cover a wide range of interconnected economic, social and political factors- internal and external which stand in Nigeria is way towards attaining food security.

Nigerian Food Security: An Evaluation

Agriculture is the principal source of food and livelihood in Nigeria and employs nearly three-quarters of the nation's workforce (Eze, 2013), however, about 90% of its produce comes from inefficient small-scale rainy season subsistence farming with poor infrastructure and little or no access to credit. Many of these farmers are unable to meet their own subsistence requirements, thereby exposing families to food insecurity and higher food prices. Nigeria did not have to contend with the problem of food insecurity in the 1940s and early 1950s, because the agricultural sector produced surplus for food and export. The country was self-sufficient in food production of one or two food or cash crops. There was the groundnut pyramid in the north, cocoa in the west, oil palm and kernel heaps in the east rubber plantation in the mid-west (Tell, 2009). The discovery of oil during the late 1950s and the high revenue accruing from its sales changed the dynamics. Since independence, the agricultural sector was officially neglected for oil and its role in food production and contribution to GDP began to decline, its share to GDP fell from 61.50% in 1963-1964 to 14.6% in 1983. (Anyawu, Oaikhenan, Oyefusi & Dimowo 1997). Since 2006, the Agricultural sector consistently contributed over 49% to the nation's GDP, with a growth rate of 7.4, 17.1, 6.3, 5.9, 5.7 percent in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively. Agriculture also accounts for the greatest share of GDP growth rate, as it contributed 3.1, 3.0, 2.8 and 2.4 point in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively (CBN, 2010). According to FAO (2024) Nigeria has 70.8 million hectares of agricultural land area with maize, cassava, guinea corn, yam, beans, millet and rice being the major crops. Nigeria's rice production rose from 3.7 million metric tonnes to 4.0 million metric tonnes. In spite of these, only 57% of 6.7 million metric tons of rice is consumed in Nigeria annually leading to a deficit of about 3 million metric tonnes which is either imported or smuggled into the country. To stimulate local production, the government banned the importation of rice in 2019. As for cassava, Nigeria produced 59 million (tonnes) in 2017 making it the world's largest producer (approximately 20% of global production). Animal production has remained under-explored. Livestock mostly reared by farmers in Nigeria are the small ruminates like goats (76 million),

sheep (43.4 million), cattle (18.4 million) and poultry population stands at 18 million (FMARD, 2017). Here too, domestic demand outweigh production despite several interventions. Nigeria is the largest fish consumer in Africa and among the largest fish consumers in the world with about 3.2 million metric tonnes of fish consumed annually. Nigeria's fishes and aqua-culture are among the fastest growing sub-sectors in the country. Total fish production per year is closed to 1 million metric ton (313,231 metric tonnes from aqua-culture and 759,828 metric tonnes from fisheries). The aqua-culture sub-sector is considered a viable alternative to meeting the nation's need for self-sufficiency in fish production and nutritional needs. However, while growth did take place, it did not improve the food security situation in the country. This could be attributed to the nation's growing population. Rapid annual population growth in the last decades has seen food insecurity become a norm in many households which has further intensify poverty and lack of access to food. According to Ojo and Adebayo (2012), any system where food demand is not sufficiently met by supply is no doubt one with a looming food crisis.

The nation's economy is still feeling the heat of the rising cost of food items, especially the rise in the prices of staple foods. Significantly, the price of rice has increased by over 100% since 2006. It is instructive to note that Nigeria requires 2.5 million metric tonnes of rice annually while local rice production is less than half a million metric tonnes per year (Tell, 2008).

Since independence, successive governments in Nigeria have adopted explicit agricultural policies and programs to revamp the agricultural sector. For instance, Shehu Shagari initiated the Green Revolution, the Obasanjo's government started what was known as Operation Feed the Nation in 1976, the National Special Program on Food Security (NSPFS) was launched in 2002, and the Root and Tuber Expansion Program came in 2008, all with the aim of shifting the economy away from oil dependence and promoting food security. Although the programs achieved substantial boost in agricultural production, but like the ones before and after them, failed to address the food security needs of the country.

Beyond high prices of staple food in Nigeria, climate change has brought Nigeria to the brink of food crisis. Drought presents a major problem for the affordability and availability of food items while excessive rain has destroyed homes and farmlands. These weather events have damaged crops and livestock making it difficult for farmers to produce more food, thus, pushing more Nigerians into poverty as hunger and malnutrition intensified with little access to food supply.

Food security outcomes for millions of Nigerians deteriorated with rising conflict and insecurity. Clashes between herders and farmers have left in its trail heavy losses of lives and properties. For predominantly farming communities like Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara and Niger states, farming is no longer business as usual as several farmers have been displaced and dispossessed of their farmlands by armed herders and bandits which has crippled farming activities in parts of the country (FEWS NET, 2019). Macroeconomic conditions have remained extremely poor in Nigeria due to the complications with the naira redesign (2022) and the removal of subsidy (2023) by the previous and present administrations respectively. This trend has driven headline inflation to reach a record high since March 1996 of 21.9 to 33.2% in January 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). In the 2013 UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), Nigeria came in at a position of 152 out of 187 countries, placed 39th out of 78 countries on the World Hunger Index with 10 million stunted and underweight children.

Table 1: Nigerian Hunger Statistics (2001-2022)

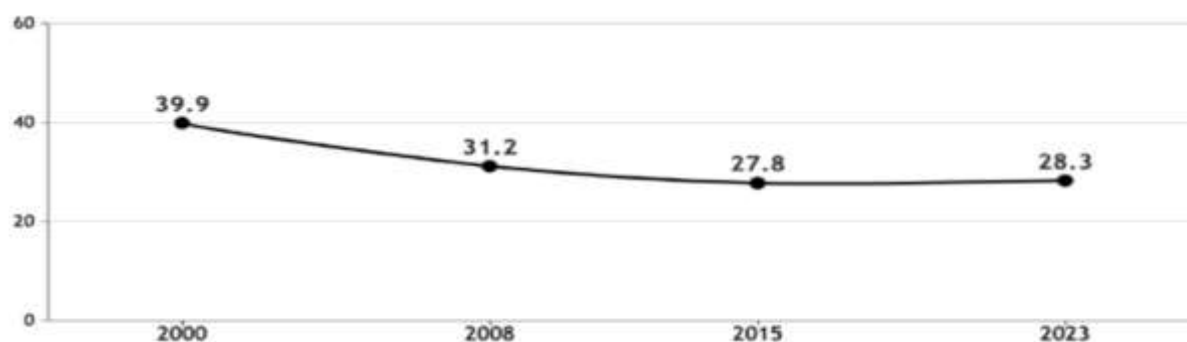
Year	% of Population	Annual Change
2022	0.00%	15.09%
2021	15.09%	1.70%
2020	14.20 %	1.80 %
2019	12.40 %	1.80 %
2018	10.60 %	0.50 %
2017	10.00 %	0.50 %
2016	9.60 %	0.30 %
2015	9.30 %	- 0.20 %
2014	9.50 %	- 0.10 %
2013	9.50 %	- 0.10 %
2012	9.70 %	0.50 %
2011	9.20 %	0.80 %
2010	8.40 %	0.90 %
2009	7.50 %	0.80 %
2008	6.70 %	0.30 %
2007	6.40 %	- 0.20 %
2006	6.60 %	- 0.40 %
2005	7.00 %	- 0.80%
2004	7.80 %	- 0.70%
2003	8.50 %	- 0.30%
2002	8.80%	0.00%
2001	8.80 %	8 80 %

Source: World Bank (2024)

Nigeria consumes only 1730 kcal of calories per-day and 64g of protein on average per person, which is significantly less than the recommended 2500-3400 kcal minimum daily requirement. This indicated that Nigeria is suffering from poor diet. Similarly, Nigeria ranked 91st out of 109 countries in the 2015 Global Food Security Index (GFSI), scoring 37.1 on affordable, available and safety indices.

In 2022, the Global Food Security Index ranked Nigeria 107th out of 113 countries in the world and the 25th out of 28 sub-Saharan African nations, with an overall GFSI score of 42; scoring 25.2 in affordability, 39.5 in availability, 55.6 in quality and safety, and 53.7 in sustainability and adaptation indices. The country's scores are very weak showing that a high percentage of the population live under the poverty line with insufficient controls to stabilize consumer prices and lack of food safety nets programs to provide support to the population. Similarly, the Global Hunger Index (GHI) in 2023 ranks Nigeria 109th out of 125 countries with a score of 28.3 showing that Nigeria has a serious level of hunger.

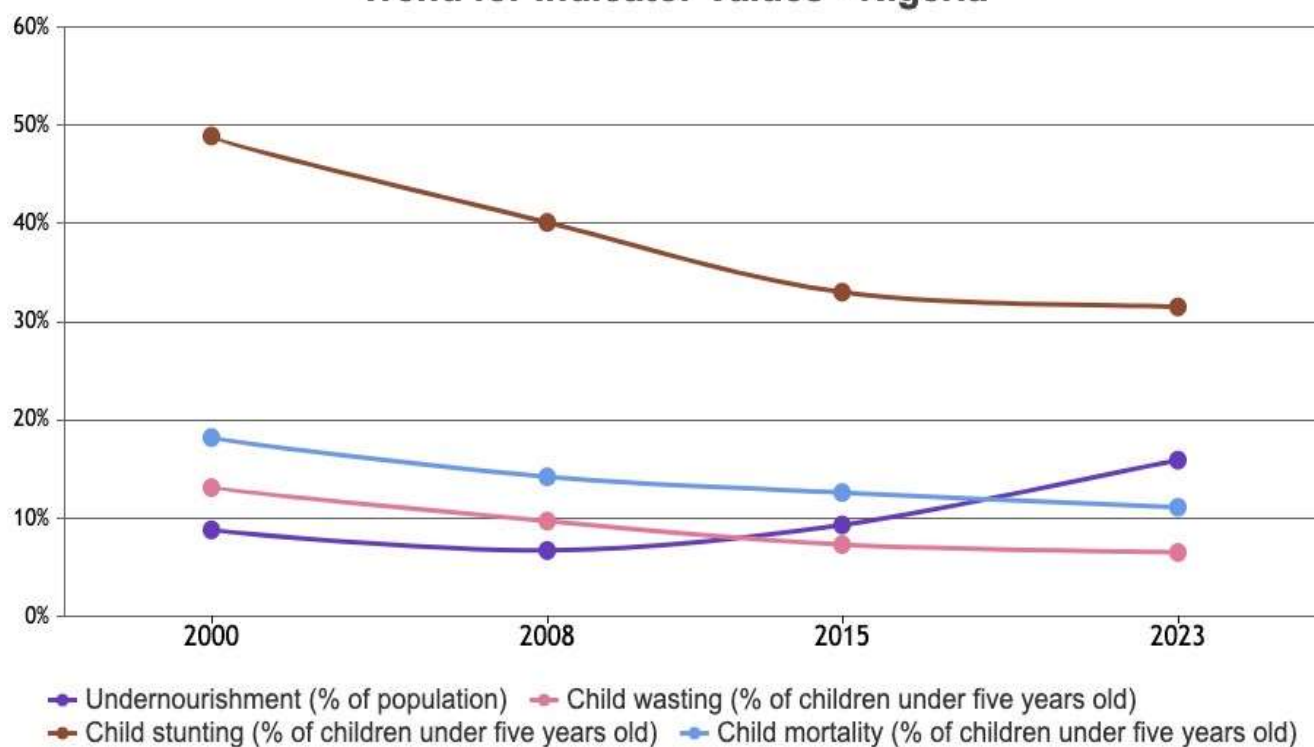
Table 2: Global Hunger Index Score for Nigeria.



Source: Global Hunger Index (2023)

Its trend for hunger indicator values showed that Nigeria has 30% of its population undernourished, 60% child wasting, 60% stunted children and 30% child mortality.

Table 3: Global Hunger Index Score Trend for Indicator Values - Nigeria.
Trend for Indicator Values - Nigeria



Source: Global Hunger Index (2023)

Many have found the government policy of naira redesign in 2022 and swift action to remove subsidies as a catalyst to plunge more Nigerians into greater food insecurity than previously seen. This comes at a time when the Global Economic Outlook (GEO) estimated the unemployment rate in Nigeria at the end of 2022 at 37% estimating that should rise to 40.6% in 2023 and 43% in 2024. The World Poverty Clock (WPC) indicates that 711 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty, the largest number globally. Against this background, the president announced a State of Emergency on Food Security on the 14th of July, 2024. The implication of the president's 14th July declaration is coming at a time when Nigeria was already on the brink of full-blown food insecurity (CARE, 2023). Central to the intervention plans of the federal government are the 12 key action plans:

- i. Immediate release of fertilizer and grains to farmers and households.
- ii. Synergy between the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources for irrigation and all-year-round farming
- iii. Creation of a National Commodity Board for price assessment and maintenance of strategic food reserves.
- iv. Increase security measures for farms and farmers.
- v. Central bank's role in funding the agricultural value chain to be enhanced.
- vi. Activation of 500,000 hectares of land for farming and river basins for continuous farming.
- vii. Deployment of concessionary capital and funding to the agricultural sector.
- viii. Improvement of transportation and storage facilities for agricultural products.
- ix. Increase of revenue from food and agricultural exports.
- x. Improved facilitation of trade by working with the Nigerian customs.
- xi. Massive boost in employment and job creation in the agricultural sector.
- xii. Commitment to ensuring that every Nigerian have access to affordable food.

4. Food Security: A Panacea for Economic Development

The importance of food to man's survival cannot be overemphasized, because available, accessible, sustainable and quality food supply gives stability to individuals, households, societies, nations and the world at large. Iweoha, Omoregie, Alabi and Idahosa (2015), opined that food is the most basic need of man. Without food therefore, man ceases to exist.

Food Security is a Tool for Achieving National Political Ends

Food security is vital for achieving national development because it serves as a boost for other sectors of the economy. An effective agricultural system brings about food security which in turn paves way for industrialization thereby cutting off importation and increasing the use of locally made food and products. Self-sufficiency in food production means that surpluses will be exported and a favorable balance of payment ensured because of reduced imports. This will turn around the entire economy and lead to development

Food Security Ensures Internal Security

Food security is a vital ingredient for achieving national security. 'A hungry man is an angry man' so goes an adage, consequently, a country with insufficient food production will have to contend with internal insecurity such as kidnapping, robbery, conflict and violence between

communities etc. Food security plays a vital role in resolving conflict and sustaining peace which is a necessary condition for national development.

Food Security is an Indices for Measuring a Country's Development.

The classification of countries into developed, developing and undeveloped is connected to food security. One of the criteria for measuring a country's development is the amount of food and nutrition available to its people because a country that cannot feed its people cannot be termed as developed. National development is achieved when nations bring about greater development of their citizens, the first of which is making food and nutrition available and accessible to them. A nation will surely fail in achieving its national development goals if it fails in achieving this primary responsibility.

Food Security is a Tool that gives international identity and Status

Exported world-class food serves as cultural ambassadors to a country and its people. Today Nigeria is known to be the largest producer of cassava with more than 50 million metric tons annually (FAO, 2018) and the second largest producers of sorghum with 6.4 million metric tons (Food Business Africa .com, 2017) in the world. These foods give Nigeria a high-ranking status in the international food market and can be used as weapons in international relations in the following ways:

- i. To influence the international food industry
- ii. To influence international politics and security economic relationships beyond the food industry.

Food security therefore, is an instrument of national power.

On realizing that a country's national development is measure by its attainment of food security, the United Nations (UN) included 'the eradication of extreme poverty and hungry as one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to draw the attention of nations of the need for food security. USAID, (2011) reported that where food is available, accessible, stable and well utilized by all people, peaceful coexistence will be experienced and nations will record steady development in the following ways:

- i. Secure human dignity
- ii. Real opportunity to explore available resource
- iii. Ensure security at the highest level
- iv. Unlock a vast resource of human innovation
- v. Stronger and healthier nation
- vi. Uplift the economy and at the same time improve household income
- vii. Better future for children where their brains are developed for better educational activities
- viii. Experience less hunger and will be able to focus on other important matters that will bring development in the nation
- ix. Food security will ensure a better place for all
- x. People's lives will be improved on both sides and will be much happier.
- xi. Many things will be done that will make a mark in agriculture and history.

Challenges of Attaining Food Security in Nigeria.

Corruption has been identified by this study as a major cankerworm that has continued to cripple Nigeria's development. (Ifamose, 2007) defined corruption as the manifestation of a societal unacceptable way of behavior through which an individual or group make unjust gains. Corruption has continued to manifest at various levels in both the public and private life of Nigeria, it will continue to erode Nigeria's development if not checked with an "iron fist".

Government agencies and ministries saddled with the responsibility of implementing government policies and programs toward attaining food security divert funds for personal use. This kind of institutional corruption has continued and will continue to undermine and cripple Nigeria's effort toward realizing food security hence national development. All other factors affecting the attainment of food security in Nigeria like climate change, insecurity, population growth, lack of access to modern technology etc. will be taken care of if corruption is addressed

Conclusion

No doubt, one of the major objectives the Nigerian state must pursue in order to realise its national development goals is food security. This is because a hungry nation will always remain backwards. More so, the survival of Nigeria as a country is linked to its ability to meet the material needs of its citizens by first of all putting quality food on their table at all times.

Recommendations

1. The government should strengthen anti-corruption agencies and institutions to help in strict implementation of anti-corruption laws in order to curb the menace of corruption.
2. Climate change must be addressed by the government by making efforts to cut down Nigeria's carbon emission levels.
3. The government should encourage and support dry season farming by both small and large-scale farmers, this will boost all-year-round agricultural productivity.
4. The government should as a matter of urgency introduce and encourage the use of modern digital technology, this will increase productivity and also make farming attractive to young people.

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