

**POLICY FLAWS AND FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGERIA:  
A STUDY OF EBONYI STATE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Joshua O. Nweke, Akunna Oko Okpara**

Department of Psychology & Sociological Studies  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

&

**Anthony Itumo**

Department of Political Science  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki

&

**Benjamin Okorie Ajah**

Social Science Unit, School of General Studies  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

**Abstract**

*Food insecurity is a global challenge. It has far reaching consequences on the lives of people. It results in hunger which affects development especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Previous studies paid attention on the plights of people during food insecurity without attention on the effect of government policies in overcoming the challenge of food insecurity. This study therefore unveils the flaws associated with policies and programmes on food security in Ebonyi State Nigeria. Survey design was adopted for this study. Diffusion model theory provided the framework for this study. The questionnaire instrument which centred on respondents demographic data and factors responsible for poor implementation of agricultural policies that would have promoted food security in Nigeria were distributed to one hundred and fifty two (152) respondents. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse quantitative data while qualitative components of data were content analysed. Results indicate that failure of food security policies and programmes was as a result of: lack of basic infrastructure like good road network, electricity/power (54%), Fraud, dishonesty and corruption in the system (61%), lack of farmers access to bank facilities (55%), natural hazards like flood and pests (57%), lack of training and capacity building (51%) and non availability of mechanized farming equipment (49%). The study recommends that: government at all levels should collaborate with experts to train stakeholders who will help to ensure the realization of food security policies of government, basic infrastructure especially road and electricity should be improved on so as to ensure improved and enhanced food processing, food storage and transportation and that government should partner with the private investors to boost food production.*

**Keywords:** Agricultural resources, Food insecurity, Food security, Government policy and Farmers

## Introduction

The world is in transition from an era dominated by surpluses to one defined by scarcity. Food scarcity is one prominent factor that has gained momentum in global history. Not eating at all on some days is how the world's poorest are coping with the doubling of world grain prices since 2006. In Nigeria, 27% of families experience foodless days. In India, it is 24%; in Peru, 14% (Brown, 2017).

Food insecurity continues to be a major challenge to public policy makers in Nigeria. Achievement of food security in any country is typically an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which hinder economic development (Davies, 2009). This is why all developed and some developing countries make considerable efforts to increase their food production capacity. Approximately, one billion people worldwide are undernourished. Many suffer from micronutrient deficiencies, and the absolute numbers tend to increase further, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2008). The security of food is only guaranteed when food is available at all times and there is adequate supply of basic food stuffs to people (The World Food Conference, 2010).

Individual's access to basic food at all times for an active and healthy life is essential (World Bank, 1986). In many parts of the globe, there is lack of access to an adequate diet which can be either temporary (transitory food insecurity) or continuous (chronic food insecurity). Food insecurity continues to be a key development problem across the globe, undermining people's health, productivity, and often their very survival (Smith and Subandoro, 2007).

In September 2013, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) had warned that Sahel States in Northern Nigeria would be faced with severe food insecurity. This is not far from the obvious. "Poor families have used up their food stocks and are facing high food prices awaiting the next harvest." Alarmingly, it points out that over 1.4 million children in the region are at risk of severe malnutrition in 2013. In certain products regrettably, the country's ambitious Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) seems to have been hijacked by unscrupulous operators across the country's borders. With sustained violence in the northern part of the country and climate change, major cities like Enugu, Port Harcourt, Ibadan and Lagos are getting food price shocks as rising food prices bite into household budgets (Eme *et al*, 2014).

The global challenge of food insecurity has made many countries especially in Africa to initiate policies that will ensure food security. Nigeria as a nation embarked on Farmer Support Programmes (FSP) aimed at stimulating rural development and land reforms. There is also some policy thrust of government which aimed at ensuring that individual farmers have access to land and to deregulate the agricultural sector and establish the National Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS). Laudable as these policies and programs were, it would appear that the goal of food security has not been achieved.

There is an indication of a serious policy inconsistencies and corruption in Nigeria which affect food security. Accordingly, frequent policy changes and poor performance of agencies assigned to implement food and agriculture policies have

serious setback on food production and distribution. Each time a new government comes to power, the previous agricultural policies and programmes are abandoned and new ones are put in place, and not that the new ones are better than the old ones. This creates no room for stability and progress in food production. Similarly, the dismal performance of some of the past programs like Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, Lower River Basin Development Authorities as well as agencies like National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA) and the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (Otaḥ 2013).

In 2008, Nigeria released its National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), laying out numerous constraints to food security in Nigeria and adopting a value chain approach to address these constraints. The objective of the NPFS is to ensure sustainable access, availability and affordability of quality food to all Nigerians and to be a significant net provider of food to the global community. National Programme for Food Security evolved as an aftermath of the November 1996 World Food Summit and request for assistance by the Federal government of Nigeria under the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). After the initial participatory review and subsequent evaluation, SPFS was extended to the 36 states of the federation including Ebonyi State. The National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) was formally launched in Nigeria in 2003 at Bukuru, one of the NPFS sites in Kaduna State and was jointly implemented by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO/UN). The programme was funded and supervised by the World Bank by providing 66% of the total project cost. The federal government was to provide 19% in input procurement while state government was to provide 15% in salaries and general services.

Food Security has been a serious problem that affects many countries all over the world. Various agricultural policies and programmes which differed in nomenclature and perhaps organizational structure and advisory procedures have been established in Nigeria, yet the country is still striving to feed her citizens. There are evidences that various policies and programmes introduced to alleviate and eradicate the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria faced a lot of challenges. Such policies and programmes have always ended up with the regimes that introduced them without achieving any fit hence this study. This study underscores those factors responsible for the poor implementation of rural agricultural development and food security programmes in Nigeria.

### **Government policy on food security in Nigeria**

There is a clear indication of government's interest in and commitment to increase food production in order to ensure food security in Nigeria. According to NEEDS (2004:88), the numerous initiatives are expected, *ceteris paribus*, to: Provide incentives for private sector participation in the agricultural sector, foster effective linkage with the industrial sector; add value to agricultural produce through processing for export; create more agricultural and rural employment opportunities; increase the income of farmers; reduce drastically the rising trend in food import and

ultimately achieve food security. There are, in fact, some euphoric claims from government agencies and officials that the policies and programs are already yielding desired results because the agricultural sector has recorded an unprecedented annual growth rate of seven percent (7%), and that the strategic grains reserve has reached 150,000 tons, and still rising. It has also been said that increased food production has encouraged the World Food Programme to contemplate the establishment of an office in Nigeria from where it would obtain food for other African countries in need (*Nigerian Tribune*, October 2004).

In essence, the impression has been created that Nigerian agricultural policies are working because the agricultural sector is flourishing and that with more focused investment in the sector, the food security goal may have been achieved or is within easy reach. However, the hard fact is that attainment of food security is not a one-year or one-season goal, but usually a long-term goal requiring careful planning and much more sustained effort to ensure continuity. There are still challenges to the attainment of food security. Despite the staggering sum of \$364 million government plans to spend for 'proper repositioning and implementation of National Programme for food security' (*The Nation*, October 2007), the food security programs cannot be implemented in isolation. There is still the need for food policy to be formulated and serious considerations given to some other issues germane to food security.

#### **Government policy on food security over past regimes in Nigeria**

The Nigerian government is not taking things for granted. All efforts directed at restoring agriculture to its former status before the oil boom in the national economy in terms of its higher contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), could be regarded as evidence of increased concern for and commitment to food security. In desperation, the Gen. Yakubu Gowon military government embarked on a gargantuan importation of rice in the early 1970s to stave off hunger. But Nigerian ports did not have the facility to handle the huge importation of what came to be called the Rice Amada. The ports were choked by rice and a decongestion committee had to be set up (Ekpu, 2009:12). At the end of the day, massive importation of rice could not tackle the long term problem of food security; rather than a profound agricultural policy shortly after the civil war. Whereas, Nigerians suggested to the government then that the over bloated army which became redundant after the civil war could be drafted to the farm to boost agricultural production. This policy option was discarded simply for security reason. In 1976, General Olusegun Obasanjo government started what was known as Operation Feed the Nation, (OFN). This was intended to be some kind of agricultural revolution in which everyone was asked to be involved to plant something, anything, anywhere. Those who didn't have farms as gardens resulted to flower pot farming. However, for various reasons, these efforts did not produce the bumper harvest that was expected and cynical Nigerians nicknamed the programme Operation Fool the Nation (Ekpu, 2009:12). When Sheu Shagari took over as President in 1979, he embarked on a mere change of name. He called his own initiative Green Revolution without any significant change in conception, content or context of the policy. The programme could not make any

appreciable impact. Not only that his government was weighed down by corruption that it could not achieve much in all fronts. Then the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida introduced the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, DFRRI in 1985.

It was supposed to be a comprehensive, integrated programme for massive food production and rural transformation. On paper, it was great but in actual practice, the programme was invested with massive corruption and eventually frustration. However, with the advent of civilian administration in 1999 greater attention was given to food production. The Nigerian Minister for Agriculture publicly restated government's commitment to combat hunger and malnutrition by providing adequate food for the people and ensures food security for all. To achieve this goal therefore, a number of what he called food security initiatives were launched (Bello, 2004:1-6). They include:

1. Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS): This is a programme by which government sought the assistance of 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.
2. Root and Tuber Expansion Programme: 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.
3. Fadama Development Project: The Fadama project is for ensuring all-season farming through large scale irrigation system or naturally flooded areas (Fadama) of a number of crops, plants, fruits and vegetables.
4. Community-based agricultural and rural development schemes: This comes under different names such as farm settlement or back-to-land programmes. In this type of schemes the participants who are usually men, are encouraged by the government to take to farming by providing them with material and financial support.
5. Provision of infrastructures: Such as linking up the rural areas through new access roads and grading the old ones; supplying energy through rural electrification; distributing farm inputs like seedlings and fertilizer; selling or leasing tractors and harvesters to farmers to encourage mechanized farming and providing improved storage facilities to reduce post-harvest loss of agricultural products, put at between 25 and 30 percent (*Vanguard*, October 27, 2004).
6. In collaboration with the United States, the government commissioned the American-based International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (ICSFAD), to study the problems militating against increased agricultural production in the country. The main objective here is to assess the soil type and use the result to determine the appropriate type of fertilizer that would be used by the farmers.

7. Policy instrument and direction by which the government (a) banned, among other items, the importation of some agricultural products. The effect of this ban is said to have “unleashed boundless productive energy in the areas of livestock production and agriculture” (Presidential National Day Broadcast, Nigerian Tribune, October 1, 2004); (b) sold fertilizer to farmers at subsidized rate and (c) facilitated increased investment in agriculture by strengthening the financial capacity of state-owned agricultural banks to grant soft-loans, and pleading with the private commercial banks to extend low-interest loan facilities to large-scale and small-scale farmers. The plea has been largely ignored by the commercial banks probably because of the perceived risk in agricultural financing and the negative consequences of volatile agricultural market (Larson et. al., 2004:199-250), (NEEDS Document, 2001:88), (Davies, 2009:9).

The Olusegun Obasanjo regime (1999-2007), adopted the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) and its state counterpart adopted the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS). The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) document was a response to the demands and strategies of the Millennium Development Goals (MPG). Specifically, the National Agricultural Policy assigns supportive roles to the government, while investments in the sector were left to the private sector initiative. At the State level it was known as the State Economic Empowerment Development Strategies (SEEDS). Obasanjo also initiated the National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS) launched in 2002 in all the 36 states with the objectives of increased food production and elimination of rural poverty and also Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP).

The Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration (2007-2010) introduced the Agricultural Transformation Agenda ([www.fmard.gov.ng](http://www.fmard.gov.ng)). They made food security and agriculture one of his seven point agenda. His agricultural policy therefore involves not only activities in agricultural production but also includes feeding the industries, food processing and manufacturing, distribution and marketing, trade and consumption with the output from the major employer of labour. The sector raises the level of industrialization by providing food for the labour force. This is true because a poorly feed worker cannot supply efficient labour services which high level industrialization entails. This is elaborately manifested especially when viewed against the background that food is the source of energy and energy by definition is the ability to do work.

Goodluck Jonathan took over after Yar'Adua's death and continued with the transformation agenda. He also introduced vision 20:20. The primary focus of vision 20:20 was on supplying fertilizers directly to the rural farmers and not through middle men; provide seeds with high yield directly to the small hold farmer, provide telephones to the rural farmers for easy communication and encourage value chain in such a way that agricultural produce are being processed locally to finished produce and export. The regime further has the programme of providing storage facilities and

exporting perishable goods such as tomatoes, etc by the provision of infrastructure such as perishable sheds at major airports in Nigeria. The Youth Empowerment in Agriculture Project was another programme initiated by the Jonathan Administration which did not see the light of the day. The current regime of Muhammadu Buhari from May 2015 to date is continuing with the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and Youth Empowerment in Agricultural Programme (YEAP) which he inherited from Goodluck Jonathan (Awa and Rufus, 2017).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Diffusion Model Theory of rural development was adopted as a theoretical framework for this study. The theory was propounded in 1962 by a United States Rural Sociologist, Everett Rogers. The diffusion model theory of rural development is an attempt to explain the existence of substantial productivity difference among farmers in the same economic and geographical regions. According to the model, such differences arise due to differences in farmers' adoption of innovations such as new varieties of seeds, mechanical and chemical inputs within the same environment. Some farmers would embrace modern techniques such as mechanical equipments, improved seeds and chemical inputs, thus guaranteeing food security and oppose the adoption of these modern techniques, as such continue to have poor harvest thereby, causing food insecurity (Everett Rogers, 1962). The diffusion model theory emphasize that to correct the structural impediment to improve agricultural productivity, the farmers need to embrace modern techniques of farming to guarantee food security. The diffusion of innovations to farmers requires re-orientation and rehabilitation which is possible through communication and other support services. The benefits of the modern techniques have to be explained to farmers in Ebonyi State (rural areas) for their understanding and application of same to reduce the incidence of food insecurity and poverty. This theory has been graciously applied by many developing nations and has contributed to the fame recorded by agricultural extension services, demonstration farm or experimental farm (local innovation). Through these channels, the rural farmers who are still unaware of the modern innovation are brought face to face with the concepts, their applications and the gains accrued there from. The diffusion model theory has gained considerable acceptance in Nigeria where it is emphasized as a solution to the problem of low productivity of the average rural farmers leading to national food insecurity.

### **Methodology**

#### **The study area**

The area covered in this study is Ebonyi State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It has boundary with Ministry of Education by East, State Library by West and Jamb office in the North. The Ministry is made up of employees from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Majority of the employees were Ebonyians. It is worthy of note that the key stakeholders in food policy and programmes initiative and implementation as it affects Ebonyi state are found in the

ministry of Agriculture and Natural resources, hence the choice of the ministry as the study area.

### Target population and sample size

The population of the Ebonyi State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources stood at five hundred and twenty one workers. This constitutes the target population. The sample size of 200 was chosen for the study which is 38.5% of the total population.

### Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was distributed to two hundred respondents. Out of two hundred (200) questionnaire distributed, one hundred and fifty two (152) were correctly filled and returned. This means that one hundred and fifty-two (152) were the basis for this analysis. This work is organized in two sections; demographic characteristics of respondents and thematic analysis. Demographic characteristics include gender, generation, race and ethnicity, education, geographic region, and marital status.

### Demographic characteristics of respondents

We sought to know respondents sex, age, religion and educational qualifications. Data obtained on these are contained in table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

Variable	No. of respondents	Per cent age
<b>1. Sex</b>		
Male	92	61%
Female	60	39%
<b>Total</b>	152	100%
<b>2. Age</b>		
B/w 16 and 18 years	10	7%
B/w 19 and 21 years	40	26%
B/w 22 years and above	102	67%
<b>Total</b>	152	100%
<b>3. Religion</b>		
Christianity	139	91%
Islam	5	4%
African Traditional Religion	8	5%
<b>Total</b>	152	100%
<b>4. Educational Qualification</b>		
FSLC	26	17%
WAEC/SSCE	28	18%
OND/NCE	33	35%

HND/BSc	37	25%
MSc and PhD	8	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results in table 1 indicate that majority of the respondents were males. They constitute 61% of the total sample population while the females make up the remaining 39%. This implies that more male respondents were sampled than females and it is an indication that the males were greater in number in the ministry of Agriculture and natural resources. This shows that great number of males were in the civil service than the females. This confirms the position of Udegbe (1997) that women reproductive roles, socio-cultural beliefs, education, glass ceiling barrier are some of the likely reasons for the imbalance of women in the formal work sector.

On their age determination, we discovered that those between 22 years and above were 67%. This is followed by those who were between 19 and 21 years old as at the time of this research. The list was respondents between 16 and 18 years. This set of respondents was 7% of the total sample population.

Concerning their religious affiliations of respondents, findings show that majority of them were Christians which is 91% of the total sample population. This is followed by those who were affiliated to African Traditional Religion that constitutes 5% of the total respondents' population. The list among them was Islamic worshipers who make up only 4% of the total sample population. The implication is that Christians were greater among those employed in the ministry under study.

With regard to respondents educational qualification, we found out that majority of them had their OND and NCE certificates. They constitute 35% of the total sample population. This is followed by 25% of the respondents who had HND and BSc. Those who had their WAEC/SSCE were 18% while those who possess FSLC were 17%. The list among them was those who possess their higher degrees. They make up only 5% of the total sample population.

### **Thematic analysis**

#### **Why there is poor implementation of rural agricultural development and food security programmes in Nigeria**

The main purpose of this study was to determine reasons why there is poor implementation of rural agricultural development and food security programmes in Nigeria. Data generated on this are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Respondents views on the reasons why there is poor implementation of rural agricultural development and food security programmes in Nigeria**

S/N	Description of Item	Certified	Did Not Certify
1	Lack of funds/ capital	84 (55%)	68 (45%)
2	Lack of basic infrastructure/ facilities	82 (54%)	70 (46%)
3	Fraud/ dishonesty and corruption in the	93 (61%)	59 (39%)

system		
4	Difficulty in farmers access to facilities (loan) from banks and other financial institutions	68 (45%)
5	Natural hazards such as flood, pests etc	66 (43%)
6	Lack of training and capacity building	75 (49 %)
7	Non availability of mechanized farming equipments	77 (51%)

Results in table 2 indicate that one of the major factors that hinder the realization of food security programmes of government was lack of fund. This was the position of 55% of the respondents' population while 45% were on the contrary. It implies that lack of funds was a challenge in realizing the objective of food security policies in Nigeria. Government may come up with a laudable policy but such policy may not see the light of the day when funds to back them up are not provided. Basic infrastructures are also needed to aid food security policy implementation. Infrastructures like good road network especially in the rural areas are needed to facilitate the evacuation of farm produce to the urban areas. Steady electricity supply is essential to enable farmers preserve and store perishable farm products while pipe born water and dams are needed for irrigation purposes and so forth. In line with the effect of non availability of these infrastructures in the implementation of food security policies, 54% of the respondents were of the opinion that those basic infrastructures were lacking and as such it contributes to policy flaws. This was opposed by 46% respondents who believed that lack of basic infrastructure was not a challenge to the implementation of food policy programmes in Nigeria.

On whether fraud, dishonesty and corruption contribute to food security policy flaws, 61% of the total sample population affirmed this position. This is against the views of 59% of the respondents' total population which implies that those factors aforementioned contribute to the failure of food security policies in Nigeria.

Difficulty in farmers' access to bank facilities was evaluated. Results indicate that 55% of the respondents affirmed that farmers do not have access to bank facilities which results in policy flaws. This is contrary to the opinions of 45% of the respondents. In terms of whether natural hazards such as flood and pests affect the implementation of food security policies in Nigeria, 57% of the respondents confirmed this while 43% were on the contrary. What this means is that natural hazards hinder food security policy programmes of government in Nigeria.

Data generated also indicate that lack of training and capacity building for stakeholders in agric industry especially farmers is contributory to food security policy flaws. This is the opinion of 51% of the total sample population as against the views of 49%. In line with this Eme *et al* (2014) states that why there are many complex factors that influence sustainable development and food security, it is clear that education in agriculture plays an important role in preparing farmers, researchers, educators, extension staff, members of agric-business, among others to make

productive contributions towards agricultural development. He recommends that of importance are the changes and adaptation required in agricultural insurance and agricultural education in order for it to contribute more effectively to improved food security, sustainable agricultural production and rural development.

Also, it was discovered that majority of the respondents disagreed to the fact that non availability of mechanized farm equipments is a factor responsible to policy failure on food security. Those who had this view were 51% of the total population while those on the contrary were 49%.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were reached. It was noted that there is still food insecurity in Ebonyi State and Nigeria despite the various agricultural and food security policy introduced by government. Results show that the following were hindrances to the realization of food policy security objectives of governments: lack of funds/ capital 55%, corruption in the system 61%, lack of access to bank facilities 55%, natural hazards 57%, and non availability of mechanized farming equipments in 49%. The development of rural agricultural continued to be a farce despite government and individual efforts in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government at all levels should collaborate with experts to train stakeholders who will help to ensure the realization of food security policies of government.
2. Basic infrastructure especially road and electricity should be improved on so as to ensure improved and enhanced food processing, storing and transportation;
3. The government should partner with the private investors to boost food production.

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