AGRICULTURAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

The module reviews several agricultural policies and programmes that were initiated in Nigeria vis-a-vis the development of the agricultural sector in the nation. It examines the impact of intervention programmes like the Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution and Agricultural Development Projects. The module concludes by identifying gaps in the inventions, execution and management of the programmes. Solutions/recommendations were then proffered based on these gaps as lessons/guide for future policies and programmes inventions.

5.1 Farm Settlement Scheme (FSS)

This was initiated by some regional governments in Nigeria and was a critical element of Western Nigeria Policy of Agricultural and Natural Resources of 1959. The main objective of this scheme was to settle young school leavers in a specified area of land, making farming their career thereby preventing them from moving to the urban areas in search of white collar jobs. These settled farmers were also to serve as models in good farming systems for farmers residing in nearby villages to emulate. The programme initiated in old western Region; aimed at solving unemployment among primary school leavers. Policy instruments used include agricultural extension, cooperative societies, and credit facilities.

A major challenge of the scheme was that some of the settlers were too young and inexperienced in farming thus causing a high percentage of drop-outs among the settlers. The lack of understanding of the meaning and implication of the scheme by some settlers who assumed that through their participation in the scheme they would eventually get paid job also impeded the sustainability of the scheme. They were discouraged and some withdrew as soon as the allowances were not given any more. The high cost of establishing a viable farm settlement in terms of cash and staff discouraged some of the participants. Finally, expenses made on the scheme was incurred mainly on installation of infrastructure like construction of houses, schools, markets, roads etc. for the settlers which did not directly bring about increase in agricultural output by the participants as targeted.

5.2 National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP)

National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) was an agricultural extension programme initiated in 1972 by the Federal Department of Agriculture during General Yakubu Gowon’s regime. 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. The programme was designed to spread to other states in the country after the pilot stage that was established in Anambra,
Imo, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Benue, Plateau and Kano states. Mini-kit, production-kit and mass adoption phases were the three phases of the programme. The policy goal of NAFPP was to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production. Consequently, land reform and mass literacy policies were recommended for farmers.

It was the opinion of the initiators of this programme that target crops for accelerated production are major staple foods of Nigerians and if produced in abundance, hunger and related food crisis will be put to check. This was achieved through the introduction of high yielding varieties, use of appropriate fertilizers, agrochemicals, good storage and processing facilities, provision of credit as well as marketing outlets. In addition, several research institutes were mandated to develop improved crop varieties and were made popular through extension agents and the use of mass media. The policy instruments included subsidy, credit, adaptive research and demonstration plots. The Go-Back-to-Land Programme of 1983-1985 was a restoration of the elements of NAFPP after the military coup in 1985.

Lapses found in the programme included inability if some farmers to form co-operatives which made them left out in the programme as the programme relied on disbursement of credits and farm inputs through co-operative societies. Abrupt/premature withdrawal of funding by the Federal Government due to the introduction of another programme termed Operation Feed the Nation cased a major blow to the continuation of the programme. Demonstration trials done on some selected farmers’ plots by the research and extension personnel did not give a true/good representation of the outcome of the technology or programme. In other words, it lacked farmers’ participation.

5.3 Operation Feed the Nation (OFN)

This programme evolved on 21st May 1976 under the military regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo and remains one of the most widely-publicized agricultural programmes. The programme was launched in order to bring about increased food production in the entire nation through the active involvement and participation of everybody in every discipline thereby making every person to be capable of partly or wholly feeding him or herself.

Under this programme every available piece of land in urban, sub-urban and rural areas was meant to be planted while government provided inputs and subsidies (like agrochemicals, fertilizers, improved variety of seed/seedlings, day olds chicks, matchets, sickle, hoes etc) freely to government establishments. The OFN programme attempted to mobilize the general public to participate actively in agricultural production and ensure self-sufficiency in food production. The programme stimulated Nigerians to farming through the strategies used. Some of these strategies included subsidized production inputs,
increased bank credit to farmers, establishment of commodity boards and fixing of attractive prices for agricultural produce. Policy instruments include mass media, centralized input procurement, massive fertilizer subsidy and imports.

Farming was done on any available piece of land irrespective of its suitability for agriculture whilst majority of the participants in the programme had little or no farming background and there was no formal or informal preparatory teaching or advice given to them on how to manage their farms. Individuals received these inputs at a subsidized rate. They practiced mono cropping instead of mixed-relay cropping and relied on hired labour to carry out their farming activities, which resulted in high input and low output/yield per unit of land. Preference was given to government establishments and individuals in authority/administration over the poor farmers (real producer of food) in terms of input supply. There was abundance of food in the market and less demand for the food because many people produced part or almost whole food they consumed. The Programme addressed the problem of rising food crisis, rural-urban migration and escalating food import bills.

The programme recorded an incidence of endemic poultry diseases especially new castle disease that wiped out the birds due to lack of quarantine and necessary routine inoculation/vaccination. The programme lasted till another regime and was replaced the Green Revolution.

5.4 Green Revolution (GRP)

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

The policy goal of GRP had the dual purpose of curtailing food importation through boosting crop production, and promoting big mechanized farming. By 1983, another military regime toppled the civilian government and subsequently introduced the ‘Go back to land’ programme which aimed at making farmers out of all Nigerians.
The programme did not achieve its objective of increasing food supply because there was delay in execution of most of the projects involved in the programme. There was also no monitoring and evaluation of the projects for which huge sums of money were spent.

5.5 Agricultural Development Projects (ADP)

ADP formerly known as Integrated Agricultural Development Projects (IADP) was earlier established in 1974 in the North East (Funtua), North West (Gusau) and North Central (Gombe) states as pilot schemes. The idea of Agricultural Development Programmes is an offshoot of the concept of integrated agricultural and rural development. It started in 1972 in Northern Nigerian towns of Gombe and Gusau with two pilot projects assisted by the World Bank. This became necessary because of the need for the application of knowledge and skills in all the relevant areas of agriculture. This concept involved the provision of infrastructural facilities such as roads, schools, water supply in the rural areas at the right times in required quantity to farmers.

The ADP is the implementation organ of the state ministry of agriculture and natural resources. It is semi-autonomous and focuses on the small farmer. It adopts the integrated rural development strategy in its operations. The success of the Gombe and Gusau projects encouraged other state governments to embark on more of such projects with the assistance of the World Bank. Since then, Nigeria has continued to witness agricultural development programmes of various dimensions. It is against this background that effective extension services have been established. The earlier impressive result of the programme led to its replication in 1989 to the entire then nineteen states of the Federation. This approach to agricultural and rural development was based on collaborative efforts and tripartite arrangement of the federal government, state government and World Bank. The objectives of the programme are to bring about solution to the decrease found in agricultural productivity by sustaining domestic food supply, through massive infusion of World Bank funds, the ADPs were established to provide extension services, technical input support and rural infrastructure to the farmers/rural dwellers.

Today, the programme has grown to become the major agricultural and rural development programme existing in states in Nigeria. The important features of the programme are reliance on the small scale farmers as the main people that will bring about in food production and the feedback information mechanism which is a decentralized decision making process that allows farm families/households to give their responses to an innovation/technology, incentive, subsidies etc according to their judgment.

Some problems that occurred in the course of executing the projects were; Shortage of fund due to decline in oil prices that started in 1982 which led to delays in recruiting competent staff and provision or
purchasing of materials and facilities needed for the projects take off. This made implementation much slower than scheduled. Secondly, ADP emphasizes more on modern/ high input technology like sole cropping while majority of the farmers practiced mixed/relay cropping. There was also untimeliness of subsidized input supply for the programme.

Considering that ADPs are still recognized, its present problems include: high frequency of labour mobility, limited involvement of input agencies, dwindling funding policies and counterpart funding, intricacies of technology transfer etc.

The closest assistance ever realized by farmers in Nigeria have come from contact with various Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) and the extension agents working under the Training and Visit (T and V) system. The Activities of ADPs in Nigeria spread over three thematic areas; provision of infrastructural rural facilities, conducting worthwhile trainings on improved agricultural technologies and supply of farm inputs to enhance the technical and economic efficiency of small farmers in general.

5.6 River Basin-Development Authorities (RBDAs) (1976)

The existing abundant water resources in the country and its potential for increasing agricultural production prompted the establishment of River Basin Development Authority (RBDA). The scheme became necessary because of persistent short rainy seasons in many parts of the country which has continued to restrict cultivation to single cropping pattern the year round. However, the establishment of various large-scale irrigation facilities the country witnessed unprecedented multiple cropping patterns.

Larger areas were put into cultivation, while livestock and fisheries production were intensified. Available statistics from eight River Basin Development Authorities showed that there was an increase in the tempo of activities in 1998 when it was earlier reported that the Hadejia-Jama’ are River Basin and Tiga and Challawa dams located in former Kano State could conserve enough water to irrigated land that can produce over 50% of the nations need for wheat, 30% of its need for rice, cotton and sugar cane. In addition, it could produce several thousand tons of fish; develop livestock, poultry and hydroelectric power generation.

River Basin Development Decree was promulgated in 1976 to establish eleven River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs) (Decree 25 of 1976). The initial aim of the authorities was to boost economic potentials of the existing water bodies particularly irrigation and fishery with hydroelectric power generation and domestic water supply as secondary objectives.
The objective of the programme was later extended to other areas most importantly to production and rural infrastructural development. Problems found in the programme were: a number of the authorities grew out of proportion and the operations of some suffered from intensive political interference. Also, substantial public funds were wasted to streamline sizes and functions of RBDAs through the disposal of their non-water assets. Policy instruments include input distribution credit services, infrastructure development, and man-power development.