

## INSECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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***Abstract:** Sustainable food security enhances attainment of sustainable economic development. A nation that is not food secure is not likely to achieve sustainable economic development as availability, accessibility; stability and utilization without hampering the environment are the core areas of sustainable food security that can promote sustainable economic development. This paper reviews national insecurity issues and sustainable food security in Nigeria. It reviews literature on food security, security and insecurity issues; examines the impact of national insecurity on food security within the country; and highlights the coping strategies. The paper concludes by emphasizing that insecurity is a serious challenge confronting Nigeria in terms of economic development. Recommendations made include: good governance and effective leadership as solution to problems of insecurity and hunger. The need to empower and provide adequate security for rural farmers, also, hydroponics (soilless farming) should be encouraged within the country since farmers will not need soil and to clear bush for farming rather farming can be done at home.*

***Keywords:** Agriculture, Economic Development Food Security, Insecurity Issues and Sustainability*

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's economy mainstay was built around agriculture prior to the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantity at Oloibiri, Delta state in 1956. After the discovery, petroleum was seen as a more feasible resource for economic development thereby making the government neglect agriculture and turning to a major food importer in order to feed the growing population (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017). The population of Nigeria was put at 140 million in 2006 with a growth rate of 2.6% (NPC, 2006). In 2021, the population of Nigeria rose to 212,585,043 (NBS, 2021) with a growth rate of 2.5%. To feed this growing population necessitated the need for sustainable agriculture. In Nigeria, food security

is a national concern considering that a larger number of its population is food insecure (FMARD, 2016). To curb the problem of food insecurity, Nigerian government over the years initiated various policies and some of these include National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) (1972), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) (1976), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) (1977), Green Revolution Programme (GRP) (1980), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural infrastructure (DFRRI) (1986), Better Life Program (BLP) (1986), National Agricultural Research Project (NARP) (1972), Family Support Programme (FSP) (1995) and Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS) (1999) (Tunde, 2013).

During the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, all heads of Government and representatives pledged their support and commitments to achieving global food security and alleviation of hunger with the aim of halving the population of undernourished persons by the year 2015. In spite of this, Nigeria as a country is yet to achieve this, even in 2021.

Akerele, et al. (2016) observed that the prevalence of food insecurity in the low income urban and rural households of Nigeria stands at 79% and 71% respectively. According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization (2021), about 9.2 million people in Nigeria are confronted with the crisis of food insecurity and armed conflicts. This figure is anticipated to increase to over 12.8 million by 2050 (FAO, 2021). Food security is a serious challenge facing Nigeria. Hence, the president of Nigeria Muhammadu Buhari established National Food Security Council to address problems facing food and agriculture sectors.

Several studies have been carried out on how agricultural production can be improved upon for sustainable economic development in Nigeria. However, the recent hike in the prices of food in every part of the country is an indication that food security has not been adequately and critically analyzed in spite of the various approaches at addressing the challenge. Nigeria is a food-deficit country (Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, 2020) and insecurity is the order of the day.

Furthermore, huge amount of money have been spent in an effort to ensure food security for Nigeria citizens without significant success. Hence, the need to examine the impact that national insecurity issues have on food security within the country. This paper therefore reviews the increasing security challenges facing Nigeria and the impact on sustainable food security. Specifically, the paper:

- i. reviews literature on food security, security and national insecurity;
- ii. identify the causes of insecurity;

- iii. examine the impact of insecurity issues on food production; and
- iv. highlight the coping strategies

## CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

The emergence of the term “food security” was introduced in the mid-1970s, at the World Food Conference in 1974. FAO expanded the concept of food security in 1983 to include securing access by vulnerable people to available supplies, meaning that attention should be balanced between the demand and supply side of the food security equation: “ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food that they need” (FAO, 1983). World Bank, (1986) defined food security as the condition whereby all people have access to sufficient food to live healthy and productive lives. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Africa, (1986:12) cited in Ojelade (2019) defined food security as a situation “When all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life”. A standard definition was however agreed upon and adopted during the World Food Summit in 1996. The World Food Summit, 1996, agreed that food security “exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2008). The World Bank (2007) indicated that food security is of three folds, viz: food availability, food accessibility and food affordability. Availability of food which is crucial to this paper means ensuring sufficient food for the households through production. According to Amaechi (2018) food security can be seen as the relationship between the total numbers of people and food available at a particular time. It is the state of affairs where all people at all times have access to sufficient food. “A household is food secure when it has access to the food needed for a healthy life for all its members and when it is not at undue risk of losing such access” (UN, AC/SCN, 1991). National food security is when the amount of food available in a country is evenly distributed and enough to meet people’s food needs (Tunde, 2009).

The declared aim of the federal government of Nigeria’s agricultural policy for vision 20:20:20 according to Towobola et al. (2014) include ‘(i) achievement of food security, (ii) increase production and productivity, (iii) generate employment and income, and (iv) expand exports and reduce food imports thereby freeing resources critical infrastructural development and delivery of social services’.

Sustainable food production is “a method of production using processes and systems that are non-polluting, conserve non-renewable energy and natural resources, are economically efficient, safe for workers, communities, consumers, and do not compromise the needs of future generations”(Foresight, 2011). Sustainable food security is when sufficient and healthy food is provided for all people without exhausting our planet (Donkers, 2014). Helland and Sorbo (2014) argue that sustainable food security will require: (a) availability of adequate food production, (b) access to food and ability to purchase food, (c) sufficiency in terms of nutrition, energy, proteins, micronutrients as well as safety, and (d) the stability and foreseeability of these conditions. Attainment of sustainable food security is however beclouded by insecurity issues confronting Nigeria, hence, the need to examine the coping strategies.

## CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND INSECURITY

Security can be seen as protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or communities (UNDP, 1994). Ibidapo-obe (2008), says “security can be seen as the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions”. A citizen can only be protected when he or she is economically, medically, educationally, environmentally socially, and politically protected.

Nigeria is in a precarious situation as the security of the country is being threatened. Total security encompasses security of lives and property, food, health of the people, security of economic and raw material resources, of the environment and of a national integrity. The security interest includes safety of life and property, economic, psychological, mental welfare and freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. Put together therefore, security can be seen as total freedom from threats of dangers such as economic, political, social or psychological problems, peace of mind, not vulnerable to harm and loss of life, property and livelihood. Insecurity on the other hand connotes a state of fear due to lack of protection (Beland, 2005). Achumba *et al.* (2013) defined insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, it is the state of being exposed to danger where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is said to be the state of being unlatched to anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune.

## CAUSES OF INSECURITY

### **Some of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria include:**

- porous frontiers of the country which encourages individual to move freely without being tracked
- religious fanaticism and intolerance is a major source of insecurity in the country
- poor distribution of resources and neglect of the people
- ethno-religious conflict is also a source of insecurity in Nigeria
- loss of socio-cultural and communal value system
- inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weaponry and technical know-how
- failure of government at all levels in the past in providing basic needs and delivering public goods and services to the masses

## IMPACT OF NATIONAL INSECURITY ON FOOD SECURITY

In Nigeria, there are several issues of national insecurity that affect food security; some of these include kidnapping, civil war, conflicts, Boko Haram's insurgency, Niger Delta crisis, Fulani herders/farmers clashes among others. These have led to loss of lives and property, displacement of communities, loss of livelihoods and increased food prices. Oludayo (2020) reported that a number of conflicts were experienced in Obi, Doma, Keana and Awe local government areas of Nasarawa State in 2017 that led to the displacement of communities and loss of lives and livelihoods. Similarly, a Punch Newspaper reporter Oyekola (2021) reported that suspected herdsmen cut off the right hand of a rice farmer, in Bindofu village, Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State. Premium Times (2021) reported that two farmers were killed in Isaba Ekiti, in Ikole Local Government Area of Ekiti State by suspected herdsmen.

Similarly, about 4.5million people are facing food insecurity in Nigeria and some neighbouring countries as a result of Boko Haram insurgency (Adebola, 2018). This insurgency caused population displacement and limit crop production below average, restricting market and trade activities and causing higher food prices since farmers can no longer visit their farmlands. The effect of this crisis is that farmlands have been converted to battle field.

Recently, in virtually all the states across the country, farmers especially smallholders are afraid of going to the farms to carry out farming activities as result of fear of being kidnapped or clashing with Fulani herdsmen. This in most cases leads to loss of lives, property and

displacement of the farmers. A very good example is late Dr. Aborode, a large-scale commercial farmer in Ibarapa who was killed on 11th December, 2020 by Fulani herdsmen. In the same vein, Premium Times reported that some gunmen kidnapped four farmers in a farm location in Ekiti, demanding N50 million as ransom to secure their release.

Similarly, the fear of being attacked on the road and kidnapped for ransom has made many food traders, both small and large-scale farmers abandon farming and food business thereby leading to food insecurity (FEWS NET, 2013). Corroborating this is the failure of government at all levels in providing basic needs and delivering public goods and services to the masses. This has led to increase in crime rate such as terrorism and kidnapping; hence, the security of lives and property of food producers remains a challenge thereby leading to food insecurity. From all these analyses, it can be established that Nigeria has huge potentials of agricultural development but national insecurity issues are impacting seriously on availability, accessibility, stability and utilization of food within the country. Hence, national security if adequately ensured can promote sustainable food security within the country.

## **COPING STRATEGIES**

The coping strategies include: good governance, effective leadership and enabling environment should be provided by the government of Nigeria for its citizens particularly those in the food business. Farmers at the rural and urban areas of the country should be encouraged, empowered and provided with adequate and urgent security for optimum production. This will encourage achievement of food security by 2030.

Also, hydroponics (soilless farming) should be encouraged within the country since farmers will not need soil and to clear bush for farming rather farming can be done at home. Favourable policies should be targeted at small scale rural farmers so as to ensure food security. Sack method of food cultivation (a method of growing crops in soil-filled sacks or polythene bags) is suggested within individual compounds as this will discourage farming at community fringes. A strong monitoring mechanism for controlling indiscriminate discharge should be developed by the government. Hence, there is the urgent need to re-strategize Nigeria's security architecture in order to enhance sustainable development of the economy.

## CONCLUSION

In spite of the fact that Nigeria is blessed with abundant fertile land for agriculture and enormous human resource, food crisis still looms **large in the country**. It can therefore be concluded that insecurity in terms of the activities of kidnapers, militants, violent armed robbers and particularly Boko Haram in the country have continued to disrupt farming activities and famers' productivity levels across the country. This in turn has unequivocally affected economic development. Furthermore, if insecurity is not checked by the government, it will affect the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG 2 & 8). Security of lives and property will undoubtedly guarantee food security, health and economic security of a nation. When citizens feel unsafe physically and psychologically, promoting increased food productivity will be a mirage.

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