

Food Insecurity: A Growing Threat to Nigeria's National Security

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Abstract

In Nigeria, the topic of food security has played a significant role in the national security equation. The study argues that though the strategic conception and approach are important in the articulation of threats analysis, the non-strategic conceptions like food security or insecurity are also important. It also examines the performance of this sector and the extent to which it could be employed as a catalyst to the defence of national security. The chapter finally recommends ways through which the country could achieve food self-sufficiency in order to solve future security problems. The issue of food and national security has become an important discourse in the international system. Food, one of the basic needs of humans cannot be neglected as people cannot be productive on empty stomachs. For some years now, food situations have improved especially in the developed countries where technology in agricultural production has reached advanced stages. The number of hungry individuals decreased slightly from 688 million in 1992–1994 to 639 million in 2002–2004 as a result of this development. Though many developed countries have sufficient food to meet the calorie requirement of its people the developing countries are yet to achieve food sufficiency. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, the number of hungry people has risen to over 19% in the last decade. It is disheartening to imagine that in most of these areas, agriculture is the main stay of their economies, all persons have means or access and they are still hungry. Thus, in many developing countries the question of hunger has become a security threat.

Keywords: Hunger, poverty, food insecurity, famine, mass destruction of farmland.

INTRODUCTION

International organizations especially those concerned with food have carried out several research, proposal and have organised conferences to access food security and solve the problem [1]. For instance, the 1974 United Nations sponsored World Food Conference in Rome, the 1996, Rome Declaration on World Food Security, etc.

Food security is of much concern to the Nigerian Government as past and present administrations have placed immense emphasis towards achieving this aim. The Nigerian agricultural sector is essentially for domestic food production and in the provision of foreign reserve. Right from the post-independence era till the mid 1970's the nation experienced food sufficiency and exported substantial quantities of cash crops. With large portion of the population dependent on the sector for employment, agriculture provided about 70% of Nigerian export earnings [2]. The sector was responsible for about 63% of GDP in 1960. Unfortunately, agriculture lost its prime position with the neglect of this sector by the government partly because of the discovery of petroleum in

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commercial quantity and partly of lack of modernization and government inertia. This attitude made farming unattractive as there was 'easy money' through contracts and other means. The farmers also became disinterested in farming because the sector can no longer serve as a source of income and savings. This degeneration resulted into massive importation of food by the government which transformed it from being an exporter to an importer of agricultural products [3]. Because of the strategic influence of over dependence on imports and the need to match food production with population growth the Obasanjo and Shagari administration introduced the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution in-1976 and 1980 respectively in an attempt to increase food production and stop the foreign exchange drain. These efforts were followed by the introduction of the Agricultural Development Project (ADP), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFFR), the construction of river basins, improved irrigation facilities etc, to address the issue of food shortages [4]. By the mid 1980s agricultural production dwindled to its lowest ebb due to the negative consequences of the structural changes of the economy which aftermath led to the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), with the basic objective of restructuring the economy with a focus on agriculture and food including appropriate pricing techniques. The democratic government of Obasanjo also put in place machineries to achieve food sufficiency and security in the country by initiating the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) an initiative of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to eliminate poverty, hunger and malnutrition [5].

The food economy in Nigeria is presently suffering from some form of insufficiency. Consequently, a large number of people experience malnutrition. Hypothetically, there is enough food production to guarantee food security and in turn national security, but the reality on the ground is different.

Nigeria has attained self-sufficiency in major staples such as, sorghum and millet and is currently the largest producer of cassava, yams and cocoyam worldwide. However, the increased aggregate food production has not necessarily translated into improved household food security and nutrition [6]. Food production can hardly go round, the unavailability of food and the lack of purchasing power, even when the food is available, is a security threat. As such food inadequacy negatively affects national consciousness and becomes a threat to national security.

The work essentially articulates the relationship between food and national security it will assess how food insecurity has become a source of national security threat, and governments efforts towards food sufficiency; it will also view food security from the conventional and non-conventional aspect of national security. Apart from the introduction, section 2 discusses the conceptual clarification, section 3 looks at the efforts towards food security, section 4, examines the implications of food insecurity to national security.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Food security as a concept expresses different meanings to different people. It could be explained as the access to food at all times by all the people Food Security essentially is to promote a sustainable socio-economic and political wellbeing that would ensure national growth. Food security is "food that is available at all times, that all persons have means or access to it, that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quality, quantity, and variety, and that it is acceptable within the given culture," according to the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in the Rome Declaration of 1996 [7]. The main issue here is the availability of food and ability to acquire it, this explains that it is only when all these conditions are in place that we can say a country is food secure.

According to the World Bank, food security is the ability to always have enough nutritious, safe food to meet everyone's dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. According to Alberto Valdes, food security can be characterized as the capacity of food-deficient nations, regions, or families to achieve annual goal consumption levels. The National Council on Agriculture Journal

highlighted that the concept of food security has multiple meanings. It explained that food security is different from food self-sufficiency because not all the food needs of a country come from domestic sources. For a nation to be food secured, the citizens must be able to have access to food, be able to afford it and utilize the food in their body. Barrowclough viewed the problem of world hunger from two dimensions, the failure of public policy and the negative effect of social structures which he said are peculiar to both developed and developing countries [8]. He argued that greater economic empowerment for people is essential to effectively combating hunger and food insecurity. This calls for raising social participation rates, particularly among the underprivileged. In general, there are three main goals of food security: guaranteeing the generation of sufficient food supplies, optimizing supply flow stability, and guaranteeing people in need of them have access to accessible supplies [9]. Food insecurity has become a major problem of the Nigerian Government with increase in population growth and changes in diet and taste especially in the urban areas, the food demand has become enormous. This situation has been worsened by the campaign for food export especially that of cassava products which has resulted into acute rise in the price of garri, Nigeria's main staple. At a seminar on Food Security in Abuja, Dr Adeoye (a participant) noted that in his community, Oyo-North, people have bought up all the cassava on the field up front for the next three years. This is a minus for Food Security and a threat to national security.

With this situation in progress, the goal of the World Food summit of reducing the number of hungry people by halve in 2015 looks gloomy, with only seven years left it seems unattainable considering the number of hungry people. In the absence of immediate action, the food situation is predicted to worsen considerably further. It is unfortunate to find in this era of globalisation with its advancement in communication and transportation, widespread hunger still exists in some parts of the world a condition that has been attributed to inequality which has characterized the world today.

National security, another concept we are concerned with is synonymous with defence, it forms the internal and external security of a state. Internal security forms the baseline of a country's defence the domestic environment determines how a nation behaves in the international system [10]. The external aspect has to do with defence against external threat to state. It is concerned with protecting a society from actions which could threaten it. Freedom from danger or threats to a country's capacity to defend and grow, advance its core values and legitimate interests, and improve the wellbeing of its citizens are all aspects of national security. National security, according to Arlighous P.E is "the protection of vital economic and political interests through a variety of means, the loss of which will threaten fundamental values and the vitality of the state". Essentially National Security involves any and all actions undertaken to protect the interest and values of a state. National security conceptually according to Mc Namara is a state of tranquility, an absence of fear or disturbing elements in relation to state's objectives. Here he noted the presence of freedom to develop and improve the position of the state.

Preconceived notions as well as unconventional ones influence national security. A secure system of food, health, money, underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, and trade are all included in the non-conventional perspective, which differs from the conventional idea, which is the strategic or military standpoint from which the concept has frequently been defined. Here, we are concerned with the Secured Food Program. A vital component of national security is food security. Food is a very unstable weapon that can be used to incite unrest in neighboring states [11]. In times of conflict, any type of food blockade can be withstood by a nation that can maintain its food needs. According to Lord John Boyd, in this context, "you cannot build peace on an empty stomach, so an army's effectiveness and its soldiers' obedience to orders depend on their physical fitness". This is particularly true of underdeveloped economies where access to food is not a foregone conclusion and ground troops form the preponderant percentage of the armed forces.

Because of the importance of food to man, food sufficiency should be paramount in government policies. Food plays an essential role in national security. A food insecure nation faces a lot of threat

from within and without. Political instability may result from it internally since hungry people tend to become irrational and angry. In addition, those who are hungry lose their patriotism because they feel that their government does not care for them and they would not be prepared to give their lives to defend the nation in the event of an outside attack.

Food has a significant impact on a state's power standing externally, as measured by other states. Accordingly, a nation that has enough food is considered strong, while one that does not is perceived as weak. Nigeria poses a considerable security danger due to its reliance on external supplies for the majority of its needs and the hostility of its neighbors. Another crucial instrument for accomplishing foreign policy goals is food security. When food security is achieved in many developed nations, extra food is frequently distributed as food stamps to the underprivileged or as part of food aid programs. This gives industrialized nations the ability to influence the political and socioeconomic systems of some food-insecure nations. Without a doubt, Nigeria's national security is impacted by agricultural productivity in terms of supply and demand. Food and its implication for national security has become an issue of more concern. The threat to security emanating from food insecurity can therefore only be clearly understood within the wider context of poverty and under development. Nigeria's political economy of dependent development and neo-colonial accumulation has fueled poverty.

How do we measure Food Security or how do we know a country is food secured? Some explanations have been made in this regard. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) states that the difference between a country's expected domestic food consumption (i.e., food produced domestically plus imported food less nonfood usage) and a consumption need (Economic Research Service, Food Security Association of the FAO. Also, Gunter Dresrusse argued that food security could be measured through the traditional supply and demand equation, on the basis that food security balance could be obtained at the point of interception of the two curves (demand and supply) [12]. Food insecurity has always been explained within the context of fluctuation in food production and price changes. The Nigerian society is a heterogeneous one; these fluctuations apply to different groups of the society in diverse ways. For instance, a farmer would feel the impact in the area of output and income, the labourer feels it in employment while others like the civil servants will feel it in reduced or increased income spending, because of these variations we cannot generalise the impact of food security on the populace.

EFFORTS TOWARDS FOOD SECURITY

The question of food insecurity in Nigeria could be traced to the colonial era'' During this time the policy formulation and implementation to develop the sector was a regional responsibility, the administrators were interested in the production of exports crops like rubber, coffee, cotton, cocoa and palm-oil to provide raw materials for their industries in Europe (at the expense of the most needed food crops in the colonies). With independence, agricultural policies were assessed within the historical and political economy context. The export of cash crops persisted because it gave the nation the much-needed foreign exchange. The need for self-sufficiency in food production motivated the Nigerian Government to embark on projects to improve agricultural production. For instance in the first development plan 1962-1968, the sector was accorded the highest percentage of government allocation above other sectors because government wanted to increase the GDP from 3.9% per annum to 4% per annum. This was intended to improve the standard of living, provide material for local industries and for export. In the 70's and 80's the agricultural sector was characterized by low output, government adopted certain policies like the use of marketing board to regulate prices and market products, providing credit to farmers at concessionary rate, establishing institutions like banks, extension services, programmes etc. Some of these include the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), National Agricultural and Commerce Bank (NACB) [13,14]. The goals of The Green Revolution and Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) were to guarantee food security [15]. Despite government investments in this sector and the huge resources allocated to it, the issue of food insufficiency remained, because the policies do not

contain well thought out methods of achieving the objectives. There is the need for the government to embark on an agricultural production system that will ensure sufficient food to satisfy internal food demands through achieving food self-sufficiency and security.

In response to these food shortages the government has been importing basic food items such as grains, maize, fish, sugar etc, especially rice and wheat, which is main cereals in bread production. Though wheat is available in the country, the quantity is inadequate to meet the bread requirement of the populace because it is mainly planted by irrigation. At a seminar on Food Security in Kaduna, the former Minister for Agriculture Alhaji Adamu Bello stated that Nigeria spends over US\$ 2 billion annually in importing rice, vegetable oils, Pringles biscuits; cookies of all sorts, animal products, etc. and from 1992-1997, Nigeria imported about 4 million tons of wheat in addition to domestic production of about 750,000 tonnes. The over dependence of the Nigerian populace on imported items is not the best if we look at the economic condition that was precipitated by the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) when many Nigerians could no longer met their food requirement, they became hungry and angry a situation which led to a state of economic and political instability, a crisis situation which threatened national security.

As a way to achieve food sufficiency and sustainability, the FAO in the year 2000 signed an agreement for a Multilateral Trust Fund project worth more than \$45m in support of the National Programme for Food Security in Nigeria. The FAO wants to provide the technical support while the Nigerian Government provides financial and human support, In this regard, the Federal Government earmarked N364m for the expansion of the National Programme of Food Security (NPFS). The funding, according to the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Agriculture, MS Amah People, would be shared in the ratio of 47:26:19:8, among Federal, State, Local Government and beneficiary communities (This day August 25, 2006). A number of developmental partners like the African Development Bank (ADB), World Bank, UNDP, and USAID, the Arab Bank for Economic Development and the Islamic Development Bank have committed \$18 million, \$60 million and \$30 million respectively to support NPFS in 13 States in Nigeria.

Also, there is a South-South Cooperation, an agreement whereby Chinese specialist work with Nigerian farmers exchanging skills and knowledge. According to the agreement, 520 specialists and technicians in a range of agricultural disciplines will be deployed as part of the NPFS expansion phase project [16]. The Federal Government had launched the NPFS on a pan territorial basis with 3 production / demonstration sites in all the States of the federation including Abuja for the development of Urban and semi-urban agriculture. There are about 250-300 farm families per site. This food security initiative is expected to reach many poor Nigerians and boost agricultural production in food staples like yam, cassava, grains etc. Some Nigerian farmers have benefited from NPFS credit assistance; they have set up various businesses with these loans. In this vein Mrs. Adetutu Tomiwa, a widow, in Lagos set up a piggery with her loan in 2003 [17]. Today she has a flourishing business and has paid off the original loan.

CHALLENGES OF FOOD SECURITY TO NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

From the analysis of Food and National Security problems, it is evident that National Security in Nigeria could be affected by food insecurity. Certain factors have challenged the nation's ability to address Food Security. In addition to low productivity, drought, weather problems, poor post-harvest techniques and management there are conflicts, HIV/AIDS, agricultural inadequacies as major impediments to food security in Nigeria.

1. *HIV/AIDS on Food Security:* The issue of food security transcends the boundary of agriculture to health concerns. HIV/AIDS represents a major hazard for food production and national security threat. The spread is on the increase. This is a serious threat to agricultural production especially in the rural areas where agriculture is the main source of employment. Over the years the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS rose from 1.8% in 1991 to 5.8% in 2001, declined to 5.0% in

2003 and further dropped to 4.4% in 2005. Though the security impact of HIV/Aids may not be felt now, the increasing number of infections may have major economic repercussion as most of the victims are young adults between the ages of 15-24 years., this is the labour force whom the country needs dearly. The FAO estimates that seven million agricultural workers have been lost to Aids Since 1985 and that 16 million will die over the next twenty years [18]. If the rate of infection is not checked, it would affect food production, as a large percentage of agricultural force would be lost in the country, it would also drain government resources from food production to providing Anti-retroviral drugs for the victims. There is an urgent need to define the link between HIV/AIDS and national security in terms of food production.

2. *Natural Causes:* Food production in Nigeria has been negatively affected by droughts, flood, desert encroachment etc. This condition is more in Northern Nigeria, this area is losing about 35,000 hectares of range land and crop land to desertification each year, affecting each of the Northern States. The high temperature and low rainfall can cause variations in food supply in the country. Though the federal government irrigation projects have utilised some unused land the output is not commensurate to the enormous resources expended on these projects, irrigation is done all year round but it is not all the crops that could be grown through irrigation. Other cases of natural factors are deforestation, the devastation of arable land especially in the Niger Delta region, which find expression in environmental degradation in form of oil spillage, gas flaring etc. which render vegetation useless. Fishing and other seafood like shrimps, crabs would not be available.
3. *Civil Conflicts and War:* Nigeria has experienced several crises from the civil war of 1967-1970 to several inter-tribal conflicts, religious and ethnic crisis which have affected socio-economic activities. The duration and nature of these crises interrupt agricultural production in the country because the people would not go to farm nor market their products thus food scarcity and high prices. It is important to state here that the civil war was a major setback to agricultural production. During the war many of the conscripted soldiers left their farms to join the army. After the war, one would have expected the demobilised soldiers to return to the villages to continue with farming, but this was not the case as many of them neither returned to the village nor back to farming. This period unfortunately coincided with the oil boom era when there was 'easy' money. Also, in times of war more money will be diverted from food production to other projects like importing food to feed the affected areas. In addition, the activities of militants groups like (MOSSOB), O'odua People's Congress (OPC), Niger Delta Youths Movement like Asari Dokubo and his Mujahedeen's, the crisis formatted by these groups would not allow normal economic activities and food distribution in the affected areas.

Furthermore, in Nigeria, there is so much trade in food crops across national borders. Unofficial trade (smuggling) in commodities like rice, beans, grains and ground nuts has become common. Coupled with this is the neo-liberal ideology of trade liberalization in agricultural products which ironically has encouraged dumping of surpluses from developed countries. Increased costs of production and subsidization of agricultural products by some developed countries have also jeopardized the goal of food security. Nigerian Government needs to give a thought to all these as they have become sources of security threat.

Another obstacle is the influx of refugees that come in search of food, employment and shelter from the neighbouring countries, where famine and war have taken labour away from food production. During the recent famine and drought in neighbouring, Niger Republic and indeed the crisis in Chad people migrated into Nigeria. These refugees come with neither money nor belongings. They do not constitute any productive force but mere parasites and security threat.

Failed economic policies have serious consequences on food security, programme like OFN, Green Revolution and SAP which were meant to promote food production did paradoxically provoked food insecurity through an ineffective method of production. Because of the desire to earn foreign

exchange, most big time farmers and cooperative bodies' diverted resources and land to the cultivation of export cash crops instead of food crops that would increase food supply. The IMF and SAP undermined 'Food Security by distortions in prices of agricultural products which forced down local prices. This discouraged local farmers from farming and as such Nigerians could no longer obtain their food requirement, they became hungry, angry and this led to a state of economic crises which resulted into political insecurity. Another hindrance is inconsistent agricultural policies. Different governments have its own agricultural policies. Successive governments find it difficult to continue with the policies of their predecessors. Most of them are not mass oriented, they are either politicised or personalized. So, it becomes difficult to achieve credibility and a better direction for the sector as the policies are short-lived.

Institutional factors which include the unavailability of land and the lack of resources to purchase it is another problem. A large portion of farmers in Nigeria are subsistence farmers who own small hectares of land. Farming has become marginally rewarding because it has become less profitable, many of them have abandoned their profession and moved to the urban areas. Educational awareness and enlightenment have reduced the number of able hands on the farmland. Also, the unavailability of resources to employ hired labour has affected agricultural production. The growth in food production never kept pace with the growth in domestic demand, this is a desperate situation that should be tackled as the small-scale farmers cannot handle the food situation. Therefore, agriculture needs to be spared from the incompetent hands of our peasant population if this nation is to achieve food security. This brings us to the inadequacies in the rural sectors, inadequate rural infrastructures like roads, transportation, lack of basic facilities for a good livelihood, all have made it impossible for food supplies to move in and out of the rural areas where food production takes place. The neglect of the rural sector is a security threat.

Also, government neglect of the sector discouraged the farmers. In most cases farmers do not have access to subsidised farm inputs like fertilizers (in most times fertilizer used to get to the farmers at the end of the planting season) high breed yields seedlings are unaffordable because they are in the hands of non-farmers who sell to them at exorbitant rates or get them late. Credit facilities in most cases are not forthcoming (though the creditors' i.e. agricultural banks argue that beneficiaries often defaulted in repayment of loans and credit facilities extended to them). Poor budgetary allocation, accountability and transparency hinder the implementation of the programme [19]. For instance, the proportion of Federal Government budgetary allocation to this sector declined from 2.4 percent in 1999 to 1.5 percent in 2000. In addition, government directives to construct Silos and Warehouses in many states have been flawed by many State Governments, where they are available they are left empty thus most agricultural products are wasted in season because of the low capability to process and store them. Government efforts to encourage fishing and poultry have increased the prices of grains because they are used in the preparation of feed. Most food items are not all year round and when not in season becomes expensive due to poor food storage and preservation. This problem is exacerbated by erratic power supply; the losses realized could have translated to increased income for farmers and Nigeria as a whole. The alarming rate of population growth is also a consequence of food insecurity; the increasing population has not been matched with increased food production.

CONCLUSION

Food imports have become a worrisome issue. The government should try to meet demands through domestic production. Government should invest part of the gains from oil in agriculture to motivate and support farmers by providing them with low interest loan through micro credit services, subsidies on agricultural inputs and high breed seedling as incentives to improve production especially now that government has banned the importation of such goods like poultry and beef. Special credit support should be given women, since majority of them in the rural areas are involved in agriculture. To prosper and prove food sufficiency, refugees should be settled in areas: 'where land

is available for them to produce their own food with government assisting them with farming implements, tools, seedlings, etc. This would help increase food production, ensure access to food by many citizens and guarantee national security. It is common that a country suffering from food insecurity borrows from the international financial institutions or depends on food aid. In the Nigerian context this should not be the case.

As a growing economy with adequate human and material resources, efforts should be made towards being self-reliant on food through policies that would translate it into a sustainable national food security system which would ensure and maintain national security. The Nigerian Government has carried out some laudable programmes towards agricultural development to promote food security, which have not translated to complete achievements. It is now essential to eradicate hunger and food insecurity in the modern world. If the people are hungry they would not be able to respond to a call for national defence. Nigerians at all levels of the society should join hands to ensure an enabling environment for the success and sustainability of policies and programmes towards Food Security.

Recommendations

In the light of issues and problems raised in this chapter, the following recommendations are made to improve Food production and ensure national security should be a revival of the agricultural sector by the Nigerian Government to sensitise and encourage the private sectors and other stakeholders to improve local food production. Increased funding/allocation should be made by the National Assembly members toward the development of the sector such as adequate funding for agricultural institutions, Agric extension, services and research Centre to motivate them to improve Food production and ensure national security.

Government should ensure effective storage and processing of agricultural products. In this regard, the government should make sure that the strategic Grains Reserve Programme meant to ensure food sufficiency is fully implemented and operational. They should see that silos and warehouses are fully stocked when products are in season. More silos and warehouses should be constructed in more states to meet the food demand of the people. Government should be able to anticipate and plan for good and for bad years. More effective food processing technology should be encouraged especially for the perishable goods to make them available and at affordable prices when not in season. This in a way will encourage domestic industrialization.

Government should ensure food security through massive agricultural production. The agricultural sector should be transformed or commercialised particularly traditional methods into mechanised system by doing away with old methods of hoes and cutlass. This will encourage large scale production and self-sufficiency in food production. Farmers need to be enlightened in the latest agricultural technology as we cannot achieve self-sufficiency in manual farm methods. The government need to motivate the farmers and train them, to enable them maintain large scale agricultural production, channel more resources to the rural areas for the provision of infrastructural facilities like good roads, pipe borne water, education and good health services as there exist enormous potential to increase agricultural productivity and promote food sufficiency in these areas. This will also help to check rural urban drift.

Nigeria should not be more dependent on rain fall agricultural practices; rather it should invest in large scale irrigation practices. More dams should be constructed as an alternative to provide water for agriculture; because rain feed agriculture cannot sustain massive agricultural production. Government needs to embark on an agricultural production system that will ensure sufficient food to satisfy internal food demands through achieving food self-sufficiency and security.

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