

FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER RESOURCES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR NIGERIA, LAGOS, FEBRUARY 1988, 65 pp.

This document, titled "Agricultural Policy for Nigeria", was produced by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development and published in Lagos on 4th February 1988. The purpose of the document was to provide a well-designed and articulated agricultural policies as instruments for promoting agricultural growth and development in Nigeria.

It comprises five chapters. The first chapter captioned INTRODUCTION dealt with the role, performance, problems and the objectives of the agricultural sector. The second chapter titled MACRO POLICIES AND AGRICULTURE presented the objectives and strategies of the pricing policy, trade policy, exchange rate policy and agricultural land policy. The third chapter discusses AGRICULTURAL SECTOR POLICIES AND STRATEGIES. It outlined the various policies and strategies with which the objectives and targets of food production (which include; crops, livestock and fish), industrial raw material production and forest products and wild life are to be attained. The fourth chapter titled POLICY ON SUPPORT SERVICES dealt with government policy on sixteen support services: Extension, Credit, Insurance, Produce Marketing, Storage, Processing, Research, Co-operatives, Land Resources, Pest Control, Mechanisation, Water, Rural Infrastructure, Statistics, Advisory Services and Manpower Development. The last chapter titled ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES identified the roles of the three tiers of government: Federal, State and Local Governments. It also stated the roles and responsibilities of the private sector and was concluded with the mechanisms for periodic policy review.

The introductory paragraph of the first chapter briefly summarised agricultural planning experiences in Nigeria prior to independence and up to date. It identified the 1980s as the period the problems in the agricultural sector became apparent, while clear solutions to these problems were not proposed. Government however started making efforts to solve them a decade later with the launching of three successive plan documents, the Second (1970 - 1974), Third (1975 - 1980) and the Fourth (1981 - 1985) National Development Plans which contained various policies, programmes and projects aimed at solving the problems identified.

The objective of this review therefore is to ascertain if there are significant differences between the previous set of development plans in which several agricultural sector policy objectives were stated and the present document. Also, the new policy document will be critically examined to ascertain if the shortcomings of the previous set of development plans have been well addressed. In doing this, the set of objectives, instruments, strategies and other related issues will be compared and related to the problems of the agricultural sector.

I. Objectives of The Agricultural Sector

The ultimate goal of Nigeria's agricultural policy as stated in the document is "the attainment of self - sustaining growth in all the subsectors of agriculture as well as the

realisation of the structural transformation necessary for the overall socio - economic development of the rural areas".

Seven specific objectives were stated thus:-

- (i) The attainment of self - sufficiency in basic food commodities with particular reference to these food commodities which consume considerable shares of Nigeria's foreign exchange and which can be produced locally within the country. The time scale for the attainment of self - sufficiency for the various food commodities were also fixed based on the following criteria: the relative magnitude of the current supply - demand gap, the relative ease of accelerating their local production and relative availability of resources for their local production. Thus self - sufficiency for maize, guinea corn, millet and cassava, is expected in two years or within a short term. In the medium term or within five years, self-sufficiency is expected in the production of cowpea, fish, poultry meat and eggs, mutton and goat meat, while self - sufficiency in the production of rice, beef and dairy products is expected in the long term;
- (ii) The second specific objective is increased production of agricultural raw materials to meet the growing needs of an expanding industrial sector. In pursuance of this objectives industries which use imported agricultural raw materials have been directed by government to get themselves involved in the local production or the promotion of the local production of their agricultural raw materials;
- (iii) Third is increased production and processing of export crops with a view to increasing their foreign exchange capacity and further diversifying the country's export base and sources of foreign exchange earnings;
- (iv) Fourth is modernisation of agricultural production, processing, storage and distribution, through the infusion of improved technology and management so that the sector can be more responsive to the demand of developments in other sectors of the Nigerian economy;
- (v) Fifth is creation of increased rural employment opportunities through improvements in infrastructural facilities so as to productively absorb an increasing labour force;
- (vi) Sixth is improvement in the quality of life of rural dwellers through the provision of social amenities like potable water and improved health and educational facilities; and
- (vii) Finally, improved protection of agricultural land

resources from drought, desert encroachment, soil erosion and flood is to be pursued.

II. Policy Instruments and Strategies

The major policy instruments aimed at achieving the stated objectives are enumerated below.

On the use of subsidies, it was stated that "subsidies will be selectively granted on farm inputs, farm equipment and facilities and farm service to reduce the cost of agricultural production and if necessary, on agricultural product prices to enhance farmers revenue". The subsidies will be granted on a declining scale and will be phased out at an appropriate time.

In the crops subsector, inputs covered are seeds, seedlings, water supply, fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. Processing and storage equipment and facilities, irrigation structure, dam and bore hole construction, pumps, sprayers and other farm machinery and equipment are to be subsidised. Farm services to be subsidised are bush clearing, machine hire, agricultural extension services, and pest and disease control services. In the livestock subsector, inputs to be subsidised are; slaughter houses and abattoirs, meat processing and storage facilities, dips, fences and stock. Dairy processing equipment and materials, feedmills, incubators and breeding stock, animal feed and water, veterinary drugs and services, animal pest and disease control service. In the fishery subsector, the following inputs were listed for subsidy; pond construction, landing jetties, fishing terminals and lofts. Outboard/inboard engines, nets, hooks and lines, floats and sinkers, fishing boats, fish seeds and fingerlings, fish feeds and fishermen training services. In the forestry subsector, the inputs to be subsidised are seed and seedlings, fertilizers, agro-chemicals, polythene pots, mycorrhizal (stock) soil and fencing materials. Powered saw and logging equipment, forest extension, training, pest and disease control services.

Other policy instruments include: regulatory tariff to promote agricultural exports and discourage non-essential imports, particularly raw materials that can be sourced locally; favourable fiscal and monetary policy instruments like tax relief and credit guidelines favourable to the agricultural sector; realignment of the naira exchange rate vis-a-vis other currencies to make the prices of Nigeria's agricultural commodities more competitive in the world market; and land acquisition and allocation to be done by government to ensure that agriculture is favoured.

The strategies that the government intends to adopt for achieving the stated objectives are:-

- (a) Ecological specialisation in crops, livestock and forestry production;
- (b) Encouraging all scale of production i.e. large, medium and small scale farming;
- (c) Input supply i.e. procurement/production and distribution of relevant agricultural inputs; and
- (d) Expansion and rationalisation of the various support services to be rendered by the government.

The policy document also touched on the roles and responsibilities of all the three tiers of government and

the private sector. The main area of direct involvement of the Federal Government is in the provision of the general policy framework within which agriculture will develop and guidance to state and other public agencies on areas of emphasis for investment, particularly in strategic products. Others are research into all facets of agriculture, pest and disease control at national and international levels, provision of water for farming and other uses, maintaining strategic grains and animal product reserves for food security and all other services that had been listed earlier.

The state Governments are primarily responsible for the promotion of extension and inputs for agricultural production, ensuring access to land as well as involvement in training of manpower, pest and disease control, credit administration and storage for price stabilisation.

The local governments are to assist the states in extension, provision of rural infrastructure and promotion of farmers organisation.

The private sector is expected to play a leading role in investment in production, marketing, processing and storage. It is also expected to participate in input supply and distribution mechanisation, research and provision of infrastructure.

The mechanism through which the policy objectives, instruments and strategy will be monitored are ensuring stability and continuity in policy and also engaging in perspective planning.

III. Observations

The broad agricultural policy objectives stated in the new policy document do not differ significantly from those that have been stated in the previous three successive development plans. On the whole, they were geared to the basic roles of the agricultural sector in any economy (that is the provision of food, industrial raw materials, foreign exchange and employment). However, the new policy document contained a longer list of specific objectives; seven compared to the five stated in the second and third national development plans and the four stated in the fourth national development plan. Also the objectives were more clearly stated and specifically directed at both the traditional and current problems of the agricultural sector. With the exception of the realignment of the naira exchange rate, most of the policy instruments in the new policy document have featured in one or two of the previous development plans while the role of subsidies featured in all. The problems as rightly identified in the new policy document are inconsistency and problem of implementation particularly in the area of subsidies.

Another innovation in the new policy document is the emphasis on ecological specialisation as a key strategy for the attainment of the stated objectives. This is one vital factor that has eluded this country over the years.

Out of the sixteen support services contained in the new policy document, only three were completely new. They are agricultural insurance, agricultural statistics and data bank and agricultural investment and management advisory services. The old ones were however more distinctly elaborated upon and directed more towards the private sector unlike previously when they were directed more towards government agencies.

For the very first time roles and responsibilities were

shared among the three tiers of government and for the private sector. However, the roles as shared between the three tiers of government need to be treated more succinctly between the States and Federal Government and between the States and Local Governments. For instance the policy document in stating roles for local Governments suggested that "The Local Government authorities will be expected to take over progressively the responsibility of the State Government with respect to"

The phrase "take over progressively" has a lot of implications which need to be clarified and have specific period fixed for the word "progressive" or else the local government may be inactive now or the states inactive later.

The new policy document recognised the importance of policy stability and continuity and the need to be forward looking in planning by devoting the last section on highlights of the mechanism through which the policy objectives, instruments and strategy will be adequately and efficiently monitored.

IV. Comments and Concluding Remarks

There was a significant improvement in the statement of the agricultural sector policy objectives compared to the ones stated in the previous documents. But as good as these objectives are they can only be achieved if the instruments and strategies directed at them are well implemented. Since the three tiers of government have been identified with roles and responsibilities, this set of objectives must be their guiding principles. If possible, it should be entrenched in the constitution to forestall what happened during the last civilian regime when each State had its own set of policy objectives, while some had no priority in agriculture. In order that self – sufficiency which is the ultimate goal of the agricultural sector is realised, it is very essential that policy objectives stated at the Federal level be adhered to at both the State and Local Government levels since it is their collective efforts that will bring about the national self – sufficiency. This is where the importance of ecological specialisation and liberalisation of trade across state boundaries become very apparent. Every effort must really be geared towards these two strategies if our stated objective of self – sufficiency is to be achieved.

However, the target period set for attaining self-sufficiency in the various subsectors are not realistic if we are to start counting from the year of the document. The slow pace at which the facilitating services are being executed, the bureaucratic procedure of the Government and the fact that Nigeria's agriculture is still very much dependent on weather and the outside world are but few of the problems that could hinder progress. For instance, take the case of grains which if the weather permits can be produced in surplus in the year 1988 the problem of storage is still imminent. The same thing holds for the livestock industry where we still depend on the outside world for the vital inputs such as parent stock and important feed concentrates. Much as it is important to set targets, it is very unreasonable if set in vacuum. Efforts should be made to ensure that enough incentives and facilitating services are made available to producers at the right time and in adequate quantity. After all the infrastructural facilities are put in place that one hopes for a reasonable rate of growth.

Specifically, vital farms inputs such as seeds, seedlings, chemicals, land development services, irrigation water, credit and all the relevant infrastructures should be promptly made available to the small farmers, while industrialists should be lured into agricultural production, processing, storage and other facets of agricultural activities by favourable monetary and fiscal policies. Also, efforts must be made to ensure that the agricultural sector policy objectives are complemented by the industrial sector policies. In this vein, the government should adhere strictly to the idea of local industries sourcing their raw materials locally. This implies that only those agro – allied industries that can use local crops be encouraged. Much therefore still depends on the government, although it is not going to be involved in direct production, but it is the only one that can ensure adequate supply of inputs to the sector. It also has the responsibility for the monitoring and evaluation of developments in the sector. There is therefore need to accelerate work on the Data Bank. Planning so far has been based on grossly inadequate data on farm holdings, land classification, farm labour force, yields, and so on. The best that we have are small sample surveys, there is no comprehensive national census. It is hoped that the agricultural data bank will soon make it possible for the country to plan with "facts" and have a solid basis for monitoring and appraisal. This is a task that must be tackled from the grass-root. Hence all the tiers of government must really be involved, to realise the perspective plan.

In conclusion, efforts should be made this time around to ensure consistency in policy objectives and instruments, through a good implementation strategy, as well as a high sense of discipline and co-operation among the three tiers of government.

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