

## BOOK REVIEW

Osuntogun, Adeniyi and Rex Uzo Ugorji (eds.) *The Private Sector and Nigeria's Agricultural Development*, Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI), Ilorin, 1984; 298pp., price not stated.

This book is a collection of twenty-six (26) papers presented at the First National Seminar on "The Role of the Private Sector in Nigerian Agriculture", organised by the Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute, Ilorin in October, 1983.

The papers are grouped into five parts: (i) The Role of the Private Sector in Nigeria's Agricultural Development; (ii) Experiences and Case Studies of Private Sector Participation in Agricultural Development in Nigeria; (iii) Public Policy and Private Sector Involvement in Nigeria's Agricultural Development; (iv) Financial Institutions and Private Sector Participation in Nigeria's Agriculture; and (v) The Role of Religious Bodies in Nigeria's Agricultural Development.

The authors were drawn from the Research Institutes, Universities, Private Companies, Banks, the Civil Service and the clergy. The general concensus was that, there is need for and there is room for increased involvement of the private sector in Nigeria's agricultural development. They, however differ in their specifications of the functions of the private sector and that of the public sector.

Five papers were presented in Part I. The authors are of the opinion that the scope of participation of the private sector should cover the following areas: reasearch, extension and enlightenment, manpower development, provision and maintenance of infrastructures such as roads, water and electricity, local manufacture of agricultural equipment, mechanised and integrated farming and agricultural financing.

Two modalities were recommended by the authors for implementing this increased participation by the private sector. The first involves both horizontal and vertical integration especially by firms that engage in processed commodities while the second involves the creation of designated zones in the major cities of the country. In each of the zones, both the public and the private sectors will jointly make available the financial resources to provide the required infrastructures. This recommendation was borne out of the fact that government finances have dwindled in recent years. No mention was made of how private companies that invest in infrastructures such as roads which will not serve them alone would be compensated. Thus it is pertinent to note that availability of finance by the private sector is not enough to make agriculture attractive to them. There must be adequate fiscal, monetary and institutional policies which will lure them into agriculture. I am of the opinion that these are still not very adequate, what with heavy import duties on agricultural equipment, heavy taxation of the companies' profit and ineffective land use policies, to mention a few.

In Part II of the book, experiences and case studies of private sector participation in agricultural development in Nigeria were examined. It contains eleven papers. Some were on the historical experience of private sector contributions to agricultural development, while others were case studies of enterprises in the agricultural sector which the private sector could take on. The assessment criterion was mainly the physical contribution of the private sector enterprises. This was generally found to be minimal. Several reasons were adduced for this poor performance. Among the major ones

were inadequate infrastructures and other incentives which the private sector felt should be provided by the government.

This is a clear departure from the first part in which the authors called on the private sector to participate in the provision of these infrastructures. This also brings out vividly the diverse opinions of different groups in the society. The main contributors to Part I are researchers and University lecturers while the contributors to Part II were company executives or private sector affiliates.

Right now, if agriculture is to move fast and in the right direction, there is need for cooperation between the government and the private sector. Much as the government is expected to provide certain infrastructures, the private sector should do away with the idea of not wanting to invest in them at all. They ought to realise that they have some positive externalities which will enhance their businesses.

Part III is made up of four papers. Two of the contributors made very important observations and recommendations. The first stressed the need for a clear definition of the roles of the public and private sectors. He suggested that the government should concentrate on the provision of supportive services and regulatory functions while the production and distribution of inputs and outputs be made the exclusive preserve of the private sector. Comparing the recent performance of both the public and private sector participation in input and output production and distribution, this allocation of functions appears reasonable. However, as mentioned earlier, the private sector where possible should assist in the provision of supportive services like research and infrastructures to enhance the fast growth of the sector. Hence it is very essential that such rigid dichotomy should not be drawn between the roles of the public and private sectors. There should be room for flexibility and cooperation in order to encourage capable investors.

The second contributor stressed the need for clear-cut policy on processing and utilisation of local raw materials as well as the need to monitor it regularly and make necessary adjustments. He went further to recommend that companies utilizing raw materials for which substitutes or alternatives are available locally should be made to submit a yearly progress report on their drives to find local replacements. A target, he said, should be set achieving stated replacement percentages. This, he said, will force them to comply. This is quite reasonable, but for it to be well implemented, there is need for adequate research on local substitutes and the information well disseminated. Also, there is need for a disciplined policing authority and adequate fiscal measures.

Part IV is made up of three papers and the contributors were all from financial institutions. The papers discussed mainly volume of credit going to the agricultural sector and the repayment performance. The authors observed that the agricultural sector received more funds in the seventies following the intervention of the Central Bank of Nigeria and the establishment of the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank. The repayment performance was found to be very poor. The probable reasons for this poor performance were stated and recommendations were made to improve the situation. Most of them were directed at the lending institutions and others at the borrowers and government. One generally agrees with the authors' recommendations because they were well directed at the problems. If well implemented, they can go a

long way to improving the repayment performance and more credit will be made available to the agricultural sector.

Three papers were presented in the final part: two by christians and one by a muslim. They all gave historical accounts of the contributions of their organisations to agricultural development.

The Catholic Church had been involved in agricultural development in Nigeria as far back as 1870, when the Topo Experimental Farm was founded. However in recent times the contribution of the church has been mainly in the area of human management. She has carried out many projects aimed at organising farmers into Cooperatives. Examples are the Igala Farmers' Council and the Ogidi Farmers' Cooperative.

The Anglican Church too has been very active in organising and encouraging local communities to embark on various farming schemes. One notable programme is the "Wusasa Christian Outreach" in which courses in different aspects of agriculture are organised for the farmers. This project has attracted the financial and moral support of international organisations.

The only contribution recorded by Islam is that by the Islamic Education Trust which embarked on crop, fishery and poultry projects mainly to earn revenue for executing their programmes unlike that of the christians which is more of rural development.

The activities of the religious bodies particularly the christians are quite commendable and every encouragement should be given to them to intensify their efforts.

In conclusion, this book can be said to be a very useful volume. This is because it contains information which will be useful to both the public and private sectors particularly at this critical period of renewed emphasis on agricultural development and efforts by government to get the private sector to be more involved in the development of the agricultural sector.

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