

## Urban Food Security in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The challenges of urban food security in Nigeria are enormous. The unmitigated rural - urban drift or increase in urban population has made it significantly imperative to address the problem of dearth of or absolute lack of essential foods with balanced nutritional values in most of our urban centers. That apart, the burgeoning crisis of persistent lifestyle changes, the issue of greater emphasis on urban development without commensurate attention given to the important issue of food security, inadequate capacity for urban service provision and delivery, the persistent deteriorating infrastructure for urban food processing and preservation, rapid price changes, environmental contamination and other deplorable conditions that are visible in the urban centres, have made it germane to thoroughly review the problem of food insecurity in Nigeria. Under the present circumstances where urban living has become a matter of chance due to lack of political response to the issue, undue emphasis placed on individual responsibility towards addressing the food insecurity crisis deplorable rural infrastructure and persistent abandonment of well formulated policies on agricultural development, it is necessary to examine concretely these issues shaping up around the problem. The paper also attempts to lucidly locate the food security values and the formal safety nets that could be operationalized to enhance food sufficiency in Nigeria. It also provides some valid conclusions.

**Keywords:** urban food security, Nigeria, urban drift, agricultural development, food sufficiency

### INTRODUCTION

Food is the most basic requirement of life. It is sine-qua-non for healthy living and survival. Its, imperative can be lucidly located in the fact that it is a basic means of human survival and sustenance. An adequate food consumption, particularly in terms of quality is a sound means to healthy productive life. And due to its importance, it is accorded a greater priority in all Nigeria households budget.

It is a basic fact that all kind of food have different nutrients that enhance the growth and sustenance of man, particularly if taken in the right quality and quantity. The five classes of food which must be combined and consumed in appropriate proportion are carbohydrate, protein, fats and oil. Vitamins and minerals.

Many nations are endowed with many resources which can be exploited to enhance their economic development. These resources are mainly human and non- human. The extent at which the productive capacities of the human resources can be exploited to the benefit of the country depends to a large extent, on how well fed they are. That, perhaps, explains why many countries accord greater priority to food security. Yet, most of the developing countries like Nigeria still contends with the persistent problem of food security. According to Bolarin, *et al* (2007).

"the concern for food security and nutritional wellbeing in an economy is predicated by. the role of human element in economic development. This shows why, at the national level, food is of economic and political significance, especially in issues relating to national security, maintaining political stability and ensuring peace among the populace.

The concept of food security is a very difficult one, as there are many dimensions to it. However, the two basic dimensions this study will focus on are, the level at which the country produces and imports sufficient food to meet the food needs of the people, and the level at which the problem of malnutrition has been solved. According to the World Health organization (WHO), and the Food and Agricultural Organizations (FAO), "The basic maximum requirement figures are 65 grammas of protein and 2500 kcal of energy per capita intake of which if consumed otherwise, leads to a state of malnutrition".

The concept of food security has been defined in various forms. **In** other words, there have been divergent views on what it actually entails. According to Olawale (2005), food security is "the access by all people at all homes to enough food for an active and healthy life". It is the ability, and the commitment of the government to ensure that its citizens are provided unrestricted access to foods at all times (Kent, 2006). According to the committee on world food security (WFS), it is "the physical and economic access to adequate food by all household members without undue risk of losing the access. The United States Agency for international Development (USAID) Provides basic elements of food security viz: Food availability, food access food utilization, and the risk of loosing such access.

## BASIC ISSUES

It has been observed that food security is very strategic because it determines the level of agricultural stability of a nation. In Nigeria it is a measure of achievement of food self-sufficiency and self-reliance objectives of the government.

According to Bolarin, *et al* (2007) food security problems are attributed to problem of distribution, storage and marketing. In Nigeria the problem was attributed to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which was introduced by the Babaginda administration which made export very attractive while it raised phenomenally the cost of producing food. It is also worthy of note that the over-dependence on the small-scale farmers exacerbate the problem of food security in Nigeria. This explains why Agricultural experts have called on the large -scale mechanized farmers to replace the small-scale farmers as practiced in the United States of America.

This view does not however, imply that the small-scale farmers are not significantly relevant in bringing about food security in the country. In fact, they are adjudged to be more economically prudent and rational.

The Nigerian public policy on food and agriculture has also been identified as a strong factor responsible for food security problem in the country. According to Adetokunbo (2002). "Food policy in Nigeria has been characterized by inappropriate role of government in food and agriculture, which manifest in badly formulated and poor executed food policies and the unintended consequences and beneficiaries of the food and agricultural policies". According to Sharma (1992) "national food availability is determined mainly by domestic net supply and

food importation. The capacity to import food in turns depends on export earnings, foreign exchange reserves, and value of essential non-food import and debt service obligations. Aside these factors identified above there are several other factors that adversely affect food security in the country (this will be discuss them in the later part of this paper). But it must be noted that virtually all the factors that contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of the country also enhance the nation's food security.

Like in other African countries Nigeria experiences fluctuations in household own-food production and food prices. (Siamwalla and Valdes (1994). The living standard of Nigerians often threatened by food prices - inflation (Idachaba, 1989). Bashir (1986) observed that the factor contributing to food problems in Nigeria vary from man-made problems to natural forces. (Gurkam (1995) pointed out that food security is consistently not only linked with food production but also general economic and social development variables. The improvement in food production, and therefore, food security however, requires consistent improvement in yield and labour productivity - an improvement which in turn requires improvement in socio-economic infrastructures in agriculture, upgrading the quality of human resources, instituting virile agricultural research and extension system and providing price and non-price incentives for the adoption of new technology (Bolarin, et al, 2007). It is pertinent to note that most of the origins of food insecurity have an element of economic access to food directly or indirectly. Economic access is not limited to monetary access, it includes access to land, to credit, to education and to health services. Per-Pinstrup- Anderson (1994) observed in his studies that food insecure - people are usually not able to meet their needs from the market.

The economic access to food by Nigerians has been found to be very poor. Thus, it is mainly due to unemployment and underemployment. The progressive increase in the population of the country from 88.9 million in 1991 to 140 million in 2008 without corresponding increase in food security, has aggravated the problem, income growth helps to improve food demand and therefore, food security. Food demand and supply trends are known to influence prices as well as the composition in their diets and other factors related to food security. Although food insecurity is usually associated with rural households and urban poor who are more vulnerable to high food price and low income, there are differences between household food security within the urban and rural areas. While real wage and employment are the main determinants of food security in the urban areas, the level of domestic food production dictated by the extent and ease of access to production inputs and services is a primary determinant of food security in rural areas.

## URBANIZATION AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

There is obviously no doubt that Nigeria faces litany of problems which have, in one way or the other, impeded its level of economic growth and development. The rate of urban population growth in the country is persistently increasing as against what it was in the 1960s and 1970s. Presently, about 47 percent of the population of the country live in urban centers such as Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, Portharcourt, Ointshe, Aba, etc. it is therefore, expected that the population of these centres will increase to about 60 percent in the year 2020.

The disparity in the rates at which urban population and urban economies in Nigeria is growing would no doubt, make it difficult for the government to meet the services demanded by the expanding urban population, particularly in terms of infrastructural needs. This condition would lead to overcrowding of the centres and

frequently deteriorate the environment (Ukadike 2000). Dearth of, or insufficiency of or deterioration of infrastructural facilities coupled with the difficulty to deliver services by the government due to the rapidly growing population, would make access to water, health care, housing education, etc very difficult for the people.

It is quite apparent that urban economies in Nigeria has continued to decline due to the factors listed above, and particularly due to the policy measures implemented under the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Consequently, urban poverty is persistently increasing. According to Olakunle (2003) "the urban low income earners and the urban poor in Nigeria earmark significant proportions of their income for the procurement of food. This obviously signifies food insecurity.

In virtually all the cities in the country, access to food has been increasingly dwarfed to include formal markets which in most cases are centrally located, informal markets, urban subsistence production and street foods or foods that are prepared outside the household. According to Drakakis (1991), "while urban food economies may offer a global supermarket for the urban well-to-do, vulnerable groups have to rely on a narrow range of very localized coping strategies." However, the rate at which the locus of poverty is shifting to the urban areas of Nigeria calls for urgent policy attention by the government.

Rapid urban growth in Nigeria was formerly equated with industrialization. But today, it has led to underdevelopment and the neglect of agriculture; many rural dwellers migrate rapidly to the cities in search of the elusive jobs. Thereby compounding the problem of urban food insecurity. In fact, urban food insecurity in Nigeria has now become a politically invisible problem. Several reasons have been attributed to this: Unemployment, the burgeoning informal, lifestyle, changes for overcrowding, decaying infrastructure and declining urban services.

Maxwell (1998), observed that urban food insecurity and malnutrition are made invisible to both urban managers and national policy makers by the very nature of their manifestations. Unless there are major food supply problems or sudden increases in food prices, that is, unless there are food related problems that affect a large number of the urban population negatively and simultaneously, food insecurity is dealt with at the household level, and rarely becomes a political issue. Perhaps, in the same vain, food and nutritional problems in most of the cities in Nigeria are not particularly linked to seasonal changes or other community wide phenomena, but rather to the individual fortunes of households and household members on the labour market and in the informal economy. Therefore, food insecurity in the cities is much more an individual or household phenomenon, and much less a community phenomenon

#### **DWINDLING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND FOOD INSECURITY**

Agriculture is basically one of the most valuable sectors of the Nigeria economy. It contributes more than 40 percent of the total annual crop in Nigeria. Aside from that, it accounts for over 70% of the non-oil export, employs about 70 percent of the country's labour force and provides over 80 percent of the food needs of the nation. During the independence in the 1960, agriculture provided enough food for the Nigerian populace. In fact, food production during this period was at subsistence and self sufficient levels. The economy was witnessing rapid growth due to the booming trade in agricultural commodities export. The economy grew at about 5.5% annually. But between 1960 and 1970, Nigeria started experiencing decline in agricultural production, consequently leading to food shortages. The population grew at a geometric progression thereby exacerbating high demand in food. The gap between domestic food supply and domestic demand became widened due to the increase in population at a rate considerably higher than the rate of increase in food production. This disparity has led to rising food prices in many Nigeria cities and declining foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exports. According to Helleiner, (1996), "The interaction of these factors has led to food insecurity and the idea of self-sufficiency is becoming more and more difficult to achieve due to declining agricultural production and inefficient food marketing system".

To address the problem of food insecurity, a number of agricultural development institutions were set up and special programmes and projects were launched. They include, National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) in 1973. Agricultural Development Project (ADP) in 1973; Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) in 1976; River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) in 1977; National seed service (NSS) in 1977; Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS) in 1977; Rural Banking Scheme (RBS) in 1977; Green Revolution (GR) in 1979; Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) in 1986; National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in 1992; National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) in 1992; Nigeria Agricultural Cooperatives and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) in 2000; National Agricultural Development Fund (NADF) in 2002; Commodity Marketing and Development Companies (CMDC) in 2003.

Ihimadu (2004) stated that "many of these programmes and projects are not impressive enough to bring about the expected transformation of the sector. The food self sufficiency ratio has fallen from 98% in early 1960s to less than 4% in 1986. In 1990, 18% of the population of about 14.4million people was extricated to be critically food insecure. This has increased to over 40% in 2004" (Idachaba 1989)

## **CONSTRAINTS TO URBAN FOOD SECURITY**

Transportation problem is one of the major constraints to urban food security in Nigeria. In fact transport facilities are grossly inadequate. Motorable roads are lacking in many of our rural settlements. Where they are available, they are not accessible during the raining season consequently farm produce cannot be transported to the urban centres. They get perished subsequently.

Most of our urban centres lack adequate market infrastructures. In fact, there are no good storage and warehousing facilities such as luck-up silos and bans. Even in some cities, market facilities such as clean environment, health facilities, fire services, security facilities, water supply and good toilets which contribute significantly to efficient food marketing are lacking.

There is also the problem of shortage of processing facilities. There are no processing facilities in most of our cities. Efficient handling, packaging, grading and processing facilities are very important in food marketing. When they are lacking, sufficient goods cannot be supplied to the urban centres. Absence of processing facilities for crops such as mangoes, tomatoes, pineapples and bananas compel their sale at low prices immediately after harvesting to avoid post-harvest losses (Babatunde, 2004).

The seasonality and perishability of agricultural products also pose a serious problem to urban food security. Seasonality creates surpluses at harvest time. At off-season, there is shortage of the products which lead to short supply to the urban areas.

The persistent lifestyle changes of urban residents create a serious problem for them. Often times people's tastes change as a result of change in financial status. Consequently, when their new needs cannot be met, it became a problem. This could be explained from the perspective of change in their food demands.

Other factors such as rapid price changes, undue emphasis on individual responsibility towards addressing the problem of food insecurity, inadequate capacity for urban service provision and delivery, and under emphasis by the government on urban development authority without commensurate attention to food security, heighten the persistent problem of urban food insecurity in Nigeria.

## **URBAN FOOD SECURITY VALUES**

To address the persistent problem of urban food insecurity a well articulated national food marketing system is needed. This would affect food production and urban household's food security. It can in fact, stimulate increased commercial activities that could generate more funds for plough back investments in both agricultural and agro-allied industrial sectors. The resultant increased agricultural productivity will lead to increased food production and increased food output. It can lead to employment generation for both food distributors and the farmers (Babatunde, 2004).

There is the urgent need to accelerate the pace of transformation of the rural areas. Emphasis should be accorded to the provision of rural infrastructure as good accessible roads potable water, good health facilities, effective transportation system, etc. all these would engender increase in agricultural production and consequently meet the urban food needs.

Government ought to formulate and design policies to increase the output of crops and livestock (through urban agriculture) to meet national food requirements. In other words, there is the need to evolve genuine national food security programme with clear-cut objectives, and appropriate policies (not the over-bloated presidential initiatives on agriculture) the long-term aim of national food security programmes should be to double food production over the next five years. And to realize this, our development plan should be kept under close review to ensure that sufficient domestic resources are committed to the food and agricultural sector. National policies should be re-examined to determine their incentive - or disincentive - effects on food production. The urban food production process would need to be modernized through schemes to improve roads shortages, water management, marketing and credit services, extension and research.

There is the need to increase the productivity of the small urban farmers and generate employment opportunity for the landless urban farmers. It is very glaring that there is an overlap between poverty and food security due to inadequate income and wealth. This brings about inadequate access to available food. Government should therefore, device strategies on how to ensure the income growth of the urban dwellers in order to improve their food demand, and therefore their food security. According to Bolarin et al (2007) "Since real wage and employment are the main determinants of food security in the urban areas, and the level of domestic food production dictated by the extent and ease of access to production, inputs and services are primary determinant of food security in rural areas; policy design should take cognizance of these conditions". There is the urgent need for an increased investment in post harvest technology research and development. In this context, simple storage and processing equipment could be developed and could be effectively used at the level of the farmers and marketers, so as to reduce post harvest food losses in the country (ibid)

It is imperative to organize a nutrition - based programme to improve the food substitution knowledge of many urban households since educational status also affect food security in both urban and rural areas.



## CONCLUSION

Many studies have been carried out on food security in Nigeria. It is generally agreed that the major problem with food security generally lies in poor storage, marketing and distribution arrangements which greatly reduce availability of market supplies of food. This paper also observed that seasonality and perishability of agricultural products, persistent lifestyle changes of urban residents, shortage of processing facilities, inefficient handling, packaging, grading and processing of foods, and inadequate capacity for urban service provision and delivery affect urban food production in the country.

These problems can easily be addressed if the government has the political will to do so. The government must address a situation where the urban poor spend a very large portion of his total income on food. This brings about urban poverty and translates to urban food insecurity. It is also important that the issue of urban population growth be addressed. The rate of urban population growth in Nigeria is perhaps among the highest in Africa. Drastic reduction in the population size of the cities through provision of social amenities in the rural area would go a long way to reduce rural urban migration and hence reduced the food demand of the urban areas, and consequently address the problem of urban food security.

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