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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CROP FARMING SCHEME OF THE RIVERS STATE SCHOOL-TO-LAND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMME.

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Abstract:
This work investigated the sustainability of the crop farming scheme of School-to-Land agricultural programme in Rivers State, A multi-stage sampling technique was implored to select a sample size of 57 from a sample population of three hundred (300). Descriptive statistics of frequency tables, bar charts, percentages, mean and Score Sheet tabulation were implored in the analysis. Performance decisions were taken based on the failure percentages. Study revealed that the programme failed due to lack of government financial commitment, forceful reacquisition of lands by communities, abandonment of farming activities due to aged trained farmers and lack of interest by trained and settled farmers. The study recommended for the government to step up maintenance culture on the authority's properties. There should be renewed sensitization of youths on the need for youths to return to farming as a way forward to guarantee sustained agricultural productivity
Keywords: Investigation, Sustainability, Crop Farming, School-to-Land, Agricultural.

Introduction

The problem of food shortage especially in the last few decades is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. One of such report by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations paint a dismal picture of some third world countries to the effect that they were being threatened with famine and starvation. In 1985, it was even predicted that Nigeria's food production may inevitably lead to starvation in five years unless the country doubled its food production efforts. This report was disturbing in Nigeria, which for long was an exporter of agricultural products like palm oil, cocoa and groundnuts but later resorted to importing assorted food items. Oil boom contributed to the utter neglect of the agricultural sector. The need to produce massive quantities of food for our large and constantly rising population had been recognized for some time. This was why various governments at both federal and state levels made attempts for the purpose of achieving increased food production. This further explained why the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) and the Green Revolution (GR) programmes aimed at revitalizing agriculture in the country were launched between 1978 and 1980 (Tamuno, 2009). Unfortunately, these programmes which were well meant failed to make the desired or significant impact and ended up as wasteful exercises in terms of revenue and other material resources. Also, the then military administration of General Muhammadu Buhari identified the problem food shortage and its inherent dangers, and placed much emphasis on self-sufficiency in food production. To drive the emphasis on food sufficiency home, in Rivers State, the then Military Governor, Fidelis Oyakhilome in line with the Federal Government's agricultural policy evolved an agricultural programme that was definite in purpose to ensure the cultivation of large hectares of farm land.

To solve the problem of youth unemployment and feed the ever increasing population in the country had always been the major policy thrust of the various governments at both Federal and State levels. In this view, many past agricultural programmes were embarked upon at various levels of government. Such programmes as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), 1976, Green Revolution (GR) 1972, Community Block Farming (CBF), National Accelerated Food Production (NAFP) programme 1973, Directorate of Food and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), 1986. Apparently, most of these programmes did not create the desired significant impact in arresting the unemployment and food situations in Nigeria. To some extent, they ended up as wasted efforts in terms of

man power and resources. Major reason was short sighted planning and lack of interest on the part of the operators. These programmes failed to create the desired impact on employment generation, increased food production and rural infrastructural development. The School-to-Land programme in 1985 introduced in Rivers State represented one of the bold attempts the state government had initiated to tackle these same problems of food shortage and unemployment. This study therefore investigated so far, the "Sustainability of the Crop Farming Scheme of the Rivers State School-to-Land Agricultural Programme". Specific objectives of the study include; (i) to investigate the reactions of trained farmer of School-to-Land programme on crop farming. (ii) to identify the reactions of trained farmers of School-to-Land programme on income generation, (iii) to ascertain the reactions of trained farmers of School-to-Land programme on self-employment (iv) to identify the number of participated farmers trained (v) to identify the number of participated farmers settled on farms and (vi) to identify the number of settled active farmers and number absconded.

Literature Review

Food productivity in Nigeria is faced by the inability of both government and private farmers to sustain availability of farm produce without clinching on the understanding that availability of farm produce is seasonal. This is orchestrated by the fact that there are periods when certain farm produce are scarce in the market thereby occasioning high food prices. In a nation where agriculture is seen as a priority through cultivation rather than un-ending agricultural programmes targeted at mopping up unspent cash through surplus budgeting, foods are bound to be available at all times. Sustainability of farm produce is the use of modern farming techniques that enhances the quality of soil nutrients and protects the environment and at the same time harmless to human health in the productions of foods at any period of the year. In this regard, beside technology, farm infrastructures such as irrigation system, fertilizers, and assessable feeder roads are essential.(Alademerin and Adeji, 2010). Farm produce must be of high quality. Availability in the markets must command cheaper prices to justify both huge human and financial inputs at the same time affordable.

The school-to-land programme is an innovative idea which recently appeared in the literature of agricultural development (Igbanibo, 2012: Robinson and Kalu, 2013). For this reason, documented records on its usefulness and performance are very scanty. Even then, available documented information appears mainly in newspapers, magazines and government publications.

In a statewide broadcast, on March29, 1985, the former Military Governor, Oyakhilome described the programme as a "programme designed to achieve an increase, very impressive increase in the area of agricultural production if put under effective cultivation by the adoption of improved methods and exotic species'. Punch Newspaper of 7th June, 1985 described the programme as "Commendable and indeed heroic". It was as one capable of creating employment, improving our food situation and propelling the much desired mass mobilization of people for material reconstruction.

Commenting further, new Nigerian Newspaper of June 20, 1985 saw the programme as a welcome innovation and a noble experiment designed to create a set of youthful farmers to replace old ones and a way of responding to the current uncertainties in the oil sector. Newswatch magazine of July 29, 1985 called the programme a welcome departure from "white-colar jobs" by young leavers. The Nigerian Tide newspaper of 5th June, 1985 called it "a giant stride towards a diligent and fruitful agricultural revelation". The Daily Time newspaper of 5th July, 1985 confirmed it as a pragmatic approach to make youths go back to the land. Emma, (1988) described the programme as a pointer towards achieving increased farm produce for the nation and suggested that adequate training should be given to youths to better equip them for self-reliance.

Aims and Objectives of Rivers State School-to-Land Programme

The School-to-Land programme was established by Edict No. 4 of 1985 by the Rivers State Government and formally launched the same year. It was one of the measures taken by the Rivers State Government to help check the rising trend of unemployment amongst the youths. It is an Agricultural Training Institute charged among others with the responsibility of intensive on-the-job-training of:

(i) young secondary school leavers of Rivers origin in modern agricultural practices.
(ii) encourage the young school leavers to take to agriculture as a viable profession.
(iii) train the young farmers in processing of grains.
(iv) production of food crops and livestock for local consumption.

The goals are:

(i) to train a new breed of small-scale farmers and thus create opportunities for, and encourage self-employment of young secondary school leavers in agriculture, particularly in the areas of crops, fisheries and livestock production.

(ii) to operate and promote modern agricultural practices thus contribute to increased production of food and fibre

(iii) to provide essential inputs and support services as a loan package to eligible young farmers after their training.

The project had its sites in Bunu-Tai, Iriebe, Kpaa, Egbeke/Nwuba, Bori New town, Kpaa, Agbate, Okordia Sagbama, Ogbia and Bukuma (Tamuno, 2009). However, the programme presently, has two (2) existing farm locations at Kpaa 350 hectares and Bori New Town (Wiiyaakara) 450 hectares (ADP, 2009). However, in 2008, Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) acquired Egbeke/Nwuba while other government projects were also sited at Bunu Tai and Iriebe. School-to-Land's head office was relocated from No. 35 Port Harcourt Aba road to ADP farm at Rumuodomaya in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area which serves as pilot farms occupying 5 hectares of land.

Report revealed that from 1985 to 1994 when government attention was on the programme, a number of achievements were made mostly in the area of training of farmers (SLA Report, 2016). An overall number of 2343 youths comprising men and women were trained by the programme from 1985 to 1994. The programme recorded a total number of 1,360 out of projected 500 farmers ear-marked for training, indicating about 63 per cent increase from initial projected number. The report further showed that from 1988 to 1990, 600 farmers were trained in crop farming which explained that 200 farmers were trained in each of the respective years. Trainings from 1990 to 1993 accounted for 116, 145 and 68 youths, showing 23.2, 29.0 and 13.6 per cents respectively from 500 projected numbers of youths for each year. For the year 1994, only 53 farmers received trainings which showed 10.6 per cent of annual target of 500 farmers. However, report on table 1 revealed that a number of farmers were empowered through loan facilities and settled with government acquired plots of land within their respective localities to practice farming. Farm inputs such as improved seeds and seedlings were provided. Loan disbursements and repayment records, level of facilities provided to enhance farming activities by the trained farmers reflected as shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Number of Farmers Settled, Loan Disbursements and repayments by Rivers State School – to- Land Authority (1985 – 1994)..

Farm Locations	No. of Settled Farmers	Loan Amount (₦)	Repaid Amount (₦)	% Repaid (₦)	Loan Outstanding (₦)	% Loan Outstanding (₦)
Agbeta	42	150,000	7,720	5.2	142,280	94.8
Bori New Town (Wiiyaakara)	61	305,000	20,000	6.6	285,000	93.4
Bunu-Tai	86	430,000	1,544	0.4	428,456	99.6
Bukuma	24	120,000	-	-	120,000	100
Egbeke/Nwuba	81	405,000	58,672	14.5	346,328	85.5
Iriebe	46	345,000	62,460		282,540	81.8
Kpaa	135	675,000	71,024	10.5	603,976	89.5
Okordia	61	305,000	27,792	9.1	277,208	90.9
Ogbia	28	140,000	61,792	4.4	78,208	55.8
Sagbama	27	135,000	16,984	12.6	118,016	87.4
Total	**591**	**3,010,000**	**327,988**		**2,683,012**	
			10.8%		**89.1%**	

Source: Statistics and Planning Unit, Rivers State School-to-Land Authority

Table 2: Level of Facilities provided within farm locations by Government to enhance farming Activities.

Farm Locations	1 bedroom flat/farmer	Water Boreholes	Electricity Generator	Schools: Primary & Secondary	Sports Facilities	Clinics
Agbeta	Nil	Partial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bori New town (Wiiyaakara)	Nil	Partial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bunu-Tai	Nil	Partial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bukuma	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Egbeke/Nwuba	Nil	Partial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Iriebe	Partial	Provided	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kpaa	Nil	Partial	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Okordia	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Ogbia	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sagbama	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Source: Statistics and Planning Unit, Rivers State School-to-Land Authority.

Empirical Studies

Studies in this direction were buttressed by Idris (2006), adopting a descriptive approach, conducted a study on "Achieving Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria: A Land-use Policy Perspective", attributed sustainable productivity to consistent supply of farm inputs and the people's willingness to practice farming as a career. The paper suggested for more research and training of farmers and proper investigation of soil quality to enhance increased productivity. Similarly, Alademerin and Adedeji, (2010) descriptively worked on "Developing an Approach for a Sustainable Agricultural Revolution: A Prescription for the Private and Public Sector in the Southern States of Nigeria" and observed that strings of poor achievements in agriculture in other underdeveloped nation like Nigeria is as a result of lack of intensive research in agriculture and local political challenges. The study saw agricultural programs in Nigeria as avenue for frauds. It was recommended that practical farmers should be involved in the implementation of extension services to help identify where challenges exist than use paper/office farmers.

The work of Ibinabo, (2012) descriptively analyzed "The Defunct Rivers State 'School to Land' Scheme: A Dream Deferred. Can the Objectives of the Songhai Farming Scheme in Rivers State be achieved?" The program was found to have left trained farmers to struggle for greater harvest through their levels of empowerment, especially with the plots of lands allotted to them in their local government areas. The study recommended for government consistent material supports to achieve sustainable agriculture. Eke and Effiong, (2016) in their investigation on "The Effects of Capital Accumulation on Crop Production Output in Nigeria using Ordinary Least Square and Co-integration methods. The result revealed that with the huge financial and human capital resources expended on the cultivation, there was no significant impact on crop production. It further revealed that capital accumulation must be used together with human capital for crop production to yield positive results. The study recommended for total review of government policies on agriculture to boost productivity.

This study covered the gap by investigating the present position of the achievements of the programme after the dissolution of the board in 1994 by the then governor Chief Rufus Ada-George and considering the fact that before the dissolution of the board, large number of trained farmers have been settled with soft loan facilities and plots of land in their various farm locations to cultivate.

Materials and Method

This survey study was conducted in Rivers State, Nigeria. The investigation centered on the Sustainability of the Crop Farming Scheme of School-to-Land Agricultural (SLA) Programme. Reviewed materials were sourced from the state ministry of agriculture, school-to-land authority reports, journals, textbooks and other relevant publications. Based on available statistics on the programme, data were collected from a sample population of three hundred (300) distributed to the six local government areas where School-to-Land projects were sited. Only fifty seven (57) samples were returned. The reason was that many of the project sites have been abandoned by settled farmers while others were either retaken by land owners from the communities or government projects sited on them. These samples were collected through a well-structured questionnaire using a multi-stage

sampling technique. This gave the opportunity of capturing all shades of characteristics. Direct oral and personal interviews also aided our investigations. Descriptive statistics of frequency tables, bar charts, percentages, mean and Score Sheet tabulation were implored in the analysis. Performance decisions were taken based on the failure percentages.

Results and Discussions

Table 3: Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents on Marital Status, Age and Gender.

MARITAL STATUS						
	Single	Married	Divorced	Widow	Widower	Total
Frequency	2	43	4	5	3	57
% Response	3.5	75.4	7.0	8.7	5.2	100

AGE (in years)					
	20 – 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 and above	Total
Frequency	-	-	23	34	57
% Response	-	-	40.3	59.6	100

GENDER			
	Male	Female	Total
Frequency	43	14	57
% Response	75.4	24.5	100

Source: Field Work, 2016.

Analyses results in table 3 show that greater number of farmers (75.4%) are married. This is followed by widows with 8.7%. it explains the fact that the only way the widow are surviving is through their cultivation on the land allotted to them by the authority. The result further revealed that 7.0% of the settled farmers are divorced. The remaining 5.2 and 3.5% were singles and widowers respectively. For the ages of the farmers, there are not active farmers found within the ages 20 – 30 and 31 – 40. This means that at the inception of the programme in 1985, people who are within age 40 this year (2016) were nine years old then. It further explains the inability of the government to intensify efforts in attracting youths into the programme. However, 23 of the respondents were 41 – to 50 years of age representing 40.3% while 34(59.6%) are within 51 years and above. For gender participation, respondents surveyed discovered that male farmers were more in this programme with 43 representing 75.4% while females were 14(24.5%).

Table 4: Socio-Economic Profile of Respondents on Household Size, Sources of Inputs and Labour

HOUSEHOLD SIZE				
	0 - 2	4 - 6	7 and above	Total
Frequency	5	18	34	57
% Response	8.7	31.5	59.6	100

SOURCE OF INPUTS				
	Supplied by government	Purchased from market	Received after training	Total
Frequency	-	57	-	57
% Response	-	100	-	100

SOURCE OF LABOUR				
	Family	Hired	Corporative	Total
Frequency	28	22	7	57
% Response	49.1	38.5	12.2	100

Source: field work, 2016

Results of table 4 analysis on household size revealed that farmers whose household size fell within 0 – 2 were 8.7%. This size could affect participation in agricultural programme especially where farm activities are more of manual labour than mechanically performed. In this aspect, farmers carry out their farming activity considering the fact that large numbers of equipment used by the authority have either become obsolete of old or needed to be replaced. Farmers with household size of 4 – 6 were 31.5% while a greater number with 7 and above were 7(59.6%). The understanding is that farmers with large family sizes carry out more farming than those with smaller family sizes. The reason remains that were mechanical technology is not available, wives and children become ready labour. Where the resources to hire labour are not available, family is always a cheaper source of labour.

Source of input inter alia, is a major factor in agriculture. Greater number of the settled and active farmers 57(100%) purchase their farm inputs. This number show that input source is not limited to improved seeds and seedlings but includes processing equipment. That fact remains that agriculture did not begin and end with farm cultivation but involves processing. Where a farmer's agricultural productivity stops at farm produce, the processing of perishable produce to guarantee sustained availability of food will be lost hence a clear scarcity emerges. The result further revealed that supply of inputs to settled farmers after their training by the government was not available neither did government remain committed making inputs available to the farmers periods after training. On the issue of source of labour, families supplied their labour for farming activities. This is reflected in the result which showed that 28(49.1%) employed the services of members of their family to cultivate their farms. It further revealed that 22 of the respondents 22(38.5%) accepted to have hired their labour to remain as farmers since mechanized agriculture seem to have defiled every call and policy recommendations.

Forming corporative societies by farmers is found to be very helpful. A further analysis explained that 7 respondents representing 12.2% accepted that farming activities were performed by the farmers through their cooperative societies. In cooperatives, famers attend to members' cultivations by assisting one another in groups. This reduces the cost of labour and makes farming activities faster.

Table 5: Number of Trained Farmers Still Practicing Farming as Career.

Farm Locations	No. of Settled Farmers	No. Active	% of Active Farmers	No. Absconded	% of Absconded Farmers
Agbeta	42	0	0	42	100
Bori Newtown (Wiiyaakara)	61	39	64	22	36
Bunu-Tai	86	0	0	86	100
Bukuma	24	0	0	24	100
Egbeke/Nwuba	81	0	0	81	100
Iriebe	46	0	0	46	100
Kpaa	135	18	13.3	117	86.6
Okordia	61	0	0	61	100
Ogbia	28	0	0	28	100
Sagbama	27	0	0	27	100
Total =	**591**	**57**		**534**	
Total Farmers Trained = 2,343	**25.2%**	**2.4%**		**22.7%**	

Source: Field work, 2016.

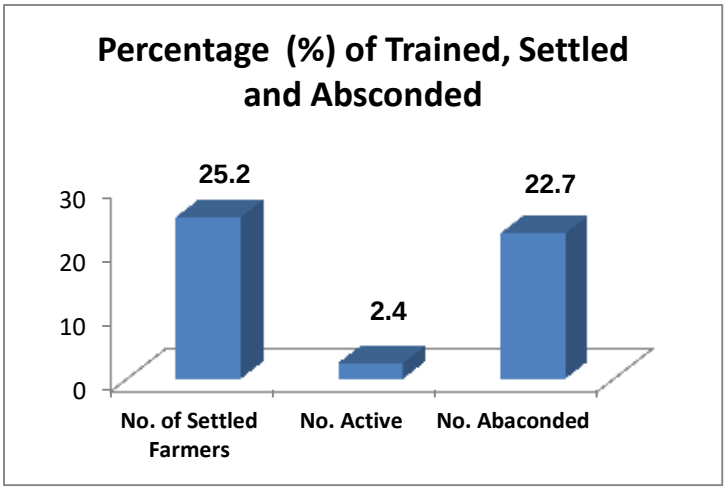

Fig. 1: Bar Chart Representing Number of Trained, Active and Absconded Farmers, 2016.

Findings shown in table 5 revealed that a total of 2,343 farmers were trained by the authority. Out of this number, 591 farmers were settled at the acquired farm lands in their various communities by the authority with initial inputs to actively practice farming. In terms of settled farmers, one hundred and thirty five (135) were settled in Kpaa community while eighty-six (86) were settled in Bunu Tai community. Bukuma, Sagbama and Ogbia, had the least settled farmers with 24, 27 and 28 respectively. The essence of this work is to find if the programme has continued production of agricultural produce since the programme was mandated to sustain food production. However, further results show that thirty one years later, number of fifty-seven (57) representing 2.4% trained and settled farmers were found still in active farming comprising 39 from Bori Newtown (Wiiyakara community) while the remaining 18 are from Kpaa community. It was further discovered that out of the ten (10) communities (locations), only two (2) remain partially functional as eight (8) are completely abandoned. Reasons given by farmers were non-availability of improved variety seeds and seedlings, lack of soft loans to enable them purchase fertilizers, storage facilities as many are willing to further diversify into poultry and fish farming etc. A programme where eight locations out ten are 100% abandoned do not spell sustained. Bar chart analysis in figure 1 further show that out of the total number of trained farmers, 25.2% were settled, 2.4% remain in active farming while 22.7% have abandoned farming activities of the programme.

Table 6: Impact of the Programme on Trained/Participated Farmers.

	I now use improved materials & seedlings	I learnt new farming methods	I now grow crops all year round	I learnt nothing from the programme	I can now produce more food	Total
Response	3	19	24	Nill	11	**57**
% response	5.2	33.3	42.1	Nill	19.2	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2016.

Analysis result table 6 on the impact of the programme on trained farmers dwelt on improved seeds and seedlings, farming methods, sustained crop cultivation, knowledge acquired and increased productivity. The analysis revealed that 3(5.2%) of the respondents still use improved materials and seedlings thirty-one years after the programme. since farmers attest to the fact that government do not supply them with improved variety seeds and seedlings, it means these farmers now purchase the seedlings with their resources showing a complete neglect of farmers by the government. This is contrary to the work of Idris, (2006) which attributed sustainable productivity to consistent supply of farm inputs and the people's willingness to practice farming as a career.

Most of the farmers 19(33.3%) explained that the knowledge they acquired after undergoing trained at the School-to-Land authority is still helping them to practice farming activities effectively irrespective the dwindling resources. This is consistent with the result of the study done by Ibinabo which found that school-to-land programme left trained farmers to struggle for greater harvest through their levels of empowerment. Greater number of farmers 24(42.1%) now grow crop all year round to ensure their family do not lack food explaining that their continues practice of crop farming activities is still at the subsistence level. Further result show that all

the remaining active settled farmers acquire knowledge of farming from the training received from school-to-land. Result also show that 11(19.2%) of the active farmers can produce more food to sale and feed their families. This number is adjudged to be persistent in the crop farming activities irrespective of non-provision of farm inputs from the government. They have taken farming as a career to sustain their households.

Table 7: Impact of the Programme on Farmers Level of Income.

	My income has increased	I can invest more on my farm	I can now borrow & repay loans easily	No change in income	Borrowing or repayment ability not changed	Total
Response	7	11	7	14	18	**57**
% response	12.2	19.2	12.2	25	31	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2016

Table 7 analyzed responses that bordered on income generation, increased farming investment, ability to repay loans, change in income and inability conveniently repay loans. Result show that 7(12.2%) can stated that their income generation has increased. These set of farmers were encouraged by the trainings they received which acted as their spring board into full farming career. This is in agreement with the work of Eke and Effiong, (2016) that capital accumulation must be used together with human capital for crop production to yield positive results. Again, 11(19.2%) stated there willingness to invest more on other areas of agriculture that may be considered viable. Active farmers' ability to borrow and repay was 7 representing (12.2%). A number 14(25.0%) saw no change income from when they were not involved in agriculture hence still operate faming at subsistent level where they can only guarantee feeding their family and not build house, buy cars training their children and others while inability to repay soft loans obtained for family has not improved.

Table 8: Impact of the programme on Self-employment/reliant

	Provide food for my family	Pay my children's school fees	Build my own house	Living on rent	Can Afford Clothing	Total
Response	18	7	4	11	17	**57**
% response	31.5	12.2	7	19.2	29.8	**100**

Source: Field work, 2016.

Analysis on family food provision, children's school fees payment, build personal house, live on rent and ability to afford clothing as shown in table 8 found that only 18 among the surveyed active farmers representing 31.5% could afford food for their families. This is an indication that the programme could not sustain food supplies to markets for the teeming population. It is obvious that food scarcity is as a result of non-sustainability of food supplies to markets in both rural, urban and city markets. Child education is one of the essential responsibilities of parents. Further analysis result show that 7(12.2%) farmers can pay their wards' school fees. A handful of the active farmers 11(19.2%) could afford accommodation while the rest (80.8%) are living on rent. Clothing one-self is a necessary condition for mentally sound individual. However, it was discovered that 17(29.8%) could afford clothing for themselves and households.

Table 9: Score Sheet (Level of Performance) for School-to-Land Programme.

S/No.	Targets	Farmers	Percentages (%)		
1.	Total No. of Trained Farmer	2,343			
2.	Settled Farmers	591	25.2		
3.	Active Farmers	57	9.6		
4.	Absconded Farmers among Settled	534	90.3		
			Performance Criteria		
	Performance Indicators/ Extracted Question	**Farmers**	**% Success**	**% Failure**	**Remarks**
5.	I now use improved materials	3	5.2	94.8	Fail
6.	I learnt new farming methods	19	33.3	66.7	Fail
7.	I now grow crops all year round	24	42.1	57.9	Fail
8.	I can now produce more food	11	19.2	80.8	Fail
9.	My income has increased	7	12.2	87.8	Fail
10.	I can invest more on my farm	11	19.2	80.8	Fail
11.	I can now borrow & repay loans easily	7	12.2	87.8	Fail
12.	No change in income	14	25.0	75.0	Fail
13.	Borrowing or repayment ability not changed	18	31.0	69.0	Fail
14.	Provide food for my family	18	32.0	68.0	Fail
15.	Pay my children's school fees	7	12.2	87.8	Fail
16.	Build my own house	4	7.0	93.0	Fail
17.	Living on rent	11	19.2	80.8	Fail
18.	Can Afford Clothing	17	33.3	66.7	Fail

Source: Field Work, 2016

Score sheet of investigation into the sustainability of the crop farming scheme of the Rivers State school-to-land agricultural programme revealed that the programme failed. The recorded percentage levels of success and failures when compared, found that the programme did not impact positively on the lives of the people in terms of supply of farm inputs, sustained supply of farm produce, ability to repay agricultural loans, income generation, payment of children's school fees, additional investment on agriculture, affordability of personal houses, rent an accommodations and clothing. Based on this judgment, it is admitted that crop farming scheme of the Rivers State School-to-Land Agricultural Programme failed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The programme has existed for thirty one (31) years. Its popularity seems to be speedily on the decline. The study unfolds the fact that out of 2343 trained farmers, 591(25.2%) were settled, 57(2.4%) were active after thirty one years while 532(22.7%) abandoned crop farming of the programme. The study also discovered that the programme did not perform better on all the selected indices of improving the lives of rural households. Based on the findings, it is recommended that;

(i) The authority should keep detailed and sufficient records on their food production activities to enable proper assessment of the programme.

(ii) Government should step out to re-acquire those farm locations forcefully retaken by communities.

(iii) There is the need for the government should step up maintenance culture in the authority's properties. A situation where all the equipment and machines have broken down, no silos for seeds storage, farmers' shades are collapsed, spells total failure of the programme.

(i) There should be renewed sensitization of youths on the need for then to embrace farming as a way forward to guarantee sustained agricultural productivity.

Contributions to Knowledge

1. The study established that forceful re-acquisition of farm locations by the community as a result of government negligent to retraining, financial commitments and maintenance culture is fundamental to failure of the programme.
2. It was established that one of the causes of failure of the programme is that trained and settled farmers at the inception of the programme in 1985 are old and no longer active to continue crop farming activities.
3. The work further established established that electricity, schools, clinics, housing accommodations, water boreholes and sport facilities to better the lives of farmers were not provided while water borehole projects started at Agbeta, Bori New town (Wiitaakara community), Bunu-Tai, Egbeke/Nwuba and Kpaa communities have remained uncompleted for the past three decades.

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