
AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural policy-making in Nigeria has been through changes over time. During each phase, the characteristics of policy have reflected the roles expected of the sector and the relative endowment of resources. In particular, the emergence of petroleum as a major source of revenue had meant that more revenue was available for funding of programmes. It also meant that agriculture no longer commanded the same amount of attention it did in the earlier periods.

These notwithstanding, agricultural policy had been dynamic. Institutions were created while others were disbanded depending on the exigencies of the time. Hence the marketing Boards gave way to commodity boards and production companies; the River Basin development Authorities have been modified to meet changing objectives; small-scale irrigation schemes are receiving more attention than the earlier large versions; agricultural extension by the State Ministries of Agriculture has given way to extension by the Agricultural Development Project (ADP); technology generation and dissemination are being integrated through the ADP-Research Institute farming systems research.

Dialogue has been on-going on key sub-sectors of agriculture among policy makers, practitioners and development agencies, aimed at evolution of more effective policies in the agricultural sector.

It is now realized that agriculture at policy concerns more than food production. In spite of abundant production of food, excessive hunger still does exist among the populace. Both under- and malnutrition could still coexist with apparent plentiful supply of food. Many of the citizens could still be deprived of good health and education in spite of high per capita supply of food.

Availability, access and distribution of food and basic needs have become important security complements of food availability. The broad term, poverty alleviation has assumed an acceptable battle cry for policy makers in the food sector generally.