

## A POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS ON SMALL SCALE FARMERS AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

**A**griculture is a very important sector, aside ensuring food security, employment and the supply of raw material to industries; it is the base for the development of other sectors of the economy in the developed and developing countries. Smallholder farmers have been the major contributors to food production in Nigeria; in the colonial and postcolonial era their surpluses were used for development projects in educational development, industries, infrastructures among others. This paper examined the role of smallholder farmers to food security and economic development but these contributions has no significantly impact on their livelihood as they still live in poverty and are marginalized. As the economy grows, the role of agriculture in the economy shrinks and agriculture is relegated to the background. The implementation of trade liberalization and the removal of subsidies exacerbated the conditions of peasant farmers especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, many of them have not been able to cope with the business of farming because of poor supply of inputs, poor infrastructure, land tenure system, finance, science and technology, etc these problems have led to the abandonment of farming by some famers to some non farm activities. And the consequence of this to Nigeria is increased dependence on the developed world for food.

## Introduction

Agriculture is a multidimensional tool that is relevant in the economic growth of a nation. In the developed and developing countries, the sector has contributed and it is still contributing to the economic development of states, but its role in sustaining it is declining. The sector, which was the main stay of the economy in the postcolonial era, has degenerated to a low ebb with a less significant contribution to economic growth. As the economy grows, the role of agriculture in the economy shrinks. As a pivotal sector, agriculture has in diverse ways contributed to other sectorial development. Johnston and Mellor (in Dunmoye 1987:154 ) identified five ways in which agricultural productivity contributes to overall economic growth. They are namely:

- Substantial increase in the demand for agricultural products, that is food supply.
- Expansion of agricultural exports, cash crops especially as it is one of the most important means of increasing income and foreign exchange, particularly in the early stages of development
- The labour force for manufacturing and other expanding sectors of the economy are drawn mainly from agriculture.
- Agriculture is expected to make a net contribution to the capital requirement for overhead investment and expansion of other sectors.
- The net cash income of the farm population may be important as stimulus. That is it generate finance for off farm activities after planting season.

Globally, small-scale farmers are the key food producers, there are approximately 2.5 billion people involved in full- or part-time smallholder agriculture, managing an estimated 500 million small farms. Smallholders manage over 80 per cent of the world's estimated 500 million small farms and provide over 80 per cent of the food consumed in a large part of the developing world. (IFAD, 2013: 9). Smallholder farmers contribute significantly to poverty reduction and food security. Yet small-scale farmers often live in remote and environmentally fragile locations and are generally part of marginalized and disenfranchised populations.

In the initial period of growth or the take off stage of a country's economy agriculture represents a major if not the only source of capital accumulation. Most developed countries made their initial economic boost from the agricultural sector and this modernization project took many forms (Ellis and Biggs, 2001)

The physiocrats, for instance, viewed the agricultural sector as the only area that can generate economic surpluses or net products over cost of production in order to initiate economic growth, and that the rate of growth of other sectors is dependent on the growth of the agricultural system. This theory explains the significant impact in the economic growth of European countries because the realization of the importance of the agricultural sector by these nations brought about the early agricultural development in the economic history of industrial revolution in Europe, especially in England, where there was an agrarian revolution which commercialized the sector through the re-organization of the Manorial system of agriculture into the enclosed system.

Classical economist like Adam Smith, David Ricardo among others also accepted and built on the philosophy of the physiocrats, emphasizing the importance of agriculture to economic development. In his book *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith emphasized that agriculture:

Is of all other arts the most beneficial to society and whatever tends to retard its improvement is extremely prejudicial to the public interest. The produce of agriculture is much greater than of any other...whatever measures therefore discourages the improvement of this art is extremely prejudicial to the progress of opulence (in Dunmoye 1987).

The above view of Smith expresses the high percentage of agriculture's contribution to the British economy at the initial stage of its economic growth. This situation is similar to that is obtained in many developing countries now, where agriculture contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

In Europe, the initial Plan Mansholt and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that resulted out of it became a main vehicle for modernization, which was supported by often far reaching state interventions in agriculture at the level of the individual member states. In Asian countries modernization mainly took the form of the well known green revolution, consisting in the introduction of miracle seeds and the associated package of fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, credit facilities, infrastructural works, extension and training and interventions in the markets. As far as Latin America is concerned the massive land reform programme in Peru (in the 1969-1975 period) typically represented modernization, whilst in Mexico an Asian-like 'green revolution' was tried out (Ploeg, ND:)

Despite the passing of time, this sector is still as relevant now as it has ever been. The African economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, especially for those African states that do not benefit from oil reserves. For these countries, agriculture becomes the most important sector in their economies. About 60% of African workers are employed in the agricultural sector which accounts for more than 30% of the continent GDP (African Business 2010). The sector has played a pivotal role in laying the foundation for economic growth and the enhancement off the people's socio-economic status. Thus it becomes imperative that for a country to develop, it must first develop its agricultural sector because agriculture is the bed rock of most economies.

Theoretically, the agricultural sector in developing countries including Nigeria is often credited with the potential of contributing substantially to the overall growth and development of the economy. In the colonial and postcolonial era, Nigeria was food secured with enough for export. It became one of the world leading producers of crops like cocoa, rubber, palm oil, groundnut etc and the surpluses of the peasants were used for economic development of the country. It was the exploitation of the peasants through the marketing boards that led to the establishment of the foremost higher institutions in the country. It is a documented fact that the state welfare programme of Chief Awolowo in the old western region in the areas of free education, free health care delivery were funded by proceeds from cocoa export. The proceeds from palm oil funded the University of Nigeria Nsukka likewise the funds from groundnuts funded the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria and developmental efforts in other sectors. The government relied on the surplus value of the peasant for economic resources.

With the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and trade liberalisation supported by World Bank, the International Monetary Fund International Monetary Fund (IMF) and more recently the WTO encouraged countries to decrease investment in food production and to reduce support for peasant and small farmers, through policies that discourage subsidization determine the prices of the commodities in the

international market and peasant farmers do not benefit from the higher prices because they do not have the capacity to compete. The relative decline of agricultural production for domestic food and industrial requirements is a major concern in Africa and this has concentrated food import from the western developed countries

Dunmoye (1989) asserted that the relation between the state and the peasantry in predominantly agricultural states, irrespective of ideological orientation, has always been very uneasy. This assertion suffices in assessing the performance and contributions of small-scale farmers as an economic unit to the question of food security of a nation. This is also necessary because, “the narrow perspective of productivity” is not enough. There is also the need to consider the social and political issues in the evaluation of the food security crises including the issues of class, gender and capital formation for increased productivity.

The quantum of agricultural food production in Nigeria compared with population increase is undesirably at variance. Again Dunmoye (1989) recalled that many Sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria, Ghana and Zaire which were not food-sufficient, significantly increased their ratio of food imports to total food consumption. This situation has not improved significantly. The overriding interest in this work is to study the nexus between the socio-political and economic encumbrances between the small-scale farmers and state dynamics in the quest for food security question in Nigeria. Most farmers in Nigeria can be considered small because of the size of their farm holdings and the backwardness of peasants and Peasant farming especially in the developing world calls for renewed attention. An attempt will also be made to explain the theoretical explanations that have been advanced for the crises of food security in Nigeria, and the extent do people produce their own food and how much does this make them food secured. How can the situation be improved? How can subsistence production increase the value of food production?

### **Peasantry question and Food Security**

There is no universally accepted definition of peasant or small farm holding, but the word peasant has been synonymous with agricultural activities whether farm work or aquatic, it may be assessed from the number of workers, capital invested, or amount of land worked but the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) adopted a 2-hectare (ha) threshold as a broad measure of a small farm (11). Tedheke (1982:20) submits that the peasant being a pre industrial entity is looked upon as a residual phenomenon in industrial society, due to their increasing marginal role within the prevailing market and town centered industrial economy. He argued that the prevailing industrial economy capitalism has relegated to the background the place of the peasant and the towns and cities became the major determinants of social and economic change relegating the countryside to the background. The posture of the peasant has allowed a general observation, as rural producers, they plant subsistence crops although they sometimes need to sell some surplus for cash requirement (Wagley, 1964:21)

About 70% of Nigerians are involved in agricultural production and a large part of this percentage could be located in the rural areas. These farmers are involved in livestock farming, fisheries and crop production; they do both dry and wet season farming and their farm holding range from small to large-scale farming (Mohammed, 2012: 113 ) Small- scale farmer holders or small holder farmers are terms used to describe non-large scale farmers and is one characteristic of underdeveloped peasant agricultural sector in a political space or entity. Their major characteristic is self-sufficiency at least at the micro or nuclear social unit, i.e family. Farm families in those circumstances consume a substantial part of what they produce. While some of their output may be sold in the market, their total production is generally not much larger than what is

needed for the maintenance of the family. Not only is productivity per worker low under these conditions but also yields per holdings are low. Even where the land was originally fertile, the fertility is likely to have been depleted by decades of continuous cropping. The available manures are not sufficient, and the farmers cannot afford to purchase them elsewhere.

Peasant agriculture is characterized by inertia. The peasant farmer is likely to be illiterate, suspicious of outsiders, and reluctant to try new methods; food patterns remain unchanged for decades or even centuries. Evidence, however, suggests that the apparent inertia may be simply the result of lack of alternatives. If there is nothing better to change to, there is little point in changing. Moreover, the self-sufficient farmer is bound to want to minimize his risks; since a crop failure can mean starvation in many parts of the world, farmers have been reluctant to adopt new methods of farming which could expose them to greater risks of failure.

The increased use worldwide of high-yielding varieties of rice and wheat since the 1960s has shown that farmers are willing and able to adopt new crops and farming methods when their superiority is demonstrated. These high-yielding varieties, however, require increased outlays for fertilizer, as well as expanded facilities for storage and distribution, and many developing countries are unable to afford such expenditures

## **LAND TENURE**

Given that about 75% of the population in Africa lives and are dependent on the land and agriculture, including access to natural resources for their livelihood, their environmental security has to be sought in land. Land policy, is thus crucial to sustainable livelihoods and food security. Access to and rights in land and natural resources are central to an analysis of livelihood strategies and livelihood security. Land has been taken and given to the rich. Land use decree annihilated land from the peasant

Land administration is very important for peasant households, Maxwell and Wiebe (1998) based on a causal relationship between resources (e.g. land), production, income, consumption and nutritional status, argued that access to resources (land) is an essential determinant of access to food; food security is a function of food availability, access, and utilization; and access to food encompasses the three important dimensions of sufficiency, sustainability and vulnerability. From this it could be argued that, land tenure and food security are linked (ECA, 2013:30) and access to more productive land and control of by the poor offers the most stable form of security for poor households.

In Nigeria, the traditional land tenure system constituted an obstacle to the development of agriculture in land use, farm planning and introduction of better farming systems as well as land fragmentation which makes for effective land conservation difficult (Anyanwu, et.al 1997) the land use decree was enacted to satisfy the need for larger areas of land for agricultural and non-agricultural purposes. The land for agricultural purpose is usually inherited in Nigeria making it difficult to acquire for commercial purpose. The increasing population especially in the urban areas has made land to be scarce, for agricultural purposes. Also the land Tenure Act which emphasizes that land could only be used but not individually owned denied access to those that need them.

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security is a flexible concept as reflected in the many attempts at definition in research and policy usage. Whenever the concept is introduced in the title of a study or its objectives, it is necessary to look closely to establish the explicit or implied definition. The 1996 World Food Summit adopted a more complex definition: "Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO:2002). "Food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life".

There are four dimensions to this: (i) availability of sufficient amount of food which is a function of food production (ii) stability of supply over time which depends on the ability to supply over time which depends on the ability to preserve/store produced food and supplement available food through imports if necessary (iii) access to the available food which depends on income level and its distribution and (iv) food utilization which encompasses procurement, ingestion and digestion all of which are dependent on nutritional quality, education and health (Omale and Omede,2016:756).

Food security is conceived in this context as the ability of households to meet basic/subsistence needs of protein and energy in order to function effectively as healthy individuals (Hyande and Oboh, 2007).

(FAO:1996). This definition is again refined in The State of Food Insecurity (2001). The international community has accepted these increasingly broad statements of common goals and implied responsibilities. But its practical response has been to focus on narrower, simpler objectives around which to organize international and national public action. The declared primary objective in international development policy discourse is increasingly the reduction and elimination of poverty.

In 1986, the World Bank defined 'food security' as "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and healthy life". They identified two essential elements of the food security equation as "the availability of food and the ability to acquire it" (World Bank, 1986). Food security' is the capacity of households, communities and the state to mobilize sufficient food, through production, acquisition and distribution, on a sustainable basis. Food security thus depends on the land resources available to the household or community and their ability to mobilize resources for the production and/or distribution of food to achieve an active and healthy life (ECA, 2013:33)

The 1996 World Food Summit exemplified this direction of policy by making the primary objective of international action on food security halving of the number of hungry or undernourished people by 2015. The continuing evolution of food security as an operational concept in public policy has reflected the wider recognition of the complexities of the technical and policy issues involved. The most recent careful redefinition of food security is that negotiated in the process of international consultation leading to the World Food Summit (WFS) in November 1996. The contrasting definitions of food security adopted in 1974 and 1996, along with those in official FAO and World Bank documents of the mid-1980s are set out with each substantive change in definition underlined. A comparison of these definitions highlights the considerable reconstruction of official thinking on food security that has occurred over 25 years. These

statements also provide signposts to the policy analyses, which have re-shaped our understanding of food security as a problem of international and national responsibility.

According to Maxwell (1996), food security as a concept originated only in the mid-1970s, in the discussions of international food problems at a time of global food crisis. The initial focus of attention was primarily on food supply problems - of assuring the availability and to some degree the price stability of basic foodstuffs at the international and national level. That supply-side, international and institutional set of concerns reflected the changing organization of the global food economy that had precipitated the crisis. A process of international negotiation followed, leading to the World Food Conference of 1974, and a new set of institutional arrangements covering information, resources for promoting food security and forums for dialogue on policy issues (Dre'ze, 1989)

### **Historical Dynamics and Food Security Crisis in Nigeria**

In 1986, the highly influential World Bank Report "Poverty and Hunger focused on the temporal dynamics of food insecurity. It introduced the widely accepted distinction between chronic food insecurity, associated with problems of continuing or structural poverty and low incomes, and transitory food insecurity, which involved periods of intensified pressure caused by natural disasters, economic collapse or conflict. This concept of food security is further elaborated in terms of: "access of all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life".

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, food insecurity affects the urban poor more severely as they are mostly dependent on the market, unlike their rural counterparts who are able to exploit natural resources to provide for food or to generate (Baiphethi and Jacobs, 2009)

Historically, rural households produced most of their own food, whereas urban households purchased most of their food (Ruel *et al.*, 1998). But experiences in Nigeria has shown that the rural populace who are mainly the food basket of the nation can not adequately provide enough food for them selves and the urban populace so the nation is dependent on imported food to take care of the shortfall because of the food insecure nature of the country. While farming still remains important for rural households, people seek for diverse opportunities to increase and stabilize their incomes.

The extent to which households, especially rural ones, are able to feed themselves depends on non-farm income as well as on their own agricultural production (Chapman & Tripp, 2004) small scale farmers are involved on a diverse array of non farm activities and enterprises, such as carpentry, provision shop owner, security guards among others many of them use this income to buy farm inputs like fertilizer, seedlings, and other agro products. With this income that is reinvested into farming and cater for their household, it could be argued that subsistence farmers generate income from diverse sources, although there are some group of farmers who farm all year round, especially the irrigation famers, (Fadama). Many households in Nigeria diversified out of their inability to get finance from government and other official sources. An interesting aspect of off farm business is the fact that some farmers use part of this income to buy crops during season and sell with profit later when not in season.

According to Bryceson (2002), based on a case study of seven countries (Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Congo-Brazzaville, Malawi, Zimbabwe and South Africa), these countries were all undergoing "de-

agrarianisation” and “de- peasantisation”. This was driven mostly by, restrictions on access to land (South Africa), urbanisation (Congo-Brazzaville and Nigeria) and the removal of agricultural subsidies with the enforcement of structural adjustment policies in the other four countries. During this period, peasant agriculture, with its subsistence orientation and relatively low yields, was discouraged in (Baiphethi and Jacobs, 2009: 461 ).

With the introduction of trade liberalization policy, developing countries were under pressure from the WTO to liberalise their economies and open up to global trade, as state marketing boards were dismantled because they go against the principle of "free" trade. Under WTO agreements, countries have also been forced to "liberalize" their agricultural market, reduce import duties (which is an important income loss for the importing governments!) This policy favours agro-industrial production to the detriment of the peasant farmers. African rural-dwellers value the pursuit of farming activities (Bryceson, 2000) thus subsistence production of food is still a major component of livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the same time Trans National Corporation (TNCs) have kept on dumping surpluses into their markets, using all forms of direct and indirect export subsidies and, national governments have failed to stabilize their markets and protect farmers and consumers against sudden price fluctuations. (Campesina ,2014). Neo-liberal policies have destroyed the capacities of countries to feed themselves. In the developing countries and Nigeria in particular, it was made to produce export crops so it became raw material export dependent economy. “The country produced what it does not need and needed what it does not produce”, e.g the importation of rice a staple , when it has the human and material resources to produce it locally, so the energy of the peasant is wrongly used. The peasants have been shortchanged because they are not being utilized properly. Instead of an independent peasant agricultural production by focusing on what we need, we import, which is a continuation of the colonial agriculture. Food production and supply has not been proportionate with demand in Nigeria despite government programmes and projects towards food self-sufficiency, government and other stakeholders have put in place mechanisms to make more food available from the international market. These policies are sabotaging peasant agriculture, because the removal or reduction of subsidies has affected small-scale production especially in terms of inputs. Subsistence agriculture in Nigeria is undergoing a decline and this is evident in the availability of fertilizer an essential input.

**TABLE 1.1 FERTILIZER COST AND SUBSIDY ELEMENT (2000-2009)**

S/N	YEAR	COST (N)	SUBSIDY 25%(N)
1	2000	2,908,000,000.00	727,000,000.00
2	2001	4,042,400,000.00	1,010,600,000.00
3	2002	5,162,711,400.00	1,290,677,850.00
4	2003	5,814,400,000.00	1,453,600,000.00
5	2004	13,314,000,000.00	3,328,500,000.00
6	2005	9,044,000,000.00	2,261,000,000.00
7	2006	16,249,500,000.00	4,062,375,000.00
8	2007	33,886,500,000.00	8,810,490,000.00
9	2008	64,681,500,000.00	9,350,490,000.00
10	2009	41,175,000,000.00	11,000,000,000.00
11	2010	89,310,000,000.00	22,300,000,000.00

*Source:* Nigerian Agriculture Digest 2010

From the above table fertilizer subsidy decreased from 27,000,000.00 in 2000 to 22,300,000,000.00 in 2010, which is a massive difference. Despite this huge subsidy farmers still have limited access to the commodity. This has promoted scarcity of the product and limited usage. This prompted the former permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture Fatima Bamidele to reiterate that Nigeria is currently the lowest user of fertilizer in the world. Nigeria is facing a fertilizer crisis; it uses less than 8kg per hectare while the global average is over 150kg per hectare (Daily Trust, Friday April, 1, 2011). This abysmal low consumption rate of fertilizer is a major cause of low productivity of Nigerian agriculture

The commodity falls short of the required quantities nationwide, an indication that farmers do not have access to this most important agricultural input. Even when they are available, they come after the planting season when farmer have no need of it. The local farmers have lost hope in the ability of the federal, state and local governments to provide them with fertilizer at subsidized rate. Affordability is a major constraint in the use of fertilizer in Nigeria. The farmers who are the beneficiaries are not financially buoyant enough to buy it, being small scaled with little income, buying at the market rate will be near impossible because a bag of fertilizer is sold between N4500- N6000 (Mohammed, 2012: 171) Government fertilizer allocation process has become politically driven rather than market driven; politicians and highly placed people buy the commodity at subsidized prices and resell to farmers at exorbitant rates. Even when the fertilizers are distributed as promised by government, it does not get to most of the farmers because of the persistent diversion.

Virtually all of the fertilizer used in Nigeria is imported, unfortunately through an ineffective procurement system. About 70% of fertilizer that come into the country is subsidized and 30% from commercial channels. Unfortunately the 70% from subsidized channel are recycled back into the commercial channel, so the farmer never really benefit from this subsidy of fertilizer supply (NTA, Tuesday Live, 12 July 2011, In Mohammed, 2012: 172) Government effort in this area should be utmost. Government did not cushion the impact of subsidy removal on farmers. In addition it did not support the farmers during the time of low prices. When marketing boards were abolished, no alternative mechanism was introduced to take its place. Thus, subsistence agriculture has not been able to improve food security and poverty alleviation in the country. Smallholders often cannot afford to wait for the best price or look for more profitable markets for their produce. The need for immediate cash for things such as school fees may lead people to sell produce, and even productive assets at low prices, thereby pushing them into poverty or preventing them from escaping poverty or the poverty trap

### **The Political Economy of raw material dependence for foreign exchange and the peasant production question in Nigeria**

Units of economic production in any political space are always enmeshed in socio-economic struggles and contest philosophically referred to by Charles Darwin as "Natural Selection". This may occur with the other party, in most cases the weaker party, being oblivious of the contest because of the stronger party's political and economic sophistication. Tedheke (2008) recalled Eyles and Jones in an attempt to explain social classes in a political and economic unit thus;

Class is virtually important in determining the social position of individuals...social position strongly influences location. This influence is greatly reinforced by psychological attributes. Individuals perceive themselves to be of a certain social standing and often feel that this social standing is threatened by the presence of others of lower social position (Jones and Eyles,1978:152).

In the foregoing analysis, the economic and political sophistication of small-scale farmers in Nigeria in addition to their unique sociology has placed them at a disadvantaged position to recognize their contributions to the food security “stability” equation in Nigeria. This may be attributed to lack of education or they might just be sociologically programmed to behave as such by the state or its elite social classes or both. Political economy essentially, is the study of production, allocation, distribution, and utilization of the resources used, along with the commodities produced, by farming. Agricultural economics plays a role in the economics of development, for a continuous level of farm surplus is one of the wellsprings of technological and commercial growth.

Agriculture is the source of livelihood for more than half of the world’s population. In some countries more than four-fifths of the inhabitants support themselves by farming, while in the more industrialized countries the proportion ranges much lower to less than 3 percent in both the United States and Great Britain. In general one can say that, when a large fraction of a nation’s population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, average incomes are low. This does not mean that a nation is poor because most of its population is engaged in agriculture; it is closer to the truth to say that because a country is poor most of its people must rely upon agriculture for a living.

One salient feature of class socio-politics especially as it affects agricultural resources in Nigeria is the calibration in land ownership. Even though some of these small farm holders reside in the rural areas and in most cases, right on their farm lands, most often than not these lands are appropriated for cash on tenure basis to urban elites who are large scale mechanised farmers. These urban resident farmers are mostly engaged in commercial agriculture whose farm produce are meant for export or for sale to domestic value chain industrial concerns. The political economic significance of this is that within the shared ratio between the contributions of the value chain concerns and small scale farmers to the food security needs of Nigeria’s consumers is in favour of the small farm holders or small scale farmers.

The contribution of small- holder farmers to agricultural production and food security should not be underrated. They produce the bulk of domestic food consumption as against the large scale farmers who produce for specific market, some of them produce for agro industries who will in turn process the material.

According to UNDP (1994), food security is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. National and international political action seems to require the identification of simple deficits that can be the basis for setting of targets, thus necessitating the adoption of single, simplistic indicators for policy analysis. Something like the “State of global food insecurity” analysis has to be undertaken. Since food insecurity is about risks and uncertainty, the formal analysis should include both chronic sub-nutrition and transitory, acute insecurity that reflects economic and food system volatility.

Such formal exploration is usefully complemented by multi-criteria analysis (MCA) of food security. This should lead to qualitative, if not quantitative, comparisons. Where the focus of investigation is on sub-nutrition, then the linkages between sub-nutrition and inadequate food intake need to be carefully explored. Some elements that need to be considered, according to FAO (1983:10) are:

- Sources of dietary energy supply - taking account, for example, of different foods, trends in the acquisition of food from subsistence to marketing;
- Climatic variability as a source of volatility and short-term nutritional stress;
- Health status, especially changes in the incidence of communicable diseases, most obviously HIV/AIDS;
- Spatial distribution within countries of poverty and forms of food insecurity, drawing on evidence from vulnerability assessment and mapping supported by the Food Information and Vulnerability Mapping Systems (FIVIMS), the FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) interagency initiative.

Sen (1981) theory of entitlement argues that it is sometimes necessary that there should be a more practical approach in the re-labelling of indicators of food needs as entitlements, because it would be less useful than, for example, reflecting entitlement failure in a formal Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA).

Entitlement as a construct introduces an ethical and human rights dimension into the discussion of food security. There has been a tendency to give food security a too narrow political definition, little more than a proxy for chronic poverty. The opposite tendency is international committees negotiating an all-encompassing definition, which ensures that the concept is morally unimpeachable and politically acceptable, but unrealistically broad.

As the philosopher, Onora (in Maxwell, 1996) noted “It can be mockery to tell someone they have the right to food when there is nobody with the duty to provide them with food. That is the risk with the rights rhetoric. What I like about choosing the counterpart, the active obligation of duties rather than the rights, you can’t go on and on without addressing the question who has to do what, for whom, when” Oil industry which is capital intensive has led to the near extinction of agricultural production, provides low employment opportunities and low link to the rest of the economy. (okorobia,2011:456 )

### **Problems of Nigeria’s Small holder Farmers**

A peasant small holder farmer produces for subsistence and market, his objective is to balance his family food need, cash income and with this his production is believed to be much less market oriented and production inputs consist mainly of land and family labour, capital investment is negligible, modern biological inputs like fertilizer and chemical are seldom used and the level of production technology is low (Olayemi etal,1980:18)

Agriculture in Nigeria is seasonal. Many farmers are dependent on rain feed farming coupled with poor adoption of improved input and technology has affected and reduced their productivity. Coupled with this is the poor level of value addition which includes Processing, storage facilities, marketing knowledge thus without Value addition even if production is increased it will not be of much impact on the total output.

Trade liberalisation: This has been seen as a path for economic success. The developed countries preach free

market and free trade to the poor countries in order to capture larger shares of the latter's markets and pre-empt the emergence of possible competition (Chang, 2008:24) These policies are hurting the developing world as it is viewed as an imposition not a matter of choice. The policy has prospects for export but most farmers cannot benefit because many of them are not aware of the procedure they would follow to enable them benefit. Peasant farmers are at the mercy of middlemen, who buy at cheap rate and sell expensive. Since Nigeria rectified the agreement on trade liberalisation efforts have been made towards reaping its benefit only that it has not gotten to an appreciable level. The government has implemented certain projects and programmes to promote agriculture and export trade to help farmers move to the next level. Although there are small levels of progress only that it is not to any appreciable level but there is a lot room for improvement.

Finance: A lot of farmers have lost hope in the banks especially the commercial banks that demand for outrageous collateral that they cannot afford, although some of them have been able to get Bank of Agriculture micro loan credit, which is between 0-250, 000 Naira. (Mohammed, 2016:216) Government intervention to these farmers is limited, even when they get it; it becomes difficult for a lot of them to pay back the loan. Thus the unavailability of credit and other financial services required to enable small scale farmers increase output is a major problem to food production in Nigeria. Unless this problem is solved the rural farmers will remain poor.

Many Nigerian farmers are aging and their replacement by young ones has been difficult because of education, non-profitability, and rural -urban drift of able-bodied youth, which deprive farmers of the required labour hours, among others. Despite the provision of some amenities by government at the rural areas rural-urban drift still persist. This is in the admiration of life as the dream of every rural man is to go to the urban area.

Poor level of science and technology: Production is labour intensive and one of the reasons for the poor yield is the system of farming, low technical efficiency, and many small farm holdings still practice traditional mode of production. Thus coupled with transport, environmental degradation we have a major challenge to food security in Nigeria. The oil companies' difficulties have not complied to the environmental policies of the country and this has negative effects on food security because the land that would have been used for farming have been destroyed. Water pollution also affect the source of water to peasant farmers, Improved access to water will improve yield. Many Agricultural policies and reforms are to meet the needs of the big time farmers at the expense of the rural ones; they go through a lot of risk.

Infrastructure: Access to market triggers production and bad roads have limited food availability and attracted middle men to come to the farms to buy the products thereby reducing farmers profits. Poor farmers do not have access to inputs they use composite manure because of lack of fertilizer improved varieties of seed, and other inputs coupled with targeted subsidies in order to realize higher yields. This will result in the expansion of domestic staple food production in order to improve food security and reduce dependence on food imports that has resulted to low domestic production and food insecurity. These inputs, which should be made available at subsidized prices, are not to their reach because many of them buy from the open market. The number of households engaging in subsistence agriculture as a main source of food and income is declining, while there is a rise in the number of households engaging in subsistence production as an extra source of food (Aliber, 2009 in Baiphethi and Jacobs).

Land in Africa is a critical constraint on poverty reduction because most rural households rely on land for the reproduction of future generations, since the industrial and service sectors do not currently provide alternative opportunities for survival. Apart from its value for agricultural purposes, to realize subsistence production and cash income, land also provides for basic household needs, such as energy, through fuel wood, medicines, housing materials and nutrition (Mukamuri, 1997; Moyo, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

Small farmer holders or peasant farmers have been hindered by shortage of manpower, facilities, inputs, access to land, credits among others in their effort to increase production. From the colonial and postcolonial era, the surpluses of peasant farmers were used for the social, economic and political development of Nigeria as the proceeds of agriculture was used to set up other sectors of the economy. This group of farmers produce the bulk of the food consumed locally but they receive less attention from government. Agricultural policies implemented in Nigeria are western capitalist oriented which in most cases have not accommodated peasant farmers and as such have affected domestic food production.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government should site companies close to the source of raw material so that manufacturers would patronise the small holders more.
2. Government should provide technology that would lead to the modification of some aspects of peasant farm organisation system, especially in the area of value addition.
3. Some of the pull factors like good roads, internet, water, electricity, opportunities etc, that make people move to the urban areas should be established in the rural areas to help reduce rural-urban drift
4. Government should give priority to its domestic food production in order to become less dependent on the world market because the small-scale farmers have the capability to contribute immensely to food production and should be encouraged.

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