

**FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*There is no food crisis in Nigeria now. However, the country is not yet food-secure. The concern for and the awareness on food security are increasing daily; public discourse on it is now more focused while the generally discerning Nigerian populace is becoming skeptical about the acclaimed success of government food security initiatives. This paper examines some of the agricultural policies and programs of the government, ostensibly aimed to increase food production and ensure food security. Commendable as the policies and programs are, it would appear that the goal of food security might not be realized with these initiatives alone. There is still the need for the formulation of food policy; application of biotechnology in agriculture; collaboration and cooperation with external agencies and foreign trade partners, as well as job creation to tackle persistent poverty in the country, which limits access to safe and nutritious food.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Attainment of food security in any country is usually an insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which impede economic development. This is why all developed and some developing countries make considerable efforts to increase their food production capacity. But hunger, defined here as a situation in which there is an inadequate quantity of available food; and malnutrition, which is indicative of intake of unbalanced diets, have been ravaging most developing countries, severely menacing poor families (Macnamara, 1973:107). Both have also had debilitating effects on the productive capacity of the citizens, impacting negatively on the overall economic development of many countries. The twin problem is closely linked with poverty. While hunger may be occasioned mostly by lack of jobs, or hyper-inflation, that causes reduced purchasing power, etc. which may be eliminated or reduced with sound management of the national economy; malnutrition is caused by poor diet and has a very long-term devastating effect on people in many poor countries. Medical and anthropometric evidence has shown, for instance, a very close link between malnutrition and infant mortality; poor growth in children, as well as reduced adults' immune system, to fight some diseases. To be sure, malnutrition saps the working strength of an economy, cripples the mind and body of children, and consequently deprives the society of its greatest potential, i.e. its future productive human resources (Salvatore and Dowling, 1977:61). Countries that are food-secure do not have this dreadful situation to contend with.

Nigeria is one of the food-deficit countries in sub-Sahara Africa, although it is arguably better, in terms of food production, than the others. It has also not suffered any major catastrophe that could precipitate scourges of famine, mass hunger, and, therefore, food crisis. Nevertheless, it would appear that Nigerian policy makers, economic planners, and agricultural experts believe that the country is not completely immune from having a food crisis. They view with concern the negative consequences hunger and malnutrition have created elsewhere and could create even in Nigeria, and share the view that there cannot be any meaningful economic development as long as the complex problem of food shortages is not decisively tackled. This probably explains why food security has become a first-order priority of the present Nigerian government (Atinmo and Adeniran, 1999: 110) so much that it has appointed a Special Assistant to the President on food security and an honorary Presidential Adviser on Agriculture, to complement the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture. Furthermore, government agencies and officials connected with food production, food importation, and food distribution have been seizing every available opportunity to draw attention to the need for the country to be food self-sufficient and for food

surplus. They have been assuring the people of government's regret and concern about the rising cost of food and raising their awareness of the efforts being made to ensure that Nigeria is food-secure.

Despite government concern for food security, the awareness being generated through public discourse on the matter and the various agricultural policies and programs aimed at increasing food production, the usually discerning Nigerian public has been quick to ask: To what extent has Nigeria been or is capable of being food-secure? The objective of this paper, therefore, is to discuss food security situation in Nigeria and the challenges that must be overcome to achieve it.

### **MEANING OF FOOD SECURITY**

In simple language, a country is food-secure when a majority of its population have access to food of adequate quantity and quality consistent with decent existence at all times (Reutlinger, 1985:7; Idachaba, 2004:2). What is implied in this definition is that food must be available to the people to an extent that will meet some acceptable level of nutritional standards in terms of calorie, protein, and minerals which the body needs; the possession of the means by the people to acquire it (i.e. access) and reasonable continuity and consistency in its supply.

But availability of food alone does not seem sufficient to explain and celebrate the attainment of food security in a country. Food can be available in a country because of effective agricultural policy, good harvest in a particular year or massive importation of food, or food handout (aid). Massive food import, particularly by developing countries, usually has negative effects on foreign reserve and causes budgetary hemorrhage, while food aid, which is sometimes used as an economic instrument in the service of political goals of the donor-countries (Ikoku, 1980:286), may even discourage food production activities in the recipient countries. Therefore, any country that needs massive food import or food aid before its citizens could feed would have only a short-term solution to its food crisis, but would not be food-secure for all times because the feeding of the people in that country will be dependent on the willingness and sometimes the ability of the external suppliers to supply.

This is not to suggest in any way that every country that has reasons to import food lacks food security. On the contrary, some countries may and do import food to offset production shocks and cover the short-fall in domestic food supplies (Lavy, 1992:126), encourage consumption of some food items or even assist the export trade of a particular target state with which they have bilateral trade agreements.

Importing food by such countries may not necessarily be undertaken to solve any severe food shortage problem. To that extent, these countries are not food-insecure.

Food security should not be seen only from the perspective of availability of food in quantitative and qualitative terms. Food hygiene and safety should also be given important consideration in order to protect the health of the people. Food, for instance, may be available, but the source from which the food is produced or processed may be unhygienic or that the chemical substances used to produce or preserve the food may constitute a health hazard. Health and safety consideration, therefore, becomes important in food production. For example, given the likely general misuse of chemicals due to illiteracy and crass ignorance, particularly in developing countries, some chemicals used for treating livestock disease types, indiscriminate application of pesticides to treat crop diseases or control pest and other agricultural parasites, may be harmful to humans much later after the consumption of the agricultural products (Sinha, 1976:21). In essence, a country should be considered as food-secure when food is not only available in the quantity needed by the population consistent with decent living, but the consumption of the food should not pose any health hazard to the citizens.

### **FOOD SECURITY SITUATION IN NIGERIA**

The accuracy of estimates of food deficits or surpluses in a country depends largely on the accuracy of base line information on food requirements and food supply (Ibid: 146). The estimates may be obtained from food balance sheet which will give a very comprehensive picture of a country's food supply during a given period; or through household surveys which assess food needs and food consumption (Olayemi, 1998). However, such estimates are difficult to obtain in most developing countries, including Nigeria, because of lack of effective statistical organization of information and data, which can be attributed to the absence or low level of planning, data gathering techniques, analysis, and coordination of all activities relating to food production and distribution. It is, therefore, always difficult to give a comprehensive picture of food supply since data on domestic food production in Nigeria are still remarkably weak. Indeed, the paucity of accurate and reliable data on food production had left many important aspects of food security in Nigeria to the realm of conjecture due to information gaps (Collier, 1988: 763; Olayemi, 1998). The paucity of reliable data notwithstanding, some assumptions from agricultural activities, and outcomes in the last decade may still be useful here.

Nigerian agriculture is being dominated by small-scale farming on small farms, family-owned, rented, or leased. The major staple foods produced by the farmers are sorghum, yam, millet, cassava, and maize, as well as live stocks which give a majority of Nigerians the amount of calorie and protein they need. Going by the growing number of food stuff, livestock markets, and sales points in the urban and sub-urban areas (with large quantity of food items offered for sale, though at prohibitive prices), as well as the regular agricultural product shows on television, it is hard to suggest that there is food shortage in the country. In addition, apart from the 1973-74 Sahelian drought, major disasters of short or long duration that could cause transitory food insecurity has not been a recurrent event in Nigeria, which would have made the country to be a recipient of food aid from the international community as it was the case in the 1973-74 Sahelian drought (Idachaba, 2004:4).

The Nigerian government is not taking things for granted because it still considers the prospect of food security, supply of industrial raw materials, overall economic growth, and eradication of poverty to be virtually dependent on what happens in the agricultural sector. Hence, all efforts directed at restoring agriculture to its former status before the oil boom in the national economy, in terms of its higher contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), could be regarded as evidence of increased concern for and commitment to food security.

Borrowing from the declaration made at the 1974 World Food Conference in Rome, that every man, woman, and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition in order to develop their physical and mental faculties (U.N. World Food Conference, 1974:3). The Nigerian Minister for Agriculture publicly restated government commitment to combat hunger and malnutrition by providing adequate food for the people and ensure food security for all. To achieve this goal, therefore, a number of what he called food security initiatives were launched (Bello, 2004). They include:

1. Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS): This is a program by which the government sought the assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), in disseminating information on proven and accessible technologies to 109 farming communities across the country to enhance food production and substantially increase income levels of the farmers.
2. Root and Tuber Expansion Programme: This is an agricultural program supported by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which made available to

- farmers the necessary information on improved processing technology and expansion technique for cassava and cassava product.
3. Fadama Development Project: The Fadama project is for ensuring all-season farming through large scale irrigation system or naturally flooded areas (Fadama) of a number of crops, plants, fruits, and vegetables.
  4. Community-based agricultural and rural development schemes which come under different names, such as farm settlement or back-to-land programs. In this type of scheme, the participants who are usually men are encouraged by the government to take to farming by providing them with material and financial support.
  5. Provision of infrastructures, such as linking up the rural areas through new access roads and grading the old ones, supplying energy through rural electrification, distributing farm inputs like seedlings and fertilizer, selling or leasing tractors and harvesters to farmers to encourage mechanized farming, and providing improved storage facilities to reduce post-harvest loss of agricultural products, put at between 25 and 30 percent (*Vanguard*, October 2004).
  6. In collaboration with the United States, the government commissioned the American-based International Centre for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (ICSFAD) to study the problems militating against increased agricultural production in the country. The main objective here is to assess the soil type and use the result to determine the appropriate type of fertilizer that would be used by the farmers.
  7. Policy instrument and direction by which the government (a) banned, among other items, the importation of some agricultural products - the effect of this ban is said to have “unleashed boundless productive energy in the areas of livestock production and agriculture” (*Nigerian Tribune*, October 2004); (b) sold fertilizer to farmers at subsidized rate; and (c) facilitated increased investment in agriculture by strengthening the financial capacity of state-owned agricultural banks to grant soft-loans and pleading with the private commercial banks to extend low-interest loan facilities to large-scale and small-scale farmers. The plea has been largely ignored by the commercial banks probably because of the perceived risk in agricultural financing and the negative consequences of volatile agricultural market (Larson et al., 2004:199).

The programs, policy instruments, and policy direction enumerated above are clear indications of government's interest in and commitment to, increased food production. According to the government (NEEDS, 2004:88), the numerous initiatives are expected, *ceteris paribus*, to:

*Provide incentives for private sector participation in the agricultural sector, foster effective linkage with the industrial sector; add value to agricultural produce through processing for export; create more agricultural and rural employment opportunities; increase the income of farmers; reduce drastically the rising trend in food import and ultimately achieve food security.*

There are, in fact, some euphoric claims from government agencies and officials that the policies and programs are already yielding desired results because the agricultural sector has recorded an unprecedented annual growth rate of seven percent (7%), and that the strategic grains reserve has reached 150,000 tons, and still rising. It has also been said that increased food production has encouraged the World Food Programme to contemplate the establishment of an office in Nigeria from where it would obtain food for other African countries in need (*Nigerian Tribune*, October 2004).

In essence, the impression has been created that Nigerian agricultural policies are working because the agricultural sector is flourishing and that with more focused investment in the sector, the food security goal may have been achieved or is within easy reach. However, the hard fact is that attainment of food security is not a one-year or one-season goal, but usually a long-term goal requiring careful planning and much more sustained effort to ensure continuity. There are still challenges to the attainment of food security. Despite the staggering sum of \$364 million the government plans to spend for 'proper repositioning and implementation of National Programme for food security' (*The Nation*, October 2007), the food security programs cannot be implemented in isolation. There is still the need for food policy to be formulated and serious considerations given to some other issues germane to food security.

## **IMPERATIVE OF FOOD POLICY**

Nigeria has an agricultural policy, which is essentially directed at higher production, which leads to increased yield per unit of area of land under cultivation. All of the programs that have been put in place by the government have emanated from agricultural policy which, it is agreed, is necessary for developing a healthy and viable agricultural sector (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2001). But agricultural policy that has, as its main goal, expanded food production without consideration for minimum nutritional standards will not guarantee food security within the meaning earlier provided in this paper. While an expansive agricultural program is being pursued, there is also the need for a national food policy which seeks to assure all citizens access to food supply that is reasonably priced, relatively safe, adequate in quantity, and nutrition (Claffey and Stucker, 1982:50; Nyangito, 1999:112).

There is no food policy in Nigeria at present, probably because there is little appreciation of its complementary role to agricultural system and practices to promote relative self-sufficiency in food production (Adeoti, 1989:126; Federal Government of Nigeria, 2001). To put the matter in perspective, a food policy properly formulated will encompass diet policy that shows, for example, the relationship of good diet with good living, as well as the causal link between inappropriate or insufficient diet with major and common debilitating diseases. With the current knowledge of human nutrition, a food policy will be guided by what the human body requires and which particular food items provide it, all of which are pre-requisites for effective food choices by the people. Agricultural policy-makers and planners will also be guided by food policies to factor good nutrition that leads to healthy food consumption into the food production programs (Hadwiger, 1982:81). The colonial government in Nigeria did just that, when it identified deficiencies inherent in Nigerian diets and formulated a food policy which placed more emphasis on food in relation to health rather than on mere food production (Ikpe, 2003: 218).

Furthermore, a food policy, unlike agricultural policy, should stipulate safety guidelines for food production in the growing food industry; it will crystallize in food safety regulations, such as the minimum requirements of basic nutrients that must be present in the food, the conditions under which the food is produced, its packaging, and even the advertisement to promote the consumption of the food. Similarly, safety guidelines embedded in food policy should prohibit very harmful practices that



may occur in the dairy industry and meat processing factories, as well as the use of carcinogenic food additives and food enhancers that are routinely used by bakers to preserve food or improve its taste.

Pesticides, therapeutic drugs, and chemically compounded feeds for crop protection and improved nutrition for livestock, respectively, are some of the inputs which experts in agriculture regularly advise and encourage farmers to use while the government sometimes makes them available at subsidized price. But the manufacture, distribution, and the application of these agro-chemicals can hardly be effectively monitored or controlled without first formulating a good food policy that incorporates safety concerns (Oniang'o and Allotey; 1999: 267-268).

What this means is that the goal of food security will remain unattainable if all that matters to the government is simply making food available in a country in the quantity desired by the people but its consumption is capable of causing the consumers all sorts of ailments; then that country cannot be listed among those that have achieved food security. Safety concern in food production and consumption, therefore, might have informed the recent sporadic actions taken by the National Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), a regulatory agency, to ensure the safety, purity, and wholesomeness of processes and practices in the Nigerian food industry. The Director-General of the agency admitted this as much when she declared:

*The impact of food safety on the health of consumers is significant because cases of toxicities have been reported among which is mycotoxin contamination. Most harmful mycotoxin is causing immense safety concerns globally and countries are strengthening their food regulation and control systems to address the problem (Vanguard, Tuesday, February 15, 2005).*

But NAFDAC can hardly be as effective as it ought to be in ensuring safety in food production and consumption because (i) its emphasis, in terms of its operations and its laboratory facilities, has been on ridding the country of fake, substandard, and expired drugs manufactured in or imported into the country; (ii) it is not pro-active enough in beaming its searchlight on the production, sale, and distribution of foods as it tirelessly and commendably does on fake and expired drugs; and (iii) its activities overlap with those of the Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), another regulatory agency, empowered to set standards for all consumer products, including foods, drugs, cosmetics, tyres, cables,

etc. The overlapping functions have led to a bitter war of wits between the chief executives of the two regulatory agencies, while jurisdictional scuffle among their officials is common.

This kind of situation is unhelpful to the important task of ensuring purity and wholesomeness in the production, processing, and distribution of food items. Had there been a food policy backed up with food regulatory statutes setting standards and vesting exclusive power in one regulatory body to monitor compliance and impose sanctions for any infraction, the safety regulation for foods processed in Nigerian factories would have been more effective and purity of food assured. The attainment of food security would then have become a more realistic proposition. The country would also have been spared the embarrassment it faces when some agricultural produce and food items exported from Nigeria are banned by other countries whenever fungal growth and mycotoxin contaminations are detected (*Vanguard*, April 2007).

#### **EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF FOOD SECURITY**

Nigeria does not rank very high among developing countries in the world food system in the rating of FAO, which seems to concern itself with finding ways and means to alleviate hunger and combat mass starvation around the world. Such ways and means include international undertaking for world food security, creating an early warning system to monitor short-term crop fluctuation, issuing timely warnings to countries with regard to crop failures, and granting multilateral food aid to countries in need.

Unlike some countries in Asia (e.g. China, Malaysia, and Indonesia) and South America (e.g. Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela) where food security does not appear to be an issue save when there is a major cataclysm causing temporary food insecurity, attainment of food security is becoming problematic in Nigeria. A recent report from the Global Hunger Index of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) even shows that Nigeria is unlikely to meet the target of the Millennium Development Goals, in relation to food security, at the current rate of progress (*Vanguard*, October 2007). Admittedly, government concern has compelled a number of initiatives to expand production. However, given the interdependent nature of international economic relations, it is unlikely that a country like Nigeria would be able to achieve its food security goal using its internal dynamics alone. For any country to be able to achieve its food security goal, it would, as Dahlberg (1998:25) suggests,

need to think and act both locally and globally. This means that the country has to assess all the contextual specifics of its local food system and food sheds and act to get regional, sub-regional, or international support for its local needs (*Saturday Tribune*, March 2007).

Thus, while Nigeria is taking some bold food security initiatives internally, there is still the need for the country to co-operate and collaborate with international agencies directly involved in and sufficiently concerned with the attainment of food security. This would need an adjustment of its relations with international, regional, and sub-regional institutions like the FAO, the European Union (EU), and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It would also require seeking the understanding and support of some countries which may be negatively affected by some agricultural, food, and fiscal policies.

For example, the ban placed on the import of some agricultural products - like grains, frozen chicken, and meat - in order to encourage local production, hurts the exporting countries of these food items to Nigeria. This can provoke retaliation against Nigeria's export of cash crops. These countries need to be reassured that Nigeria's import prohibition of food items was not aimed to rubbish their ingenuity to produce so much food for local consumption and export the surplus; while greater collaboration is also needed with FAO in order to keep technical and financial aids that regularly come from the organization flowing.

In addition, it would be helpful for the Nigerian government to take a hard and more discerning look at the usual irritating and self-serving suggestion from the World Bank, IMF, and the developed countries against subsidies in agriculture in developing countries because it is now evident that the suggestion is at variance with the practice in the developed countries. The developed countries do subsidize agricultural products. The quantum of domestic support and subsidies on agriculture reported to the World Trade Organization by member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) between 1995 and 1998 was, for instance, up to 89 percent of total domestic support and subsidies (Hoekman *et al.*, 2004:178). It is the support and subsidies that have enabled greater agricultural production and cheaper food without depressing the income of the farmers, but generating surpluses that the developed countries dole out as food aid to the developing countries, where the food aid sometimes serves as a disincentive to local food production.

The economic logic of subsidizing agriculture is one issue on which Nigerian government has to engage in tough negotiation with its foreign food trade partners who claim that subsidies on agriculture are uneconomic. It is true that agricultural subsidies may lead to misallocation of resources, price distortion, and inefficiency or that their distribution may be so faulty that benefits thereof go to unintended targets. The point still has to be made though, that there is no other way by which small-scale farmers in Nigeria can be made to increase food production without some form of subsidy. There is also no way by which the country can achieve and sustain food security without some form of ‘guided’ co-operation and collaboration with external bodies.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DIMENSION OF FOOD SECURITY**

Deterioration in technology or ecology, which lowers outputs from given input, has long been identified as one of the reasons for poor agricultural production performance in Nigeria (Collier, 1988:764). Indigenous techniques, like crop rotation and other cultural farming practices, which have been used to preserve the soil structure and its fecundity do not seem to be adequate or even relevant in the present efforts to increase food production in most developing countries. It is for this reason that the use of chemical and organic fertilizer has been widely promoted in Nigeria, while its sale is even heavily subsidized by the government, despite the awareness of the corruption that is associated with its procurement and distribution (Idachaba, 2004:23). Government intervention to increase food production through technical and economic assistance to the small-scale farmers for land improvement schemes is, therefore, not a misallocation of resources as some people have suggested. It is, in fact, a necessity because, viewed from a macro-economic perspective, this kind of intervention cannot be left to market forces in the present circumstances. There is, thus, the need for the government to sustain the intervention.

Furthermore, threat to the attainment of food security in Nigeria also comes from the unresolved issue of the safety of genetically modified foods made possible through agricultural biotechnology. Today, biotechnology represents a scientific advance in agriculture with far reaching potentials in increasing food production in an environmentally sustainable manner. Agricultural biotechnology includes using genetics to modify crops and plants to produce more nutritious food, cloning of livestock, tissue culture technique, and genetic engineering. Apart from its potential to produce higher yields, the use of

biotechnology gives shorter gestation and maturity periods to crops, plants and livestock, as well as increasing greater resistance to pests and diseases. All the developed countries have used and will continue to use biotechnology to produce genetically modified foods (Ndiritu and Wambuguh, 1999:247). Parts of these foods are sold and sometimes given as food aid to developing countries, despite safety concerns raised by some anti-biotechnology campaigners in EU countries against genetically modified foods produced in the United States (*Punch*, 2002).

The Nigerian government has embraced the idea of using biotechnology to boost food production as a pre-condition for food security. It established the National Biotechnology Development Agency at Abuja, setting aside the sum of 26 million naira (about \$185,000) to be invested in the project, and specifically mandating the Institute of Agricultural Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, to apply biotechnology for the improvement of farming systems for various crops, such as sorghum, maize, cowpea, cotton, and sunflower (*Vanguard*, February 16, 2005). Furthermore, Nigerian agricultural scientists have been very enthusiastic in advancing the frontier of knowledge in biotechnology. They have been making efforts to assure the people that genetically modified foods do not pose any higher risk to consumers than conventionally cultivated crops, and have been calling on the government to allocate more research funds to enhance the application of biotechnology in agriculture to optimize yield potentials (*Punch*, 2004; Akinyosoye, 2007).

The positive disposition of the government and the enthusiasm of the scientists notwithstanding, there are still obstacles to be overcome before full advantage is taken of scientific information on biotechnology in agriculture. First, the amount set aside for investment in the project is grossly inadequate. While it appears to make economic sense to invite the private sector participation in biotechnology research as the government seems to be doing at the moment, it must, however, be borne in mind that majority of the companies that have the financial capability to go into such venture are foreign-owned and are most unlikely to consider it a viable investment option to venture into purely local agricultural research endeavor. Second, the quality and the effectiveness of extension services needed to increase the awareness of the peasant farmers of the potentials of biotechnology are still low and need to be upgraded. Finally, there are still unwarranted public fears to contend with on the safety of genetically modified foods, stemming from scare-stories, reinforced by superstition and ignorance, of

the danger in the consumption of genetically modified foods. The incontrovertible fact is that without the help of agricultural biotechnology, success in food security will continue to elude Nigeria.

### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT DIMENSION**

It has been well established in the copious literature on economic development that the problem of hunger and malnutrition is closely linked with poverty and lack of jobs because access to food is contingent on having the means to acquire it (The World Bank, 1991; Olayemi, 1998). This means, in essence, that any government that is desirous of making the country to be food-secure must also strive to create employment opportunities in both the rural and urban areas. This is by no means an easy task because employment creation has always been government's Achilles heel (Sinha, 1976:35).

The most intractable economic and social problem in Nigeria today is unemployment. The situation is getting worse by the day as many more young people are entering the labor market; few are even ready to take up farming. Job opportunities in the commercial, manufacturing, and service sectors are also constricting rapidly; while rural-urban drift is growing at an alarming proportion. Sadly, too, the expectation of economic planners that agriculture would become the largest employer of labor and a key contributor to wealth creation and poverty alleviation has remained largely unfulfilled. The potentials of the agro-business sector as a major employer of the growing labor force and earner of foreign exchange have, therefore, been seriously undermined (NEEDS, 2004: 76).

The trend above needs to be reversed if the aim of food security is to be realized. And to do so, there is a more compelling need for the government to initiate and implement macro-economic, fiscal, and monetary policies that will expand employment opportunities and promote overall economic growth with equitable distribution of the benefits of growth (Adeoti, 1989:132).

### **CONCLUSION**

Nigeria is an agricultural country but is among developing countries that are not yet food-secure. The concern for food security, therefore, has greatly increased in the country, generating public discourse and cynicism. In response, the Nigerian government has made food security a top priority in its economic reform agenda. It has also formulated agricultural policies and adopted some strategies it believes will make the agricultural sector of the economy more viable to ensure food security.

But the goal of food security seems increasingly elusive because the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies alone are not yielding the desired results and even if it is conceded that they are yielding some results, such results are incredibly marginal to be noticed by the people. This is so and likely to remain like that because of the lacuna in the whole agricultural development program, typified by the absence of a food policy, ineffective linkage between the local food system, international food production, and supply system; inadequate funding of science and technology, universally acknowledged as one of the pillars on which food security rests; and the inability of the government to tackle decisively the increasing level of poverty which reduces access of many Nigerians to food supply. The only way out for the government is to do more than it is presently doing in its drive to achieve food security by finding solutions to the problems raised above.

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