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*Review*

# Nigeria and the Search for Food Security since the Amalgamation

Christian Chukwuma Opata

Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
Email: opatacc@gmail.com; Christian.opata@unn.edu.ng;  
Tel: 08035118199

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That Nigeria is becoming more dependent on external sources to feed her citizens is epitomized in the level of importation of foreign food items into the nation. This phenomenon has engaged the mind of various administrations in the nation both colonial and post colonial. To attain food security, various regimes came up with one agricultural programme or the other. For instance, from 1972, at the establishment of the Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), there have been well over fourteen major policies on agriculture. However, what is obvious is that the various measures adopted by government suffer one form of alopecia capitis which is not idiopathic in origin. This then calls for serious enquiry with a view to unravelling the reasons for the failures as problem identified is half solved. How the nation could extricate itself from food insecurity would be suggested based on the experience of other nations. This done, one of the major problems confronting the nation and one factor that is tangential to the nation's corporate existence would have been addressed, thus contributing to the self examination being carried out in various quarters in Nigeria. Until we know that unstable is the future of any country which has lost its taste for agriculture and that one lesson in history which is unmistakable is that the strength of a nation lies very near its soil- and Nigeria is blessed with vast fertile land- we will be groping in the dark.

**Keywords:** Amalgamation, Nigeria, Agriculture, Food, Security.

## DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Three concepts are in use in this exercise. They are Amalgamation, Agriculture and Food security. The Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) succinctly defined amalgamation in 2014. In the poster advertising their 58<sup>th</sup>/59<sup>th</sup> Congress, they referred to the amalgamation as a political cum administrative thread used by Britain to stitch the political surgery it conducted on the various ethnic nationalities without the application of any form of anaesthesia. Little wonder Prof. Jide Osuntokun defined the amalgamation as "an over-arching political

architecture" Jide Osuntokun, cited in Soji Oyeranmi, "The Colonial Background to the Problem of Ethnicity in Nigeria: 1914-1960" in *Journal of History and Diplomatic Studies*, Vol.8, 2011, 35-61. From these definitions, one can rightly conceive the amalgamation as a deliberate ploy used by Britain to bring the hitherto independent nationalities in Nigeria under one umbrella government controlled or better still colonized by her for her own interest and the interest of the colonized not considered; hence the "surgery without a anaesthesia". Sir Hugh

Clifford who governed Nigeria from 1919-1925 subscribes to this line of thought as he maintains that Nigeria is a collection of independent native States, separated from one another... by great distances, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers. Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, cited in Soji Oyeranmi, "The Colonial Background to the Problem of Ethnicity in Nigeria: 1914-1960" in *Journal of History and Diplomatic Studies*, Vol.8, 2011, 37.

Agriculture on its part involves the cultivation of land, raising and rearing of animals, for the purpose of production of food for man, feed for animals and raw materials for industries. It involves cropping, livestock, forestry, fishing, processing and marketing of agricultural products. J.C. Anyanwu *et al*, *The Structure of the Nigerian Economy (1960-1997)*, Onitsha: Joanee Educational Publishers Ltd., 1997, 10.

Food security has been defined by various scholars in different ways. In 1996, the Rome Declaration on world food security defined food security as food that is available at all times, to which all persons have means of access, which is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality and variety, and is acceptable within the given culture and J. Clover cited in E.O. Ojo and P.F. Adebayo, "Food Security in Nigeria: An Overview", *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol.1, No.2, 2012, 199-222. The United Nations Organization saw food security as the most basic human need and as a central indicator to absolute poverty and physical well being and holds that food security not only refers to an adequate aggregate supply of food, but also means that people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. According to this body, two indicators are used in measuring food security. These are measuring food supply as the mean daily per capita supply of calories and protein and child hunger rate which is measured by the percentage of children under five years of age who are undernourished. For more insight on this see United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1994, *Human Development Report, 1994*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

## INTRODUCTION

Three major arguments inform the basis for this study. One is the observation by General Babangida, a onetime president of Nigeria to the effect that in Nigeria, people manage affluence to achieve poverty. Ngozi Veronica Nkah, "Echoes on Nigerian Politics", *The Economy*, Vol.1, No.29, October 31, 2011, 12. The second motivation came from Chief Obafemi Awolowo through an open letter to Shehu Shagari on July 1, 1981. In the letter, Awolowo made Nigerians understand that Nigeria as a nation is seriously ill. The Nigerian economy he noted ails critically; and the body-politic he said aches in every part of its

organism as in everywhere, there was hunger, depression, and discontent. Obafemi Awolowo, "Excerpts from Awolowo's Letter to Shagari" *The Nigerian Economist*, March 29, 1993, 14. The third motivation for this study is to see how Nigeria that is a signatory to the Maputo Declaration on food security had helped in violating the same clause it willingly signed and how such action have endangered food insecurity/crisis in Nigeria.

## Agricultural Policy and the Disarticulation of Domestic Food Production in Colonial Nigeria

Prior to the contact between Nigerians and the colonial government, agricultural practices were very pronounced in their economic activities. However, when Britain came into Nigeria as colonizers, they made some notable changes in the nation's agricultural practices. First, they adopted an agricultural policy which encouraged agriculture to be carried on in the traditional forms of African land tenure devoid of mechanization and plantations. K.M. Buchanan and J.C. Pugh, *Land and People in Nigeria*, London, University of London Press, 1958, 98. Sir Hugh Clifford justified the latter approach using the economic and social upheavals connected with plantation agriculture that were experienced in East Africa as an excuse. What the British policy on agriculture was bent on achieving at this time was how to ensure steady flow of agricultural produce that would serve as raw materials for her industries. To attain this objective, the British sought to create a money economy in which commercial agricultural export was the key factor, even as they left the prosecution in the hands of the native peasantry. As the natives were not informed on new agricultural practices, they began to "educate" them in the scientific and economic methods of modern agriculture and in the importation and distribution of agricultural implements of a superior type to those locally made. M.O. Ijere, "Colonial Policy in Nigerian Agriculture and its Implementation" in *Agricultural History*, Vol.48, No.2, April 1974, 298-304.

The British went on to complement the latter effort with the provision of extension services to farmers. With respect to extension services Hugh Clifford in 1920 argued that:

The average native of West Africa derives little benefit from an European agricultural station because he cannot be induced to visit it. Similarly, as experience in the Gold Coast has shown, the only instruction which can be rammed into the understanding of the average African farmer is that which is imparted to him personally and directly by officers of the Department who visit him in his own village and accompany their advice by practical demonstration. M.O. Ijere, "Colonial Policy in Nigerian Agriculture and its

Implementation" in *Agricultural History*, Vol.48, No.2, April 1974, 301.

To ensure that they reaped the benefits of their efforts at improving agricultural productivity, Britain restricted manufacturing in Nigeria. For instance, in 1921, of the 102 non-mining firms in Nigeria, only 7 were allowed to engage in manufacturing; by 1946 the figure rose to 11. In the words of L.S. Woolf, this was made to ensure that "Britain maintained her policy of finding new markets and defend old ones." L.S. Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1920, 7.

Implicit in L.S. Woolf's observation is the fact that agricultural production at this stage was not meant to ensure domestic food security but for export. This was made eloquent in 1926, when Clifford stated that Great Britain is a manufacturing country which depends very largely for its new products upon other countries and largely upon tropical countries. He moved that it is important that tropical countries within the British Empire should produce these products in ever-increasing quantities of the highest quality and Nigeria he said should be able to produce the maximum of raw materials. *Nigerian Legislative Council Debates, 4th Session, 1926*, Lagos: Government Printers, 1926, 44. This logic was one of the policies of the colonial administration that made Nigeria to suffer domestic food insecurity as it diverted the attention of farmer to cash crops for sale and eventual export. During World War 11, consequent on the paucity of raw materials for British industries, especially after Japan seized the Far East in 1939, the British Ministry of Food appropriated to itself the right of sole purchase of primary products from West Africa, including Nigeria. Shokpeka and Nwaokocha argues that these policies of Britain in the field of Agriculture were geared towards the production of export of cash crops to feed her industries and that such policies forced local farmers to ditch the production of food crops to focus on cash crops had negative connotations. S.A. Shokpeka and O.A. Nwaokocha, "British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the Example of Benin Province, 1914-1954" *Journal of Human Ecology*, 28(1), 2009, 57-66.

A clear manifestation of such negativity was evident in Northern Nigeria where the colonial administration systematically and heartlessly attacked traditional food economy through four major initiatives. Mahmud Modibbo Tukur noted that they conducted a detailed census on every food item, including spices to ensure full and effective control; Levied taxes on every food item grown, consumed and marketed as reflected by the census in order to extract maximum revenue from it. They also taxed food items carried by trading caravans at a higher rate than they did for British goods as a measure to deter traders from handling food items, by lowering their profits and by deliberately replacing food crops with cash crops

and demoting food crops into the "informal" and so-called "subsistence sector" of the colonized economy M.M.Tukur, cited in Alkasum Abba *et al*, *The Nigerian Economic Crisis: Causes and Solutions*, Zaria: Academic Staff Union of Universities of Nigeria, 1985,20. The general line of colonial economic policy in Nigeria was that of intensive exploitation of Nigerian Farmers and their soils, while forcing both the farmer and the soil down to the lowest minimum diet required to keep the one alive, and the other fertile. In the northern part of the country, the colonial regime advocated and pushed as a means of ensuring minimum amount of protein in the diet of the farmer, and manure for the soil. Both the farmer and the soil were primarily to produce crops for export. The colonial regime therefore retreated from enunciating a positive food policy based on either capital investment in food production and fertilizer industry, or based even on food and fertilizer importation. Alkasum Abba *et al*, *The Nigerian Economic Crisis: Causes and Solutions*, 21.

Through this means, the food production sector of the Nigerian economy remained underdeveloped throughout the colonial period as the desire of the colonial masters were at cross with that of the native population.

For instance, in the southern part of the country, precisely in Benin Province, the British continued with the policy of forest reservation throughout the 1940s in spite of local opposition. The forest reservation policy had negative effects on local food production as it limited access to farm land among the local farmers. That the latter is true is eloquent in the frightening food shortage of 1945 in Benin Province. The paucity of food led an old Benin farmer to tell the colonial authorities that "we chop yams and corn not timber and rubber". S.A. Shokpeka and O.A. Nwaokocha, "British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the Example of Benin Province, 1914-1954" *Journal of Human Ecology*, 59. It is on record that by 1951 a total of 44,928 acres of timber were under natural regeneration treatment. Of this, 6,447 acres were added during 1951 in the Ohosu and Igbuobazuwa reserves. By 1953, 9,748 acres of forest were opened for regeneration under the tropical shelter wood system, bringing the total forest then under regeneration since 1950 to about 118,449 acres or approximately 185 square miles. A further 13.6 square miles was later added to the existing acreages. Thus by 1960, Benin Division had become the home of timber and the official deviation from food crops cultivation was near total. S.A. Shokpeka and O.A. Nwaokocha, "British Colonial Economic Policy in Nigeria, the Example of Benin Province, 1914-1954" *Journal of Human Ecology*, 59. However, it is of importance to note that colonial agricultural orientation which though, in part, disarticulated and disorientated the local agricultural and food production philosophy, did not eliminate the primary objectives of food production in the colonial societies- elimination of hunger,

sustenance and war against poverty. (A. Adebowale, “ Food Production, Hunger and Poverty of Public Policy in Nigeria: A Political Economic Analysis” *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.2,2013, 20-25).

### **Post-Independence attempts at achieving food security in Nigeria**

On attainment of independence in 1960, Nigeria's agricultural sector had the same orientation that existed during the colonial era. A good pointer to this fact is the government conceived the idea of River Basin Development Authorities in 1963. The objective of the River Basin Development Authorities was to help in the development of land and water resources potentials of Nigeria for agricultural purposes and general rural development. G.G. Goshit, “Agricultural Development Programmes and Food Security in Nigeria (1970-2004) in P. Ojiji(Ed.) *The Nigerian Economy: Challenges and Direction for Growth in the Next 25 Years*, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007, 173-197. This idea was not put to practice in the First Republic as the nation began to implement the ideas inherent in this programme in 1973. Food security in Nigeria in the immediate post-colonial era was not a major issue demanding urgent government attention. This is attested to by the fact that in 1960, food production grew at almost 4% per annum compared with an annual population growth of about 3% between 1960-1967. From that time up till 1970, food situation in the country has worsened to the extent that it dropped to a net-15% between 1970 and 1977 S.A, Adesote and J.O. Abimbola, “A Historical Analysis of Governance and the Attainment of Food Sufficiency in Nigeria” *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.23, No.1,2013, 1220-1236. This decline in food availability put a lot of demand on Nigerian farmers. For instance, the history of rice cultivation in Adani dates to this period (immediate post-colonial period). According to Ikechukwu Peter, a rice farmer from Iga community in Uzo Uwani local government Area of Enugu State, rice farming in Adani is associated with early settlers that migrated to the environment before the Nigerian Biafran war (1967-1970) C.I. Obayi, “ Rice Production in Adani, Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area, Enugu State;1980-2012: Challenges and Prospects” An unpublished Bachelor of Arts Degree Project, Department of History and International Studies, University of Nigeria, August, 2014,22. Corroborating this evidence as it relates to hunger in the wake of the nation's independence, an elder from Lejja, Nsukka opined that *oyibo bu Oku reeru egu O chepu onye nwe bee*, (the White men or Government is the fire that burns the house and drives the owner away”. This statement was in connection with the demand by the

growing urban population in Nsukka and Onitsha for rice which forced many farmers in Adani to switch over from yam cultivation to rice cultivation between 1962 and 1967 (Ugwokeja Okwor, C.87. Retired tenant Farmer at Adani, interviewed at Ori Egu Lejja daily Palm wine market on August 16, 2014). As the government of the First Republic was bedevilled by political crisis, they did not find enough time to consolidate on some agricultural initiatives they introduced even though such initiatives were targeted at export production drive and not to improve on domestic food production. For instance, in Eastern Nigeria, the Okpara administration was more interested in establishing Oil Palm plantations. The development of the Farm Settlement plantations under the First National Development Plan(1962-1968) emphasised the introduction of more modern agricultural methods and the supply of improved farm implements. Unfortunately, this lofty dream was rendered comatose by the leaders and had to be abandoned. During the First Republic export earnings from agriculture stood at ₦304.0 million and accounted for 70.8% of total export value in 1964. This was to decline to ₦286.8million representing 32.385 of the total export value in 1970. Alkasum Abba *et al*, *The Nigerian Economic Crisis: Causes and Solutions*,17.

It was after the Nigerian Civil war that government came up with several agricultural programmes that were targeted at improving domestic food production for local consumption. In the early 1970s, the Gowon administration in a quick reaction to domestic food scarcity resorted to massive importation of rice into the country to stave off hunger. However, Nigerian ports did not have the facility to cope with what came to be tagged “Rice Amada”. The ports were choked by rice and a port decongestion committee was set up. R. Ekpu, “A Harvest of Hunger” *Newswatch*, August 3, 2009, 12. Therefore, the importation of food became a stop-gap emergency means resorted to by Nigeria's leaders to cushion the effect of domestic food shortages unleashed by the economic policies of the colonial regimes which neglected food crops during their reign.

As this interim measure could not provide the needed respite, the administration of General Gowon came up with some measures. One of such measures was the introduction of the National Accelerated Food Production Project (NAFPP) which came into effect in 1973. This programme was targeted at stirring massive production of six major crops. These crops include rice, sorghum, wheat, millet, cassava and maize. Great as this programme was, it was jeopardized by inadequate finance, paucity of publicity and infrastructure and low commitment in some states. Anyanwu *et al*, *The Structure of the Nigerian Economy (1960-1997)*, Onitsha: Joane Educational Publishers Ltd., 1997,21-22. The Gowon administration also toyed with the idea of an agency to help farmer source funds. This idea led to the founding of the Nigerian Agricultural

and Co-operative Bank (NACB) in 1973. The bank was mandated to ensure that there is a serious improvement in storage facilities and also to promote the marketing of agricultural products. Under the arrangement, the Federal Government through the Central Bank owns 40% of the equity shares of the bank. The bank functioned by providing two forms of credits to farmers. These are the direct-lending to individual farmers and organizations and on-lending to establish institutions mainly state governments and co-operatives bodies against guarantees for on-lending to third parties. By 1995, its total credit was ₦3.179.6 million on 68,945 projects with direct lending dominating at 62.4%. Even in the face of what appears to be an impressive record, the quantity of loan granted to small-holder farmers was grossly inadequate. Anyanwu *et al*, *The Structure of the Nigerian Economy (1960-1997)*, Onitsha: Joanee Educational Publishers Ltd., 1997, 22. Before the Gowon regime could make amends of the deficiencies inherent in their agricultural programmes, it was driven away through a coup d'état. This now paved way for General Obasanjo to carry the burden of the nation's agriculture as his superior; Murtala Mohammed was shot in an aborted coup.

In May 1976, the Obasanjo administration began what it christened Operation Feed the Nation, (OFN) which was meant to be a form of agricultural revolution in which every Nigerian was to be engaged in planting. Those who had no plots of land to farm on were encouraged to resort to flower pot farming. However, the programme was doomed from inception. First, it was a hurried political initiative launched midway into the farming season by a regime that was anxious to secure support and legitimacy from urban groups and students. Peasant farmers who are the backbone of food crop production were out of calculation in the original planning of the programme. Little wonder, Nigerian peasant farmers saw the scheme as government and student affair. Also it was not designed to be cost effective. Out of a total of ₦9.5million earmarked for the scheme in the first year, ₦6.5 million was spent on wages only. In the final analysis, the programme did not achieve the desired result it had set out to achieve. P.I.Ukase, "Nigeria's Food Security System and Poverty Reduction Policies: Options and Strategies for Sectoral Reforms in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in P. Ojiji (Ed.) *The Nigerian Economy: Challenges and Direction for Growth in the Next 25 Years*, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007, 198-219. Hence Ray Ekpu literarily baptized the programme "Operation Fool the Nation." R. Ekpu, "A Harvest of Hunger" *Newswatch*, August 3, 2009, 12.

When Nigerians saw a new democratic regime in 1979, they thought it was going to be *uhuru*, especially as it concerns food availability but that was day dreaming. The Green Revolution which the administration of Shehu Shagari introduced in 1980 was also a failure. As Opat

observed, the programme turned out to be a "Yellow Revolution" as the plants in the nation under the programme did not photosynthesize. C.C. Opat, "Perpetuation of Poverty through Governance in Nigeria, 1979-2007" in E.J. Otagburuagu, *Governance in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Nsukka: Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2009, 146-152. The failure of the programme could be seen from various angles. First, the nation's food payment bill rose from ₦1.00 billion in 1979 (the year the administration came to power) to ₦1.9 billion in 1983. Equally, in the 1980s, the average Nigerian ate 12% of less home-grown food than a decade earlier. O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria: 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Enugu: Magnet Business Publishers, 2001, 218. Also indicative of the failure of the programme is that Nigeria spent nearly ₦50million yearly in foreign exchange importing vegetable oil. "Gusau Wants Importation of Oil Altered" *Daily Times*, November 4, 1981, 26. Also in 1979, the country imported over 40million kilograms of milk-based baby foods valued at ₦58million. This rose to 79 kilograms valued at about 80million in 1981. Alkasum Abba *et al*, *The Nigerian Economic Crisis: Causes and Solutions*, 39. (a year after the launch of the programme). A greater criticism levelled against the programme that hinges on why it failed has to do with its extroverted orientation rather than auto centric disposition. V.T. Ojogbanne observes that; this ideology of development is disseminated by transnational and national capitalist interests based in the Western world. It operates through various bilateral and multi-lateral organizations such as the Ford Foundation, USAID, the World Bank and through U.N institutions such as the Food and Agricultural Organization. V.T Ojogbanne cited in P.I. Ukase, "Nigeria's Food Security System and Poverty Reduction Policies: Options and Strategies for Sectoral Reforms in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" in P.Ojiji (Ed.) *The Nigerian Economy: Challenges and Direction for Growth in the Next 25 Years*, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007, 198-219 — what a better way of enthroning a cyclic cycle of asymmetrical dependency.

The succeeding military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida initiated two major agricultural programmes aimed at combating food crisis in Nigeria. Thus in 1986, the regime came up with the Directorate For Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI). The programme which was meant to harness all the resources in the rural areas had three major objectives among others. These were provision of food in abundance for the hunger-stricken Nigerians populace, provision of infrastructure like good roads, markets etc to rural dwellers and improve and encourage the production of export crops. As observed by scholars, DFFRI was marred by massive corruption. E.O. Ojo and P.F. Adebayo, "Food Security in Nigeria: An Overview" in *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol.1, No.2, 2012, 199-222. The second

agricultural scheme was the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) which was established in 1992 with the main objectives of executing a national agricultural land development programme to moderate the chronic problems of low utilization of abundant farm land under which it was to develop 30,000 to 50,000 hectares of land in each state of the federation within a space of two years. As at 1995, NALDA had developed a total of about 16,000 hectares of land out of which 8.1% was cultivated with various crops. However, granted that it helped generating farm land, it “ended up increasing the number of rural poor and increasing rural-urban drift.” G.G. Goshit, “Agricultural Development Programmes and Food Security in Nigeria (1970-2004) in P. Ogiji (Ed.) *The Nigerian Economy: Challenges and Direction for Growth in the Next 25 Years*, Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2007, 173-197. On January 18, 1988, General Babangida placed a ban on the exportation of grains, especially maize and sorghum. This ban became necessary in the face of rising cost of grains in the market. For instance, as at October 1987, a tonne of maize sold for ₦450, but by February 1988, the same quantity sky rocketed to ₦900. This had a chain effect on other agricultural and industrial sector. For instance, the prices of poultry feed short up. A tonne of chicks mash which sold for ₦1,110 in October 1987 rose to ₦1,210, while the price of growers mash increased from ₦740 to ₦900. A crate of 30 eggs which sold at ₦8 in December, 1987 sold for ₦12 in January, 1988, whereas the price of an egg rose from 20 kobo to 50 kobo within the same period. Mike Ubani, Stevin Adukwu and Ransome Emenari, “Spectre of Hunger: Starvation imminent as pressure heightens on grains”, *The African Guardian*, March 7, 1988, 12-13.

Other regimes in Nigeria came up with their own schemes to improve food security in Nigeria. For instance the National Acceleration Crops Production Programme (NAICPP) and the Agricultural and Rural Transformation Programme came into effect in 2000. The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy was launched in 2003, the 2003 Rice initiative and the Cassava initiative of Obasanjo. It suffices to state that even the President Goodluck Jonathan administration is still battling with food insecurity especially as it concerns rice. Nigeria spent \$2.85 billion dollars on the importation of food items in 2006. A breakdown of this figure showed that Nigeria imported 36% of its rice need costing \$267 million dollars, sugar, 99% costing \$1 billion, wheat 99% totalling \$1 billion dollars and tomatoes 14% costing \$50 million dollars. Fish import is 66% per consumption costing \$500 million dollars. *Newswatch*, May 5, 2008, 27. In 2011, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Alhaji Bukar Tijani disclosed that the amount spent on rice importation into the country annually was ₦350 billion. N. V. Nkah, “Nigeria imports ₦350bn rice annually”. *The Economy*, Vol.1.No.29, October 31, 2011, 13.

Bemoaning the level of food insecurity in Nigeria, O.N. Njoku in 2014 noted that:

The irony of Nigeria’s situation is the parallel existence of food insecurity with available abundant agricultural resources capable of making Nigeria once more food secure and self-reliant. In the 1960s, Nigeria’s global shares of some key export crops were as follows: 60% of palm oil; 30% of groundnut; 20-30 % of groundnut oil; and 15% of cocoa. By year 2012, Nigeria’s share of each of these was less than 5%. O.N. Njoku, *Economic History of Nigeria, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries*, Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers, 2014, 239.

An analysis of Nigeria’s quest for food security over the years indicates that it has been a story of minimal successes and huge failures. It therefore becomes imperative that any meaningful interrogation must take into account some of the factors that had jaundiced the search for food security in the nation. One of the prevailing factors that appear to be consistent in hampering all the agricultural programmes that were ostensibly targeted at ensuring food security in Nigeria is lack of commitment. This is evident in the amount of money allocated to the sector in the nation’s budget. It is instructive to note that under the first three National Development Plans, the agricultural sector never received up to 10% of the nation’s budget as approved by the African Union as a measure towards the attainment of food security during their Maputo meeting held from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2013. These statics will suffice to prove the case of underfunding. Under the first plan, it was allotted 11.6% of the budget but only 9.8% of that was actually released. In the second plan period, it got 9.9% while in the third period it was allocated 7.2%. A. Adebowale, “Food Production, Hunger and Poverty of Public Policy in Nigeria: A Political Economic Analysis” *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, Vol.2, No.2, 2013, 20-25. What was more, even the little budgeted was not properly utilized as those saddled with the implementation are more interested in personal aggrandizement.

Another factor is the use of improper ideas. The idea of encouraging the use of advanced technologies to facilitate increased food production in Nigeria is to say the least not informed by any sound economic judgement. Schumacher always reminds us that small is beautiful. Implicit in this dictum of his is the idea that we should borrow what we can adapt conveniently and help grow and sustain. The idea of replacing local livestock with imported ones that are not adaptable to our environment is a clarion call for the extinction of our own home breed stocks. Equally in the league of the problems militating against food security is the lack of appropriate technology to enhance storage of

available food after harvest. This problem of post-harvest losses which is prevalent in most African states accounted for more than 50% of crop losses in Africa, Nigeria inclusive in 1995. *West Africa*, 17-23 April, 1995, 577. It is equally apposite to note that poor planning for long term purposes is a major factor in the food insecurity prevalent in the nation. For instance, two major problems confronting food security in Nigeria are flooding and desertification. The estimated number of Nigerians living along the nation's coastline is about 20 million which translates into 22.6% of the national population. In a nation where it had been predicted that for a 1-m rise of the sea level, more than 3 million people are at risk and the number of people to be displaced put at 740,000 for a 0.2-m rise to 3.7 million for a 1-m rise and 10 million for a 2-m rise. Awosika, *et al*, *The Impact of Sea Level Rise on the Coastline of Nigeria*, Venezuela: Margaritta, 1992, 123-154. The displacement of such a huge number of people means a greater burden on food security as it translates to food insecurity consequent on flooding. Even communities living very far away from Nigeria's major coastlines are not spared this ugly trend. Anambra state appears to be the worst in south-eastern Nigeria with 62 critical erosion sites and 550 active sites. Nnaka community was cut off from the rest of the neighbouring communities in 2008 by flood. Other communities like Ozubulu, Aguleri, Agulu saw economic activities in them halted by erosion within the same period "Environment: Nigeria's Nightmare" *Tell*, 11 August, 2008, 20 & 30.

The problem of desertification appears to be more serious than that of flooding. Experts have postulated that the biological potential of land to grow plants in 10 northern states of the country is diminishing at an alarming rate "Environment: Nigeria's Nightmare" *Tell*, 11 August, 2008, 20 & 30. For a region that over 20% of its population depends on farming and animal husbandry, this is an ugly tale. The scourge of desertification has forced Nigeria to lose about 350,000 hectares of arable land to desertification yearly and many families forced to abandon their land. Some joined the league of street beggars in major cities, thus creating more demands on the existing insufficient food. For instance, about 50,000 farmers in 100 villages in Yobe state and 40,000 farmers in Borno state have lost their means of livelihood due to desert encroachment: "Environment: Nigeria's Nightmare" *Tell*, 11 August, 2008, 20 & 30. Even as desertification and flooding are taking their toll on the food production sector of the nation's economy, oil pollution in the oil producing states of the Niger Delta is adding its quota to food insecurity.

Of recent, another dangerous trend has added to food insecurity in Nigeria. This has to do with the level of insecurity in the nation caused by insurgents especially in the northern parts of the country by the Boko Haram sect. People running away from their places of abode do not

carry with them the land they farm in. They rely more on relief agencies.

## CONCLUSION

Already, it has been projected that by 2030 food will likely account for the largest share of human consumption in Nigeria. Ife Adedapo, "Economic changes that businesses should explore" *The Punch*, Thursday, September 18, 2014, 10-11, Nigerians and their government have a serious challenge ahead. Daniel Wit warned that welfare constitute a third objective of modern government and any government be it democratic or dictatorial that makes its citizen go hungry will automatically run into trouble. Daniel Wit, *Comparative Political Institutions: A Study of Modern Democratic and Dictatorial System*, New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1953, 9. To avoid trouble, Nigeria should take some necessary steps. These include drawing lessons from history of nations like Japan by integrating their traditional technologies into their farming practices rather than jettisoning them. Nigeria should borrow technologies it can handle not those that would turn her into a ready market for advanced nations. Corruption which has made most of the agricultural programmes in Nigeria should be checked through the use of the clergy both traditional, Christian and Islamic and those found guilty of sabotaging food security efforts should be sentenced to life imprisonment and be turned into a farmer throughout his life with their period of incarceration. Government should also place a perpetual ban on the importation of any food item that can be manufactured or produced locally to encourage local production. The consumption habit of the urban elite should undergo a re-orientation as they are prone to consuming imported food. Land should be mapped out in all the states of the federation and be distributed to genuine farmers who are to plant the crops best situated for such environment. This would encourage the use of comparative advantage in the planting of crops and rearing of animals. The constant war between Fulani nomads and local farmers could be checked through the establishment of grazing reserves. If these measures are taken it would go a long way in fast tracking the food security measures of the present administration as spelt out in its transformation agenda.

It would be trite to state that a generation without regeneration must as a matter of fact suffer some irreversible somersault. Laying the blame of food insecurity in the nation on colonial rule is an escapist approach. A fool at forty they say is a fool forever and Nigeria is over forty as an independent nation. I want to believe that Nigerians are not fools, only we have failed to make the right choice and deliberately at that. This means that some people are eating fat from the nation through this malady of

food insecurity and would resist any genuine attempt to redress it. For those who are bent on enthroning hunger in the nation, especially for the Christians among them, the statement of the Second Vatican Council should serve as a guide for them to rethink. The Council observed that:

Since there are so many people in this world afflicted with hunger, this sacred Council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the saying of the Fathers: ' Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him' *Second Vatican Council—'The Church Today'* cited in A.P. Castle, *Quotes and Anecdotes: An Anthology for Preachers and Teachers*, Mumbai: The Bombay Saint Paul Society, 1998, 67.

Government should also encourage researches geared towards improving sustainable food security. The need for

research is informed by the dictum of Kuantzu who said that;

If you give a man fish, he will eat once. If you teach a man to fish, he will eat for the rest of his life. If you are thinking a year ahead, sow a seed. If you are thinking ten years ahead, plant a tree. If you are thinking of one hundred years ahead, educate the people. By sowing seed, you will harvest once. By planting a tree, you will harvest tenfold. By educating the people, you will harvest one hundredfold Kuantzu, cited in A.P. Castle, *Quotes and Anecdotes: An Anthology for Preachers and Teachers*, Mumbai: The Bombay Saint Paul Society, 1998, 66. Thinking ahead and in the right direction is the answer.