

Agriculture as Catalyst for Poverty Reduction in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Agriculture has been acknowledged naturally as an important tool for poverty reduction in Cross River State. The growth and of development indices for any state lay within the agricultural sector but today the sectors development is a threat political, economic, social, cultural and scientific art of a given nation. When it ought to encourage the rate of unemployment and poverty is high and must be reduced. The concept of poverty reduction was introduced based on United Nation declaration scheme such as “freedom for Hunger and world food day” agriculture is seen within a wide general concern to reduce the economic poor condition of people who occupy lower socio-economic status. In Nigeria, Patriarchal society and inheritance is patrilineal this is a constraint to agricultural development context as vehicle, in 1999 the federal government of Nigeria launched a poverty reduction scheme such as family economic advancement, community-based poverty reduction and international funds for agricultural development. This paper therefore discusses the role of agriculture in poverty reduction by focusing on mechanized system of farming and the significance of animal farming in agriculture and poverty reduction using stratified technique. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources. The paper further recommends that funding and redirection of both individuals, government and other donor agencies toward agriculture particularly, animal farming to avoid over dependence on oil section as a way of reducing poverty in Cross River State-Nigeria.

Keywords: Agriculture, Poverty Reduction, Catalyst, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

In Cross River State, problems of Agriculture are the most fundamental issue confronting us with an estimated population of about two million eight hundred and ninety-two thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight (2,892,988) yet with little food supply. The machinery and attendant difficulty of food production are grave issues, in spite of the ‘freedom from Hunger campaigns and world food day declared by the United Nation’s food and Agricultural organization, food and agricultural organization (1979) report. The problem still remains unchanged, resulting to questions, such as “what shall we eat today due to high cost of food products, rather than what shall we eat tomorrow.

In Nigeria, industrialization remains the key factor for an agrarian poverty reduction with an estimation of about 65-75% of the total population. The current percentage of agricultural output leaves much to be desire because the production levels are low, resulting in government falling back on scarce “foreign exchange” to import food items such as Rice, Beans, oil, in order to cover production deficits, to be able to feed 60 – 70% of total population (Sanchez, 1972).

Moreso, in Cross River State, Agriculture has been a major occupation and main source of income. The performing rate of growth and performance of the Agricultural sector have not been impressive and domestic food supply problem have manifested in soaring food import from other parts of the state with high food prices resulting to high unemployment rate, and visible under employment, low productivity, low per capital income and low standard of living (Ering, 2002).

Alarmed by this situation, in 1999, the federal government of Nigeria launched a poverty reduction scheme which aimed at reducing unemployment and increasing in income accruing to Nigerians. Some of this scheme include National accelerated food production (NAFP), family support Scheme, Family Economic Advancement Scheme (FEAP) 1999), Poverty Eradication Scheme (PES) 1999, government Donor Agencies, United Nation Children Funds, Based Natural Resource Management Scheme, Community Based Poverty reduction scheme, international fund for agricultural development and Directorate for food and rural infrastructural development scheme (Corral, 2015).

It is on this note, that the paper seeks possible ways by which through Agriculture and with 65-75% of the national population involvement can be transformed and strengthened to increase its productivity and consequently enhance farmers' incomes and thereby achieving the overall result of poverty reduction in Cross River State.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Cross River, poverty is seen to be the major problems confronting the state and Nigeria as a whole, the impediment of poverty lead to human trafficking, low income, low investment, low capital and little or no saving. Furthermore, it is believed that agriculture remain incomplete as long as they do not address the problem of poverty, lack of storage, facilities, poor marketing system, poor yield, lack of processing machine, and unimproved seedling. This paper examines agriculture in Cross River State, a catalyst for poverty reduction. Because Cross River State government seems to be incapable of handling poverty reduction posed by them in order to achieve a stable agricultural system which is mostly practice by the government.

CONCEPTUAL EXPLANATION

Agricultural can be view as a process of rearing of farm animal, cultivation of crops for the benefit of man and livestock. Agriculture is derived from the latin word ager (field) and colo (cultivate). However, Rindos (1980) defined Agriculture as a set of integrated activities which affects the environmental inhabited by the domesticated plants throughout its life cycle. Agriculture is mostly characterized by large scale production. It can also be defined as the science and art of cultivating the soil, growing of crops and rearing of farm animals (Ogen, 2007). It includes preparation of plant and animals' products for man uses and their market distribution. This includes horticulture, fruit growing, dairy farming livestock and seed growing and the use of land as grazing land meadow land, market gardens, Osier land, woodland, nursery land.

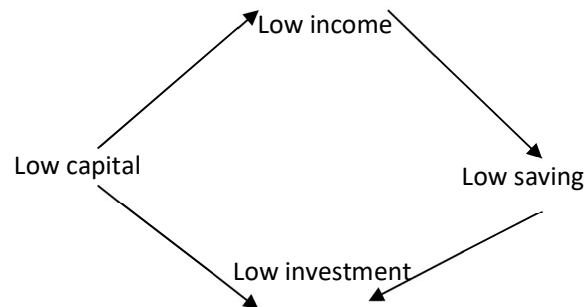
The major crop grown in Cross River State include sorghum, corn, yaros, rice, cassava, millet, groundnut and melon. In Cross River State, the major food crops constitute to the basic nutritional requirements for the development of the state and the surrounding environment. However, some of the problem of Agriculture include absence of a deliberate government policy on marketing of farm products, little or no processing of farm produce, lack of storage facilities, poor yield due to poor pest control, equipment, lack absence of improved seedling and fertilizer, average farm size over 90% of the farm tool is made by human muscle, the vagaries of weather and disease take their toll in the field and the ecological stability of traditional agriculture under population pressure is seriously threatened (Richardo, 2003).

Significantly, agriculture is the most critical factor for survive of Nigeria which by extension would help transform and streamline government policies and programme. Consequently, over 90% of all the eaten in this country is generated by this system. Systematically, poverty reduction can be view as ability of an individual or group of individual to lead lives of reasonable value in order to enhanced proper substantive choice they have (Sen, 1997), which can only be realized through the context of socio-economic and religious well being committed to social security (Nussbaum, 2000). Furthermore, poverty reduction is seen as a situation of having the means of acquiring the most fundamental necessities of livelihood. (Joseph, 2000). It can also be seen as one of the things in life that comes to an individual without the requirement of any effort whatsoever on the part of the individual.

In Cross River State, poverty has tenacious grip on its victim and a lot of effort that was not required. There is need to get rid of it for a majority of Nigerian, this has been an uphill task.

Some of the major causes of poverty arise from political instability, foreign debt burden, inconsistency in government policies and programme, domestic and religious conflict, unemployment, collapse of major economic programmes, high dependency rate, extreme environmental condition example flood and drought and uneven distribution of reserve.

Poverty of circle



Source: Field work

In Cross River State, unemployment translates directly to low-income generation and high dependency ratio arising from unemployment deplete, the effect of this, is the preponderance of low income, low saving, low investment and low capital formation. This is the vicious circle of poverty in which majority of Cross Riverian are trapped as it is showed on the poverty circle above (Olajide, 2012).

SIGNIFICANCE OF AGRICULTURE IN POVERTY REDUCTION

It is believed that agriculture has to be been made a main stay due to the fact that a very large population of the Nigeria populace (65-75) percentage is engaged in agriculture. As a sustainable agricultural sector is responsible for food production for the increasing population raw materials for local industries, employment opportunity for youth people and foreign exchange for both economic, political and socio-cultural development. Corral et al. (2017) believes that agriculture contributes to rural development and enhanced the basic living condition of rural communities; it also serve as a major driving forces for developing countries. It contributes the – Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth which brought about 34.4% changes in Gross Domestic Product (Olajide et al, 2012). Agriculture provides the labor force of about 65-75%.

However, the major economic importance of agriculture lies in poverty reduction. In Cross River State the practice of food production for the populace and exporting of agricultural product by increasing agricultural output and which will thereby enhance poverty reduction (Jamal et al, 2018). The incidence of poverty in Nigeria started in 1980 with empirical evidence that has shown that about 70-75% of the populace living in poverty (absolute poverty) (Ogen 2007). According to the World Bank indicator (2016) the fraction decreased was 62.6% giving a total of 95 million people within the category. Development and growth cannot be achieved without economic diversification with attention to poverty reduction. Despite the rapid economic growth, the Gross Demotic Product increased to 69.8% between 2000 and 2009, it decreased to 2.7.21% between 2009 – 2016. But the poverty ratio was increase from 31.1% 41.8% from 200 to 2009 (World Bank, 2015).

Agriculture entails optimal performance and function to decrease poverty through income and price mechanism which aim at reducing poverty (Ogen, 2007) as cited in Olajide et al. 2012). It is further believed that agricultural possess a multifunctional impact on a country socio-economic and industrial development sector. From the aforementioned, government, nongovernmental organization, elites, international bodies, private and public invest on

agriculture has not been achieved and poverty has been prevalent in the past 30 years (FAO). Despite all this, the Cross River State government have strengthened their commitment to end poverty to achieved economic growth by the year 2030.

According to Corral, (2017) agriculture contribute 16.20% to the gross domestic product in Cross River State.

- Agriculture provides livelihood support to about third of rural communities to enhance poverty reduction.
- Agriculture account for (15- 20%) total export earnings and provide raw materials to a large number of number of industries such as sugar, rice, milk products, silk, textile and flour mill.
- It maintains the basic ecological balance for Cross River State sustainability and developmental allied sectors.
- The allied sector (hot, culture, fisheries, animal husbandry and dairy) are catalyst to economic condition of health, nutrition for poverty reduction.
- It serves as a well in maintaining food, security and in the nation security as well as poverty education agencies.
- It provides basic economic opportunity or alleviation of poverty, though saving, investment, capital generation.

METHODOLOGY

Practically data were generated through primary and secondary data (text books, journals, newspapers, web publication and magazine) and statistical data were generated by the Cross River State statistical bureau (CRS – SB). The study is purely analytical and historical statistical descriptive.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND POVERTY ALLIEVIATION

Since creation, scholars have tried to look at the link between agriculture and poverty reduction (Alexis 2011). Other scholars shows that although there is some correlation between low investment, low saving, low capital and low infrastructure. It is not clear that agriculture and poverty reduction have direct link. But this paper believes that agriculture is an aspect that led to poverty reduction in Cross River State which adopts a Ricardo theory on agricultural improvement as a framework approach to give a step-by-step explanation with adequate variables.

This Ricardo theory states that, traditional agricultural land rent is a traditional system which entails free competition amongst land owners and capitalist together with diminishing returns to capital and labour as a way of fixing the availability of fertile land (Belloc et al, 2008). Foster (1999) argued that Ricardo allowed for traditional agricultural improvement for the purpose of growth, productivity and ultimately lead to scientific and practical comprehension of the long run tendency of the economy towards a state of stationary.

The theory psychological believes that, poverty situation brings about a posse of serious problem to the day-to-day government which create room for lack of employment, low income, low investment, urban conflicts and military confront the Nigerian nation today. The increase rate of crime, terrorism and social violence are associated to poverty (Rotimi, 2011). Where one cannot get job, they make themselves available for odd job to stay alive which take a solute dimensional criminal imaginable.

Primary root of poverty seems to be complex and is associated to violence for those that are oppressed, economically deprived, discrimination against socially isolated. Some scholars believes that inequality and poverty generate violence. Awake (2012) opined that 90% of all violence-related deaths have occurred in the world's due to this effect. Akande & Okuwa (2009) believes that poverty play an important role in African traditional system of farming based on conflict experience.

According to Desai, 1992 the collapse of agriculture gave rise to poor economic system which generates insufficient means of livelihood for community development which result to in conflict and war situation all over Nigeria. In Cross River State, poverty is look upon as a social and economic threat when youths are involved in conflict (religious and ethnic) for instance the conflict within the Niger Delta region in South South Nigeria resulting to hardship both economic and social level are occasioned by low income, low investment, low serving and low capital. Above all, it is believed that unemployment, lack of fertilizers, poor farm implements pre-dispose people to poverty. Agriculture connote development in terms of food for the suitability for the state and nation at large which entail survival and therefore deserves to be transformed and strengthened will focused government policies and programme.

METHOD OF IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN CROSS RIVER STATE

Since democratic dispensation in Nigeria, attempts have been made in Cross River State to increase productivity of agriculture through the ministry of Agriculture and natural resources. Some of the approaches adopted are;

1. The use of modern industrial methods for agriculture processing products
2. Economic and social modification of land system allocating for farming.
3. Scientific application of mechanical system of farming to make way for possible large-scale operation.
4. Prepared application of paid labour recruited outside family sources.
5. Economic orientation of production towards world markets
6. And improve scientific crops.

However, effort have been made to ensure that mechanization agriculture holds the key to economic, cultural and political transformation in Cross River State.

Moreso, agriculture projects were made as parts of the country's development plans varying from industrial system of farming, operational schemes which does not achieve a long lasting success and the degree of impact of all efforts amongst the farmers who were indeed limited operation to settlement, re-settlement, group farming and, plantation schemes which does not achieve a long lasting success and the degree of impact of all efforts among the farmers who were indeed limited in operation. The major basic problems include poor level of knowledge about tradition farm practice which was improved. the existence operation, pre-concerned ideas was based on experience obtained from various environmental source with limited emphasis on farmers themselves as a main agent of innovations.

In Cross River State, mechanized agricultural system of farming failed because of administrative bottleneck, government policy, climatic factors, topography and lack of fertilizers and poor seedling and weeding equipment. Others include lack of machinery, rapid deterioration, disease and pest and other biological factors arising from a disturbance of the ecological environment. Mechanization recorded more failures than success in Cross River State towards agriculture progress ((World Bank, 2015). If these problems were overcome, the system of land tenure system will be encouraged, where small and fragmented piece of land is obtainable and the vehement opposition of local farmers to land act reforms involving basic consolidation and economic enlargement of holding could act as its effective tool against commercial/mechanized effort. The basic failure of the past efforts naturally calls for new scientific approach to adopt and ensure effective and efficient success. Those approach must take into consideration the peculiar environmental and social factor that affect both commercial and agrarian production.

Moreso, the degree of success being recorded in agriculture is based on harmony, environment, and social factors for both long- and short-term view points and consistently meet the food, physiological and needs of the community. This implies that;

- i. The product must be sold to human being
- ii. Sufficient quality of food and related farm product must be obtained per unit of physical input and

- iii. The process of raising the damage product to the land through pollution and erosion is kept to minimum.

In an attempt to transform traditional agriculture base on the requirements, the problem of discordance between agriculture and environment has been reduced to the barest minimum and give room for ecological stability. Interestingly, the basic characteristic of agriculture create room for the development of scientific framework with the optimum satisfaction of environmental handicaps, which will enable the government to promote research design and experimentation of agricultural machinery for sowing, tillage, processing and harvesting suited to the peculiar requirements of Nigeria agriculture.



Source: Field work (2023)

In Cross River State, the appropriate education given to farmers should be vigorously implemented. This implies that government should encouraged adequate coverage of all the farming communities in respect of transfer of improved technology, marketing, storage and provision of input facilities. Specifically, the government should facilitate.

- The development of seeds, multiplication farm and adequate production of large quantities of improved seedlings
- Adequate provision of fertilizers, crop production equipment for spraying a pesticide and farm tractors.
- Establishment of farm services are made available to farmers.
- Rehabilitation of roads to facilitate farmers access to services, inputs and market.
- Establishment of dams, well to provide water for both small scale irrigation and domestic uses
- The substantial increase in the number of extension agents required to cover all the farm in communities
- Provision of favourable incentive to famer through the improvement of the profitability of farming.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Providing answer from the secondary data question, the study revealed that agriculture in Cross River State have been able to make significant positive impact toward food production, improvement in skills in Cross River State and Nigeria as a whole. Specifically, the major challenges confronting agriculture is funding. This has eroded the basic quality; it has also made access to catalytic development for a great population of Cross Riverians. With increasing number of people, the problem of access has not been addressed due to insufficient equipment, fertilizer and climate condition given the indices of poverty, unemployment, low income, low saving, and low investment.

The study shows that the state government remains the best agencies of agricultural development and should thereby re-appraise its major policy in re-appraise it funding, principal policy to make it more impactful and accessible.

As a causative agent of poverty reduction, if caution is not taken, to access agriculture it will result to economic, political and cultural damages. Moreso, fertilizer should be provided to the farmers. This is as a result of increasing demands, needs for foods in and outside the country for the overall foreign aid and income generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, therefore, the researcher recommended the following.

1. The government should encourage modern agriculture as a laudable project of saved to aid in employment generation and poverty reduction which will in turn reduced social rate of crime amongst the rural dwellers.
2. It is recommended that, individuals, non-governmental organization and churches should be encourage to support modern agricultural system of farming.
3. Youth should see and embraced agriculture, as a welcome development while waiting for service.
4. Government in all level should encouraged and plant sustainable policy programmes that geared toward poverty reduction through agriculture system.

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, poverty reduction has been given basic insight into the role of agriculture and poverty reduction. In order to achieved catalytic poverty reduction, more practical strategies should be encouraging such as increased income level based, implementation of trade, co-operation among elites and proper polices design. Moreso, government should encourage training and retraining of personnel's, provision of marketing board mechanism. This is because growth of a nation economic since most countries productive system in low income in terms of share in overall input which intensify well-being standard of people in long run.

In Cross River State, the basic potential in absorbing the unemployment is low, resulting to poor saving, low investment and low capital at its optimal level. This implies that raw materials are readily available like nut and cocoa which can aid foreign exchange development, the comparative advantage in oil base product, rice, cassava, tomato, livestock, cotton to boost foreign aid and provision of employment opportunity to reduced poverty ration. Furthermore, government and individuals should encourage every sector to promote mechanized system of farming.

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