

UNIT 3 MEASURES FOR IMPROVING NIGERIAN AGRICULTURE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is central to Nigeria's economic growth and development on account of its overall strategic influence on the economy. However, productivity is constrained by several factors, among which are environmental problems, inconsistent policy formulation by Government, low capital for production, lack of infrastructural facilities in the rural areas, socio-economic aspects, especially inefficient supply and prohibitive costs of required inputs, poor or lack of organization (especially duplication of programmes), institutional problems, poor rural remuneration, low rural retention and lack of efficient storage facilities. In particular, inconsistent policies arising from political or administrative problems aggravate the risk and uncertainty inherent in agricultural planning.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should to explain:

- the pertinent ways through which agricultural productivity could be improved in order to ensure sustainable development of the sector, and thus the entire economy.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

The measures of improving agriculture in Nigeria are:

3.1 Development for Efficient Information System

There is need for efficient and effective information system, which will facilitate planning, sound management and implementation of agricultural policies. Data collection on agriculture should be the sole function of a unit within the Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture. The Federal Office of Statistics should therefore, collaborate with the ministries to constitute a formidable reservoir of information for agricultural planning. Research institutes and Universities should serve as conventional sources of data collection.

3.2 Restoration of Subsidy

Agriculture is an accretionary process. Its effective management therefore, depends solely on the availability of supply inputs and distribution. However, productive agriculture thrives on incentive creation, most especially in the form of subsidy whose removal does more harm than good to agriculture. There is therefore, a need to restore the subsidies on some key inputs such as fertilizers.

3.3 Effective Research Extension and Farmer Linkages

The efficiency of government as an actor and/or regular is crucial to efficient management of agricultural resources. Indirect support of the agricultural sector through the activities of government agencies such as the National Agricultural Land Development Agency (NALDA) and Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), should feature prominently above direct government intervention. Other relevant stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations (World Food Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Bank) should be accessed. Efforts must also be made to continue to link farmers with the activities of the research institutions, not only to pass down research findings to the farmers but also to ascertain the farmers' requirements.

3.4 Improvement of Rural Property Rights

The system of property institutions under which land is owned and used is a very critically important factor in agricultural productivity. However, at present Nigeria's Land Use Act of 1978 is hardly helping the Nigerian land user (apart from the State). Therefore, to maintain the role of the Act in the economy, an effective land-use reform which must be reasonable, familiar to the people, and have an integral and

supportive relationship to the system of local farming, should be instituted.

3.5 Repositioning Agriculture through Export Revitalisation

There is need for the federal Government to actualize her intention to encourage increased investment in agriculture for both large- and small-scale farmers, but with greater emphasis on the latter. There is a greater need for more incentives in all their ramifications, to facilitate increased food production to Nigerians and more rapid rehabilitation of economic trees to prevent importation of products for which the nation has always enjoyed resource abundance. Greater incentives should be provided to the private sector agriculturists to boldly invest and thus, improve the present situation. The institutions that support agricultural exports should be brought to the knowledge of real and potential agricultural exporters. The government should also work out arrangements that would favour the interest of Nigerian agricultural exporters at various for those institutions.

3.6 Consistent Government Agricultural Policies

For the past decades, government policies have been largely inconsistent and discontinuous. There is a strong need for efficient, practicable and consistent policies on agricultural production in order to ensure sustainable production and economic development through the agricultural sector.

3.7 Efficient Provision of Infrastructural Facilities

Agricultural production in most rural communities is constrained by poor infrastructure. There is a strong need to provide easy and accessible roads for inward flow of agricultural inputs as well as outward flow of farm produce. This, in addition to the provision of electricity will facilitate two-way communication, access to energy for powering farm structures, farmers' socio-economic development and rural education. It will also stem the tide of drift in rural-urban migration of productive youths.

3.8 Efficient Supply of Agricultural Inputs

Lack or erratic supply of agricultural inputs is a major factor causing low agricultural productivity in Nigeria. There is a strong need to ensure farmers have easy and prompt access to farm inputs, especially fertilizers, implements and seeds so as to facilitate timely land preparation, seeding and crop husbandry. Efficient supply of agrochemicals for seed and crop protection will not only enhance

disease-free seeds at planting but also, good health and large output crop and animal produce for human consumption. A similar case will apply to the issue of preventing the circulation of adulterated agrochemicals, especially pesticides.

3.9 Establishment of Modern Storage Facilities

The need for the introduction of modern storage facilities (refrigerators, cold rooms) will to a large extent, prevent the usual heavy losses in farm produce, especially the perishable types.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learned that:

- i. the solutions to the nation's agricultural problems are not only political, but also involve social, economic, human and environment considerations' and
- ii. there is a critical need for tactical political will in the planning and implementation of agricultural policies in order to sustain agricultural production and national development.

5.0 SUMMARY

Agricultural development can be improved and sustained through a critical analysis of the inherent problems and careful planning and implementation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Enumerate five problems of agricultural development in Nigeria.
- 2) Why is political will critical to sustained agricultural development and economic growth?
- 3) How does the improvement of rural property rights facilitate agricultural development?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Oludimu, O.L. and Imoudu, P.B. [1998]. *Institutional Reforms for Agricultural Development. Essays in Honour of Late Professor Segun Famoriyo*. Triumph Books Publishers: Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.