

UNIT 4 LAND TENURE AND USE SYSTEMS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Land Tenure System
 - 3.1.1 Definition
 - 3.1.2 Classes of Land Tenure System
 - 3.2 Land Use
 - 3.2.1 Land Use Systems
 - 3.3 Factors Causing Changes in the Usage of Agricultural Lands
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The way the land is held or owned differs in different parts of the world, depending on the existing laws and customs. Similarly, the ownership of land is critical to the purpose of use of the land. Traditionally in West Africa, land ownership is either communal or individual. Also, although most land is used for agricultural purposes land ownership affects the development of agriculture.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the different forms of land ownership
- appreciate the way land is used for various purposes, including agriculture.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Land Tenure System

3.1.1 Definition

Land tenure is defined as the system of land ownership by individuals, family, community or government agency either for temporary use or as permanent property.

3.1.2 Classes of Land Tenure System

- i. **Communal Land Tenure:** The land belongs to the entire community, as represented by a family, a village, or a clan. This is a typical traditional practice in Nigeria. Every member of the community is entitled to a piece of the land for agriculture. Also, allottees have the freedom to grow choice crops, to use the land for any purpose and freedom to make desired improvements on the land without restriction. However, the individual allotted can neither sell any part of the land nor under normal circumstances, transfer the land to a stranger. The land tenure system involves a small population of users and subsistence farming, which hampers mechanization and economic exploitation in spite of abundance of land. There is a limitation to the acquisition of more available land by an intending farmer. Communal land cannot be used as security for accessing credit facilities in commercial banks.
- ii. **Inheritance Land Tenure:** This involves the acquisition of land by inheritance from parent(s) or generation to generation. In Nigeria, most agricultural lands are acquired through inheritance.
- iii. **Leasehold System:** This system involves the payment of a certain amount of money for the use of the land over a specified period of time.
- iv. **Rent Land Tenure:** This system involves the payment of a certain amount of money as rent for the use of a land by a farmer over a short period of time.
- v. **Individual Land Tenure:** This involves the ownership of a piece of land by an individual through either freehold or rent tenancy.

Freehold Ownership

Advantages are

- complete freedom of owner over the land,
- permanent ownership of land,
- freeholder can use the land for any purpose, and
- freeholder ownership of land offers great security to freeholder, with high prospects of huge investment and returns on investment on land.

Disadvantages are

- Individuals who have none or inadequate land can neither rent or buy from freeholder,
- Possibility of land fragmentation by freeholder, thus making intensive or large-scale agriculture difficult and reducing the associated economic efficiency.

Rent Tenancy: This land tenure system involves the renting of portions or all of the land by the individual land owner to farmers as tenants. The tenants pay rent for using the land as well as remit a proportion of the yield from the land to the land owner.

- vi Land tenure by purchase or freehold: This involves an outright purchase of the land for agriculture.
- vii Land tenure by free gift or pledge: This involves the acquisition of land as a gift.
- viii. Tenancy at the will of government: In Nigeria, the Federal Government reformed the land tenure system by the Land Use Decree of March 1978. The decree removed land from all traditional custodians and placed it in the hands of State Governors and local Government Authorities. Each individual is entitled to ½ ha of land for house building purpose in urban areas, 500 ha for intensive agriculture and 5000 ha for grazing land. A Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) obtained from government would certify the owner's authority. The limitations of this system are that there is no provision to freehold title to land, procedures for freehold title to land are difficult and there is no provision for consolidation which militates against the issue of C of O.

3.2 Land Use

Nigeria's total land area is 92.4 m ha. About 91 m ha of this is adjudged suitable for cultivation. Also, approximately half of this cultivable land is effectively under permanent and arable crops while the rest is covered by forest wood land, permanent pasture and built-up areas.

3.2.1 Land Use Systems

- i. Agriculture: In Nigeria, as shown in 3.2, most land is used for farming. The various farming activities include growing food crops, plantation crops or feed crops; pastoralism, bush or planted fallow, and forest reserves.
- ii. Non-agricultural land: The use of land for housing, roads, railways, sea-ports, airports, reservoirs, shops, industries and

warehouses. Others are military installations, offices, hospitals, parks and wildlife resorts. Non-agricultural land use involves a small proportion of total land area in Nigeria, in spite of the increasing population and industrial growth.

3.3 Factors Causing Changes in the Usage of Agricultural Lands

- i. The establishment of forest reserves.
- ii. Road and railway construction, especially connecting farm production centres.
- iii. Construction of houses, hospitals, office complexes and non-agricultural structures essential for human welfare, which commands some prices on land sale by the farmer.
- iv. Population growth and the need to increase food crop production for consumption and export earnings for national development.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, you have learned:

- the different systems of land tenure, their benefits and limitations in agricultural land use;
- the different land use systems in Nigeria, and
- the factors which influence the use of agricultural lands.

5.0 SUMMARY

In West Africa, especially Nigeria, land is traditionally held in trust by the entire community, but this limits the acquisition of land for agricultural purposes. Other systems of land tenure have their inherent benefits and limitations. Also, the usage of agricultural lands greatly depends on other non-agricultural sectors such as forestry, construction and population growth and pressure.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Define the term “Land tenure”.
2. Mention five classes of land tenure system in practice in West Africa.
3. State the difference between leasehold tenure and rent land tenure systems.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Adegbola, A.A., Are, L.A., Ashaye, T.I. and Komolafe, M.F. (1972).
Agricultural Science for West African Schools and Colleges.
Oxford University Press: Nigeria.

‘Opportunities in Nigeria’s Agricultural Sector’
<http://www.nigeriabusinessinfo.com/agric.htm>