

CHAPTER 2

Problems of Agricultural Development in Nigeria

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this chapter, students should be able to:

- â identify the problems of agricultural development in Nigeria.
- â discuss the various problems of agricultural development in Nigeria.
- â state possible solutions to the problems of agricultural development in Nigeria.

2.1 Introduction

Most developing countries in Africa experience periodic food shortages, causing a large percentage of the population to be poor and undernourished. Majority of the farmers are small holders, who practise the traditional methods of farming such as shifting cultivation and mixed farming. In addition, the use of traditional implements and hand tools has restricted agricultural production to a small-scale level.

2.2 Factors Militating Against Agricultural Development in Nigeria

Nigeria has not been able to achieve self sufficiency in food and cash crop production in spite of the vast agricultural potential. Some of the factors responsible for these are as follows.

2.2.1 Land tenure system

This is the system of land allocation and ownership in Nigeria which makes it difficult for a farmer to acquire and cultivate an extensive area of farmland. The system of land tenure or allocation and ownership in Nigeria makes it difficult for farmers to acquire and cultivate an extensive area of farmland.

2.2.2 Problem of finance and credit facilities

Farmers have difficulties in accessing profitable sources of finance and credit facilities for agricultural purposes.

2.2.3 Poor transportation network facilities

Majority of the farmers cannot effectively market and distribute their farm produce because there are no good access roads. There are also limited number of specialized vehicles for conveying agricultural products such as beef, chicken and diary products.

2.2.4 Poor storage and processing facilities

This problem has constrained farmers to produce just enough commodities for consumption and sale.

2.2.5 Inadequate agricultural education and extension service

Farmers are unable to adopt modern farming techniques due to poor agricultural education and extension service.

2.2.6 Inadequate tools and machinery

Tools used for agricultural production are crude and as such sap a lot of energy without much input; moreover, machines are expensive and most farmers cannot afford it.

2.2.7 Inadequate distribution

Farm inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and agro-chemicals are not readily available or accessible to farmers; where available, farm inputs are expensive and farmers cannot afford them.

2.2.8 Poor pricing and marketing incentives

Farmers do not receive the right prices for their produce and this discourages production.

2.2.9 Rural-urban migration

Basic amenities are insufficient in the rural areas, causing drifting of youths to the urban areas, leaving farming activities to the aged who cannot put in their best.

2.2.10 Inconsistency and poor implementation of government policy on agriculture

Different agricultural policies such as Operation Feed the Nation (1976) had been launched and replaced with similar ones such as Green Revolution (1981), without achieving the objectives of their establishment. Also, poor implementation of agricultural policies has denied farmers the opportunity of benefiting from such government policy.

2.2.11 Unpredictable climate and poor irrigation

There are poor irrigating facilities all over the country and due to this farmers rely only on weather. The effect of weather failure is severe on the farmers.

2.2.12 Problems of pests and diseases

Pest and diseases destroy crops causing poor yield and low income. The farmer also spends a lot of money in controlling pests.

2.2.13 Environmental degradation and climate change

Soil erosion, deforestation, desert encroachment, bush burning, pollution, flood, etc. affect agricultural lands and thereby reduce the availability of land for agricultural production.

2.3 Solutions to Problems of Agricultural Development

The following are the possible solutions to the problems of agricultural development.

2.3.1 Land tenure system

Solution

1. Land tenure systems should be modified to make land available to farming, forestry and wildlife.

2.3.2 Inadequate finance or financial problem

Solutions

1. Effective tax relief should be granted to farmers to encourage accumulation of capital for further investments in meaningful agricultural ventures.
2. Commercial banks should be encouraged to grant loans at low interest rates to farmers.
3. Collateral security should be removed or be in the form of guarantee rather than landed property or any other permanent assets.

2.3.3 Poor transportation network facilities

Solutions

1. More roads should be constructed in the rural areas and existing ones rehabilitated by government; this will make evacuation of farm produce easier.
2. More specialized vehicles for conveying of agricultural produce should be made available.

2.3.4 Poor storage and processing facilities

Solutions

1. There should be serious research into food preservation and storage that will suit our types of food and environment.
2. Government should provide storage silos for the preservation of grains.
3. Provisions of storage and processing facility to co-operative centres should be pursued under the subsidy scheme.
4. Government should train more people on the technology of food storage and food processing

2.3.5 Poor agricultural education and extension services

Solutions

1. Government should promote literacy through adult education for the farmers to facilitate the process of communicating information on modern farming techniques, farm subsidies and incentives by the government.
2. Farmers should be informed as to where and when they should get subsidies.
3. Adequate number of qualified extension workers should be employed to disseminate new agricultural ideas and innovations to the farmers.
4. More schools of agriculture should be established for the training of literate farmers and extension officers.

2.3.6 Inadequate tools and machinery

Solutions

- 1.** Local fabrication of farm tools and machinery should be encouraged.
- 2.** Agricultural engineering schools should be established and the faculty or department of agricultural engineering be empowered to train personnel on the fabrication and maintenance of tools and machinery.
- 3.** Farmers should be encouraged to form co-operative societies to enable them to pull their resources together and purchase farm machinery

2.3.7 Inadequate and poor distribution of farm inputs

Solutions

- 1.** High yielding varieties of crops, improved breeds of livestock, fertilizers and agrochemicals suitable for each ecological zone should be made available and distributed to farmers at the right time.
- 2.** Agricultural extension and liaison service should be empowered and encouraged.

2.3.8 Poor pricing and marketing incentives

Solutions

- 1.** Commodity boards should be re-established, to market specific crops that are produced in Nigeria, so that farmers can get higher prices for their goods
- 2.** Government should provide adequate storage facilities and also buy the excess produce from the producers.

2.3.9 Problem of rural-urban migration

Solutions

- 1.** Government should provide necessary basic amenities in the rural areas.
- 2.** Farm settlement scheme may be established to accommodate young school leavers.

2.3.10 Inconsistency and poor implementation of government policy on agriculture

Solution

- 1.** The policies should be one that will allow farmers access to farm inputs and be self-reliant.

2.3.11 Unpredictable climate and poor irrigation facilities

Solutions

- 1.** Farmers should be encouraged to adopt irrigation practices or systems in case of drought.
- 2.** To prevent excessive loss of water from the soil, water conservation techniques such as mulching, planting of cover crops, etc. should be practised.
- 3.** The growth cycle of some crops can be adjusted for early maturing varieties planted to suit the climatic factors of the area.
- 4.** Information on climate change should be made available to farmers by the meteorological department; this will help farmers to adjust their planting period.
- 5.** Irrigation facilities should be provided at subsidised rates to farmers.

2.3.12 Problem of pests and diseases

Solution

1. Sales of agro-chemicals should be regulated and made available through reputable established outlets.

2.3.13 Environmental degradation and climate change

Solution

1. Farmers should be encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly farming practices that would prevent environmental degradation such as afforestation, planting of trees, cover cropping and avoidance of bush burning.

Activity 1: Visit some farmers in your locality and ask them to state the problems they are facing on the farm. Also ask them to narrate how they have been coping with the problems. Suggest possible solutions to their problems.

Activity 2: Discuss and record the outcome of your field trip.

Revision Questions

Essay Questions

1. (a) List five factors that militate against the development of agriculture in Nigeria.
(b) Suggest one possible solution to each of the problems. (WASSCE 1990)
2. Discuss briefly four factors that can cause food shortages in Nigeria. (WASSCE 1992)
3. (a) Discuss the effects of rural-urban migration on agricultural production. (WASSCE 2004)
(b) How can government solve the problem of rural-urban migration?
4. (a) Mention three ways in which each of the following factors affects agricultural development.
 - (i) Poor tools and implements
 - (ii) Poor storage facilities
(b) Suggest one solution to the problem of poor tools and implements. (WASSCE 2003)
5. Discuss briefly the ways in which the following factors contribute to the problems of agricultural development in Nigeria.
 - (a) Finance
 - (b) Farm input
 - (c) Transportation
 - (d) Storage and processing facilities

Objective Questions

1. Most Nigerian farms sell their produce immediately after harvesting because
 - (a) stored produce will be lost to pests.
 - (b) there are inadequate storage facilities.
 - (c) the produce is perishable.
 - (d) the prices offered for stored produce are low.

2. Which of the following is not a problem of agricultural development in Nigeria?

- (a) Provision of food and employment opportunity
- (b) Land tenure system
- (c) Poor and fluctuating climatic conditions
- (d) Poor storage facilities

3. Wastage of agricultural products during harvesting period is mainly due to

- (a) inadequate transport facilities.
- (b) storage and processing facilities.
- (c) agricultural education and extension.
- (d) implementation of government policies on agriculture.

4. Food shortage can be minimized by

- (a) efficient pest control services.
- (b) natural hazards.
- (c) illegal exportation of farm produce.
- (d) hoarding.

5. One of the following is not a solution to the problem of rural-urban migration.

- (a) Provision of basic amenities
- (b) Establishment of farm settlement scheme
- (c) Provision of food for the farmers
- (d) Farming should be made attractive

6. The most important climatic factor that determines the success or failure of crop production in Nigeria is

- (a) rainfall.
- (b) wind.
- (c) sunlight.
- (d) humidity.

Answers to Objective Questions

1. (b) 2. (a) 3. (b) 4. (a) 5. (c) 6. (a)