

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a very important economic activity and it is one of the most engaged activities among many West African Countries. In Nigeria, about 70 percent of the entire population is engaged in the agriculture sector. The majority of people living in the rural areas for instance are engaged in agricultural activities. In this chapter, we shall discuss among other things the components of agriculture such as crop farming, fishing, livestock. We shall also discuss the problems and solutions to agricultural development in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

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

- ◆ Identify the main components of agriculture;
- ◆ Explain the main features of the various systems of agriculture;
- ◆ Explain the importance of agriculture to economic development in Nigeria;
- ◆ Explain the process and challenges/problems of producing and marketing agricultural products in Nigeria.

9.1 Definition of Agriculture

Agriculture can be defined simply as the cultivation of land for the production of food and cash crops. Agricultural activities however go beyond simple land cultivation to include activities such as the rearing of animals (livestock and poultry), fishing, forestry, hunting etc.

9.2 Components of Agriculture

The various components of agriculture are:

- a. **Crop farming:** This is concerned with the production of food and cash crops. Food crops are those types of crops that are produced for consumption purposes. Examples of food crops are rice, cassava, yam, beans, maize etc. while cash crops are produce to earn income through their sale. Examples of cash crops are cocoa, rubber, palm oil, cotton etc. Most of these food crops are produced in Nigeria and other West Africa countries.
- b. **Animal rearing/livestock production:** This involves rearing of animals such as cattle, poultry, ruminants (goats and sheep rearing), piggery etc. In Nigeria, cattle rearing is mostly done in Northern part of the country. This is due to the available large expanse of grassland for animal grazing. Animal meat product are important source of protein while their skin are useful for leather product. Fishing is another important agricultural activity. Fish farming is usually dominant among people living along reverine or coastal areas. Fish is one of the most important source of protein. In
- c. Nigeria, fish farming is mostly prominent among the Ijaws, Ijayes and other tribes living along the coast.
- d. **Forestry:** This deals with the growing and production of trees and tree products. Example is the production of timbers and logging of tree for domestic uses such as building houses, production of firewood as

alternative to chemical fuel etc. Trees like Iroko, mahogany, Obeche etc are examples of tree produced under the forestry agriculture.

- e. **Hunting:** This involves the catching of bush animals for consumption and income purpose. Animals are usually caught either through traps and other weapons.

9.3 Agricultural Systems

The practice of agriculture can take different forms. Some of the systems involved include:

- a. **Peasant farming:** Peasant farming is the use of simple farm implement such as hoe and cutlasses for agricultural production. Peasant farming is usually undertaking for substance purpose, i.e. for meeting the food needs of the family. It usually have few products left for sale. Members of the family usually constitute the labour force. This type of farming system is characterized by mixed cropping, a situation where about two to three crops are grown together at the same time.
- b. **Plantation agriculture:** This is a system of agriculture where crops are produced in large scale. It is usually a capital intensive system of farming. It is a farming system where a particular agricultural product is grown on large scale. Examples of plantation agriculture include cocoa plantation, palm plantation and rubber plantation. Most plantation agriculture are practiced in forest area and are mostly tree crops.
- c. **Mechanised farming:** Mechanized farming involves the use of modern machineries and equipment such as tractors, grazers, ploughs, harvesters, insecticides etc to produce agricultural products. With mechanized farming, it is possible to produce either food or cash crops in a very large quantity even in short times. Irrigation service can be used to supply water to dry land.
- d. **Co-operative farming:** Co-operative farming is a type of farming system where a group of people pool their resources (money, land, materials etc) together so as to gain the economies of large scale production. Co-operative farmers have the advantage of easy access to loan.

9.4 Importance of Agriculture

Agriculture is the mainstay of West African economy. It account for about 60% of the Gross Domestic Product and hence contribute largely to the development of the various economies in West Africa.

The importance of agriculture to the economy of Nigeria and other West Africa countries include:

- a. **Provision of food supply for the populace:** The practice of agriculture make food available for the teeming population in Nigeria and other West African countries.
- b. **Provision of raw materials for industries:** Agriculture provides raw material for industries. Such industries include textile, rubber, palm oil etc. and other related agro allied industries.
- c. **Source of revenue:** Agriculture serves as a source of revenue for the government and the individual. The export of agricultural products earns a lot of money for the government and farmers.
- d. **Agriculture contributes to Gross Domestic Product:** Agriculture plays a significant role in contributing to the Gross Domestic Product of most West African countries.
- e. **Agriculture provides market for manufactured goods:** With agricultural activities industrial products such as insecticides,

pesticides, tractors, animal feeds etc are marketed. Thus, agriculture provides market for industrial products.

- f. **Provision of employment:** Agriculture provides massive employment to the teeming population. About 70% of the labour force in Nigeria and most other West African countries are engaged in agriculture.

9.5 Problems of Agricultural Development in Nigeria

Numerous problems face agricultural development in Nigeria. These problems cut across natural, technological and financial factors etc. Some of the various problems facing agricultural development in Nigeria and most other West African countries include:

- a. **Low level of soil fertility:** There is the existence of poor soil in some part of the country and other parts of West African countries. Poor soil would lead to low agricultural yields.
- b. **Pests and Diseases:** The existence of pests and diseases which destroy farm produce constitute a serious problem to agricultural development in Nigeria. For instance the attack of insects, rodents, locusts and birds can considerably lead to loss of agricultural output.
- c. **Use of simple farm implement:** The use of simple farm implement by farmers lower agricultural production. Most West African countries lack modern agricultural technology to boost agricultural products. The use of simple farm implement for subsistent farming reduces agricultural output.
- d. **Poor distribution network:** The lack of good road network linking villages where most of the farm products are grown makes it difficult to convey agricultural products to the urban centres where they are demanded. Perishable agricultural products could get spoilt if they are not evacuated in time from the villages to cities and urban centre where they are needed.
- e. **Lack of storage facilities:** The lack of storage facilities such as industrial refrigerators, and other preservers could affect the already produced farm products. Farmers often do not have where they could store the remnants of their farm produce and as such most of the products could get spoilt.
- f. Other factors which could affect agricultural development are low prices for agriculture products, inadequate market structures, inadequate research to improve seedlings, declining labour force engaged in agriculture sectors etc.

9.6 Agricultural Policy in Nigeria

Government undertakes various policies to improve the production of agricultural products. These policies include:

- a. **Increased financial budgetary allocation to agriculture:** In an attempt to boost the supply of agricultural products in the country, there is increase in there budgetary allocation.
- b. **Credit facilities:** Policies towards ensuring that loan at reduced interest rate are provided is also encouraged. This is to enable farmers have access to credits to improve their agricultural activities.
- c. This has led to the establishment of special agricultural banks to support farmers.
- d. **Establishment of River Basins Development Authorities:** River Basins are usually established to provide arable land for farming through irrigation. Government spends huge amount of money to build dams which are used to provide irrigation, improve fishing activities and drinkable water for the overall development of agriculture.

- e. **Supply of agricultural inputs:** Government endeavours to supply agricultural inputs such as improved seedlings, fertilizers etc to boost productivity. The inputs are sometimes given directly or through the farmer cooperative societies.
- f. **Establishment of research centers:** The establishment of research centers to help improve agricultural product has been encouraged by government. This is manifested in the establishment of research centres to improve crop production. Research findings are applied to improve and increase agricultural productivity. For instance there are research centres such as the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm Research (NIFOR), Cocoa and Rubber Research Institutes and other research institutes to improve the production of cash crops.
- g. **Land tenure decrees:** Government promulgates land tenure decree to make land available and affordable to farmers to embark on agricultural production.
- h. **Establishment of price limit:** Government sometimes fixes minimal prices for agricultural products in order to encourage farmers to produce more of the agricultural crops.

9.7 Marketing of Agricultural Commodities and its Challenges

There are different marketing systems for the marketing of agricultural products in Nigeria. There are the traditional marketing system (usually applied to the sale of food crop) and the marketing board system.

The traditional system of marketing involves a situation where many middle men are involved in purchase and sale of agricultural products.

It also involves a situation where the farmers sell their farm products directly to consumers.

9.7.1 The Marketing Board System

Marketing Board is a government trading agent. It is a body set up by the government to buy and sell agricultural products. The body was mainly concerned with the purchase and sale of agricultural cash crops such as a cocoa, palm produce, groundnut etc.

9.7.1.1 Functions of Marketing Boards

- a. **Provision of ready market:** Marketing board provides ready market for the purchase and sale of farm produce.
- b. **Price stabilization:** Marketing board helps in stabilizing producers price by fixing relevant prices for the crops. This prevents the low pricing of agricultural produce during periods of increased harvests. This helps to minimize price fluctuation and encourage farmers.
- c. **Standardization of agricultural products:** Marketing board ensures the proper grading of product so as to improve its quality.
- d. **Promoting economic development:** Marketing boards allocate funds to the different government for the purpose of improving the level of economic activities and hence economic development.
- e. **Financing of research:** Marketing boards help in the financing of research activities. They encourage research in the development of agricultural products.
- f. **Processing of agricultural product:** Marketing boards ensure processing of agricultural products in order to allow for easy storage of the products.

9.7.1.2 Challenges facing Marketing Boards

Marketing boards are faced with certain challenges and problems which

include:

- a. Inability to stabilize farmers' income.
- b. Limited storage facilities. Most of the storage facilities of marketing boards are not enough to subsidize prices.
- c. Accumulated funds are not used effectively to meet the challenges of the board.
- d. The board do not have bargaining power for better prices in the world markets.

9.8 Prospects of Agriculture in Nigeria

Agriculture plays a significant role in economic development. As a result of world economic crises, countries have begun to emphasize agricultural development as a way out. The prospect for agriculture in Nigeria and other West African nations is continuously derived from the following:

- a. **The fall and instability in oil prices:** The decrease in the demand for petroleum and the recent economic crises has necessitated the need to diversify productivity into more sustainable economic activity like agriculture.
- b. **The cost of food imports:** The neglect of agriculture has increased the cost of agricultural product. This necessitated the need to pay more attention to the development of agriculture to feed the populace.
- c. **Growth in population:** A growing population means an increased demand for food. Most West African Countries including Nigeria has tremendous growth in population in recent times and this has led to the increased demand for agricultural products to sustain the growing population.
- d. **The quest for food security:** Many countries including Nigeria desire to be self sufficient in food production and reduce reliance on other countries. It is dangerous to rely too much on other countries for the supply of food.

9.9 Solutions to Agricultural Development in Nigeria

- a. Adequate financial support in form of credit facilities to farmers.
- b. Provision of adequate infrastructural facilities.
- c. Effective control of pest and diseases through the provision of insecticides, pesticides etc.
- d. Adequate provision and maintenance of dams for irrigation.
- e. Provision of agricultural subsidies to farmers.
- f. Establishment of rural agricultural banks to provide credits to farmers.
- g. Provision of educational programmes and training for farmers.
- h. Effective control of flood and other disaster agents.
- i. Establishment and encouragement of farm settlement.
- j. Land reform system should be introduced.
- k. Encouraging farmers' cooperative societies to promote largescale farming.

Summary

This chapter has discussed:

- Agriculture as the cultivation of land, rearing of animals, and other related activities such as forestry, fishing etc. The components of agriculture include crop farming, animal rearing, fishing farming, forestry, hunting etc.

The systems of agriculture which include:

- a. **Peasant Farming:** This involves the use of simple farm implement.

- b.** It is mainly for self subsistence. It is mainly to meet the food requirement of the family while the surplus is offered for sale at the local market.
- c. Mechanized farming:** This involves the use of modern farm machinery and equipment for agriculture. Examples of such machineries are tractors, ridgers, harvesters, herbicides and insecticide spraying machines. Mechanized farming is used for large scale production of agricultural products.
- d. Plantation agriculture:** This is a type of agricultural practice that involves a well developed plantation of certain agricultural products. It is usually a capital intensive system of farming. Capital items such as machines, tools, improved seedlings etc are used. Plantation system of agricultural are usually highly organized and are stocked with modern facilities. Usually a single agricultural produced is produced but on a very large scale. They usually have rich infrastructural facilities such as staff quarters, pipe-borne water, electricity, good road networks etc.

Importance of Agriculture which includes:

Food supply: Agriculture provides food for the teeming population.

Provision of raw materials: Raw materials for industries are usually gotten from agricultural product. Example is rubber for plastic, palm oil for soap etc.

Source of income/revenue: Agriculture is a very important source of income both for the individuals and the government.

Means of employment: Many people get employed through agriculture. Agriculture contributes to GDP growth of a country.

Class Activity

Students should visit an agricultural plantation nearest to their school and find out the importance of that plantation on the economic life of that locality.

Revision Questions

Objective Questions

1. Which of the following crops can be referred to as Nigeria's export crops

- (a) Rubber, Groundnuts, Beniseed, Cotton
- (b) Sheabutter, Sorghum, Onions
- (c) Rubber, Cocoa, Coffee, Palm Kernel
- (d) Palm Oil, Palm Kernel, Sugarcane
- (e) Soya beans, Rice, Groundnut, Cashew nut (**SSCE 1988**)

2. One of these is a reason for low agricultural productivity in Nigeria:

- (a) Lack of skill workforce
- (b) Non availability of land
- (c) Few population engaged in agriculture
- (d) Lack of sufficient capital and infrastructural facilities
- (e) None of the above

3. The largest employment sector in a typical West African country is:

- (a) Construction
- (b) Transportation
- (c) Petroleum
- (d) Agriculture
- (e) Manufacturing (**SSCE 1997**)

4. West African economies can best be described as:

- (a) Agricultural
- (b) Backward

(c) Developed

(e) Industrialized (SSCE 1999)

5. The greatest foreign exchange earner for Nigeria before the advent of petroleum was:

(a) Mining

(b) Handicraft

(c) Agriculture

(d) Manufacturing

(e) Tourism (SSCE 1995)

Essay Questions

1. **(a)** Discuss the important role played by agriculture in the economy of your country. **(SSCE 1988)** **(b)** What are the problems hindering the development of agriculture in your country?

2. Discuss the different types of agricultural systems that exist in West Africa. **(SSCE 1992)**

3. Describe the problems facing agriculture in Nigeria. **(SSCE 1993)**

4. In what ways can the government improve agricultural production in Nigeria? **(SSCE 1996)**

Glossary

Peasant farming: Type of farming system that is practiced for consumption purposes. It is practiced on a small scale with little or no intention to make sales.

Mechanized farming: It is a type of farming system that involves the use of machineries for agricultural production on a large scale.

Marketing Boards: Agencies responsible for the purchase and marketing of agricultural cash crops.