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A Lack of Governmental Support for Nigerian Agriculture and Its Impact on Food Security

Nigeria is located on the western coast of Africa. Nigeria's plan to remain self-sufficient has caused mass starvation throughout the country. The import ban has given Nigerian farmers an impossible task. Nigeria lacks the technologies and education necessary to feed its ever-growing population. Self-sufficiency is an unrealistic goal for Nigerian society, however, without an agricultural department developed within the nation's government, Nigerians will continue to undergo the negative effects of the low quantity of food produced.

Nigeria had a population of 206.1 million in 2020. 51.96 percent of Nigeria's total population lived in urban areas and cities (Statista, 2022). Government in Nigeria is a federal republic, with executive power exercised by the president. The president is the head of state, the head of government, and the head of a multi-party system. 75.9 % of the land area in Nigeria was reported as Agriculture land in 2018 (Trading Economics, 2022). Nigeria's major agricultural exports include sesame seeds, cashew nuts, cocoa beans, ginger, frozen shrimp, and cotton. Sesame, cashew nuts, and cocoa account for more than half of the nation's agricultural exports (AFCTA, 2022). Nigeria's small family farmers own 0.5 hectares of land on average, predominantly managing mixed crop-livestock systems, including also fish farming (FAO, 2018). This is comparable to about 1 football field. Nigeria is characterized by three distinct climate zones, a tropical monsoon climate in the south, a tropical savanna climate for most of the central regions, and a Sahelian hot and semi-arid climate in the north of the country. This leads to a gradient of declining precipitation amounts from south to north (Climate Change Knowledge Portal, 2021). Nigeria is a patchwork of distinctive regions, including deserts, plains, swamps, mountains, and steamy jungles. It has one of the largest river systems in the world, including the Niger Delta, the third-largest delta on Earth. Much of Nigeria is covered with plains and savannas (National Geographic Kids, 2022).

The average household size in Nigeria is 5.0 persons. The household size is slightly higher in rural areas than in urban areas (5.1 versus 4.7 persons). It is also higher in the north than in the south (DHS Program, 2010). In Nigeria, overcrowding in urban housing is a growing problem. Approximately 85% of the urban population lives in single rooms. Data has been limited, but in 1996 only about 27% of people in urban areas had access to piped water. Less than 10% of urban residents had an indoor toilet. The lack of safe housing continues with about 37% of all housing units being cement or brick roofed with asbestos or corrugated iron; 34% were mud-plastered with cement and roofed with corrugated iron. (Nations Encyclopedia, 2022). The Nigerian food guide is a food pyramid divided into five food groups. At the bottom are bread, grains, and tubers, followed by vegetables and fruits. Both groups are to be eaten at every meal. Eggs, fish, meat, and dairy are on the third level and are to be eaten in moderation (FAO, 2022). Most Nigerian meals are made up of one course and are cooked outside over an open fire. Gas and kerosene stoves are sometimes used, but the two fuels are very expensive for

many Nigerians (Food in Every Country, 2022). Of the health care spent in Nigeria, 77% is out-of-pocket, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) latest data, from 2017. This means that most Nigerians do not have health insurance of any kind and the poorest Nigerians have extremely limited access to quality health care (Okunola, 2020) Even though primary education is officially free and compulsory, about 10.5 million of the country's children aged 5-14 years are not in school (UNICEF, N/A).

Food insecurity in Nigeria is rooted in the lack of legislature promoting and sustaining agriculture as well as the ban on importing from other countries. The Federal Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2015 placed a ban on the importation of 41 items including rice from accessing foreign exchange in the official window. Local rice farmers have been unable to upscale production capacity to meet local demand for the staple food, despite huge financial interventions in the form of loans by the Federal Government through the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and other channels. This has forced up the price of the commodity with a 50kg bag selling between N20,000 and N25,000 in the market (Anagor, 2021). This dramatic increase in prices hasn't changed government officials' minds. Nigeria's government has recently released news that they will not be lifting their ban on imports despite the number of people who have little to no access to food especially in urban areas since they have no ability to provide for themselves,

The main causes of Nigeria's food insecurity are the lack of promoting and sustaining agriculture, along with the ban on importing from other countries. The first solution to this problem would be to develop a group of informed agriculturalists to serve in the government. With the knowledge of these individuals hopefully the import ban policy would be lifted and other government officials would realize that self-sufficiency only brings on food insecurity. Another solution to making Nigeria more self-sufficient is to develop and adopt technologies such as GMOs and machinery. As a country Nigeria is short over 500,000 tractors. Funds being loaned to farmers are seemingly pointless since they don't have access to machinery necessary to help them meet demand. If these funds were used to advance and bring new technology to Nigeria the country would be able to begin fighting the issue of food scarcity. I also believe that Agriculture Education for all ages is necessary. If the general public was more aware of the technologies that Nigeria currently fails to use despite their availability they would be able to take a more informed stand against Agriculture practices used in Nigeria and against the idea of a self-sufficient society.

On top of the import ban, Nigeria is being significantly impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency. Since 2009, Boko Haram has run an armed rebellion against the Nigeria government. The Boko Haram is a militant Islamic and jihadist rebel group that is causing additional setbacks for Nigerian farmers. At its peak in 2010, Boko Haram was considered the world's deadliest terrorist organization based on the number of people killed. In more recent news a top leader from the rebel group was killed in May 2022 and Nigeria has taken steps to help protect farmers impacted by the armed rebellion (Nextier, 2020). Farmers were a key point in Boko Haram's attack plan. By targeting farmers and agriculturalists in the invaded Northeast region the group made a larger impact and impacted the food insecure across the country. In fact, George, Adelaja, and Weatherspoon found that an increase in conflict intensity, measured by number of fatalities, increases the number of days where the household had to rely on less preferred foods, limit the

variety of foods eaten, and limit the portion size of meals consumed. The research team also found that the conflict-driven food insecurity is mainly materialized through agricultural input and change in home's income (George, Adelaga, Weatherspoon, 2020). With the terrorist group decreasing agricultural output and increasing food insecurity, Borno State Police Command was set up to protect farmers from attacks.

A final pillar compounding the food insecurity in both rural and urban Nigeria is food waste. As the world population is expected to hit 9 billion by 2050, Nigeria's population is following the surge. Nigeria currently has 201 million residents today and that will increase to 400 million by 2050. Experts expect urbanized population increases to reach approximately 70% by 2050 (Nigeria: Food Smart, 2020). A question that remains unanswered is could Nigeria produce enough food for population growth. Due to the lack of industry support from the ministry of agriculture this goal has yet to be achieved, but hope still remains. In fact, historically Nigeria loses and wastes 40% of its total food production, equal to 31% of its total land use and produces 5% of the country's GHG emissions (Nigeria: Food Smart, 2020).

The first step to solving Nigeria's rising food insecurity is to increase food production efficiency. The World Bank's research found that by addressing the supply chain of three commodities, maize, catfish, and tomatoes Nigeria would be able to address key priorities like improving food security, improve rural, low-income farmer welfare, and meet Nigeria's international commitments to reduce GHG emissions produced by food waste (Nigeria: Food Smart, 2020). Heavy reliance on the oil industry has made the agriculture sector lose any competition in productivity. Due to this agriculture production is not reaching its full potential. A solution to this would be to create a Nigerian Extension and Outreach program similar to the United States's and a partnership with Universities offering prominent plant breeding and genetics programs. Partnerships to develop plant breeding programs would allow Nigeria to quickly increase production outputs and an extension and outreach program would better educate farmers on the most current agricultural practices.

The most complex solution would be solving the Boko Haram insurgency. While there is no one quick fix to end over a decade of militant invasion, Nigeria has multiple areas of their programs that would better serve the impacted populations and end the insurgency faster. Currently Nigeria is gradually returning displaced populations to the region only for those people to face high food prices. Nigeria has also created a program to reintroduce defectors back into the country, but due to lack of support from politicians it lacks a space to host them increasing the risk of them returning to jihadism (International Crisis Group, 2014). Experts in Conflict and Governance say that on top of more funding and resources the solution needs to include community dialogues and programs (Brechenmacher, 2019). An example of this would be providing psychological support and education to the women abducted by insurgents. By rearranging the national budget the resources could be allocated to better serve the food insecure and affected communities. In fact this year Nigeria has significantly changed their budget and many economists share it isn't for the better. More concerning for a long term solution is the 70% increase in the budget to allot for fuel subsidies (Reuters, 2022). The 16.2 Billion dollars would go far to help create meaningful solutions to the Boko Haram insurgency.

The most important solution for solving Nigeria's food insecurity is governmental support and policies that support farmers. Even by increasing food production and output, the

rising Nigerian population is still at risk. Self-sufficiency is simply impossible for the country of Nigeria. Even with new technologies, agriculture education, and a more informed government this idea of a healthy society that doesn't import goods is unachievable for any country. Instead new governmental regulations are needed to increase transparency of government spending. Experts have found that Nigeria ranked 154th in the 180 countries listed in Transparency International's Corruption Index (Transparency.org, 2021). An increase in transparency will allow farmers to lobby for increased spending to promote agricultural productivity and also trade relations. With Nigeria's climate and location it makes it impossible to produce a balanced diet for all communities. The import ban is nothing more than a policy put in place causing people to starve and it's end will create immediate relief for the Nigerian people.

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