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Agricultural Policies in Underdeveloped World Economies: A Study of Nigeria

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Abstract

The primary challenge facing the underdeveloped world today is the pervasive menace of poverty. It stems from the apparent incapacity of certain Third World Countries to harness the agricultural resources bestowed by nature for the collective benefit of humanity. Conversely, post-colonial African countries, particularly Nigeria, have forsaken agricultural production over the past decade in favor of crude oil exploration, driven possibly by the allure of quick profits from oil sales. Consequently, many underdeveloped nations find themselves in significant socio-economic turmoil, exacerbated by the plummeting prices of crude oil in the international market. Beyond the economic downturn resulting from dwindling oil fortunes, leadership conflicts present another challenge. Policies are formulated without the necessary political will for execution, contributing to a general downward spiral of the system. This study reveals that the root cause of poverty in Africa, especially in Nigeria, lies in the mismanagement of the nation's political economy. The high expectations accompanying political independence have given way to escalating frustration, with the populace bearing the brunt of such misrule. The study serves as a theoretical exploration of poverty studies, relying on secondary materials for investigation. It emphasizes that overcoming these challenges, particularly in Nigeria, requires a renewed focus on agricultural production—a reliable strategy to effectively combat poverty and enhance overall agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Poverty Reduction, Underdevelopment, Consolidation, Agricultural Policies, Post-Colonial Countries

Introduction

The expectations and hope that followed Nigeria's political independence were extremely high, as citizens anticipated improved living standards post-colonial era. Deakaa (2008) and Nzogola-Ntalaja (1987) argued that the living conditions, which were a basic right denied during colonial rule, were expected to improve after independence. However, leaders in underdeveloped countries, including Nigeria, created structures and agencies that, instead of promoting development, served as a means for political elites to amass wealth privately.

The rising expectations for a better post-independence life were met with increasing frustration and depression as political elites prioritized personal gain over the welfare of citizens. Deakaa (2008) observed the evolution of a political elite class in underdeveloped African countries, driven by mindless capitalist ideologies, exacerbating poverty among the citizens.

The post-colonial condition became a tool for social dominant forces to unleash suffering on citizens, serving as intermediaries of Western capital. Policies formulated by political classes often aligned with the interests of international finance capital, suppressing the welfare of the majority.

Despite attempts to address socio-economic issues, Nigeria and other underdeveloped countries experienced slow economic growth, exacerbated by adverse conditions such as poverty, ignorance, hunger, diseases, and conflicts. George Genyi (2011) described Nigeria as having the classic features of a failed nation state during the era of military dictatorship. Past administrations aimed to address issues like poverty, low agricultural productivity, and social security through policies. While policies like the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACIB), and others were formulated, critics argue that these efforts lacked sufficient commitment to achieve their objectives.

Conceptualization

Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon. It is also a social issue. Poverty is an unhappy consequence of an unequal income distribution. Samuel Johnson, an eighteenth-century English poet and essayist, once stated that ‘’a decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization. One of the classical economists, Adam Smith, corroborated this when he put it similarly: ‘’no society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable.’’ Thus, poverty in all its senses is unwholesome.

In considering what poverty is, Townsend (1997) sees poverty as a situation where individuals or families are in command of resources that, over time, fall seriously short of the resources commanded by the average family. The conceptualization of the concept of poverty demonstrates the dynamism of poverty in such a way that as the average standards of the relevant communities increase, the relative poverty level increases as well. According to Black (2003), poverty is the inability to afford an adequate standard of consumption. Ravallion and Bidani (1994) refer to poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs.

That is, a situation of inadequate consumption gives rise to insufficient food, clothing, and shelter. Poverty also means a lack of certain capabilities, such as being unable to participate with dignity in societal endeavors (Aluko, 1975; Sen., 1987). In order to substantiate that this concept is the bearer of various definitions, poverty has also been defined by the World Development Report (1990) as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. The report constructed two indices based on a minimum level of consumption in order to indicate the practical aspect of the concept. While the first index was a country-specific poverty line, the second was global, allowing cross-country comparisons (Walton, 1990). Other indices invoked by the United Nations include life expectancy, infant mortality rate, primary school ratios, and the number of people per physician. Again, the UNDP (2009) defines poverty as a state of long-term deprivation of those essential materials and non-material attributes of well-being that are considered necessary for decent living.

Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction (or poverty alleviation) is any process that seeks to lessen the level of poverty or powerlessness in a society or among a group of people or countries. It can also mean a course of action or a process of engaging collaborative efforts by different concerned partners in a system to reduce or minimise the causes and consequences of poverty and inequality from ravaging the lives of poor people. It is a process of empowerment for individuals, groups, societies, communities, and poor citizens of a country.

Poverty reduction can also be described as all those well-designed programmes and activities targeted at stemming the squalor, despoliation, and low quality of life, as well as improving the socio-economic status of the people. Poverty reduction must also increase the capacity of people to participate in making decisions that affect their lives. In all of this, distributional mechanisms aimed at reducing inequality must be put in place. A poverty reduction programme may be targeted at the economic or non-economic dimension of poverty. Some of the popular methods used are agricultural-related policies, economic diversification to widen the scope of participation, value addition to create more jobs, and income redistribution through programmes such as the National Poverty Alleviation (Reduction) Programme (NAPEP), among others. Poverty reduction efforts may also be aimed at removing social and legal barriers to income growth among the poor.

Policy

Scholars and practitioners lack consensus on the exact meaning of "policy." Each country has an objective, and everyone involved is expected to contribute to achieving this objective. However, ambiguity or lack of clarity in the means or process of achieving the objective can make it cumbersome or even impossible. Policy plays a crucial role in addressing this issue.

According to David and Filley (1977), policy is a statement of principle or group of principles with supporting rules of action governing the achievement of specific objectives directed by a business or program. It is a statement of intention based on specific principles with a plan of action for realizing set objectives. Similarly, Conventary and Baker (1985) define policy as guidelines, either in general or specific terms, that guide a country or organization toward achieving long-range targets set by objectives.

Ademolekun (1987) sees policy as course-setting involving decisions of the widest ramifications and longest-term perspective in the life of an organization, emphasizing the importance of decision-making and its implications. Pal (1997) simplifies policy as "a course of action or inaction chosen by public authorities to address a given problem or an interrelated set of problems." Policy can also refer to government decisions arising from a particular moment of choice, such as in a state of emergency.

Obiajulu and Obi (2004) stress the importance of having policies written for clarity and understanding. They argue that unwritten policies can lead to multiple interpretations and misunderstandings. In general, policy is a regulatory framework or written principles guiding public action with a detailed plan for implementation and resource allocation to attain set objectives. It provides direction for public actions, activities, programs, and projects, serving as the frame on which government decisions are made and analyzed. Policy can be considered the product or output of government activities.

Agricultural Policy

Agricultural-related policies are public policies put in place to improve the agricultural sector of the economy of a country in order to address the issue or problem of poverty reduction. Subsequently,

Government after government or regime after regime in Nigeria made deliberate agricultural policies in order to tackle the issue of hunger. These agricultural-related policy initiations arose as a result of government concern to reduce poverty in Nigeria or any underdeveloped third world. Agriculture can be improved to facilitate its role in providing food and contributing to the overall development of a country. In the view of Norton and Alwang (1993), agricultural development can provide food, labour, and capital to support increased employment in industry and can stimulate demand in rural settings for employment-intensive consumer goods. However, there are still areas of the world, particularly in parts of Latin America and Africa (Nigeria, to be specific), where land suited for agricultural production is not being farmed. Myint (1975) submits that agricultural development can promote the economic development of underdeveloped countries (Nigeria, inclusive) in four ways:

i. By increasing the supply of food available for domestic consumption and releasing the labour needed for industrial employment
ii. By enlarging the size of the domestic markets for the manufacturing sector
iii. By increasing the supply of domestic savings; and
iv. By providing the foreign exchange earned by agricultural exports.

Methodology

The study relies on an expo-factors research design in which a systematic empirical inquiry was carried out whereby the researcher does not have direct control over the independent variables because their manifestations have already been presented or because they are inherently not manipulated (Onwumere, 2005). The data generated was purely from secondary sources of information.

Poverty Reduction through Agricultural related Policies

In expounding on the points mentioned above, Myint (1975) endeavours to distinguish between two terms:

(1) Contributions and,

(2) Unction’s. To him, the terms contribution and function are related to the agricultural sector and may be interpreted in two ways:

1. They may be taken to mean the voluntary contributions or the spontaneous functions of the agricultural sector, reflecting the interrelationship with the rest of the economy during the long-term process of economic development.
2. They may be interpreted as the compulsory contributions that can be made to perform by deliberate policy.

This can be illustrated for each of the four types of contribution mentioned above. For example:

1. The agricultural sector may be said to make voluntary contributions to the domestic food supply if an increase in agricultural productivity spontaneously lowers the free market price of food. On the other hand, it can be made to contribute to the domestic food supply by, say, imposing price controls on the food sold to the workers in the manufacturing sector.
2. Similarly, the agricultural sector can spontaneously increase the size of the domestic market.

1. The agricultural sector can voluntarily contribute to the supply of domestic savings if these savings flow out freely, induced by higher returns on investment in the manufacturing sector. On the other hand, savings can be squeezed out of the agricultural sector by taxation by deliberately turning the terms of trade against agricultural products.
2. The same distinction can be applied to the agricultural sector's contribution to the foreign exchange supply.

Jhingan (2006) listed the contributions of agriculture to economic development as follows:

a. Increasing the demand for industrial products and thus necessitating the expansion of the second and tertiary sector
b. Providing more food to the rapidly expanding population
c. Improving the welfare for the rural people;
d. Providing productive employment;
e. Providing additional foreign exchange earnings for the import of capital goods for development through increased agricultural exports;
f. Increasing rural income to be mobilized by the state.

No matter how agricultural development contributes to economic development, the empirical truth is that agriculture contributes significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP) of many underdeveloped countries. This is because the majority of their citizens are involved in agriculture. But this is where agricultural productivity is high enough. In Nigeria, for instance, agriculture contributes 45 percent to domestic products (GDP). Additionally, it contributes the largest share of GDP, is the largest non-oil export earner, the largest employer of labour, and is a key contributor to wealth creation and poverty reduction, as a large percentage of the population derives its income from agriculture and allied activities (NPC, 2005; Tell, November 30, 2009).

Types of Poverty

There are basically three main types of poverty. These include: (1**) Relative Poverty** (2) **Absolute Poverty** (3) **Subjective Poverty**

1. Relative Poverty

The relativity of poverty implies that the relatively poor may barely secure minimum physiological needs, often with limited resources and a lack of means for adequate social participation (Modibbo, 2013). Individuals within these strata can be considered socially and politically disempowered, and affording some physiological needs does not necessarily indicate economic and social empowerment.

Ake (1994), in his democratization and disempowerment thesis, consistently maintained that adopting the colonizer's value system was a part of the structure of colonial domination. In the post-colonial era, this phenomenon has become a means of continuous disempowerment and domination.

The phenomena of poverty can be viewed here from the perspective of colonialism and colonial domination, along with the philosophies it represents. Ake (1994) argued that every state and political system have their own grammar necessary for political competition, maneuvering through politics, and sharing meaning and values. According to Ake (1994), post-colonial political and post-independence structures embody disempowerment.

At independence, Nigeria inherited disarticulated institutions that reinforced and continue to encourage asymmetrical relationships. Despite the consensus among scholars that education is a solution to poverty, the Nigerian condition remains debatable. Urban dwellers, particularly the working class with Western education, are not materially better off than semi-skilled or stark illiterate businessmen and women. Primordial loyalty, sectional interests, and ethnic and religious affiliations have remained predominant in navigating the unfolding events in Nigeria.

2. Absolute Poverty

The concept of absolute poverty refers to a situation in which individuals or households lack sufficient income to secure the minimum physiological human needs required for survival and physical efficiency (Nurske 1953; Sen, 1984). According to this definition, the availability of resources becomes the measure of absolute poverty. Ijere (1991) views persons, groups, or families/societies as experiencing absolute poverty when they lack the resources, specifically what economists' term as "real income," to meet the requirements for a proper standard of living, including necessary calories for food and diets. Inability to secure the minimum standard of living or lack of resources to purchase essential needs categorizes individuals or groups as poor.

These essentials include food items, housing accommodation, health care services, potable drinking water, sanitation, electricity, good road networks, and accessible and compulsory education for all. Those categorized as poor within this definition are further determined through the yardstick known as the poverty line. Abimiku (2006) suggests that the poverty line, based on the level of income or consumption in a given society, provides a threshold to distinguish those above or below the poverty line. Makinwa (1987) notes that, the World Bank's poverty line for international comparison is set at one dollar (₦1) per person per day.

Pyatt and Round (1985), using income as a yardstick for evaluation, assert that absolute poverty is a condition characterized by insufficient social services such as food, sound and affordable education, adequate health care facilities, access to infrastructures (housing, telecommunications, road network, internet facilities), safe drinking water, sanitation, transportation, and increased life expectancy ratios. These social services align with the lowest level of Abraham Maslow's needs hierarchy (Alaye-Ogan, 2008), essential for good living standards. Maslow's hierarchy posits that these needs must be met for survival, and any deficiency may lead to impaired physical efficiency and eventually death (Maslow, 1970). This understanding forms the basis for defining the poverty line by Nurske (1953) and Sen (1984).

Subjective poverty, in contrast to relative poverty, is expressed in terms of non-material and intangible qualities, depending on individuals' perception of their standard of living. It is determined by individual perspectives often derived from participatory studies using public opinion polls. The feeling of being poor or not is dependent on an individual's perception of the absolute minimum standard of living below which one is categorized as poor.

Causes of Poverty in Underdeveloped Countries

Poverty is a persistent issue in underdeveloped economies worldwide, including Nigeria. Key indicators of poverty include social and economic inequality, environmental factors, family size/population growth, lack of investment attitude, endemic corruption, stagnation in average annual per capita growth rate, distorted and slow economic growth, population growth indicator, and the role of policy makers.

Social and economic inequality is primarily caused by large-scale corruption and squadermania among state managers, while environmental factors include indebtedness, import payments from highly industrialized countries, and rising import bills from highly industrialized countries.

These factors contribute to global inequality and perpetuate poverty in underdeveloped countries. Family size and population growth are also significant causes of poverty in Nigeria, as traditional African hospitality and extended family systems lead to the fractionalization of limited resources, heightening poverty. This traditional hospitality encourages idleness and prolonged periods of unemployment or search for employment in the formal sector. Lack of investment attitude is another vital factor contributing to poverty in underdeveloped countries, as people prefer to attach more value to ventures with immediate yielding capacity financially. This lack of investment attitude has facilitated the increased development of poverty.

Endemic corruption is another factor contributing to poverty in Nigeria, as a small segment of society through their control of state power appropriates the majority of the country's wealth, which they squander. This tradition of domination, squadermania, and appropriation undermines the economy's ability to grow and results in poverty and deprivation. Stagnation in average annual per capita growth rates is another significant factor contributing to poverty in underdeveloped countries. The World Bank and IMF have alleged that in some African countries, the rate of economic growth has fallen, leading to poverty as population increases.

Distorted and slow economic growth is another major cause of poverty in underdeveloped countries, such as Nigeria, due to the ongoing change agenda of the APC-led Federal Government. Population growth indicators, such as India's rapidly expanding population and Bangladesh's massive poverty, also contribute to poverty. In conclusion, poverty is a persistent issue in underdeveloped economies like Nigeria, influenced by various factors such as social and economic inequality, environmental factors, family size/population growth, endemic corruption, and population growth indicators. Addressing these issues is crucial for promoting sustainable development and addressing poverty in Nigeria.

Problems of Poverty Reduction Programme in Nigeria

Despite of all the efforts the Federal Government of Nigeria seems to have put in place towards the reduction of poverty in the country through numerous agencies, poverty has continued to strive. Some of the factor militating against the smooth operations of government poverty reduction measures as Nkom (1982) enumerates, include the following:

Weak Budgetary Allocation: Weak budgetary allocations, mismanagement and poor governance have afflicted the programmes, resulting in facilities/infrastructures not been completed or even established.

Many Intervention Programmes

Many intervention programmes are developed in a rather erroneous assumption that the poor generally constitute a harmonious group and thus relatively uniform prescription could be applied across board. However, researches from various sources, especially in most social science researches have proved that the reverse is the case. So, strategy to reduce poverty would not be the same.

Lack Target Mechanisms

Virtually all the programmes lack targeting mechanisms for the poor and hence, do not focus directly on the poor.

Frequent Policy Changes

Frequent policy changes and inconsistent implementation have prevented a climate of uncertainty, resulting in most operators having very short-run perspective of the objectives of the programme.

Mismanagement and Fraudulent activities

Mismanagement and fraudulent activities in wastage of resources and failure to achieve cost effective results as funds earmarked for such programmes are not judiciously utilized. They are either misplaced or misapplied within the programme or diverted to another uses outside the programme.

Theoretical Framework: The Decision-Making Theory

The Decision-Making Theory, first popularized by Blaise Pascal in the 7th century, provides a clear understanding of how poverty reduction and policy structure have been guided and handled over time. This theory emphasizes that decision making is a complex activity at individual, government, or community levels, and is crucial for organizations and institutions like Nigeria's government. Decision making is essential as it affects other functions and processes of government bureaucracies.

Oseweshe (2015) argues that policy makers at various government levels use public policies, such as agricultural policies, to promote their self-interest through rent-seeking, often through outright corrupt practices. In Nigeria, decision makers play dominant roles in society through governance. Higley (2010) highlights the importance of policy makers in taking political decisions affecting societies, which reinforces itself in distribution processes, including poverty reduction.

The study also highlights the prevalence of value allocation, resource mobilization, and distribution among Nigerian policymakers since the Post-Independent era. These policies, intended to reduce poverty, have institutionalized and entrenched poverty, especially among the rural populace. The choice of rural populations demonstrates the severity of poverty due to their vulnerable living conditions. Poverty does exist in urban cities, but at minimal levels due to the availability of job opportunities compared to rural settings where access to public or critical infrastructures is negligible. Overall, the Decision-Making Theory provides a valuable perspective on the impact of agricultural policies on poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Agriculture- Related Poverty Reduction Policies in Nigeria

It has been argued that the primary responsibility of the agricultural sector is to ensure that a vast majority of the rural population is gainfully employed as well as guarantee internal food security. Of particular importance is the fact that it provides raw materials for domestic industries.

Agriculture also contributes to the diversification of the export base of the economy, among other things. The sector, however, has not been able to adequately achieve these tasks. This is because it seems to be faced with problems of not only poor policy management; it also encounters myriads of challenges such as low productivity, shortage of farm inputs, as well as storage and preservation facilities: poor rural infrastructure and low level of technology.

To tackle these problems, as earlier mentioned, the federal government of Nigeria has conceived a number of agriculture and rural development-related policies. Some of the measures adopted by the government include the establishment of the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA), and the Strategic Grains Reserve Programme. Let us now begin with the Directorate for Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure.

Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)

In addition to conventional pursuit of growth objectives, and as Ogwumike argued, the 1986 budget radically departed from past narrow sectoral preoccupation with mere generation of food and fiber surpluses to the overall formulation of a national rural development strategy. The greater emphasis this time was on the reduction of rural poverty and enhancement of the quality of rural life as justification for the budget.

It is in light of this that DFRRI was established by Decree No. 4 of 1986. The DFRRI was expected to, among other things, identify, involve, and support viable local communities in the effective mobilization of the rural population for sustained rural development activities. The mission was in recognition of the complementary roles of the basic needs of food, shelter, and potable water, as well as bearing in mind the need to promote greater community participation and economic self-reliance in the rural community (National Population Commission, 1994; Ogwumike, 1998).

The NPC Report (1994) has enumerated the core objectives of DFFRI to include the following:

i. assisting rural dwellers to improve the quality of their lives and enhance their standard of living;
ii. laying a solid foundation security, socio-cultural and socio-political growth and development of the country, by linking security, growth and development of rural areas to those of urban centers:

iii. diversifying and improving rural infrastructures,
iv. Creating a deeply rooted and self-sustaining development process predicated on effectively mobilized mass participation starting from the grassroots to encompassing the entire nation.

The Directorate of Rural Development (DFRRI) in Nigeria aimed to provide 90,000 kilometers of feeder roads between 1986 and 1993. However, the project faced challenges such as overruns of targets, inadequate funding, and technical deficiencies. The first phase of water and sanitation projects targeted 5,000 communities, but only 9,605 were reached. The first phase of electrification targeted 170 projects, but only 170 were executed.

The DFRRI focused on promoting technology that could use local raw materials for affordable buildings, training 115 technical extension workers to produce burnt bricks, floor tiles, and roofing sheets. However, these materials remain inaccessible to the poor, whose housing needs remain severe and elusive. The directorate faced issues with coordination among government tiers and the rising cost of program funding.

Despite these challenges, DFRRI completed over 278,526 kilometers of roads and electrified 5,000 rural communities between 1986 and 1993. However, critics argue that the policy failed to meet expectations and became moribund, leading to non-prioritization of projects to meet the needs of the most vulnerable poor. The emphasis on mass participation from the grassroots did not yield desirable results, alienating the benefiting communities.

The National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA)

The National Agricultural Land Development Authority was inaugurated in 1991. The policy took off in 1992 with the aim of moderating the problem of low utilization of abundant land resources in the country. This policy, which involved the three tiers of government and the local communities, had as its target the development of 3000–5000 hectares of land in each state between 1992 and 1994. This strategy was meant to develop at least 6,500 to 12,800 farmers within the area so that they could live within a radius of 3-5 kilometers. However, evidence from various sources shows that NALDA developed and allocated only 1000 hectares of land as a composite, divided into four (4) plots. The authority was faced with problems ranging from the inability of some states to provide the required 1,200 hectares of land in a contiguous location due to a shortage of funds for the execution of the authority's activities (NPC, 1994).

The Strategic Grains Reserve Programme

This programme was established in 1987 specifically to help address the problem of food insecurity and minimize intra- and inter-seasonal variations in agricultural products' supply. The programme offers assistance to deserving neighboring and friendly nations and curtails the perennial problem of post-harvest losses (NPC 1994). It can be argued here that though this programme was well-intended, it did not have an impact (just as it has not to date). This singular fact appears to be a major challenge to rural farmers, as they have continued to experience increasing post-harvest losses. While the high rate of inflation occasioned by the misapplication of government policies that have affected all agricultural products are testimonies to the fact that the issue of food security in Nigeria has remained an illusion,

In summary, these agricultural-related programmes aimed at poverty reduction in Nigeria, though well-intended, have seemingly failed to have a significant impact on the poverty situation. This may be partly blamed on the failure to enlist the participation of rural farmers in the planning and implementation processes. In addition, the situation can also be attributed to inadequate funding. The scenario presented above probably points to the fact that the spurns and squatter settlements made many families reduce their food intake from 3 to 2 meals a day. This trend can be said to be debilitating in rural areas where acute malnutrition is prevalent. This view also points to the fact that the agriculture-related poverty reduction policies discussed in this section have done little or nothing to boost food security in the country.

Agriculture-Poverty Reduction Nexus

The debate surrounding the role of agriculture in poverty reduction has been a topic of interest, as it plays a crucial role in socio-economic management. In developing societies like Nigeria, agricultural productivity is more beneficial to the poor than other sectors, such as building and construction, manufacturing, mining, and telecommunications. However, not all Nigerians live and work in cities, and most derive their livelihoods from agriculture.

Agricultural practices have been proven to reduce poverty in various sectors, including farming, ranching aquaculture, apiculture, horticultures, viticulture's, and animal husbandry. Empirical studies have shown that agricultural practices can generate income, food, employment, and reduce poverty. The Department for International Development (DFID) Report (2004) classified the interface between agriculture and poverty reduction into four specific areas: improved income, cheaper food, creating opportunities in non-agricultural sectors, and stimulating economic development from agricultural to industrial and services bases.

Several case studies from different countries indicate a direct interface between agricultural productivity and income increase. The World Bank (2007) found that agriculturally driven growth generates larger welfare effects in terms of poverty reduction than non-agriculturally inclined growth, especially for the poorest 20% of the population. Rural growth in agricultural production has contributed significantly to the reduction of urban poverty, while urban growth in relation to other services sectors appears to have no effect on rural poverty.

In conclusion, increased growth in the agricultural sector is a viable determinant of poverty reduction, while growth in non-agricultural sectors could be considered supportive. Agriculture tends to contribute significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa compared to non-agricultural sectors, as the poor are concentrated in rural areas. Therefore, the key policy agenda in these countries is to ensure agriculture becomes the pivot for socio-economic growth and poverty reduction.

Conclusion

Empirical research has revealed that most underdeveloped countries (including Nigeria) are characterized mainly by poor resource-based agriculture policies. The economies of Nigeria can be said to be dominated by small farm holdings, depleted soil, shortages of rainfall, increased droughts, and poor yields. These ecological issues, one way or another, could hamper meaningful efforts geared towards the reduction of poverty. With these ecological problems, one can then say that there is a direct link between these countries and poverty in all senses.

Recommendations

This research cannot be considered complete without making recommendations in light of the critical foregoing findings. This is imperative so as to bring about the improvement of agricultural-related policies and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

i. It therefore means that government policies that have no focus cannot achieve much in terms of policy goals intended to ameliorate the poverty conditions of the people. For any meaningful poverty reduction to take place, the following recommendations are put forward:.
ii. Poverty reduction through agricultural improvement is crucial in Nigeria, especially given the dwindling crude oil prices. People-oriented agricultural policies can help reduce poverty by involving people in the process and ensuring their full participation. To achieve meaningful poverty reduction, Nigeria needs policies that appreciate the environment and commit to using naturally endowed resources. The government should identify specific agricultural policies and ensure people own and participate fully in them.
iii. Integrating agriculture with industrialization can ensure farmers are guided through modern farming techniques and skills for increased productivity. Addressing constraining factors such as corruption, lack of farming inputs, prudent use of resources, and ignorance can help increase agricultural productivity. The government should create structures to increase the supply of essential materials for farmers and ensure that funds for projects impacting poverty reduction are not misused or misallocated.
iv. Creating investment attitudes and an economic environment can encourage Nigerians to invest in shares through friendly policies focusing on the poor. Enhancing civil servant salaries can also help save and invest for rainy days.
v. Weak budgetary allocation and target mechanisms should be addressed, and institutions established to implement poverty reduction should be punished for mismanagement and poor governance.
vi. Finally, strengthening agricultural research and development, including improved seedlings, skill acquisition, and technological innovations, can help farmers help themselves and reduce poverty. This can be achieved through adequate education of farmers using local languages and skills.

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