

FOOD SECURITY AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

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ABSTRACT

The place of food security in the life of nations cannot be overemphasized. Unfortunately, the importance of food security in the development of the nation has not gathered adequate attention and this is responsible for some challenges confronting the nation. There is no argument that any nation with food insecurity will have a weak internal security, an unhealthy populace with low capacity for production, a depressed economy and in general this will retard growth and development. This paper examines the place of food security in Nigeria's development since independence; its opportunities and constraints. Oral interviews were conducted for relevant information. Adopting both descriptive and historical approaches, it is argued here that food security least reduces extremism, armed conflict and terrorism; enhances good health of the populace which is needed for proper functioning in day to day activities; serves as a boost to other sectors of the economy *inter alia*. The paper reiterates that issues such as poverty, corruption, conflict and terrorism, population growth identified as constraints to food security must be tackled in order for food security to actualise its potentials in the growth and development of the nation.

Keywords: Food security, National development, Agriculture, Security, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Food security has been defined by Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations as a "condition where all people at all times have both physical and economic access to the basic food they need" (FAO, 1996a). Though it has become a front burner issue on several discourses both at the national and international level, emphasis have been placed more on food as an important necessity for mans' survival. However, Kalu (2015) asserts that "food security is not just about food; it is about security" and several developed countries have recognised the imperative of making food security a priority in their agenda especially as it serves as a trigger for political stability, internal security and national development. He further states that "world power, America, has further elevated food security from the portfolio of mere national security to the rank of national priority." Today, some societies in the African continent are moving ahead on a new consensus that food security is the continent's most fundamental development issue, unfortunately since Nigeria attained her independence, the place of food security in her

development has not gathered adequate attention and this is responsible for some of the challenges confronting the nation.

Since independence, the crusade for food security has been on for some time and it is evident in the successive governments of the country. To recall, according to Omeje and Ogbu (2015:121) “in the 1970s, the government introduced the National Food Operation Programmes and the Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative bank was established to fund agriculture as well as assist farmers. This was followed by Operation Feed the Nation in 1976.” Then the Green Revolution Programme of Alhaji Shehu Shagri’s administration came on board. Furthermore, there was Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo’s National Special Programme for Food Security, and National Agricultural Policy (Awa and Rufus, 2002); Musa Yaradua’s Seven-point Agenda and Vision 202020; and Goodluck Jonathan’s Agricultural Transformation Agenda (Adedoyin, 2013). The current administration is not left out in this crusade, there is the “President Muhammad Buhari’s Youth Empowerment in Agricultural Program (YEAP) which empowered 30,000 youths along areas based on priority value chains-rice, aquaculture, poultry, maize etc. and the Anchor Borrowers Programme designed to assist small scale farmers to increase the production and supply of feed-backs to agro-processors” (Awa and Rufus, 2002:32) and most recently in March 2018, the president inaugurated the National Food Security Council with the mandate to constantly assess existing food security policies, develop new projects that will create jobs in the agricultural sectors, amongst other functions. In spite of this list of programmes and their goals of achieving food security, average Nigerians are yet to feel the positive impact of these programs, thus, food insecurity is still largely widespread.

Today, according to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) report, “about 44.60 million people are severely food insecure”. The situation is worse in the North east as scholars agree that the increasing spate of terrorism in North east, is not unconnected to high food insecurity (Awodola and Oboshi, 2015; Adebayo, Olagunju, Kabir and Adeyemi, 2016). According to Integrated Regional Information Networks report (IRIN, 2017), about “4.4 million persons in the three North-eastern states in Nigeria are at a crisis or worse level of food insecurity”. Generally, poverty has been attributed to be the major constraint to food security amongst other factors (Metu et al, 2016; Adebayo et al, 2016), as it leads to inadequate income needed to meet household basic needs.

Consequently, Baba (2010:118) reveals that “the problem of food insecurity is that, apart from the physical pains and wrought on the victims, hungry or undernourished people cannot contribute meaningfully to the development process because of their reduced capacity for productive work.” Furthermore, he asserts that “where the population of hungry people is large, there is potential for instability and conflict.” Otaha (2013:34) notes that “food is not like other commodities, it is an indispensable and an important factor in a nation’s quest for economic growth and development”. It is now increasingly being recognised that food security is a nation’s foremost defense against anarchy and revolutionary conflicts. All these engender rapid development in any society, thus, solutions to issues that could threaten internal security, cause national consternation and further impede development can be found within the food sector. It is within this backdrop that this paper examines the food security and Nigeria’s development since independence; its opportunities and constraints.

CONCEPT OF FOOD SECURITY

It is important that the term security is first understood. “Before the end of the Cold War, scholars have for many several generations interpreted and restricted the understanding and meaning of the concept security to the security of the nation-state and not the people” (Danjibo, 2013:486).

The concept of security with the end of the Cold War has ever more come under examination for scholars and practitioners alike. “This is due to the fact that security as a concept has moved from the unilateralist understanding where the state is both the receiver and provider of security” (2013:487). Now several security threats confront not only the state but also the individual; threats such as poverty, hunger, diseases, environmental degradation and unemployment. More precisely, Adedoyin (2013:455) avers that “there is a radical shift from the idea of security that is state based to that of security that is focused on the people’s welfare, hence human security.”

Human security on its own part has been defined according to the 1994 United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP)-Human Development Report “as freedom from fear and freedom from want”. “It also elaborates the two aspects of human security: one, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression; and two, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or in communities.” The report further states that human security comprises of seven components- economic security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security and food security, which is the main focus of this paper.

Food security according to the FAO (2014) “is a complex phenomenon that manifests itself in numerous physical conditions resulting from multiple causes”. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau of Africa defines food security as a “situation when all people at all times have physical, social and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life.” In developed countries food security is defined as access to nutritionally adequate, safe, and personally accepted foods and their capability to purchase them. Eme et al (2014) argue that food security connotes physical and economic access to adequate food for all household members, without undue risk of losing the access. Notwithstanding the multiplicity and multifarious definitions and descriptions of food security, it can be seen simply as accessibility, availability and affordability of safe and nutritious food necessary for an active life.

DIMENSIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

To obtain a complete and more nuanced image of the state of food security, it is necessary to analyse the four dimensions of food security. The four key dimensions of food security as pointed out by the 1996 World Food Summit (FAO 1996b) and cited in several scholarly work are;

Food Availability: Amalu (2015:17) maintains that “the availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality, supplied through domestic production, imports, food stock and food aids.” This determines whether the food is available in a territory or country is enough to feed the total population there.

Food Accessibility: This is the physical and economic access to food. Adequate resources to purchase appropriate foods for a nutritious diet, income of the population, transport and market infrastructures characterise this dimension. The pointers of this dimension include food price, per capita food consumption and employment rate.

Food Utilisation: “The utilisation of food through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation, and health care, to reach a state of nutritional wellbeing in which all physiological needs are met” (Amalu, 2015:17). This dimension highlights the importance of non-food inputs in food security.

Food Stability: this is the stability of access to adequate food at all times, independent of shocks (such as economic or climate-related crisis) or cyclical patterns. This dimension addresses the

stability of the other three dimensions over time. For people to be food secure there must be stability of availability, accessibility and proper utilisation (Olaifa, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts the theory of Human Needs espoused by Abraham Maslow. In his theory, he categorizes human needs from basic to sophisticated levels on a hierarchical model. From the bottom and in order of importance, they are: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs, and the self-actualization needs. According to Woodhouse and Lamport (2012), Maslow describes the body's physiological need for food, especially in terms of maintaining homeostasis of water, salt, macronutrients, vitamins, minerals, and temperature within the bloodstream. In his words, Maslow (1943:373-4) stated that;

Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most pre-potent of all needs...If all the needs are unsatisfied, and the organism is then dominated by the physiological needs, all other needs may become simply non-existent or be pushed into the background...for consciousness is almost completely pre-empted by hunger. For the chronically and extremely hungry man...life itself tends to be defined in terms of eating. Anything else will be defined as unimportant.

The central point of Maslow's theory is that people tend to satisfy their needs systematically starting with the basic physiological needs and moving up the hierarchy (Chinyoka, 2014). Maslow is of the notion that for the higher level needs to be achieved, the lower level needs must first be satisfied. In the context of this paper, the citizens of any country's physiological needs (of which emphasis is placed on food) must first be met for citizens to self-actualize, function properly and contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. Thus, any nation seeking for positive development must first ensure that her population is well-fed and food secured.

FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Prior to the contact between Nigerians and the colonial government, agricultural practices were very pronounced in their economic activities. However, when Britain came into Nigeria as colonizers, they made some remarkable changes in the agricultural practices of the nation. "First, they adopted an agricultural policy which encouraged agriculture to be carried on in the traditional forms of African land tenure devoid of mechanization and plantations"(Buchanan and Pugh, 1958: 98). Momentarily, their aim was to ensure the flow of agricultural produce that would serve as raw materials for her industries. In fact, colonial pattern of agriculture was "individualistic and archaic, very exploitative and directed towards external rather than internal needs as emphasis was on the production of export crops such as sugar, cocoa, tea, oil palm, even as they left the prosecution in the hands of the native peasantry.

Since the farmers were not conversant with these new agricultural practices, Ijere in Opatá (2014:335) claims that "they began to "educate" them in the scientific and economic methods of modern agriculture and in the importation and distribution of agricultural implements of a superior type to those locally made." However, the made every efforts at improving agricultural productivity, that Britain even restricted manufacturing in Nigeria, in 1921, with the permission of only 7 out of the 102 non-mining firms to engage in manufacturing; though by 1946 the figure rose to 11(Opatá, 2014). Thus, agricultural production was not meant to ensure domestic food security but for export. Nigeria suffered domestic food insecurity since the production of food crops was not encouraged. In Northern Nigeria, Modibbo Tukur cited in Alkasum Abba et al, (1985:20) captures how the colonial administration suffered traditional food economy through four main initiatives:

They conducted a detailed census on every food item, including spices to ensure full and effective control; levied taxes on every food item grown, consumed and marketed

as reflected by the census in order to extract maximum revenue from it. They also taxed food items carried by trading caravans at a higher rate than they did for British goods as a measure to deter traders from handling food items, by lowering their profits and by deliberately replacing food crops with cash crops and demoting food crops into the “informal” and so-called “subsistence sector” of the colonized economy.

Generally, both the of farmers and their soils were intensively exploited while compelling both the farmer and the soil down to the lowest minimum diet required to keep the one alive, and the other fertile. Opata (2014:336) describes the situation in Northern Nigeria:

In the northern part of the country, the colonial regime advocated and pushed as a means of ensuring minimum amount of protein in the diet of the farmer, and manure for the soil. Both the farmer and the soil were primarily to produce crops for export. The colonial regime therefore retreated from enunciating a positive food policy based on either capital investment in food production and fertilizer industry, or based even on food and fertilizer importation.

Consequently, the food production sector of the Nigerian economy remained underdeveloped. In the southern part of the country, precisely in Benin Province, the British continued with the policy of forest reservation throughout the 1940s in spite of the resistance by the locals. This forest reservation policy impacted negatively on local food production as it restricted access to farm land among the local farmers. By 1945 there was food shortage in Benin Province. “The paucity of food led an old Benin farmer to tell the colonial authorities that “we chop yams and corn not timber and rubber”(Shokpeka and Nwaokocho, 2009:59). Thus, Benin Division had become the home of timber and the official deviation from food crops cultivation was nearly non-existence. Adebowale avers that however, it is of importance to note that colonial agricultural orientation which though, in part, disarticulated and disorientated the local agricultural and food production philosophy, did not eliminate the primary objectives of food production in the colonial societies-elimination of hunger, sustenance and war against poverty (Adebowale in Opata, 2014:336-337).

By the mid 1950s, with the discovery of oil, there was a change with more attention placed on oil and as Ojo and Adebayo (2012:205) described the situation: “it was like declaring holiday for hoes and machetes.” As prices of oil went up, interest in agriculture declined and this marked the beginning of the nation’s problems. Consequently, the prices of food increased and the nation’s economy is feeling the brunt of the rising cost of food items. In fact, since 1960 “Nigeria’s food crises is a product of colonial disorientation that has led to neglect of the peasant agriculture and food crops subsector as well as over reliance on cash crop production over the oil sector” (Attah, 2012:173).

CONSTRAINTS TO FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

There are several constraints to food security in Nigeria. Some of the major factors are;

Poverty

Across different countries and health systems, studies of people who experience food insecurity have constantly found that it is strongly tied to limited household resources, poor socio-economic status, and low disposable income (Press, 2015; Parnell and Smith, 2008). Poverty has been identified as the major constraint to food security. “This is due to the fact that the poor lose their capacity to work, to feed themselves and their families, to ward off diseases, to maintain their assets to pass on farming knowledge to their children and to remain linked to the communities” (IFPRI, 2002). Food insecurity is widespread due to some people’s inability to get the deserved income for their labour, and some other people’s unemployed status.

Pride and Misconception

It is believed that the problem of food security in Nigeria is caused by pride and misconception. This is so as many people see farming as a low-status and demeaning occupation probably that should be carried out by the poor and impoverished. In corroborating this, during an interview a respondent stated thus: *I have a small piece of land that can be used for farming, but how can I go and start bending my waist to farm, God forbid! What will my neighbours say? I am a banker for that matter (Geraldine Udoh, interview)*. Another respondent during an interview claimed that *“I cannot do farm work o. I am a graduate and though I may not have a job now, it is better for me to sit in my house and wait till I get a job than to farm. In fact, it’s tedious.(Francis Obeten, Interview)*. Thus the problem of food security has been aggravated by pride and misconception about farming.

Wars and Conflict/Terrorism

Ewete (2010:61) provides an insight on the issue of war and conflict as a constraint to food security:

Wars directly impact agricultural productivity due to large migrations of populations from conflict areas leaving fertile lands and livestock abandoned; the destruction of crops and livestock by armed groups; and the destruction or decay of rural infrastructure and transports to markets.

While establishing a likely threat to food security in Maiduguri and beyond due to Boko Haram, Awodola and Oboshi (2015) observe that “...the cultivation of crops, a critical aspect of food security is gravely under threat given low cultivation of crops as a result of Boko Haram atrocities.” In corroborating this, a farmer who abandoned his farm in Borno and returned to the East stated thus: *I had a very big sorghum farm, severally; I had to abandon the farm for weeks due to fear of being killed, till I decided to relocate with my family last year December. Many of my farmer friends have also gone back to their villages. This shows that conflict keeps away farmers from the farm and engaging in agricultural activities (Okey Emeka, Interview)*. That is to say that the activities of the Boko Haram sect have negatively impacted the well-being of the northern Nigerians and increased food poverty extremely. It has been projected by the Famine Early Warning System Network in Nigeria, that if conflicts continues at parallel levels, food security will continue to decline through the summer lean seasons when income and food stocks are most stretched and food prices peak before harvest (FEWSN, 2018).

While linking the effect of war and conflict on food security and development, Adedoyin (2010:132) summarises thus:

The resultant effect to these factors include loss of agricultural land, pollution, decline in agricultural and natural resources yields/productivity, toxic wastes/contaminants, displaced persons and refugees, impeded development and relief efforts, landmines, lack of access to productive activities, environmental degradation, migration of population, abandonment /destruction of productive assets and rural infrastructure, illegal mining, timber logging and most importantly, hunger.

Non-Usage of Knowledge by Graduates of Agricultural and Other related Sciences

Most often graduates of agricultural science at any level of tertiary education delve into non-agricultural occupations, thereby just obtaining a tertiary certificate and discarding knowledge that would have brought new ideas and innovations that will boost food production in the nation. Though some may blame it on finding specific related jobs, some of them out rightly neglect the knowledge. Some students even reject admissions into Agriculture courses when offered to them as alternatives to what they may have applied for if they were unable to meet with the requirements of their choice courses. This shows to an extent the attitude towards the study and practise of agriculture as this causes a reduction of manpower in the agricultural sector.

Corruption and Bad Governance

In his analysis, Uwaegbute (2011:93) maintains that “corruption and unhealthy rivalry between rulers increase food insecurity.” He further points out that “in developing countries such as those in Africa, there is always a tendency for successive governments to change, modify or even jettison good programmes set up by their predecessors to enable them make some money or rather embezzle money for their own selfish and personal use”(2011:94). In Nigeria, Metu et al (2016:185) argue that “corruption in Nigeria has been on the increase leading to money budgeted for public utilities being siphoned for private use. This leads to decay in infrastructure especially rural infrastructure where majority of the farmers live and operate from. For instance, we have seen situations where money meant for importation of fertilizers are siphoned.” Corruption and the absence of good governance have led to unfavourable policies and poor policy implementation. This results in decline in agricultural productivity and further worsens the problem of food insecurity.

Urbanisation and Population Growth

Food insecurity occurs when “the demand for food exceeds the supply of food because of the rate of the growth of population is higher than the growth in agricultural production” (Metu et al, 2016:185). Also, the phenomenon of rural-urban drift makes it impossible for the country to achieve food security. Rural-urban drift also results in the loss of young and often educated people who could have contributed to the development of the rural areas. As most of the youths leave in search of white collar jobs, farming is left in the hands of few able-bodied men and women as well as the aged. Consequently, Uyoyou (2010) notes that only a few people are engaged in food production and this will lead to less food to feed the teeming population of Nigeria.

HIV/AIDS

The alarming spread of HIV/AIDS in developing countries has become worrisome. According to the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA, 2017), Nigeria has the second largest HIV/AIDS burden in the world. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2017) states that, “while HIV prevalence amid adults is extremely small (2.9%) compared to other sub-Saharan countries such as South Africa (18.9%) and Zambia (12.4%), the size of Nigeria’s population means 3.2 million people were living with HIV in 2016.” Agriculture is at the heart of Nigeria’s development on account of the need for food, raw materials, employment and household, exports earnings and national income, thus, the agricultural sector is greatly threatened by HIV/AIDS Pandemic.

In showing the nexus, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2002:18) commented thus:

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become increasingly intertwined with issues of food and nutrition. On one hand, malnutrition and food insecurity may force household to adopt livelihoods that increase the risk of HIV transmission, such as migration to find work. On the other, HIV/AIDS may precipitate or exacerbate malnutrition and food insecurity.

This is to say that there is a cyclical relationship between food insecurity and HIV/AIDS. More specific on the diseases as a constraint to food security, Ewete (2010:67-68) says that:

The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security includes loss of labour, the inability to cultivate traditional crops due to illness, lack of access to land, loss of farming skills, more household headed by children and consequential adoption of less-productive farming strategies. Agricultural labour had declined due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

It has also been observed that as result of HIV/AIDS, there is a decrease in the variety of crops grown, changes in cropping patterns are taking place and cash crops are being abandoned for less labour-intensive subsistence crops. More so, HIV/AIDS averts the labour of healthy individuals to other critical issues such as nursing for the sick and attending the funerals of those who have died. Therefore, achieving food security becomes difficult.

Climate Change, Natural Disaster and Environmental Degradation

Climate change, natural disasters and environmental degradation are some factors affecting food security. The predicted temperature rise in addition to natural disasters that will degrade the soil and water resources will affect food security. Ewete (2010:65-66) posits that “there is widespread recognition that the effects of climate change are likely to be highly uneven, with some individuals, households, communities or regions experiencing significant negative effects such as the loss of life and property, due to climate extremes, the loss of agricultural infrastructures.” And “low income developing countries are more likely to suffer from these changes resulting in significant increase in food insecurity because they do not have the capacity to cope or adapt to changes” (Uwaegbute, 2011:82).

Other constraints to food security include geographical remoteness, world trade rules, poor research and extension personnel capacity, inadequate investment in agriculture, weak infrastructures, policy incoherence and inconsistencies, bio fuels disasters and international prices, gender inequality, and also devaluation of Naira (Amalu, 2002; Uza 2008; Bidwell, 2009; Fawole,2010; Metu et al, 2016).

PROSPECTS OF FOOD SECURITY FOR NIGERIA’S DEVELOPMENT

Boosts the Economy: Achieving food security in Nigeria is pivotal to national development. This is because it serves as boost to other sectors of the economy. Food security is a product of an effective agricultural system. A boost in agricultural production will pave way for industrialisation, thereby plummeting importation and increasing the usage of locally made food and products. With self-sufficiency in food production, surpluses will be exported and foreign exchanges will be garnered and all these will boost the entire economy and engender development.

Ensures Internal Security: Food security is vital for internal security. It is a general adage that a hungry man is an angry man; consequently a nation with a weak food security will have a weak internal security that could bring into being, an angry population waiting to act at any slightest opportunity. This could be the reason as to why conflicts and violence of all dimensions are rife in Nigeria. Solutions to these conflicts and violence which affect internal security and the stability of the country can be found within the food sector, if only Nigeria makes it a national priority. Food plays a key role in solving conflicts and sustaining peace which is necessary for development. No nation can develop where insecurity is prevalent and there cannot be security where there is no development.

Enhances Health and Well-being for Productive Work: Also, it is a common knowledge that good food enhances immunity and good health, a well fed child can develop intellectually to justify investments in his education. Baba (2010:118) notes that “the problem of food insecurity is that apart from the physical pains and wrought on the victims, hungry or undernourished people cannot contribute meaningfully to the development process because of their reduced capacity for productive work.” When there is a reduced capacity for work, development cannot take place.

Hence, the role of food security in ensuring the good health of the people can never be overemphasised, because it plays a key role in national development.

Creates an International Identity and Status: Besides, the nutritional values and industrial potentials, food is an international identity and status, as world class exported food tends to become cultural ambassadors for a country and its people. Today, Nigeria is known as the largest producers of Cassava with about 50 million metric tonnes annually (FAO, 2018) and the second largest producers of sorghum with 6.4 million metric tonnes (Food Business Africa.com, 2017) in the world. These food items serves as cultural ambassadors and also gives Nigeria a high-ranking status in the international food industry.

OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

- Poverty alleviation should be the first preoccupation of any responsible government. There is need for equal distribution of the resources of the nation as well as bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. Amalu (2015:21) posits that “reducing poverty is the solution to food insecurity because poor people spend large amounts of their income on food, leaving them vulnerable to high food prices; and many poor people get their daily earnings from farming, leaving them vulnerable to declines in agricultural output. Thus, job creation, affordable food pricing, improved social services, infrastructural development and rural development is pertinent in order to eliminate poverty.
- We must let go of pride and the misconception that farming is a low-status and demeaning occupation,. We must engage in subsistence farming at least around our houses and neighbourhoods in order to encourage food production and encourage food security in general. Also graduates of agricultural and other related sciences must ensure the go for occupations where they can use of the knowledge acquired in order to also contribute to the food security crusade.
- Good governance is fundamental to food security since it implies peace within the polity and confidence by all that their needs are important to leaders. Corruption must be checked when aiming to achieve food security. Embezzlement of money meant for agricultural and rural development must be stopped. The Economic and Financial Crimes and Commission (EFCC) must ensure that persons who siphon funds meant for agricultural development programs must be brought to book to serve as deterrence to others. Thus, funds can be put into good use in order to boost agricultural production and in turn foster food security.
- “In Nigeria most of the food need is produced by peasant farmers who are scattered all over the rural areas and not multinational companies who produce on large scale for export and profit” (Otaha, 2013:26).Hence, more attention should be given to these small scale farmers and their rural environment by ensuring they get adequate loans with minimal interests, subsidized prices for fertilizers and seedlings, access to agricultural equipment.
- Baba (2010:125) avers that “restrictions or outright ban on the export of some food items, removal of import tariffs or duties on some food items, subsidies on some food items, cash payments to consumers, imposition of price controls and subsidies on some inputs such as seed and fertilizers” are measures that can be adopted in the course of achieving food security. Though these measures may provide some temporary relief, devising ways of improving domestic food production is the only sustainable solution to food crisis.

- HIV/AIDS prevention and its impact on food security should be taken seriously. Awareness programmes should be initiated especially for the rural communities. According to IFPRI (2002:23) “HIV-impact assessment should be included in all development plans and major projects. The agricultural research community must develop farming practises that adapt to the reality of HIV/AIDS and yet maintain productivity level.” For instance, the development of light-weight machines such as ploughs could be made available to foster continuous production by the sick.
- The food manufacturing industry should be a secure industry where conflict does not have to interfere with transportation and distribution of food. The 1996 World Food Summit reaffirmed that a peaceful, stable and enabling political, social and economic environment is the essential foundation which will enable states to give adequate priority to food security and poverty eradication. Democracy, promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and the full and equal participation of men and women are essential for achieving sustainable food security for all (FAO, 1996).
- There should be increased investment in, and reorganisation of the extension service structure as well as agricultural researches may lead to creation and implementation of innovations and enhanced agricultural practices. Also, subsidies to agricultural inputs should be augmented by government in order to increase food production.
- Women are the custodians of food in the home. Uwaegbute (2011:92-93) claims that “they are involved in production, processing, preservation, marketing, preparation and service of food in the home. Women constitute farmers, yet they do not own farming inputs.” He further asserts that “education of women mitigates all aetiological factors of food insecurity. Women are constrained by the fact that they are less educated than men; do not own land, capital and other facilities required for effective food production”. Thus women play important roles in improving food security and policies that will encourage their maximum participation must be considered. Such policies could include–ability for women to obtain agricultural credits and loans, own of lands and increase women-education, etc.
- “When the availability of food is more than the present use, it is preserved for future consumption, and preservation is done on foods that are perishable for future use” (Essien, Essien and Bello, 2015). Thus, adequate and proper storage and preservation facilities are also prerequisite for improving food security.

CONCLUSION

The paper was an attempt to examine food security and Nigeria’s development since independence, taking in to cognizance opportunities and constraints. Food insecurity has been identified as a major threat to the growth and development of the Nigerian society. Poverty, pride and misconception, conflict, neglect of agricultural sector, irresolvable incoherence in governments’ policy formulation and implementation strategies, corruption, environmental degradation etc, were identified as constraints to food security. It is important that every nation should have the capacity to feed her population. Prospects of food security and options for improving it have been thoroughly discussed in the paper. Attaining food security means that there must be availability, accessibility and affordability of safe and nutritious food for the present and future generations. Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources to feed her populace and even export for economic growth. Thus, Nigeria must work towards

attaining self-sufficiency in food production in order to reposition herself on the map of the world as a leading food producer. Food security is an essential tool for national development and must be elevated to national priority.

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INTERVIEWS

Okey Emeka, 39, Farmer, Telephone interview, 28th March, 2018.

Geraldine Udoh, 35, Banker, Interviewed at Calabar, 6th April, 2018.

Francis Obeten, 26, Graduate and unemployed. Interviewed at Odukpani, 7th April, 2018