

National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) and Rural Development: A Content Analysis

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Abstract;

This study evaluated National Programme for Food Security as an approach to developing rural areas in River State. Review of secondary materials, in-depth interviews/focus group discussions, personal field observations and camera pictures constituted data sources for the study. Content analysis method was advantaged in analysing recorded and coded oral communication. It was discovered that few determined beneficiaries were still being sustained through farming after the programme ended. Apart from employing few rural dwellers, it failed to attract rural infrastructure to sustain the programme. Further result showed that the programme did not attract rural infrastructure to sustain agriculture in the implemented communities and soon after the programmed ended, beneficiary farmers abandoned farming activities in search of paid employments. The study recommended for corruption free agricultural policies implementation approaches in other to achieve self-sustenance by rural dwellers. Successive government should imbibe the culture of continuity of agricultural projects to avoid duplication of programmes and waste of funds.

Keywords: Agriculture, Rural Development, Programme, Approach

1. Introduction

In Nigeria, absence of rural developmental indicators have been seen as prove of poverty presence. Rural development has remained a function of government participation in the agricultural sector. In other words, there is an existing positive relationship between government policies on development of rural economy and agriculture. Greatly, agriculture utilizes large portions of available lands. Development of rural areas is achievable through government's participation in rural agriculture. In fact the role of agriculture transcends its poverty reduction function by facilitating the transformation of the whole economy. Agricultural growth in most successfully agriculturally developed nations is also accompanied by an expansion of non-agricultural sector (Mellor, 1995). This is true, in part, because the acceleration of agricultural development will facilitate industrialization by low cost food while labour consumes increasing volumes of industrial goods as incomes rise.

In other words, when agricultural sector is attended by the right mix of other economic forces and an institution, economic growth process becomes evident. Ironically, the faster a nation is developing, the faster the growth of agriculture, and the more rapid is the decline of agriculture's share in the overall economy (Mellor, 1995).

Various works have evidenced that agriculture is an important approach to towards enhancing development. Infrastructure for agriculture is viewed as important input to growth through provision of public goods. It is established that rates of return have not only been high in infrastructure investment in Canada but also that public infrastructure has had a significant and positive role to play in a nation's economic growth and agricultural productivity (Aschauer, 1993; Wylie, 1996 cited in Olutayo, 2009).

Despite the benefits associated with agriculture through its attraction of rural infrastructures such as feeder roads, markets, water boreholes, good transportation systems and others, introduction of agricultural programme such as (NPFS) has not shown considerable commitment to rural development. If the essence of infrastructure is to encourage agricultural productivity but has it been able to enhance rural agriculture? It is against this backdrop this paper sets out to discuss the relevance of NPFS as a rural development approach as may be perceived by beneficiaries.

Though a qualitative study, this paper addresses the issue by examining the perceptions of NPFS performance from the perceptions of beneficiaries as programme designed to increase farm productivity for development, empower the people and eradicate poverty. This work covers post NPFS activities to unravel if after the programme, were beneficiary farmers still able to continue farming activities with the same vigor instilled in them during the programme.

The paper further presented brief history of NPFS in Nigeria, methodology and critical analysis of secondary materials, in-depth interviews/oral communication and group discussions. Field work pictures are presented and the paper is finally concluded.

Scope

This paper focused on interpretation of oral interviews from NPFS beneficiary farmers in Rivers State with a view to broadly explaining their perceptions of the performance of the

programme.

2. Brief History of NPFS in Nigeria

National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) is an expanded phase of erstwhile Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) implemented from 2002 to 2006 in all the states. It was a counterpart funded project with its origin from a follow-up of request by federal government of Nigeria earlier made to Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)'s Special Programme for Food Security aimed at alleviating food scarcity challenges among households in Nigeria. At its inception it was formally (SPFS) which lasted from 1982 – 2006.

In Nigeria, the NPFS was selected as a priority project as a result of the preparation of the National Medium–Term Investment Programme (NMTIP) for Nigeria in support of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)'s Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) designed to;

- i. Sustain, develop and Manage Land and Water Resources.
- ii. Improve rural infrastructure and accessibility to Market.
- iii. Improve Household income and Food Security.
- iv. Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and
- v. Develop livestock (World Bank Report, 2009).

As a result of end of SPFS, in 2002, NPFS began in Nigeria with the federal agriculture ministry at the apex management committee, with Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) authorities acting as the supervisory body at the state level and implementation agencies for the programmes. The programme had five (5) years design; 2008 to 2013). Taking off of the second phase was due to ending of the pilot of first phase in 2007 with additional nine sites. The word "Special" removed from the name of the programme. Therefore, removal of "Special" changed the name to "National programmes for Food Security" (NPFS).

In Rivers State, the three senatorial zones had one NPFS site. The programme was established to basically achieve;

- i. Assistance of farmers to increase farm yields and livestock.
- ii. Increased households' income and profitability.
- iii. Training and education of farmers for adequate land, water and other resources utilization in other to facilitate sustained food availability and self-employment (ADP Report, 2008).

The goals were at;

- a) Strengthening services of extension agents, research and new agricultural technology from research institutes.
- b) Assisting the farmers to achieve their increasing potential towards sustainable income generation.
- c) Providing quality seed and material planting for high yielding, and crop disease – resistance varieties, fertilizers and other inputs.

Rivers State showcased an empirical credence of the programme at the pilot phase. Stipulated eligibility criterion for NPFS activities to impact on rural development was showcased in its numerous locations in eight L.G.As across Rivers State;

Table 1: National Programme for Food Security (NPFS) Beneficiary communities

Beneficiary Communities	Local Government Areas
▪ Atali/Elimgbu/Eneka	- Obio/Akpor
▪ Idoke/Ihuaba	- Ahoada – East
▪ Opiro	- Etche
▪ Oyorokoto	- Andoni
▪ Rumu-Ada	- Emohua
▪ Akabuka	- Onelga
▪ Umuagbai	- Oyigbo
▪ Okobo	- Ahoada - West

Source: Rivers State Agricultural Development (ADP) Office Report, (2009).

3. Methodology

This work is a qualitative study which purely adopted content analyses technique, informed by the in-depth interviews/focus group discussions on National Programme Food for Security (NPFS), conducted between 14th March, 2017 and April, 2017 in Rivers State. The curiosity for this research arose due to observations of NPFS activities in the state since the initiation of the programme to improve welfare of the rural people and empower them for development. The nature of this work is anchored on facts. Considering that that NPFS is a national programme, it necessary to conduct oral interviews specifically on its activities in the L.G.As where it was implemented in the state. From the forgoing, the review of secondary materials; in-depth interviews and direct field observations constituted the three basic research methodologies for this work.

As a survey study and qualitative in nature, qualitative approach provided sources of data since the concern of this work was to understand perceptions of individuals (Bell, 1993 cited in Glover, Champion, Daniels, & Dainty, (2014). Caley, Chell, Chittenden & Mason, (1992) pointed out that the reason for qualitative design method was to reveal real life events. This is a scenario seen by Hammersley, (1993) as a configuration of actions and complex belief.” Again, qualitative approach was adopted for this work because it helped to reveal the focus of NPFS activities in the implemented localities and there was no prior study on NPFS in Rivers state that utilized content analysis method. The study opted for in-depth interview as a better source of data generation because it was capable of revealing our subjects’ perspectives and viewpoints when recorded interviews were transcribed (Kvale, 1983 cited in Glover, et al, (2014).

Content analysis is at the intersection of qualitative and quantitative method of research tradition. It can be approached from the conceptual or rational technique considered best in addressing social researches (Marying, 2000). The utilization of content analysis was considered the best technique for this study. This technique of analysis has been used by scholars such as Lal Das & Bhakaran, (2008), Olutayo, (2009), Mayring, (2000) and Nwajiuba, (2013) and it worked. The eight L.G.As where NPFS projects were located attracted the attention of this work for interviews and sight observations hence content analysis technique was used in the analysis of information received.

LITERATURE REVIEW

4. Conceptual Underpinnings

In academic literature, food security is considered as accessibility and availability of food to all inhabitants of a nation with World Health Organisation (WHO)'s stipulated right proportions of nutrient requirements (Honfoga & Van Den Boon, 2003). Understanding the fact that availability of food is different from accessibility is imperative. It then means that available food needs be accessible by the people. In this regard, the parameters for accessing available food must be there hence, it will mean food scarcity in the midst of plenty. Consistency of food supply depicts food security. There is food security when supply is sustained. Sustained food supply in actual sense may not mean food security where there are arbitrary prices of food and accessibility is impeded from reaching to the people. Therefore, available food must be enough to feed the people without any one feeling starved.

One of the major challenges bedeviling food security is population (Amaka, Kenechukwu, Okeyika & Olisa, 2006). Population explosion has renamed one of the major reasons for food scarcity. Where more mouths to be fed are constantly increasing, it automatically means that there is the possibility that more works and programmes to improve and check the underlying factors behind scarcity are required. Every food must contain the right nutritional composition and prices must be affordable. Greater percentage farm yields must be produced from the consuming country as contained in government NPFS agricultural policies. Amaka, *et al*, (2003) posited that agricultural programmes work towards one goal which is "zero hunger." It is obvious that lessons learned from agricultural policies towards ensuring sustained food security informed the introduction of NPFS by federal government of Nigeria.

Content analysis pertains to interpretation of "textual materials which involve in-depth interviews/oral communications, documents etc. Recently it has become frequently used by the academia to clarify the use of descriptive approach in examining the perceptions of subjects. In this regard, it is implored to express large samples that cannot conveniently be quantitatively captured. According to Mayring, (2000), It links "purely quantitative and qualitative research methods."

The word "content" represents what is contained in a luggage, information, house etc. Result of its analysis determines decision to be taken base on conclusions and inferences drawn about the content (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976). Holsti, (1968) defined content analysis as a decision reached through a systematic technique of making inferences and identifying specifically contained characters in a message. It is a technique of research from which decision are based on "quantitative description" of communication content (Berelson, (1952).

Two approaches of content analysis involve; "conceptual and rational analysis." Under "Conceptual Analysis" conclusion is determined by establishing the frequent repetition or consistent use of particular word(s) in describing actions, events, behavior etc. For instance, "I became tired and left the work". How often was the word "tired" used helps in taking a decision about the individual? The underlying fact is that in "conceptual analysis" a particular response or word is chosen and examined. The essence is to "quantify and tally is frequent use or presence. On the contrary, "rational analysis" goes further to determine one's action by investigating the frequent use of the next word. Looking at the sentence "I became tired and left the work." The researcher is faced between taking a decision that the subject left the work site in disobedience or due to tiredness. Rationalization process is also important in content analysis.

To achieve the broad goals of agriculture on rural development, agricultural projects need to be focused on specific objectives (Danso, Keraita & Afrane, 2002). In addition, Danso *et al.*, (2002) argued that “development of rural areas must not be anchored on the amount of harvested produce or the profit that a person or group could make, rather, it entails social, economic, political and general welfare of the greatest number of people.

5. Theoretical Framework

Food security, has five approaches namely; “basic needs, sustainability livelihoods, food availability, entitlement and income based approaches. They all try to present food security forms. This paper anchored on “food availability approach” also known as “Malthus Approach” propounded by Giovanni Botero (1588) and popularized by Thomas Malthus, (1789) cited in Burchi & Muro, (2012). The approach looked at existing disequilibrium rate of population growth and food supply and suggested that to balance disequilibrium, there must always be more available food than the population growth rate. This theory explained that food security is “the aggregate quantity of food available (Burchi & Muro, (2012). The approach emphasized that within an economy, with increased stock of food production within a country and a nation deserves consistent trading on farm produce to balance the equilibrium. The theory points to the fact that there must be constant availability of food to sustain the teeming population of a nation in times of economic fluctuation.

6. Empirical Review

Roles often attached to agriculture have remained undisputable in the area of economic development. Such impacts are more for discussions in the midst of scholars. The anchoring of nation’s economy and development of country sides on agriculture have been elaborately reviewed in various works (Uche, 2011; Aliyu, 2016). A survey study carried out by Ezeh & Nwachukwu, (2007) in Abia State, Nigeria on “Impact of Selected Rural Development Programmes on Poverty Alleviation in Ikwuano Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria”, revealed that beneficiary farmers performed better in terms of income and output therefore, the project was statistically significant.

Further study carried out by Ezeh & Nwachukwu, (2010) in Imo State, Nigeria on “Impact of Fadama on Poverty Alleviation”, revealed that registered farmers performed better than non-registered farmers on the area of output and income generation therefore, the project was adjudged statistically significantly. Another study by Eboh *et al.*, (2007) in Akure on new cassava varieties introduced to farmers in Nigeria revealed significantly more yield with more stem cuttings than old local varieties planted in control farms at Ijapo and Ado north. Study conducted by Onibukun, (1988) in Benue, Imo, Kano and Kaduna state on the assessment of the Directorate for Food and Rural Infrastructure (DFPRI), revealed that poor agricultural sector performance was resulted from lack of provision of rural infrastructure.

Nwanyanwu, Njoku, Igbara and Turakpe (2014), in their work using Z-statistics analyzed data on self-employment from “National Programme for Food Security in Rivers State.” Their findings revealed lack of self-reliance of beneficiary farmers to the programme. This was attributed to poor participation by farmers due inadequate credit facilities, inputs and retraining of beneficiaries after the programme ended in 2006. Descriptive study by Omeje, (2015) on “issues and challenges of rural development” revealed food security challenges jeopardizing government efforts in ensuring food security in Nigeria with a view to finding the reason behind consistent food shortage in the country. The study further found that prevalent issues of subsistent farming in an unimproved soil, lack of adequate storage facilities and eventual high food prices. Poor rural infrastructure, crop diseases, non-directional or focused

agricultural policies and others. In another work done by Taiwo, Omifolaji & Kehinde, (2015) in which NPFS was assessed to determine productivity of farmers using product moment correlation coefficient. It was discovered that greater numbers of beneficiaries were male. Accessibility of rural markets was not easy due to lack of road infrastructure and markets to sale their produce.

Budgeting techniques and double difference method analysis on assessment of NPFS on beneficiary income in Plateau state by Panwal & Arene, (2015) discovered a positive impact on the income of beneficiary farmers. There was under-utilization of farm implement (hoes, knives, cutlasses etc.) and excessive application of fertilizer, seeds and labour. Non-participation of other potential farmers was due to existing perceptions of government non-seriousness on previous agricultural programmes. In another study, fuzzy sets and Tobit regression analysis on alleviation of poverty among participated farmers of NPFS in Oyo State conducted by Idiaye & Omonona, (2014) showed marginal poverty reduction among beneficiaries of the programme.

Be it as it may, benefits of agriculture embraces infrastructural provision, self-employment, rural income generation, and sustained availability of farm outputs as rural development indicators. The studies reviewed so far have exposed us to the contributions of agriculture as an approach to rural development. It was therefore necessary to conduct similar studies in Rivers State with specific emphasis to National Programme for Food Security (NPFS).

ANALYSES AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

7. In-depth Interviews

In support of the study, in-depth interviews/oral communications and site observations were conducted in eight L.G.As Rivers State namely; Obio/Akpor, Ahoada-East, Etche, Andoni, Emohua, Onelga, Oyigbo and Ahoada-West Local Government Areas.

Several staff of Rivers State ADP which acts as technical partners to Rivers State government on agricultural projects were interviewed. From an in-depth interview, there responses revealed that NPFS has a pyramidal shape in its formation. The programme began through sensitization and organising the people into corporative associations in each site, registered with the ministry of commerce. They had to form two groups per site who now form themselves into executive body who again selected three (3) persons to form the Apex body (Secretary and Presidents of Farmers' Corporative Associations from the communities in the LGA where the project is on-going) to represent each group of the corporative association. This Apex body acts as a link between farmers/members and ADP. This Apex body coordinates and submits members' loan applications to state ADP for approval. This is a revolving loan scheme where repaid loans are issues to other applicants of the same facility. The Farmers are expected to use the loans to purchase farm inputs; lease lands and pay labour on their farms. Repayment terms depend on the farming activities the beneficiary is engaged in. For instance, beneficiaries involved in fish farming are expected to repay faster than those engaged in oil palm agriculture.

However, this activity is purely for small holders. Farmers are usually linked to good sources of inputs by ADP at a subsidized price and training is usually on-the- farm training monitored by ADP extension officers. Market for farm produce could be sourced for if there is bounteous harvest by helping the farmers to evacuate their produce. The staff noted that NPFS is usually into anything farming. They further showed that the programme has installed boreholes in several host communities.

In-depth interviews conducted in Oyorokoto in Andoni L.Gas with a beneficiary showed that the programme is not functioning effectively. The beneficiary stated that;

“Attitude of government towards releasing the loans is one of the impediments to success of the programme. Most farmers have their fish ponds ready for stock but could not receive the loans which they applied for. Though no amenity has been built by the government in the name of NPFS, it is evident that this programme has brought interested farmers under one umbrella but we need money to increase the size of our ponds. Water project began by this programme could not be completed...”

Direct observations revealed several fish ponds that there are yet un-stocked with fingerlings while most farmers do not have adequate fund to provide fish feeds. This situation was confirmed by another beneficiary who stated that “many farmers are still waiting for funds to enable them kick start their intended line of farming activities”. Another beneficiary farmer and former commissioner for agriculture in the state, who pleaded anonymity, revealed a silent challenge to agriculture is the cases where unspent government funds were mopped up/misappropriated by government officials at the end of every fiscal year instead of returning the money back into government coffers.

In Akabuka community in Onelga, in-depth interview was conducted to ascertain the performance of NPFS. A farmer, revealed that the programme is complimenting efforts of the oil companies especially on agriculture and has helped to keep his subjects became more resourceful. “It is a programme that has brought all farmers together considering the turnout of farmers. “At least, our number has increased to 38”.

Umun-undele Isu in Etche local government area reflected an industrious community. In an in-depth interview with a beneficiary farmer who won the “federal government best farmer award in the 1990” under NPFS said he is into Moringa, Pepper, Tomatoes, fishery, bee keeping and livestock farming. He welcomed NPFS programme for her continues representation by ADP, especially when it comes to monitoring. He however acknowledged efforts of government towards agriculture and that his experience has given him assurance that government has better policies on agriculture. When asked if government agricultural projects

“This programme has given lots of people hope especially in the area of crop production but internal misunderstanding has pushed the programme in this area behind reality. Members who could not secure loans accused Apex body of master minding their disappointments. Efforts to explain to them that the agencies disqualified them after assessment could not be welcomed by them. In the area of infrastructure, no sign of amenities in the name of NPFS.....”

have attracted infrastructural facilities to the community, he expressed dissatisfaction in that direction including farm inputs and soft loan scheme. According to the beneficiary;

However, during a focus group discussion, a farmer who participated in NPFS programme in Emohua local government area, raised alarm over an improper coordination by their Corporative Association's Apex body in linking them with ADP. Two other farmers however, expressed disappointment over low participation of farmers in the programme particularly areas of garden egg, pepper, tomatoes, melon, vegetables, etc. They stated that forty-six (46) members of their cooperative have been in agriculture long before programme was introduced. Another beneficiary concurred explained that lack of tractor equipment and supply of farm inputs is affecting farming in the area. This conforms with the study of Onibukun, (1988) which found that lack of infrastructure affected agricultural performance in Kaduna state.

Findings revealed that challenges faced by participating farmers include lacked soft loans to purchase fish fingerlings to stock their ready ponds. The programme was planned to survive through financial assistance (loan) to participating farmers. This conforms to the work of Nwanyanwu, Njoku, Igbara & Turakpe, (2014) which found that beneficiaries are still not self-reliant in terms of productivity and taking care of their families due to inability to embark on large scale farming as agricultural credits and other inputs are not being received from government. Where soft loans could not get to participating farmers, the programme is bound to fail irrespective of other logistics available. Farmers expressed disappointment over lack of infrastructural facility by under NPFS project, though the programme is welcomed as expressed by the people. Again, improper coordination of the Farmers' Cooperative Associations by Apex body was a setback to achieving the programme's objectives. This issue created inability of members to receive the revolving soft loan from the government.

Farmers emphasized that lack of tractor equipment and high yielding variety inputs is greatly affecting farming and overall performance. The few beneficiaries that are still into farming as their last hope, lamented that their crops are old and are no longer producing effectively and explained that farmers are lamenting of government non-supply of improved inputs and funds to replace aging crops. These have affected beneficiaries and potential farmers' interest in farming activities.

8. Summary of Findings

The findings are summarized based on the following heading;

Credit facility

Few beneficiary farmers accessed soft loan facilities by NPFS to help them increase their farms sizes, diversify and acquire simple modern farming tools.

Farmers Corporative Association

Under the programme, farmers formed corporative associations to have one voice of presenting their demands to the government through Agricultural Development Office (ADP).

Training Programmes

On-the-farm trainings were given to beneficiary farmers by ADP extension officers who supervised and monitored beneficiaries' farms and gave advices while re-training was implemented for a short period.

Input Supply

The farmers could not access improved seeds and seedlings compared to the time the programme was on-going. Link to sources of farm inputs at subsidized prices became at individuals' efforts especially monetary wise.

Livestock production

Participation on livestock farming dropped drastically mostly poultry, fish farming and piggery while rabbit and grass cutter farming were forgotten.

Large Scale farming

All through the period of implementation, no effort was made by the programme to enhance large scale farming particularly the issue of land acquisition; this made beneficiary farmers subsistence farming a permanent situation.

Farm Infrastructure

Farm infrastructure facilities to assist agricultural participation and performance such as markets, boreholes, processing equipment, graded feeder roads, tractor machines etc., were not provided by the programme. This was pointed out as a major setback to harvesting of large farm produce. Few boreholes sank are non-functional.

Improper Coordination of Farmers Corporative Association

Farmers accused leadership of the Corporative Farmers Association of undue influence. Many farmers said they could not benefit from the little revolving loans from coordinating office due to favoritism and high handedness of the associations' leadership. All calls and cries for change of leadership were treated with kid's gloves.

Overall finding revealed that majority of the beneficiary farmers have deserted farming activities in search of paid employments thereby defeating the core mandates of the programme.

9. Conclusion

Development of rural areas using agriculture is not achievable without government providing the needed infrastructure. Both social and physical Infrastructure is requirements that facilitate agricultural productivity such as; storage facilities, good roads, markets, water boreholes hospital for ill-health treatment are essential. They propel the interest to embrace rural development approaches by supposed first stakeholder beneficiaries of government programmes. The evidence is that benefits of rural development approaches are expected to trickle-down to the poor since the infrastructures are expected to impact positively on the well-being of the poor masses (Olutayo, 2009). On the contrary, rather than initiating approaches that can enhance the lives of the rural poor, introduction of rural development approaches have remained characterised by policy inconsistency, duplication, politicization and non-sustainability which do not deliver expected impacts on targeted rural dwellers. Responses from beneficiaries revealed that boreholes sank in Atali/Eelingbu/Eneka, Okoboh and Oyorokoto by this programme are not functional while many remain uncompleted. Farmers were still pleading for soft loans to assist them purchase fingerlings and other inputs. Aging crops in farms that needed replacement with new improved inputs created drops in farm outputs. Availability of high yielding and subsidized inputs are only readily available on paper as beneficiaries complained of lack of improved variety inputs.

10. Recommendations

Based on findings, the study recommended that;

- i. measures aimed at securing government infrastructures in communities by rural dwellers should be adopted. The essence is to ensure sustainability of government programmes.
- ii. Policy clash should be avoided as to reduce expenditure wastes. Where programmes are duplicated, funds are wasted.

11. Contributions to Knowledge

- ❖ The paper established that communities remain in dire need of rapid and sustainable development due to huge financial waste on duplication of projects by the government.
- ❖ Governments do not undertake proper consultations on the needs of the rural populace to know types of existing facilities before initiating new ones.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1



NPFS beneficiary crop farmer conducting a Researcher round his plantain & vegetables farm in obio/Akpor local government area.

Source: Field observation, 2012.

Appendix 2



Beneficiary feeding his fishes in large earth ponds developed during the programme

Source: Field observation, 2012.