

APPROACHES FOR ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA IN A POST COVID-19 ERA: A REVIEW.

Agu, Rachael Ifeoma and Emeka-Okafor Eugenia Nkechi

Department of Home and Rural Economics, Federal Polytechnic, Oko Anambra State, Nigeria

agurachael61@gmail.com,

Abstract

Food security has become a global issue facing mankind. Food security situation is worsening with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In spite of huge investment placed in agricultural sector and all the agricultural programmes enacted in the country, Nigerian still continues to be food insecure. Good number of people are poor and do not have access to adequate desired food and nutrition needs at all times. The paper reviewed the approaches for enhancing food security in Nigeria in a post COVID-19 era. It is discussed under the following sub heads: Conceptual clarification, impact of COVID-19 on food security, approaches for enhancing food security in post COVID-19 era. The review showed that diversification of economy to put agriculture on the lead other than oil has a great role in food security. Creation of many job opportunities and empowerment of local farmers and researchers among others are other approaches for improving food security in Nigeria.

Key word: Food Security, COVID- 19, Impact, Approach.

Introduction

Food as important aspect of human life, consists of anything edible which when consumed, provides nourishment to the body. Food consumption is inevitable as it has numerous effects in life. According to Okeke (2014), food is any solid or liquid substance which when taken by the body, provides it with the necessary materials to enable it to grow, replace worn-out and damaged parts and to function optimally.

The search for food has been in existence right from the time of the early men when agriculture was the major occupation of man specifically crop production for human survival and sustainability. One of the things that reduces human activities and productivity and are specifically noticed in developing countries is hunger. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Agu and Okadi (2020) estimated that more than 1.02 billion people worldwide suffer from hunger with an estimated 830 million living in developing countries. According to United

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Nation (2017), about 795 million people, or every ninth person in the world, is under nourished, with the majority living in developing countries and rural areas. For sustainable increase in productivity, economic growth and overall human development, human beings must be adequately fed with the right nutritious foods and in appropriate time. In other words, food security is inevitable.

Agu and Okadi (2020) observed that in spite of the huge investment and annual budgetary allocation in the agricultural sector, and the impressive figures turned out by the national bureau of statistics, the number of people without access to adequate food and nutrition continue to rise annually, especially among sub Saharan African countries.

Before the year 2020, Nigeria has been witnessing food insecurity as a result of insecurity over life and property all over the country. Due to threat, killing and fear imposed by the herdsmen and bandits in the country, a lot of farmers and families in the rural areas where foods are been produced have been rendered homeless, and unproductive. According to the report by the International Committee on Nigeria (ICON, 2020), collected data from January 1, 2000 to January 31, 2020, the deadliest terrorist group also known as Boko Haram has killed more than 43,000 Nigerians, the vast majority women and children. ICON also raised awareness of the continuing slaughter by the Fulani Militants who have killed nearly 19,000 Nigerians farmers. All these problems initiated food scarcity in Nigeria.

The emergence of Corona virus disease (COVID-19) in December 2019 that claimed many lives all over the world also triggered the already existing food insecurity. This resulted from the lockdown of the economy and social distance put in place to curb the spread of the virus.

This paper is therefore designed to review the approaches for enhancing food security in the era of post COVID-19 in Nigeria. The paper is reviewed under the following sub heading: conceptual clarification, impact of COVID-19 on food security in Nigeria, and approaches for enhancing food security in Post COVID-19 era, conclusion and recommendations were also made.

Conceptual Clarification

Food security

Food security is one of the most challenging situations of the whole world today. The term food security has been variously defined by many authors in various ways but all heading to food reaching people at all time. According to Food and Agricultural Organization in Attah (2012), food security obtains when all people at all time, have physical, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Hence the 4 pillars of food security are availability, accessibility, utilization and stability, the author further stated. Igbuzor (2012) noted that food security is achieved if adequate food (quantity, quality, safety, socio- cultural acceptability) is available and accessible for and satisfactory utilized by individuals at all

times to achieve good nutrition for a healthy and happy life.

Food security is a very important concept that is unavoidable in human life. The importance of food security made the United Nations to include it as a component of the sustainable development goals which officially came into force on January 1st 2016 as successor to the Millennium Development Goals (Agu and Okadi, 2020). The United Nations (2017) hereby indentified that sustainable Development Goal 2, aims to end hunger and ensures access to sufficient safe and nutritious food by all people all year.

For the purpose of this study, food security is the ability of an individual, household, state, nations and the society to acquire, access and eat their desirable and best nutritious and healthy food for their growth and development at all times.

Corona virus (COVID-19)

Corona virus which is said to have emanated from China is a respiratory disease from the family of viruses that causes illness such as common cold, severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Morens et al. (2020) opined that the agent of COVID-19, SAR-COV-2, was named after the genetically related SARS-CoV (more recently distinguished by some as SARS-COV-1), which caused a deadly near-pandemic in 2003. The authors further noted that before the year 2019, neither SARS-COV-2 nor its genetic sequence had ever been identified in viruses of humans or animals. The novel corona virus outbreak,

popularly known as COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) On March 11, 2020 (Domenico and Maurizio, 2020). Pandemic as noted by Torrey (2020) is a geographic spread used to describe a disease that affected a whole country or the entire world. COVID-19 been deadly disease claimed lives whose number is not ascertained.

The term post meaning after is used to refer to the time succeeding an event while era is a period of time characterized by particular circumstances. It is a long and distinct period of history. Post COVID-19 Era however is referred to the period after the end of the disease. For the purpose of this study, it is a period when the lockdown has been eased and the economy returning as usual with the fact that the disease has or is gradually reducing to some extent.

Impact of Covid-19 on Food Security in Nigeria

Some of the impacts of Covid-19 on food security in Nigeria are:

1.Drop in oil export due to drop in oil demand: The restricted movement used to curb the spread of the virus drastically affected the export of Nigerian oil which is her major sources of earnings. Kazeem (2020) opined that accompanying steep drop in oil prices amidst a drop in global demand left Nigeria drastically short of earnings given its dependence on the commodity as it's bigger revenue source. The economic fallout due to Covid-19 now led Nigeria into great recession. The effect of the inflation is seen

as food prices keep increasing on daily basis. This is seen in every staple food items such as rice, beans, garri and many more.

Oyekanmi (2020) stated that the consumer price index (CPI) report released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicated that the Nigerian inflation rate rose to 13.71% (year-on-year) in September 2020 indicating 0.49% point higher than 13.22% record in August 2020.

2. Drop in food production: Restricted movement also made many farmers unable to go for their farming businesses as usual. This in turn brought low productions, food scarcity and increase in the prices of the available ones. It also reduced the household's income and purchasing power.

3. Increase in death rate: COVID-19 claimed lots of lives in the nation. This affected the economy of the country nutritionally as the available resources that should be used in boosting the economy and the food sector is diverted to disease control and cure.

4. Unemployment and salary reduction: increased unemployment also resulted from COVID-19. Many jobs were lost while some companies down sized the number of their staff and their salaries because the work that they do to be paid was automatically stopped. This affected food security as such people could no longer feed their families as well. However, the food security of the lucky ones who retained their jobs and salaries was also challenged as they continued to endure

steady salaries amidst the incessant rise in food prices and other services.

Approaches for Enhancing Food Security in Post COVID-19 Era.

The following approaches can be used to enhance food security in post COVID-19 Era:

1. Economic and structural reformation;

There are other solid mineral resources and agricultural products in the country yet under explored such as bitumen, sesame among others. The country needs to improve in such areas. Nigeria also leads in crude oil export yet imports petrol due to lack of good refineries. The refineries should be put in order to reduce cost of production and unnecessary expenses. Economic and structural reformation should also include good economic environment that will make the business to sale. Such environments include policies that make market attractive and promote both local and foreign investment. Reduction in port charges will also help the situation.

2a. Farmers empowerment: Government should empower farmers at all levels through adequate funding, provision of agricultural materials such as fertilizers, and improved varieties for better yield. Akobundu in Ajayi(2020) stated that smallholder farmers' capacity must be enhanced and strengthened to end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030.

2b. Workshops: Farmers and the stake holders in agriculture should be seriously engaged with workshops on new innovations.

2c. Increase in home gardening Households at all levels should involve in home gardening where people can plant some crops within their limited space as does with flowers.

3. Research funding: Scientific research in both nutrition and public health should be adequately funded by the government to enable them help in finding solutions to the treatment and protection of the deadly diseases to avoid future occurrence.

4. Job creation: More jobs in agricultural sectors and businesses should be created by both government and individuals who are well to do. When high numbers of people are employed, poverty is reduced. Poverty witnessed in the country according to Igbuzor (2020) also contributed to food insecurity. Therefore creation of jobs by the government through youth empowerment programmes with close supervision can help in reviving the economy

Therefore adopting these approaches would not only help in winning the war against hunger and the widespread food insecurity in the country, rather it will go a long way to boost food production and strengthen economic resilience, in a bid to stimulate and enhance sustainable economic growth .

Conclusion

Agriculture has been the bedrock of food security in Nigeria but has been neglected for

some factors such as oil boom which now fails the country due to global decline in oil price as a result of Covid-19. COVID-19 has also increased the level of unemployment in the nation as there are no money to pay for the workers salary hence compulsory sack bringing hunger to good number of people all over the nation. Increase in death rate was also ascertained.

Farmers on the other hand were restricted from doing their farming work . All these challenges affected food security in the country. However with measures such as diversification in the economy, more jobs create specifically in agricultural sectors, farmers empowered, increased home gardening and adequately funding of researches among others will improve food security in Nigeria and as well bring the economy back to normal. The approaches will also assure the 4 pillars of food security (availability, accessibility, utilization and stability) of the sustainable Development goal 2030.

Recommendations

On the basis of the review on the impact of COVID-19 on food security, it is hereby recommend among others that:

1. The economy should be diversified and mostly to agricultural sector to avoid over dependency on one source which is oil.
2. Agriculture should be highly funded and more jobs created from it to enable youths to be usefully engaged and also reduce poverty.
3. Researchers including nutritionists and agriculturists should be encouraged and

adequately funded and as well be included in policy making.

4. There should be continuous stakeholders' and local farmers' workshop in every innovation in agriculture for proper adoption and utilization of such. Some of the

innovations include growing of potatoes in sacks with limited space as does in Zimbabwe and growing of yellow cassava and orange fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP) which are all vitamin A fortified from the stem.

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