

# Interrogating The Effect of Public Policy on Food Security: A Comparative Analysis of Agricultural Transformation Agenda and Agricultural Promotion Policy In Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

*This study interrogates the effect of public policies on food security, with specific focus on the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP). It assesses the performance of these two policies, comparatively, with the objective of interrogating their contribution and effect on Nigeria's food security dream and their effects on smallholder farmers in the country. The study is a qualitative study; that engages 60 participants, male and female alike and the primary data for this study was collected using the Key Informant Interview (KII) from selected participants. While secondary data were obtained from relevant textbooks, scholarly journals, and official agricultural policy documents provided by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. The findings revealed a significant challenge which includes corruption, lack of monitoring on the part of implementing agency, poor resource management and insincerity on the part of government in the implementation and effectiveness of these policies. Feedback from participants interviewed in the field indicates widespread frustration among farmers, largely due to corruption and poor resource management. This study concluded by recommending transparency and proper monitoring and evaluation by the ministry of agriculture and other stakeholders in the agricultural industry, for improving the effectiveness of future agricultural policies.*

**Key words: Public Policy, Transformation, Agricultural, Policy and food Security**

## **Introduction**

Public policies have been an essential aspect of governance since the establishment of government, be it oligarchy, monarchy, aristocracy, tyranny, or democracy (Knill & Tosun, 2012). Policies are created and implemented to satisfy the needs and desires of citizens. In today's world, public policy has become an integral part of politics, especially in liberal democracies, (Dahl, 1989). To maintain its continuity, a political system is a collection of structures that function together, as Gabriel Almond (1958) explained. The system routinely converts demands from citizens into public policies that address their needs. Almond categorized the inputs of political systems as political socialization and elite recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation and political communication. These inputs are processed by the political system in response to the demands of citizens, (Gabriel Almond, 1958). The relationship between politics and policy has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry. One model coined in this regard by David Easton

(1965) is the feedback or Black Box model. This model posits that demands and support have not been included in decision and policies, and this will be fed back through the same process for their conversion into decision and policies. Easton argues that the political system is that part of society which engages in the authoritative allocation of value. Inputs, in the form of physical, social, economic and political products of the environment, are received into the political system in the form of both demands and supports. Demands refer to the claims made on the political system by individuals and groups in order to alter some aspects of public policy.

The issue of hunger and malnourishment, according to World Food Programme (2021), has been a significant concern in Nigeria since the inception of the Fourth Republic. Despite the various agricultural policies embarked upon by different regimes to address this issue of hunger and malnutrition that continue to ravage most citizens in Nigeria. The country remains a food-insecure nation, relying on the importation of grains, livestock produce, and fish. Its agriculture sector began to decline after the discovery of oil in 1956 and has yet to fully recover, as Ojo (2012) explains. The state of the economy has affected food prices, importation, and production. According to the Global Hunger Index, Nigeria was ranked 100th among 113 countries on the global list, with an overall score of 40.1 based on the indices of availability, affordability, quality and safety, natural resources, and resilience (Global Food Security Index, 2020).

To address the issue of food insecurity in Nigeria, the government formulated two major agricultural policies from 2011 to 2023: the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA 2011-2015) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP 2016-2023), Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2022). The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) was introduced by the Nigerian government in 2011, with the primary goal of transforming Nigeria's agricultural sector from a subsistence-based system to a commercially-oriented one. The policy aimed to increase food production, create jobs, and reduce the country's dependence on oil revenue (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2011). ATA focused on improving the productivity and profitability of six key value chains: rice, cassava, sorghum, cocoa, cotton, and oil palm (FMARD, 2011). The government implemented several initiatives under the ATA, including the establishment of the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) which provided farmers with subsidized fertilizers and seeds (Okeleji, 2011). The government also provided funding for the establishment of Agricultural Transformation Zones (ATZs), which aimed to enhance the overall productivity of agriculture in Nigeria. Despite these efforts, Nigeria is still far from achieving food security. ATA was introduced under President Goodluck Jonathan and the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) under President Muhammadu Buhari, with the aim of improving agricultural productivity, promoting food security, and achieving self-sufficiency in food production. ATA, launched in 2012, was designed to serve as a hub for agricultural production and processing. The policy aimed to increase the use of improved seeds and fertilizers, facilitate the adoption of modern farming techniques, and enhance the value chain of agricultural products. ATA also placed emphasis on the development of infrastructure such as irrigation systems and rural roads in order to facilitate the movement of crops to markets. A report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI 2016) revealed that the implementation of the ATA led to improvements in the country's agricultural sector. Notably, the number of farmers using improved seeds and fertilizers increased, and there was a significant increase in the production of rice, cassava, and sorghum. The report also noted that the ATA contributed to an increase in agricultural exports and a significant reduction in the country's food import bill (FMARD, 2016). APP, launched in 2016, aimed to build on the successes of the ATA and further improve the competitiveness of Nigeria's agricultural sector. The policy focused on four main areas: (1) increasing productivity, (2) improving value addition, (3) promoting access to markets, and (4) enhancing the overall competitiveness of the agricultural sector. The policy targeted initiatives such as the Anchor Borrowers Programme, provision of loans to smallholder farmers for the cultivation of crops such as rice and wheat (Odunze, 2016). The government also invested in infrastructure development such as irrigation systems and rural roads to facilitate the movement of crops to markets. The policy emphasized the need to improve the value chain of agricultural products and promote the consumption of locally produced food, (Mekonnen & Akerele, 2021).

Food security is a term used to define the state in which all individuals in a nation have physical and economic access to a sufficient, safe, and nutritious food supply that meets their dietary requirements and preferences for an active and healthy life, (FOA, 1996). It is a fundamental aspect of any government, whether in developed or emerging economies, and it encompasses three critical elements: food availability, food accessibility, and food adequacy. Food availability refers to the presence of sufficient food to meet the dietary needs of a population. This means that food should be available in quantities that meet acceptable nutritional standards in terms of calories, protein, and minerals required by the human body. According to Idachaba (2004), food accessibility means that all individuals should have the means to acquire food, including access to markets, transportation, and other resources needed to purchase food. There must be a reasonable degree of continuity and consistency in the food supply for people to have access to it at all times, (Davies, 2009). Food adequacy implies that the food available to people should be of adequate quantity and quality, and consistent with a decent existence. The food should be safe to consume, free from harmful contaminants that might cause illness or disease. It should also be nutritious to support the body's growth, development, and maintenance. Food security is not a simple matter of determining whether a population's food needs are being met or not. Rather, it is a multifaceted issue that involves assessing various factors related to food production, safety, and hygiene. For instance, countries that rely heavily on food aid to feed their populace may have a short-term solution to food insecurity (Reutlinger, 1985). However, this can discourage local food production, undermine the food security of the recipient countries, and result in significant budgetary strains. In summary, food security is a central tenet of government policy aimed at ensuring that all people have access to sufficient food for an active and healthy life at all time. Achieving food security requires a meticulous assessment of various factors, including food production, safety, and hygiene, among others. It is an essential aspect of any serious government, whether in developed or emerging economies, and should be a top priority for policy makers. Food security is a vital concern for many countries around the world, as access to safe and nutritious food is necessary for human survival. However, achieving food security is a complex issue that involves several interrelated economic, social, and political factors, both internal and external, which pose significant challenges, (Adeoti, 1989). The concept of access and entitlement to food has played a pivotal role in shifting the focus towards food security, and today, the most common definition of food security recognizes the complex inter-linkages between the individual, the household, the community, the nation, and the international community. In recent years, the concept of food security has gained considerable significance, being closely linked with human rights. International instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child have recognized the right to adequate food and freedom from hunger as fundamental human rights. Despite this recognition, a vast majority of the global population still lacks access to food security (Davies, 2009). Reports suggest that around 800 million people worldwide suffer from severe malnutrition, indicating a significant gap in existing human rights policies.

Nigeria, like many African countries, faces significant challenges in achieving food security, low agricultural productivity; inadequate infrastructure, high transport costs, weak policy formulation and insincere implementation system, and political patronage are some of the primary challenges facing food security. Nigeria in recent times has tried to make some significant strides towards improving food security with initiatives such as the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP). These Policies aim to increase agricultural productivity, improve infrastructure, and support the agricultural sector to ensure food security.

Despite these policy efforts, Food insecurity still persist, affecting a significant portion of the population. According to the Global Hunger Index 2020, Nigeria ranks 98th out of 107 countries, indicating a serious level of hunger and malnutrition. The report highlights that over 20 percent of Nigeria's population, or approximately 41 million people are undernourished. In addition to undernourishment, many Nigerians also suffer from micronutrient deficiencies. According to a report by the World Food Programme (WFP), over 37 percent of children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth as a result of malnutrition; food insecurity remains a major

challenge in Nigeria, affecting millions of people across the country. Addressing this issue requires a multi-faceted approach, including improving agricultural productivity, and addressing poverty.

### **Empirical Review of ATA and APP**

According to Okon, (2017), this agenda aimed to directly supply fertilizers to rural farmers, bypassing middlemen; provide high-yield seeds to smallholder farmers; offer telephones for better communication; and promote value chains to process agricultural products locally for finished goods and export. Additionally, the polices introduced programs to establish storage facilities and facilitate the export of perishable items like tomatoes by developing infrastructure such as refrigerated storage at major Nigerian airports. The policy also introduced the youth empowerment in agriculture programme. Following the swearing of a new administration 2015, the government pledged to continue the agricultural policies from the previous administration, enhancing seed yields and fertilizer distribution, focuses on exports, and treats agriculture as a business through mechanization, alongside transforming the value chain via production, marketing, and funding for research institutes." (Channel 10PM News online accessed 12/03/25).

Despite the promised continuity, new agricultural policy was lunched Agricultural Promotion Policy(APP),this new agricultural policy continued with the youth empowerment in agriculture programme (YEAP), the policy continued the process with empowering of 30,000 youths in priority value chains based on specific regions, with an initial participation from 12 states ([www.frnard.gov.ng/FMARD Policies](http://www.frnard.gov.ng/FMARD Policies) accessed 10/03/25). The beneficiaries were promised training in various value chains including Rice, Aquaculture, Poultry, Maize, Tomatoes, Wheat, Sorghum, Apiculture, Soya bean, Cassava, Groundnut, Oil Palm, Grass cutter, and multiple value chains. The policy also introduced the School Feeding Programme, which the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development intended to model after Brazil's nutritional smart agricultural school feeding program, was also in the pipeline. Brazil's School Feeding Programme ranked second only to that of the United States in terms of size and scope, provided daily meals to 40 million school children at an estimated annual cost of 2 billion USD, which is jointly funded by the Federal, State, and Local Governments, along with communities and the private sector ([www.fmard.gov.ng](http://www.fmard.gov.ng)). The Nigerian government aimed to boost productivity and yield among smallholder farmers by utilizing a cooperative model and advancements in technology. Brazil has reached self-sufficiency in rice production and exports 20% of its rice to over 65 other countries. There exists a yield gap in rice production of 1.5 metric tons to 2 million tons, and the Nigerian government planned to implement strategies adapted from Brazil to achieve self-sufficiency in rice production and processing. While much work have been done on the area of agricultural policies in Nigeria, no work has been done on interrogating the effect of ATA and APP therefore this study intends to fill the gap and contribute knowledge by providing analysis on the effectiveness or otherwise of these two agricultural policies on food security in Nigeria from a comparative perspective.

### **Theoretical Frame Work**

Functionalism is a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the roles played by social structures, including institutions, hierarchies, and norms within society. In this context, "function" pertains to how an activity contributes to or hinders the stability of a system. This theory originated in the early 20th century and is closely associated with prominent thinkers such as Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer, and Robert Merton, who significantly influenced American social theory during the 1950s and 1960s.

Structural functionalism has six basic Features

1. **Social Structure:** Central to the framework of structural functionalism is the notion of social structure, which encapsulates the organized patterns of social relationships and institutions that characterize a society. Each component of this structure is posited to

- fulfill a specific function within the broader social system.
2. **Functions of Institutions:** Everyday social institutions—such as the family, education, religion, and government—are regarded as essential elements that contribute to the overall functionality of society. For instance, the family unit plays a critical role in the socialization of children, while educational systems facilitate skill acquisition and promote social integration.
  3. **Stability and Order:** Proponents of structural functionalism emphasize the significance of social stability and order, positing that various societal elements work in concert to maintain equilibrium. A disruption or dysfunction in one part of the system (for example, changes within the family structure) can precipitate social instability.
  4. **Consensus and Cooperation:** This theoretical perspective asserts that social order is achieved through a collective agreement on values and norms shared among members of society. The cooperation of individuals and institutions is deemed essential for sustaining social harmony.
  5. **Adaptation and Change:** Although structural functionalism primarily concentrates on stability, it does recognize that societies undergo change and evolution. These changes, however, are interpreted within the context of maintaining social order. For example, shifts resulting from technological advancements or demographic changes may initiate social transformations, but these are often viewed as adaptations that ultimately lead to new forms of stability.
  6. **Manifest and Latent Functions:** Robert K. Merton’s contributions to the theory include a distinction between manifest functions (the intended and apparent consequences of an action or institution) and latent functions (the unintended and hidden consequences). For example, while the manifest function of education is to impart knowledge, a latent function could involve the establishment of social networks.

The application of structural functionalism theory to the investigation of “Interrogating the Effect of Agricultural Transformation Agenda and Agricultural Promotion Policy on Food Security in Nigeria” requires a comprehensive and academically rigorous analysis of how these agricultural policies function within the broader societal framework. This approach elucidates their roles in promoting systemic stability and enhancing food security in Nigeria.

The ATA and APP represent institutional frameworks specifically designed to confront the multifaceted challenges associated with food production and distribution in Nigeria. These policies endeavour to enhance agricultural productivity, improve food accessibility, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. By augmenting efficiencies in food production, ATA and APP are supposed to play a critical role in the stabilization of the food system, which is essential for the overall well-being of society. A central tenet of structural functionalism is the interconnected nature of societal elements. The efficacy of the ATA and APP can significantly impact other social structures, including the economy, health, and education. For instance, improved food security may yield enhanced health outcomes, thereby reducing healthcare expenditures and bolstering workforce productivity. Furthermore, as food availability improves, it is plausible that educational outcomes may also benefit, as children with better nutrition are more likely to focus and excel in their academic pursuits. Feedback Mechanism from Structural functionalism emphasizes the importance of feedback between various social structures. The outcomes resulting from agricultural policies—whether success or failure—can provide critical feedback to governing bodies and policymakers. For example, substantial improvements in food security is attributable to the ATA and APP and may catalyze increased investments in agricultural research and development, thereby reinforcing the original policies. Conversely, if these policies do not yield the intended enhancements in food security, this may instigate a reevaluation of existing strategies and stimulate necessary reforms, illustrating the adaptability of the social system.

## Research Design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory design using a cross-sectional approach. The design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to capture the perceptions, experiences, and opinions of farmers and agricultural officials at a specific point in time. Unlike quantitative surveys that emphasize measurement and statistical generalization. This study prioritized the depth of understanding and contextual insights into how the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) affected food security in Nigeria.

## Area of Study

The study was conducted in Benue State (North-Central) and Oyo State (South-West) of Nigeria. Benue State was purposively selected because it is regarded as the “food basket of Nigeria,” producing more food than any other state. Oyo State was selected because it is a major farming hub in the southern region (Punch Newspaper, 2023). This combination provided a comparative perspective across different agro-ecological zones.

## Population of the Study

The population comprised staff of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and farmers in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs). Specifically, respondents were drawn from Otukpo LGA (Benue State) and Ogbomosho North LGA (Oyo State). While the overall population of these LGAs exceeds 600,000, the focus was on the sub-population directly engaged in farming and agricultural policy implementation.

## Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A total of 60 respondents participated in the study. The sample was not meant to be statistically represented but to provide sufficient qualitative insights until data saturation is achieved. The sample consisted of:

Farmers (smallholder and cooperative members) – 45

FMARD officials – 15

Purposive sampling was used to select the study states and LGAs, while judgmental sampling (a form of purposive selection) was applied to identify actual respondents. Community leaders assisted in connecting the researcher with genuine farmers actively engaged in agricultural production.

## Instruments of Data Collection

Primary data were collected using Key Informant Interview (KII) guides tailored for two groups of respondents:

1. FMARD officials – focused on policy formulation, implementation processes, and challenges.
2. Farmers – focused on access to inputs, experiences with ATA and APP, and perceived impacts on food production.

The guides consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions to allow for flexibility and depth. Supporting tools included audio recorders and field notebooks.

Secondary data were obtained from policy documents, FMARD reports, journal articles, and newspapers.

## Validity and Reliability

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study:

**Credibility:** Interview guides were reviewed by two agricultural policy experts and pilot-tested with five respondents outside the study area.

**Dependability:** Consistent interview procedures were maintained, and data were transcribed verbatim.

**Confirmability:** Triangulation was achieved by combining interviews with secondary data sources.

**Transferability:** Thick descriptions of the research context were provided to allow for applicability in similar contexts.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Data collection was carried out over a six-week period. Participants were contacted through community leaders and FMARD offices. Interviews lasted between 45–60 minutes and were conducted in locations convenient and safe for respondents. Verbal and written consent were obtained prior to participation.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data from interviews were analyzed thematically using NVivo 14 software. Codes were generated inductively from the data and grouped into themes aligned with the study's objectives. The findings were presented in narrative form, supported by direct quotations from participants to reflect their lived experiences.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose and scope of the study. Anonymity was guaranteed by assigning codes instead of using real names. Confidentiality was maintained, and respondents were assured that data would be used strictly for academic purposes.

### **Presentation and Analysis of the Research Questions**

#### **Key Objectives of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) in Nigeria**

This objective explores how participants perceive the main goals of Nigeria's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP). Insights gathered from participants suggested that the ATA and APP are primarily aimed at boosting food security, reducing reliance on foreign imports, and driving economic growth by supporting farmers. These initiatives focused on enhancing domestic food production to achieve self-sufficiency, combat hunger, and enable the country to meet the needs of its growing population. The policies also prioritize job creation, a crucial step in addressing unemployment and improving living conditions for those in rural areas. Furthermore, these strategies also encouraged the export of agricultural goods to enhance foreign revenue and support the nation's economic development. Ultimately, the goals of the ATA and APP align with promoting economic advancement, securing food supply, and achieving self-reliance in the agricultural sector, as reflected in the gathered data.

*These agricultural policies did not achieve their objectives in reality. Most of the subsidized fertilizers and improved seedlings that were supposed to be made available were not available or didn't get to the real farmers. Politicians hijacked them and we farmers are left stranded. Most time we buy fertilizers with government logos from the market, for a very exuberant price because the fertilizer were sold to merchants who in turn sale to us without subsidy. (45 years female farmer, from Ogbomosh north26/8/24).*

*The major objectives of these policies were to make Nigeria food secure and eradicate hunger and creating jobs for our ever increasing population. (40 years, farmer, from Ogbomosh north, 26/08/24).*

In response to question one, clear challenges were identified concerning the success of Nigeria's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP). The interviewee expressed a sense of dissatisfaction, suggesting that the two initiatives have fallen short of their expected goals largely due to issues such as corruption and poor allocation of resources. They mentioned how key supplies, such as fertilizers and higher-quality seedlings,

were frequently unavailable or redirected to merchants, keeping them out of the hands of farmers.

This example illustrates a significant divide between the policies' ambitions and their actual results, with many farmers left to manage on their own by relying on personal solutions rather than receiving support from the government. Although a few farmers were able to access subsidized fertilizers, the prevailing sentiment is one of disappointment and discontent. This commentary highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in agricultural policies to ensure they genuinely improve productivity, create jobs, and support economic growth by aligning with the primary goals of the ATA and APP. Productivity, efficiency, and the advancement of agricultural technology stand out as key areas that lacked attention in both policies:

*The policies achieve their objectives though not in full. Some farmers benefitted from the policies through their cooperatives that helped to access fertilizers at subsidized rate (45years, female farmer, Otukpo Local Government area of Benue State 30 /09/24).*

*The policies did not achieve their objectives. As a farmer, me and some other farmers did not benefit from the policies even when we were asked to register at farmers' cooperatives society in order to access and enjoy the policies, yet we still did not get it even up till now. We are still waiting for response. Whatever you see us doing today is based on self-help (26years, male farmer, in Ogbomosho north, 26/08/24).*

Responses to Question Two reveal that the failure of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) in Nigeria is predominantly linked to corruption, lack of integrity, failed system and political favouritism, as highlighted during the interviews. These initiatives, designed to enhance agriculture by offering subsidized inputs such as higher-quality seedlings and fertilizers, were manipulated by political figures for their own gain, failing to benefit farmers as intended.

Subsidized goods were often distributed as political rewards or sold to benefit political allies, rather than being provided to the farmers who needed them. This corruption undermined the policies' objectives of increasing agricultural output and promoting sustainable farming practices. The absence of genuine policy implementation and inadequate assessments by the authorities contributed to the failure of both the ATA and the APP, leaving farmers to struggle while the political elite thrived. These conclusions are supported by the following evidence:

*First I think the government herself is not sincere with either of the policies from the policy formulation stage to the implementation, it was more like using the policies to enrich political friends and associate, all the subsidized improved seedlings and fertilizer that came to our state came in through politicians and most of these politicians after selling what they intend to sale they keep the others only to distribute as campaign souvenir during election to their loyal list who are not farmers but political thugs and machine as they are informally referred to (47years, male, farmer, Ogbomosho north 26/08/24). .*

*The major reasons or the failure of this two polices is corruption and most of the people that were given the product to distribute to farmers ended up selling them, I personally bought the improved cassava stem from one of the boys of a popular politician in our state. So the major challenges were corruption and insincerity in the part of the government and the implementing ministry who did not really do any assessment job before distributing these subsidized materials, rather they stay in their offices after collecting their own share of the funds distribute the others to politicians who further enrich themselves at the expense of the masses and use the others for political campaign living the really farmers to continue in struggles.50 years male farmer, from Otukpo Local Government area of Benue State 30 /09/24).*



The answer provided to Question three emphasizes that Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) failed to achieve their targets; on the ground that a supportive environment backed by genuine commitment was lacking. This lack of supportive oversight, contributed to Backdrop of the policies.

Additionally, organizations such as research institutes, extension services, and farmers' groups were expected to participate in facilitating the implementation of the policies, regulatory institutional support – would have aided the policies in meeting their goals. This may not have necessarily make Nigeria fully agriculturally independent, but would achieve significant improvements over the current situation. This is backed by the following findings:

*Government should have created an enabling environment with sincerity of purpose and encourage people to key into farming with regulatory bodies,(Ministry of Agriculture) and should be charged to live up to their responsibility. (47 years, male farmer, from Ogbomosho north, 26/08/24).*

*Institutional support like research institute extension services and farmers' organization should have been mandated to also help in ensuring proper implementation of each of the two policies. If they had done this, I think the policy would have actually achieved its objectives even if not to make Nigeria totally independent but to a lager extent it would have been better than what was obtained. (57 years, male farmer, from Otukpo Local Government area of Benue State 30 /09/24).*

### **The Impact of the ATA and APP Initiatives on Food Security in Nigeria**

This objective highlights how participants perceive the effects of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) on food security in Nigeria. The responses to the inquiry regarding the ATA and APP indicate varying opinions on their success in increasing agricultural output. A few interviewees reported experiencing little benefit, commenting that assistance such as subsidized fertilizer and better-quality seeds were only available during Jonathan's presidency, and there was no significant help during Buhari's time in office. Conversely, one participant stated that they received assistance but only after giving a bribe in order to be added to the list of those eligible for support. This assistance reportedly enabled small-scale farmers to boost their production and engage in the agricultural sector. Nonetheless, dissatisfaction prevailed, with one individual noting that the high cost of food suggests that the policies have failed to make a significant difference, indicating a disconnect between the policies' goals and real-world outcomes. These observations imply that although the policies may have helped some farmers, their overall influence on food security has been limited and inconsistent, as reflected in the findings.

*For me very little impact has been made by these two policies, the only time I got fertilizer and some improved seedlings at a subsidized rate was in 2013 during Former President Jonathans reign, since the beginning to end of Buhari's administration I did not see any one around my environment who received any support from the government. (48 years, male farmer, from Ogbomosho north 26/08/24).*

*I received fertilizes and improved seedlings in 2015 and that really boosted my production though I had to pay someone some amount of money for my name to be captured among those that were to benefit, and since then I have always benefited from government policies. This has helped me a lot, small farmers like us cannot contribute meaningfully to the food production process without this help. (31years, female farmer, from Otukpo Local Government area of Benue State 30 /09/24).*

*I can tell you that the policies have achieved nothing and have no impact; the high cost of food*

*items will tell you the reality. (35years, female farmer, from Ogbomosho north 26/08/24).*

Interviewees' feedback suggests that although both the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) had their strengths, the ATA made a more noticeable difference in boosting food production. Participants frequently mentioned that the ATA's provision of subsidized fertilizers and seedlings, despite some corruption issues, benefited numerous farmers and enhanced local rice cultivation. In contrast, the APP encountered more serious difficulties, particularly concerning security threats such as banditry and conflicts with herders, which drove many farmers away from their fields and this reduced the policy's effectiveness.

One respondent pointed out that, while they benefited from the APP, the ATA produced better outcomes because it encouraged local farming initiatives. Despite these challenges, neither policy succeeded in achieving even 50% of its goals related to food production, rural development, and economic improvement. As a result, the ATA's influence on food security in Nigeria appears to have been more significant and effective than APP, as demonstrated by the following observations:

*The ATA policy was more effective though it did not achieve its objective in full but there was a good starting point. Some of us farmers benefited though the benefit was not without bribery but at list we had the subsidized fertilizers and seedling (40years, male from Otukpo local government area of Benue state farmer, 26/09/24).*

*ATA was better to farmers than the APP I remembered some of us were profiled to benefit from ATA policy though we had to contribute some money to someone who helped us to facilitate the process. (46 years, female farmer, from Otukpo local government area of Benue state farmer, 26/09/24).*

*Well to me I benefited only in APP, the minister himself give me an harvester for use in my rice farm he also made some fertilizers and seedling available to me, and gave some to distribute, which I distributed to my widows foundation. (38years, female farmer, from Ogbomosho north 26/08/24).*

*ATA was better. Most of the local rice we have today, the farmers were encouraged into farming during the implementation of ATA. (25 years, male farmer, 29/12/22).*

*APP to me stated well but was mess up on the way due to issues of banditry, killer herds men etc. seriously this had an effect on the out- come of the APP. So success of APP was not allowed to manifest as many farmers abandoned their farms, do you know many of us had to result to buying guns for protection before we can enter our farm, women and children were raped daily in farms so this and many other issues affected the APP and gave ATA an edge over it. Though none of the two policies achieved up to 50% of what they were formulated to achieve. (45years, male farmer, from Otukpo local government area of Benue state farmer, 26/09/24).*

Answers to Question Seven indicate that the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) have had noticeable effects on important areas of Nigeria's food production, particularly in the rice and cassava sectors.

While rice availability has increased, local production is still insufficient to fully meet the demands of Nigeria's expanding population. In the cassava sector, improved seeds have shortened the production period to six months, thereby boosting yields.

Nevertheless, concerns have been raised about political interference which is potentially restricting cassava's ability to significantly contribute to self-sufficiency in flour production. The themes of food supply and economic empowerment suggest that these policies have had positive impacts on food production, import replacement, employment, and rural progress, contributing to food security and poverty alleviation in Nigeria. However, the full potential of these policies remains unrealized due to challenges in their execution, as highlighted in the findings below.

*The policies impacted a lot in local rice production, though it is still not able to meet the Nigeria population rice need. (27 years, female farmer, 27/09/24).*

*The improve seedling in cassava that can produce after six months is one major way the policies impacted cassava production circle. I think if the government were not just playing politics with the policies we would have been self-sufficient in flour production using cassava (46 years, female farmer, from Ogbomosho north, 26/08/24).*

Interview responses to Question Eight reveal that the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) initiatives had little effect on smallholder farmers. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction, noting that these farmers were often used by politicians to form cooperatives but were not provided with any meaningful benefits. One coordinator mentioned that the materials intended to be subsidized for farmers were instead handed to individuals with political connections who were not actual farmers. This sense of manipulation and exclusion resulted in only a few farmers, mainly those with political ties, receiving benefits from these policies.

Although the ATA and APP were supposed to increase food production, create jobs, and develop rural areas, they fell short by not reaching most smallholder farmers, thereby limiting their potential impact on food security. Themes such as food availability, economic empowerment, and poverty reduction were not fully addressed, indicating the policies' limited success in boosting food security in Nigeria, particularly for those lacking political connections. This is evident in the following findings:

*The ATA and APP did not in any way impact smallholder farmer. These small farmers we are talking about were mainly use by politicians to form cooperative societies and at the long run never heard anything from them. (44 years, male farmer, from Otukpo Local Government area of Benue State 30 /09/24).*

*I was one of the coordinators of famers in my local government when ATA was introduced. We had high hopes but our hopes were dashed when we were informed that the subsidized materials have been distributed to our constituency through some persons who were never farmers but politicians. So, to me it only impacted small farmers who were close to politicians in our state, that is like 5% of total farmers (55 years, female farmer, from Ogbomosho north 26/08/24).*

### **Comparative Analysis of ATA and APP**

A thorough comparative analysis of data collected from the two policies under study reveals that the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) has had a markedly greater influence on the Nigerian agricultural sector compared to the Agricultural Production Program (APP). Discussions with personnel from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture show that between 2017 and 2023, persistent security challenges in various farming regions significantly impacted agricultural productivity. These issues forced many farmers to abandon their farms in pursuit of alternative income opportunities, leading to a decline in agricultural output and exacerbation.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results from Objective One demonstrate that the core aims of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) in Nigeria were centered around improving food security, reducing dependency on imports, and driving economic development by supporting farmers. The intention behind these policies were to encourage self-sufficiency by boosting local food production, generating employment, and increasing foreign revenue through agricultural exports. However, feedback from respondents shows that these aims were not fully achieved in practice. Corruption, lack of transparency, and poor resource distribution emerged as key issues. A large number of farmers encountered challenges in obtaining subsidized inputs, such as fertilizers and better-quality seeds, as these supplies were frequently taken over by politicians and sold at inflated prices through unofficial means. While some farmers within cooperatives did experience certain benefits from accessing subsidized fertilizers, majority expressed dissatisfaction with the policies' inability to fulfil their promises. These findings point to a noticeable disconnect between the policies' goals and their actual outcomes, with systemic problems limiting the effectiveness of the ATA and APP in delivering improvements to agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria.

Objective Two explores how participants perceive the impact of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) on food security in Nigeria. The findings reveal a mixture of opinions regarding the success of these initiatives. Some respondents recognized certain positive outcomes, such as the provision of subsidized fertilisers and better seedlings through the ATA, but also pointed out that this support diminished after President Jonathan's tenure. Additionally, political interference affected the effectiveness of the programmes. With some participants having to give bribes to receive benefits, while others reported that resources were allocated to politically favoured individuals rather than to farmers. One respondent commented that high food prices indicate a lack of real impact on food security. The ATA appeared to have more influence on local rice production than the APP, which encountered issues such as banditry and conflicts with herders. Overall, the findings suggest that the policies only slightly improved food security, achieving less than half of their objectives and falling short in meeting the needs of smallholder farmers.

Objective Three evaluated the strategies used within the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) to improve agricultural productivity and food security in Nigeria. The findings show that while both policies aimed to provide essential inputs like subsidized fertilisers and seeds to raise crop yields, the Anchor Borrower Programme under the APP was particularly successful in improving financial access for farmers. This enabled better loan availability, helping farmers invest in resources that would enhance their output. The formation of cooperatives also played a significant role, assisting small farmers in working together to obtain resources and agricultural insurance, thereby strengthening their resilience. Despite these promising approaches, systemic issues such as corruption, favouritism, and political meddling were highlighted as major barriers, reducing the success of these policies. Respondents noted that these efforts were often derailed by politicians who divert benefits from the actual farmers. In addition, inefficiencies in the Ministry of Agriculture, including poor oversight, compounded the challenges. While the ATA and APP contributed positively to agricultural productivity, systemic issues ultimately limited their effectiveness in ensuring food security in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

In summary, Nigeria's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) and Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) represent significant efforts to improve food security, enhance self-sufficiency, and drive economic growth. However, feedback from participants highlights considerable challenges in the implementation and effectiveness of these policies. Farmers' frustrations, largely stemming from issues such as corruption and poor resource management, clearly indicate the need for a major re-evaluation of the current systems to ensure averting previous policy failures. Many farmers feel excluded, relying on self-sustaining methods rather than receiving the intended support from the government, which reveals a serious gap in the effectiveness of these policies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. ***Boost Transparency and Accountability:*** To enhance the effectiveness of agricultural assistance programs, it is crucial to implement robust oversight mechanisms. The mechanisms will play a vital role in ensuring that designated resources are delivered directly to the intended farmers, preventing misallocation and curbing corruption. Here are some detailed strategies to achieve this.
  - ◆ Establish Clear Guidelines and Standards: Create comprehensive guidelines that outline the eligibility criteria for farmers seeking assistance. This will help in maintaining consistency and clarity in the allocation process.
  - ◆ Regular Audits and Evaluations: Conduct frequent audits and evaluations of agricultural assistance programs. Independent bodies should be assigned to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the resource allocation process.
  - ◆ Public Reporting and Transparency: Mandate regular reports on the progress of agricultural assistance initiatives to be published publicly. This should include data on the distribution of resources, number of beneficiaries, and impact assessments. Public access to this information fosters accountability.
  - ◆ Cross-Agency Collaboration: Foster collaboration among various governmental agencies involved in agricultural support. A coordinated approach can streamline processes and reduce opportunities for corruption.
2. ***Remove Political patronage from Agricultural Efforts:*** In order to enhance the effectiveness of agricultural policies, it is imperative to eliminate political influence and patronage in the implementation process. This can be achieved by ensuring that resource distribution is based on objective criteria of need rather than on political affiliations or connections. Establishing clear, evidence-based frameworks for assessing agricultural needs will promote fairness and efficiency, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for farming communities. By prioritizing equitable access to resources, policymakers can support sustainable agricultural practices and enhance food security while fostering a more just socio-economic environment.
3. ***Simplify Direct Resource Distribution:*** The establishment of efficient systems for the direct delivery of agricultural essentials, including fertilisers and seedlings, represents a critical strategy in enhancing agricultural productivity and equity among farmers. By circumventing intermediaries and politically connected entities, this approach can foster a more transparent and equitable distribution of resources. Direct resource distribution not only minimizes transaction costs associated with intermediary involvement but also empowers farmers by ensuring that they have immediate and reliable access to necessary inputs. This can lead to an increase in agricultural output and a reduction in market inefficiencies, ultimately promoting food security and sustainability within farming communities. Moreover, implementing such systems requires careful consideration of logistical frameworks, partnerships with local agricultural organizations, and the use of technology to streamline the delivery process. Through these means, direct resource distribution can be realized, thereby supporting the agricultural sector's growth while contributing to broader socio-economic development goals.

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