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INVIGORATING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CORPORATIVE FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

DR. SUNDAY A. IDAHOSA & FRIDAY FRANCIS NCHUCHUWE

ABSTRACT

The paper examined the concept of cooperative federalism as an imperative for Agricultural Development in Nigeria rather than "True Federalism" as have been the case in recent times. It argued that the current clamour for "True Federalism" in Nigeria is not in consonance with the spirit of National Development vis-a-vis Agricultural development in the country.

The conclusions are that for Agricultural productions to be improved, there is dire need for cooperation among the three tiers of Government in Nigeria and that Nigeria and that Nigerian should join hands in clamouring for cooperative federalism which has more potentials for equitable distribution of the cognate resources relevant to development efforts.

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems of Nigerian economy today is the over-reliance on oil which makes it a monolithic economy.

Before the decade of 1970s, Agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. The Nigerian Agriculture was able to grow at a sufficient rate to provide adequate food for an increasing population, raw materials for a budding industrial sector, increasing public revenue and foreign exchange for government, and employment opportunities for an expanding labour force (NOA Report, 2002).

The support provided by Government for Agricultural Development then was concentrated on export crops like cocoa, groundnut, palm produce, rubber and cotton as self-sufficient in food production seemed not to pose any problem worthy of public attention.

Indications of problems in the Nigerian agriculture however, started to emerge from the second decade of the country's independence. The decade witnessed rapid deterioration in the country's agricultural situation as evident in widening food supply-demand gaps, rising food import bills, rising food prices, rapid declines in government internal revenue from agricultural exports as well as in the labour force required for agriculture.

The situation was further compounded by the residual effects of the civil war (1967 — 1970), severe droughts in some parts of the country, government fiscal monetary policies and above all, an "oil boom" which created serious distortions in the economy and accelerated the rate of migrations of labour from agriculture.

It is arising from the above factors that agricultural sector's performance has not been very impressive. The output of the traditional cash crops such as cocoa, rubber, groundnut and palm produce has dwindle continuously over the years, while production of livestock has also fallen. Similarly a huge discrepancy exists in the growth rates of food stuff production and population. The result is that Nigeria, a major producer and exporter of agriculture produce, suddenly discovered that she now is an importer of food (FGN Report, 2000)

For example, between 1992 and 1997 alone, Nigeria imported rice to the tune of 699,054 tonnes while about 1,068,802 tonnes of wheat was imported during the same period.

In an effort to tackle these serious problems, the three tiers of government in the country have been initiating a number of agricultural policies, programmes and projects, largely within the frame work of Development plans, the primary task of which became the

need to seriously and urgently take measures to advance agriculture, with a view to ensuring a tolerably good standard of living and feeding her population and more importantly, have her current monolithic economy diversified. The efforts are to say the least not yielding much result.

For example, before the adoption of the economic policy reforms in the mid 1980s, some agricultural Development programmes were adopted in a bid to improve agricultural performance. These were backed up by substantial budgetary allocations, but the Development programmes were not totally coherent and logical.

Consequently, although agricultural performance improved noticeably, the results were not adequate not only in relation to the committed financial resources, but also in relation to the nation's minimum needs of agricultural products. The issue remains that while various attempts have been made and are still being made to improve the agricultural base of the nation, its overall performance is still below expectations (Ojo, 1991, 225-296).

Improving Nigeria's agricultural performance to a sustainable level has therefore become a thing of great concern to the federation as a whole. The focus of this paper therefore is to make a case for Cooperative federalism as an imperative for tackling Nigeria's Agricultural underdevelopment as against a "True Federalism" approach.

THE NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

The starting point of Nigerian federalism was in 1954, Since then, Nigeria has remained a federation. However, it is difficult if not impossible to really pace the Nigerian federalism more so that the Nigerian military has so much bastardized the practice courtesy of their political adventurism.

By the very nature of the military, federalism in whatever appropriate way it may be viewed was simply rubbished in Nigeria. And even though we now operate a presidential democracy, the fact remains that it is difficult to place Nigeria's federalism. That is to say, what type of federalism is Nigeria really operating?

States still depend largely on the center for their resources as they still go cap in hands to the center. At present there is a legal tussle between some states mainly from the southern part of Nigeria and the federal government on the need for the states to control their resources — a major element in the principle of federalism as enunciated by K.C. Wheare

Similarly, many states in Nigeria mostly from the south too have been agitating for state control of the police so as to beef up security for the citizenry to no avail.

Given the type of K.C. Wheare's federalism, the central government of Nigeria has no basis to deprive the states, these rights. Conversely Zamfara state in Nigeria adopted the Sharia legal system contrary to the provisions of section 10 of the 1999 constitution — to wit. The Government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion of the federal republic of Nigeria — for the reason that the state as right in so far as Nigeria operates a federal system and funny enough, the central government of Nigeria is not comfortable with it. All these were allowed going by K.C. Wheare's definition.

As one writer puts it, the political system in Nigeria is better described as "federalism in law and unitarism in fact" or put in another way, "dejure federalism and defacto federalism. Even though it is difficult to place Nigeria's federalism vis a vis its practice, it is necessary to point out that it has several features of K. C. Wheare's conceptualization. For instance, Nigeria has a written constitution, a supreme court and a bicameral legislature. There is constitutional interpretation and judicial review. No unit is large and powerful enough to control the central government also or dominate the other units

put together. Each constituent government operates directly on the people rather than indirectly through the other. No unit or state has the right to secede from the federation, and above all, powers and functions are shared between the centre and the states with some exercised concurrently (Idahosa, 1994)

Power sharing is a key issue in federalism, and for this reason conflict becomes a common feature of federalism even though it is an attempt to ensure and maintain unity in diversity. Therefore, for federalism to be, there must be clear cut responsibilities or roles vested on each level of government to avoid conflict. Nigeria has a central government, 36 states and 774 local government, which share various powers as contained in the second schedule of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria.

FEDERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

One great advantage of federalism is that it fosters unity in diversity. Also it brings government programmes closer to the people and creates a sense of participation and belonging in them. Similarly, through federalism, each major group can develop at its pace and experiment with programmes as it desires (Dare et al 1993).

Thus from time to time, the various levels of government in a federation cooperate to embark on common policies or programmes so as to bring about development or a better life for the citizens (Todaro, 1980).

In Nigeria, the various levels of government do cooperate in many aspects and yet, there is a general call for "true federalism" a concept that is archaic and highly utopian (This we have buttressed severally in this paper in line with the views of many other authors and scholars). The point being made is that the call for true federalism is misleading because as we pointed out earlier, the world itself is a world of interdependence and cooperation.

To bring about Development therefore, different programmes are usually embarked upon in a federation and Agriculture is just one of them and a crucial one for that matter.

IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture, according to the Oxford advanced learner's dictionary is the science or practice of cultivating the land and keeping or breeding animals for food. Put in another way, it means food production for the citizens.

Agricultural development therefore implies enhancing or improving upon various food production mechanisms of a state so as to make food available for the populace. This indeed is the essence of any good government. As part of its responsibilities the government of any country serves to cater for the welfare of the citizenry while at the same time providing them with sound security and protection. Welfare of the citizens entails food production for them among others. Tijani Yesufu (1993) proposed that the most fundamental of welfare are:

- (i) Food
- (ii) Housing and Clothing
- (iii) Transportation and Communication
- (iv) Energy and Fuel
- (v) Education
- (vi) Health and Medical Services

To Yesufu, food is number one and this view we share completely. When a nation is developed agriculturally, the citizens will never lack food and in the same vein the Nation will grow and continue to develop.

Agricultural development can yield many other benefits and these include:

- (i) Supplying adequate raw materials to a growing industrial sector
- (ii) Constituting the major source of mass employment
- (iii) Constituting a major source of foreign earnings and
- (iv) Providing a market for the products of the industrial sector.

It follows therefore that all the tiers of government in Nigeria must cooperate to ensure that the benefit of Agricultural and indeed food production is enhanced for the overall benefit of the people. A nation which is able to feed its people no doubt is on the path to meaningful development. Once there is self-sufficiency in food production and consumption, the nation will be better for it in terms of her Gross Domestic Products (GDP), Gross National Product and National Income. Intensified food exports in this regard, will also beef up our foreign earnings.

It is pertinent to bear in mind that the successful implementation and enforcement of the agricultural policies in Nigeria hinge crucially on the co-operational attitude of the national, state and local government officials and institutions designed and established for the purpose. It is these officials' responsibility to ensure that governments' goals in agricultural development are fulfilled.

There is no doubt that in cooperation, there can also be conflicts. However, the agricultural policy for Nigeria, has been designed to reduce conflict by highlighting the level of involvement of each tier of government and this is stated below.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN AGRICULTURE

The main areas of direct involvement of the federal government include:

- (i) The provision of the general policy framework within which agriculture will develop
- (ii) Research into all facets of agriculture

- (iii) The control of pests and diseases of national and international significance
- (iv) The development of water resources, including the construction and maintenance of small, medium and large dams for irrigation, and aquaculture (fish farming), rural water supplies and other uses and the construction of boreholes.
- (v) Maintaining strategic grains and animal product reserves for purposes of food security.
- (vi) The establishment and maintenance of national capability for animal and fish diseases control through a virile federal veterinary and public health service.
- (vii) Advice on agricultural produce tariff and pricing policy through representations in appropriate policy formulation committees.
- (viii) The promotion and sale of exportable agricultural produce outside the country.
- (ix) The maintenance of a reasonable flow of resources into agriculture and rural development by way of matching grants, subventions and investments in federal, joint federal and state, state and other specialized projects and by creating conditions which facilitate resources flows from other sources.
- (x) The training of manpower for agricultural development
- (xi) The establishment of an Agricultural Insurance Scheme.
- (xii) The promotion of appropriate technology in agricultural production, preservation, processing and storage through the development of forest resources, development of prototypes and pilot projects as a follow up to research inventions.

- (xiii) The co-ordination of nation's forestry development efforts including forest resources, development and utilization, forestation, wildlife conservation and management.
- (xiv) The co-ordination of data collection and
- (xv) The inventorisation of land resources through soil survey and fertility mapping and the control of land use and land degradation for effective soil conservation.

STATE GOVERNMENTS INTERVENTION IN AGRICULTURE

The state governments will be primarily responsible for the following:

- (i) The promotion of primary production of all items of agricultural produce (including crops, livestock and fisheries) through.
 - (a) The maintenance of a virile and effective extension service which can deal with problems of products, reservation, storage, processing and marketing, and
 - (b) The promotion of the production of inputs for crops, livestock, fish and forestry using the combined activities of government and private agencies.
- (ii) Ensuring access to land by those who wish to engage in farming
- (iii) The training of manpower for agricultural development
- (iv) The control of plant and animal pests and diseases
- (v) The establishment of appropriate institutions for administering credits to small scale farmers, pastoralists fishermen and fish farmers.
- (vi) The maintenance of buffer stocks of agricultural produce for purposes of price stabilization.

- (vii) Investments in rural development, including rural roads and water suppliers so that the standard of living of rural dwellers is improved.
- (viii) Ownership, management and control of forest estates held in trust for the local communities.

The local government authorities will be expected to take over progressively the responsibility of the state government with respect to:

- (I) The provision of an effective agricultural extension service
- (ii) The provision of rural infrastructure
- (iii) The mobilization of farmers for accelerated agricultural and rural development through co-operative organizations and the communities
- (iv) The provision of land for new entrants into farming in accordance with the provisions of the land use decree; and
- (v) The co-ordination of data collection at the primary levels.

From the above separate but closely knitted responsibilities, it is clear that agriculture cannot be developed without interactions and co-operation, and this is what co-operative federalism is all about. Relationships in a co-operative federalism transcends government officials and institutions. Indeed, non-governmental organizations or the private sectors as a whole are also involved in these relationships and they are expected to perform some roles highlighted below.

ROLES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- (i) Investment in all aspects of agricultural production.
- (ii) Agricultural produce storage, processing and marketing
- (iii) Agricultural input supply and distribution
- (iv) Agricultural mechanization

- (v) Provision of certain types of infrastructure and
- (vi) Support for research in all aspects of agriculture

NIGERIAN FEDERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

One issue that has generated a lot of controversy in recent times is revenue allocation in the Nigerian Federation. This has adverse effect on Agricultural Development.

Currently, the revenue sharing formula from the Federation Account is as follows:

Federal Government	48.5%
State Government	24%
Local Government	7.5%
Special Funds	100%

The Value Added Tax (VAT) is also currently distributed as follows

Federal Government	15%
State Government	50%
Local Government	35%

Based on the foregoing revenue allocation formulae, one is afraid if the local governments who are indeed supposed to develop the Local Areas can effectively do so.

A local Government Chairman lamented recently that all the allocations that come to his council (and by implication may others) are used up in paying salaries and as such developmental projects are suffering. Local Government are not alone in this regard, the states are also crying aloud and indeed they have gone to court. The whole world is waiting for the Supreme Court's decision if the matter is not resolved amicably.

There is no doubt that in a Federation, functions and powers are shared between or among levels of Government and by the same token, each level of Government requires

money to fare well. We have made the point earlier that there is nothing like "true Federalism" and as such the issue of financial autonomy does not arise. However what should be called for are fairness. and justice. As a system, the Federal Government of Nigeria may not be out of order not to allow some of its parts (States) to be stronger than others or deny others development because they do not have "oil." Rather the Federal Government should ensure equal development and what we think is proper for Nigerians to do today is simply to ask the Federal Government to revisit the sharing formula so as to allow its parts enough fund to develop, and the focus should indeed be on the Local Government, not the states. The reason for this position is that if we agree that development comes from below or the localities then they through their local government which are the Government of the grass root should have more funds.

For this reason, we make the following recommendations on ReVenue allocation:

Federal Government 35%

State Government 30%

Local Government 35%

The three tiers then can contribute 10% each of their allocations as special funds to be controlled by Federal Government. This is our recommendation, and if the Federal Government heeds to this, the much desired National development will no doubt be a thing of the past.

FORCES WHICH ALSO HINDERS AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1) Incompetent personnel or officials
- 2) Lack of Community membership participation and uncooperational attitudes of some Community

- 3) Pull-him-down syndrome of some political party officials in party politics era
- 4) Technological factors
- 5, Greed and Corruption
- 6) Self-centredness of some top government officials saddled with the responsibility of Agricultural development
- 7) Lack of co-operation by officials of the different levels of government, based on the idea that Nigeria is a federation and each level of government should go it alone.
- 8) Undue intrigues by officials of the different levels of Governments deliberately wanting to frustrate development efforts of each other as a result of different political ideologies.
- 9) Lack of self-help initiatives of the localities.
- 10) Superiority-inferiority tussles by developmental officers e.g. Federal Government officials or state officials superiority over Local Government officials.
- 11) Lack of adequate support by the Local Government councils
- 12) Non-challant attitude of the community members
- 13) Lack of proper enlightenment and education for the communities
- 14) Organizational problems

The world of today is a world of interdependence, co-operation, collaboration and consultation. It follows therefore that for a people and a Nation to develop, there must be cooperation. Indeed "no man is an island". There should be a harmonious relationship so that we all can be better for it. Three tiers of government in Nigeria should embrace cooperation, collaboration and integration to move Agricultural development forward.

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