



Peasantry and Food Security in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This Study examined and evaluated the role of peasantry performed by peasants to guarantee food security in Nigeria. The set goal is to emphasize the impact of peasants in the process of ensuring food security in Nigeria. And the paper argue strongly that peasants are of necessity in the struggle to avert food insecurity in Nigeria and that their empowerment and advancement is imperative. The works of Marse, Engels, Clement, Cunningham, Smith, Ake, etc on Marxian political economy approach as the theoretical framework was adopted as to establish the social relations in the mode of production and the exploitation of the peasant worker by the Bourgeoisies to amass wealth through the surplus values that they reinvest as to build capital at the expense of the workers wages, as well as the connection between the peasants and food security through surplus in food production, if empowered with an improved skills and seedlings. It adopted a secondary method of sourcing data through the published academic materials and internet materials. However, the study recommended among others that; government transformation policies on the rural peasants improvement on their skills through massive programmes that will facilitate their production, improved transportation system from the rural areas to the urban cities, food preservation facilitates should be provided, amendment of land use decree in Nigeria to allow peasants have access and ownership rights on their lands as part of their means of food production.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 May 2021

Received in revised form

30 May 2021

Accepted 18 Aug

Available online 21 Aug 2021

Keywords: Peasantry and food security.

INTRODUCTION

There has always been a debate concerning the role of peasantry in food security all over sub-saharan Africa, especially Nigeria. This has been so because one cannot discuss agriculture without relating the inputs of peasants in the cultivative processes that result to the production of food stuffs that will contribute to the food security in Nigeria. It is a glaring thing that the peasants contribute a whole lot to the security of food in the country and as such should be improved as to be able to increase their production capacities to be able to strongly provide food sufficiently for Nigerians on a daily basis.

Moreover, Nigeria as one of the sub-saharan African countries known for peasant farming, should not be marginalized on their capability and capacity to improve and achieve self-destiny (Bryceson, 2000). The role of peasants in cash crop production provided the political force behind the movement for self rule that was the order of the day in the early 1950s and ended up to be the economic foundation of newly independent states economies that were actualized in 1960s. Peasants helped them to boost the economic prowess of these newly independent states alongside some of the Asian countries that formed parts of the third world that aspire to develop to be in the standard of the civilized world of the North (Bryceson, 2000). Peasants are rural dwellers who farm on the land as farmers and pastoralists who are engaged in general food production. They are of different family units in any society within and around Nigerian territory that are into food production, consumption, human reproduction, socialization, welfare and risk-spreading to the extent that, they form their own class within the state in relationship to regional and international markets. They are seen and regarded as localized village community and traditional conformists (Shanin, 1976).

Furthermore, peasants are used to identify pejoratively the low class who are poor, uneducated with low income. Equally, they are seen to be living a precarious life which even extend to their production, prices, social security and political dimensions (Bryceson, 2009). Peasants belong to the informal groups with diverse socio-economic activities within the macro economic system. They are socially subordinated under ruling classes and typically in a permanent process of transformation due to changes imposed on the peasants by external force (Deere, 1995). The peasants as well, lack access to political power in Nigeria and also, often subjected to coercion, exploitation and expropriation by those in the society's high echelon. They equally adapt to any societal changes caused by external forces on the community, their, kin, family and personal levels (Danilov, 1988). They are also classified as merchants and capitalist farmers to petty traders, petty commodity producers, tenants, landless and marginalized classes. Even when employed by the state, that features of peasantry are parts of the elements used in identifying them. But their ability to generate marketable and taxable agrarian surpluses are determined by the density of the population, ecology and technology which stand as a major challenge to African peasants generally, especially that of the sub-saharan Africa. There are environmental impediments such as desertation, leaching and fertility depletion by heavy rainfall, rainfall variability and drought. Despite these harsh environmental conditions, hunting, gathering and pastoral activities constituted the bulk of sub-saharan African's livelihood before the Bantu – speaking people between 1000 BCE and 1000 CE from an area in what is now Cameroon (Andah, 1993). Evidence of plants associated with West Africa's forest agriculture date back as far as 3,500 years ago. Grains such as Sorghum and Millet were probably domesticated between 2000 and 1000 BCE in West Africa (Sutton, 1997).

On the contrary, food security is of much concern in the world as a whole, because it implied and stands for accessibility by all individuals at any given point in time to sufficient and quality food for an active and healthy life (Rentlinger, 1985). It has two basic central element, which include; the

availability of food and the possession of the ability for its acquisition (Adeoti, 1989). There are some impediments that hinder adequate food security in Nigeria which basically has to do with peasants not being properly empowered for greater national productivity, extensive cost involved (Adeoti, 1987). Besides, Atinmo & Ademiran (1999) observed that the challenges of food security is majorly that of high level of illiteracy that does not allow peasants to follow up with modern technological advancement in agriculture, which actually does affect food security in Nigeria. Again, the problem of food security has to do with the city – woman hijacking agricultural programmes meant for rural women for their selfish ends. In spite of the fact that Nigeria is blessed with abundant agro – ecological resources and diversity, Nigeria still is one of the largest food importers in sub-saharan African territories (Idachaba, 2009).

Lastly, Attah (2012) assert that it is a staggering statistics that more than 800 million people have too little to eat as to meet up their daily energy needs. In sub-saharan Africa, the region with the highest demographic growth in the globe, 239 million people continue to suffer from severe hunger, representing a staggering 30% of its total population. Most of the worlds hungry people live in rural areas and depend on the consumption and sale of natural products for both their income and food. According to food and agriculture organization, food security obtains when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996). The main objective of food security therefore, is for people to be able to obtain adequate food needed at all times, and to be able to utilize the food to meet the body's needs. Food security is multifaceted with underpinning pillars used in identifying food security. These are food availability, food accessibility and food utilization. This means that a nation whose food production level is unable to satisfy these three criteria is said to be food insecure. In Nigeria, agriculture has remained the largest sector of the Nigerian economy. It generates employment for about 70% of Nigeria's population and contributed about 40% to the Gross Development Product (GDP) with crops accounting for 80%, livestock 13%, forestry 3% and fishery 4% (Attah, 2012). More importantly, is that there are so many problems facing peasants that have resulted to food insecurity in Nigeria; these problems are as follows; problem of inadequate support for peasants to improve in their level of food production in spite of the government policies and programmes to increase, production of food and boost agricultural sector which have been hijacked by the elites for their own personal benefit (Eme, Onyishi, Okala & Uche, 2014). Again, most of the government policies are poor policies in terms of implementation processes such as National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFP), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution Programme (GRP), Go Back to Land Programme (GBLP), etc couple with high level of illiteracy amongst the local farmers, lack of storage facilities, excessive use of rudimentary farm tools and land slide problems among others. In addition to the above, are problems of droughts, floods, pests and diseases that to a large extent causes crop yield failure in Nigeria.

In this regard, this study has its aim to examine peasantry and food security in Nigeria. Objectives such as to find out if peasants are being properly empowered for greater food production, to evaluate whether agricultural policies made by Nigerian government have been favourable to peasants for greater food production and to find out those challenges that affect peasant's contribution to food security in Nigeria. This is significantly important because it will help to properly place the peasantry in proper perspective, as well as to enable government officials to be able to come up with policies and programmes that will help boost food security by peasants actively participating in the programmes in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION:

There is need to conceptualize the terms involved in this study for proper understanding of the terms used.

PEASANTRY: The word peasant is a derivation from the word peasant in the 15th century France which means someone from the countryside or outside of a municipal district from the Latin word *Ragus* (Silbrtman, 1979). Also, peasants is seen to be a class of people that is made up of small farmers and landless individuals who labour on the land as agricultural labour force (Bernstein, 2010). While Dalton (1972) conceptualize peasant as someone of a low social class with low social status that sustain himself or herself by labouring in either small industry or labour as agriculturist. Whereas, Edelman (1999) defines peasants as a category of farmers or labourers in the form of low social grade that depends on their daily labour for a living.

However, in Europe, peasants were categorized into three different classes based on their personal status ranging from slave, serf and freeman. They are not landlords or entitled to hold any land as leasehold, copyhold or quit-rent forms of land tenure (Byceson, Kay & Mooiji, 2000). According to Kearney (1996) peasant is a class of person who tills the soil as a micro-temporary landowner or agricultural small farmer who has little or no knowledge of technology and do involve in a division of labour grouped according to age group or gender classified. Family forms the basic unit of production or one's household. Because peasant families indulge in subsistence farming to produce what they consume and the little left over to be sold in the market for the purchase of whatever they lack. In most situation, a portion has to be given to the landlord prior to what will be acclaimed theirs, which is usually small.

On the contrary, Wolf, assert that not until a peasant is joined in a union within a society in and at the state level subjected to the laws and powers of the state in relation to demands and sanctions, one cannot talk of peasantry (Wolf, 1966). Therefore, peasantry is having four characteristics or features that are inter-trained and they are; family farm which is the most fundamental multi-facet unit of social union, land husbandry and animal pasturing for the existence, a known traditional culture of rural communal existence and lastly, a multi-directional subjection to exogenous authorities that are forcefully influential (Shanin, 1973). However, there seems to be no basis for the belief that there could ever have been a pure peasant society for any period, long or short and that such socially categorized peasantries may be found in a wide range of pre-capitalist social formations. In analysis of these categories of peasantry, it is common to refer to three strata; a rich peasantry, middle peasantry and a mere peasantry (Byres, 2006). To that extent, Max (1957) wrote of the peasantry of France as the minute peasants that multiplied, which its membership lived in same low quality of life and finds it difficult to mingle with each other because the pattern of production separates them. Both the small holding, the peasant and his household, in conjunction with another set of small holding, another peasant and other family. The creation of an African peasantry was rudimentarily as a result of the linkage that exist between the international capitalist economic system and the local traditional socio-economic system around the context of territory defined colonial political system. Interestingly, the peasantry as an analytical category was a creation of colonialism.

FOOD SECURITY: Food security stands for availability and accessibility of healthy and enough quality of food for healthy life existence of all at all times within a particular place or country at an affordable cost. It is important that for there to be food security, there must be facilities for food preservation, in other words, durable storage facilities to preserve food for the people. Egypt set an

example during the ancient famine in the land but due to incessant increase in population in this modern stage of life, there is need for adequate means of proper preservation and handling of the consumable food stuffs (Arslan, 2018). The process of treating and handling food, determines the storage outcome, whether it will spoil or remain good for edible purposes. It must be a process that will prevent the growth of microorganisms such as fungi – yeast, bacteria and other organisms that can cause rancidity in the food stuffs. It is necessary to prevent the occurrence of rancidity because it produces fowl smell in the food and its capable of causing diseases that affects man negatively at the point of consuming such foods stuffs, affected by such (Arslan, 2018).

However, there are some ways by which food can be preserved such as by drying and freezing of fruits and vegetables for a short period of time; other methods involved canning, dehydration, picking, pasteurizing, fermentation, etc mostly for the food stuffs that can be exported for other parts of the world to have access to our own food products. These food reservation processes helps to slow down the activities and growth of disease causing bacteria and stopping the activities of some enzymes that can degrade the quality of the food by increasing the temperature to preserve it for a longer period (Arslan, 2018).

Interestingly, Agbo (2002) conceptualize food security as accessibility of sufficient food stuff by the people for quality life existence. While Odey (2002) assert that food security, is the availability and accessibility of consumable food stuff desired by the people at any given time, year in, year out. Whereas for Gokum (2007), food security is the availability of quality food stuff adequately distributed to sustain the global population expansion of consumable food stuffs in a quantity that will fluctuate in production nor affect prices of food stuff globally. Again, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2002) posits that food security implies that people at all times are having physical, social and economic access to enough, good and quality food that nutritiously meet their desires, needs and choices of food for an active and quality existence of life. Adebayo (2010) documented that the idea of food security was presented initially at the world food conference in 1974 viewed solely from the perspective of having adequate availability of food on a national scale. It is currently a situation in which every individual at all times should have access to enough food with adequate nutritional quality for good health and active life (World Bank, 1986, Tollens, 2000).

METHODOLOGY:

The descriptive method was adopted to utilize more qualitative information from the secondary sources to access the place of the peasantry in food security in Nigeria. Both published and unpublished academic materials will be accessed to get findings that will answer research questions posed in this work. The study will adopt qualitative approach also, as a key approach in discerning peasantry and its mode of production. The qualitative research method will also help to compliment original works. The methodology will involve the review of textual documents and analysis visits and solution strategies. The required information will be extracted from baseline data that will be obtained from relevant books, journals, internet articles concerned with the topic, newspapers and magazine, seminar reports, archival materials, etc. Data are recorded observations about the phenomenon being studied (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1982). William (2006) assert that data are not only elusive but ephemeral, which means a set of data may be true representation of a situation in one place, at a particular time under specific circumstances, and as perceived by a researcher. The next day however, all might change. The implication in this regard, is that data are not always true; it is subject to change with time, place, circumstances and the world view of the researcher. Given the nature and method of data collection adopted, qualitative content method of data analysis will be gleared from baseline data.

Content always adopted enables researcher to slit through large amount of data with comparative ease in a systematic fashion. It can be a useful technique for allowing one to discover and describe the focus of the individual, group, institutional or social attention. Mostly, content analysis research is motivated by the search for techniques to infer from symbolic data, what would be too costly, no longer possible or too obstructive by the user of the other techniques.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The study adopted the Marxian political economy approach as its theoretical framework because it is relevant in making a clear understanding of capitalism, especially as the experience shows in Nigeria's mode of production and social relations. Proponents of political economy aside from Marx as scholars of Marxism includes; Engels, Albo, Armstrong, Clement, Cunningham, Jenson, Lebonite, Macpherson, Ryerson, Palmer, Panitch, Sault, Smith, Ake etc. They all have their different strands of the concept of political economy as well as differing slants of it that stand as the nuances in their scholarship. Marx in his analysis differentiated fundamentally on how capital is produced, how profit is maintained and the development of crisis and contradictions (Gamble, 1999).

However, the mode of production is the historical form in which the two core dimensions of any economic organization of society are united. These two central elements are the productive forces – phenomena that enable production processes such as technology and infrastructure – and the relations of production, which refers to the class-based organization of production, distribution and consumption in society (Gamble, 1999).

Accordingly, Marxian political economy argues that the socio-economic character of different societies in history is characterized by the specific mode of production, such as slavery, feudalism and capitalism. The historical configuration of productive forces and relations of production is a crucial point of departure for Marxian political economy (Harvey, 2014). Particular emphasis is given to the analysis of class struggles and the different forms of exploitation of labour force, as well as to contradictions and crisis. Thus, the economy is not conceived as a neutral platform of exchange and cooperation, but as historical and political constitution primarily characterized by asymmetric power relations, ideology and social conflicts. To understand the contemporary world economy, proponents of Marxian political economy claim that Marx's core analysis of the capitalist mode of production in the eighteenth and nineteenth century remains a useful starting point (Harvey, 2014).

Moreover, commodities are at the core of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production; and they are defined as products or services sold on markets and produced by human labour power (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The peculiar characteristics of commodities is their dual character – they exhibit both use value and exchange value. The capitalist mode of production is primarily defined by the neglect of the use value, while the exchange value – potentially translating into higher return on investments – is paramount. Thus capitalist societies do not primarily produce for the needs of the population but for the sake of realizing a high exchange value – simply put, profit. Marxian political economy argues that, this profit is rooted in the exploitation of labour power, more specifically the wage labourer. Capitalists only pay the workers the wage they need to reproduce their labour power, even if workers generate a higher value. The excess profit generated is what is called surplus value, which the bourgeoisie then appropriate as a capitalist and then reinvest to boost the business. These process of amassing money as capital is defined a capital accumulation by the capitalist, or the class of owners of means of production. It presents the core dynamics of the capitalist mode of production and thus implies a structural imperative of the capitalist economy to grow. Yet, the capitalist mode of

production is not free from contradictions and from a Marxian political economy perspective; crisis play a prominent role as recurrent patterns in capitalist development (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001).

Generally, speaking, crises emerge from various contradictions that exist in the basic constitution of the capitalist mode of production but more specifically, consist of a specific conjuncture of tendencies and triggers. Thus, each economic or financial crisis has links to the general contradictions of capital and to specific political, ideological and cultural circumstances (O'Connor, 1988). Different lineages of Marxian political economy also stress the importance of different aspects of contradictions and many argue for multiple causation, including, for example, credit insufficiency, scarcities of or political difficulties with labour supply, resistance or inefficiencies in the labour process, excess capital and wages squeezing profits (O'Connor, 1988).

Fuchs (2014) explains that the central problem addressed by Marxian political economy is the exploitation of workers by capital, i.e. The dominance between classes and the power of capital. Thus, the unit of analysis is classes, not individuals and collective interests are determined within classes, rather than between individuals that are unable to make their own choices. However, within a certain mode of production there are powerful material and social structures (e.g. competition) that induce people to behave accordingly. Hence, Marxian political economy does not propose a universalist view of humans as being necessarily competitive or collaborative but, emphasizes the effects of the historically specific mode of production based on the way humans behave (Fuchs, 2014).

Within a certain mode of production, Marxian political economy historically, has sought to isolate some tendencies and laws of motion in the economic, the social and the political spheres. In the capitalist mode of production, examples would be the increasing accumulation of capital and its concentration, as well as the recurring crises of capitalist production. These laws of motion are thought to be ontologically real and some Marxian political economy scholars have argued, that the laws determine the behaviour of societies. Some strands of Marxian political economy have, however, put emphasis on over-determination, highlight that even though laws of motion can be discerned, their interconnectedness and multiplicity, makes it more difficult to make accurate statements about the behaviour of human societies. Theorizing in the field of critical political economy has emphasized the concept of hegemony, stressing the historical nature of processes, societal change and the constant struggle of ideas and movements (the war of position in the words of Antonio Gramsci) for temporal and spatial dominance (Fuchs, 2014). According to these theorists, the laws of societies and economies are more dependent on historical and cultural junctures, thus making a case against determining theorizing. A possible bridge between those two traditions was offered by critical realist theorists: they assume a real world, both in the natural and in the social world, but this is subject to changes and actualizations that can originate in the actions of historical and spatially confined actors with Marx, one could restate that:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past (Marx, 1852 cited in O'Connor, 1988).

However, notwithstanding, these theoretical differences, Marxian political economy theories do generally, agreed that the world is not made out of particulars that can be isolated for the purpose of analysis. Instead, entities like classes, firms, states and institutions exists within a context, which is essential to their existence. By disaggregating these bigger components to their constituent part, one cannot do justice to their real nature, since at each stratum or level of organization (from subatomic

particles to complex systems such as human societies) there are emergent powers that are ontologically real in their own right (Sayer, 1992).

Also, Marxian political economy gives importance to dynamic processes, for instance, class conflict or accumulation that are historically embedded and changed over time. An important aspect of Marxian political economy is that capital that is defined ontologically as a material asset (like money, machinery, etc), but as a social relation and hence only acquires ontological existence and significance in the capitalist mode of production and the corresponding class relationships (Sayer, 1992). Ogali (2017) eruditely explains that;

Marxist political economy offers rather, a dynamic science with emphasis on human relations in the production process, a relationship that is fundamentally advantageous to a segment of society, exploitative and therefore conflict – oriented. Other elements of Marxist political economy include historical dynamics of social phenomena, the existence and conflict between social class categories. The oppressed people are viewed as the main productive force, their labour sustains society and therefore, their material wellbeing should be the primary basis of socio-economic development.

Moreover, the foregoing explains the reason why the peasantry, who constitute majority of the populations in the developing countries and maintain ownership of land in the countryside and who also feed the urban population (both productive and otherwise), should be the focus of sustainable development. Marx's theories on the subject of political economy are contained in his *Das Kapital*. The book argues that the main way that Marx's is relevant to capitalism is that it implies that sustained full employment is not compatible with capitalist property relations. Full employment increases the power of workers, and thereby threatens both the power and the profits of the capitalist class. Full employment helps workers secure higher wages and also a lower intensity of labour, both of which threaten the profits of capitalists (Milward & Moseley, 2012).

However, Bottomore (1991) points out that while there are variants of Marxism, there is a common agreement that Marxism includes the following four elements. The first element is its propensity in looking at history from the materialist approach. The term materialist can be understood not from the stand point of what motivates but, the manner in which the economy in relation to its composite materials, technology, labour skills and the technical knowhow to produce for human existence, all of which is termed as the mode of production.

The second element reflect the concern about class division in the society as well as the social interaction that exists between the classes. The class divisions are basically the workers and those who ask them to work, those who sell their labour for wages and the class that own the means of production as their personal property, which enables this class to exercise property rights over what is produced, how it is produced, by whom and where it is produced. All of this is referred to as the relations of production.

Hodge (2008) maintains that Marxists believe that class conflict is inherent in capitalism and that, class struggle is an important element of social change. Together, the mode of production and the relations of production constitute the economic base which shapes the so-called superstructure. This includes the family system, the political and legal system, the culture and reigning ideology, the set of ideas that most people come to accept. The precise relationship between base and superstructure has always been a matter of debate among Marxists, but it may be seen as a constant interaction in which the base and superstructure are influencing each other.

Marxism's third element is the dialectical approach to historical change. Social tensions and conflict within a society produce a struggle between elements of the old order (thesis) and elements of the new order (antithesis), out of which may emerge a new form of society, which is a (synthesis) of old and new stages of society (Bottomore, 1991). The resulting new order is bound to produce its own contradictions and new sources of conflict and struggle. But a particular society cannot be fully broken up until that society has produced the conditions which its demise is possible.

Furthermore, the fourth element of Marxism is its commitment to socialism. With this commitment comes the belief that it is not sufficient to study the world. Rather, Marxists should work to change it. Marxism holds that the capitalist economy is inherently contradictory and that crisis that generates conflict and struggle for change are inevitable. Whereas, Dimmelmeier, Purchauer & Shah (2016), maintain that the Marxian political economy denotes a range of political economy perspectives that are largely connected to and in the tradition of the writings as well as insights of Karl Marx. Generally, this theory comprises an integrative analysis of the economy, society and politics. These are not considered as isolated but as interdependent structures that evolved historically. The analysis of class struggle involving the exploitation of labour by capital within the capitalist mode of production, is fundamental to the understanding of dynamics within the Marxian political economy approach.

Again, for this theory, capital and labour represent two antagonistic classes in the society, with the former being primarily characterized by ownership of the means of production and the latter involves free wage labourers in a double sense. They are free from control over the means of production and free – compared with the feudal system – to sell their labour power. Capital is central to this and is primarily organized to ensure the profitability of invested money. This is why the famous notion of capital as money which begets money is formalized (Dimmelmeier, Purckhauer & Shah, 2016).

Lastly, reflecting on Marxist theoretical issues on the peasantry, Wolf (in Ogali, 2017) posed the question whether the peasantry is a threat or a responsibility. From various theoretical perspectives, the peasantry has been viewed either as a threat or as a burden or a responsibility to the society. Industrialization or modernization remains an enduring threat to the survival of the peasant both from demands for surplus and competition from capitalist farms, operated with modern scientific and technological innovations. Olatunbosun (in Ogali, 2017:61) warned that:

The choices before us are clear: either we have a meaningful rural development plan based on equity and social justice, or must forfeit a golden opportunity to achieve a decent level of living for all men whether they live in urban centres or in the rural areas. Defective rural development policies that have marginalized and neglected the rural peasantry have been identified as the reason for Nigeria's economic backwardness.

Relating this theory to this study, it is proper to say that it is apt, because it focuses on the relations and factors of production that have bearing with studies on the peasantry. But more importantly, this theory preaches the change of status quo through revolutionary actions, which is the solution to the poor state of treatment of peasants in Nigeria that till the ground to produce food for the nation, yet they hardly get the benefits of their efforts, due to the harsh realities of capitalism and exploitative ruling elite class in Nigeria.

FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA:

Adebayo (2010) documented that the idea of food security was first presented at the world food conference in 1974 viewed solely from the perspective of having adequate availability of food on a

national scale; today, it is a condition in which all peoples have access at all times to enough food of an adequate availability of food on a national scale; today, it is a condition in which all peoples have access at all times to enough food of an adequate nutritional quality for a healthy and active life (World Bank, 1986, cited in Tollens, 2000). However, there four dimensions to this:

- Availability of sufficient amount of food which is a function of food production;
- Stability of supply over time which depends on the ability to preserve or store produced food and supplement available food through imports if necessary;
- Access to the available food which depends on income levels and its distribution; and
- Food utilization which encompasses procurement, ingestion and digestion all of which are dependent on nutritional quality, education and health (Tollens, 2000).

Again, food security exists at both the macro and micro levels. National Food Security (NFS), the macro dimension, is a possession by a nation of the capacity to produce enough food through production or importation to feed its population. This is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for household security and individual food security, since food availability on a national scale does not preclude the lack of adequate access to such food by many of the inhabitants due to weak markets, poor infrastructure and information system, and inequality in resource and income distribution (Tollens, 2000). In some countries such as Botswana, Burundi, Gambia, Liberia, Madagascar, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania and Zambia, their situation have been deteriorating over a decade while in others such as Ghana, Malawi and Nigeria do have aggregate figures showing some level of improvement (FAO, 2006).

Tijjani, Alhassan, Saddik, Mohammed, Lawal & Maje, (2013) pointed out that Nigeria used to produce virtually all its food needs and surpluses for its agro-industries in the 1970s and showed remarkable trend that Nigeria was and could even remain self-sufficient in terms of the food requirements for its citizens and for exportation. In recent years, there is low turnout in agricultural productivity in Nigeria, the expected yields from crops, soils, rivers, lake, livestock and forests are far below potentials. Even with low productivity in agriculture, a significant proportion of the output is lost or wasted during storage and transpiration. There is lack of efficient and effective storage facilities to preserve the produced foods; also the roads are so bad that most of these foods are lost before they get to the consumers. The inability of food supply to match up with demand is attributed to low productivity in agriculture leading to a shortfall in domestically produced food in Nigeria. To supplement the shortfall in domestic food production, Nigeria depends so much on food importation, which is affecting the economy of the country like that of many other African countries (TASMLM – 2013). Taking a comparative look at some of the African countries discussed above in relation to food security, it is proper to say that whereas some countries like South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria etc are trying to have food security, it is a very uphill taste in some other African States. This is where a sense of synergy is necessary for us to help one another in Africa. One common trend that runs through countries in Africa, irrespective of how well any one of them might be, is that they have food security problem to varying degrees.

Experts have argued that significant food and nutrition problems exist in Nigeria (Okuneye, 2000). The basic aim of deregulatory policy measures in the food sub-sector was to correct this problem. Olayide (1982) conceived the food and nutrition problem in terms of food supply and demand imbalance. Factors that constrain food supply and food demand invariably affect food security. On the supply

side, major factors hampering the supply of food in Nigeria are ownership of productive assets and resources which are biased against agricultural producers which are based on the nature of farm organization and technology which are crude and undeveloped, and the lack/primitive state of marketing infrastructures and mechanisms, all of which influence food output and availability. The demand for food is affected by poor growth rate/ distributional structure of income, high food prices, preference structure which is largely in favour of foreign products, and various socio-cultural factors relating to poor state of nutrition, education, intra-household food distribution decisions, poor cooking technologies and low access to adequate healthcare (Tollens, 2000). Famoriyo (1998) explains that the point of intersection between economic policy and food security lies in the direct and indirect impact of policy (both economic-wide policy/ies and sector – specific policies) on food availability/ supply stability, factor incomes and price level, and thus, on access to food, and on social and cultural factors (such as education and health) that affect food utilization.

There have been some food security challenges in the world and particularly in Nigeria over the years. Despite the volume of rainfalls in Nigeria, the country still suffers food security problems. According to Professor Gbolagade Ayoola of the University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria has enough food produce but, in shortage of food mix, food items that Nigerians find it difficult to access them (Faloseyi, 2006).

Whereas, in the view of Ojo (1994) the quantity of grain production perhaps, exceeds the volume of calories required to live quality life and improve in production capacity of the people. Reiterating the necessity of food which is not adequate conditions for abundance of food accessible to Nigerians. For food security to strive, sufficient quantities and qualities of food stock should be made generally at the reach of the masses. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Nigeria. This is as a result of the fact that much of the available food potential is not realized by the people because of insufficient production and processing.

All these are largely because of inequitable distribution of the food items and immense wastage of the food in transit and in homes, in wastage of the food in many of the third world countries. Abayomi (1997) explains that some factoral constraints include poor seedlings, lack of adequate motivational incentives to peasants in Nigeria, fraudulent smuggling of foreign foods items across boarder by Nigerian business people, wars and conflictual crisis, flood, famine and other unpredictable natural disasters. However, Ezekwene, (2007) maintains that, at a time when Nigeria is already grappling with a vicious problem of food security problem affecting about 75 million of its people with at least 115 million undernourished, the advice given by late President Yar'Adua on investment, in rice milling research and development as a way of the looming food crisis, particularly rice, is timely. This is because the gross inadequate process of domestic rice production has led to unbridled rice importation in the past couple of years as the 5% demand short fall is imported at the foreign exchange, which affects in the long run food security and self-sufficiency potentials for socio-economic and political development.

Interestingly, in the World Bank Policy Research (2006), food security is defined as access of enough food, qualitative for good health by all at all time. USAID (2011) has proposed several key steps to increase agricultural productivity which is in turn key to increasing rural income of peasants and reducing food insecurity. They include the following:

- Boost agricultural science and technology. Current agricultural yields are insufficient to feed the growing populations. Eventually productivity derives economic growth.

- Securing property rights and access to finance.
- Enhancing human capital through education and improved health.
- Conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms and democracy and good governance based on principles of accountability and transparency in public institutions and the rule of law are basic to reducing vulnerable members of society (USAID, 2011).

Again, the United Nation Millennium Development Goals are of the initiatives aimed at achieving food security in the world. In its list of goals, the first Millennium Development Goals states that the UN is to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty by 2015 and that agricultural productivity is the key player, if this is to be achieved. However, it is saddening to note that 2015 has come and gone, yet hunger and starvation remain prevalent in many lands, especially Third World Countries. This is a case of gross negligence by humanity. Of the eight MDGs, eradicating extreme hunger and poverty depends on agricultural productivity entirely. The MDG 1 calls for halving hunger and poverty by 2015 in relation to 1990 as the base period. According to FAO (2010) food insecurity refers to the consequences of inadequate consumption of nutritious food, considering the physiological use of food by the body as being within the domain of nutrition and health. Malnourishment also leads to poor health. Hence, individuals fail to provide for their families. If left unaddressed, hunger sets in motion an array of outcomes that perpetuate malnutrition, reduce ability of adults to work and to give birth to healthy children and erode children's ability to learn and lead productive healthy children's lives in happiness. This truncation of human development undermines a country's potential for economic development for generations unborn.

Furthermore, discussing the causes of food insecurity in Nigeria is a very difficult task; this is because most Nigerians develop apathy towards locally produced food and prefer imported foods which they consider as superior to domestically produced ones. The emergence of oil sector and the substantial revenue accruing from the sector shifted emphasis from agriculture to the extent that even domestic food production is not given the desired requirement. Government felt that it was better to import food than to embark on local production, especially when oil money had changed the tastes of most Nigerians in favour of foreign imported goods Dyson (1994) points out that since Malthus days, virtually two centuries ago, food problems and food security have been formulated on whether food production can keep pace with population growth. The poor performance of the world food production in the 1980s and the poor harvest of the early 1990s have revived interest on the neo-Malthusian persuasion. As a result, the definition and the measurement of food security evolved around the Malthusian fear. The common short-run definition of food security in a single country or in the world at large is the ability of food – deficit countries, or regions within countries, or households within these countries to meet target consumption levels on a year-to-year basis (Valies, 1981; Bigman, 1985).

Moreover, the target consumption levels are represented in the literature by a constant: a level of average per capita consumption and/or a person's minimum caloric intake (energy requirements). That is the choice of the target level determines the measure of the food security. In practice, the severity of the food problem, in the demand – driven approach, is measured by two indicators. The first of these is the expected food gap which is defined as the difference between actual average consumption per capita in any given year and a normal year (or trend) level of average per capita consumption. The second indicator is food insecurity which is defined as the probability that in any given year, actual food consumption will fall below a minimum daily requirement level, employing nutritional criteria. The nutritional aggregate measures, focuses on the energy intake required to maintain the body weight

of an individual, which was determined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations as the minimum requirement of about 2,350 calories per day. Despite some nutritionists doubts, this measure is widely used by the World Bank, the FAO and many food analysts.

Lastly, food security has three aspects; food availability, food access and food adequacy (Nwaniki, 2007). Food availability has to do with the supply of food, that is to say, food should be sufficient in quantity and quality and also should be in variety, if food security is to be attained, appropriate adaptation measures to climate change need to be taken within the global agricultural environment. The right to sufficient food is enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and in subsequent international law. It is unfortunate to note that only 22 countries have embedded this right in their constitutions. Food security has to do with the absence of threats of hunger or malnutrition people face in their lives. In a broad sense, it entails safety from basic physiological needs. The lack of safety will be manifested in chronic hunger and starvation and malnutrition. It can either be chronic or transitory. Chronic food insecurity is a perpetual inadequate diet resulting from the lack of resources to produce or acquire food. Transitory food insecurity on the other hand, is temporary decline in household's access to enough food. It results from instability in food production and prices, to the household incomes.

PEASANTRY AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA:

Peasantry is a social class in a mode of production comprising rural low class farmers that are agriculturally inclined to produce food crops for their subsistence as well as food stuffs for the urban people. In this regard, food security had to do with peasants in a peasantry social class, making increase in their food production for there to be sufficient amount of food that will easily be accessible and affordable by the people generally. These food production must be of good quantity and quality; as to be nutritious enough for healthy living in any given society. To this end, therefore, in Nigeria as it has always been in other countries, peasants play a huge role in ensuring food security in Nigeria but, they have from one time and the other being constrained hindered and prohibited to produce food abundantly by incessant crisis, conflicts, tribal wars and even the most recent, the herdsmen, bokoharam men, and other militias that are causing a whole lot of problems that deter farmers from effectively indulging in their farming professions that ought to result to adequate food production in Nigeria.

The creation of an African peasantry was primarily the result of interaction between the international capitalist settler economic system and the traditional socio-economic system within the context of territorially defined colonial political system. Hence, peasantry was that analytical category that was created by colonialism. Fanon (1967) cited in Kearney (1996) insists that even during the colonial period, the native peasantry lived against a background of the tradition, because the traditional structure of society alone remained intact. The peasant who stays put, defends tradition stubbornly, and in colonized society stands for the disciplined element whose interest lie in maintaining the social structure (Fanon, 1967 in Kearney, 1996). However, Post (1972) pointed out that he started out with the question of the diffidence shown by many scholars concerning the use of the term peasant in African studies. According to him, the answer is not in the indefinite extension of analytical modesty, but to look systematically at any given place at any given time in terms of the question: who is extracting labour power in the form of agricultural products from whom, and how? This analysis would involve such matters as influence of land tenure, the extent and nature of absorption into the world market system, relations with the state apparatus and those who control it and class

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differentiation and relations among the rural populations. Such a list is a fairly obvious one, but a surprising number of scholars fail to keep that in mind.

Lastly, in Nigeria the class relations and the differentials between the low rural class peasant and the high urban class dwellers is one of the major challenges facing the rural farmers. In as much as the urban high class dwellers are expecting food stuffs from the low class rural peasants, there has been not much consideration of the peasants and their challenges which eventually result to food insecurity. These urban dwellers are comprising some of them that are relating with those that control the state apparatus, yet, the interest of the rural peasants matters less to them even though they expect so much of the food stuffs from them, the rural peasants. Another major challenge is their comparative advantage in relation to the world market, where the developed world farmers with high technology makes things virtually impossible for the low rural peasant absorption into the international market. Most importantly, government officials influence on lands, together, with the influence of the bourgeoisies who in turn extract labour power of the peasants, which made it difficult for Nigerian peasants to be able to produce adequate and sufficient food of good quality for the Nigerian people. These are mostly reasons why food insecurity, extreme hunger and poverty, unhealthy life existence have become the order of the day in Nigeria currently.

CONCLUSION

This study on food security is absolutely necessary because food is an indispensable prerequisite for the survival of mankind and his economic activities which include food production. Food is quite different from other commodities for the fact that it is inevitable for survival and existence. Everybody is in need of food to be able to do other human activities that will bring about growth and development in any society. Unfortunately, most of the food needed in Nigeria is produced by peasants who lack capital, skills, energy, capacity and other viable ingredients to produce on large scale that will meet the demands of our ever increasing populations. Thus food security issues have become very sensitive in Nigeria particularly.

No doubt, one basic objective of Nigerian state that the government has interest to pursue in this nascent democratic era, is food security. Though, it has a huge constraints coming from militia groups, mostly the ones from the northern and middle – belt areas because these are sort of food baskets of Nigeria. A country that cannot formulate and effectively implement agricultural and food policies may find it difficult to use the citizens as catalyst for sustainable development. Again, the very survival of the state is linked to the ability of its economy to meet the material demands of both people and government. Any government that makes her citizens go hungry will definitely run into trouble. In essence, food is an essential component of welfarism. It is however ironic that the people that predominantly engage in food production, peasants, are not supported or given the incentives to succeed. This has created food security problems in Nigeria for some time now. All of the foregoing make this study a timely response, as it has carefully explored peasantry and food security in Nigeria with emphasis on the activities and class of low farmers called peasants. It is only hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study will come in handy, to improve our lots in relation to food security as the reverse case will end in a chaotic situation that might cause us all immense food security problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

- The peasantry should ideally be the focus of rural transformation policies in Nigeria through massive empowerment programmes, such as the introduction and utilization of new agricultural techniques, improved crop varieties, education, bank credit facilities, price protection mechanisms, improved transportation network, etc.
- Rural agricultural policies should also capture the peasantry as essential stakeholders in the Nigerian agricultural industry to boost food security.
- Food preservation facilities should be provided to avoid wastage of perishable farm products.
- Peasants should be educated on new and improved methods of rural farming as well as accessibility to improved seedlings.
- The areas in which the land use decree has divested peasant farmers of their farm lands should be corrected, and while repealing the harsh land use Act, government should provide land for peasants in Nigeria to increase their productivity on food production as to make food insecurity a thing of the past.

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