



THE NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN SMALL HOLDER WOMEN FARMERS

1. Introduction

Food security remains a critical concern in Nigeria's quest to guarantee the security and welfare of its people. Food security is linked to agriculture, the rights to food, work and freedom from want; economic growth and diversification, job creation, provision of raw materials for industries and improvements in the standard of living.¹ Agriculture relates to crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry. The value chain of agriculture has been articulated to include people and activities that bring a basic agricultural product like maize or vegetables or cotton from obtaining inputs and production in the field to the consumer, through stages such as processing, packaging, and distribution.²

The steady and continuous rise in the price of food, the impact of climate change, insecurity, the conflict between farmers and herders, the Russian-Ukraine War, etc., have contributed to the food security crises currently affecting the nation. The food component of our consumer price index, currently at 23.34% (September 2022) on a year-on-year basis is one of the highest contributors to inflation.³ Statistics show Nigeria's food imports from 2016-2021 has been increasing. Table 1 tells the story.

Table 1: Nigeria's Food Imports 2016-2021

YEAR	2016 (₦'Million)	2017 (₦'Million)	2018 (₦'Million)	2019 (₦'Million)	2020 (₦'Million)	2021 (₦'Million)	Total (₦'Million)
Annual Food Import (2016 - 2021)	1,215,000	1,618,000	1,493,635	1,769,468	1,917,799	3,068,394	11,082,295

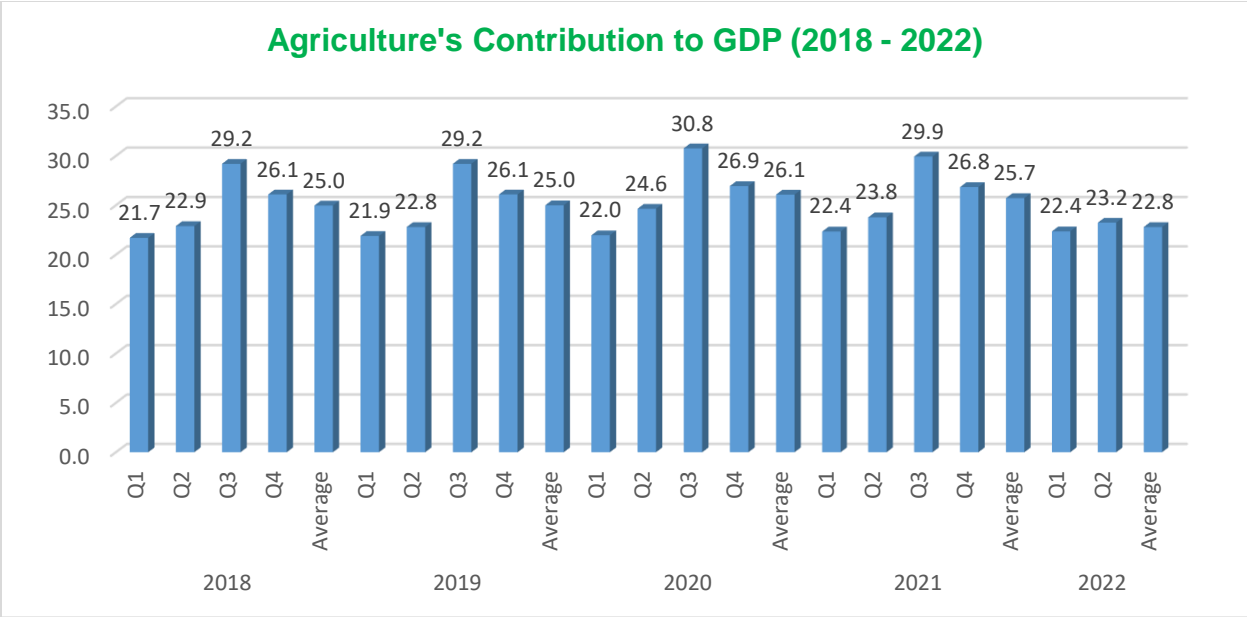
Table 1: Nigeria's Food Imports (2016 - 2021)

Agriculture is vital to Nigeria's economic growth and development. Chart 1 below shows Agriculture's contribution to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product between 2018 to date.

¹ In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), freedom from want is identified as one of the highest aspirations of the common people. The right to an adequate standard of living including food is provided in article 25 (1) of the UDHR and article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

² <https://fmard.gov.ng/value-chain>

³ Consumer Price Index of September 2022 by National Bureau of Statistics; on a year-on-year basis, the headline inflation rate was 20.77%.



Source: Nigeria GDP Reports 2018-2022, national Bureau of Statistics

With a land mass of 923,768 square kilometres, 84million hectares of arable land, out of which 40% is cultivated, there is room to get more out of the land from agriculture.

2. The Gender Dimension

Women constitute 49% of Nigeria’s population. According to the National Gender Policy in Agriculture:⁴

“Women carry out about 80% of agricultural production, 60% of agricultural processing activities and 50% of animal husbandry and related activities, yet women have access to less than 20% of agricultural assets”.

Therefore, majority of farmers in Nigeria are smallholder farmers and majority of the smallholder farmers are women. Thus, smallholder women farmers (SHWF) contribute a lot to the food security of Nigerian households. However, SHWF face the challenge of gender-blind budgets and not being specifically targeted in the appropriation, management and utilization of agriculture budget votes. Access to gender-friendly equipment, inputs, credit, finance and other resources is not prioritized in the budget.

Available budgetary information on the pattern of Federal Government spending on Agriculture indicates that each fiscal year, there are very few budget line items that address the challenges faced by women farmers or that provide targeted interventions for women farmers in the federal budget. The National Gender Policy in Agriculture which places a minimum threshold floor of 35 percent for women farmers in resource allocation, deployment of human resources and public interventions is more obeyed in the breach. To unlock the agricultural potential of the Federation so as to make food available, affordable, and

⁴ At page 71 of the Gender Policy in Agriculture, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2019.

accessible and to enhance productivity from agricultural value chains, there is need for strategic investment in small-holder women farmers.

3. Implementing the Plan, Policy and Budget Continuum

Plans, policies, laws and other standards set desired national goals and targets and provide the roadmap for their attainment. On the other hand, the budget provides resources for the implementation of plans and policies. Nigeria is a State Party to a plethora of international and regional standards on the right to food and gender/sustainable practices in agriculture. Starting from the standard-setting Universal Declaration of Human Rights [article 25 (1)], to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [articles 2 and 11 (2) (a)], International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women [articles 4 and 14] and articles 15 and 19 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2 focus on eradicating poverty; ending hunger and achieving food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture. The second and fourth targets of Goal 1 specifically focus on poverty among women and how to reduce it. In particular, Target 2.3 of Goal 2 equally states:

“By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment”

The Maputo commitments of African Heads of State and Governments were reaffirmed in Malabo on the tenth anniversary of Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme and resolved inter alia to support and facilitate preferential entry and participation for women and youth in gainful and attractive agri-business opportunities.⁵ The Nigerian Gender Policy in Agriculture provides that gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches are adopted in every plan and programme geared towards agricultural sector development. It has a broad goal of ensuring that all Nigerians, irrespective of gender, have equal opportunities and access to the resources, services and programmes of the agricultural sector. This is considered as the only guarantee for food security and economic growth in Nigeria.

Improvements in agricultural productivity do not depend solely on generating additional resources, but also on the efficient utilization of available resources, and the effective and equitable deployment of resources within different population groups in the country, especially small-scale women farmers. There is therefore a critical need to mainstream the provisions of these standards in the allocation and management of public expenditure to agriculture.

⁵ Approved by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at the 23rd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Malabo Equatorial Guinea from 26-27 June 2014 on theme of the African Year of Agriculture and Food Security: Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods through Harnessing Opportunities for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development, also marking the tenth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme

4. SWOFONS Demands

The Small Scale Women Farmers Organization in Nigeria (SWOFON) is a coalition of women farmers' associations and groups across Nigeria. SWOFON's goal is to promote women-friendly agricultural policies and women's access to land. To achieve this, SWOFON organizes and empowers women farmers to engage policymakers and other development stakeholders on their needs.

In the light of the foregoing, SWOFON demands the preparation of budgets that have links to policy positions in national and international standards and this should specifically include the following:

- Removing drudgery from agriculture through gender-friendly mechanisation – low cost equipment and machinery such as hand-held power tillers, ploughs, planters, harvesters, etc., especially locally produced and fabricated equipment which is serviced by local technicians and artisans;
- Transparent and well managed federal level programme of revolving micro-credit facilities to increase the productive capacities of women;
- Improved seeds/seedlings, stems, fertilisers, pesticides, feeds, animal stock storage facilities, irrigation facilities;
- Investments across the value chains including locally produced processing equipment for product's preservation and value addition as well as capacity building to minimise post-harvest losses.
- Strong and targeted extension services which links SHWF with innovations, research findings, education on new farming techniques, etc. This involves strong collaboration with states and local governments. Increasing the number of state and local government level female extension workers is imperative;
- Capacity building on climate change resilience, adaptation and mitigation strategies as well as organic farming; capacity building on management of agriculture cooperatives, financial literacy and group dynamics in its link to modern agriculture practices;
- Information Communications Technology/Knowledge Management (ICT/KM) Framework through using new devices to enhance ICT/KM capacity in the sector as well as reviving radio farm broadcasts designed to provide information to farming communities. On extension service, ICT has opened a new vista that can transform extension services from the analogue to the digital. This is about building an Agriculture Information Management Platform where all sources of information could converge as a one stop platform that facilitates farming;
- Improved legislative oversight over public expenditure in agriculture with a focus of value for money.

*Technical support for this Policy Brief was provided by the Centre for Social Justice Limited
by Guarantee*