



NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Communique of the Initiatives' Sixth National Roundtable for Good Governance

Concept Paper

Agricultural Development in Nigeria and the Challenges of Food Security

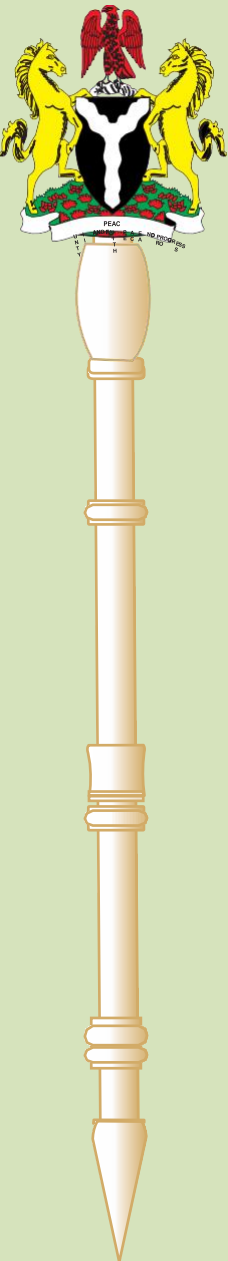
Following basic hierarchy of human needs, with the exception of clothing and shelter, food undoubtedly remains the most vital considering its centrality to human subsistence. The world today is facing incessant worsening food crisis era unnoticed in the last 30 years and with the potential of leading to global food disaster.

The Food Security Assessment in 2005 proves that over 750 million people were food insecure in 70 lower countries of the world. The consequence of food shortage in the world has been that of elevated food prices, which have had dramatic impact on the lives and livelihoods, including increased infant mortality of those already undernourished or living in poverty and spending 70-80% of their daily income if not all on food. There is yet another group in the poverty line, whose weekly income may not guarantee a good meal.

An assessment of past efforts of government indicates that succeeding administrations in Nigeria had conceived programs aimed at ensuring food security adequate for the teeming population. Unfortunately, these laudable initiatives have not fulfilled their aspirations. Some of the programs include: Farm Settlement Scheme and National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP), launched in 1972 by Yakubu Gowon administration; The Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of the Murtala /Obasanjo administration;

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the River Basin and Rural Development Authority of 1976; the Green Revolution / World Bank funded Agricultural Development Project(ADP) by the Shagari administration in 1980; the Directorate for Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) of the Babangida administration, etc.

'Worldwide demand for food is expected to grow steadily over the next 40 years, but 25 percent of the world's food production may be lost to 'environmental breakdowns' by 2050 unless urgent action is taken'. This is the message in a document presented to environment ministers from more than 140 countries meeting in Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the United Nations Environmental Programme Governing Council to discuss climate change and other environmental challenges.

On 18 June 2008 in Bauchi, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua stated that Nigeria is among the worst hit by the shortage of food occasioned by land degradation and climate change. The President made the remarks while declaring the 2008 National Desertification Summit in commemoration of the World Desertification Day.

With the above conclusions, the reality of global food crisis and Nigeria in particular is one that needs urgent introduction. An interventionist synergy between primary and secondary levels of government and the private sectors, including international development partners apart from being declared a national priority to redress this ugly circumstances; should be a global imperative.

Ironically, prior to the discovery of Oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria in 1953, agriculture was the mainstay of the nation's economy – the groundnut pyramids of the North, the large cocoa farms in the West and the imposing palm oil heaps in the East; Nigeria indeed had enough surpluses for export.

The task before the Sixth National Roundtable on **Agricultural Development in Nigeria and the Challenges of Food Security, being a continuation of THE INITIATIVES' Public Consultation and Mobilization Strategy (PCMS)**, is to review key issues and strategies that will not only re-position the agricultural sector, but also boost agricultural development in Nigeria as well as ensure food security. This no doubt will assist the nation in meeting the challenges of the 21st Century and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Roundtable will also focus on key governance components, such as strengthening and building capacities of relevant public and private institutions, review and enactment of agricultural friendly legislations, as well as modalities for promoting cooperative societies, farmers' clubs,

agricultural research institutes, etc., towards achieving sustainable food security in Nigeria.

Other areas of strategic focus of the roundtable will include:

- Search for incentive-driven measures that will promote agricultural development in Nigeria.
- Identify areas that need re-positioning in all the existing agricultural programs.
- Identify major challenges facing the sector
- Critically examine the consistency or otherwise of national agricultural policies, poor credit access and management as well as weak private sector linkage.
- Examine low mechanisation, poor chemical and fertiliser supply as well as decayed infrastructure in the sector
- Explore ways of building capacity for agricultural training and research.
- Explore ways of accessing Bank Group assistance to the sector and recommend possible areas of partnership and collaboration among stakeholders

Finally, the sixth National Roundtable will explore strategies for revisiting conventional approaches to promote institutional reforms in the agricultural sector.