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PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

By

Baba Dare, A; Gimbason, D.M; Oguntunji, O.I.; & Adeyemi, T. F.

Abstract

This paper reviews problems and challenges of household food security in Nigeria. It examines holistically the concept "household food security" as well as problems facing attainment of viable household food security in Nigeria. The paper also delves into the implications of household food insecurity on nutritional status of people. The paper also x-rayed in detail the challenges of household food security in Nigeria. Based on the findings from the review, it is revealed that household food security can only be achieved if government formulate and implement sustainable policies that will ensure availability of sufficient foods to the people. It has also been revealed that all members of the household should engage in production activities that will lead to surplus food production. The review, therefore recommends that government should geared all efforts towards production of enough foods for the entire population. All members of the families should engage in works that will bring income sufficient for their livelihood.

Introduction

Food is one of the necessities of life. It is one of the factors that determine an individual growth and development. Both the qualitative and quantitative levels of food intake are prerequisite for achievement of proper and adequate nutrition as often advocated by the nutritionists. Lapedes (2005) stated that food is necessary for health, growth and normal functions of living organisms. It is essentially the material that will enables man to grow and reproduce himself.

Food is anything that is safe to be taken or eaten to derive the nutrients needed for normal growth and development. Rickets (2004) asserted that food is something that is good to eat. It could be in liquid, semi solid and solid forms and are necessary to carry out one or more of the life functions of the body interm of health, growth and normal functions of living organisms.

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importance of foods to the existence and survival of a living organisms cannot be over-nasized, most especially to the growth and development of human beings. There is before the need to ensure adequate production, distribution and utilization of foods for vation of nutrients needed for cell nourishment. This is the reason why there is persistent nour for strengthening of household food security. Omonona and Agoi (2007) observed several studies have been carried out on food security in Nigeria most of which focused on asuring food security using consumption expenditure and suggesting ways of solving the d problem.

verty and hunger are resultant effects of food insecurity and food scarcity among a given pulation within the society. The major concern of government and private individuals is w to ensure adequate and even distribution of foods for human consumption. Omotosho, seph, Ladele and Ajagbe (1995) stressed that the greatest major world problem today is how eliminate hunger and overcome poverty. This problem is greatest in the developing ountries where people starve for lack of adequate food and nourishment, and where starvation nd poverty go hands in hands. The common strategy adopted by agriculturists has been ncreasing output of food in tonnage per year through land clearing, improved machinery, etter cultivation methods, improved seeds, improved animal nutrition, breeding, and health, without considering the quantity and quality of agricultural products that get to the ultimate consumer.

Household Food Security: An Overview

A Household is a group of people living together under the same roof and eating from the same pot. Household food security is used to describe a situation where every family or household has enough food to eat. It means that all the resources such as money, manpower, equipment and land on which the family will cultivate crops (foods) are sufficient for maintaining adequate food production. Food and agricultural organization (2005) defined household food security as a situation when all people, at all time have physical and economical access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods for healthy and active life.

The concept "adequate and proper nutrition can be realized if people have the opportunity to choose and access different groups of foods. According to Lucas and Gilles (2006) a family is food secured if it has enough foods to cover the nutrient needs of its members throughout the year as well as economic measures like credit and income generating schemes for families. Family food security is a basic requirement for good nutrition but by itself is not enough. For each family members to be well nourished, food must be shared according to individual nutrient needs.

Foods are necessity of life and prerequisite for normal growth and development of an individual. The teeming and increasing Nigeria population has engendered inadequate consumption, and made utilization and accessibility to foods by the entire members of household difficult. Gebremedhin (2000) noted that food insecurity and hunger are fore runners to nutritional, health, human and economic development problems. These problems connote deprivation of basic necessities of life. Hence, food security has been considered as a universal indicator of households and individual personal well being. The consequences of

hunger and malnutrition are enormous on livelihood and well being of massive number of people and inhibiting the development of many poor countries.

The household food security issue is a global initiative resulting from dearth of food supply in relation to availability of food stuff, the quality of diet, stable supply and access to foods produced. Food and agricultural organization (2005) stated that there are two dimensions to household food security globally. The first is food availability and the second is food affordability or accessibility.

By and large, a country have enough foods to feed her citizens, but the cost of purchasing the foods may be too high for some individual households to afford. Food and agriculture organization (2005) observed that, for a country and the household to be truly food secured, there must be enough food production and exchanges at cheaper rate to ease household food consumption. In order to ensure adequate nutrition, efforts need to be geared towards entrenchment of viable food security programmes to improve food production, availability and accessibility.

Problems of Household Food Security in Nigeria

In Nigeria, food intake or utilization is inadequate as a result of reduction in purchasing power of low income earners and population explosion. World health organization (2005) asserted that by the year 2020, the world's population may increase to 7.5 billion and agriculturists predict that household food insecurity and hunger will remain a problem in many places. Atleast, around 1.2 billion people will be aged over 60 years, all of whom are dependants living in developing countries. Inadequate food security often lead to reduced energy for physical, mental and other vital activities, failure to gain weight, low productivity and decrease resistance to infection.

Apart from reduction in purchasing power of some members of a household, non availability due to low production of foods constitute another hindrance to food security in Nigeria and other highly populated countries in Africa. Sharma (1991) asserted that national food availability is determined mainly by domestic net of supply and food importation. Siamwalla and Valde (1994) reiterated that food insecurity is generally accounted within fluctuations in household own food production and food prices.

The poor and ineffective implementation of programmes and policies aimed at improving food production and utilization account for household food insecurity in Nigeria. This is evident in operation feed the nation, adoption of food and basic nutrition as one of the components of primary health care in Nigeria, fertilizers distribution to rural farmers, green revolution e.t.c. Olayemi (1996) noted that public policy on food and agriculture is itself at the root of Nigeria food security problems. This is to say that food policy has been characterized by inappropriate role of government in food and agriculture, which manifest in badly formulated and poorly execution food policies.

The poverty and low level of income among the dependent and independent population account for persistent food insecurity and shortages. World Bank (1991) observed that there is normally an overlap between poverty and food security due to inadequate income and wealth

generation, hence, the inadequate access to available food. Income growth helps in improvement of food demand and supply and thereafter sustainable food security.

The problems of food security are in exhaustive going by the indispensable impact of foods to body nourishment. Food insecurity is usually resulted from different in an aggregate of food demand and supply in relation to household purchasing power. World Bank (1991) asserted that food demand and supply trends are known to influence prices as well as the composition in their diet and other factors related to food security.

Hunger and malnutrition are two sides of the same coin, which manifested in food insecurity. Food insecurity leads to hunger, while food scarcity and hunger often predispose people to malnutrition. Household food security is one of determinants of nutritional status of people. Olayemi (1996) posited that various foods serve as important vehicles for taking nutrients into the body which bring about human pleasure, hence, the need for food to be taken in the right quantity and quality. Food and Agricultural organization (2005) observed that hunger and malnutrition increase both the incidence and fatality rate of conditions that cause a majority of maternal deaths during pregnancy and child birth.

Household Food Insecurity and Nutritional Status of People

As earlier mentioned and discussed in this paper, foods play an important roles in the growth and development of an individual. Food security has been given premium of place in the national policies and sustainable economic plans because of its dominant roles in the maintenance of health and well being of people and political stability of the nation. Okunmadewa (2001) noted that the concern for food security and nutritional well being in an economy is predicated by role of human element in economic development. This shows why at national level food is of economic and political significant especially in issues relating to national security, maintaining political stability and ensuring peace and stability among the populace.

Food scarcity due to inadequate food production and supply usually lead to hunger and nutritional deficiency diseases of different types. United Nations Organization (2005) posited that more than eight hundred million (800 million) people have too little to eat to meet their daily energy needs. Most of the world's hungry people live in rural areas and depend on the consumption and sale of natural products for both their income and food. Food insecurity tends to be concentrated among the landless or among farmers whose plots are too small to provide for their needs. Food insecurity or lack of food can be perilous since it retard their physical and mental development and threatens their survival.

Food insecurity is one of the predisposing factors to malnutrition in children. The need for ensuring adequate and basic nutrition most especially in school children is often hindered by inadequate food supply. Smith, Ramakrishman, Ndiaye, Haddad and Martorell (2003) stated that malnutrition affects one out of every three pre-school age children living in developing countries. This disturbing, yet preventable state of affairs causes untold suffering and presents a major obstacle to the development process.

Proper and adequate nutrition is essential for maintenance of health and well being of an individual. Insufficient diet or nutritional deficiency problems are often resulted from poor or non-availability of foods that contain all the essential food nutrients needed by the body. Inadequate food production and supply often lead to deficiency of some essential nutrients expected in a prepared food, thereby reduce body immunity. United Nations Organization (2005) noted that as the underling causes of more than half of all child death, hunger and malnutrition are the greatest obstacle to reducing child mortality. Hunger and poverty compromise people's immune systems, force them to adopt risky survival strategies and greatly increase the risk of infection and death from HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases.

The need to ensure adequate nutrition through intake of different foods in required proportion for normal growth and development by people have been strengthened and accorded premium of place in the national health policy and programmes. Abubakar ((2007) stated that promotion of food supply and adequate nutrition is one of the components of primary health care. Promotion of food supply and adequate nutrition is a programme adopted by government towards ensuring regular food supply to the community to prevent the menace or health problems that may result from poor nutritional status.

Challenges of Household Food Security in Nigeria

Inspite of the government relentless efforts directed at attainment and sustenance of adequate national food security for which household food security is an offshoot, there are many impediments to its full entrenchment. Below are some of the difficulties facing household food security in Nigeria:

- The level of income of members of some households is too low compare with their foods demand in relation to their nutritional requirement. Hence, the accessibility problem;
- Government ineptitude-ness towards making locally produced foods available and affordable to people through reduction of importation of such foods;
- The gross national food products are too low to take care of the largely populated Nigeria. Hence, persisting food scarcity;
- Political instability and civil unrest is also an impediment to achievement of sustainable household and national food security;
- Inadequate knowledge of values inherent in some of the locally produced foods. Nutritional education needs to be strengthened to improve food production, distribution, consumption and utilization by the body;
- Consumer protection council is finding it difficult to influence the decision and action of food producers for easy accessibility, affordability and availability of their products to consumers;
- The level of advocacy is too low for creating awareness on need to ensure viable household food security.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is succinct to say from the reviewed literature that household food security in Nigeria can only be achieved if government will intervene in formulation of sustainable policy to facilitate viable agricultural production, economic enhancement, good political will by stakeholders and improvement on general living standard of individual family members.

Food accessibility and affordability are determined by the ability of households to obtain food from their own production and stock, from the market and other sources. These factors are in turn determined by the resources endowment of the household which defines the set of productive activities they can pursue in meeting their income and food security objectives.

Food utilization which is typically reflected in the nutritional status of an individual is determined by the quantity and quality of dietary intake, general child care and feeding practices. Poor infant care and feeding practices, inadequate access to qualitative health services are all major determinants of poor health and nutrition as well as household food security.

The problems and challenges of household food security are enormous and in exhaustive. To this end, this paper recommends that:

- Government should encourage sufficient food production through appropriate agricultural policies such as land policies, subsidized inputs like seedings, fertilizer and agricultural machinery and agricultural extension services;
- Government should be discreet in the determination of types of food the country can import or export;
- All members of the families should engage in works that will bring income sufficient for their livelihood. This is due to positive correlation between ones income and his nutritional status;
- People should endeavour to plant high yield crops and plant food crops that mature at various times so that the family is not unduly exposed to hunger.
- The family budgets should be adequate enough for acquiring all the needed food stuff containing all the essential food nutrients;
- Government should provide and maintain strategic food reserves on which people can fall back in time of adversity like drought and other natural disasters;
- Government through its various agencies and ministries should give nutritional counselling and orientation need for adequate food security to people.

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