

NIGERIA'S FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE AND THE RESPONSE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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NIGERIA'S FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGE AND THE RESPONSE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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The main factor of economic and political stability in the country is food security. The unresolved food problem arising from the reorientation of the Nigerian economy towards the oil sector compelled the country's consecutive governments to develop programs aiming at optimizing agricultural production and food security. However, as a result of these programs, the country managed to achieve only partial food security. The authors present a modern assessment of food security in Nigeria using several methods. The value of the Global Food Security Index (GFSI) for Nigeria demonstrated a slight increase from 2012 to 2017, which can be regarded as a positive trend, yet the improvement in the constituents of the Index is extremely slow. The changes in the GFSI value reflect certain encouraging changes in Nigeria, such as a decrease in the level of corruption, relative stabilization of the political situation, limited diversification of agricultural production, and the formulation of national food standards. In another positive development, the value of the Global Hunger Index decreased between 1992 to 2017, but the proportions of undernourished population and of stunting and wasting children remain high. According to the methodology of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Nigeria was assigned extremely low ratings in terms of availability and quality of nutrition.

The present study analyzes the assistance of international organizations rendered to Nigeria with the aim of stabilizing the food situation. The country receives international funds for the development of agricultural sectors and for providing the population with prepared foodstuffs. FAO, the International Fund for the Agricultural Development, Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria, Mercy Corps, the Save the Children Fund, the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief and many other organizations have become contributors to the cause of mitigating the food challenge in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, agriculture, food security, international organizations, FAO, IFAD

The lack of a solution to the food problem, along with the enormous expenditure of hard currency on food imports, compelled Nigerian authorities to alter their attitude toward agricultural development and to design new programs to optimize the agricultural sphere. In the postcolonial period, Nigerian governments developed and adopted legal acts and various programs regulating and supporting the agricultural sector, which aimed at developing agriculture and ensuring food security, yet today the West African nation still faces an enormous food security challenge.

The National Accelerated Food Production Programme (1973), Operation Feed the Nation (1976-1980), Green Revolution Programme (1980-1983), Agricultural Transformation Agenda (2011-2015), Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (2017-2020), Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016-2020) may be viewed as the most noteworthy programs of the Nigerian government over the years since independence in 1960. The incumbent Nigerian government adheres to the principles of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, the Sustainable Development Goals, and follows the recommendations of the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS) within the framework of the Agricultural Policy of the Economic Community of West African States. As a result of following the path of reforms and initiatives outlined in these programs, Nigeria has managed to achieve self-sufficiency with regard to a number of food crops, but it still has fallen short of finding an encompassing solution to the challenge of achieving the optimal level of the country's food security and reducing the importation of other food stuffs, which currently stands at the enormous \$22 billion per year (over 16% of the country's total annual imports in 2017 [1]).

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Russian academia has given due attention to the problems of agricultural development and food security in Nigeria. Among the most prominent works on this topic are the reference monograph *Nigeria* [2] and the collective monograph *Africa in the Context of Global Food Security* [3], published at the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In addition, a number of works by African researchers devoted to the issue of food security deserve our special attention. Thus, O.O.Ikelegbe and D.A.Edokpa, researchers from the University of Benin (Nigeria), who based their study on a survey of farmers, revealed a number of factors that affect the insufficient level of the country's food security [4]. S.Matemilola and I.Elegbede carried out a study of the causes of food insecurity in Nigeria, reviewing the government's policies in this area and devising strategies to improve the situation [5]. Nigerian researchers Adetayo F.Tolulope, Olawale O.Olatujoye and A.I.Adebusuyi from the Obafemi Awolowo University (Ile-Ife, Nigeria) explore the importance of foreign aid for the national development of the country, including its agricultural industry [6].

Two other Nigerian scholars, M.K.Aliyu and A.W.Adeowu, in their article indicated that over the years Nigerian authorities had put much effort into revising national political and socio-economic strategies [7, p. 115]. These efforts had been aimed at raising levels of security in the country, including food security. A.S.Ojo in his research paper provides extensive empirical information on the development of the Nigerian agricultural sphere in the context of economic globalization [8, p. 101].

In their turn, D.S.Fankun and G.O.Evbuomwan in their article pointed out that agriculture had been the main source of budget revenues until the discovery of large oil reserves in Nigeria, after which the agricultural sector was ignored by the country's authorities, which led to the impoverishment of the rural population, a sharp increase in unemployment and Nigeria's mounting dependence on foreign aid [9].

The problems of the development of the agricultural sector of the economy and the formation of the food policy of Nigeria still have not been sufficiently considered by Russian and foreign researchers: there exist plenty works devoted to the state of crisis in the Nigerian agricultural sector, but they fail to reveal its consequences for the population of Nigeria or to consider the importance of comprehensive assistance of international organizations to support the country's food security.

NIGERIA'S FOOD SECURITY AT PRESENT

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provides the following definition of food security: it exists when «all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life» [10].

FAO has developed a number of indicators to assess the availability and quality of nutrition of the population. Nigeria lags far behind the global average in terms of the availability and quality of nutrition. For instance, the per capita production of foodstuffs in Nigeria is lower by 30% than the global standard, the availability of proteins - 30% lower, while the availability of proteins of animal origin stands at the meager 1/13 of the recommended value. The share of edible root crops, grains and tuber crops is 32% higher than the average figure for the world. FAO experts point out that such an unbalanced consumption of products carries serious implications for the health of Nigerian citizens [11, p. 105].

The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) conducts annual research to assess progress or failure in the fight against hunger around the world. The Institute's researchers have developed a special indicator, the Global Hunger Index (GHI), which has become a tool that allows for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at the global, regional and national levels. Over the past 25 years (from 1992 to 2017), Nigeria managed to slightly reduce the indicators characterizing the GHI in the country, however, they remain very high: the proportion of the undernourished population stood at 7.9% in 2017 (16.1% in 1992); the percentage of children under 5 years of age who were underweight was 7.2% (20.6%); the share of children under 5 years of age with insufficient growth reached 32.9% (43.8%); the mortality of children under 5 years old was 10.9% (21.2%). The overall hunger index has declined significantly since 1992 (48.8%): in 2017, the index stood at 25.5%. Yet the acceptable value of the hunger index should not be exceeding 5%. According to IFPRI estimates, in 2017, Nigeria was in the 84th place in the world (with the 1st place being occupied by a country with the smallest risk of hunger) [12].

In 2012, experts at the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), who had the support of the American company *DuPont*, developed the Global Food Security Index (GFSI). The factors taken into account when calculating GFSI include a set of indicators, each of which is assessed separately and assigned a corresponding score and has a specific weight in the final index [13].

In Nigeria, some of the indicators have in fact deteriorated, for example, food consumption as a share of household spending; the indicator worsened over the period between 2012 and 2017: the share of household spending was evaluated at 18 points on the GFSI scale (down from 26.5 points); the indicator of the proportion of the population living below the global poverty line also worsened (from 21.1 points in 2012 to 17 points in 2017), etc. Among the improvements, EIU experts pointed out the emergence of food safety regulations and improved access to finance for farmers.

An assessment of the availability of food showed that the sufficiency of its supply constituted only a third of the possible maximum score; government spending on agricultural research and development was extremely low; the agricultural infrastructure was greatly underdeveloped (in fact, the lowest scores were assigned to the quality of roads, ports, etc.); food loss during storage and transportation increased dramatically. However, certain improvements were also observed. Since 2015, under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari, political stability has been receiving a higher score, while the level of corruption has decreased [14].

From the perspective of the GFSI, the quality and safety of food are assessed using 5 different indicators: the diversity of food, the presence of food standards, the availability of micronutrients, food safety, and the strength of the formal food industry. The assessment of nutritional diversity is responsible for contributing one third of the possible maximum score. The presence of food standards, including national dietary recommendations, national nutrition plan and organization and supervision of nutrition, is also commended. In 2017, the theoretical base in Nigeria received the highest score possible - 100 points.

The assessment of the availability of micro-nutrients in food demonstrated very poor results. For example, the availability of iron in food of animal origin in Nigeria is 1 mg per capita per day (for comparison: in South Korea this figure is 8.9 mg, in France - 8.6 mg, in Japan - 8.0 mg). The presence of vitamin A in the diet of Nigerians is at least twice as low as the level observed in developed countries. However, there is also a positive development: the food safety indicator went up from 46 points in 2012 to 61 points in 2017.

Nigeria has been included in the Global Food Security Index since 2012. In 2012, the worldwide value of the GFSI stood at 35.4 points, in 2017 - at 38.4 points. This rate of change can be regarded as a weak but positive trend, yet improvement is extremely slow. In 2017, Nigeria was ranked 92nd in the world (out of 113 included countries).

The above assessment, which is based on the Global Food Security Index, confirms the aforementioned observations made in the course of analyzing data from FAO and the Global Hunger Index: Nigeria is only partially capable of ensuring its own food security.

THE EFFECTS OF THE FOOD CRISIS ON THE POPULATION OF NIGERIA

Due to malnutrition or unbalanced nutrition, in Nigeria every third child under the age of 5 is stunted; every thirteenth is acutely malnourished; every fiftieth is overweight [10]. Among the adults, every tenth person is overweight, and every second woman of reproductive age suffers from anemia.

Malnourished children suffer from irreparable mental retardation and physical stunting; they may become incapable to study and, consequently, drop out of the education system, at best remaining unskilled workers for the rest of their lives. The part of the adult population of the country which suffers from malnutrition also may not be considered fully functioning employees. For example, iron deficiency in adults reduces their labor productivity by 17% [10].

Unbalanced nutrition leads to metabolic disorders: an excess of starch provokes the development of diabetes, anemia, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Inappropriate diet causes health problems among a significant part of the population of Nigeria, especially among children. The lack of vitamin A in children reduces their ability to resist infections and annually leads to the death of more than half a million African children [4]. Many Nigerians are not even aware of the nutritional standards, the existence of balanced foods, vitamins, minerals, and of their role for human health.

Unbalanced nutrition, coupled with poor sanitation, have increased the vulnerability of rural people to numerous diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, whooping cough. Every year, the media report on the commencement in Africa of an epidemic of a disease that has not manifested itself in developed countries for a long time. The consequences of these diseases include the appearance of a huge number of people with disabilities on the continent.

The World Health Organization and the World Bank published the World Report on Disability in 2011, and according to its contents, in Nigeria there were more than 25 million people with one disability (15% of the population), 3.6 million of which were recognized as severely disabled (2.15% of the population) [15]. In Nigeria, studies have been carried out repeatedly to identify the causes of a high percentage of people with disabilities, and more than

50% of those surveyed recognized that they received this status as a result of frequent diseases, i.e. due to reduced immunity [16].

Disability in Nigeria is seen as a curse, so people violate the rights of persons with disabilities, especially children, even within their own family. As adults, people with disabilities due to social prejudice are practically deprived of the opportunity to start a family, obtain an education, or find a decent job. According to a study done by N. Smith, 55% of the disabled respondents never worked, and 14% were «professional» paupers [16]. Thus, there is a global relationship between poverty and disability due to various factors. Disability and poverty can create a vicious circle in which physical barriers impede employment, which in turn hinders the generation of sufficient income.

It can be concluded that over the past half century, since the time when Nigeria chose the path of development based on the principle of a monocultural economy, the country's food security has significantly deteriorated, the availability of food has become unsatisfactory, which has caused negative consequences for the country's population.

ASSISTANCE FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST HUNGER

The study above has demonstrated that Nigeria is very highly dependent on external food assistance. International organizations that are to a greater or lesser degree involved in agricultural development are the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA), the African Development Bank (ADB), and some others.

The country receives two types of assistance. The first of the types is the allocation of funds to support the domestic production of food. The projects of this type include the USAID West African Seed Program (\$9 million), the USAID West African Fertilizer Program (approximately \$20 million), the Hunger-Free Initiative for West Africa project, funded by Germany (\$2 million), the Regional Food Security Reserve, funded by the European Union (^56 million), etc.

In addition, in order to increase the level of knowledge in the field of organization of agricultural production and implementation of investment projects, ECOWAS holds various conferences and

seminars for heads of agricultural bodies of the Community.

The second type of assistance is the allocation of funds to provide the population with prepared foodstuffs. For instance, in order to help people affected by the actions of the Boko Haram extremist group in 2017, various organizations established a number of food assistance programs. Among these organizations are the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria, which set up the program titled «Life-Saving Food Assistance to Conflict Affected Communities in North Eastern Nigeria», the Mercy Corps organization («the North East Borno Food Security Project»), Save the Children Foundation («Increasing Food Security Strengthening Coping Capacities for Vulnerable Conflict»), the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) («the Emergency Food Assistance and Nutrition Support for Crisis Affected Households in Southern Borno and Northern Adamawa»), etc.

In 2018-2019, FAO runs in Nigeria 10 projects that support agriculture and are aimed at enhancing the food security of the population in need of food (among the projects is, for example, «Emergency agricultural and livestock assistance to returnees, IDPs and host communities affected by the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria - Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States»). The organization also provides assistance in eliminating unemployment by engaging the population in agricultural production and in developing recommendations for combating pests, and also provides technical aid, etc. [17].

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) also makes a significant impact on the development of agriculture in Nigeria. IFAD works with governments in need through such mechanisms as loans and grants to develop and finance projects that allow rural people to overcome poverty themselves. IFAD is currently implementing two projects in Nigeria that entail concessional lending. For instance, the «Climate Change Adaptation and Agribusiness Support Programme in the Savannah Belt», planned for the period 2013-2019, will have the total cost of \$93 million [18], and involves households located in 7 states that comprise the Savannah Belt of Nigeria: Borno, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara. The objectives of this program are to reduce the poverty of rural residents, increase food security, accelerate sustainable economic growth and reduce vulnerability for small farmers. Another project of IFAD is the «Value Chain Development Program», aimed at developing agricultural markets, expanding market access for small farmers, increasing the productivity of small farmers and, as a result, increasing the volume and quality of marketable products.

IFAD has already completed 9 projects related to agricultural development and rural areas at the community level (\$116 million), environmental management at the community level in Niger Delta (\$82 million), expansion of improved tuber crops and root varieties (\$36 million), construction of rural financial institutions (\$40 million), agricultural development in Sokoto State (\$17 million), development of artisanal fisheries (\$19 million), etc. [19]. The 11 IFAD projects have the total value of over \$1 billion, while the Fund's own financial contribution amounts to \$466 million. The implementation of these projects is expected to assist over 3 million households in rising above the poverty line [18].

Thus, the world community supports the people of Nigeria in terms of agricultural development and food assistance, health care, expansion and renovation of infrastructure, etc. practically in all areas related to the social and economic aspects of the sustainable development of the country.

Nonetheless, while the state of the agricultural industry demonstrates positive dynamics, the pace of

this improvement is recognized as extremely slow and insufficient for ensuring food security. At this stage of the country's development, the assistance of international organizations is needed for further positive shifts in the development of agriculture and eliminating food insecurity in Nigeria.

However, an effective expansion of the agricultural sector and the achievement of food self-sufficiency demand qualitative changes in the agrarian policy of the Nigerian state. The updated policy should place greater emphasis on fostering innovation and attracting investment, which in modern realities are among the key drivers of agricultural growth.

The main directions of agricultural development and improvement of food security in Nigeria should include the stabilization of the investment climate and attraction of investment in every component of agricultural production; maintenance and expansion of economic relations with foreign countries; implementation of internal transformations associated with the optimization of agrarian policy.

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