



# VOICES FOR FOOD SECURITY (VFS)

## THE CONTEXT OF THIS PAPER:

This paper has been supported by Voices of Food Security (VFS) campaign. The campaign was launched in July 2009 against the backdrop of the gloomy food security situation in Nigeria. The campaign, Campaign is a national lobby platform by an amalgamation of small-scale farmers' organizations, Civil Society Organizations and networks across Nigeria. Its major objective is to mobilize all stakeholders to work together to achieve food security for Nigeria.

The campaign is meant to empower small-scale farmers from being passive spectators, to demand right to consultation on government policies and programmes as well insists on service effectiveness in the agric sector as a way of ensuring value for money and overcoming the food insecurity. Campaigners are also seeking recognition for women the contributions of women on the farm, enabling legislation to protect the interest of small-scale farmers, enact, popularize and implement a Right to Food Act among others.

The campaign becomes imperative as another chapter in the efforts to pressure the Nigerian authorities to give appropriate support to agriculture particularly by focusing on small-scale farmers. As the world continues to reel in an economic recession, an important component of which is a food crisis, the question has been how to respond to this crisis. Despite abundant land resources, it is estimated that 53.6 million Nigerians go to bed hungry everyday. Reflecting its poor performance, Nigeria is ranked 154 on the UNDP Human Development Index behind South Africa (125) Ghana (142), and Kenya (144). Women form about 60-80 % of farmers, but get little assistance from government and have restricted access to land. Nigeria continues to import a lot of the food that its citizens can produce.

The campaign recognizes that the successful implementation of VFS depends on the favourable disposition of government to make the policy environment right for food security in the country. Thus the need arose to integrate a policy inventorization study into the design concept of the campaign from outset. Such a study will help to understand the current actions of government in relation to the three components thereby defining the coordinates of the policy template for implementing the VFS in general. In this connection, it is of special interest to relate such coordinates to the gridlines of the new idea of food as a human right in Nigeria.

### Partners:

ASSFON, CBD-NGO Forum, CISCOPE, FIF, NANTS, JDPC, ActionAid PAP Partners, Activista

### Allies:

AAEUM, MIBSSFANET, SLISSFAN Project Partners, TNI, WRAPA,

### Supported By:

Oxfam International (Oxfam Novib and Oxfam GB-Economic Justice Campaign),  
ActionAid Nigeria (Partners Against Poverty and HungerFREE Campaign)

### Interim Secretariat:

C/o Oxfam GB, Bassan Plaza, 3rd Floor, Block G, Plot 705, Behind TOTAL Headquarters,  
Central Business District, ABUJA,  
Tel: +234 946 11545, +234 946 11546, +234 7082091482;  
E-mail: vfs.campaign@yahoo.com

## NIGERIA:

# POLICY TEMPLATE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME (NFSP)



Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (National Strategic Food Reserve Department)

The Federal Government of Nigeria has recently launched a medium-term strategy framework christened Seven Point Agenda, which accords a top priority status to food security. This was followed by the formulation of Vision 20-20-20 as a long-term perspective plan, which seeks to take the country high up among the top 20 best performing economies of the world by the year 2020. Within this framework, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources quickly articulated a National Food security Programme (NFSP), as a medium term strategy document for realizing the goals of the Seven Point agenda and

Vision 20-20-20. The latter, therefore, defines the current policy environment for the implementation of the Voices for Food Security campaign (VFS) in the country.

The purpose of this bulletin is to present the highpoints of the on-going policy inventorization study, thereby sensitizing the stakeholders to the expected results. The layout consists in three main aspects, as follows: i) a content analysis of NFSP document with a view to highlighting the policy thrusts, interrogating the policy issues and illuminating the initial steps towards implementation; ii) a content analysis of VFS



are one and the same household. This connotes that the supply chain is twisty or meandering around the household to and fro in terms of different kinds of cottage enterprises involved in producing what the household consumes and consuming what the household produces.

Thus, given that the critical item of a commodity of value produced and consumed in Nigeria is food, then the value chain approach to commodity development as adopted in the food strategy document is a step in the right direction. This was perceived in terms paying policy attention of the federal government on all aspects of the value chain, from production to storage through processing to marketing and, of course, consumption.

Commodity focus entails identifying a number of strategic commodities wherein Nigeria has both the comparative advantage to produce and the competitive advantage to trade in them in the international market. Moreover, commodity focus reflects the commodity dependence of Nigerian economy beyond petroleum, as a major source of livelihoods in terms of food security and employment generation; as well as a source of foreign exchange earnings and national wealth creation. Thus in the food strategy document, a number of crop and livestock/fishery commodities were identified for the policy attention in the quest for food security in Nigeria.

The implementation of NPFS has begun in earnest, following an initial period of planning and articulation involving the experts and stakeholders. By and large, three major steps can



be discerned from the recent policy actions of the federal government towards implementing the programme:

1. *Institutional restructuring* The National Food Reserve Agency was established, which was initially super-imposed on the previous structure of almost the entire ministry and later restructured into a more focused agency concerned with food storage and related functions.
2. *Fund provision* An intervention fund was earmarked for agriculture and food security of the country to the tune of two hundred billion Naira domiciled in the Central Bank of Nigeria for on-lending to private bodies and the states for large scale production. This fund was criticized for being unfriendly with the small scale farmers in terms of focus and modalities.
3. *Establishment of study groups* Five study groups were recently inaugurated for the resuscitation of critical organs of the policy system for agricultural development of the country; namely River Basin Development Authorities, Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank, Commodity Development and Marketing Companies; Bio-technology, and Communication Strategy. The study groups will conduct a constant analysis of the situation in their respective functional domains and render technical back-up support to management in each case.

### FOOD AS A RIGHT IN NIGERIA

The project document for implementing VFS puts much emphasis on the notion of food as a right of the people.

Fortuitously, as indicated above, the right to food is implicitly recognized in the current food security strategy among the policy thrusts behind implementation of the document. According to the document, "The government has an obligation to make special provisions for the vulnerable groups in the society." Therefore, "government will take the need for safety nets for certain segments of the population serious ... (by providing safety nets) on ground of vulnerability, implying that certain people are already entrapped in the poverty cycle and can no longer help themselves out unless they receive help from outside sources...".

However this has not witnessed any practical policy action to confirm the seriousness of the federal government to the notion of food as a right, as pledged in the strategy document, yet. Same is true of the adoption of other policy best practices in principle awaiting concrete actions, such as: Visibility of private sector; Successor farmer generation; Participative policy process; and Policy advocacy and brokering.

The notion of right to food transcends the need for

safety nets provision. The memorandum by FIF and other publications (FIF 2009, FAO 2007) have characterized this notion as follows:

1. That the notion of Right to Food means food is a God-given right; a natural right and a birth right. Therefore both the people as right holders and government as duty bearers have an obligation to fulfill in order to realize the right. While everybody is required to work in order to eat, the government is required to act responsibly to uphold the right and to, through its programmes and strategies, help to deliver the right to people.

2. That the obligation of government to deliver right to food does not imply provision of free food for the general public, as this is not possible anywhere in the world; rather it implies that a) people are to be held responsible if they fail to work in order to eat without any justification; and b) government is to be held accountable for its policies that fail to ensure food security of the people. That is, food as a right is not an apology of state socialism, but a source of inspiration for both the right holders and duty bearers in the food system to take their responsibilities seriously in helping to make the nation food secure on a sustainable basis.

3. That food as a right is at the core of food security policy, which provides an overall philosophical framework for all policies and strategies of the government to attain the food security of the country. Suffice it to say that any nation that is not significantly food secure will sooner or later become subjugated or subordinated to other nations that are food secure, directly or indirectly.

4. That the notion of food as a right goes beyond mere attainment of security of the nation, to the regime of welfare of the people of the nation in terms of the implicit gratification that the people of Nigeria will feel if their food security is guaranteed in the Constitution; incidentally the welfare of the citizens is the primary duty of the government as stated in Chapter II of the Nigerian Constitution. Therefore **Right to Food** is not only a desirable property of livelihoods but also a

practical philosophy of life in its sanctity, thereby providing a framework for formulating and implementing food security policies and strategies of the government and for eliminating the possibility of perennial policy failure in Nigerian agriculture.

5. That the resurgence of the notion of food as a right owes to the growing realization that rights-based instruments help in generating new demands that drive new production initiatives. This has its origin in the legal instruments of the United Nations Organization. The relevant international laws include: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of which the relevant Article 11 was passed in 1966; Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and General Comment of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: The Right to Adequate Food.

6. That the organ of UN responsible for promoting the domestication and implementation of Right to Food all over the world is Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which Nigeria is a member of and is responsibility-bound to observe its values and actions let alone its legal obligations under the organization. The Guidelines for Implementation of Right to Food



was adopted by FAO Council in 2004, whereby the Federal Government of Nigeria owes it an international obligation to observe the tenets of right to food and to adopt the instruments for its domestication by law.

7. That this has not happened yet in Nigeria, understandably because the government of the day, quite naturally, may not find it expedient or convenient to introduce such a rights issue to our polity by itself. Thus the responsibility falls on us as a coalition of civil society organizations to move in that direction, and as partners with government to introduce the issue of Right to Food for the collective good of Nigerians. Thus in sponsoring the Right to Food in Nigeria, we are not asking the government to make new commitments but to honour the international commitment it had made in the past.

8. That Right to Food has taken root in other parts of the world to the advantage of the food security status of countries and the world at large. An example of such a country is Brazil, where it enjoyed the favour of President Lula da Silva, who was passionately involved and had put the full weight of his political authority behind it. This accounted for the quick recovery of Brazil from a previous position of shame when food insecurity

loomed large, to its present enviable position of food sufficiency as a nation.

9. That in some other countries, the explicit provision of Right to Food in their constitution has empowered the people to exercise it on occasions when the policy of government or action of private sector connotes the violation of their right to food. An example is Ecuador, which the Article 13 of the Constitution is the central provision on the right to food, and defined the right to food as "...the right to have unrestricted and permanent access to sufficient and nutritious food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, for a healthy and dignified life". Furthermore, it expressly recognizes and guarantees "... the right to food sovereignty", which is a 'right to food-related' concept.

10. That, furthermore, based on events in Nepal, the exercise of Right to Food is not just a theoretical possibility but a practical reality as well. Lately, the Supreme Court of Nepal issued an interim order according to which the Government of Nepal has to supply immediately food to 32 food-short districts. The Court found the immediate action necessary because of over three million people suffering from food scarcity at the time. The decision of the Supreme Court followed a public interest litigation which had also been based on the right to food. Thus, similar to the Indian Supreme Court Orders on the right to food, the order of the Supreme Court of Nepal is one more important case that can be used to help people to understand that they are "entitled" to certain forms of public support as a matter of right.

#### THE WAY FORWARD

The way forward for implementing the National Food Security Programme within the current policy environment is a function of three critical milestones, apart from adopting the right to food as a state policy. These, as enunciated under the four components of VFS document, are highlighted as follows:

- **Farmer support (Fertilizer and credit)** This entails i) Reinforcing the institutional capacity of small scale farmers organisations in Nigeria to engage in policy processes; ii) Improving access to adequate, affordable and



quality fertilizer for small scale farmers in Nigeria by 2012; and iii) Improving and securing access to adequate and affordable credit to small scale farmers in Nigeria by 2012.

- **Agriculture investment (Budget tracking)** This involves i) By 2012, at least 7% of national capital budget must be devoted to agriculture (2015 is 10% goal of Maputo Declaration); ii) By 2012, at least 40% of the national agricultural budget must be devoted to support small-scale farmers; more specifically on credit, fertilizer and other agrochemicals, extension services plus taking into account gender; iii) By 2012, at least 60% of the agric capital budget of states must be devoted to support small-scale farmers; more specifically on credit, fertilizer and other agrochemicals, and extension services.

**Food security (Right to food)** This entails i) Consolidation and harmonisation of all existing policy framework into a consolidated National Food Security Policy Framework; ii) Emergence of suitable legal framework in terms of constitutional provision and statute laws backing the implementation of the NFSP; and iii) Generating demand for mainstreaming right to food instruments in existing policy frameworks.

**Harnessing all key players (Recognition and support to women in agriculture)** Entails 1) Increased women's representation and participation in decision-making at all levels of agricultural governance and production; 2) Special targets for women with input supply; 3)

Amending the Land Use Act to allow access for women who form over 70 percent of labour on the farm.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The current policy environment for implementing the Voices of Food Security in Nigeria is governed by the instrumentality of the National Food Security Programme. The scope for raising the food security status of the country depends on the policy commitment of government to properly orientate the implementation of NFSP in favour of small scale farmers, to ensure a more consistent and stable policy environment, and to maximize the potential role of civil society organizations as valuable partners in agricultural development.

The following recommendations emerge:

1. *The need for better focusing of small scale farmers* This involves three sets of specific objectives namely:

- To promote and consolidate farmers movement at the grassroots level; reinforce and consolidate small scale farmers umbrella organisation at the states and national levels; and facilitate the participation of small scale farmer's organisation in policy processes at the local, state and national levels.

- To strengthen the capacity and voice representation of small-scale farmers, particularly women, in agriculture policy processes especially on fertilizer; Policy upgrade to ensure effective

quality fertilizer distribution by relevant institutions like the Agricultural Development Projects and farmer organisations (especially small-scale farmers); To set up a mechanism for monitoring the distribution and quality of fertilizer accessed by small-scale farmers in Nigeria by December 2010.

- Strengthen the capacity and voice representation of small-scale farmers in agriculture policy processes especially on credit; lobby for the implementation of credit policy to deliver effective and adequate credit for small scale farmers by relevant government institutions; lobby for increased private sector and financial institutions commitment to adequate credit provision for small scale farmers.

- Undertake a census of all small scale farmers with a view to ascertain their number, location, popular crops produced, where, when and by whom. This facilitates easy distribution of input and policy support as well monitoring of output for mop-up and other actions.

2. *The need for policy consistency and stability* Both aberrations of policy inconsistency and policy instability may be referred to simply as policy discontinuity, which accounts for perennial policy failure in the agricultural sector, as highlighted below.

a. Discontinuity describes a situation whereby a policy is not allowed to mature fully before it is changed or jettisoned altogether in preference for another policy or for no other policy in particular. In such a situation agricultural development policies assume a stop-go nature, or become ad hoc in nature. In any event, stop-go policies or ad hoc policy solutions often fail to address underlying problems permanently. Such policies merely lead to emergence of temporary or panic measures without yielding lasting solutions thereby adding to the instability of the policy environment for agricultural development, instead of subtracting from it.

b. The issue here should not be construed to mean that policies cannot be changed. Rather, policy changes should not be at the whims and caprices of policy authorities but a well thought out decision of the all stakeholders to be jointly

taken, following the due policy process (stakeholder consultation, validation workshops and the statutory meetings of the National Councils on Agriculture).

c. The thesis is that policy instability manifests itself in terms of frequent organizational restructuring or high personnel turnover in political, administrative and professional leadership positions, which create perturbations to the growth path of agriculture and further reinforce and complicate the food problem. Thus the permanent solution to the food problem calls for measures for stabilizing both the political and policy environment. These measures include holding the policy authorities responsible and accountable by encouraging the people to demand their right to food by peaceful means.

3. *The need for enhancing the role of civil society* The role of civil society organizations cannot be overemphasized, as partners and as watchdog of government. An example of situations where the role of civil society organization is crucial is the FIF's campaign on right to food, understandably because the government of the day, quite naturally, may not find it expedient or convenient to sponsor such a rights issue.

### References

1. Ayoola, G. B. (2001), *Essays on the Agricultural Economy A Book of Readings on Agricultural Development Policy and Administration in Nigeria*. FIF University of Agriculture Makurdi.
2. Adetunji, M. O. (2007), *Restoring the Glory of Agriculture Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Years (1999-2007)*. Presther Brands Limited. Abuja.
3. FIF (Farm and Infrastructure Foundation). *Memorandum to the National Assembly on the Need to Guarantee Right to Food in the Constitution of federal Republic of Nigeria*. 16<sup>th</sup> August 2009.
4. FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), *The right to food Key Rome 2007*.
5. FMAWR (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources), *National Food Security Programme*. Abuja 2008.