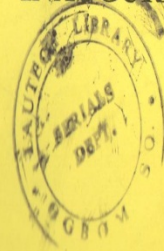


LADOKE AKINTOLA UNIVERSITY
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TITLE

**BRIEFCASE FARMERS
AND AGRICULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA**

BY

Professor Afolabi, Anthony Bamidele



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Briefcase Farmers and Agricultural Development in Nigeria

by

Professor Afolabi, Anthony Bamidele

An Inaugural Lecture

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Briefcase Farmers and Agricultural Development in Nigeria

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Chairman Committee of Deans and Provost, Deans, Professors, Learned Colleagues and Friends, Gentlemen of the Press, Greatest Nigerian Students, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel highly honoured and give thanks to the Almighty God for giving me the opportunity and privilege of being the first Professor from the Department of General Studies to present the first inaugural lecture. I sincerely thank God for this opportunity and for the life of the founding father of this Department, Professor Olatunde Bayo Lawuyi, the first Professor in the Department and the pioneering Head. Thanking God is not unusual of human beings but mine is special because today is a special day in my life. Having been born on the 29th of November, over 4½ decades ago, today is my birthday.

The Department of General Studies is one of the earliest academic departments in this University. It is a service department made up of four units, namely; History, English Language, Sociology and Philosophy. The Department has been established because you and I,

students and staff, need a broad education. My view is that the Department has not disappointed the founding fathers of this University as it keeps on growing from strength to strength. To the glory of God, it is the first department in the university to publish an academic Journal. It is also the Department that no student graduates from the university without passing through. That LAUTECH is a university of Technology is no news and I make bold to say that the staff in our department have not been found wanting in scientific academic endeavour. I am delighted to inform this audience that the department has already admitted postgraduate students in the area of Social Work.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, you may be amazed just like most members of the audience here present, what a Professor of History delivering an inaugural lecture has to do with science of agriculture, especially as such is not coming from a chair of Agricultural Science. Such surprise is not unexpected. But may I say that the reason is that there is a symbiotic relationship between the past and the present¹. I am sufficiently in agreement with Professor A.A. Adediran (2002:3) who opines that:

The roots of the present are in the past; the first duty of a historian to the public is therefore to provide an accurate picture of the society in its pre contemporary stage and thus to unravel the trends of development.

The crucial role of history in the lives of an individual and that of society has been succinctly summarized in the words of Marwick (1970:240).

We cannot escape from history. Our lives are governed by what happened in the past, our decision by what we believe to have happened. Without a knowledge of history, men and society would run adrift, rudderless craft on the uncharted sea of time.

The debate whether history is a science or an art is no longer fashionable as the methodology of history and her objectivity have clearly made it a science.

The above argument alone may not fully satisfy doubting Thomases. However, I am proud to say that the fact that I hold an M.Sc. degree; that my Ph.D thesis is titled "A Historical Analysis of Agricultural Research Agencies in Nigeria, 1945-1980" and that my major research area has been the history of agriculture in Nigeria have greatly qualified me to delve into this area. Pioneering the history of agriculture in Nigeria is an enthusiastic academic endeavour that I have intentionally undertaken and enjoyed since my postgraduate days. Most of my publications either in national or international journals or books have been on agricultural history, policies, strategies, challenges, research and development.

Delivering an inaugural lecture is the right of a Professor in a University. It is also the joy of such a Professor for it allows the Professor to tell the world (academic and public) what he has been busy doing since, and allows people to know how he has judiciously or otherwise utilized the confidence or finance granted him/her. The Professor chooses either a general topic or a topic relevant to his/her area of academic research. In my own case, I have chosen the latter.

In tracing the origin of Inaugural Lectures, Cox-George (not dated) traced the probable genesis of the tradition to the practice of the ceremony of inception at the early stage of the University of Paris. At such ceremony, the teacher was not only honoured by his colleagues but also by the Chancellor and it was at the end of such ceremony that he delivered the inaugural lecture, had the biretta placed on his head, and thereafter was seated on the magisterial seat.

Another probable place of origin was the University of Oxford where a dinner was usually given in honour of a newly appointed Professor. It was usually after the wining and dining that the newly appointed Professor gave his inaugural lecture. It was this that was later formalized into the inaugural lecture where the town and gown meet to reflect on the expertise of a newly made Professor. One can conveniently conclude that the real features of this tradition are immediacy and the desire of the town and the gown to meet. This is why it has been observed that:

the world of scholarship is a universal one, and that the real purpose of an inaugural lecture is better served if delivered at the beginning, or as close as possible to the beginning of one's tenure as a Professor (Oloruntimehin, 1976:1).

It is precisely in this spirit that I hereby invite everyone here present to join me on this historical excursion as this is the day the Lord has made and we have no option but to rejoice.

This inaugural lecture is divided into five parts. The first part is the preamble. The second part delves into pre-colonial agriculture in Nigeria. The third part examines colonial agricultural inheritance. In the fourth is presented an analysis of post colonial agricultural development. The fifth part, serves as the conclusion. It critically examines the state of agricultural development and suggests ways of departure from the present state.

Preamble

Let me begin this section by saying that the practice of agriculture is as old as man's existence on earth. Some of the civilizations of the earliest times like that of Babylon and Egypt owed their growth to the practice of agriculture. Then, and even, as at now, people engage in agriculture for three principal reasons: subsistence agriculture, when you

produce for the stomach; commercial agriculture, when you produce for the market or industry and pastime agriculture, when you engage in agriculture as a hobby.

Apart from the provision of food, agriculture provides for industrial raw materials and serves as a veritable cash earner. As a broad based economic activity, it uses labour and capital to exploit land, and all its associate products and resources, for the provision of food and industrial output (Onodje, 2002:1).

In the conception of agricultural research and development are two complementary terms. It involves, for instance, the pursuit of research as a development goal as the former often leads to the latter. Research is seen as the primary motive of progress as its purpose is to extend the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to its reservoir (Enwonwu, 1984:1). As far as agriculture is concerned, research has been a major contributor to its practice and development. It is the function of research in agriculture to discover and investigate the fundamental laws governing plant and animal life, their productivity and the way in which these laws should be applied to the process of plant and animal husbandry in order to bring about greater productivity and economic efficiency in the agricultural industry. Agricultural development, in essence, is a continuous process which involves sustained commitment to policy, planning, allocation of resources and management of research linked with extension, training and infrastructural development in agricultural practice.

In this lecture, we shall use the term agricultural development to mean:

The process of transformation of traditional agriculture which makes it more productive, less directed solely at subsistence and more commercialized. It is a process of modernization which should ensure increased productivity and returns to the farm (Okigbo, 1980:219).

Agricultural research is the investigation of the farm business, the farmers' environment, and the growth processes of plants and animals so as to facilitate development of inputs of materials and management practices which could maximize production and give man greater control over the environment and growth processes of plants and animals. The difference between traditional agriculture and modern agriculture is the continuously increasing degree of control, which man exercises in maximizing the production permit of labour or area of land based on application of science and technology rather than on centuries of trial and error. Consequently, agricultural development is seen as the systematic use of knowledge gained from research for the production of useful materials, devices, system practices, methods and processes that result in increased returns to the farmer in relation to the cost of inputs on labour expended. Here- in lies the

relevance of research in agricultural development (Okigbo, 1980).

In a sense, it can be said that the management of agricultural research is most related to the history and development of agriculture in Nigeria. This is so because the typical agricultural research institutes, faculties of agriculture, universities of agriculture and other agricultural institutions are established to advance the economic interests of various governments, whether colonial or post-colonial. It should therefore, be less surprising that since there is a time factor, history of the agricultural practices is, equally, the indicator of the history of national development.

In discussing the search for development in Nigerian agriculture, as stated above, mention must be made that it is more than the pursuit of more funds as an achievable goal. Indeed it involves other factors of a socio-cultural nature which are beyond the more funding. Thus, by the search for Nigerian agricultural development we do not simply mean the search for appropriate ways of merely increasing funds for research. We also mean the desire for important common goals, interests and values in terms of which development can be forged and a sense of commitment developed. Our reference, therefore, is to a process, which at one and the same time, is a political, social, economic and cultural one which involves the development of social bonds which can enhance the capacity of government, society, researchers and farmers to work together to achieve important common purposes.

It is my belief that the process of agricultural research has unleashed certain centrifugal forces which have made the search for agricultural development as defined above an insurmountable task. Consequently, my career has been devoted to identifying these forces and suggest ways by which they can be surmounted, so as to ensure that Nigeria wakes up from her developmental slumber, agriculturally.

One important point that we should note is that agricultural research is an experience and not an ordinary growth in productivity or an increase in the aggregate of yield produced by a nation. A nation that has a developed agriculture has to experience poverty reduction, reduction in cost of labour and a technological innovation. We cannot really say that Nigeria is achieving the necessary agricultural development because the experience so far is slow and inadequate in the various areas highlighted. Undoubtedly she has reached the starting point, but this is not the same as taking off (Oladipo, 1986:20).

Finally one is not belittling the intellectual integrity of this gathering by trying to define the words farmer and briefcase. But it is necessary that we do so, in order to give clarity to our conceptualization of agricultural research. The two words may sound too simple but their usage in this particular context is limited. The simplest meaning of a farmer is somebody who owns or manages a farm. In other words, a farmer earns a living by managing or operating a farm either as an owner or a tenant. The owner or tenant then has a briefcase. The briefcase is a

case used for carrying papers or documents. It may be a flat case for carrying papers or documents and it may not. In as much as we think the two concepts correlate, there are some puzzles here, we suspect. Do we mean a farmer with neither hoe nor cutlass, a farmer with just theoretical and no practical knowledge, a farmer with cash in the briefcase or having policies, programmes, and documents locked inside the briefcase? Is the briefcase farmer alien to a peasant farmer? Is the briefcase farmer one that has chosen farming as a hobby? Is the farmer the elite administrator and strategic thinker? Too many questions, but there are limited answers. In this lecture we shall present some answers.

But note that many scholars have objectively studied Nigerian agricultural system and hardly do they commend its productivity in terms of results or its cost effectiveness in terms of scarce resource allocation. Actually comparison with other agricultural research systems like those of Asia, Latin America and such African countries like Zimbabwe and Kenya, indicates that the Nigerian system lacks the most basic facilities to match its available and potential intellectual capacities. The various studies have thus, clamoured for a stable research funding, greater programmes co-ordination, better articulated research priorities, and much more narrowly focused attention to key crops and farming systems (Aboyade, 2003: 171). Our position is not significantly different.

Pre-Colonial Agriculture

The chief occupation and the most important source of wealth in Nigeria before the imposition of colonial rule was agriculture (Ekundare, 1973:41). It was the principal activity in the greater part of Nigeria. The farmers engaged in food farming, combined it with palm oil processing, both for home consumption and local exchange (Oluwasanmi, 1966:2). Certain features of the pre-colonial agricultural economy of Nigeria are worthy of note. For instance, the indigenous method of cultivation was the widespread system common to all agricultural communities in the country. Their tools were and till today remain the traditional short-handled hoes and cutlasses for which there have been no substitutes (Olorunfemi, 1972:11).

A reasonable number of people engaged in agricultural pursuits primarily for consumption and local exchange (Carvin and Oyemakinde, 1980:84). It was not until the 1850s that significant change occurred in their agricultural practice because they had contact with an alien economy and were thus introduced to new ideas. It is Helleiner's (1966:387) contention that prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, agricultural production in Nigeria was mainly for subsistence. They were, specifically, for consumption for survival. The impression is being generally challenged today. Carvin and Oyemakinde (1980:482) are of the opinion that the term subsistence used to describe the pre-nineteenth century Nigerian

agriculture is hardly apt. The indigenous agricultural production, they pointed out, should be seen within specific technological need and culture demand. They were adapted to a specific challenge and must be evaluated from this perspective.

The issue is not that they were highly efficient, now in retrospect relative to the efficiency of modern technology but that they were able to meet the needs of the people at least to a degree of reasonableness. The first external influence on the local efforts came with the missionaries due largely to their education agenda and need for local consumption. The missionaries sought to develop Africa through the combined influence of religious and economic education. In the words of a leader of the anti-slavery movement:

Let the missionaries and school masters, the plough and the spade, together and agriculture will flourish; avenue to legitimate commerce will be opened: confidence between man and man will be inspired, whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect and Christianity operate as the proximate cause of this happy change (Buxton, 1840:282).

The 'Bible and the plough' view is a necessary starting point in any effort to understand the political, social and economic context of missionaries' interest in agricultural production and development. This is not just because there was direct invitation to the state to be involved, but also because the mercantilist perspective of Christianity was an important instrument in the construction of advantage and a superiority which the 'white' would exhibit. Missionaries' efforts included that of the Roman Catholic Church and the Scottish Mission both at Calabar. The missionaries and their converts not only introduced exotic crops, they also encouraged and promoted agricultural innovation and improvements throughout their lives.

The involvement of the foreign private companies in agricultural research and development in the mid 19th century cannot be underestimated. Such companies as the Royal Niger Company and the United African Company to mention a few introduced and established plantation schemes to train the indigenous farmers the art of western cultivation and seedlings protection. Both the Royal Niger Company and the United African Company founded experimental agricultural stations for experiments with coffee, cocoa and other crops in places like Lagos and Calabar.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed in West Africa, including Nigeria, the establishment of experimental stations for coffee, rubber, cocoa and other export crops (Anderson 1982:62). The period coincided with the incumbency of Alfred Moloney, the Governor of

Lagos between 1886 and 1891, who agreed in 1887, that the project of Lagos and Tropical Africa in general be hinged on developing their agricultural resources (Omosini, 1975:657). He was interested in agricultural development and to satisfy his desire, he formulated some strategies.

The main pivot of these strategies was the establishment of a botanical station which took the pattern of the Royal Gardens at Kew in West Indies. He meant it for a model farm where farmers would learn modern farming skill. It was also meant as a distribution centre where seeds and seedlings of economic plants would be given to farmers in Lagos and the hinterland. Also, he felt that it would serve as a training centre for young indigenes who wanted to pursue modern agriculture, and would eventually become superintendents of the station. Additionally, he wanted the station to be handled by qualified hands so as to achieve its objectives.

There were a number of factors that influenced Moloney. Among such factors was the fact that he preferred an agricultural economy to a commercial one (Omosini, 1975:674). He had complained seriously about the unflourishingly commercial economy of Lagos. For instance, he referred to the 1881 census of Lagos in which fifty percent of the total male population was plugged to the commercial world. He also bent towards diversifying the economy and shifting emphasis from trade to agricultural economy as the only solution to the problem. Furthermore, Alfred Moloney was positively impressed and motivated

by the success and exemplariness of the Church mission. He was greatly impressed by the Church Missionary Society's encouraging cultivation of cotton in Abeokuta. In addition to the above, he was influenced by his relationship with the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast. The mission had pioneered work on technical education and botanical experiments among its converts. Lastly, his opting for developing indigenous agricultural resources and introducing exotic ones was deeply seated in his personal conviction and his own practical experiences in West Africa (Moloney, 1890: 614).

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, contrary to earlier belief that the first botanical station was established in the first half of the 1890s, my research indicate that it was formally established in Ebute Metta, Lagos in November, 1887. The land acquired for the purpose was charged to Mr. James Mc Nair, a West Indian. He plotted out the land with bed meant for different kinds of plant.² The establishment of the botanical station was a cataclytic effect for a new economic policy for the whole of British West Africa, specifically in the 1890s when Europe demanded a maximal quantity of raw materials. By 1890, further stations were started for coffee and tobacco at Abutshin, Nkissi, Akppakka and the Creek.³ Another botanical station was established in the Oil River Protectorate at Calabar in 1893.

The botanical stations were designed to develop into practical schools for instructing farmers about production of export crops for European markets. The colonial

government engaged scientific agriculturists to supervise the work done in these gardens, to study the indigenous methods of agriculture, to suggest improvement and to introduce and cultivate products of other regions of about the same latitude that were likely to thrive and be profitable to Nigeria.⁴

The Colonial Agricultural Inheritance

It is not possible for me here to undertake a detailed critique of the various agricultural activities and changes that took place during the colonial era because of space and time. However, I shall try to recognize the decisive role of imperialism in determining the peculiar characteristics of Nigerian agricultural development. What emerged during the colonial period were two forms of research structure: departmental structure (1910-1950) and the ministerial structure (1951-1959). The period 1910-1950 was that of experimentation as it witnessed the intensification of research and extension services under a Director of Agriculture. The pre-independence era (1951-1959) which can also be referred to as the period of internal self government emphasized agriculture as exclusively a regional responsibility.

The period between 1900 and 1944 has been described by Adesina(1989:19) as a period of *laissez faire* oriented development policy during which government made provision for intensified research and experimentation on the main problems of agriculture and for the application of

results.⁵ In spite of the fact that there were many decisions of the colonial state in regard to land tenure, fiscal and other matters impinging on agriculture, there was hardly any coherent and identifiable set of agricultural policies. Thus, the early agricultural policies were ad-hoc and basically exploitative and Eurocentric. Shenton (1987:14) rightly observed that Nigeria's three major agricultural exports were only accorded any great importance and credit for selfish interests.

That the British colonial government took active interest in the development of agriculture should not be mistaken to mean that it had the aim of raising the living standard of Nigerians or expose Nigerian agricultural practices to the world market. The reality was that it (colonial government) created structures, policies and processes that served primarily its own economic and political interests (Afolabi 1997:14). The major concern of the British was to establish an export enclave in the colony whose resources could be processed and shipped to the home country. Even though, it tried to consolidate the land management in Nigeria, it however refused and failed to promote extensive agriculture. Rather, it settled for what the peasants could produce (Iyegha, 1988:49).

The departmentalization of agricultural administration began in 1910 when Moor Plantation became the headquarters of the nation's department of Agriculture (Berry, 1968:97). Moor plantation was a favoured choice because by this time, the British Cotton Growing

Association had abandoned the plantation as a centre for cotton cultivation and it had become an impoverished soil and site ravaged by insects and pest. Two years later in 1912, separate Departments of Agriculture were set up for Northern and Southern Nigeria respectively at Samaru and Moor Plantation, Ibadan. At first the Departments of Agriculture were mainly revenue raising departments, concentrating on increasing crop yields. As time went on, it came to be realized that getting local farmers to adopt improved methods was at least as important a part of their duties as that of devising improvements and increased emphasis was laid on the extension work of the file staff. The task of agricultural departments also included holding public lectures, issuing from time to time memoranda on most approved methods of cultivation and promoting export products (Olorunfemi, 1972:71).

It is remarkable to note that the first agricultural institution was established at Moor Plantation, Ibadan in 1921, with the objective of training junior and intermediate technical manpower for the research institute and the experimental stations being established all over the country. Ten years later, a similar school was established at Samaru, Zaria, with the main objective of training junior workers for agricultural services in the northern part of the country. The two schools were administered by the Department of Agriculture as a service unit.

The agricultural activities of the Department of Agriculture were for sometime paralysed, because of the First World War 1914-1919. They were also influenced by the non-plantation orientation of the colonial government. There was no large scale farming and thus no mechanization. The failure of the British colonial government in the East African Kenya Scheme of plantation agriculture discouraged her from pursuing large scale plantation agriculture in Nigeria. The government, unwilling to leave the people completely to the mercy of the ruthless exploitation of the foreign capitalists, could only act as the watchdog rather than as investor. The government was, therefore, most of the time on the sideline at least until a new Department of Agriculture incorporating the Northern and Southern Nigeria Departments, under the Directorship of O.T Faulkner, was established in 1921. Faulkner was an officer with Indian experience and outlook and he left a lasting memory in the institutionalization of what was later called "Faulkner Layout". Faulkner's successor, J.R. Mackie in 1926 would be remembered for consolidating his pioneering agricultural department's activities.

We may be tempted to wonder why, in spite of the fact that agricultural research extension and activities were of paramount importance to the Agricultural Department, the Department still had some problems with the colonial government. The reason is that it was not easy for the department to implement their plans as they were often frustrated by political officers acting for supposed reasons

of state. It was this that made Mackie to write that "the whole history of my department since 1920 shows that almost every scheme which involved work among the farmers has been opposed or obstructed."⁶

It is pertinent to remark here also, that the Nigerian Marketing Boards had its origin in war time arrangement for the orderly marketing of West African produce and protection of British supplies of raw materials. Having been impressed with the first positive step towards solving the problems of cocoa disease in 1938 by Agricultural Department of the Ghana government at New Tafo, the other British West African colonies including, Nigeria, Gambia and Sierra Leone decided to pool their resources together to finance a joint research institute. Thus, the West African Cocoa Research Institute was established at New Tafo in Ghana with sub-stations in other British West African colonies including Nigeria.⁷

Yet, in spite of changes here and there, the colonial government did not really have any definite agricultural research policy. The British established the agricultural research stations for their own selfish purposes. The stations were on a rather small scale. The research workers were few, mostly Europeans. The stations themselves were of relatively small sizes in infrastructural capabilities compared to their modern day counterparts. Moreover, the staff were committed not to the Nigerian nation or people but to their mother country. We, therefore, think that the establishment of the research stations was an

experimentation in which the indigenous population benefited very little from research efforts. The economy benefited the metropolis substantially and the colony the least. Had the British allowed both export crops and food crops to develop simultaneously, there would probably have been a shift in the way research into agriculture unfold in post colonial Nigeria. The legacy of colonialism was a dualistic structure of research consisting of a relatively progressive subsector of usually, but not necessarily, large production units of export crops, and a stagnant sub-sector of peasants producing food commodities primarily for their own consumption.

The European model, as could be inferred from the above had more salient features. First, basic research was rudimentary. There was a close integration of applied research and extension as these were responsibilities of the same department of agriculture. Second, the research officers during this era were invariably foreigners on tours lasting about three years. Consequently, and in many cases, programmes and projects were prone to discontinuation especially when an officer left and there was no suitable replacement or when the outgoing officers left no records of what had been done. Also, research and extension efforts were focused on export crops, such as cocoa, cotton, groundnut and oil palm produce which, apart from satisfying the raw material needs of European countries, provided the much needed foreign exchange required to finance consumer goods and capital items especially for

laying network of transportation infrastructure. Moreover, apart from the production of tree crops like rubber, oil palm and cocoa in the small farmer production systems, rice in particular was encouraged as cash crops in some parts of southern Nigeria and was used also for the farmers own consumption. Furthermore, the information extended to the farmers was limited and, to some extent, extension was managed through a combination of coercion and limited provision of means and service. For most times the farmers were passive receivers of knowledge (Afolabi, 1998:17).

It can also be rightly asserted that some problems had arisen with respect to the location of research institutes. For example, the British Cotton Growing Association erroneously believed that cotton could be grown in Ibadan, and began research in Moor Plantation in 1905 only to abandon the station five years later. Similarly the National Cereals Research Institute at Moor Plantation, Ibadan, on inheriting the assets of the Department of Agriculture, was given the mandate to conduct rice research in Nigeria, even though Ibadan is not in a major rice growing zone. It was only recently transferred to Badeggi (Niger State) a more suitable ecological zone.

By 1946, Sir Arthur Richards, the Governor General of Nigeria, divided Nigeria into three different regions, namely Eastern Region, Northern Region and Western Region. This division was purely for administrative convenience. The implementation and adoption of the 1951

constitution then gave way to internal self government and led to the reorganization of services. By this, there was the establishment of a federal Department of Agriculture with provision for research and extension for the regions.

The period 1951-1959 witnessed the growth of the regional administration as semi-autonomous planning and decision making units with substantial responsibilities (Adesina, 1992). The colonial rulers, as pointed out earlier, deliberately developed institutes, structures and mechanisms with which they laid foundation for the contemporary peripheral location and role of the Nigerian formation in international market (Falola, 1987). The regions were, therefore, from the onset steered into an export oriented agriculture meant for providing raw materials, such as cocoa, palm oil, palm kernel, cotton and groundnut for local and international industries. The activities and structure of agricultural research during this era were not significantly different from that of the colonial government. Although, an enlarged administrative structure emerged, attempting to be all inclusive, because of the regionalization policy, there was a change only in the designation of offices and officers. The regional Department of Agriculture was redesignated Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This was at the regional level only. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources was grouped into divisions or units with specific assignments.

Several scholars have opined that the regional government, in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources did not perform well. But my own research lead me to ponder on whether there could be anything different. The internal self government did not necessarily imply full independence. The fact that they continued the colonial policy on agriculture limited the capability to deliver. We can rightly say that the efforts of both the colonial and self internal governments on agricultural development in Nigeria were diffused and weak (Hallet 1971). The major point, though is that the period 1945-1959 witnessed no agricultural sector objectives.

Post Colonial Era

The first decade after independence was a crucial period. It could be termed the transitional stage because it was the bridge between dependence of colonialism and self reliance of post independence. The challenge was for Nigeria to build up strong, well ordered research staff. Everywhere there was shortage of trained, seasoned and experienced personnel. The vacuum is yet to be filled.

Administratively, many of the new leaders were not ready for their jobs. As A. Ayida (1987:5) opined, those who took over from the British colonialists were opportunists who had not gathered enough skills, knowledge and experience to occupy top posts. In order to correct this situation, research administrators, in their bid to reduce

incompetence, felt that they only needed to send the researchers out of the country for postgraduate training. This was the first step they took to build research competence. Many of the trainees returned with their degrees. There was nothing wrong with this, but the fact that those graduates only returned home and in no time were entrusted with major research responsibilities without the seasoning experience required to make proper decisions, limited their inputs. At present, there are about eighteen agricultural research institutes established all over the country in order to achieve the objective of agricultural development. The major issue seems to have been that almost everyone expected far too much from the start.

The search for alternative agricultural research system is informed by the perceived magnitude of the problems of the research scientists. Each and every research consultant had identified these problems using parameters and criteria which they found most applicable. The criteria may be classified into three categories: first is the criterion of working conditions, the environmental constraints. Second is the dialogue between the farmer and the researcher, the communication link. Third is the organization criterion. Between 1960 and now, various ministerial responsibilities have been realigned and several new organizations, predominantly parastatals, are set up within very short time, often without any pre-establishment survey and analysis.

The apparent limited productivity of the first generation of Nigerians trained to replace European research scientists can be traced to lack of effective tools, limited exposure to contextual demands and manner of training. But it is hardly too much to say that, even though well endowed Nigerians might be available, their successes would depend on how well they are remunerated, and the atmosphere in which they perform their routine duties.

Prior to 1970, the Nigerian economy was predominantly agriculture, with agriculture accounting for about 67% of the total GDP, employing more than 5% of the labour force and being responsible for 60% of the total foreign exchange earnings. With increased fortunes of the country especially from the oil sector, agriculture suffered neglect, from the second half of the 1970s. The resultant effect could be seen in stagnation of agricultural production and an increasing dependence on imports to meet the basic food needs of Nigeria. Between 1975 and 1985 the dominant position of agriculture was taken over by petroleum which then had 89.7% and 97.1% export earnings respectively as against agriculture taking a meagre 2%. Recent remarks by the federal government states that agriculture now contributes 39% GNP and about 3% of total foreign exchange earnings. It accounts for over 80% non oil export and employ about 70% of the nation's active labour. The federal government further remarked that from a food deficit situation of the late 1970s and early 1980s, the country's agriculture has recorded significant improvements. To the federal

government, Nigeria has attained self sufficiency in the production of major staples, such as maize, sorghum, cassava and millet. She is the largest producer of cassava, yams and cocoyam in the world. This has earned her a gold medal from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Obasanjo, 2004).

But then, the average yield and quality of every Nigerian agricultural unit, be it farm, land for grains, crops, fruits, vegetables, production or livestock such as cows, sheep and goods or a pond of water, is among the lowest in the world (Nyako:2001,4). The current yield of Nigerian agricultural units vis-a-vis those of agriculturally developed nations are:

*Maize average yield per hectare: 1.2 tons as against world's average of 12 tons with some nations obtaining as much as 18 tons per hectare without the use of fertilizers.

*Groundnut average yield per hectare: 400kg as against 2,700kg of a Turkish, Spanish or Egyptian farm price of our best quality is at best 40% of others; financial return from an agricultural unit is therefore, 5% of the figure of those countries.

*Onions average yield per hectare: 4 metric tons as against 120 tons of a Yemen farmer, namely 3.3%; our onions are of much poorer quality than the Texas variety onion.

*Tomatoes average yield per hectare: 5 tons as against 100 tons of an Israeli farmer (our tomatoes are of much poorer quality than Israeli's cherry variety); profit from a hectare is less than N50,000 as against \$100,000= (N10m) of his Israeli's counterpart.

*Potatoes average yield: 4 tons as against 60-80 tons of USA or Irish.

*Rice average yield: 1.5 tons/hectare as against 20 tons of that of a Thai farmer who may obtain up to 40 tons annually from the same unit by multiple cultivation.

*Cocoa average yield per hectare: 150kg as against 2,000kg of that of Ivory Coast, Ghana, Malaysia and Brazil etc. Cocoa butter: 50% at best as against 70% of other farmers. Price of our best quality is about 70% of farmers, (Ivorian, Ghanaian, Malaysian and Brazilian); financial return from a hectare is, therefore, about 57% of that of farmer in those countries.

*Cow average yield: 300 litres/lactation as against 10,000 litres namely 3%; first calving 4-5 years as against 20-22 months; Carcass weight at 3 years: 150kg as against 1500kg for other exotic stocks (rate of calving 2 years as against annually) First heat: 3-4 years as against 8 months; Pecosity of bulls: 6years as against 2years.

It is disheartening that Nigeria's rate of agricultural research growth after independence is neither satisfactory nor sufficient to raise the living standards to level competitive with those in affluent countries. What are the possible reasons?

While some blame the policy framework, others pick on the low policy relevance of research so far conducted in the country. Others have put the blame squarely on the

shoulders of the average Nigerian farmer who is characterized as an irrational, conservative, ignorant and superstitious resource-allocator (Aribisala: 1983). Some still attribute the poor performance of these farmers to the following factors:

- resource-poverty and unnecessary intervention in agricultural production by the country's public sector(Olayide, 1976)
- increasing population pressure on the land(World Bank, 1981)
- poor extension service and contact with farmers(Okigbo, 1986)
- increasing environmental degradation and adoption of non-sustainable agricultural practices (Eicher 1985, Brown and Wolf 1985, 1988)
- insufficient investment in agricultural research and technology(Stafel, 1986) and
- non-policy relevance of completed research works which in most cases end in the prescription of experience packages for adoption by farmers(Ikpi, 1989)

Evidently, the human aspects of agricultural research outweigh any other aspect in importance because the usefulness or ineffectiveness of a research system is a function of the capability of the researchers (scientists, administrators, aides and so on) to perform properly and sustain that performance. The research system therefore owes it a duty to the nation to induce the researchers' motivation and creativity and to continue upgrading their research capabilities.

Nigerian bureaucrats are institution builders. As institution builders they feel that the abolition of Nigerian Council for Science and Technology (NCST) and the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) and the building of other institutions would solve development problems. Frequent changes in agricultural research, of course, have stemmed from two sources: the changes that are directly the changes in political regimes, and two, changes in policies which are the result of inadequate articulation and understanding of the rationale behind policies. Some policy distortions and improper sense of priorities crippled institutions like the NSTDA and NCST, while policies like the "Operation Feed the Nation", (OFN), "Green Revolution," and "Back to Land" were cosmetics, meant to give semblance of change which has not occurred.

What is certain is that the problems militating against agricultural development are as serious as they were at independence. In other words, research has not adequately

addressed many of the most important constraints of agricultural development in Nigeria. It is beset with problems. Scholars like B N.Okigbo, S.O. Olayide, F.S. Idachaba, Oyatoye, Oyenuga and my humble self have extensively discussed the various problems which include but are not limited to financial inadequacy, leadership incompetence, inadequacy of materials and equipment, uncondusive socio-political environment, ineffective delivery of results, research management problem and location sites. For example Okigbo (1986) argued that:

Their location distribution create insurmountable logistic problems, wastage of resources, unnecessary duplication of efforts through the proliferation of costly facilities and insufficiency, consequent upon any attempt to ensure that location-specific packages of technology and the associated services are rendered to all parts of the country which require them.

Their unsuitable location made it difficult to access raw materials they needed to work with. This situation tends to exaggerate or inflate the running costs of the institution. As far back as 1975, it has been found out that six out of fourteen agricultural research institutes were unsuitable location for their research.

Nigeria's agricultural research also has serious financial problems. It is not the amount spent which is the main problem. Rather, as our research show it is the way in which these amounts are allocated (Diouf, 1990:3) that is the problem. This is why we have categorized financial problems into two: namely poor level of research funding and instability of research funding (Idachaba, 1986). The research institutions have since become ineffective because of fluctuations caused by instability of research funding. This has made it difficult for researchers to predict research results. And, in fact, many of the projects could not be completed because of financial costs. Equally sad is the fact that most resources are spent on personnel, with equipment and operational costs being of lower priority. Also, irregular timing of allocation creates cash flow problems often at a crucial stage in a crucial process, causing irreversible damages. The fluctuation in the amount available creates uncertainty and difficulty in planning, resulting in inadequate maintenance of equipment, offices, laboratories and field experiments. S. M. Nwosu has asserted that while researchers never knew the problems that arose in the field, the fieldworker, that is extension workers, lacked the knowledge of research results. Even if they know, the interest, will, courage, incentives and wherewithal to disseminate such information are not there. In a keynote address delivered by Professor Ajobola-Taylor, Director Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, (IAR&T)

Ibadan, (1978), to the first National Workshop on the role of agricultural extension and research liaison service in improved technology transfer in agriculture, he commented:

Research in itself is valueless, in a development context if it is not extended to the users. But let me hasten to say that the extension of half baked, ill digested and inappropriate technology is even more harmful than no transfer.

Ajibola-Taylor further asserted that irrelevance in agricultural research findings in Nigeria stems from these reasons: First, is the failure of most agricultural scientists to start off their research from the level of the farmer; second, agricultural scientists and researchers in the faculties of agriculture of Nigerian universities and agricultural research institutes are not familiar with the structure of a typical farmer's farm in the immediate environment of their institutions. According to Taylor, the scientist is as distant to the farmer, who he (scientist) claims to be benefitting by his research, as the moon is far from the earth. This is why he made a passionate plea, two years later, in 1980, that:

Our agricultural scientists should not be farmer-shy; they should draw farmers into their trial processes early, so that with them they can observe experience and even experiment together.

We concur.

Cynicism

We want to call our attention to the fact that the ancient man was a research worker. His instruments of research were different. He depended on personal observations, and on hit and miss methods. Today's research is seemingly more organized because it is less individualized and much better equipped. Technological advancement has subdued nature and created new frontiers of agricultural research. This development suggests that man has moved beyond primitivity. But, how far have Nigerians moved beyond 'hoe and cutlass' agriculture? It is not that there are no changes in the agricultural history or research in Nigeria but the reality is that some operators and practitioners of agriculture including scientists, academics, researchers and even students are cynical about what they do. The examples and instance I will cite may look simple or unserious but they are germane.

Let us take, for example, the popular Faculty of Agriculture chorus in one of the Nigerian Universities:⁸

There is one thing I want to be 0
There is one thing I want to be
There is one thing I want to be 0
There is one thing I want to be
Yeh I want to be a farmer
Yeh I want to be a farmer
Yeh! Yeh!! . Yeh!! I want to be a farmer
There is one thing I want to be

Or, take another example, one of the earliest choruses in the Southwestern Nigeria especially in the 1950s through the early 1970s which is now the popular chorus of a Faculty of Agriculture in another great university in Nigeria:⁹

Ise Agbe nise ile wa
Eni ko sise, a ma jale
Iwe kiko, laisi oko
Ati ada, koi pe o Ko ipe o.

Meaning

Farming is our indigenous occupation,
an idle hand,
will definitely steal,
Education without hoe and
cutlass is incomplete (2x)

The two examples above are likely to have originated at the same time. The choruses have become mere rhetorics or slogans. In all honesty, how many of our students in the faculties of agriculture do take to farming after graduation?

The government may have its faults but of what percentage are those interested? In the 1950s through 1970s, practical agriculture was compulsory in both primary and secondary schools. Almost everybody was involved in farming even at the subsistence level. Nowadays the reverse is the case not only because of the oil boom of the 1970s but because of the import of technological and computer advances. The two choruses, I suspect now belong to the 'old school'.

A friend of mine, who holds a doctorate degree in one of the specialized fields of agricultural sciences, had to withdraw two of his children from a school because they were asked to cut grass after resumption from holiday. He queried why his children should hold cutlass and suffer the same way he did while in school. Strange as the behaviour may seem, the relevant questions are:

- (i) How many of the students in faculties of agricultural sciences are really interested in the study of agricultural sciences?
- (ii) Are they forced to do such courses in agricultural science and why?
- (iii) Why should agricultural sciences be dumping ground for 'rejects' of other disciplines?

- (iv) How many students of agricultural sciences have hoes and cutlasses?
- (v) How many of them do the practical aspects of the farm year on their own without hiring labourers or extra hands?
- (vi) How many of them have seen cocoa/rubber/palm oil plantations before?
- (vii) How many of the students have seen cocoa seedlings before?
- (viii) How many students of Animal Production and Health Department can hold/feed chicken, rabbit or cow?
- (ix) How many students passed through secondary schools that have land to do practical agriculture?

Since independence, we can count on our fingertips the number of Federal Ministers or State Commissioners of Agriculture that have degrees or even diploma in Agricultural Sciences or related disciplines. What do we expect if we have been putting square pegs in round holes? For instance, asking a Professor of Architecture to man the

Ministry of Agriculture is ridiculous. Agricultural scientists are professionals and the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources should be so treated.

A related issue is the array of private commercial farms that we now have in the country. Most of the farms are owned by retired this or that or serving this or that. In most cases, it is not that they are really interested in feeding the nation. Our observations suggest that they disguise under private farms to acquire such land for their grandchildren. At the end of the day, if we ask the productivity level of these agricultural activities the only conclusion to be reached is that theirs is a convenient strategy to deceive the whole world.

So, we come to the briefcase metaphor. The briefcase farmers first came in the person of European imperialist. The British colonial officers did not encourage farming. They even disturbed enthusiastic support of planning by J.R Mackie. They were here to enrich their 'home government' by establishing export enclave. Now we have the Nigerian briefcase farmers. They are into agriculture to enrich themselves. The briefcase is loaded with money rather than seedlings, as they smile to the bank. Or, to put it differently, as they come away from the bank, they smile because the briefcase would deliver not seedlings but money for political projects. The academic farmers are not left out. Check the briefcase, at best it contains books, but they may be books not related to agriculture. We have come

this far because we have not planned the research and administration of agriculture well. We hate to end my lecture on this note. But we can only hope that as we research further into agricultural development we have a less negative picture.

Conclusion

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, we can confidently say that Nigeria has relied for too long on the poor and uninformed to feed her and produce her exports. Agriculture has been left to the peasants and mostly to the uneducated. The impression of when you get education, you get out of farming has not been beneficial. We do not need to shy away from the fact that the peasants have played their part in most difficult conditions, working under exploitation and oppressive landlords and governments and lacking access to reasonable credits and markets. It is not a curse to say that peasants will remain with us for some time. However, before they exit, it is the responsibility of government, agricultural scientists, agricultural economists and extension workers and agricultural engineers to improve their conditions of production in order to reduce their poverty and numbers.

It is interesting to note that just 3% of the population of the United States of America feed all Americans. The reason for this is that their farmers do not only farm on a

large scale but use latest technologies in their production. They can produce in commercial quantities. They have consistent quality and put their products on the markets at competitive prices. It is not that Nigerians cannot do this but we need to re-orientate ourselves to understand that modern agriculture requires capital and technology.

I wish I could be equally bold in pronouncing on the future of agricultural research and development in Nigeria. I genuinely do not know its future because historians are not seers or fortune tellers.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, ladies and gentlemen, LAUTECH, the best state university in the country can do the magic. First, only students interested in agricultural sciences should be so admitted. Second, it may not be out of place if our Faculty of Agricultural Sciences makes a courageous step by introducing the teaching of the history of agricultural sciences, research, policies, strategies and development. There in, the students will come across fake, failed, successful agricultural practices, policies etc and the need to bolt up change. We are aware of various on-going researches especially in our departments of Agronomy, Agricultural Economics and Extension, Agricultural Engineering and Animal Production and Health that are problem solving. We can also be different from others by telling the world what we are doing here. The impact of our great university must be felt in the area of food security, that is, production, distribution and storage. First, we could start from our immediate environment of the university and

Ogbomoso community to the larger parts of Oyo and Osun states and later to the rest of the country.

Finally, we must hearken to the voice of farmers as we all grapple with creating a viable agricultural sector in Nigeria. In fact, every Nigerian will be proud if the country is richly blessed with a leader that can dramatically lead us to agricultural-led industrial development. God loves Nigeria and loves every Nigerian by giving us not only good soil but also good weather. Let our diverse experiences solve the rest of the problems.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I rest my case.

Notes

1. Carr, E.H. (1989) *What is History?* Second Edition by R.W Davies, London, Macmillan, P.42.

2. Address to 'Brazilians' September 30, 1888
Omosini O. (1975) remarked that quite a number of the unrated Africans and Brazilians responded enthusiastically to Moloney's plan. He described this botanical station as "Moloney's pet project".

3. The one at Nkissi was on a considerable scale and in 1905 yielded a crop of 380,000 lbs in which tons were prepared for.

4. N.A.I.C.S.O. 1/19 "Sir Egerton to Colonial Office January 26 1907".

5. N.A.I PR/B1 **Nigeria State of Agricultural Policy**, Lagos Printer 1946.

6. Apart from the frustration via supposed "reasons of state" there was also the unavailability of qualified foreign agricultural officers that could be appointed. So also was the refusal of the colonial government to spend huge amount of money on colonial agriculture. Furthermore, the colonial government wanted each colony to develop according to its financial ability.

7. *There were: West African Institute for Rice Research (WAIFRR) 1948 Rokupr, West African Stored Products Research Institute (WASPRI) 1948, Lagos, West African Institute For oil Palm Research (WAIFOR) 1951, Benin, Nigeria, West African Fisheries Research Institute (WAFRI), 1952, Freetown, Sierra Leone, West African Institute for Trypanosomiasis (WAITR), Vom, Nigerian and West African Groundnut Council (WAGC), Gambia. The euphoria of independence led to the discontinuation of the*

inter territorial research institute in 1962 and by 1964 Nigeria took over the inter-territorial commodity institutes.

8 Faculty of Agriculture chorus, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

9 Faculty of Agricultural Sciences chorus of LAUTECH, Ogbomoso.

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