



EFFECTS OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY ON POVERTY REDUCTION AMONG BENEFICIARIES IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The research was conducted to assess the effects of National Programme for Food Security on poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Sokoto state, Nigeria. Three-stage purposive sampling technique was used in the study select one hundred and twenty (120) beneficiaries of the programme that made the sample size. Data collected using structured questionnaire was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Result shows that majority (57.5%) of the beneficiaries fall within the age range of 21-40 years. Majority (77.5%) practice farming as their primary and secondary (58.3%) occupation. Majority of the beneficiaries (64.1%) had Qur'anic education. All the beneficiaries have benefited in one way or the other from programme. However, the effect of the project on poverty reduction has not been appreciated as an average (50%) of the effect remained undecided, 30.8% disagreed, and only 10.8% of the beneficiaries agreed that the project has assisted in addressing poverty in the area. It is recommended that the loan provided per individual should be increased. Agricultural extension service and other inputs like agro-chemicals should be integrated into the programme so as to enable production at commercial quantity.

Keywords: Food security; effects; poverty; beneficiaries

INTRODUCTION

The issue of poverty has been a universal phenomenon, touches all structure of human life. According to FAO hunger report (2011), 850 million people of the world are undernourished from 2006 – 2008. In the same period, Nigeria has 9.4 million persons affected out of its total population of 147.7 million. Many researches revealed that women and children are much more affected by hunger and its consequences than men. Women make up a little over half of the world's population and nearly two-third of the world's hungry people. Children, particularly at their early ages need balanced diet for proper growth and body maintenance. UNICEF (2007) reported that 10.9 million children under five years die in developing countries each year due to malnutrition and hunger related diseases, which caused 60% of the deaths.

Different ways or avenues have been identified in addressing poverty and hunger across the globe. These include agriculture, tourism, mining, telecommunications etc. Of these and other means, agriculture has been said to be more relevant way, particularly for the developing nations. Investment in agriculture remains critical to sustainable long-term food security. For example, cost-effective irrigation and improved practices as well as seeds development through agricultural research can reduce the production risk facing farmers especially smallholders and reduce price volatility (FAO, 2011).

However, many developing countries, particularly in some parts of Asia and Africa have been unable to balance, much less increase food output in relation to population growth. The decline in food self-sufficiency in the Sahel is perhaps, the most dramatic example of this. For those developing countries with high rate of economic growth, food consumption has not suffered, but for those less successful economically this has not been the case (Pierce, 1990). This is basic divergence between economic and physiological demands for food. Inability to pay for needed foodstuffs represents one of the fundamental stumbling blocks for achievement of proper nutrition in many of these countries.

In Nigeria, food security which goes with food self-sufficiency and sustainability is still elusive (Nworgu, 2005). This is because the agricultural sector has not been able to deal effectively with the problem of food security for the Nigerian people when viewed from the stand point of the nutritional status (Daudu and Ajayi, 2009). The main objective of the study was to assess the effects of National Programme on Food Security on the beneficiaries in the Sokoto state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

Sokoto state is located in the north-western geopolitical zone of Nigeria near the confluence of the Sokoto Rima and River Basin. Sokoto is in the dry Sahel surrounded by sandy savannah and isolated hills, with annual average temperature of 28.3°C, it covers a land area of 26, 648.48 km² and located within longitudes 11°30 – 13°E and latitudes 4° - 6° 40'N with a population of 3.7 million people (NPC, 2006). The state is bordered by Kebbi from the South, Zamfara from the East and Niger Republic from North-West. Agriculture is the main stay of the state's economy. Soil varies from sandy to clay loam at upland and Fadama areas. The soil types make it possible for a variety of crops at the sites. It grows a variety of crops; main crops grown during rainy season include Sorghum, Millet, rice, cowpea, groundnut, maize, cassava and okra. While tomatoes, pepper, onion, garlic, carrot, and sugar cane are grown during the dry season. Animal husbandry is also popular; cattle, sheep, goats and camels, as well as different classes of poultry are found, while communities along river banks engage in fishing activities.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Three-stage purposive sampling technique was used in the study. This was based on the beneficiaries of the programme only. First, four (4) Local Government Areas that have benefited from the programme were selected. Second, one village was selected from each of the Local Government Areas. Finally, thirty (30) beneficiaries were selected from each of the villages. Thus, a total of 120 beneficiaries constitute study sample size.

Data Collection and Analysis

Both primary data and secondary information were collected for the study. The primary data was collected using structured questionnaire consisting of open and close ended questions while the secondary information was collected from published documents such as journals, seminar papers, internet browsing, text books, pass students project, and other secondary literature sources. The primary data generated from the study was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis in form of frequency and percentage.

RESULTS

Results in Table 1 reveals that 57.5 % of the beneficiaries were within the age range of 21 and 40 years old, while 7.5 % were within 1 - 20 years. On the level of education, majority (64.2%) of the respondents attended Qur'anic schools, while only 5 percent of the beneficiaries had acquired tertiary education. However, 5.8 percent were non-literate.

Table 1: Distribution of Beneficiaries' Based on Socioeconomic Characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
1 – 20	9	7.5
21 – 40	69	57.5
41 – 60	31	25.8
61 and above	11	9.2
Gender (male or female)		
Male	85	70.8
Female	35	29.2
Marital Status		
Married	120	100
Single	0	0
Family size		
1 – 5	3	2.5
6 – 10	16	13.3
11 – 15	38	31.6
16 and above	63	52.6
Educational background		
Non-literate	7	5.8
Qur'anic Education	77	64.2
Primary	19	15.8
Secondary	11	9.2
Tertiary	6	5.0

Table 2 shows that farming was the major occupation of the beneficiaries in the study area as 77.5 % of the respondents indicated that farming was their primary occupation, while 58.3 % indicated that it was their secondary occupation. Furthermore, the table indicates that 43.3 % practice both rainfed and irrigated farming.

Table 2: Occupation, type of farming and size of farmland of the beneficiaries

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Primary occupation		
Farming	93	77.5
Trading	24	20
Civil servant	2	1.7
Others	1	0.8
Secondary occupation		
Farming	70	58.3
Trading	49	40.8
Civil servant	1	0.8
Type of farming system		
Rainfed	37	30.8
Irrigated	31	25.8
Both	52	43.3
Size of Farm Land (per hectares)		
< 2	30	25
2 – 3	47	39.2
4 – 5	32	26.7
> 5	11	9.2

Table 3 reveals that all the beneficiaries had benefited from the project for the past five years. 35 % received farm inputs, such as fertilizers, improved seeds and water-pump machines at highly subsidized rates, while majority (65%) of the beneficiaries received soft loans ranging from ₦10,000 to ₦50,000.

Table 3: Distribution of Beneficiaries Based on Benefits Derived from the Programme

Beneficiaries	Frequency	Percentage
Benefited	120	100
Not benefited	0	0
Period of benefit (years)		
1 – 5	120	100
6 – 10	0	0
11 - 15	0	0
16 and above	0	0
Type of Benefit		
Provision of inputs	42	35
Access loan	78	65
Amount received (₦)		
<10,000	1	0.8
10,000-20,000	32	41
21,000 – 50,000	45	58.3
Type of Inputs		
Fertilizer	52	43.3
Pumping machine	31	25.8

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Seeds	37	30.8
Others	0	0

Table 4 indicates that majority (74.2%) of the beneficiaries rated the programme as good, while 4.2 percent rated it as poor. The table further indicates that 49.2 percent of the beneficiaries agreed to the success of the programme, 12.5 percent strongly disagreed, while 38.3 percent were undecided. As regards the effect of the programme on addressing poverty half of the beneficiaries (50%) were undecided, while only 8.3 % agreed to its effect in addressing poverty.

Table 4: Distribution of beneficiaries based on performance, success of the and effect of the programme in addressing poverty

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Programme performance		
Excellent	0	0
Very good	26	21.6
Good	89	74.2
Poor	5	4.2
Very poor	0	0
Programme Success		
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	59	49.2
Undecided	46	38.3
Strongly disagree	15	12.5
Disagree	0	0
Effect of the Programme in Addressing Poverty		
Strongly agree	0	0
Agree	10	8.3
Undecided	60	50
Disagree	37	30.8
Strongly disagree	13	10.8

DISCUSSION

Most of the beneficiaries of the programme fall within the active production age, which is the age that individuals are found to be physically active in field operations. All the beneficiaries were married, that is, most of the actively practicing farmers in the study area were married, thus, assumed to be responsible individuals that can judiciously utilize the packages received from the programme for the purpose intended.

Eighty percent of the respondents were educated in one way or the other. Literate farmers have added advantages over the non-literate in terms of acquiring and utilization of new agricultural technologies, practices or programmes. This agrees with Roling (1988) that, once a farmer has got such system (knowledge), he or she has become a better decision maker in farm business. This finding was reaffirmed by Ogbureke (2011), who opined that agriculture is the best way to reduce poverty considering that about 70% or

more of the nation population engages in one agricultural venture or the other. The same table 1 further shows that most (39.2%) of the respondents own a farmland size ranging from 0-3 hectares while, only 9.2 percent of the beneficiaries possess farmland size greater than five hectares. This result was similar to that of Ajibola (2006) and Adesokan (2007) as cited in Dayo (2009) that majority of the rural farmers in Nigeria have farmland size ranging from zero to two hectares.

None of the beneficiaries got more than ₦50,000 which means that, the volume of the loan per individual farmer was low, therefore, not sufficient for them to cultivate at commercial quantity.

As obtained on table 4, majority of the beneficiaries agreed that the programme has performed well. The table also shows that about half of the beneficiaries (49.2%) were of the opinion that the programme was a success, even though 38.3% remained undecided. However, 12.5 percent of the respondents went strongly against the success of the programme. The implication was that, most of the beneficiaries agreed that the project was successful.

Despite the fact that the beneficiaries' responses on the performance and success of the programme were positive, they were of the view that, the programme did not have meaningful effects on addressing poverty in the study area. The same table 4 further indicates that an average percentage of the beneficiaries (50%) were undecided of whether the programme had effect in addressing poverty in the study area. Nevertheless, 5% of the beneficiaries agreed that the programme made an effect in addressing poverty in the study area.

CONCLUSION

Beneficiaries of National Programme on Food Security in Sokoto State were generally farmers, married and fall within the youthful age. The programme has brought about positive changes in terms of the benefits derived. However, only a few of the beneficiaries agreed to the effect of the programme on poverty reduction, all others strongly disagreed, disagreed or were undecided.

Agricultural extension service should be enhanced to incorporate educational programmes that could increase the knowledge of the farmers as they lack western education. Volume of loan per individual farmer should be increased to better the output of the beneficiaries. Inputs like agro-chemicals should be integrated into the programme so as to enable the farmers produce at commercial quantity.

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