

FOOD POLICY FAILURE AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

Nigeria's persistent food policy failures stem from deep-rooted corruption, inconsistent implementation, and external pressures such as civil unrest and climate shifts, which severely threatens national stability. By mid-2025, an estimated 33 million people face acute hunger, up from 31.8 million in 2024, driven by floods, displacement, and 30% inflation. These shortcomings inflate food prices, erode public trust, and destabilize regional economies, creating fertile ground for terrorism and communal violence. Insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram, exploit food scarcity to recruit and disrupt supply chains, while herder-farmer clashes over dwindling resources further weaken state authority. Corruption diverts agricultural funds, with budgets falling short of the 10% Maputo target, leaving smallholder farmers producing 90% of Nigeria's food vulnerable to attacks and low yields due to inadequate infrastructure and support. Policy stagnation, marked by short-lived initiatives like the Anchor Borrowers' Programme, fails to address systemic issues, perpetuating dependency on imports and insecurity. This study applies Marxist theory to analyze how capitalist exploitation and class dynamics intensify these crises, highlighting the need for structural reforms. It identifies gaps in linking policy lapses to security threats and proposes targeted strategies, including transparent audits, enhanced farmland security, and climate-adaptive farming.

Introduction

Nigeria has long grappled with food shortages tied to weak agricultural strategies, which in turn threaten the stability of the country. Before the 1970s oil boom, Nigeria was a major exporter of crops like palm oil and groundnuts, but it shifted its focus to petroleum, sidelining farming. This change left agriculture underfunded and underdeveloped, with output failing to match a population of over 200 million. Government efforts, such as the Operation Feed the Nation in 1976 and the Agricultural Transformation Agenda in 2011, aimed to boost production but often collapsed due to inconsistent execution, corruption, and lack of follow-through. For instance, budgetary allocations to agriculture have hovered below 2% of the federal budget, far short of the 10% target of

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the Maputo Declaration, leading to reliance on imports worth billions annually. Infrastructure gaps compound the problem: poor roads, inadequate storage, and limited irrigation cause up to 40% post-harvest losses, inflating prices and reducing access to staples such as rice and maize.

These shortcomings directly fuel security risks. In the northeast, Boko Haram has exploited hunger by destroying farms, taxing producers, and restricting access to fields, displacing millions of people and slashing cereal yields by 30% since 2015. Herder-farmer clashes in the north-central region, driven by unregulated grazing and climate-induced resource scarcity, have killed thousands and ruined farmlands, with over 1,300 farmers slain between 2020 and 2024. Nationwide, 31.8 million people faced acute food shortages in 2024, a sharp increase due to floods, banditry, and economic pressures such as high input costs. Such conditions erode state authority as insurgents recruit from desperate communities and conflicts spread, straining military resources and fostering instability (Gråby, 2021).

Broader factors include climate shifts eroding soil and altering rains, as well as governance flaws such as embezzlement in aid programs. Policies on mechanization and research have faltered, with unused imported tools and findings not reaching smallholders, who produce 90% of food but remain impoverished.

This paper is needed because few studies have directly linked these policy lapses to security breakdowns, with limited recent analyses of post-2020 crises. The gap lies in the lack of empirical links between agricultural infrastructure decay and insurgency growth, overlooking integrated fixes.

It is against this backdrop that this study raises the following research questions:

What primary factors cause persistent food policy breakdowns in Nigeria? How do these breakdowns heighten national security threats such as terrorism and communal violence? What targeted strategies could reform policies to bolster both food supply and stability?

Conceptual Clarification

National Insecurity

A state of national insecurity occurs when the citizens of a society are not protected from widespread attacks. In this scenario, the country is vulnerable to terrorism, anarchy, dangers, illiteracy, starvation, poverty, squalor, and malnutrition. It is a violation of the peace and a risk of mass destruction brought on by criminal activity by individuals or corporations that could impact the nation's legitimate social and economic operations (Emmanuel, Otu, and Odey, 2017). Likewise, national insecurity can be defined as the availability of danger, risk, peril, or jeopardy on a national level. Any country's core ideals are destroyed when there is unbridled terror and civil upheaval. This implies the absence of protection against all significant dangers to the existence of people and the welfare of the country. According to Akinbade (2017), national insecurity is defined as the complete lack of any kind of safeguard against crime, violence, intercommunal conflicts, disagreements, accidents, attacks, conspiracy, sabotaging, and hostage-taking. As a result, the police, court system, correctional facilities, and prisons have collapsed and the military and intelligence community are not protected. The rise of technology online has made Nigeria one of the very connected nations, which enable communication, trade, and international relation. Nevertheless, greater connectivity has also incremented chances of hacking which present serious threat to national security (Chukwuemeka, & Ernest, 2025).

Accordingly, a state's incapacity to provide a conducive atmosphere for equality and individual involvement through democracy, respect for human rights, and civil society involvement exposes that country to many forms of national insecurity (Mbagwu, 2015). According to Nnamani and Onuigbo (2012), national insecurity is a state in which widespread feelings of insecurity due to destruction and unchecked violence endangers justice, peace,

and human survival. Consequently, a lack of equity, fairness, and development fosters national insecurity. Accordingly, any human community that lacks a government to ensure security can be compared to existing in a primitive condition where people are short, savage, and plagued by various types of insecurity (Joshua and Owolabi, 2015). The key takeaway from this is that national insecurity encompasses all factors that put a country at risk of economic, food, health, environmental, personal, social, and political destruction. In the end, national insecurity refers to a state in which a society lacks protection for the social and economic well-being of its citizens as well as defense against political repression, poverty, or conflict, which also hinders the defense of human rights, peace, and guaranteed ongoing development (Osah and Iyanda, 2016). Chukwuemeka, Alhassan, & Kenchuks, (2025) argued that military expenditure is inefficient and that resource allocation towards it hinders economic growth, thereby undermining national security. Therefore, a state's corporate existence, internal cohesion, and ability to continue promoting its basic principles and its citizens' socio-political and economic goals cant all be threatened by a lack of national security. Accordingly, a state that seeks security maintains efficiency and responds to its citizens; this shows that national security does not depend solely on this feature.

The bloodshed caused by numerous forms of insecurity classifies Nigeria as conflict-ridden and at war, even though it is not actually at war. Traditionally, 1,000 fighting casualties are needed to qualify an armed conflict as a civil war (Dupuy & Rustad, 2018; Guseh & Oritsejafor, 2019). For decades, Nigeria has continuously reported more than 1,000 fatalities from hostilities that have been started by different factions all around the nation. According to estimates from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project and the Nigeria Security Tracker, between June 2011 and June 2018, 34,261 and 37,530 persons were killed by the Boko Haram terrorist organization alone (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). Conflicts within communities, disputes between farmers and herders, confrontations between security forces and sociocultural and religious groups, and various criminal activities—particularly ransom kidnaping are some of the main causes of violent deaths besides the Boko Haram sect. Approximately 10,665 people died in Nigeria in 2018 alone as a result of various forms of violence, with criminal activity accounting for the largest number of violent deaths (3,425 deaths in 1,191 occurrences) (Ukoji et al. 2019). Apart from the lethal actions of the Boko Haram sect in the country's northeastern geopolitical zone, Fulani herders pose a significant threat to national security and have a direct impact on food security. The Fulani herders are primarily nomadic because they travel across the country looking for pastures for their herds. Due to the devastation of sedentary farmers' farms, the Fulani herders' transhumance tradition has frequently set them against them. Herders and farmers handled these disputes effectively in the past, specifically before 1999, and they never got to the point where deaths were reported. However, since Nigeria regained democracy in 1999, disputes between Fulani farmers and herders have progressively changed in tone, frequency, ubiquity, complexity, and lethality, and conventional dispute resolution processes are no longer sufficient to keep them in check. The Fulani herders' deadly acts of violence prompted the Institute for Economics and Peace to include them in the global terrorism index, designate them as a terrorist organization, and rank them as the fourth deadliest group in 2014, having killed 1,229 people (IEP, 2015). This classification was illuminating because the group was only accountable for 63 deaths in the prior year, 2013 (Burton, 2016). Since 2014, the Fulani herdsman have continued to carry out fatal attacks, particularly ransom kidnaping and militia expeditions against farmland communities deemed hostile to their pasturing and herding operations. The Nigerian government's indifference must have encouraged the herders to launch attacks despite the Fulani herders' international designation as terrorists. The audacity of the Fulani herders can be traced back to the tacit support of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari and the open support of their sociocultural groups, particularly the Fulani Nationality Movement, Miyetti Allah

Kautal Hore, and Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria. The government has not taken any significant action to challenge the belief of Nigerians that the president is protecting herder-killers and their backers (International Crisis Group, 2017; Amnesty International, 2018; Ilo et al., 2019).

The type of advanced weaponry available to the Fulani herders demonstrated their audacity. They rely on bows and arrows, machetes, and long wooden staffs. However, they currently display the Avtomat Kalashnikova (AK47), a Soviet assault weapon. Additionally, they have been terrorizing farming communities throughout Nigeria with these weapons. For example, only 80 individuals were killed by Fulani herders between 2010 and 2013, whereas 1,229 people were killed by them just in 2014. The destruction depicted in recent estimations is really upsetting. Over 10,000 people are thought to have died because of the violence Fulani herdsman have inflicted on farmland villages over the last decade. Over 6,000 of these individuals lost their lives in the last two years (Kwaja & Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; Ilo et al., 2019). An additional analysis revealed that over 2,500 people died as a result of clashes between Fulani farmers and herders in 2016 alone. Between 2011 and 2016, there was a similar high trend in deaths, with an average of over 2,000 documented deaths (International Crisis Group, 2017). According to updated statistics from the Nigeria Security Tracker, 1,041 and 2,037 people died in Fulani herder-farmer clashes in 2017 and 2018, respectively (Campbell, 2018). The Boko Haram sect terrorized the northeastern geopolitical zone at the same time that the Fulani herdsman were wreaking havoc throughout the nation. Records show that 2,016 people died in 2018 as a result of Boko Haram-related violence (Campbell, 2018; Ilo et al., 2019). These conflicts have the cumulative impact of disrupting food production activities, which has major implications for food security. Internal displacement has also resulted from the war. Since 2013, 2.4 million people have been displaced and over seven million people are at risk of starvation due to the actions of the Boko Haram group (Campbell & Harwood, 2018; UNHCR, 2018).

Internal displacement resulting from the destruction of the victims' ancestral homes is a necessary consequence of the terror of the Fulani herders in Nigeria's main states. For example, approximately 620,000 people are estimated to be displaced in the Middle Belt states of Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau, Nigeria (Kwaja & Ademola Adelehin, 2018). These farming communities suffer from relocation due to their inability to continue farming, which results in the loss of their contributions to the nation's food production. The implication is that the structural and inherent corruption of the country is making the problem of food insecurity worse (Mbagwu, 2015).

Food security

The world is currently moving from a time of abundance to one of shortages. Food scarcity is a significant aspect that has accelerated throughout world history. The world's poorest people are coping with the doubling of global grain prices since 2006 by going days without eating at all. In Nigeria, 27% of families go days without eating. It is 14% in Peru and 24% in India (Brown, 2017). Nigerian public policymakers still face a significant obstacle in the form of food insecurity. In every nation, achieving food security usually serves as insurance against malnutrition and hunger, two conditions that impede economic growth (World Health Organization, 2019). For this reason, every industrialized nation and a few developing nations work hard to boost their capacity for food production. Approximately one billion people suffer from malnutrition globally.

Micronutrient deficiencies affect a large number of people, and their absolute numbers are likely to rise, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2008). Food security can be guaranteed only when food is consistently available and people have a sufficient supply of basic food items. The World Food Conference, 2010). A person must always have access to basic nourishment to lead an active and healthy life. Access to a sufficient diet is

limited in many regions of the world, and this lack of access can be either short-term (transitory food insecurity) or long-term (chronic food insecurity). Food insecurity is still a major global development issue that threatens people's productivity, health, and survival (Smith and Subandoro, 2007). In September 2013, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) issued a warning that there will be a serious food insecurity crisis in the Sahel States of Northern Nigeria. The obvious is not far away from this. "While they wait for the next harvest, poor families are facing high food prices and have depleted their food supplies." Notably, in 2013, more than 1.4 million youngsters in the area were at risk of suffering from severe malnutrition. Unfortunately, dishonest businesspeople from outside the nation have taken advantage of the country's ambitious Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) in several items. Major cities like Enugu, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, and Lagos are experiencing food price shocks as rising food costs dig into household budgets due to climate change and ongoing violence in the country's north (Eme et al. 2014).

Many nations, particularly in Africa, have started implementing measures to guarantee food security as a result of the worldwide problem of food insecurity. Nigeria as a whole started FSP to encourage land reform and rural development. The government has also implemented some policy initiatives to guarantee land access for individual farmers, de-regulate the agriculture industry, and create the National IFSS. Despite these admirable policies and initiatives, the objective of ensuring food security has not been met. Food security in Nigeria is impacted by significant policy inconsistency and corruption. Therefore, there have been significant setbacks to food production and distribution due to frequent policy changes and subpar performance by agencies tasked with implementing food and agriculture regulations. There is no space for stability and advancement in food production because every time a new government takes office, the old agricultural policies and programs are dropped and replaced with new ones, not because the new ones are superior to the old ones. The poor results of some previous initiatives, such as Green Revolution, Operation Feed the Nation, and Lower River Basin Development Authorities, as well as organizations like the Directorate of Foods, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure and the National Agricultural and Land Development Authority (NALDA) (Otah 2013).

Nigeria's National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), published in 2008, identified several obstacles to the country's food security and used a value chain strategy to overcome them. In addition to being a major net source of food for the international community, the NPFS aims to guarantee all Nigerians sustained access to high-quality food. Following the World Food Summit in November 1996 and a request for aid from the Federal Government of Nigeria through the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS), the National Programme for Food Security was born. Following the first participatory review and evaluation, the SPFS was expanded to include Ebonyi State and the other 36 federation states. The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO/UN) and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) collaborated to implement the National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), which was formally implemented in Nigeria in 2003 at Bukuru, one of the NPFS sites in Kaduna State. The World Bank provided 66% of the project's total cost to fund and oversee the program. The state government provided 15% of salaries and general services, while the federal government covered 19% of input procurement. Food security is a significant issue that impacts many nations worldwide. Nigeria has adopted a number of agricultural policies and programs with varying names, organizational structures, and advisory processes, but the nation continues to work toward feeding its people. Numerous initiatives and policies put in place to lessen and eventually end food insecurity in Nigeria encountered numerous difficulties.

Food Insecurity

The Federal Government of Nigeria did not lament the fall of the agricultural settlements when the Nigerian civil war ended in 1970, and it did not prioritize or concentrate on their revival because it was content with the oil wealth that had been discovered at that time. It was not widely understood that crude oil could not completely replace agriculture. Farm settlements were largely abandoned. Once a food exporting nation, Japan is now among the top importers of food worldwide (Yahaya, 2019). Consequently, this has resulted in insufficient agricultural investment, poorly executed agricultural policies and plans, insufficient financial assistance for subsistence farmers, inefficient and poor market access, northern insurgency, and unfavorable weather conditions (Elemo, 2020). However, Ilaboya, Omofuma, Asekhome, and Umukoro (2012; Otaha, 2013; Fayeye, 2006) highlighted some of the causes of famine in Nigeria:

1. Inadequate Food Production: Nigeria's underdeveloped and neglected agricultural sector is one of the primary causes of famine in the country. It is marked by an excessive reliance on primary agriculture, little use of outside farm inputs, environmental degradation and abuse, and food crop loss (both before and after harvest) due to herdsmen invasion, terrorism, and banditry. This leads to a sharp rise in food prices, which causes food scarcity.

2. Poor or Inadequate Food Storage Facilities: Inadequate food storage facilities result in direct consumption of a large portion of the harvest without considering the future because food producers have no other choice. This has caused untold and wanton waste of food items, plunging people into acute hunger and years of starvation.

3. Inconsistent and Poor Policies: Famine in Nigeria have caused by poor policies. The issue occurs when the needs of people are neglected in favour of institutions, structures, and policies. Famine is the result of bad policies and mismanagement of state resources. Therefore, when policies are not all inclusive or people-friendly in design, they tend to paralyse or socially exclude many people by creating barriers through increases in food prices or accessibility to high-quality food, dooming the people to perdition.

4. Retaliatory Factors: Farmers, rustlers, and herders frequently enact laws to get revenge on their kinsmen or coworkers for wrongdoing. Sadly, these skirmishes and counterattacks between herders and farmers have resulted in a never-ending cycle of violent battles that have exacerbated ethnic discord in both resentful groups and caused immense destruction of people, farmlands, and food sectors. Furthermore, interethnic conflicts frequently occur in towns, cities, and suburbs that have had to share lands, boundaries, and territory demarcations with other nearby towns and cities, which exacerbates the already damaged farmlands and agricultural products. This implies that community land ownership does exist despite the Land Use Act. Therefore, farmers who are deemed too ambitious are evicted by indigenous people using their militants or foot troops.

Government Policy on Food Security in Nigeria

The government's interest in and dedication to boosting food production to guarantee Nigerian food security is evident. Various initiatives are anticipated, *ceteris paribus*, to: Offer incentives for private sector involvement in agriculture, promote efficient connections with the industrial sector, enhance agricultural products through export-oriented processing, generate additional agricultural and rural job opportunities, boost farmer incomes, significantly curb the increasing trend in food imports, and ultimately attain food security (Needs, 2004:88). Since the agricultural sector has experienced an unprecedented 7% annual growth rate and the strategic grain reserve has reached 150,000 tonnes and is still growing, government agencies and officials have made some ecstatic claims that the policies and programs are already producing the desired results. Increased food production has also reportedly prompted the World Food Programme to consider opening an office in Nigeria from which it could obtain food for other underdeveloped African nations (Nigerian Tribune, October 2004).

Essentially, the perception that Nigerian agricultural policies are effective has been established because the agricultural sector is thriving and the objective of food security may have been reached or is easily accessible with more targeted investment in the sector. However, the harsh reality is that achieving food security is typically a long-term objective that requires both meticulous planning and far more consistent work to maintain continuity.

The achievement of food security is still fraught with difficulties. The government intends to spend an astounding \$364 million for the "proper repositioning and implementation of National Programme for food security" (The Nation, October 2007), yet the food security initiatives cannot be carried out separately. Food policy needs to be developed, and other important issues related to food security need to be carefully considered.

Government policy on food security in Nigeria over past regimes

The Nigerian administration take nothing for granted. One could contend that any attempts to restore agriculture to its pre-oil boom status in the national economy, as indicated by its higher GDP contribution, show a renewed concern for and commitment to food security. In the early 1970s, Gen. Yakubu Gowon imported a massive amount of rice to avoid starvation. However, the enormous surge of what became known as the Rice Amada was too much for the Nigerian ports to handle. A decongestion committee had to be established because rice clogged the ports (Mbeke-Ekanem, 2020). The long-term problem of food security, not the massive importation of rice, ultimately required a major agricultural program shortly after the civil war. At the time, Nigerians told the government that the overworked army, which had become redundant after the civil war, be moved to farms to boost agricultural output. Security was the only reason this policy alternative was abandoned. In 1976, the administration of General Olusegun Obasanjo launched Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). Everyone was urged to plant anything, anywhere, as part of what was supposedly a revolution in agriculture.

Since they lacked gardens, flower pot gardening became more common among those without farms. Since these efforts did not produce the huge harvest that was expected for a variety of reasons, cynical Nigerians termed the initiative Operation Fool the Nation (Mbeke-Ekanem, 2020). When Shehu Shagari took office as the president in 1979, he initiated a straightforward name change. Without significantly altering the structure, substance, or background of the policy, he called his new project the "Green Revolution." No meaningful impact was observed from the initiative. Furthermore, corruption made it difficult for his government to do much on all fronts. Under General Ibrahim Babangida's leadership, the Directorate of Food, Roads, and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) was created, in 1985. It was designed as a comprehensive, integrated program for massive food production and rural change. On paper, it was great, but in practice, the scheme was corrupt and ultimately caused discontent. Nevertheless, food production gained increased attention after civilian management took over in 1999. The Nigerian Agriculture Minister publicly restated the government's commitment to combating hunger and malnutrition by guaranteeing that sufficient food is available to all. A number of so-called food security initiatives were launched to achieve this (Bello, 2004). These include:

1. The government requested assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to educate 109 farming communities across the country about easily accessible and proven technologies that could enhance food production and greatly increase farmers' incomes as part of the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS).
2. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) financed the Root and Tuber Expansion Program, an agricultural project that provided farmers with information on improved processing technology and methods for expanding cassava and cassava products.
3. Fadama Development Project: This project uses large-scale irrigation systems or naturally flooded areas (Fadama) to ensure the development of a variety of crops, plants, fruits, and vegetables throughout the year.
4. Community-based agricultural and rural development efforts include back-to-land programs and farm settlement. The government encourages the participants, who are usually men, to pursue farming by offering material and financial support.

5. The provision of infrastructure entails grading existing roads and constructing new ones to connect rural areas, supplying energy through rural electrification, distributing farm inputs such as seedlings and fertilizer, selling or leasing tractors and harvesters to farmers to encourage mechanized farming, and enhancing storage facilities to reduce the 25%–30% post-harvest loss of agricultural products (Vanguard, October 27, 2004).

6. In collaboration with the United States, the government commissioned the U.S.-based International Center for Soil Fertility and Agricultural Development (ICSFAD) to look into the problems preventing the country's increased agricultural productivity. The main objective is to assess the soil type and use the findings to determine the sort of fertilizer that farmers should apply.

The government's policy instrument and instruction (a) forbade the importing of specific agricultural items. According to the Presidential National Day Broadcast of the Nigerian Tribune on October 1, 2004, this prohibition has "unleashed boundless productive energy in the areas of livestock production and agriculture." Additionally, it (b) provided farmers with subsidized fertilizer and (c) promoted increased agricultural investment by urging private commercial banks to provide low-interest loan facilities to both large and small farmers and strengthening the financial capacity of state-owned agricultural banks to grant soft loans. Commercial banks have mostly ignored the call due to the perceived risk of financing agriculture and the negative consequences of a volatile agricultural market (NEEDS Document, 2001).

The Olusegun Obasanjo administration (1999–2007) implemented the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), whereas its counterpart authorized the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS). The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) whitepaper addressed the demands and objectives of the MPG. In particular, the National Agricultural Policy provides the government with supportive functions, leaving the industry to be financed by private sector initiatives. At the state level, it was known as the SEEDS. To increase food production and end rural poverty, Obasanjo initiated the Root and Tuber Expansion Program (RTEP) and the National Special Programme on Food Security (NSPFS), which were implemented in all 36 states in 2002.

The Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration (2007–2010) launched the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (www.fmard.gov.ng). One of his seven agenda issues was agriculture and food security. His agricultural policy, which is based on the output of the largest employer of labor, covers not only agricultural production but also food production, processing and manufacturing, distribution and marketing, trade, and consumption. The industry raises the level of industrialization by providing workers with nourishment. This is accurate because high-level industrialization necessitates efficient labour services, which a worker who is malnourished cannot supply. This is elaborately represented because food is the source of energy, and energy is by definition the ability to conduct work.

Goodluck Jonathan took over as the leader after Yar'Adua's death and implemented the transition plan. Additionally, he introduced Vision 20:20. The primary objectives of Vision 20:20 were to provide small-scale farmers with high-yield seeds, rural farmers with telephones for convenient communication, support a value chain that enables agricultural products to be processed locally before being exported, and supply fertilizers to rural farmers directly rather than through middlemen. The administration also has a plan in place to provide storage facilities for exporting perishable goods, such as tomatoes by constructing infrastructure such as perishable sheds at Nigeria's major airports. The Youth Empowerment in Agriculture Project was another Jonathan Administration project that never gained traction. Muhammadu Buhari continued Goodluck Jonathan's YEAP and Agricultural Transformation Agenda from May 2015 to May 2023 (Awa and Rufus, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

This study applied Marxist theory as the theoretical model. The theory provides a framework to break down the breakdown of food policy and security in Nigeria and highlights class antagonisms, capitalist exploitation, and historical materialism. From this perspective, the transformation of Nigeria from an agrarian exporter to an oil-dependent food importer after the 1970s represents bourgeois hegemony, whereby the bourgeoisie, linked to multinational corporations, has turned to extractive industries to the detriment of farming. This results in the excess extraction of peasants, who suffer from low yields as infrastructures are neglected and land is grabbed, which leads to alienation and underproduction. Policies such as the Anchor Borrowers' Programme do not fail because of bad management but because they perpetuate capitalist relations that benefit agribusiness elites and leave smallholders facing up-to-the-wire debt and displacement. The proletarian uprisings directed against poverty are the basis of many so-called 'security' issues, which are expressed as the conflict against hunger or, more severely, against insurgent rebels, who use starvation as a means of struggle or recruitment and therefore shake the state apparatus that protects capital. The power of Marxist theory is what makes it very useful in explaining systemic causes, not merely specific shortcomings. While conventional analyses point at corruption or climate as the reason, there is no investigation into how global capitalism, through its neocolonial relationship, perpetuates the dependency of nations whose lands are fertile but need not be so because imperialism suppresses local sovereignty and plunders the land. It emphasizes dialectics rather than symptoms: the failure of policy is explained by contradictions between productive forces (peasant labour) and relations (elite control), which result in crises. Its significance is rooted in Nigeria's post-colonial context, where the Marxist perspective illuminates how states failures facilitate capitalist failure and contribute to increasing insecurity through the unequal distribution of resources. This innovative study opens up new and exciting possibilities despite continued chaos.

Analysis of the research questions

Basic causes for the continued failure of Nigeria's food policies. Systemic graft is one of the main culprits that steal money from farm schemes and leave smallholders without seeds and tools (Diriba, 2024). Mismanagement is observed in short-lived schemes such as the Green Revolution, which were hit hard by erratic leadership changes and poor monitoring and did not generate the capacity to maintain output gains. Implementation - for example, the duty waiver provided on the 2024 duty waiver for imports was not well implemented due to supply chain disruption, high costs, and insecurity in the fields (attacks on farmers leading to casualties, bandits to be compensated resulting in reduced harvests). Lack of infrastructure results in post-harvest losses as high as 40% due to poor roads and lack of storage space, with the effects of inflation crippling the finances and further limiting access. Political instabilities interfere with planting in the north (Stevenson, Auld, Allan, Elliott, & Meadowcroft, 2021). Falling down in the same manner as this problem, these slips increase security risks. Hunger breeds resentment, and groups like Boko Haram, who burn crops, ban fishing, and poison wells, easily recruit; these groups play on scarcity to penalize people. Such practices weaken state power, displace millions of people, and provoke communal conflict over dwindling resources, including herder-farmer confrontation. The terrorists are also using rice or biscuits as a reward in Borno to gain loyalty, hence monetizing food in the absence of a policy. This cycle is destroying trust in the government and causing violence and instability (Idu, 2020). The National Agricultural Technology Application Programme (NATIP 2022-2027) has been leading mechanization through 600 tractor service centers to curtail losses and generate employment. Revive extension services, helping to train 130,000 agents annually, and spreading technology to farmers. To secure lands, multi-agency task forces are needed to limit attacks and build rural roads and irrigation. For instance, private-led reforms can make single-

digit loans and rules of the game for investment and incentivize value chains for crops like maize and make policy conditional on stability (Balana, Olanrewaju, Ambler, de Brauw, Bloem, Kadjo & Abdoulaye, 2023).

Conclusion

Nigeria's failure to develop a food policy is a result of endemic corruption, haphazard implementation, and external factors such as civil unrest and climatic changes, which have resulted in acute shortages that threaten the country's stability. The number of people at risk of severe undernourishment is expected to reach 33 million by mid-2025, up from 31.8 million in 2024, due to floods, displacement, and economic factors, including 30% inflation. These failures not only inflate food prices but also spur terrorism and community conflict, as rebel groups use shortages to recruit and disrupt supplies, undermine the trust in the government, and hollow out regional economies. Corruption siphons agricultural funds, and budget shortfalls are worsening insecurity, while policy stasis exposes smallholders to attacks and underperforms yields.

Recommendations

The Federal Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), must conduct quarterly audits of agricultural budgets to ensure transparency in fund allocation. The EFCC should prioritize prosecuting corruption cases within 90 days and redirecting the recovered funds to farmer subsidies. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security should oversee the 10% budget increase by 2026, aligning with Maputo commitments, and report progress to the National Assembly biannually.

The Federal Ministry of Defense, alongside the Nigeria Police Force, should establish and lead joint task forces in high-risk zones, such as Benue and Plateau states. The Nigerian Air Force must procure and deploy surveillance drones, train 500 operators by mid-2026 to monitor farmlands, and cut herder-farmer deaths by 50%. The National Security Advisor should coordinate inter-agency efforts and report outcomes quarterly.

Through its National Adaptation Strategy, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security must partner with the Nigerian Agricultural Research Institute to develop and distribute drought-resistant seeds to 5 million smallholders annually. State-level extension services, supervised by state agricultural ministries, should train farmers, with progress tracked via annual reports to the presidency.

The enforce transparent loan disbursement, partnering with commercial banks to reduce default rates by 20% within 18 months. The CBN should expand loan coverage to include tubers and maize, collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to monitor disbursements and ensure repayment compliance through digital platforms.

The Federal Ministry of Works should spearhead the construction of 10,000 km of feeder roads and storage silos by 2027 in tandem with state governments. The Ministry of Agriculture should secure public-private partnerships with oversight from the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission to ensure completion and reduce post-harvest losses to 15%. State governors must allocate 10% of their budgets to support local infrastructure

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