

State of Emergency Declaration on Food Security in Nigeria

CONTEXT:

In recent times, insecurity, climate change and its effects (including seasonal flooding, competing resource use and open conflict) and high inflation have brought Nigeria to the brink of a food crisis. Between January and April 2023, it was estimated by a consortium of UN agencies and other partners (October Cadre Harmonise, including WFP and UNICEF) that as many as 25m people could face food insecurity between June and August of 2023.

In this vein, many have found the new government's policy and swift action to remove fuel subsidies (which have cushioned many Nigerians for many years) as a catalyst to plunge Nigerians into greater food insecurity than previously seen. It is also against this background that the country's President announced a state of emergency.

This comes at a time when the Global Economic Outlook report H1 2023, KPMG, estimated the unemployment rate in Nigeria at the end of 2022 at 37.7% while estimating that this would rise to 40.6% in 2023 and 43% in 2024¹. The World Poverty Clock indicates that 71 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty, the largest number globally.

The real impact of these hikes on inflation and food inflation will not be statistically revealed until the respective rates for July are released since these would be based on data for June. We, however, know from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), as well as from market surveys and observations, that a significant contributing factor to the price of goods and services in general, and food prices in particular, is the cost of transportation of food across the food value chain - the cost of transportation of inputs and farm labour to the farm; the cost of transportation of farm produce to storage facilities, and or markets; the cost of transportation of processed food to markets, etc. among others.



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THE STATE OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION ON FOOD SECURITY:

The implication of the President's 14th July declaration of a state of emergency on food security came at a time when Nigeria was already on the brink of full-blown food insecurity. That said, the government should be commended for finally recognizing how dire the situation is and for committing to addressing the situation. Central to the intervention plan of the FGN are the following 12 key action points around which the government is committed to orient its programs and policies.

i. Immediate release of fertilisers and grains to farmers and households.

ii. Synergy between the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources for irrigation and all-year-round farming.

iii. Creation of a National Commodity Board for price assessment and maintenance of strategic food reserves.

iv. Increased security measures for farms and farmers.

¹ Reported in Punch Newspapers of 11th April 2023

v. Central Bank's role in funding the agricultural value chain to be enhanced.

vi. Activation of 500,000 hectares of land for farming and river basins for continuous farming.

vii. Deployment of concessionary capital/funding to the agricultural sector.

viii. Improvement of transportation and storage facilities for agricultural products.

ix. Increase of revenue from food and agricultural exports.

x. Improved facilitation of trade by working with Nigerian Customs.

xi. Massive boost in employment and job creation in the agricultural sector.

xii. Commitment to ensuring every Nigerian has access to affordable food.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

From what we know about the causes and drivers of food and nutrition insecurity, achieving three key goals and outcomes is central to reversing the current situation and ensuring enhanced food and nutrition security in the country. A combination of immediate and intermediate actions is therefore called for.

Immediate Actions



(a) ensuring adequate supply of food [that is enabling production (access to fertilizers and other productive resources while ensuring security to farmers);



(b) enabling physical and economic access to food [safety net programs for the most vulnerable and supporting safe market access]; and



(c) and making sure that the food is nutritious and safe for consumption [that is, the quality and safety of the food].

Intermediate Actions

A two-pronged approach of rehabilitating existing farmlands in the short to medium term while activating the new farmlands is important in meeting Nigeria's immediate and long-term food security needs. It would be necessary to ensure that policies and strategies for agriculture, food production and nutrition should be climate smart to mitigate the effects of climate change while enabling food resilience.

One key gap in addressing the current situation is the availability of reliable data, yet without reliable data it is almost impossible to plan and or achieve the desired effect from any planned intervention. For the emergency



program to be impactful, it must prioritize and focus on data - its collation, storage, analysis, and management. Given this, An agricultural census is long overdue in the country.

Policy Environment on Food Security: There are several policy frameworks already in existence in the country with respect to Agriculture in general and Food and Nutrition Security in particular. For instance, it is time to review and update the 2011-2014 National Agriculture Investment Plan. Other actions include;

a. Develop through a participatory and multistakeholder approach, a comprehensive National Implementation Strategy and Action Plan to drive the implementation of the State Of Emergency On Food Security Program; ensuring alignment with relevant policies; enabling synergy and coordination between and among MDAs, enhancing coordination between executive and legislative arms of government; as well as between and among National and subnational governments.

b. Undertake a national process audit of all national policies on agriculture, food and nutrition, and all other relevant thematic and sectoral policies, with a view to ascertaining their degree of alignment, their implementation status; as well as the level and nature of coordination and synergy among the implementing institutions.

c. Undertake an agricultural census, establish a mechanism for data generation, collation, and management.

d. As agriculture and food and nutrition are on the concurrent legislative list, there is an urgent need to ensure and enhance alignment in policies and synergy among respective institutions. The National Agriculture Council, The National Health Council, The National Steering Committee on Food Systems Transformation Pathways Implementation, along with other similar and relevant platforms that include national and subnational, as well as non-state actors' representation, should become more active and vibrant and should be become fully engaged in driving the implementation of the programs to address, redress and reverse the food and nutrition insecurity situation in the country.



e. Ensure the alignment of policies and for policies and plans to be accompanied by real commitment and investment. For example, National Investment Plans, that outline the expected cost of policy implementation and the expected sources of resourcing and financing policy implementation, among others.

f. To ensure inclusive and effective response to the unfolding food insecurity crisis in the country, The Federal Government in conjunction with the subnational governments should consider undertaking comprehensive, systematic, and periodic rapid assessments of the food security situation, in a manner that reflects the differential effects and impact of the crisis and its causes on women and men, and on girls and boys. In this regard, government should ensure the collation, availability, management, and utilization of gender disaggregated data, in addition to demographic reflection.