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Prioritizing Agricultural Produce for Marketing in Government Agricultural Policies: A Contemporary Evaluation

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Abstract

This paper examines the effectiveness of prioritizing agricultural produce for marketing through the implementation of robust and progressive government policies. These policies aim to foster a more sustainable, productive, and profitable agricultural sector. The research highlights the increasing importance of agricultural marketing within government policies worldwide. Agricultural marketing policies provide the framework and mechanisms for regulating and managing the production, processing, distribution, and sale of agricultural products. The study's objectives include identifying the agricultural produce available for marketing, assessing the existing government policies on agricultural marketing, evaluating the effectiveness of these policies, and offering recommendations based on the findings. Key challenges in prioritizing agricultural produce include limited access to finance, lack of agricultural insurance, high interest rates, inefficient supply chains, climate change uncertainties, inadequate infrastructure and market access, economic instability, price volatility, and inconsistent government subsidies and policies. To address these challenges, the study proposes several strategies, including infrastructure development, enhanced access to finance and insurance, improved market information systems, data-driven decision-making, sustainable resource allocation, value chain support policies, and standardization initiatives. The paper concludes by recommending that governments establish platforms for stakeholder consultations involving farmers, policymakers, and the private sector. Additionally, investments should be directed toward rural infrastructure development, with a focus on roads, storage facilities, technology, and market access to streamline marketing processes. Policies should also incorporate climate adaptation strategies to ensure the resilience and viability of agricultural marketing in the face of environmental challenges.

Keywords: *agricultural marketing, government policies, economic growth.*

Introduction: Nigeria was self-sufficient in the production of a wide variety of crops and cattle in the 1960s and agriculture was the foundation of the country's economy. However, the oil boom of the late 1970s brought about a change in the situation. Nigeria's excessive reliance on the export of crude oil and complete disregard for other industries, particularly the agricultural sector, nearly turned the country into a mono-economy. Nigeria was originally self-sufficient in its food production, but the discovery of oil and many other factors led to the country being a net food importer, spending billions of dollars on food imports each year. The National Accelerated Food Production Program (NAFPP) of 1972, Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) of 1974, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of 1976, the Green Revolution (GR) of 1980, the Better Life Programme (BLP) of 1987, the National Fadama Development Project (NFDP) of 1990, the Family Support Programme (FSP)/Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) of 1996, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) of 1999, the National Special Program for Food Security (NSPFS) of 2002, and the Root and Tuber Expansion Programme (RTEP) of 2003 are just a few of the agricultural policies that have been developed over the years.

Agricultural marketing policies are the frameworks and procedures used by governments to regulate and control the production, processing, distribution and sale of agricultural products. The objective is to promote fair and efficient market arrangements that benefit producers and consumers alike. A comprehensive agricultural marketing policy often addresses a number of aspects of the agricultural supply chain, including infrastructure development, price systems, market regulation, and support for trade and value-added products Nyong, *et al*.,2023) ; (Jha, 2012; Kumar & Singh, 2018). Agricultural productivity has been significantly impacted by the pressures of globalization. On the one hand, export-driven agricultural output has significantly increased access to agricultural commodities in unfriendly situations. The process of collecting, storing, preparing, shipping, and delivering various farming supplies across the nation is known as agricultural marketing. In agriculture marketing, a number of factors, such as the commodity's current demand and

storage availability, affect how well an agricultural product sells.

Effective marketing of agricultural products therefore has been increasingly important in government agricultural policy around the world in recent years. Before independence, there was widespread account manipulation and inaccurate weighing when farmers sold their goods to dealers. The farmers were compelled to sell at cheap prices without adequate storage facilities because they lacked the necessary information regarding prices. In the farmer's hamlet or a nearby community, the product may occasionally be offered for sale during a weekly village market. In the event that these stores are closed, the product is offered for sale at impromptu marketplaces in a local town or hamlet. In order to regulate the dealers' operations, the government implemented a number of steps to improve agriculture marketing. Nyong, *et al*.,2023) Improving quality will align agricultural produce with both local and international standards, creating expanded market opportunities for farmers. This includes access to international markets, driven by the diversity of crops. Additionally, sustainability will foster an enabling environment for maximizing profits.

Objectives of the Study: This paper tends to examine the effect government agricultural policies have on prioritizing of agricultural produce for marketing in Nigeria. In other words, it sought to identify the agricultural produce available for the Nigerian market, to ascertain the existing government agricultural policies for marketing of agricultural produce and to evaluate the effectiveness of government agricultural policies for marketing of agriculture produce in the Nigerian market.

This research is essential to assess the role of government policies in optimizing the marketing of agricultural produce, ensuring sustainable economic growth and food security. By identifying gaps and proposing strategies, it aims to enhance farmers' market access, boost profitability, and promote competitiveness in both local and global markets.

Challenges in Agricultural Produce Prioritization: Depending on the area, type of agriculture and degree of technological advancement, prioritizing agricultural products might present a variety of difficulties. These challenges stem from social, political, environmental, and economic factors, all of which influence the decisions of policymakers and agricultural producers in determining crop priorities. The main challenges associated with agricultural produce prioritization includes the following:

Climate Change: Climate change introduces significant uncertainty into agricultural planning due to its effects on crop yields through temperature fluctuations, extreme weather events (such as floods and droughts), and shifting weather patterns. Unpredictable weather makes it difficult for farmers to prioritize crops effectively, as future conditions become increasingly uncertain and risk-laden (Gourdji & Lobell, 2012).

Inadequate Infrastructure and Market Access: Prioritizing some agricultural products, especially perishables like fruits, vegetables and dairy is hampered by the absence of suitable infrastructure, such as storage facilities, transportation, and processing plants. Missed opportunities, waste, and inefficient distribution of agricultural products can result from inadequate market access, both domestically and abroad Nyong, *et al*.,2023); (Grimsrud & Haghshenas, 2019).

Economic Instability and Price Volatility: Price volatility in agricultural markets, driven by trade policies, international market trends, and other economic factors, poses significant challenges for farmers. Fluctuating prices make it difficult for farmers to prioritize crops, as they may increase production of a crop during a price surge, only to face plummeting prices later due to oversupply or shifts in demand.

Government Subsidies and Policies: Government policies, such as export restrictions, tariffs, and subsidies, can significantly influence agricultural decision-making. Policies promoting the cultivation of specific crops, such as biofuel crops or staple grains, may unintentionally reduce incentives for growing alternative crops that could be more sustainable or profitable. Additionally, poorly designed policies may fail to address the long-term needs of the agricultural sector effectively.

Strategies to improve Agricultural Produce Prioritization: To create adaptive solutions that take into consideration both short-term demands and long-term sustainability, policymakers, agricultural researchers and farmers must collaborate. Enhancing food security, increasing economic performance and adjusting to climatic concerns all depend on better prioritizing of agricultural products. The following are strategies for improving agricultural prioritization:

Information and Data Collection System: Farmers can choose crops based on local conditions including soil quality, weather patterns and past performance by utilizing GIS and remote sensing technology Nyong, and Nweze,, 2012); (Lobell *et al*., 2014). By determining which crops are most suited for a certain location, these tools aid in increasing yield. Farmers may foresee demand and modify their production plans in response by using machine learning and predictive analytics. For instance, it has been demonstrated that precision agricultural technologies in the USA that combine information from soil sensors and weather forecasts enhance crop management and prioritizing (Zhang *et al*., 2019).

Sustainable Value Chain and Standardization: In regions with limited water resources, water-intensive crops must be prioritized using water-efficient irrigation methods like drip irrigation. Crop rotation, intercropping and the use of organic fertilizers can

help prioritize crops that are less dependent on chemical inputs while improving long-term soil fertility Nyong, and Nweze,, 2012); (Giller *et al*., 2011). For instance, drip irrigation has been demonstrated to increase crop yields and water use efficiency by up to 40% in areas such as California (Schroeder *et al*., 2013).

Policy Support and Access to Finance and Insurance: Providing financial incentives or subsidies for crops that are essential for food security (e.g., rice, wheat) or that contribute to economic development can help prioritize high value crops. In countries like India, government interventions like minimum support prices have been pivotal in prioritizing staple crops like wheat and rice Nyong, and Nweze,, 2012); (Chand, 2015). Investing in agricultural research and extension services allows for the development of better crop varieties and farming practices. For example, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has shown that extension services can significantly improve yields and income in developing countries (Davis *et al*., 2012).

Supply Chain Optimization: Establishing cold storage and refrigerated transport networks is crucial for reducing post-harvest losses, particularly for high-priority perishable crops like fruits, vegetables, and dairy. According to the FAO (2015), post-harvest losses in sub-Saharan Africa can be as high as 40% and improving storage infrastructure is key to addressing this issue. Developing centralized collection points and regional hubs improves efficiency in distributing prioritized crops, reducing transportation costs, and ensuring timely delivery to markets. The World Bank has highlighted the importance of infrastructure investments in boosting agricultural productivity and market access in Africa (World Bank, 2014).

Climate-Smart Agriculture: Prioritizing the cultivation of climate-resilient crops, such as drought-tolerant varieties, is critical in regions prone to climate variability. The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) has highlighted the importance of breeding climate-resilient varieties to address the challenges of climate change Nyong, and Nweze,, 2012); (Challinor *et al*., 2014). Agroecological farming practices that integrate sustainable pest management, soil health improvements and diverse cropping systems can prioritize local crops while maintaining ecosystem balance (Altieri *et al*., 2012).

Farmer Education and Capacity Building: Educating farmers on crop management techniques and modern farming practices improves prioritization by enabling farmers to adopt best practices for high-yield and high-value crops. Studies indicate that farmer training programs can lead to significant improvements in productivity (Davis, 2008). Providing farmers with technical advice on diversifying crops helps them prioritize a mix of staple and high-value crops based on market demands and sustainability goals (Thornton *et al*., 2013).

Conclusion: A comprehensive strategy that incorporates data-driven decision-making, sustainable resource management, enhanced supply chains and regulatory assistance is needed to prioritize agricultural products. Agricultural systems can be changed to emphasize resilient, high-value crops that satisfy market demand and guarantee long-term food security by using technology, encouraging public-private partnerships and developing farmer capacity. In this process, research and extension services are essential as they help farmers adjust to changing economic, technological and environmental circumstances. Reduction in post-harvest losses will lead to maximum profit and increased competitiveness in domestic and international markets.

Recommendations: Prioritizing agricultural produce for marketing will create jobs, promote large-scale production, and provide opportunities to access.**;** Rural development to improve livelihoods by prioritizing the construction of roads, storage facilities, and enhanced market access, thereby facilitating smoother marketing processes.**;** Encouraging the formation of cooperatives can enhance bargaining power, reduce costs and improve marketing efficiency for small holder farmers. **;** Policies should incorporate strategies to help farmers adapt to climate change, ensuring that agricultural marketing remains viable in the face of environmental challenges.; Food security will ensure a stable supply of essential food items, reducing dependence on imports. This will enable farmers to earn higher incomes while contributing significantly to the GDP.

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