



Food Security Challenges in Nigeria

Short abstract:

Any regional policy must be built on evidence-based analysis and take into account the cross-border dimension. For example, particularly in the area of livestock and cattle trading, you cannot make any reliable, substantial contribution without trade between Nigeria and the rest of the region. Overall, if you do not take into account Nigeria's predominant position, you cannot draw any conclusions for any policy decision that you might take in terms of regional trading.

Mr. Alhaji Mohd Sabo Nanono

Executive Chairman of the Kuka Farm Enterprise, Nigeria

Mr. Nanono spent most of his working career in the development finance industry with a special focus on international banking. He served as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Kano State Investment and Property Development Corporation from 1980 to 1983, as Executive Director of the Bank of the North LTD from 1984 to 1990 and as Managing Director of the African International Bank (AIB) in Lagos from 1995 to 2000. Mr. Nanono was also the Chairman of the African Farmers' Association of Nigeria (AFAN) Kano chapter and supported many non-profit organisations. He has since retired those offices and is now a farmer alongside his responsibilities as Executive Chairman of the Kuka Farm Enterprise in Kano. The Enterprise is engaged in the production of fruits and vegetables, livestock and fish farming as well as cereals and grains production.

What are the key challenges and constraints that you are facing as an agricultural producer?

The government's fiscal and monetary policy constitutes a major constraint for most of the farmers. These are the instruments to regulate and influence the development of the agricultural sector and other related sectors. Many entrepreneurs are convinced that the government neglects the provision of basic infrastructure that would be necessary for the implementation of our business plans. We currently face serious limitations in terms of reliable energy, even possible to access the power supply grid at all. The government's pricing policy also seriously impedes the growth of the food sectors. For example, Nigeria has a vast potential to cultivate rice, not only for our local consumption but also the growing areas of Nigeria could potentially feed the whole West African region. However, rice remains primarily an import because the government encourages the import of rice from Asia rather than investing in local rice production to compete with these large-scale businesses. I am convinced that the Nigerian market has a huge untapped potential that has been developed far beyond Nigeria.

What's the role of cross-border trade?

Cross-border trade is of course very important, - it is a reality! Cross-border trade is vibrant between Nigeria and Chad, Nigeria, Chad and Niger, and between Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and the larger sub-region. It is particularly

supply, for example, for poultry products. What preoccupies us at the moment, is that there are some security concerns in the North-Eastern part of the country, which seriously affect trade between Nigeria and Cameroon. Trade between Nigeria and Cameroon is viable and important, though mostly informal. Cotton and rice are the two key trading sectors.

What would need to be done to further promote cross-border trade?

One important thing would be to improve cross-border trading and regional trading in general, and to provide a better infrastructure by developing a regional railway transportation network. This would boost trade in our entire region. But I don't see this as a project for governments. Road transport networks have limitations in terms of transportation costs compared to railways. Railways would further ease our existing trade relations with all other West African countries. Developing railway infrastructure is not impossible; I think we can do it, for example, with some sort of private sector involvement.

What's Nigeria's role in the face of food crisis in West Africa?

Nigeria does not face any serious food crisis and I don't think we will ever face one. Nigeria is a buffer zone against food supply shocks for the whole West African region. Even in terms of imports, I believe that 30% of products from the region come their way into the wider sub-region. You have to understand that Nigeria represents more than half of West African population and represents more than 60% of the regional GDP. Nigeria has never faced any serious food crisis and we are not facing any serious food crisis are happening in our neighbouring countries without anybody even noticing it. We are not a refugee camp in any neighbouring country, our neighbours are just merging into our population.

How can regional economic integration be fostered ?

Any regional policy must be built on evidence-based analysis and take into account the cross-border dimensions of trade, particularly in the area of livestock and cattle trading, you can not make any reliable, substantial policy without taking into account cross-border trade between Nigeria and the rest of the region. Overall, if you don't take into account the cross-border dimensions, you are likely to arrive to wrong conclusions for any policy decision that you might take in terms of regional trade.

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Interview with: Alhaji Mohd Sabo Nanono, Executive Chairman of the Kuka Farm Enterprise, Nigeria

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