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3 The Need to Re-Negotiate Nigeria's Federalism for Agricultural Development in The 21st Century

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Abstract

The paper examined the concept of cooperative federalism as an imperative for Agricultural Development in Nigeria rather than "True Federalism" as has been the case since the advent of the fourth Republic and posited that there is need to consider a re-negotiation of the Nigerian federation.

It argued that the recent clamours for "True Federalism" in Nigeria are not in consonance with the spirit of National Development vis-à-vis Agricultural development in the country, as the concept itself has been described as a theoretical jungle, blurred, archaic and highly utopian. It highlighted the various Agricultural potentials available in Nigeria and made some suggestions on areas of cooperation that can improve agricultural production in the country.

Its conclusion was that for Agricultural production to be improved upon and consequently increase the foreign earnings in Nigeria, there is dire need for cooperation among the three tiers of Government and that Nigerians should join hands in clamouring for same rather than the current quest for "True Federalism".

Introduction

One of the problems of Nigeria's economy today is the over-reliance on oil, which makes it a monolithic economy. Before the decade of 1970s, Agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. The Nigerian Agriculture was able to grow at a rapid rate to provide adequate food for an increasing population, raw materials

for a budding industrial sector, increasing public revenue and foreign exchange for government; and employment opportunities for an expanding labour force. The support provided by Government for Agricultural Development then was concentrated on export crops like Cocoa, groundnut, palm produce, rubber and cotton as self-sufficiency in food production seemed not to pose any problem worthy of public attention.²

Indications for problems in the Nigerian agriculture however, started to emerge from the second decade of the country's independence. The decade witnessed rapid deterioration in the country's agricultural situation as evident in widening food supply-demand gaps, rising food import bills, rising food prices, rapid declines in government internal revenue from agricultural exports as well as in the labour force required for agriculture.³

The situation was further compounded by the residual effects of the civil war (1967-1970), severe droughts in some parts of the country, government fiscal and monetary policies and above all, an "oil boom" which created serious distortions in the economy and accelerated the rate of migrations of labour from agriculture.⁴

It is arising from the above factors that agricultural sector's performance has not been very impressive. The output of the traditional cash crops such as cocoa, cotton, rubber, groundnut and palm produce has dwindled continuously over the years, while production of livestock has also fallen. Similarly a huge discrepancy exists in the growth rates of foodstuff production and population.⁵ The result is that Nigeria, a major producer and exporter of agricultural produce, suddenly discovered that she is now an importer of food.⁶ For example, between 1992 and 1997 alone, Nigeria imported rice to the tune of 699,054 tones while about 1,068,802 tones of wheat was imported during the same period.⁷

In an effort to tackle these serious problems, the three tiers of government in the country have been initiating a number of agricultural policies, programmes and projects, largely within the frame work of Development plans, the primary task of which became the need to seriously and urgently take measures to advance agriculture, with a view to ensuring a tolerably good standard of living and feeding her population and more importantly, have her current monolithic economy diversified. The efforts are to say the least not yielding much result.

For example, before the adoption of the economic policy reforms in the mid 1980s, some agricultural Development programmes were adopted in a bid to improve agricultural performance. These were backed up by substantial budgetary allocations, but the Development programmes were not totally coherent and logical.⁸

Consequently, although agricultural performance improved noticeably, the results were not adequate not only in relation to the committed financial resources, but also in relation to the nation's minimum needs of agricultural products. The issue remains that while various attempts have been made and are still being made to improve the agricultural base of the nation, its overall performance is still below expectations.⁹

Improving Nigeria's agricultural performance to a sustainable level has therefore become a thing of great concern to the federation as a whole. The focus of this paper therefore is to make a case for re-negotiating Nigeria's federalism by embracing Cooperative federalism as an imperative for tackling Nigeria's Agricultural underdevelopment among others as against "True Federalism" approach. This will entail an insight into Nigeria as a federation and an overview of the concept of federalism and cooperative federalism, an excursion into Nigeria's federalism and Agricultural Development, Potentials of Nigeria's Agriculture, suggested Areas of cooperation so as to realize Nigeria's Agricultural potentials and finally Conclusion.

Nigeria as a Federation

Nigeria is a country made up of many and variegated ethnic groups and religions with a population of about 120 million. Allied to this, is the fact that it is a polyglot society¹⁰ or put in another way, a multi-lingual nation. Before 1954, it was run as a unitary system of government and from then to date, it is run as a federal system of government. The military federalism practiced under every military regime in Nigeria is not consistent with K. C. Wheare's type. Thus, the political framework of Nigeria today is that of a federal political structure or put differently, a federal system of government.

Sections 2(1) and (2) of the 1999 Constitution (the existing working and binding document) of the union buttress this fact, thus:

Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign State to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. . . . Nigeria shall be a Federation consisting of States and a Federal Capital territory.

The Concept of Federalism

Federalism is derived from the Latin word *foedus*, which implies "covenant."¹¹ Like most concepts in political science, it lacks a universally accepted definition. However, the idea dates back to the Greek Civilizations, when efforts were made to describe the legal relationships between the leagues and the City State.¹²

Nonetheless, the honour of being the first advocate of modern Federalism goes to Jean Bodin who was followed by others like Otto Cosmanus, Hugo Grotius and Pufendorf³

The writers viewed Federalism as¹⁴

A voluntary form of political union, (either temporary or permanent) of independent authorities, for special common purpose such as defense against foreign powers and for the Interest of trade and communications or for other reasons.

Be this as it may, the discussion of contemporary Federalism generally starts with K.C. Wheare¹⁵ who viewed a Federal government or political system as a constitutional arrangement, which divides law making powers functions between two levels of government. According to him,

This constitutional form is brought about by circumstances where people are prepared to give up only certain limited powers and wish to retain other limited powers, with both sets of powers to be exercised by co-ordinate authorities.

As he puts it:

By Federal principles, I mean the method of dividing powers so that general (central) and regional (state) governments are each within sphere, co-ordinate and independent.¹⁶

According to Wheare, his definition of a Federal system as one composed of central and regional governments co-ordinate in legal authority leads to the following corollaries for the institutional structure of federalism¹⁷.

- (i) There must be a constitutional division of legal authority within the federation;
- (ii) Each component government must be independent within its own sphere of competence;
- (iii) The division of authority must be clearly laid out in a supreme constitution;
- (iv) The constitution should not be amenable by one level of government alone;
- (v) There must be an umpire, usually a supreme court, to resolve intergovernmental disputes over the boundaries of their legal authority.
- (vi) Each constituted government must operate directly on the people rather than indirectly through other tier.

Wheare consciously chose to define federalism rigidly as can be seen above and admits same, claiming:

I have put forward uncompromisingly a criterion of federal government – the delimited and co-ordinate division of government functions and I have implied that to the extent to which any system of government does not conform to this criterion, it has no claim to call itself federal¹⁸.

On the basis of this definition Sir Kenneth Wheare proceeded to classify the constitutions or governmental practice in different countries labeling them as federal, quasi-federal, or non-federal according to the degree to which they met his stipulated characteristics.¹⁹

The bottom line of Wheare's definition is that once power or the functions of government in political system are shared between or among the levels or "tiers" of government to the extent that no one is dependent on the other, and each derives authority from the people, such political system or arrangement will be said to be practicing federalism.

Conversely, when there is a single powerful authority to the extent that the authority creates, defines the power and the organizational structure of the other political units and there is no national devolution of power between them but the local units depend on the center for their powers and functions, the political system or structure will be said to be unitary. Britain, France, Japan, Ghana, Gambia to mention a few are examples of countries that practice this system of government.²⁰

The implication of a unitary system of government is that local and regional (state) government derives authority from the central government.²¹

On the other hand a political system can be neither federal nor unitary, but confederate, if rather than the local units deriving authority from the center, it is the centre that derives authority from them.²² Put in another way,

A Confederate state is a league or union or association of sovereign states, that is to say, a "compact" between several separate and sovereign entities with each state independent of the other can secede from the union if desired.²³

Co-operation is the binding principle of confederate states and there is no legal authority that can compel states to obey the laws.²⁴ The earliest example in the history of confederation includes the Swiss Confederation (1781-1789) and (1860-1865). The second being the period of the America Civil War and of course the

USSR confederation put together by force of arms in 1917.²⁵ Nigeria has never experienced a confederation in its practical sense.

In summary therefore, a federal form of political Union is contrasted with other forms of union by the distinction that in a unitary system, the state or regional governments are legally subordinate to the central government and in a confederacy the central government is legally subordinate to the state governments.²⁶ The definition of K. C. Wheare, no doubt has remained a classical definition and as one writer once put it is perhaps, the most cogent and clearly expressed on federalism.²⁷

Similarly, when people talk of federalism in its true sense Wheare's notion of it readily comes to play. However, analysts have in recent years attempted to redefine the essential characters of a federal political system. Among other things they are looking at the extent of interaction and interdependence, rather than independence, among governments within federations administratively, financially and politically,²⁸ and on this we hinge the theme of this paper.

Our concern is that there should be a re-think or a re-negotiation of Nigeria's federalism in this 21st century and 4th republic in particular to embrace the element of cooperation or put more succinctly cooperative federalism so as to bring about a more formidable agricultural development for the good of the Nigerian people. The first attempt at redefining federalism premised it on the co operational dispositions of states rather than isolationist tendencies, as those clamouring for "True federalism" would want it to be.

Buttressing the need for cooperative federalism L O Dare²⁹ contends that:

To require perpetual co-ordinate power and independence of the various governments is to render the doctrine of Federalism, unworkable. Since the control of national financial policies, wars, grants-in-aid national emergencies and depressions increase the powers of the federal government, it is predictable that states will always remain financially subordinate to the central government. The delicate balance which Wheare demanded could neither be attained nor preserved over any length of time. Its framework is thus unattainable.

In the same vein, R.L Watt defended cooperation in a federal system thus:

Federalism is a political system characterized by two sub-systems, one of the central government and the other of state governments, in which the component governments are co-ordinate in the sense

that neither is politically subordinate to the other, but which interact with each other at many points both co-operatively and competitively³⁰

The point to note here is that although it is desirable that each level or tier of government be independent in its sphere of competence, inter-governmental cooperation is inevitable. Describing co-operative federalism as "the new idea"³¹ O'Connor and Sabato inform that "the era of dual federalism came to an abrupt end in the 1930s' in the United States whose constitution in 1787, classical federalist K. C. Wheare premised his definition of federalism and its principles. According to them, the new deal programmes forced all levels of government to work co-operatively in the United States and elsewhere. Recent calls by political Leaders in Nigeria for "True federalism" rather than co-operative federalism will no doubt be an albatross to her national development and agricultural development in particular.

Nigerian Federalism and Agricultural Development

Agricultural development implies enhancing or improving upon various food production mechanisms of a state so as to make food available for the populace. This indeed is the essence of any good government. As part of its responsibilities the government of any country serves to cater for the welfare of the citizenry while at the same time providing them with sound security and protection. Welfare of the citizens entails food production for them among others. Tijani Yesufu³² emphasizes this, thus:

The most fundamental of welfare are:

Food, Housing and Clothing, Transportation and communication,
Energy and Fuel, Education, Health and Medical services

According to Yesufu, food is number one and this view we share completely. When a nation is developed agriculturally, the citizens will never lack food and in the same vein the Nation will grow and continue to develop.

Agricultural Development Can Yield Many Other Benefits And These Include:

- Supplying adequate raw materials to a growing industrial sector
- Constituting a major source of mass employment
- Constituting a major source of foreign earnings and
- Providing a market for the products of the industrial sector.³³

It follows therefore that all the tiers of government in Nigeria must integrate to ensure that the benefit of Agricultural and indeed food production is enhanced for the overall benefit of the people. A nation, which is able to feed its people, no doubt, is on the path to meaningful development. Once there is self-sufficiency in food production and consumption, the nation will be better for it in terms of her Gross Domestic Products (GDP), Gross National Product (GNP) and National Income (NI). Intensified food exports in this regard, will also beef up our foreign earnings

Potentials of Nigeria's Agriculture³⁴

One area of general agreement on Nigeria's agriculture is its undisputed Potentials. A clear indication of some of the indicators of these potentials is demonstrated as follows:

Major Geophysical Indicators of potential

- Total Land Mass	-	923,771 sq. km (92.4 million hectares)
- Estimated Arable Land	-	68 million hectares
- Natural Forests and Rangelands	-	37 million hectares
- Large Rivers and Lakes	-	120,000 sq. km
- Coastal and Marine Resources	-	960 km shore line
- Variable and suitable Climate for Agriculture		

Socioeconomic –Related Agricultural potential

- Large Population - Estimated at 120 million (2001)
- Large consumer Market
- Relatively High-level Manpower
- Large Regional and Continental African markets
- World Market

As Professor Ango Abdullai puts it,

Taking all these indicators into account, Nigerians cannot understand why agriculture is still not developed in the country to fully play its roles in the economy³⁵. As Yaya Olaniran³⁶ also puts it,

In an effort to solve these problems, government initiated a number of agricultural policies within the framework of the successive National Development Plans from

1970-1974 and subsequently at five years interval periods with the exception of 1986 – 2000. Research and data available from the Central Bank of Nigeria on the policies have, however convinced the Nigerian government and Stakeholders in agricultural development strategies in Nigeria that the policies had not made any appreciable impact on agricultural production in Nigeria.

TABLES 1,2 AND 3 IN APPENDICES 1, 11 AND 111 clearly buttresses the fact that agricultural production has not made any appreciable impact in the economy. Table 3 in appendix 11 gives credence to this. For example, between 1970-1985, the Average Growth Rate of Exports in Nigeria's foreign trade was 7.8%, share of Agric within the period was 7.4% and Average Growth Rate of Food Imports was 26.1% while the share of Food in total imports within the period was 12.7%. Between 1986-1993, the Average Growth Rate of Exports was 54% out of which the share of Agric was an abysmal 3.1% and Food imports rose to 62%. Between 1994-1999, the Average Growth Rate of Exports was 54.4% and the share of Agric was just 1.7% while Food imports rose to 98.2%.

This no doubt should be a cause for concern to all Stakeholders in the Nigerian Agricultural Enterprise. The idea of cooperative federalism is to bring about self-sufficiency in food production for the teeming masses of Nigeria and have enough for exports to improve the nation's foreign earnings. Apart from agriculture, cooperation will also help in developing other sectors of the Nigerian economy.

Suggested Areas Of Cooperation So As To Realize Nigeria's Agriculture Potentials

- POLICY INITIATIVES
- POLICY IMPLEMENTATION
- AVAILABILITY AND LOW COST OF INPUTS (FERTILIZERS, SEEDS, AGRO – CHEMICALS, MECHANIZED LAND CLEARING EQUIPMENTS, E.T.C)
- IMPROVED LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY
- IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICES
- IMPROVING THE PURCHASING POWER OF SMALL SCALE PRODUCERS
- IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

- IMPROVED AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS
- AVAILABILITY OF LAND
- MARKETING AND PRICING REGULATION
- FISCAL POLICY ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- MONETARY POLICY ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- CREATING CONDUCIVE ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND MARKETS
- INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS
- PROVISION OF STORAGE FACILITIES
- WATER AND IRRIGATION RESOURCES
- EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL TRAINING INSTITUTES
- EXTENSIVE RESEARCH INTO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Concluding Remarks

At the outset of this paper, the direction was very clear and this was that Agricultural Development in Nigeria is at low ebb and putting all things together, there is the dire need for a cooperative political will to improve the situation in this 21st century and Nigeria's 4th Republic in particular. There is no doubt that Nigeria's political framework is Federalism and to some Nigerians it must be seen to be 'True Federalism' in its entire ramification. However, the snag is that federalism depicts isolationism or put in another way, independence but the fact is that no entity can be an island unto itself and above all there is unity in strength as the common saying goes. Similarly. The world today is that of interdependence or 'globalization' as it is often used today.

Most federalisms – America., India, Canada etc have had cause to re-negotiate their political systems to suit their local needs. For example the United States of America the arrow head of federalism discarded true federalism and embraced cooperative federalism as far back as the 1930s. India has also embarked on various restructuring of its political system to suit its needs. So do many others.

As Ronald L Watts puts it

The pure model or dual federalism has never been applicable to any federation.³⁷

Citing the United States of America, Daniel Elazar also pointed to the fact that there is no true federalism.³⁸

And as William Livingston puts it,

Federalism is not an absolute but a relative term. There is no specific point at which a society ceases to be unified and becomes diversified. The differences are of degree rather than kind. All countries fall somewhere in a spectrum which runs from a theoretically wholly integrated society at one extreme to a theoretically diversified society at the other.³⁹

To improve Nigeria's agricultural production therefore, there is need for a re-think and re-negotiation of its true federalism posture and embrace cooperative federalism.

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Appendix I

Table 1
Contribution of Crude Oil Sector to Key Economic Variables
1970-1999

	Gross Domestic Product +	Value of Export	Total Revenue	Foreign Exchange
1965	2.5	12.6	17.1	14.1
1970	3.8	18.8	26.3	20.1
1975	20.5	85.6	77.5	86.5
1980	22.0	87.0	81.1	88.8
1985	15.2	96.7	74.7	92.4
1990	13.2	96.2	79.8	77.8
1995	13.07	97.6	(62.9)*	72.9
1996	13.97	98.2	(60.1)	81.9
1997	14.17	97.7	(71.5)	88.3
1998	13.01e	95.5	62.4	88.3
1999	15.10e	94.7e	64.5e	87.9e

Source: NNPC, CBN Annual Reports.

Note:

* Contribution of value added tax part of which came from petroleum Related goods and services led to reduction in crude oil revenue contribution.

e Estimate.

+ At 1984 factor cost.

Table 2
Government Revenue Sources and Contribution of Oil Revenue

	Total Revenue (Nmn)	Oil %	Non-oil %
1970	633.3	26.3	73.7
1975	5,514.7	77.5	22.5
1980	15,234.0	81.1	18.9
1985	14,606.1	74.7	25.3
1990	68,570.1	* 79.8	20.2
1995	459,987.3	62.9	37.1
1996	520,190.0	90.1	39.9
1997	523,000.0	71.5	28.5
1998	463,608.3*	62.4	37.6
1999	540,000.7	64.5e	35.5

Reflection of collapse of crude oil prices
 e Estimate

Source: CBN, NNPC