**Agricultural Rebirth in Nigeria: Issues of Policy and Institutional Realignment**

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Protocol

I. NTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a force to reckon with in the global economy. According to World Bank, “the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Nigeria was worth 568.51 billion US dollars in 2014. The GDP value of Nigeria represents 0.92 precent of the world economy. GDP in Nigeria averaged 79.89 USD Billion from 1960 until 2014, reaching an all time high of 568.51 USD Billion in 2014 and a record low of 4.20 USD Billion in 1960”. Presently agriculture contributes about 20% to the economy in terms of GDP, second to industries and third to services. Thus the need for agricultural rebirth of the sector becomes obvious to be able to do better in terms of revenue inflows to the people and the nation at large.

Agricultural rebirth connotes for the sector to be born again; or to be born anew; or, better still to be born afresh. In Nigeria, it is customary to observe a near perfect correlation between political change and policy change in the agricultural sector whenever one government succeeds another. That itself is not the problem. The real problem is the perennial absence of built-in stabilisers, in terms of appropriate policy and institutional mechanisms, in order to preserve the integrity and stability of public agricultural policy process as political change takes place from time to time. In the ecumenical sense, when somebody is born again it means “… he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”. Even though a total rebirth of the ecumenical type is not possible in the case of agricultural policy, it is nonetheless expected that a major policy change in terms of institutional or other alignments is inevitable consequent upon a major political change, albeit subject to minimal perturbation of the policy system; in which sense I find the theme of this workshop quite apt - *Agricultural Rebirth: Issues of Policy and Institutional Realignments.*

Fortunately or unfortunately, the present effort towards rebirth is taking place at a bad time for a commodity-dependent economy like Nigeria’s. The world market is presently witnessing a major dislocation of its commodity price relativities that is hurting commodity-dependent economies rather badly. Particularly the present downward gyration of commodity prices is double jeopardy for Nigeria as a commodity-dependent country: on the one hand, the collapse of oil price structure in the world market (from a high of $150/barrel to a low of $28/barrel), a commodity the government of Nigeria nearly totally depends upon, is hurting the Nigerian economy badly; while, on the other hand, the sympathetic downward movement of other commodity prices, specifically agricultural commodities that the rural economy of Nigeria also depends upon, is hurting and threatening the livelihoods and food security of Nigerians badly as well. Thus the need for rebirth of the agricultural economy at this time is emanating not only from the correlated changes in the polity and policy but also from the world economic downturn presently being experienced.

To start with, let us demonstrate this correlation with episodes in political and policy changes in the past; beginning with political changes since independence: from colonial to civilian (Tafawa Balewa, 1960); from civilian to military (Aguyi Ironsi1966); from military to military (Yakubu Gowon 1966); from military to military the second time (Muritala Mohammed/Olusegun Obasanjo 1975); from military to civilian the first time (Sheu Shagari, 1979); from civilian to military the second time (Mohamadu Buhari, 1984); from military to military the third time (Ibrahim Babangida, 1985); from military to civilian the second time, but without election (Ernest Shonekan, 1994); from civilian to military the third time (Sani Abacha, 1995); from military to military the fourth time (Abdulsalami Abubakar, 1998); from military to civilian the third time through an election (Olusegun Obasanjo recycled, 1999); from civilian to civilian, same political parties involved (Umaru Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan, 2007); and, the latest, from civilian to civilian, different political parties (Mohamadu Buhari recycled, 2015).

This series of political changes correlates nearly perfectly with policy changes in agriculture, in terms of dominant programmes implemented by successive Heads of State or Presidents, as follows: Nationally Coordinated Food Production Programme (NAFPP, 1972, Gowon); Operation Feed the Nation (OFN, 1976, Obasanjo); Green Revolution Programme (GRP, 1980, Shagari); Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRRI, 1986, Babangida); National Agricultural Land Authority (NALDA, 1990, Babangida); National Programme on Food Security (NPFS, 2000 Obasanjo); National Food Security Programme (NFSP, 2003 Yar’Adua); National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA, 2004, Yar’Adua); and, the just concluded Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA, 2011, Jonathan).

I imagine that the rationale behind this policy workshop is to determine which slogan fits the mantra of change under the present President Mohammadu Buhari; which I venture to say “Agricultural Rebirth Agenda (ARA)”. Nonetheless, the point to make out of this correlation analysis is that the agricultural rebirth that the present administration embarks upon has a strong political economy character; which political character I like to illuminate with some historical antecedent with a view to eliciting the implications of this character for agricultural rebirth; then to present a philosophical foundation for agricultural rebirth; and finally to interrogate the issues of policy and institutional alignments that the rebirth entails.

II. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURAL REBIRTH

By political economy of agricultural development is meant the interplay between economics, law and politics, and how institutions emerge for the continual formulation and implementation of public agricultural policy. The political economy of Nigeria’s agriculture consists in a series of episodes in three time horizons - pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial eras of agricultural administration. In the pre-colonial era, the exploratory trading activities of the British and Portuguese merchants along the Atlantic Ocean during the 16th Century, which involved the exchange of salt and other foreign products for pepper and palm oil from natives, and the subsequent dominant control of mercantile trade in forest and agricultural products under the Royal Niger Company, underscores the importance of such products at that time, and a trigger factor in the eventual emergence of colonial governance of the area (Ayoola 2007). In the colonial era, the deliberate effort of the British Government to establish institutions for agricultural research and administration underscores the joint roles of technology and policy as the pillars for agricultural development. This was done through the notorious but applicable philosophy of surplus extraction pursued by metropolitan Britain in its colonies during that period. In the philosophy of surplus extraction of colonial masters naturally changed to one of self-reliance and self-sufficiency, which put the initial emphasis on agriculture as the mainstay of the regional or state economies of thereby demonstrating role agriculture was expected to play in the smooth take-off of the country, and, with the benefit of hindsight, the present lessons of experience indicating that the country could only afford to neglect at its own peril.

The recent statement credited to National Bureau of Statistics clearly illustrates the political economy of Nigeria’s agriculture, that:

“GDP From Agriculture in Nigeria increased to 4816519.15 NGN Million (N4.8 Trillion) in the third quarter of 2015 from 3477845.24 NGN Million (N3.5 Trillion) in the second quarter of 2015. GDP From Agriculture in Nigeria averaged 3583037.05 NGN Million (N3.6 Trillion) from 2010 until 2015, reaching an all time high of 4816519.15 NGN Million (N4.8 Trillion) in the third quarter of 2015 and a record low of 2594759.86 NGN Million (N2.6 Trillion) in the first quarter of 2010.”

We infer from this statement that, in 2015, being an election year in Nigeria, agricultural GDP decreased from a higher level in the first quarter, before the presidential election to a lower level in the second quarter, during the presidential election, and later increased to a higher level in the third quarter, after the presidential election. Thus in all likelihood the presidential election, a political event, has a pronounced effect on the output of the agricultural sector, albeit not of a direct cause-and-effect type.

In light of this, hereunder I like to highlight certain instances in the agricultural history of Nigeria wherein the implications of political economy of agricultural development were manifestly demonstrated, which border on resource control behaviour among the states and boundary maintenance practices between the Federal Government and the States. In the first case of resource control, the political elite of a region or state exhibits a strong tendency to appropriate the benefit of agricultural development to itself alone and to subject the benefit stream therefrom to its own jurisdictional control. In the second case of boundary maintenance practices, a state government draws an artificial boundary in its agricultural development activities for the federal government not to trespass. To such instances we now turn as observed during each Republic.

*First Republic (1963-1966)*

The constitution that ushered the country into Independence in 1960 classified agricultural development as a residual item on the legislative list, which, going by a special clause in the constitution meant that agricultural development was solely a regional responsibility; and as such, each Region maintained its own inherited Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MANR). Soon after independence the new Federal Government moved to establish a federal ministry for agricultural development at the centre, which all the Regions were united to oppose, in jealously guiding their constitutional rights in that regard. This led to a pronounced constitutional crisis over agriculture culminating in the invitation extended to Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to intervene through a study (FAO 1966). But, despite the recommendation in the FAO study that a ministry of agriculture should be established at the centre, the Regional Governments did not budge or shift ground an inch on the matter. In frustration over the constitutional crisis, the Federal Government forcibly established a pseudo agriculture ministry in 1965, and carefully named it Federal Ministry of Natural Resources and Research (FMNR), which, as Alison Ayida put it, the word "agriculture" was carefully avoided so as not to "offend the political sensibilities of the regions" which were constitutionally responsible for agricultural development at that time (Ayida, 1973). Nonetheless, this pseudo-ministry operated until the military sacked the Balewa government in 1966, thereby bringing the first republic to an end. And as soon as General Gowon settled down, the constitution having been suspended, and by way of an administrative fiat, he created a truly Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (FMANR), in 1966.

The point to make here is that the action of Regional Governments reflected the commodity boom of that period that yielded huge revue inflows to the Regions from exports of farm produce at that time, which the Regions jealously protected from being snatched by the federal government. Therefore, the present administration under President Buhari should note that agricultural rebirth in Nigeria has a political economy character and that the process of rebirth is not necessarily immune to, and it is actually susceptible to a constitutional crisis about who has a superior control over agricultural resources between the federal government and state governments in due course. And per adventure someone thinks that the present 1999 constitution would prevent such a crisis from happening again, by providing for agricultural development on the concurrent legislative list then he needs to note what happened during the second Republic as presented next.

*Second Republic (1979-1984)*

The legal action about the activities of River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), filed by the six the six-UPN controlled state governments (Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Lagos, Kwara and Bendel) against the federal government during this Republic, testifies the manifestation possibility of resource control or boundary maintenance behaviour even when agriculture is on the concurrent list. Displaying the federal might previously; president Sheu Shagari had increased the number of the RBDAs from the original eleven (11) to nineteen (19) (reflecting the nineteen-state structure of Nigeria at that time). He also expanded their operations from the original focus on the management of water bodies to the boundary infrastructure provision in rural areas, so their name to River Basins and Rural Development Authorities (RBRDAs). Basking in the euphoria of this development the RBRDAs quickly swung into action and gathered a greater momentum with increased funding from the federal government: sinking boreholes in rural areas, providing rural electricity, constructing rural feeder roads, etc. However, it soon dawned on the opposition state governments if the RBRDAs continued in that tempo, the forthcoming 1983 governorship elections would be lost to NPN candidates in the rural areas. So as the 1983 general elections approached, the opposition governors became glittery, in the fear that ruling party NPN would win the next gubernatorial elections in their states. Thus the fear of RBDAs became the beginning of political wisdom! The six state governments dragged the federal government to court to challenge the right of the federally owned RBDAs to undertake rural development in their own states, thereby claiming trespass (can you imagine?). The res of their case even bordered on 1979 constitution, which, despite the provision for agricultural development as an item on the concurrent legislative list (so a joint federal and state responsibility), they claimed it naturally belonged in the jurisdiction of the states.

In all likelihood, this court case informed the amendment introduced in the 1999 constitution, whereby the status of agriculture was retained as an item on the concurrent list but, in addition, a division of labour was established between the two tiers of government. Under this division of labour, the Federal Government was assigned the responsibility for “the establishment of centres for agricultural studies” (i.e. research), and also for “promotion or financing of agricultural projects”. (Second Schedule Part II, Section 17). Thus, for a successful rebirth of the agricultural sector to take place, it is now left for the present administration to determine whether the roles that federal government is presently performing in the states agriculture actually belongs in its jurisdiction according to the 1999 constitution. Specifically as a pre-condition, the PMB administration must engage the states in an exercise in role definition, to jointly determine those implementation activities of the federal government that overreach the state governments in order to discontinued them. Then the rebirth programme can concentrate on research and promotion activities only as stipulated in the constitution.

Last, under this Republic, another manifestation of resource control or boundary maintenance practices between the state and federal government was the action of old Undo State Government, which challenged the activities of the defunct Technical Committee on Produce Prices (TCPP) during the days of marketing boards (Idachaba and Ayoola 1991). The TCPP was established under the aegis of Central Bank of Nigeria as part of an intervention institution to fix prices at which the commodities would be bought by the different marketing boards in operation at that time – seven of them namely: Cocoa Marketing Board, Groundnut Marketing Board, Cotton Marketing Board, Palm Produce Marketing Board, Grains Marketing Board, Roots, and Tubers Marketing Board (which was later de-scheduled for lack of produce to buy). It was on record that the Ondo State governor, Chief Adekunle Ajasin or so, lodged a complaint to the Federal Government that the prices of cocoa, an agricultural produce in which Ondo was the leading producer, was deliberately fixed at a low level, insinuating this as a political instrument to reduce the purchasing power of farmers in his jurisdiction, thereby predisposing his party to losing the next election (maybe!).

*Third Republic (1993-1995):*

This republic was short-lived or, better still, it died on arrival, when the head of the military government at that time, General Ibrahim Babangida, having declared the presidential election inconclusive, merely “stepped aside” to usher in a pseudo-civilian government under Chief Ernest Shonekan. In that circumstance, therefore, no sample was taken in political economy of agriculture before that republic came to an abrupt end.

*Fourth Republic (1999-date):*

Instances of resource control or boundary maintenance practices also abound during this period. I recall an instance when the Kaduna State government issued a notice in the press during a period of food scarcity, to ban the movement of food products by what it called “out-of-the-state buyers”; a statement so preposterous in the context of a single national market for food items! Another but less noticed was the action of the Benue State government under Rev. Moses Adasu, to instigate his people against the federal government over the establishment of a University of Agriculture in the state, when a general university was preferred! The case of agricultural universities also presents an instance of lawlessness prevailing in the sector, whereby these specialized institutions were established by law (Act 48, 1992) and nurtured by the preceding Babangida administration as parastatals under the ministry of agriculture, specially for practical exposure of students and direct policy relevance to the ministry, were abruptly transferred by administrative fiat by the succeeding Obasanjo administration, without recourse to the enabling law. And these universities operate like that (somewhat illegally!); which is the reason why they presently face a serious crisis of identity and run programmes in clear departure from their original mission and mandate. Thus, in the context of policy and institutional alignments envisaged under the Agricultural Rebirth Agenda, the movement of these institutions to the ministry of education, well intended as it might have been in the eyes of the past Obasanjo administration, should be quickly reversed by the present Buhari administration, before it is too late.

Perhaps the dominant instance of resource control behaviour in agriculture since the Second Republic till now revolves around fertilizer subsidy. Originally, the introduction of subsidy on fertilizer since 1976 was aimed at stimulating its adoption and use among the farmers; which aim had been achieved since the days of World Bank-assisted Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). However, the subsidy policy was and still is fraught with corruption, whereby unscrupulous intermediaries and rent-seeking middlemen in the supply chain perennially diverted fertilizers meant for farmers to unintended channels – including fertilizer merchants, transporters, civil servants and traditional rulers (Figure 1). All efforts at stopping this failed in quick succession over time, even as the budget burden on the government mounted beyond measure and it became obvious that the subsidy programme could not be sustained anymore. Yet, fertilizer has gained so much political visibility that it could not be stopped even under the best of intensions.

Under the growth enhancement scheme of the last administration, the strategy involved the use of mobile phone technology to deliver subsidy to farmers through an electronic wallet, following a registration exercise. The last administration, through its minister of agriculture Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, had claimed that it had succeeded in stopping fertilizer corruption in Nigeria to the tune of N870 Billion in public saving therefrom; a claim fiercely refuted by Malam Adamu Bello, a former minister of agriculture during the Obasanjo regime. Subsequently, however, an independent analysis of the data (NAD 2015) indicates that the subsidy provided under GES scheme amounting to N29 Billion in 2013 was significantly greater than the subsidy provided under the previous Market Stabilization Scheme (MSS) in 2010 amounting to N22 Billion, even as the quantity supplied under the former, GES scheme (586,145 MT) was smaller than the quantity supplied under the latter, GES scheme (536,095 MT).

What does all these add up to? An agricultural economy in sluggish growth over time; A nation lacking in food security of its people, let alone its people enjoying their fundamental right to food to a meaningful extent. Therefore, at this juncture, the APC-led federal government, in its present effort towards the rebirth of Nigeria’s agriculture cannot afford to look away, as the last administration substantially did, from these political economy implications for the agricultural economy. In this regard, I am to urge the present administration to shake the pre-existing policy and institutional mechanisms to the roots and to the philosophical foundation of agricultural rebirth.

III. PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION FOR AGRICULTURAL REBIRTH

I am most enthused to extol the philosophy of ‘*development as freedom’* as sponsored by Amartya Sen (Sen 1999) and based on which for me to uphold a derivative philosophy of ‘*agricultural development as freedom from hunger’*. Upon this is then to be established a philosophical foundation for agricultural rebirth as a necessary but not sufficient condition for growing the agricultural economy of Nigeria at this time. It is the people of Liberia I think who have this to say as their national motto: “The love of freedom brought us here”, while the Americans have totally imbibed an enduring culture of liberty or freedom as a political philosophy behind their very existence. Of course, freedom begets rights particularly the rights of their people to many good things of life. And going by its critical importance to life, food appears to me as a good thing, if not the best thing, for the sustenance of life on earth that is worth living. Therefore, by my own intuitive reasoning, I have this to say on the subject matter: that, unless and until a people become free from hunger, freedom from any other thing is mere platitude.

Indeed, it is based upon this foundation of freedom that the whole world became born again after WW2, through the establishment of United Nations Organization, which holds that all humans are born free of certain encumbrances, and that freedom from these should be guaranteed in terms of rights; and consequent upon the universal declaration of rights the world body quickly put in place the UN Convention on Social and Economic Rights (to which Nigeria is a signatory). This covers several freedoms as to be entrenched in the constitution of member countries, namely - freedom of expression or the right to speak; freedom of information or the right to know; freedom from diseases or the right to health; etc. Unfortunately we observe that in Chapter 4 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria wherein several rights are been guaranteed, the right to food is conspicuously missing. Thus It is not, and cannot be, a mere coincidence that those countries of the world that have observed the tenets of freedom of their people, including their freedom from hunger, otherwise known as right to food, are also those that have made meaningful economic and social progress to make life worth living for their people.

Suffice it to say that agricultural rebirth in Nigeria should be properly anchored on the political philosophy of freedom hunger and the right to food. When we speak of right to food, most people misconstrue this as an apology of state socialism, whereby government is called upon to provide food for everybody. This understanding of the notion of right to food is totally wrong, and agricultural rebirth cannot be premised on it; not operating anywhere in the free world where the able-bodied people must work to earn their rights to anything including food. That is, the right to food campaign (being championed by FIF) is largely targeted at policymakers, who should be held to account when its policies fail to help the people earn their right in spite of working. Therefore, right to food is properly conceived against the need for a paradigm shift in the mindset of policy authorities and the people who traditionally perceive food as a mere human need instead of perceiving it as a fundamental human right of the people. On the one hand, food as a human need, as presently included in Chapter 2 of the constitution, presupposes that if the policies fail to meet that need, the policy authorities cannot be held accountable for doing a bad job, thereby inconsequential. And this is the fundamental flaw in our policy process for agricultural development, whereby policy authorities cannot be held accountable for the failure of successive government policies to achieve their goals. On the other hand, food as a human right, as intended to be inserted in Chapter 4 of the constitution, presupposes that if the policies fail to guarantee that right, the policy authorities are liable and can be held accountable by the people. Thus under a regime of freedom from hunger, the right to food of the people is sacrosanct, that is, inalienable, actionable, justiciable and ultimately remediable.

Thus the obligation of the government as duty bearers under the right to food is threefold as follows:

* **Obligation to respect the of people to food:-** This stipulates the limits of state’s exercise of power, which includes refraining from destroying people’s access to food through unfavorable public policies; that is, government owes the people an obligation to implement policies that do not offend or violates right to food.
* **Obligation to protect the right of people to food:-** This entails regulation of activities of non-state actors that are inimical to people’s food entitlements (e.g. certain activities of the private sector).
* **Obligation to fulfill the right of people to food:-** This entails the provision of food assistance to vulnerable groups and other people in protracted suffering when necessary.

IV. ISSUES OF POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL REALIGNMENTS

These types of issues are usually relegated to the background and often addressed last by government, a habit akin to cooking a *Magi soup.* In cooking a *Magi soup* it doesn’t matter much to combine the wrong quantities and quantities of different ingredients together. The bad cook puts the pot on fire and the soup is done, only to find that the taste was not right; then the cook hurriedly reaches for a *magi cube* a condiment to be sprinkled on the soup for it to taste better, nonetheless a bad soup still. At the eleventh hour, in September 2014, the last administration suddenly recognized the need for a policy document which would have been produced at the outset of ATA three years ago. Similar to *Magi soup* approach, at eleventh hour of the administration, the former agriculture minister, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina hurriedly assembled a number of experts and inaugurated them into a Policy Working Group for ATA. The Group worked in a hurry and produced a policy document in the same hurry, meant to be hurriedly approved by Federal Executive Council and subsequently to be tabled in a hurry before the National Assembly for its passage into law in a hurry. However, under the intense heat of electioneering campaign of early 2014, this proved to be a very tall ambition, never to be realized. Therefore the output of Policy Working Group represented an ex-post policy document, a mere medicine after death.

Moving forward, the Agricultural Rebirth Agenda (ARA) of the present administration has taken the right foot forward by organizing a policy workshop, as the starting point of the policy process to subject the document to a critical review and revision, with a view to rearticulating it in line with the new mantra of *change* and against the need for agricultural rebirth*.* Then we can expect an ex-ante policy document to be used as guidance note for implementing ARA. To this end, seven issues of policy and institutional concern arise for interrogation as identified and highlighted hereunder.

1. *About philosophical direction of agricultural rebirth* - The starting point of agricultural rebirth for this administration is quick determination of the philosophical pathway to follow; i.e. whether it wants to go the way of the last administration that operated on the philosophy of ‘agriculture is a business not development sector’, which led to pro-business policies that put more money in the hands of the elite in the organized private sector rather than the farmers; OR it wants to chart a new philosophical course anchored on freedom from hunger or right to food, which will lead to pro-poor policies that puts the emphasis on farmers and other rural dwellers. While the proposed school feeding programme and conditional cash transfer are steps in the latter direction, such pro-poor policy instruments urgently require to be integrated fully in the ARA as part of a philosophy of freedom from hunger and right to food.

1. *About resource control and boundary maintenance behaviour:* These political economy issues are germane to the successful rebirth of the agriculture sector. Suffice it to say that resource control behaviour of the states will not stop as long as the federal government carries on with the excess luggage on its head beyond what the constitution stipulates. The issue is, what to do so that the states take up their constitutional responsibility for agricultural development in full force, without looking up to federal government first; and also what to do for the federal government to uphold the division of labour established in the constitution.
2. *About marketing and other institutions*: The last administration spent so much of its energy on providing subsidy on the farm inputs but failed to develop the commodity market where the products would be sold and income earned therefrom. This is like asking someone to yawn and sneeze at the same time. In the report of a Market Development Study Group commissioned by former minister of agriculture, Dr. Sayyadi Ruma (with me as team leader), the market was likened to the hub or midfield in a football match, where the game is won and lost. If the midfield is weak, pressure quickly builds in the goal area leading a basket of goals scored against the team with a weak midfield. Similarly the role of market in agricultural rebirth cannot be overemphasized, as the hub of transactions for exchanging farm produce for money. Thus greater production can be stimulated from the demand side of the market, not only on the supply side as the last administration did by creating numerous value chains but keeping a weak market structure for commodities. This indicates that we have learnt nothing from the British colonial agricultural administration that used the market development as the principal policy instrument to pursue its surplus extraction policies. It is also questionable if the numerous value chain groups should have been at the pre-existing commodity focused research institutions or stood on their own as they did during the last administration.

Further, the issue about market development goes further to ask what to do with the set of marketing institutions presently existing but not functioning, namely: the commodity development and marketing companies – Arable Crops Development and Marketing Company, Tree Crops Development and Marketing Company, and Livestock and Fisheries Development and Marketing Company. What do we do with these companies, which, like their predecessor, the marketing or commodity boards, have failed to meet their goals? Also what do we do with the Abuja Security and Commodity Exchange that fails to generate desired impact in the market for agricultural produce? What lessons of experience can we learn from the old marketing or commodity boards, and what lessons from the contemporary institutions to re-establish the agricultural market. Surely the present situation does not augur well for a successful agricultural rebirth, whereby there is no institution to serve as an organized market outlet at the national level.

1. *About infrastructure as backbone:* Infrastructure is the backbone for agriculture, which the success story of the ADPs attests to. However, the debate about the poor state of infrastructure in the country is focused on the national grid in electricity supply without a serious consideration of rural infrastructures that forms the backbone for agriculture. Indeed, it appears that FMARD has lost sight of the word ‘Rural’ in its name; yet it harbours a Rural Development Department to be responsible for initiating and monitoring the stock and flow of rural infrastructures in the country. In this regard, a critical issue confronting the agricultural rebirth agenda is the need for systematic data and information for successful planning and implementation of rural infrastructure project in the country. The Rural Infrastructure Survey project that was established for that purpose remains in a lull for many years now, so there is presently no systematic empirical basis for FMARD to undertake the planning and implementation of rural infrastructure projects, as done in the past with the ADPs, the DFRRI and the FEAP projects. FIF has submitted a memorandum at the last NCA meeting on the need to resuscitate the survey project, which was adopted but not implemented till date. Meanwhile FIF has digitalized the old database through the INFRASTAT, an open source and one stop shop domain to obtain such information required to properly plan and implement rural infrastructure project in the country. Figure 2 demonstrates the utility of this domain in accessing information such as the distribution of specific infrastructural facilities by states and local governments, e.g. federal roads in a state or LGA. How will this effort be supported and moved forward under the ARA?

1. *About participation and inclusion:* The hallmark of a democratic agricultural economy is full participation of the agricultural public in the policy process for agricultural development, as well as the social inclusion of all stakeholders in the process. This tenet ensures that what comes round goes around, so the democratic dividend of agricultural rebirth can spread more evenly and widely. All over the world, the mode of achieving this is through associations, cooperatives and groups that people belong to – NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, etc. In particular the business case for cooperatives is strong as private enterprises for galvanizing the financial and intellectual resources of farmers and other rural dwellers in the interest of their members; as also the policy case for the associations is equally strong as advocates of policy decisions of government that favour their members as well. The NGOs stand out as partners to and watchdogs of the government in discharging its mandate functions. So these bodies have critical roles to play in the agricultural rebirth process. To my utter dismay, this instrumentality of participation and inclusion was totally ignored by the last administration, thereby making the benefit streams from agricultural policy ineffectual. It was at the University of Agriculture Makurdi that the rebirth of an apex farmers association was born in the early 1990s, during the time of Dr. Shetima Mustapha as the minister of agriculture. We traversed the length and breadth of the country to consult with different associations in existence about the need for an apex body. At the instance of Dr. Mustafa, we organized a workshop and held the first election of officers for what we then named FOFAN (Federation of Farmers Associations in Nigeria), which trans-mutated into AFAN (All Farmers Association of Nigeria) at the instance of former president Obasanjo. Suffice it to say that AFAN and other non-state bodies have a critical role to play under the rebirth agenda. Then the question is how to integrate these bodies into the rebirth agenda, as institutions working in partnership with government?
2. *Multisectorality of agricultural sector:* Another institutional concern for the rebirth agenda is the multi-sector nature of agriculture, which issue emanates from the complex nature of commodity value chains. Typically, a value chain starts from production at one end through storage (on-farm/off-farm storage), overlapping with processing (on-farm/off-farm processing), and dovetailing into marketing and consumption at the other end. From end to end, the typical agricultural value chain in the real sector of the economy traversed several institutions in both the real and service sectors, which collectively determines the performance of agriculture. The interdependence among the various policy institutions with the agriculture ministry may be illustrated as follows:

* Foreign exchange policies (Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN) - theses set the average levels and variances of foreign exchange rates and their consequences for the foreign and domestic prices of agricultural commodities including inputs and outputs;
* Monetary policies (CBN) – these often have inflationary implications for the domestic terms of trade between the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, the term-structure of interest rates and the supply and demand for loanable funds in agriculture;
* Fiscal policies (Federal Ministry of Finance, FMF) – namely taxes, tariffs, inflationary deficit financing, etc.; these have pronounced consequences for domestic terms of trade which govern the exchange of agricultural products for products from non-agricultural sectors;
* Incomes policies (Federal Ministry of Labour, FML) – namely national minimum wages, equity, etc.; these are usually targeted at the urban labour force wages but have consequences for rural labour supplies, issues of equity, regional income distribution, etc.
* National industrial policies (Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, FMITI) - these make the provision of agricultural raw materials cheap for the purpose of agricultural industrialization in competition with exports;
* International trade and balance of payment policies (FMITI) - these generally reflect the protocols and agreements reached in the WTO, which often hurts developing economies and set the terms of external trade in favour of developed countries.

Based on the foregoing, the FMARD cannot afford to work in isolation, nor the other institutions also afford to work in silos. In particular, the institutional relationship between the FMARD and FMITI should be properly examined as an important item on the rebirth agenda. For too long, the two ministries have carried on like two wives of the same husband (or one wife of two husbands), featuring as explosive rivals or bomb waiting to detonate at the slightest prompt. The usual claim by FMITI is that in principle the boundary of FMARD stops at the farm gate as the logical endpoint of production of agricultural commodities, which the latter does not accept in practice. The rivalry came to a head during the last administration when we had a minister at FMARD who crossed this boundary far into the other territory to the point that the minister at FMITI sued for trespass several times at the meetings of the Federal Executive Council. This is an institutional problem for the rebirth programme to address once and for all. Truly there are many overlaps there but boundary maintenance posture is probably not the way to go in resolving this as an institutional or policy *embrace* problem.[[1]](#footnote-1) Probably the way to go under the rebirth programme is to work out a policy framework for strong institutional collaboration between FMARD on the one hand and the FMITI and other instrumental entities on the other hand.

1. *Agricultural corruption***:** The change mantra of the present administration is anchored on eradicating corruption. Therefore an agricultural rebirth programme tolerant to the rot in the sector is shallow or empty to say the least, and cannot achieve much. Over the years the breeding spot of corruption in agriculture sector is fertilizer subsidy, which the GES of the last administration wrongly claimed to have been addressed. It would appear that what the last administration succeeded in doing was not stopping fertilizer corruption in any perceptible way, but in substituting one form of corruption for another through the GES.

As reported by *Nigeria Agriculture Digest,* a brand new set of corrupt practices have emerged in the aftermath of GES, namely: impersonation, which led to substituted persons benefiting from subsidy through alternate or the same phone numbers; new modes of round tripping of products whereby the agro dealers just paid a token amount (say N1000) to entitled farmers instead of issuing any bag of fertilizer, but record was established for the agro-dealer to collect full value of subsidy free from government later; an upsurge of fly-by-night agro-dealers comprising new and old companies formed secretly by or in collusion with government officials, who were registered as emergency fertilizer and seed suppliers without experience, thereby perpetrating fraudulent practices to their gain. Apart from financial corruption, the inherited issue of other fraudulent practices in the fertilizer market is equally important – short bag weights, violation of truth-in-labelling norms, outright adulteration etc. Yet the last administration did not take practical actions to establish a quality assurance system in the market, not even hold one meeting of the statutory body, National Fertilizer Technical Committee in the entire four years. Which way for rebirth?

V. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The message of my paper is, first that, in a democratic agricultural economy, policy and politics are Siamese twins or opposite sides of the same coin, so the political economy of agricultural rebirth is very important. Second, that a meaningful rebirth of agriculture sector calls for an overarching philosophical direction to be agreed by policy stakeholders; which the notions of freedom from hunger and right to food fit well the Nigerian situation. And last, that a number of policy and institutional issues are involved in agricultural rebirth to be addressed, namely the situation with marketing and other institutions, the role of rural infrastructures, framework for policy participation and inclusion, multisectorality of agriculture and the menace of agricultural corruption, among others.

Above all, there is no gainsaying the fact that a strong political courage is required for the successful implementation of Agricultural Rebirth Agenda in Nigeria.

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1. For a theoretical treatment of a policy embrace problem, see Ayoola (1997); wherein conceived a dual sector (agriculture-industry) interrelationship, such that one sector depends on the other for reciprocal thrusts and feedbacks (inputs and outputs). "Deathly embrace" describes a situation whereby the two systems wait for inputs or outputs from each other that is not immediately forthcoming, and then the entire system gradually slows down until it stagnates altogether (Figure 3). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)