

Sustainable Food Security:



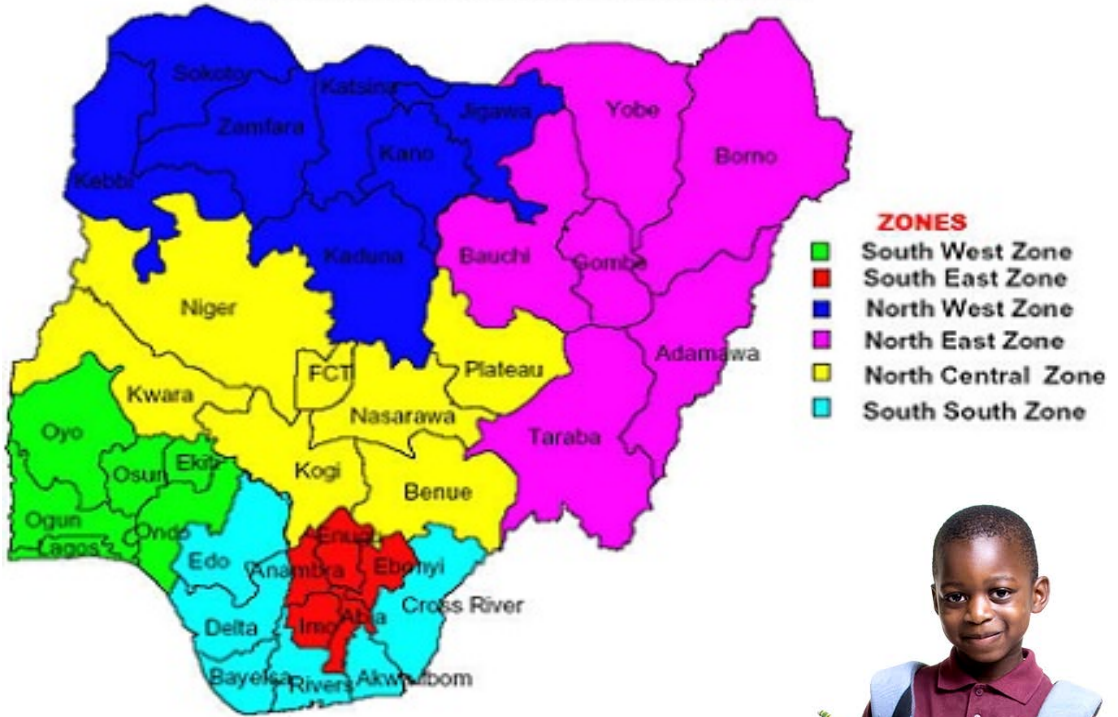
Re-igniting Nigeria's Economy
via Systems Strengthening

Wole Ogundare - August 2015





NIGERIA GEO-POLITICAL ZONES





The new government ushered in on May 29 has brought in renewed hope for many Nigerians, but the lingering question on the lips of many is – ‘how do we begin to enjoy the rewards of our blessed Nation?’ So many have postulated how to move the country forward but I will attempt to use a different approach that has worked in so many places and is currently being tested in two Nigerian pilot States. This approach is focused on helping to achieve a sustainable food security in Nigeria with a main focus on the rural poor – who constitute the majority (2013: 50.2%) – and because about 80% of these rural poor are mostly farmers who rely directly on agriculture for their livelihoods, I believe they deserve the most attention at this stage of re-building and particularly because they can jumpstart the entire Nigerian economy.

This approach is called systems strengthening – using existing systems and human infrastructure at the Federal, State, LGA & Ward levels to catalyze transformational change. The major multilateral donors in the World have been funding systems strengthening efforts over the last decade in various countries around the world; what better way to achieve measurable ROI from our public service than to actually see them working towards a single purpose, from the Federal down to the Ward level? There is on-going work in this area, even in Nigeria. The ability to sync our entire public service (existing systems) is exactly what systems strengthening initiatives aim to provide; it can be directed immediately at the food security issue and then replicated across other states/sectors in a prioritized manner.





The model of achieving food security via a strengthened system is discussed below by:

- sharing the meaning and principles of systems strengthening and
- understanding how this approach can quickly set Nigeria on the path of achieving a sustainable food security.

The building blocks of a successful systems strengthening approach are also discussed below under the global food security agenda.

Systems Strengthening

1. the process of identifying and implementing the changes in policy, ownership, mindset and practice in Nigeria's agriculture, nutrition and health systems such that the country can respond better to inherent systemic challenges in these areas
2. any array of initiatives and strategies that improves one or more of the functions of the agriculture, nutrition and health systems and leads to better improvement in access, coverage, quality and efficiency.

In its current work within Nigeria's Agricultural System (**State Agricultural Transformation Agenda**), Phillips Consulting Limited is using an improvement model, which emphasizes a systematic and evidence-based approach, designed to bring about significant improvement in:

- Farming outputs and farmer livelihoods, particularly amongst the poor;
- Efficiency and effectiveness of systems and processes of intervention, working within the existing systems; and
- Social responsiveness and accountability;
- *Ownership* – for sustainable progress, agriculture, nutrition and health leaders must own the process of change themselves rather than have change imposed upon them;
- *Inclusion* – engaging a wide range of leaders across the agriculture, nutrition and health systems including farmers, business leaders, government officials, and others will result in solutions that are likely to be more relevant, systemic, and sustainable than approaches which engage a narrow set of leaders;
- *Mindset* – the underlying assumptions, views, and attitudes of agricultural, nutritional and health leaders has a formative influence on action; cultivating positive shifts in mindset is a key element of changing behavior.

Some of our ongoing work within the pilot States (Benue & Kogi) in Nigeria also focuses on the building blocks of *food security* to ensure alignment with *global initiatives*.



Food Security

Food security is defined as the ability of people to meet their required level of food consumption at all times. In the world today, more than 800 million live in the rural communities/areas, depending directly on Agriculture for their food supply, employment and income. Therefore, boosting the rural economy, particularly through increased agricultural production is one of the chief means of alleviating poverty and increasing food security.

In Nigeria as at 2013, the percentage of rural dwellers in the population was 50.2, constituting a majority. The requirement of food security for this majority, via a *systems strengthening* approach cannot be over emphasized.

Building Blocks for a Global Food Security Agenda

Earlier consultations in FAO identified the following *nine policy priorities* as possible building blocks for the new post-2015 global food development agenda. Most of these form the very basis of strategic initiatives behind the *systems strengthening* approach:

- 1. *Prioritizing equitable development - especially the empowerment of women.*** Women hold the key: they are the drivers of change in ensuring nutrition and food security. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, agricultural yields and output would increase and there would be a significant reduction in the number of impoverished people. Key elements are (a) enhancing women's access to and control over land and other productive resources; (b) empowering women smallholder farmers to overcome institutional, social, and economic bottlenecks, (c) investing in the nutrition of women and their young children, and (d) participation of both women and men in decision-making at all levels: from the household to public policy and development planning. By focusing on equity of access or opportunity, decision makers emphasize the interests of vulnerable people.



2. Ensuring access to nutritious food through comprehensive approaches to food and nutrition security.

Policies, programmes and investments for strengthening food and nutrition security must aim at: (a) focusing on access as well as availability of foods, (b) recognizing the importance of diversified diets made up of nutritious foods, especially for pregnant women and young children, (c) preventing excessive food price volatility, (d) enabling poor people to access both social protection and social services, and (e) ensuring that the services contribute to adequate child care and feeding practices, and mother and child health care services, with sufficient access to clean water and sanitation. All forms of malnutrition – including nutrient deficiencies and obesity – should be addressed. This means dealing with the global transition to high energy and low nutrient diets and the shift away from unhealthy food consumption patterns.



3. Recognizing the key role of agriculture and rural development in eliminating poverty, hunger and malnutrition.

Smallholder farmers are essential contributors to resolving these challenges which are most pronounced in rural areas. Key elements are (a) provision of necessary public goods and support to raise rural incomes and productive capacities, (b) enabling smallholder farmers to participate and benefit from national and international markets, and (c) pro-poor development through investing in rural economies, both farm and non-farm.



4. Making agricultural and food systems sustainable and climate sensitive.

As demand for food increases – as a result of population growth, urbanization, and changing dietary habits – greater attention is given to the ecological footprint of agriculture and food systems. What are the options for enabling these systems to be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, while becoming more productive and nutrition-enhancing? The dilemma is faced by all nations and is made starker by changes in climate, which may threaten agricultural production. Sustainable intensification of agriculture requires increases in productivity, while adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-sensitive agriculture makes growth more sustainable, while improving the management of ecosystems, including soils, forests, water, fisheries, oceans, watersheds and biodiversity.



- 5. Reinforcing resilience to natural and man-made disasters:** Poor rural and urban societies experience crises – such as those linked to volatile food prices or climatic shocks – with increasing frequency threatening their food and nutrition security. The sustainability and resilience of their livelihoods can be reinforced by (a) developing a range of capacities and entrepreneurial skills, (b) promoting non-farm rural employment, (c) empowering small producers to diversify their on-farm and off-farm activities, (d) including the most vulnerable in sustainable development processes, and (e) investing in social protection - including food assistance, safety nets and targeted transfers.
- 6. Focusing on food security and waste along value chains:** Better functioning of interfaces between food and health systems will lead to reduced risks of disease, especially for food that is unsafe for humans. This is increasingly relevant as ecosystems change, due to climate change or human activity. Furthermore, there is universal concern over post-harvest processing and handling losses and food consumption waste: they undermine the sustainability of food systems.
- 7. Ensuring responsible investment in agriculture and food systems.** Investment in agriculture and food systems can – if undertaken responsibly – contribute to major societal benefits, including reduced inequalities, inclusive growth, and creation of decent jobs. Responsible investment can be strengthened by (a) recognizing that the main investors in agriculture are the farmers themselves, (b) engaging small producers and their organizations fully in the design and implementation of national strategies for agriculture and food security, (c) ensuring their secure tenure of land and improving their access to improved technology and innovation, (d) ensuring they benefit from key public goods - market infrastructure, price stabilization instruments (for both producers and consumers), affordable financial services, and functioning extension services. This calls for a combination of public and private investment involving farmer associations, agri-businesses, government, civil society groups and sources of financing.





- 8. Ensuring efficient, equitable and stable food systems through inclusive and transparent governance at local, national, regional and global levels.** Market-based systems function best within the context of efficient and equitable rule systems, with effective monitoring and incentives for compliance at all levels. International coordination and governance has improved, but the progress must be durable and rapid, if efforts are to be scaled up to ensure food security and nutrition for all. This calls for all stakeholders to concur with the rules, to display mutual accountability and demonstrate commitment to shared responsibility for governance. To ensure accountability, food security and nutrition outcomes need consistent monitoring. New indicators are being developed to capture the short- and long-term impacts of policy measures on rural incomes and resilience, progress in reducing food insecurity and nutritional outcomes.
- 9. Fostering an inclusive macroeconomic approach that recognizes the interdependence of urban, rural and peri-urban communities.** In a globalised world, food security and nutrition concerns cut across all levels of society, everywhere. Rapid urbanization is posing new challenges for food security and nutrition, while rural areas are also changing rapidly. Importantly, there are processes beyond the remit of Nations that affect food security, such as the impact of persistently high and volatile commodity prices, financial and economic crises, and migration. A lack of policy coherence in these areas impacts on food security at all levels. These global issues, and their differential impacts at all levels, need to be acknowledged and incorporated into a revised food security framework at the National level.

Wole Ogundare

Partner, Phillips Consulting Ltd

