FERTILIZER AND FOOD SECURITY/AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NIGERIA

BY

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i. With projected population of 160 million, Nigeria has the greatest number of people to feed in Africa. In terms of employment, agriculture is by far the most important sector of the economy, engaging about 70% of the labour force.

ii. Agricultural sector has the highest potential to diversify food supply and expand foreign exchange earnings.

iii. Agricultural growth has remained steady at 6% in the last five years despite growth of the overall economy.
iv. Currently, agriculture’s contribution to total exports has been relatively low, between 0.5% and 2.0% over the last four years.

v. Agricultural produce yields per hectare is 20% - 50% lower than those obtained in similar developing countries.
vi. Despite enormous agricultural production potentials Nigeria is currently a net importer of food, with N1.30 trillion in wheat, rice, fish and sugar imports.

vii. Fertilizer and other agric-inputs use is very low. Fertilizer per capital consumption is 6.1 kg/ha as against 18.9kg/ha for Senegal (FAO Fertilizer Statistics, 2011).
2. Fertilizer, Agricultural Production and Food Security

a. Fertilizer, agricultural production and food security are mutually related.

b. Fertilizer along with improved seed use is the key driver to agricultural production which in turn drives the attainment of food security.

c. Fertilizers are critical in improving agricultural production and food security through nutrient loss replenishment on farmers’ fields.
d. Food security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain active healthy life (World Food Summit, 1996). UN/FAO refers food security to the availability of food and accessibility to it. A household is considered food secured when its occupants do not live in hunger or fear of starvation.

e. Agricultural yields have remained the same or declined in the past two decades. Rise in agricultural productivity is derived more from expanded planting areas for staple crops than from yield increases (Dayo Philips et al, 2011; IFPRI Study series, 2011).
f. The study also identified poor agricultural policies, low fertilizer use, low access to agricultural credit, land tenure insecurity, land degradation, poverty and gender issues, low investment in agricultural research, poor market access and marketing efficiency as the constraints for agricultural productivity.

g. Though Nigeria has proven 159 billion cubic feet of natural gas reserve (7th in the World) and large quantity of phosphate rock deposits, local fertilizer production and supply is still a major constraint to fertilizer use.
3. Pathway to Food Security Attainment

- Fertilization
- Fertility Management
- Improved Agricultural Production
- Attainment of Food Security
• To shore up and attain food security level in Nigeria, there must be improvement in the agricultural production system.

• One key to the food security pathway is providing farmers with access to quality inputs, particularly fertilizers and the knowledge to apply them efficiently and effectively.
• There is also the need for a concerted effort, coordinated public-private partnership to achieve the scale of reform necessary for a sustainable agricultural growth.

• The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of Mr. President seeks to address the above issue of PPP through the Value Chain approach where in each value chain integrates food production, processing, storage and marketing to local and international clientele.
4. The Role of Fertilizers

• Fertilizers, along with other inputs are important contributors to raising agricultural output by increasing yields and thus securing food security.

• Excess output allows farmers to feed their families better, increase their income and develop commercial activities.
• Farmers need access to inputs especially fertilizers and improved seeds at the right time and affordable prices.

• One of the best remedies is the development of a virile network of private agro-dealers, who in addition to supplying agricultural inputs can also relay information on good farming practices complementing agricultural extension services.
5. Fertilizer and Agricultural Transformation Agenda.

The vision of the current Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) is to grow the agricultural sector via:-

- Treating agriculture as a business
- Aggressive job, wealth creation and ensuring food security
- Focusing on crops value chains
- Developing strategic marketing partnership
Under the ATA, many transformational policies are being implemented. These include:

- Fertilizer Sub-sector Reforms
- Marketing Institutions Reforms – re-introduction of Marketing Boards on Value Chain basis to be established and run by the private sector but facilitated by Government
- Financing Agricultural Value Chains through NIRSAL
- Agricultural Investment Framework
Key Fertilizer Sub-sector Reforms so far implemented include:-

- Government withdrawal from direct procurement and distribution of fertilizers to the farmers.
- Creation of new targeted subsidy delivery system using electronic platform.
- Agro-dealer development and empowerment.
In effort to address the triple issue of fertilizer availability, accessibility and affordability the Ministry introduced the Growth Enhancement Support (GES) Scheme.

GES targets the sales of 1.0 million metric tons of fertilizers (500,000 metric tons each of NPKs and Urea) to identified and registered bonafide 10 million farmers in 2013 farming season. Fertilizer use has increased from 6.1kg/ha to 43 – 45.5kg/ha for farmers benefiting under GES at 2 bags (50kg each) per farmer
The target is expected to reach 1.5 million metric tons of fertilizers (750,000 metric tons of NPKs and Urea) next season (2014). Since 5 million farmers are added on yearly basis to the database.

GES is private sector driven, with Fertilizer Companies and their agro-dealers as major implementers.
Between 2012 – 2015, GES will be contributing to additional annual national fertilizer consumption by 500,000 metric tons.

GES will improve farmers access to fertilizers, fertilizer use and crop yields for shoring-up prospects for the attainment of food security.
“Great food availability in the low-income, food deficit nations cannot be achieved with one silver bullet. No doubt, greater availability of fertilizer is critical to any solution. Yet we also need long term vision of growth, integrated investments that incorporate research, human and institutional capacity building infrastructure, sound policy, markets and governance”. Late Norman Borlaug (Noble Peace Price).
Thank For Your Attention