

Strategies for Enhancing Family Farming in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focused on strategies for enhancing family farming in Nigeria. It reviewed the concept and importance of family farming. It highlighted the aims and objectives of International Year of Family Farming (IFYF) and examined family farming in relation to its relevance and practices in Nigeria. It further discussed the obstacles to family farming and ways that can make family farming in Nigeria. It was concluded that many strategies have not been put in place to enhance family farming in Nigeria. It was recommended, among others, that the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, at all levels, should periodically organise training programmes on family farming to strengthen family farmers.

Keywords: Family, Farming, Enhancement, Obstacles, Strategies.

Introduction

Family farming is a way of forestry and agricultural production, as well as fishing, grazing and agriculture, managing conjunctly by a family and it largely depends on the family labour force - both men and women (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2014). The family and exploration are linked; they co-evolved and combined economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions. Family farming often involves to artisan fishing people, shepherds, harvesters, landless-day-

labourers and indigenes communities (Bicottsaga, 2014). Belliere, Bonnal, Bosc, Losch, Marzin and Sourisseau (2015) noted that FAO also gives substantial and statistical definitions of family farming. Substantially, family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly related to family capital and labour. Statically, family faming can also be seen as agricultural holding which is managed and

operated by a household and where farm labour is largely supplied by that household, both women and men (Belliere *et al*, 2015). The concept of family farming covers various elements, from a sociological perspective, it is associated with family values, such as solidarity, continuity and commitment; in economic term, family farming is identified with specific entrepreneurial skills, business ownership and management, choice and risk behavior, resilience and individual achievement. Family farming is often more than a professional occupation because it reflects a lifestyle based on beliefs and traditions about living and work (European Union Commission (EUC), 2016).

The term “family farming” is vast and may include almost any agricultural model or method whose direct beneficiaries are not corporations or investors. It however includes both large-scale producers (with farms covering thousands of hectares) as well as small-scale producers who are entirely dependent on the private sector, through contract farming or other forms of economic exploitation, promoted through concepts such as “the value chain” (www.spore.cta.int). This is why Compesina (2004) defines family farming in terms of peasant based ecological farming as opposed to the industrial, toxic farming of agricultural businesses which expel peasant and small farm family.

Chayamore (1990) in a perspective opened up as a rural economics stating that family farming refers to forms of organization of agricultural production characterized by (i) organic links between the family and the production unit; and (ii) the mobilization of family labour excluding permanent employees.

In addition, Chibonga (2014) expressed family farming as collective efforts by families working together on a farm in order to sustain themselves through food production, food consumption and income. Families are guided by family values such as trust, commitment, love persistence and determination working together in order to fend for themselves. Farming families often have no other major sources of incomes or foods apart from farming (Chibonga, 2014).

This paper highlights the concept and importance of family farming. It discusses the United Nations Family Day and recommendations from International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). The paper reviews the extent of family farming’s functions in relation to its awareness, practices and relevance in Nigeria. It also states the obstacles to family farming and ways of enhancing family farming in Nigeria are presented.

Importance of family farming

On why family farming is important, FAO (2014) stated that family farming , in all its diversity, is the predominant form of agriculture worldwide; local

and global food security depends on it; it generates food and income for hundred of million people, including poor and marginalized. Specifically, the importance of family farming are discussed as follows:

Self-employment: Family farming is the area of self-employment and of progress for the family units. It is through farm families' effort, dedication, and passion and hand work that the farm is developed further and the livelihood of the family is improved. The farm meets the many needs of the family whilst the family provides the possibilities, the mean and the farming for the farm. Thus, nexus between the family and the farm is at the core of many decisions about the development of the farm. Each particular farm has its own specific balances, for instance, between the mouth to be fed and the arms to do the work. These balance the family and farm together and make each family farm into a unique constellation (van de Ploeg, 2012).

History and memories: Family farming is part of a flow that links the past, present and future. This means that every farm has a history, it is full of memories. It also means that parents are working for their children; give the next generation a solid starting point within or outside agriculture. Since the farm is the outcome of the work and dedication of this and previous generations, there often is pride and anger when others try to damage or even destroy the

jointly constructed farm (McGorlick, 2011).

Perpetuation of culture: World of family farming is considered 'archaic, anarchic, and attractive'. With majority livelihoods being farm based, supporting family farming is not a 'primitive strategy but a necessary one (van de Ploeg, 2012). In addition, European Union Commission (2016) enthused that family farming is the most common operational farming mode and thus it is of great importance in most countries. Not only this, the commission was of the opinion that majority of millions farms are family farms, pass down from one generation to another, family farming contributes to the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of rural areas

Family farming is not just an economic enterprise that focuses mainly or only on profit, but a place where continuity and culture are important. Similarly, family farm is a part of a wider rural landscape. It is also a part of a wider rural community and sometimes part of networks that extends into cities. As such, the family farm is a place where culture is applied and preserved just as the farm can be a place of cultural heritage. It contributes immensely to rural development.

Embarking on rural development is very important considering the fact that more two-third of the Nigerian's population is living in rural areas and experiences a lot of mysteries. Poverty, morbidity, and underdevelopment

experienced in rural communities by family farmers show that not much has been achieved even before and after independent (Adedeji, 2004; Obeta and Okide, 2012).

Sustainable existence: Sustainability is “equitability and balance” meaning that in order for achievement of family farming objectives to be sustainable and continue indefinitely, achievement should balance the interest of different groups of beneficiaries. So, sustainable family farming is about equity, that is, equality of opportunities for well-being, as well as about comprehensiveness of objectives (Akanbi, 2010). It has also been noted that family farming guarantees a responsible management of natural resources, since conservation of the latter ensures the sustainability of the production unit (Belliere *et al*, 2015).

United Nations Family Farming Day

The UN declared 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) to recognize the importance of family farming in reducing poverty and improving global food security. IYFF aims to promote new development and policies particularly at the national but also regional levels that will help smallholders and family farmers eradicate hunger, reduce rural poverty and continue to play a major role in global food security through small-scale, sustainable agricultural production (Audinet and Hussien, 2014). Throughout 2014, regional dialogues, civil society consultation,

regional conferences and other events explored issues related to family farming not only in developed world but also in developing countries including Nigeria. Information for Low External Input in Agriculture | Food and Agriculture Organisation (ILEIA/FAO) (2014) however emphasized that many of the issues explored in family farming were co-organized by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the lead agency for IYFF.

ILEIA/FAO (2014) also stated that the 2014 IYFF aimed to create a better understanding of family farming and support the development of pro-family policies. Food Tank (2015) in addition narrated that the aims of IYFF are to focus on international attention of the men, women and youth who operate the more than 400 million family farms around the world and that the IYFF created by UN General Assembly is a worldwide celebration that aims to reposition farming families, indigenous groups, cooperatives and fishing families at the centre. Brull (2014) added that during the IYFF, some key proposals were made towards stronger family farming, policies were highlighted that indicate the major issues affecting family farming and that in 2014 as well, the UN shone a spotlight on the essential contributions of family farming to foods, security, community well-being among others.

Family farming is highly diversified and multi-faced. The

diversity of family farming and the broad range of ways that farms are run have to be respected in order to preserve this form of agricultural production as family farming is clearly the way to the future (McGurelick, 2011). Family farming is one of those phenomena that most societies find increasingly difficult to understand. This is due to many reasons. One of which is that it has control over the main resources that are used in the farm. This includes the land, the animals, the crops, the genetic materials, the house, buildings, machineries and in or mere general sense, the know-how that specifies how to combine and use all these resources. Family farmers have these resources not only to make a profit but also to make a living; to acquire an income that provides them with a decent life and if possible, allow for investments in order to develop the farm further. This applies even if the farmers use expensive machinery or irrigation systems and terrace that the farmers themselves have constructed. Indeed, farming family provides the main part of the labour force (McGurelick, 2011).

Audinet and Hussein (2014) stated the major objectives of IYFF. These are to:

- i. Support the development of policies that will foster sustainable family farming;
- ii. Increase knowledge and public awareness of the agriculture and development sectors;
- iii. Raise awareness of the needs and potential of family farmers, along

with the constraints that they face and ensure that they have access to technical support;

- iv. Create synergies for sustainability.

Family farming in Nigeria

In most states of Nigeria, family farming had been in practice. Abdullahi, Gidado and Jibrin (2010) in their report enthused that more than half of youths (56%), for instance, who considered farming as major occupation, had moderately favourable attitude towards family farming. In Nigeria, agriculture represents 21% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs two thirds of workforce, 90% of farming product comes from small farms. With 80% of arable land, Nigeria has a huge potential despite a production deficit (Framentin, 2015).

Extent of functions of family farming in relation to relevance and practices in Nigeria

By its number and extent of its functions in societies, family farming, according to Framentin (2015), dominates the world agriculture and accounts for more than one billion farmers worldwide, of whom 14 millions are in Nigeria.

- i. A farmer-centered approach is the key to the attainment of sustainability in developed and developing countries and many of the program areas in Agenda 21, Agricultural bills or Agricultural Policy that is referred to in this context as incentive policies,

- address these objectives. The sustainable development of family farming is also addressed in incentive policies (United Nations Environment Program for Development (UNEPD) (2014). Incentive policies, according to Gardner (2002), include legislation as the land Act of 1820 and the Homestead Act, directed at development, supporting family farms and the inputs of the total agricultural sectors such as land, research, and human labour.
- ii. Several significant practices have been taken in recent years by most governments all over the world to reverse the downward trend in agricultural production and livelihood of family farming. Some of these important practices include incentive policies taking into the account the recommendations of the National Commission on farmers and after consulting the state governments. These have provided for a holistic approach for development of the farm sector.

The primary focus of the policies is on 'farmers' holistically and not merely on agriculture. The major goals of these policies for farmers are to:

- Improve economic viability of farming by substantially increasing the net income of farmers and to ensure that agricultural progress is measured by advances made in this income

- Protect and improve land, water, bio-diversity and genetic resources essential for sustained increase in the productivity, profitability and stability of major farming systems by creating an economic stake in conservation.
- Develop support services including provision for seeds, irrigation, power, machinery and implements, fertilizers and credits at affordable prices in adequate quantity for farmers.
- Pay explicit attention to sustainable rural livelihood
- Develop and introduce a social security system for farmers.
- Provide appropriate opportunities in adequate measure for non-farm employment for the farm households.
- Foster community-centered food, water and energy security systems in rural communities and to ensure nutrition security at the level of every child, woman and man (Business Knowledge Resource Online, 2014).

Obstacles to family farming in Nigeria

There are many challenges confronting family farming in Nigeria. These obstacles include:

- Inappropriate agricultural security policies and strategies.
- Trade policies which undermine the promotion and consumption of locally produced foods by

allowing importation of cheap food stuffs

- Lack of market information
- Lack of transport and processing facilities
- Inadequate marketing infrastructure
- Lack of coordination along the supply chain (Partridge, 2011).

In addition, Grisa (2001) observed that one of the obstacles to family farming is that family farmers are not well organized and that they have limited access to information. He also noted that family farmers have problems related to high level of bureaucracy resulting in delays in payment and in the transport and that they could not get funds at appropriate times.

Ways of enhancing family farming in Nigeria

However, Grisa (2011) offered some solutions to strengthening family farming and these solutions could go a long way to solve most obstacles to family farming in the area of policies. These are that some family farming related programmes could be put in place for farmers to:

- ❖ Help restore or recreate a 'peasant way of life'
- ❖ Purchase a diverse range of fruits, vegetables, process good and animal products
- ❖ Create new market and make the existing one more robust guarantee sales at higher rates
- ❖ Promote traditional and regional products and practices.

The solution to most of the obstacles in developing nations and Nigeria is no exception, is perhaps the most important of the needs to localize foods, since it is something every one, everywhere, needs every day (Mc Gorelick, 2011).

Family farming could be enhanced in several ways as highlighted below if:

- *Family farmers adopt improved farm practices.* If improved farm practices are judiciously adopted and managed, agricultural productions are increased. These practices are of greatest assets to the family farmers (Rabiu, 2010).
- *Family farmers embrace organic farming.* Andre (2014) noted that concerted action to support organic farming is emphasized in the launch of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) and that a recent study shows that modern non-certified organic farming is a potentially sustainable approach or way to agricultural development. This in turn could enhance family farming.
- *Governments put in place proper incentive policies.* Like any other economic sector, improved agriculture and sustainable rural development can only be achieved in conducive environment which requires incentive policies. Family farming should be recognized and structured so as to be able to develop a good policy tailored for the sector since everything starts with legal recognition of the status

and profession of farmers (Chatel, 2014).

- *Governments adopt a new and comprehensive approach to agricultural education.* This is needed to improve agriculture focusing on a new way of thinking and understanding the reality of family farming. This approach goes beyond incorporating 'green content' in the schools' curriculum rather courses that follow a comprehensive vision that includes biological, physical, chemical, ecological and social aspects including economic, political and cultural perspectives of family farming (Sarandon and Flores, 2011).
- *Extension agents organise training programmes in family farming.* Training programmes such as seen in Farmers Field School Approach, complemented with monitoring routines or self assessment procedure play an extremely important roles in improving agriculture and making agricultural practices more sustainable for family farming (Boselie and Hiller 2010).
- *Extension agents put family farmers at the centre.* Farmer-led research and extension need put family farmers at the centre and strengthen their efforts, particularly as they are being most affected by and are actively adapting to impacts of climate change (Brull, 2014).

- *Youth-in-Agriculture participate in vocational training.* A holistic view of young people's need is required and policies must ensure the right of Youth-in-Agriculture to live their lives in their own territories and be participating in vocational training for sustainable family farming (Brull, 2014).

Conclusion

The relevance of family farming is recognized to reduce poverty and improve global food security not only at national level but also at regional level. However, as important as family farming is with a lot of acquired qualities that can benefit family farmers and sustain agriculture, many strategies that can enhance family farming in Nigeria have not been put in place.

Recommendations

The paper therefore recommended the following to enhance family farming and sustain agriculture thereby develop national economy. That:

1. Family farmers should diversify to help their income to remain more stable, offsetting the seasonality of commodity production and the climatic, financial, and other risks involved so as to be less vulnerable and more autonomous.
2. Governments can reward family farmers that work hard and also promote production and distribution of seeds of local varieties to support the conservation and management of

- agro-biodiversity. This will provide a new source of income for many family farmers.
3. Governments should also promote family farmers organizations to enable the farmers to have unlimited access to information.
 4. Ministry of agriculture at local, state and federal levels should periodically organize training programmes on family farming so as to sustain rural livelihood.
 5. Extension agents should collaborate with research scientists to assist family farmers improve their standard of living by increasing their productivity.

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