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Agricultural Development and Sustainable Development Goal 2 in Akwa Ibom State: An Assessment of Akadep

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Abstract

Food security is paramount for the development of any nation. A healthy population makes up a healthy workforce; thus, it is pertinent for government to initiate and implement agricultural programmes capable of improving food production, accessibility, and affordability. Akwa Ibom State is endowed with vast arable land for agriculture; however, these lands are not effectively utilised to address food insecurity. The state still largely depends on other states for food consumption, as the bulk of garri, beans, rice, millet, and maize, among others, are externally sourced. Despite the existence of various agricultural programmes, the agricultural sector in Akwa Ibom State continues to grapple with issues such as low productivity, limited access to resources, and lack of effective implementation and coordination, thereby hampering its ability to contribute to sustainable development. This paper assessed the impact of the Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP) on achieving SDG 2 in Akwa Ibom State, which focuses on reducing hunger, improving food availability, enhancing nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture theory was adopted as the theoretical framework to guide the study. The study

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employed descriptive and documentary methods. It was found that the majority of Nigerians, including Akwa Ibom residents, live on less than USD 1 per day, which is insufficient to meet the daily dietary intake approved by the United Nations. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics indicated a high level of food inflation in Akwa Ibom State, resulting in widespread hunger due to the high poverty rate. The study recommended, among other measures, that government should properly monitor and fund agricultural programmes to achieve the envisaged objectives.

Keywords: Agriculture; Agricultural Programmes; Food Security; Sustainable Development

Introduction

The actualisation of food security in any country is usually insurance against hunger and malnutrition, both of which impede economic development. This is the reason all developed and most developing countries make considerable efforts to increase their food production capacity (Davis 2003). Prior to independence and the discovery of oil, the Nigerian economy was largely agrarian and directed the pace of Nigeria's economy from this period to post-independence. Despite instabilities in world prices, agriculture remained the mainstay of the economy and contributed about 45 percent of GDP, represented almost 70 percent of total exports, and provided the foreign exchange that was applied to importing raw materials and capital goods.

Akinyetun (2018) submitted that the agriculture sector actively employed about two-thirds of the country's total labour force and provided employment for about 90 percent of the rural population. Nigeria, the world's largest producer of cassava, yam and cowpea – all staple foods in sub-Saharan Africa – was also a major producer of fish. The peasant farmers produced enough to feed the entire population. The various marketing boards generated much revenue, the surplus of which was used by the government to develop the basic infrastructure needed for long-term development. The policy was hinged on maximising the profits of the export-led development scheme. Thus, raw materials, which basically comprised minerals and agricultural produce, were exported to industrialised nations (Akpan, 2012).

To a large extent, Nigeria is an agrarian economy. About 60% of the country's entire landmass is arable, while its bodies of water are rich in seafood, and around 70% of the labour force are engaged in diverse agricultural activities. Expectedly, food production should not be far less than abundance, such that any changes in the demand or supply of food items would not have a significant influence on food prices, including the general price level some of the time. It is expected also that higher levels of

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agricultural productivity should reduce the prices of food products and, at the same time, have a decreasing effect on the overall inflation rate (Mbah, C., Orjime, S. and Mgbemena, E. 2022; Benfica, Boughton, Mouzinho and Uaiene, 2017; Salik & Aras, 2020).

Islam and Wong (2017) submit that adequacy of food consumption in quantity and nutritious quality is the ultimate index of food security. Akwa Ibom State is blessed with vast arable lands for agriculture. However, these lands are not effectively utilised to tackle food insecurity. The state still largely depends on other states for food consumption, as the bulk of garri, beans, rice, millet, and corn, among others, are externally sourced. As one of the oil-bearing states in Nigeria, a vast area of land has been destroyed by oil spillage, while many neglect farming due to dependence on oil; thus, there is a high risk of food insecurity in Akwa Ibom State. To tackle food insecurity in Akwa Ibom State, it is imperative to investigate agricultural programmes in the state and explore better options for the attainment of the SDG 2.

There are various agricultural programmes initiated by the Akwa Ibom State government to enhance sustainable agricultural practices. However, this paper seeks to examine the Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme, AKADEP. This programme aimed at improving agricultural practices, increasing agricultural productivity, and reducing hunger, among others. Despite the existence of this programme, the agricultural sector in Akwa Ibom State continues to grapple with issues such as low productivity, limited access to resources, and environmental degradation. The lack of effective implementation and coordination among these initiatives hampers their ability to contribute to sustainable development. Furthermore, the policies often do not adequately address the socio-economic needs of the farmers, leading to a disconnect between policy objectives and on-ground realities. Thus, this paper attempts to examine the role of AKADEP in enhancing food security in Akwa Ibom State.

Objective of the Research

The main objective of this paper is to examine the impact of Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP) on achieving SDG 2 in Akwa Ibom State, which focuses on reducing hunger, improving food availability, enhancing nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Concept of Food Security

Achieving food security is a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires coordinated efforts across sectors such as agriculture, health, trade, and social welfare. It is essential for promoting human health and well-being, reducing poverty and inequality, and fostering sustainable development. At the 1996 World Food Summit, food security was defined as existing when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life (FAO, 1996). It

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encompasses four main dimensions: availability, access, utilisation, and stability. Here's a breakdown of these dimensions:

- i. **Availability:** Sufficient quantities of food must be consistently available on a national or global scale. This includes both the production of food within a country or region and the ability to import food from elsewhere if needed.
- ii. **Access:** People must have the economic and physical means to obtain the food they need. This involves factors such as income levels, food prices, distribution networks, and physical access to markets.
- iii. **Utilisation:** Food taken must be sufficiently rich in quality to meet nutritional needs and be safe for consumption. This dimension includes factors such as dietary diversity, food safety, hygiene, and access to clean water and sanitation.
- iv. **Stability:** Food security transcends having access to food in the present but also ensuring availability and accessibility in the future, even in the face of shocks or stresses such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or conflicts. Stability involves the resilience of food systems and the ability to adapt to changing trends.

The concept, which originated in the tumultuous era of the 1970s amid global food crises, has undergone significant evolution over the decades. Initially, the discourse primarily centred on addressing food supply challenges to ensure the availability and stability of essential food items at both national and international levels. The World Food Conference of 1974 marked a pivotal moment in this discourse, leading to the establishment of new institutional frameworks aimed at tackling these issues, including initiatives for information dissemination, resource mobilisation, and policy dialogue, as documented by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI, 1997).

Amidst the escalating concerns surrounding famine, hunger, and food crises during the mid-1970s, there emerged a growing recognition of the need to redefine the concept of food security. This redefinition emphasised the importance of considering the vulnerabilities and behaviours of affected populations, highlighting the complexity of ensuring food security beyond mere availability of food. Over time, various international declarations and definitions have shaped the discourse on food security. The Rome Declaration on World Food Security (1996) provides a comprehensive definition, stating that food security entails ensuring that food is available, accessible, and nutritionally adequate for all individuals, considering factors such as quantity, quality, variety, and cultural acceptability (Madeley, 2002). Similarly, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) defines food security as a state where all people have access to safe and nutritious food to sustain a healthy and active life (FAO, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the Sustainable Agriculture Theory, a holistic approach to farming that prioritises the harmonious coexistence of environmental health, social equity, and economic prosperity within agricultural systems. The theory encompasses a range of perspectives and proposals aimed at fostering agricultural practices that are environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just. Key proponents of Sustainable Agriculture Theory include scientists and policymakers; however, it is difficult to attribute the theory to a single scholar. Rooted in the principles of sustainability, it emphasises the necessity of practices that minimise ecological degradation, foster community well-being, and ensure the long-term viability of agricultural enterprises.

One of the key pillars of sustainable agriculture theory is environmental conservation. Practices such as organic farming, which eschews synthetic pesticides and fertilisers in favour of natural inputs, play a critical role in mitigating the negative impacts of conventional agriculture on ecosystems (Reganold and Wachter, 2016). Agroecology, another cornerstone of sustainable agriculture, promotes biodiversity, soil conservation, and water management techniques that enhance ecological resilience and minimise resource depletion (Gliessman, 2015).

Moreover, Sustainable Agriculture Theory places strong emphasis on social equity, recognising the importance of fair labour practices, community engagement, and access to resources for all stakeholders in agricultural production. By prioritising the needs of smallholder farmers, indigenous communities, and marginalised groups, sustainable agriculture seeks to address issues of food sovereignty and rural poverty (Holt-Giménez and Altieri, 2013). Economic viability is also central to Sustainable Agriculture Theory, acknowledging the necessity of profitable agricultural enterprises for long-term sustainability. While sustainable farming practices may initially require investment and transition costs, they often lead to improved profitability over time through increased yields, reduced input costs, and enhanced market opportunities (Pretty et al., 2006).

Furthermore, the theory emphasises the interconnectedness of agricultural systems with broader ecological and social systems. By adopting a systems-thinking approach, farmers can better understand the complex interactions between soil health, water quality, biodiversity, and human well-being, thereby creating more resilient and adaptive farming systems (Altieri, 1995).

In conclusion, Sustainable Agriculture Theory offers a comprehensive framework for promoting agricultural development that is environmentally sound, socially just, and economically viable. By integrating sustainability principles into farming practices, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can work towards building resilient food systems that meet the needs of present and future generations.

Sustainable Development Goal 2

Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) integrates and connects food security, nutrition, and sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture. It emphasises the important role of small producers in the agricultural sector. This multidimensional goal encompasses several specific targets, which can be subdivided into three interrelated components: ending hunger and improving nutrition (social dimension: 2.1, 2.2), achieving food security through productivity improvement and income increase (economic dimension: 2.3, 2.a, and to a certain extent 2.b and 2.c), and promoting sustainable agriculture (environmental dimension: 2.4, 2.5). Goal 2 specifically aims to achieve food security and end hunger.

Target 2.1: Universal Access to Safe and Nutritious Food

By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, particularly the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

Target 2.2: End All Forms of Malnutrition

By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

Target 2.3: Double the Productivity and Incomes of Small-Scale Food Producers

By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists, and fishermen, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets, opportunities for value addition, and non-farm employment.

Target 2.4: Sustainable Food Production and Resilient Agricultural Practices

By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.

Target 2.5: Maintain the Genetic Diversity in Food Production

By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed.

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Target 2.6: Invest in Rural Infrastructure, Agricultural Research, Technology and Gene Banks

Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries.

Target 2.7: Prevent Agricultural Trade Restrictions, Market Distortions and Export Subsidies

Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, by the mandate of the Doha Development Round.

Target 2.8: Ensure Stable Food Commodity Markets and Timely Access to Information

Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including food reserves, to help limit extreme food price volatility.

Echendu (2022) argues that the centrality of food to the SDGs makes food security a major determinant of achieving success. While SDG 2 focuses mainly on food security, the connection to the other goals cannot be overemphasised. For example, SDG 1 is focused on poverty eradication. The poorest people globally and in Nigeria are small-scale farmers who are most impacted by flooding, lack of mechanised farming tools, poor infrastructure, among others (Durodola 2019; Echendu 2020; Fanzo *et al.* 2020; Mbah 2019), and lost revenue through food loss/waste along the food value chain.

Synopses of Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programmes (AKADEP)

The inception of the Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP) heralded a new era of agricultural transformation in the state of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria. Established in 1987 following the creation of Akwa Ibom State, AKADEP emerged as a response to the imperative need for sustainable agricultural development and food security. This initiative was born out of a recognition of the pivotal role agriculture played in the state's economy and the pressing need to modernise farming practices, increase productivity, and uplift the livelihoods of rural farmers (Akwa Ibom State Government, 2021).

Initially operating under the auspices of the Federal Agricultural Coordinating Unit (FACU), AKADEP benefited from collaborative efforts with international development agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). These partnerships provided AKADEP with access to technical expertise, training programmes, and financial

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resources, enabling the implementation of various agricultural projects aimed at enhancing food production, promoting agribusiness, and alleviating rural poverty (IFAD, 2019).

Extension services and farmer education emerged as foundational pillars of AKADEP's early initiatives. Extension agents were deployed extensively across rural communities in Akwa Ibom State to provide farmers with essential technical guidance, agricultural training, and access to improved farming technologies. Through the establishment of demonstration farms, field days, and farmer field schools, AKADEP facilitated the dissemination of best practices in crop cultivation, livestock management, and agroforestry, empowering farmers to adopt more efficient and sustainable agricultural methods.

As AKADEP progressed, it diversified its focus to encompass a broader array of agricultural value chains, including rice, cassava, maize, poultry, and fisheries. The programme facilitated the formation of cooperative societies and farmer groups, fostering collective action among smallholder farmers to access credit facilities, agricultural inputs, and market opportunities. By strengthening linkages between farmers, input suppliers, processors, and marketers, AKADEP contributed significantly to the growth of agribusinesses and the development of robust agricultural markets within Akwa Ibom State.

In recent years, AKADEP has embraced modern technologies and innovative approaches to address emerging challenges in the agricultural sector. This includes the adoption of precision agriculture techniques, promotion of climate-smart farming practices, and integration of information and communication technology (ICT) solutions for agricultural extension and market information services. Furthermore, AKADEP has prioritised the inclusion of youth and women in agricultural activities, recognising their potential as catalysts for agricultural transformation and economic development (FAO, 2018).

The impact of AKADEP's interventions is evident in the improved livelihoods of rural farmers, increased agricultural productivity, and enhanced food security across Akwa Ibom State. Through robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, AKADEP continually assesses the effectiveness of its programmes, identifies areas for improvement, and adapts its strategies to evolving socio-economic and environmental conditions. This commitment to evidence-based decision-making has solidified AKADEP's reputation as a leading agricultural development agency not only in Akwa Ibom State but also within Nigeria as a whole.

Looking forward, AKADEP faces new challenges and opportunities in the dynamic agricultural landscape. The programme remains dedicated to fostering sustainable and inclusive growth, resilience to climate change (Awolumate, 2018), and the integration of digital technologies to further enhance agricultural productivity and value addition. By building upon its successes and leveraging lessons learnt from past

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experiences, AKADEP is poised to continue spearheading agricultural excellence and prosperity in Akwa Ibom State, serving as a model for agricultural development across the region and beyond (Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2015).

Factors Responsible for the Failure of Agricultural Policies and Programmes in Akwa Ibom State

Efforts in agricultural development over the past decades have not been achieved due to some factors. Some of these factors are discussed below:

I. Paucity of loanable funds.

There has been a notable imbalance in the availability of loanable funds, primarily stemming from governmental sources, which falls short of meeting the substantial financing requirements for meaningful agricultural ventures. This discrepancy exacerbates an already existing deficit in the supply of finance relative to the robust demand within the agricultural sector.

Unfortunately, the situation is further complicated by the diversion of part of the available credit away from its intended agricultural applications. Such diversionary practices disrupt the alignment of financial resources with agricultural development objectives, leading to a misallocation of resources and distortion of policy outcomes. Aside from diverting funds meant for farmers, some officials divert farm implements and tractors for their personal use. Consequently, this diversion results in a detrimental impact on the overall effectiveness and coherence of agricultural policies, ultimately hindering the sector's growth potential and its ability to contribute to the attainment of SDG 2.

ii. Political instability

One of the persistent challenges facing agricultural policy effectiveness is the issue of policy instability. This is characterised by frequent changes in agricultural policies, with successive administrations introducing and disbanding policies at will. This instability undermines long-term planning and continuity in agricultural development efforts. Research by Adama (2017) highlights how successive administrations often prioritise the adoption of new policies and programmes as a means of asserting their authority and distinguishing themselves from their predecessors. This tendency leads to the abandonment of existing policies, regardless of their efficacy, and the hasty formulation of new ones, resulting in a cycle of policy churn and uncertainty.

The consequences of policy instability on agricultural development can be profound. It disrupts investment planning and discourages long-term commitments from both public and private sector stakeholders. Farmers and agribusinesses, uncertain about the direction of government policies, may hesitate to adopt new technologies or make investments in agricultural production, leading to stagnation and missed opportunities for growth (Olumide, 2015).

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iii. **Lack of Adequate Skills to Deliver Services Effectively**

Many credit institutions involved in agricultural lending often lack the presence of trained agricultural credit officers who possess a deep understanding of the intricacies of agriculture and the specific challenges encountered by farmers. Most times, individuals are selected or appointed on the basis of political or sanguinary ties. This deficiency in expertise hinders the effectiveness of credit provision, as agricultural lending requires specialised knowledge to accurately assess risk factors, tailor loan products to farmers' needs, and provide appropriate support and guidance throughout the lending process (Meyer & Nagarajan, 2017).

Moreover, the supervision and oversight of credit programmes in the agricultural sector frequently fall below acceptable standards. In many cases, regulatory bodies and supervisory agencies lack the resources, capacity, or mandate to effectively monitor agricultural credit activities, leaving room for inefficiencies, malpractices, and mismanagement to occur unchecked (Minten et al., 2018).

Consequently, the absence of trained agricultural credit officers and inadequate supervision often contribute to poor repayment performance in agricultural credit programmes. Farmers may struggle to meet repayment obligations due to a variety of factors, including insufficient access to technical assistance, inadequate market linkages, unpredictable weather conditions, and limited understanding of financial management practices (Asfaw et al., 2012). Adama (2017) highlights the consequences of these deficiencies, noting that agricultural credit schemes frequently fail to achieve their intended objectives due to suboptimal repayment rates and inadequate risk management practices.

To address these challenges, it is imperative to prioritise capacity-building initiatives aimed at equipping agricultural credit officers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively serve the needs of farmers. Additionally, strengthening regulatory oversight and supervision mechanisms can help ensure compliance with best practices and promote accountability and transparency in agricultural lending activities (World Bank, 2019).

Enhancing Food Availability: Has Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programmes (AKADEP) Enhanced Food Availability to All in Akwa Ibom State?

Ensuring food availability is paramount for sustainable development and poverty alleviation in developing countries. The Akwa Ibom Agricultural Development Programmes (AKADEP) was established to play a pivotal role in achieving this goal through their multifaceted approach to agricultural development. Established to address the challenges of food insecurity and rural poverty, AKADEP implements various initiatives aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, promoting sustainable farming practices, and improving market access for smallholder farmers.

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At the heart of AKADEP's efforts lies a commitment to empowering farmers with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to increase food production and meet the nutritional needs of the population. Through extension services, training programmes, and demonstration plots, AKADEP provides technical assistance to farmers, equipping them with modern agricultural techniques and best practices. By adopting improved seeds, proper crop management, and efficient irrigation methods, farmers can boost their yields and contribute to the overall food availability in the state. Furthermore, AKADEP focuses on diversifying agricultural production to ensure a steady and diverse food supply. By promoting the cultivation of various crops suited to the region's agro-climatic conditions, including cassava, maize, rice, and vegetables, AKADEP helps mitigate the risks associated with mono-cropping and enhance food security. Research by Olaoye et al. (2020) emphasises the importance of crop diversification in enhancing food availability and resilience to climate variability in Nigeria.

Despite efforts made by the Akwa Ibom State government to enhance food security, there is a high prevalence of hunger and malnutrition in Nigeria, nay, Akwa Ibom State. FAO (2024) reports that the assessment of global hunger in 2023, measured by the prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) (SDG Indicator 2.1.1), reveals a continuing lack of progress towards the goal of Zero Hunger. Inflationary pressures, in particular increases in the relative prices of food, continue to erode economic gains for many people's access to food in many countries, as the world is still struggling to recover from the global pandemic, hampered by a growing number of conflicts and extreme weather events. It is more worrisome in Nigeria as the food inflation rate soars to an all-time high. The cost of food in Nigeria increased 39.53 percent in July of 2024 over the same month in the previous year. Food inflation in Nigeria averaged 13.58 percent from 1996 until 2024, reaching an all-time high of 40.87 percent in June of 2024 and a record low of -17.50 percent in January of 2000 (National Bureau of Statistics).

The Cost of a Healthy Diet (CoHD) is the least expensive combination of locally available items that meets globally consistent food-based dietary guidelines. It is used as a measure of physical and economic access to healthy diets. This is a lower bound (or floor) of the cost per adult per day, excluding the cost of transportation and meal preparation. The national average cost of a healthy diet was N1,265 in July 2024. This is 1.9% higher than the amount recorded previously (June 2024 was N1,241). In July 2024, the average CoHD was highest in the South West at N1,581 per adult per day, compared to N956 per adult per day in the North West.

In recent months, the CoHD has risen faster than general inflation and food inflation. However, the CoHD and the food CPI are not directly comparable; the CoHD includes fewer items and is measured in Naira per day, while the food CPI is a weighted index (NBS, <https://nigeriastat.gov.ng/elibrary/elibraryread/1241550>).

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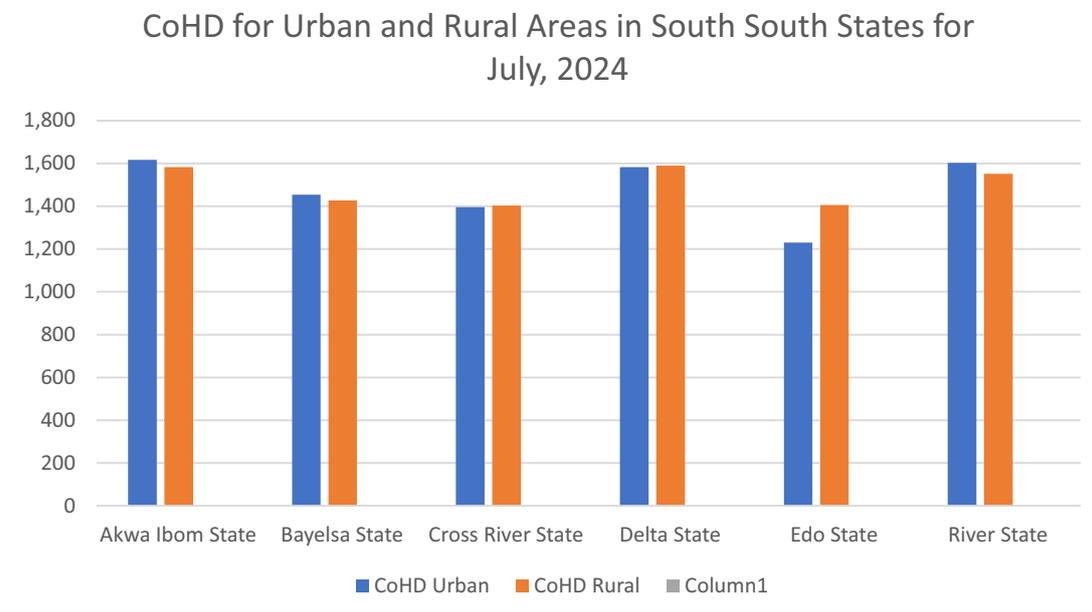
Table 1: Cost of Healthy Diet Zonal Average

Zone	CoHD Coverage
North Central	1278
North East	998
North West	956
South West	1581
South East	1352
South South	1487

Source: NBS, (2024).

The majority of Nigerians are living on less than 1 US dollar per day; thus, judging from this submission, it is not out of place to assert that Akwa Ibom people are not food secure, as the majority cannot access, let alone afford, the cost of a daily healthy diet. As represented in table 1 above, South South is the second most expensive zone (1487) in terms of cost of healthy diet coverage.

Figure 1: Cost of Healthy Diet (CoHD), as at July 2024 for South South States

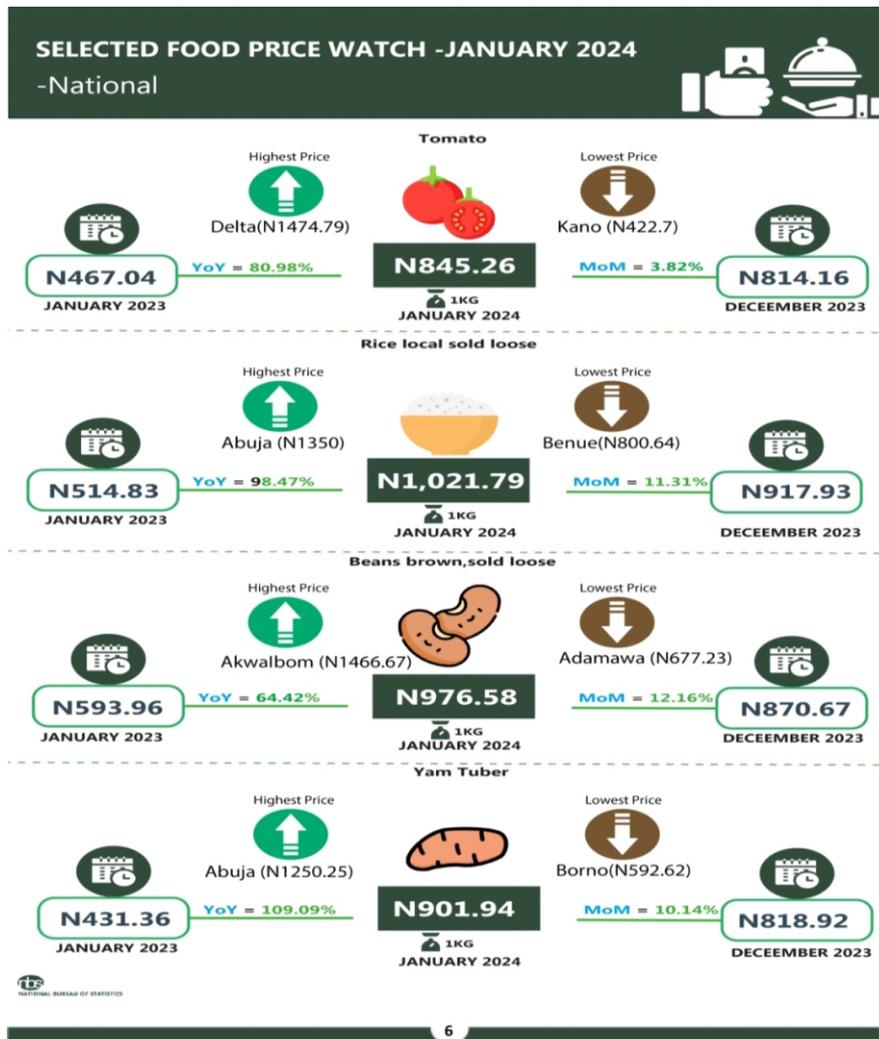


Source: Compiled by authors, from NBS Data

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As indicated in figure 1 above, the urban population of Akwa Ibom State faces the most expensive (1,617) CoHD as of July 2024 in South South Nigeria. The rural population came in a close second after Delta State. This is to show that the cost of living in Akwa Ibom State is very high. Access to food alone does not bring about food security, but accessibility and affordability of the basic daily dietary intake at all times by all in a particular environment is what makes the people food secure. The rise in food inflation rate, as earlier indicated, has been compounded by a number of factors ranging from the exponential rise in fuel price (which triggers the rise in prices of virtually all other goods and services) to poor attitudes to farming, corruption and leadership failure, among others.

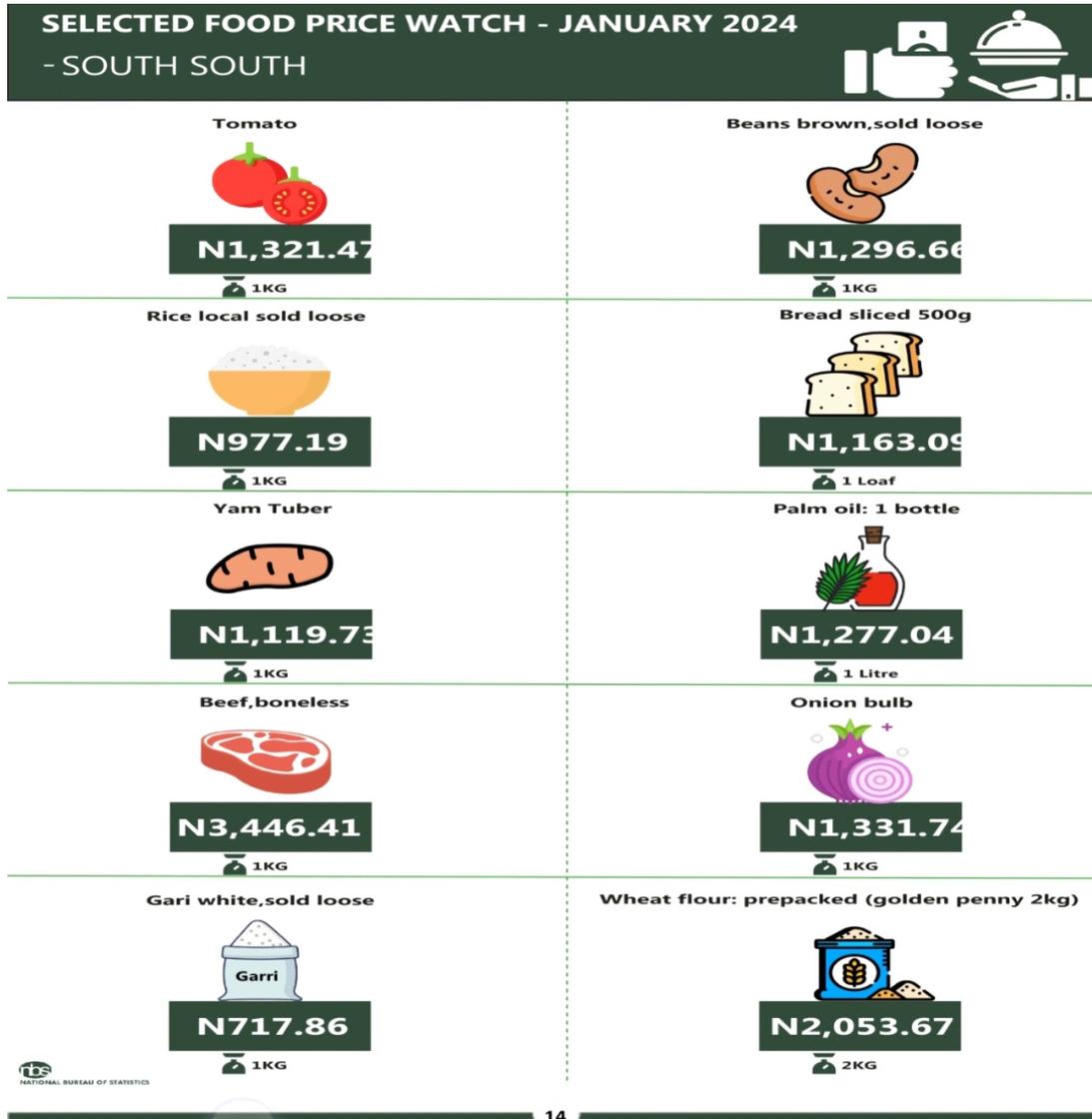
Figure 2: Selected Food Prices for January 2024



Source: NBS, 2024

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Figure 3: Selected Food Price for South-South, January 2024



Source: NBS, 2024

As indicated in figure 2 above, “Selected Food Price Watch for January 2024” shows that the average price of 1kg of local rice sold loose stood at N1,021.79. This indicates a rise of 98.47% in price on a year-on-year basis from N514.83 recorded in January 2023 and an 11.31% rise in price on a month-on-month basis from N917.93 in December 2023. The average price of 1kg of boneless beef increased by 37.08% on a year-on-year basis from N2,418.91 in January of last year (2023) to N3,315.78 in January 2024. On a month-on-month basis, the average price of this item increased by

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5.37% from N3,146.94 in December 2023. The average price of 1kg of brown beans (sold loose) rose by 64.42% on a year-on-year basis from N 593.96 in January 2023 to N976.58 in January 2024. On a month-on-month basis, it increased by 12.16% from N870.67 in December 2023 (NBS, 2024).

Similarly, the average price of 1kg onion bulbs rose by 97.38% on a year-on-year basis from N446.44 in January 2023 to N881.20 in January 2024, while there was a decline of 9.33% on a month-on-month basis. In addition, the average price of 1kg of tomatoes rose by 80.98% on a year-on-year basis from N467.04 in January 2023 to N845.26 in January 2024. On a month-on-month basis, it increased by 3.82% from N814.16 in December 2023 to N845.26 in January 2024.

The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2024) reports that the state profile analysis in January 2024 reveals that the highest average price of 1kg of locally sold loose rice was recorded in Abuja state at N1,350, while the lowest was recorded in Benue state at N800.64. The highest average price of 1kg of boneless beef was recorded in Abuja at N4,000, while the lowest was recorded in Gombe State at N2,639. In terms of the average price of 1kg of brown beans (sold loose), Akwa-Ibom state recorded the highest price at N 1,466.67, while Adamawa recorded the lowest price at N 677.23. Rivers State recorded the highest average price of 1kg of onion bulb at N 1,454.09, while the lowest was reported in Zamfara at N 435.71. The highest average price of 1kg of tomatoes was recorded in Delta at N1,474.79, while the least average price was recorded in Kano at N422.7 (nigerianstat.gov.ng).

Food security means that food is available and affordable to everyone at all times. This is not the case in Nigeria, nay, Akwa Ibom State, as many still go to bed without food. Many are unable to afford the basic daily recommended dietary intake, as shown earlier. This is sadly due to a high rate of poverty, a high inflation rate, and poor and unsustainable agricultural practices, among others. It is thus clear that AKADEP has not been able to reduce hunger and poverty in Akwa Ibom State.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Food security is imperative for any nation's workforce. A nation that cannot feed its people is a weak and failing state. Thus, SDG 2 was established to address the issues of poverty and hunger. Governments at various levels have made efforts to implement agricultural programmes aimed at reducing hunger and boosting food security. The Akwa Ibom State Government has initiated different programmes to enhance agricultural sustainability, one of which is the Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP). However, AKADEP's efforts, which include the distribution of improved seeds and fertilisers, have not led to significant improvements in crop yields. This reflects broader criticisms of agricultural development programmes, which highlight that inconsistent policy execution and inadequate skills for effective delivery often compromise their effectiveness.

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To enhance the effectiveness of AKADEP, it is vital to establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Regular assessments would help identify challenges and opportunities, enabling timely adjustments to improve programme outcomes. Implementing feedback mechanisms from beneficiaries would also ensure that the programmes remain responsive to the needs of farmers.

It is crucial to increase funding and resource allocation to ensure that agricultural programmes can provide adequate training, improve irrigation facilities, and enhance the distribution of inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. Increased investment would also facilitate improvements in cassava processing centres and support better infrastructure, thereby mitigating the effects of challenges such as erratic power supply.

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