

**INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURE:  
A CATALYTIC TRIGGER FOR NON-OIL  
DEPENDENT ECONOMY**

**BY**

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## **PREAMBLE**

It is my utmost pleasure to be present here today to deliver the second year convocation lecture of this great citadel of learning – The LANDMARK UNIVERSITY, Omu-ARAN. I wish to start by expressing my profound gratitude to the leadership and management of the University for the honour given me through the invitation to deliver the lecture. This occasion fills me with nostalgia as I recall that I was once an insider in a similar ivory tower community 35-45 years ago both as a student and later as a member of the congregation. Coming back to speak in the midst of academics, intellectuals and egg heads is some sort of home coming. I feel highly honoured.

Although this is my first time at this University; however it is my second visit to the ancient town of Omu-Aran where the University is situated. My first visit to Omu-Aran was in August 1975 – almost 40years ago when I came in company of other National Youth Service Corps members during the mandatory state tour of Kwara State where I did my NYSC between 1975 – 1976. Kwara State then extended as far as Ilesha Bariba and Yashikira to the West and Kontonkarfi and Dekina in Igala land to the East. I cannot vividly remember what Omu-Aran looked like at that time; but one thing I am sure of is that it was a rural agrarian community.

I understand Omu-Aran is the homestead of the Founder and the Presiding Bishop of the Living Faith Bible Church, the proprietors of this University; and his decision to locate the University here must have attracted some immense value to the town, transforming it to an urban community. If more and more Nigerians go back to their roots to do these kinds of things, Nigerian development will proceed at a faster pace. If we all wait for government, most of the development that we desire in our less cities will never happen. I say kudos to those who thought of bringing this University to Omu-Aran. Thank you for coming home, and for the opportunity given me to come and behold the new status of Omu-Aran.

Since this is a Convocation ceremony, permit me to also congratulate this year's graduating students, their parents and their families. It takes hard work and determination to weather through the storms of any undergraduate programme, let alone that of a university committed to excellence like Landmark University. For four or five years, you have burnt the midnight candle, and have paid the price for success. Now it is your time to celebrate this landmark achievement that may in fact define the direction of your careers; and I rejoice with you. I also thank the parents and families of these graduates who have provided the financial, emotional and spiritual support needed to take them through this process. Today could not have been made possible without your help. Thank you. And for the parents, my prayer for you is that your efforts and sacrifices on these children shall be richly rewarded, in Jesus' name (Amen).

The theme of our reflection at this convocation lecture is **“Inclusive Agriculture: A Catalytic Trigger for Non-Oil Dependent Agriculture”**. And I hasten to add that our specific context is the Nigerian nation. Our thesis today is that the trigger that Nigeria requires to catapult her away from the danger zone that over-dependence on oil has landed her is inclusive agriculture. In the course of this lecture, we shall highlight the potentials (or the promise) of this great nation, briefly review the damage that over-dependence of oil has done to our economy, highlight the compelling impact of inclusive economies on national development, and thereafter focus on the role of inclusive agriculture in eradicating poverty and steering the nation away from over-dependence on oil. Examples have the power to clarify thought; so we hope to situate the lessons learnt in the specific examples of one or two case studies.

### **Nigeria: Brief review of its Profile and Potentials**

Nigeria is one of the most populous nations on earth. According to World Bank estimates, Nigeria's population as at 2013 is 173.6 million. An unofficial 2015 estimate puts the figure at 181.5 million. Both estimates, however, agree that Nigeria is the seventh most populous nation on earth.

These Nigerian population figures, as intimidating as they are, do not tell the whole story. The story of Nigeria's population dynamics becomes more interesting when you note that our nation has one of the highest fertility rates (5.25 children born per woman), one of the highest population growth rates in the world today. According to the Population Reference Bureau in its 2013 World Population Data Sheet (which puts Nigeria's population as at the end of June 2013 at 173.6 million), the population of Nigeria will reach 440 million by 2050. Nigeria will then be the third most populous country in the world, surpassed only by China and India.

Nigeria also has many natural strengths and potentials:-

#### Nigeria's Natural Strengths

- Our land is some of the most fertile in the world
- 79m ha of agricultural land of which 40m ha is arable
- Over 40% of arable land remains uncultivated
- Average precipitation 1,150mm/year
- Potential to irrigate 3m ha
- 14m farming families
- Capable of growing almost all crops

The implication of the above is that Nigeria is emerging as one of the most important markets in the world, and may in fact become the third most important market in the near future. If our nation remains peaceful and democratic, she will be a choice destination for everyone who has something to sell. Since it is people that buy things, national population is always a consideration in marketing strategy, especially on an international scale. Also, being a developing nation with potentially low costs, she may be a desirable investment destination, especially for manufacturing concerns (but for her crippling power situation).

Added to the foregoing is the fact that Nigeria is a resource rich nation. Nigeria is one of the major exporters of crude oil. The nation is also blessed with other

mineral resources, and many yet-to-be-harnessed natural endowments. This is why Nigeria is a nation that cannot be ignored by world leaders and the international community. She is a potentially powerful nation.

The flip side of the rosy picture I just painted is that the world also pays so much attention to Nigeria because of the risk that Nigeria poses if anything should go wrong with her. In the course of his campaigns, President Muhammadu Buhari referred a few times to how he called attention of world leaders to the danger to our neighbours and to the developed world if Nigeria had a refugee problem. In the event of conflict, famine or extreme poverty within the nation, Nigerian refugees would immediately overwhelm the economies of all the remaining West African nations put together; not sparing developed countries like USA and UK, to which the educated elite could flee. Hence, there is grave international concern for peace and prosperity in Nigeria (or at least, poverty reduction); knowing the burden and trouble that an unstable Nigeria can bring to her neighbours and to other parts of the world.

Providence has blessed this nation with ample opportunities for greatness and prosperity. However, the sad reality is that decades after independence, Nigeria continues to squander the opportunities she has to attain national greatness and prosperity. In the process, we create situations that threaten peaceful coexistence in the nation, often pushing the nation to the brink of collapse as the federating units jostle for ascendancy at the centre. Even though this is not a political discussion, it needs be emphasized that the quest for power at the centre has been the single most important and most recurring threat to national peace and stability. Answering the question, “Why is this so?” feeds back into our theme for today, therefore we shall spare a moment to delve into that question.

In the formative years of our nation, the economy was predominantly agrarian and extractive, but nevertheless diversified. Also, regional governments were responsible for the prosperity of their regions, and they retained up to 50% of

wealth generated in their respective regions. This made every region in Nigeria to look inwards and explore various resources that abound in their areas to grow and diversify the economy. Those were days of cocoa in the West, groundnut and cotton in the North, and oil and rubber in the Mid-West and East. Agricultural production brought such prosperity to the state that the South West Regional Government could build Cocoa House, among other giant strides.

However, the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in Nigeria in 1956 and the oil boom of 1970s made oil to dominate the economy of the country. The federal government seized complete control of the oil windfall. Even though we were a federal republic on paper, we became a unitary state in practice, with federating units going cap in hand to beg for money at the centre. From that point onwards, the stage was set for the Nigerian Presidency to become a “hot seat” and a source of grave contention amongst the federating units.

{ Back to our theme }

The oil boom led to the neglect of agriculture and other non-oil tax revenue sectors, expansion of the public sector, and deterioration in financial discipline and accountability. The Nigerian economy soon became a monolithic economy, depending almost singularly on crude oil for funding government expenditure. For many years, oil continued to account for more than 90% of the country’s exports, 25% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 80% of government total revenues.

In turn, oil-dependence exposed Nigeria to the vagaries associated with oil price volatility which often threw the country’s public finance into disarray. Presently, government at all levels is in distress, with many states owing salaries for several months because oil prices crashed and exports dwindled since last year. Moreover, since oil revenue dominates Nigeria’s Federation Account, the sharing of oil rents govern intergovernmental fiscal relations in the country with an on-going tension between stakeholders over the distribution of resources. The era when states/regions were accorded 50% retention of any proceeds accruing from their

areas is long lost. In its place complacent representatives of unviable state governments go to Abuja every month to collect allocations (don't forget; at least 90% oil money) from the federal government to run their states.

This over-dependence on oil earnings to finance governance and the development of public infrastructure has been described as an unsustainable approach to national development. At a public affairs forum in 2014, the then Minister of Finance and coordinating minister for the economy, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said Nigeria must now plan differently in order to generate non-oil based revenues. According to her:

*“We must help the businesses in setting up, in sectors, in manufacturing, in agriculture, in other sectors; we must have that so that we can have the non-oil base ... We are too dependent on oil, I said it at my ministerial platform and now we all see that the price of oil is coming down, the quantities are also not as large as they used to be.”*

In the website of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the position statement on the economy as at June 2015 was stated among others to include the following;

*“To generate a stronger and stable growth of the economy, the government is promoting the increased production in the non-oil sector of the economy by creating a level playing field for private sector led activity. The expected area of concentration that will engender accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction include among others, the diversification of the productive base of the economy with emphasis on agriculture and rural development to consolidate existing and new initiatives in enhancing the Agrifood system capacities in the country.*

*”...conclusively, the main focus of the Nigerian Government for embarking on vigorous economic reforms is to build a more humane, productive, courteous society where every citizen is valued and the plight of the disadvantaged is adequately addressed” ... (end of quote)*

The last paragraph above indicated that the Nigerian government recognizes the need for inclusive growth as the panacea for Nigeria economic and socio-political development.

## **INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE AGRIFOOD SYSTEM**

Inclusive growth can be defined as economic growth that results in a wider access to sustainable socio-economic opportunities for the majority while protecting the vulnerable (greater good of greater number of people) all being done in an environment of fairness equality and political plurality. In other words, inclusive growth initiatives avoid creating situations of the “rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer”.

The Agrifood System encompasses the interlinked set of activities that run from “Seed to table” including input production and distribution, farm level production, raw agricultural product assembly, processing and marketing. It encompasses the value chains for different agricultural and food products and inputs and also the linkages among them. The agrifood system is also a shorthand term for agriculture and related agro industries. It refers essentially to “expanded agriculture” that produces food. Its analysis could also be extended equally to those part of agriculture and agro industry that produce non-food products such as fibers and biofuels.

Agriculture is central to Nigeria economy, even though it has lost a dominant position in exports of key crops such as cocoa, groundnut, palm oil, where in the 1960s it had between 15% - 60% of global exports of some of these commodities, but by 2000, Nigeria global share of exports of each of these commodities had dropped to 5% or less. In spite of this decline, agriculture is still central to Nigeria’s economy accounting for 40% of GDP and providing 60% of employment. It is a major source of employment growth. Between 2001 and 2007, it accounted for 51% of job creation in Nigeria.

Since agriculture still has the largest impact in the economy, therefore inclusive agriculture which is the growth in the agriculture sector in such ways that access to opportunities are provided for the majority (especially rural poor) while protecting the weak, is the greatest catalyst for triggering growth for non-oil dependent Nigeria.

It has been observed that while the Nigerian government keeps boasting of ever increasing GDP, what the man on the street notices is ever-increasing poverty among those at the “bottom of the pyramid”. This is because even though telecommunications, financial services and banking, construction and private-investment inflows have increased substantially since 1999, most of the benefits of the high growth rates achieved over the last few years have not reached the rural poor. They do not play in the fields where these GDP growth rates are being reported, and thus have been abandoned to their poverty. For this trend to be reversed, substantial growth in the agriculture sector will need to be stimulated and sustained, as the sector is key to inclusive growth, given its proven record of contributing to more robust reduction of poverty. Doing this shall require plugging Nigeria’s predominantly smallholder farmers into market-oriented value chains that provide goods and services to local, regional and global markets; thus creating wealth for both their families and the nation.

The above makes sense because the potential of the agricultural sector’s contribution to growth and development has been underexploited to date. Of course we have several excuses - the widening technology divide between us and the developed nations, weak infrastructure, declining technical capacity, weak input and output marketing systems and services, land access and rights issues, conflicts, effects of climate change, challenging governance issues, and most significantly - limited access to affordable credit. Yet the fact remains that agriculture is critical for sustainable development and poverty reduction, and agricultural growth can be a powerful tool for inclusive growth. **The 2008 World Development Report found that growth originating in the agricultural sector**

is two to four times as effective as growth originating in the non-agricultural sector in increasing incomes of the bottom third of the income distribution, thus validating the assertion that the Nigerian experience of overall GDP growth in the midst of worsening poverty is due to the neglect of agriculture. Also, some developing nations which share similar antecedents with Nigeria have deployed interventions in the agricultural sector as the main instrument of rural poverty reduction, and this has also had a much more direct impact on hunger than general economic growth (examples include Malaysia, Brazil, India etc)

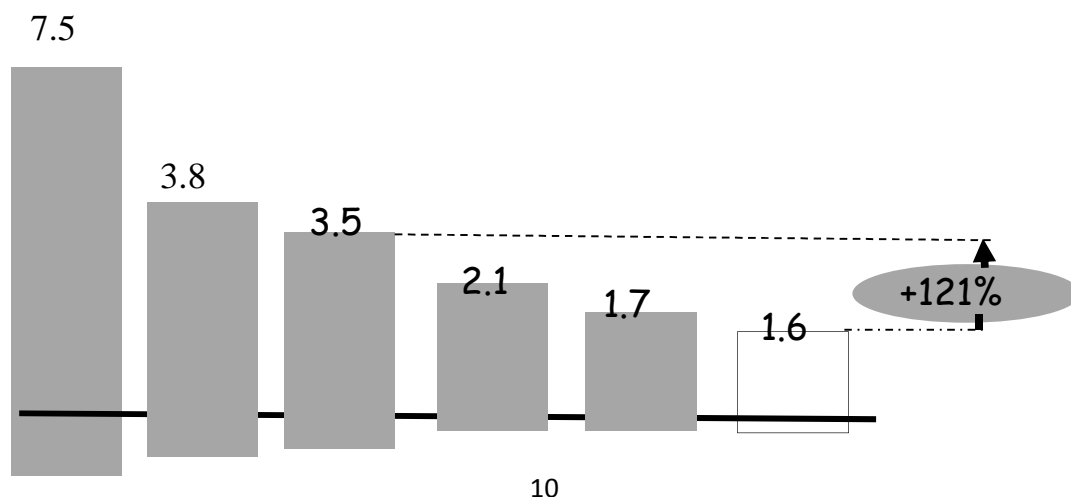
The most important pathway for Nigeria to achieve inclusive growth in agriculture is through the enhancement of agricultural productivity. No country has sustained a rapid transition out of poverty without raising productivity in its agricultural sector; and creating rural employment.

Agricultural productivity right now is abysmally low in Nigeria, even when compared with some other African countries.

Nigeria's Agricultural Sector is under performing

Cereal yields

Tons per Hectare



Egypt	South	World	Zambia	Cote
	Africa	Average		d'Ivoire
				Nigeria

Current Yield Scenario for some Agricultural Produce in Nigeria viz a viz International Benchmark

Maize- 1.5tons/hectare against 7 – 8 tons

Groundnut - 400kg/hectare against 2.700kg in Turkey

Onions - 4 metric tons/hectare against 120 tons in Yemen

Tomatoes - 5 tons/hectare against 100tons in Israel

Rice - 1.5tons/hectare against 20tons in Thailand

Cattle - milk yield – 300 litres/lactalion against 10,000 litres

- First calving – 4.5 years against 20 – 22 months
- Calving rate – 2 years average against annual
- Carcass weight at 3 years – 250kg against 1,500kg

Notwithstanding, Nigeria agriculture sector has enormous potential with an opportunity to grow output by 160% from US Dollars 99 billion today to USD 256 billion by 2030. This growth potential comes from potential to increase yields to 80 – 100% of international benchmarks; increase acreage cultivation by 14m ha of new agricultural land (approximately 38% of the Nigeria's unused available land of 36.9m ha; and shift 20% of production to higher value agricultural produce.

Nigeria faces a large and growing global agricultural market with rising commodity prices, growing demand for good and opportunities in biofuel, all of which present significant opportunities for Nigeria. For example, global cereal demand will grow by between 31% and 150% by 2050 depending on the region; and global commodity prices are in their second spike in three years. Agriculture

can become the main driver for more equitable income growth, compared to oil and gas sector.

Nigerian agriculture must be technologically driven as a profitable economic concern that meets the socio economic aspirations of Nigeria, and must be attractive for massive private sector investment. To achieve the 3-fold increase in domestic agriculture as envisaged in Nigeria's Vision 2020 between 2015 and 2020, there must be greater use of highly productive and disease resistant crops, livestock, poultry and fish strains breeds and species. Nigerian agriculture must be professionalized through promotion of educational and professional training incentives to encourage young people to embrace agricultural production, processing, extension and market.

There must be a shift from dependence on rain fed crop production through significant utilization of irrigation. This sector should achieve a high degree of public – private partnership thrust in agricultural research and development by 2020. The proprietors of Landmark University have already keyed into this vision through this agricultural based private University. I commend this initiative by Living Faith Church Worldwide. May your Ministry continue to flourish.

The food security objective of inclusive agricultural development must be to ensure sustainable access, availability and affordability of quality food to all Nigerians; and for Nigeria to become a significant net provider to the global community. The key features must include;

- i. Providing conducive environment for private sector involvement
- ii. Encouraging large scale commercial farming with strategic linkages to small holder farmers
- iii. Significantly reducing post-harvest losses through adequate storage, processing and appropriate market outlets.

Specific targets for different agricultural products must be set and these are to be achieved through the value chain approach planned to address every component of the entire agriculture value chain for crops, livestock and fisheries e.g. setting a per capital egg consumption at 200 eggs by 2020 from the present level of about 50 eggs provides scope for massive investment in egg industry value chain. The investment effort must be collaborative with intent of increasing productivity and stimulating food production through private sector participation and market development. The Federal Government will set the direction, while the organized private sector as well as the state, and local government will drive the execution.

To drive the attainment of the above, there is a need for concerted public investment in the creation of an enabling environment to attract private investment which is the engine of growth and development in all economic ventures, agriculture inclusive.

These public investment must include the following:

1. Land right and access to land
2. Finance - creating the right kind of financing options for agriculture and making it readily accessible to agropreneurs
3. Infrastructure – Road, POWER, Irrigation source etc.
4. Enabling laws for regional integration and movement of goods to create enlarged market
5. Agro industrial and SME promotion
6. Training institutions for capacity building
7. Social inclusion, food security and adaptation.

The point being made is that farmers perform differently depending on their access to adequate assets and infrastructure, even within the same agro-ecological and/or socio-economic zone. Those with access to adequate assets and infrastructure and who receive appropriate incentives and support actively engage in markets and generate high agricultural incomes, while those who lack one or more of those

three essential ingredients (assets, infrastructure and incentives) largely do not. In other words, having favorable climate, copious and affordable manpower are not enough to exploit Nigeria's comparative advantage in agriculture. If the government is serious about using agriculture to drive economic growth, then government needs to invest heavily in public goods, especially those that impinge directly upon agricultural value chains.

This leads us to the point about the non-farm dimensions of rural development. Historically, efforts to raise rural incomes have focused primarily on improving agricultural production and/or productivity. Indeed, most empirical evidence suggests that agriculture-led growth offers an unusually powerful vehicle for broad-based poverty reduction (Thirtle Lin & Piesse, 2003; de Janvry & Sadoulet, 2009; Christiaensen, Demery & Kuhl, 2010; Diao et al. 2012). However, the objective of poverty reduction through inclusive agriculture cannot be achieved by merely focusing on production/productivity while neglecting the non-farm dimension – particularly issues related to agricultural marketing and agro-processing. Without well-functioning agricultural markets, productivity gains on the farm lead to temporary production surges and price collapses. Improved market access proves necessary for maintaining production incentives, permitting household specialization and enabling movement to high-value products and to value-added activities. Value-added activities revolve around agro-processing ventures. Without functional agro-processing establishments, post-harvest loss rises, and heightens the frustration of farmers. In fact, it has been suggested that agro-processing hubs need to be developed in “catchment areas” as a specific incentive for increased production of specific crops. This is where I give kudos to the Bank of Industry for the setting up of the CAP funds for promoting agro processing.

The point being made is that sustained agricultural growth typically occurs where productivity-enhancing agricultural technology and favorable market incentives converge (Haggblade & Hazell 2010). This is the basis for the conceptualization and development of agricultural value chains, as a tool for promoting inclusive

economic growth through agriculture. Value chains are valuable in that they provide a visual framework for understanding the structural connective tissue linking small farmers with input suppliers, processors, traders and final consumers.

For the purpose of this lecture, we define a value chain as “the full range of activities and services required to bring a product or service from its conception to sale in its final markets” (microLINKS, 2012). A value chain thus encompasses the entire network of actors involved in input supply, production, processing, marketing and consumption. These value chain actors operate within an institutional environment, which can either facilitate or hinder its performance (Gereffi, 1995). Laws, rules, regulations, policies, international trade agreements, social norms and customs all contribute to this institutional environment as do public goods such as infrastructure, research, extension, price information systems and business development services. Businesses that provide cross-cutting services such as finance and transport likewise contribute key elements to the institutional environment affecting the value chain performance.

What the above suggests to us is that value chains should be developed with their specific socio-economic contexts in mind. The value chain activities described for the poultry industry in the USA (and how they are described) may not be suitable for the poultry industry in Nigeria. This is why intellectuals in each nation, who are at home with the nuances of their environment, must get involved in the design and development of value chains for their native environments. They must get involved with the agrarian communities, and impact the native farmer positively. They must employ a lexicon that communicates with, rather than confuses the ordinary farmer.

Unfortunately, we live in a country where graduates of Agriculture want to live and work in the air-conditioned offices of Victoria Island, Lagos and Asokoro, Abuja. They would pay any price to avoid serving in the village, and most would never soil their manicured fingernails. There can be no agricultural development

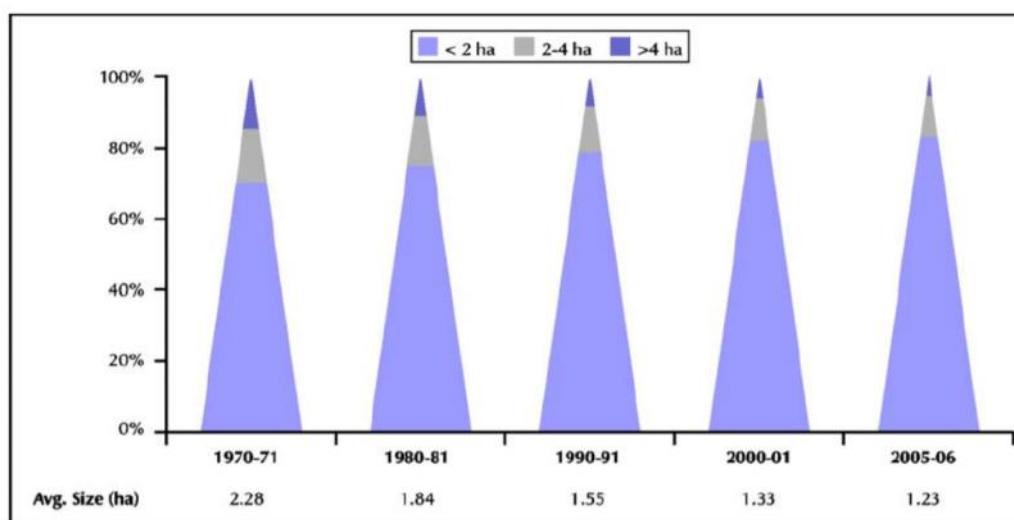
when graduates of our agricultural training institutions refuse to practice and elevate the standard of the industry. It is my hope that graduates of Agriculture related courses from Landmark University shall actually practice agriculture instead of escaping to the cities to pursue white collar jobs. Nigeria needs well trained agricultural entrepreneurs, and it is my earnest hope that your generation shall respond to the challenge rather than yield ground to foreigners whose agenda can only be to exploit our land and repatriate the benefits to their nations.

May we also ask that government should ensure that agricultural incentives get to real farmers? Ladies and gentlemen, an agricultural development agenda that makes the elite and the “political farmer” in Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt and other major cities richer, while neglecting or further impoverishing the rural poor will further worsen the poverty situation in Nigeria. Nigeria requires a conscientious deployment of available funding, know-how and technology to impact the poor directly, especially those in her rural, agrarian sectors. This is the way to arrest poverty, and promote inclusive economic growth.

### **Case Study: Inclusive Agriculture in India**

India has taken the transition from being a net importer of food to becoming a net exporter. That has been achieved in their arable sector, not by creating larger farms, but by multiplying the productivity of existing small farms. In fact, whereas the average farm size in 1970-71 was 2.28 hectares, it had reduced to 1.23 hectares by 2005-06. However, quantum leaps in productivity (production per hectare) were achieved within the same period.

Figure 6: Changes in Composition of Different Categories of Farmers and Average Farm Size in India (1970-71 to 2005-06)



Source: GOI (2012).

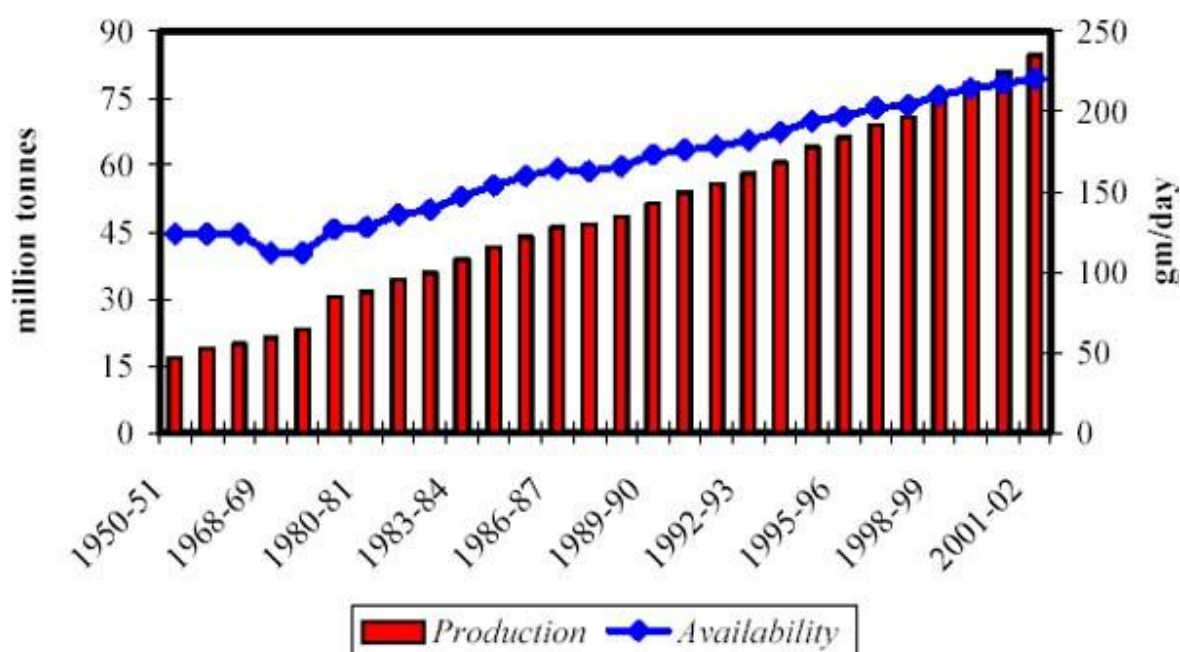
Table 1: Compound Growth Rates of Area, Production and Yield of Foodgrains, Non-Foodgrains and All Principal Crops during 1951-52 to 2010-11 (Base: TE 1981-82 = 100)

Period	Foodgrains			Non-Foodgrains			All Crops		
	Area	Prod.	Yield	Area	Prod.	Yield	Area	Prod.	Yield
1951-52 to 1965-66	1.12	2.64	1.51	2.07	3.70	1.00	1.29	2.72	0.93
1966-67 to 1980-81	0.51	2.82	2.30	0.87	2.49	1.42	0.58	2.62	1.62
1981-82 to 1990-91	-0.23	2.85	2.74	1.12	3.77	2.31	0.10	3.19	2.56
1991-92 to 2000-01	-0.07	2.02	1.52	1.18	2.69	1.09	0.27	2.29	1.33
2001-02 to 2010-11	0.37	2.12	2.89	2.16	3.67	2.49	0.91	2.50	3.25

Source: Gol (2011b).

The story of the Indian white revolution is even more dramatic. Milk production in India increased from 17 million tons in 1950-51 to 84.6 million tons in 2001-02.

**Figure ... Milk production and consumption trends in India: 1950-51 to 2001-02**



Source: GOI, 2003.

**Table ... Annual growth rate (%) of production of major livestock products in India**

Period	Milk	Eggs	Wool
1950-51 to 196-61	1.64	4.63	0.38
1960-61 to 1973-74	1.15	7.91	0.34
1973-74 to 1980-81	4.51	3.79	0.77
1980-81 to 1990-91	5.68	7.80	2.32
1990-91 to 2000-01	4.21	4.46	2.01

Source: GOI, 2003.

What is the secret? India realized that a good mix of technological, economic and institutional factors, couched in well thought out policy, and followed up with diligent and transparent implementation, hold the ace for agricultural development. The government and the governed were sincere in their pursuit of growth, and today the nation is better for it. If it happened in India, it can happen in Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

Continued dependence of oil as the economic mainstay of Nigeria exposes our nation to grave danger both economically and politically. Fortunately, government has recognized this danger, and is keen on diversifying the economy. In fact, various intervention efforts or initiatives have been launched in this regard. However, many of these schemes ignore or exclude the rural poor. Meanwhile, government and all stakeholders need to recognize inclusive agriculture as the most potent catalytic trigger to effectively diversify the economy, tackle unemployment, improve real GDP and drive up non-oil export earnings in a sustainable way. Definitely, providing inclusive opportunities and rural employment in Nigeria requires systematic and well-integrated interventions to strengthen technical, financial and business management skills and capacities of rural populations and their institutions. The examples of the success stories of nations which share similar antecedents with us should encourage us to travel along that road. In our case in fact, “the earlier the better” is the buzz word. We are chasing the world record in the rate of population growth, and not providing gainful employment for the armies of teeming youths that populate our land; this is like sitting on a keg of gunpowder, or holding a time bomb to the bosom. Luckily for us, the agricultural sector has a large absorptive capacity for skilled and unskilled manpower, and Nigeria is blessed with vast cultivatable land waiting to be harnessed. What remains is that strong decision – by all and sundry – to put our hands on the plough and make this nation, which at present is a net importer of food, a leading player in the global export market for agricultural products. That, to me, is the desirable transformation agenda. That, to me, is positive change.

In the last four decades, countries such as Brazil, Malaysia, and Thailand have been able to achieve global competitiveness in agribusiness. This has been brought about through initiatives spearheaded by the private sector with the commitments of public resources. We can do the same here in Nigeria. The Government has expressed its readiness to commit public resources to create the enabling environment. The private sector must key into this agenda, for the development

and global competitiveness of the agrifood system in Nigeria; and this is my message in this lecture. It is the way to go not just for its value to the nation but also for the value it has for personal success and fulfillment.

It would be my joy to see many of you graduands and young people become farmers and operators in the agriculture value chain very soon; and those who are already within the chain deepen their stake in the business.

Distinguished Chancellor, Management, Faculty, Staff, my dear graduands and celebrants of today, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, students, I thank you for your attention.

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