



POLICY BRIEF

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Tackling Escalating Food Insecurity in Nigeria: The Urgent Need for Legislative Intervention

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Executive Summary

Nigeria, often regarded as the giant of Africa, faces persistent food insecurity deepened by climate variability, ongoing insecurity, and heavy reliance on rain-fed agriculture. The country is ranked 110th out of 127 countries in the 2024 Global Hunger Index, projected to have over 35 million people experiencing acute food insecurity in 2026 by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Out-of-season farming offers a vital opportunity to mitigate this crisis by enabling year-round food production. However, its widespread adoption is hindered by limited access to irrigation facilities, agricultural inputs, and technical expertise. Additionally, climate-related shocks such as floods, persistent conflicts, inadequate infrastructure, and poor availability of essential resources further aggravate the acute food production and restrict the potential of out-of-season farming. In view of this, the following recommendations are proposed:

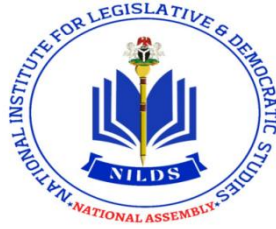
- The National Assembly (NASS) may wish to increase allocations for agricultural development, nutrition initiatives, and social protection schemes in the national budget. This bolsters critical frameworks such as the National Multi-Sectoral Plan for Food and Nutrition (NMPFAN), which requires over ₦262 billion to achieve its objectives.
- Legislators may wish to enact legislation that provide legal protections for farmers confronting insurgencies, ethnic disputes, and soaring input expenses, especially in precarious areas such as Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states. Strategies may encompass farmland defense, funding and scrutiny of agricultural initiative shortfalls.
- Lawmakers may wish to amend agricultural laws to heighten output, aid smallholder farmers, and advance climate-resilient methods despite insecurity and environmental shifts. This entails promoting tech integration through frameworks like the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) 2022–2027.
- NASS should mandate the creation of systematic data collection and monitoring frameworks to track progress regarding farming activities, outputs, and challenges, supporting evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

1. Background

Food insecurity remains a critical global issue, fuelled by climate change, conflict, and disrupted supply chains, with nearly 30

percent of the world's population experiencing moderate to severe food shortages¹. The menace in Nigeria represents

¹<https://agrifoodnetworks.org/article/seasonality-is-not-a-pathway-to-food-security>



one of the most pressing humanitarian and developmental challenges in contemporary Africa, affecting millions across urban and rural divides characterized by limited or uncertain access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. It undermines human capital, exacerbates poverty, and threatens national stability². As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria's struggle with this crisis highlights the intersection of structural vulnerabilities and acute shocks, demanding urgent legislative intervention.

The scale of food insecurity has escalated dramatically in recent years, driven by multifaceted drivers including armed conflict, climate variability, and macroeconomic pressures. Insecurity in the northeast, northwest, and northcentral regions, particularly from insurgency, banditry, and farmer-herder clashes, has displaced millions, destroyed agricultural infrastructure, and disrupted supply chains. Furthermore, recurrent flooding, desertification, and erratic rainfall patterns have diminished crop yields and livestock productivity, while soaring inflation and naira devaluation have eroded purchasing power³.

Nigerian food crisis estimates 35 million people could face acute food insecurity during the 2026 lean season, including pockets at risk of famine-level hunger. Northern states like Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, and Kaduna bear the heaviest burden, where malnutrition rates have reached critical thresholds, stunting child development and amplifying disease vulnerability. Economic shocks, including fuel subsidy removal and global commodity price surges, further entrench household-level deprivation, pushing vulnerable populations toward negative coping mechanisms such as skipping meals or child labor⁴.

This calls for immediate action from the National Assembly to address food insecurity demands through integrated strategies that prioritize conflict resolution, climate-smart agriculture, and inclusive economic policies to safeguard Nigeria's future.

Issue

Despite its promise, Nigeria confronts one of the world's most acute food insecurity crises, with 32 to 35 million people projected to face Crisis in 2026, or worse acute hunger during the June August lean season, an escalation from 30.6 million in mid-2025⁵. This crisis

² Adeshua, V. (2025). Understanding food security challenges in Nigeria and the path to progress. Report of Lagos Food Bank Initiative. <https://lagosfoodbank.org/understanding-food-security-challenges-in-nigeria-and-the-path-to-progress-by-adeshua-victoria/>

³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/389767683_Nigeria_and_Food_Security_Challenges_Intertwining_of_Climate_Change_and_Non-State_Armed_Groups_and_Policy_Interventions

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/nigeria/news/detailevents/en/c/1720792/#:~:text=Nigeria%20grapples%20with%20several%20factors,non%2Dfood%20commodities%20and%20services.>

⁵ The Guardian Nigeria. (2025, November 25). Rising insecurity may push 35m Nigerians into severe hunger in 2026, UN warns. <https://guardian.ng/news/rising-insecurity-may-push-35m-nigerians-into-severe-hunger-in-2026-un-warns/>



stems from compounded shocks, including insurgency and banditry in the northeast and northwest that disrupt farming and displace over 3.5 million people, alongside climate extremes like floods and droughts that ravage croplands, exacerbate staple price inflation amid 18–30% overall inflation, and naira devaluation⁶. Northern states such as Borno (2.9 million affected, including 15,000 at Catastrophe risk), Yobe, Adamawa, Sokoto, Zamfara, and Katsina bear the heaviest burden, marked by critical malnutrition rates signaling a decade-high emergency, even as looming donor aid cuts threaten 1.4 million internally displaced persons⁷.

Drivers of Food Insecurity

Nigeria's food insecurity crisis stems from multiple interconnected drivers, among others are:

- i. **Macroeconomic Shocks and Inflation:** 18–35% food inflation, naira devaluation, fuel subsidy removal, and soaring staple prices (rice, maize) erode purchasing power, even post-harvest, while oil dependency (80–90% of FX earnings) and a 50% debt-service-to-revenue ratio in 2025/26 constrain fiscal responses. Macroeconomic fragility compounds this, with 18–30% inflation, naira devaluation, and soaring fuel prices slashing household purchasing power, driving staple food costs beyond reach even post-harvest.
- ii. **Prolonged Insecurity and Displacement:** Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency in northeastern states (Borno, Yobe, Adamawa)

and banditry/kidnapping in the northwest (Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina) have displaced over 3.5 million since 2019, destroying infrastructure, blocking farmland access, looting food reserves, and triggering Emergency (Phase 4) to Catastrophe (Phase 5) hunger under the FAO's Cadre Harmonisé. Climate Extremes and Crop Losses: 2024 floods destroyed 1.5 million hectares of cropland, droughts stalled dry-season farming, and poor storage caused >40% post-harvest losses for perishables, amplifying food unavailability amid recurring shocks like 2022/2025 events.

- iv. **Farmer-Herder Clashes:** Escalating conflicts decimate livestock, block migration routes, reduce animal protein access, and heighten malnutrition in affected regions.
- v. **Oil Dependency Legacy:** Since the 1970s, overreliance on crude oil revenues side-lined agriculture, leaving rural subsistence farming vulnerable to shocks and limiting diversification.
- vi. **Inadequate Infrastructure and Funding:** Dilapidated roads, limited irrigation/storage, and severed supply chains inflate transport costs; federal agribusiness allocations linger at ~2% (vs. 10% CAADP target), while export bans distort markets and deter production.

⁶ World Food Programme. (2025, November 24). Increased insurgent attacks in Nigeria threaten regional stability and drive sharp spike in hunger. <https://www.wfp.org/news/increased-insurgent-attacks-nigeria-threaten-regional-stability-and-drive-sharp-spike-hunger>

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2025, August 18). FAO launches 2025 food and agriculture policy monitoring review for Nigeria. <https://www.fao.org/nigeria/news/detail-events/en/c/1741694/>



- vii. Demographic Pressures and Declining Aid: 3% annual population growth projects 141 million in poverty by end-2026; shrinking donor aid threatens 1.4 million IDPs, forcing reliance on wild foraging as WFP scales back amid rising seed/fertilizer costs.

Cross-Country Comparison

The brief further reviewed food security strategies adopted by the following selected countries:

Malawi: Malawi focuses on boosting agricultural productivity through the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP), later updated as the Affordable Input Program (AIP), which provides subsidized maize seeds and fertilizers to millions of farming households⁸. It complements this with Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) to ensure sustainable water use for agriculture and livelihoods⁹. To address poverty-related food insecurity, the Social Cash Transfer Program (SCTP) strengthens household resilience and improves diet quality¹⁰. Together, these strategies combine farm input support, resource management, and social protection to enhance national food and nutrition security.

Afghanistan: Afghanistan promotes agricultural recovery through the National Horticulture and Livestock Project (NHLP),

which improves access to fertilizers, modern machinery, credit, and watershed management¹¹. The Strategic Grain Reserve Project strengthens wheat storage systems and institutional capacity to stabilize food supply¹². The Kandahar Food Zone (KFZ) Program rehabilitates irrigation, promotes horticulture, and trains farmers to shift livelihoods away from opium cultivation¹³. These interventions integrate production support, infrastructure development, and market stabilization to reduce food vulnerability.

Ethiopia: Ethiopia strengthens food security through the Wheat Value Chain Development Project, which aims to significantly increase wheat production and farmer incomes. Funded by the African Development Bank, aims to increase wheat production by 4.2 million tons, with an average productivity of 4.2 tons per hectare¹⁴. Its Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) provides school meals and social protection to vulnerable households while supporting local agricultural markets¹⁵. The Home-Grown School Feeding and Health Program (HGSFHP) expands food assistance and links schools to local farmers, benefiting millions annually. Ethiopia's strategy blends agricultural productivity, social safety nets, and nutrition-sensitive interventions to break cycles of hunger and poverty.

⁸ Slim, F., Ibrahim, Z., Toufeili, I., Haddarah, A. & Rejeb, A. (2025). Assessing food insecurity strategies across twelve countries from different income levels: a sustainability and food systems perspective. *Discover Sustainability*, 6(689),

⁹ USAID. U.S. and Ethiopia launch new \$2.2 billion phase of the Productive Safety Net Program; 202

¹⁰ Brugh K, Angeles G, Mvula P, Tsoka M, Handa S. Impacts of the Malawi social cash transfer program on household food

and nutrition security. *Food Policy*. 2018;76:19–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2017.11.002>.

¹¹ Abdul Jabar AFJI. An overview on impacts of agriculture—horticulture sub sector in Afghanistan's economy. *Sci J Impact Factor*. 2021;2(5): Article 5

¹² 115. World Bank Group. 2017. Afghanistan—Strategic Grain Reserve Project (Project Appraisal Document No. PAD2302; Issue PAD2302).

¹³ USAID. Kandahar food zone program (KFZ); 2019.

¹⁴ USAID. Kandahar Food Zone Program (KFZ); 2019.

¹⁵ Ibid.



India: India enhances food security by modernizing agricultural markets through the e-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), which promotes transparent online trading and fair pricing for farmers¹⁶. The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) offers comprehensive crop insurance to protect farmers against climate-related losses¹⁷. On the nutrition front, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) provides daily cooked meals to millions of schoolchildren to improve attendance and health outcomes. India's approach integrates market reform, risk mitigation, and large-scale school feeding to secure both farmer income and child nutrition.

Lebanon: Lebanon strengthens its agricultural sector through the Agri-Plus program, which supports exports, improves product quality, and enhances marketing standards. The National Agriculture Strategy (2020–2025) provides a recovery framework for the agrifood sector amid economic shocks. To stabilize staple food access, the Wheat Subsidy Program supported by international financing ensures wheat imports and affordable bread for vulnerable populations. These measures combine sectoral reform, trade support, and food price stabilization to address food insecurity.

Maldives, Brazil, and China (Upper-Middle-Income Countries): The Maldives emphasizes sustainable fisheries management, agribusiness training, gender

inclusion, and improved agricultural financing. Brazil integrates social protection and food systems through Bolsa Família, the Food Acquisition Program (PAA), and the National School Food Program (PNAE), linking family farmers to school feeding schemes. China combines biofortification initiatives like zinc-enriched potatoes, ecological restoration through the Returning Farmland to Forest Program (RFFP), price support mechanisms, and the Healthy China Action Plan to promote sustainable production and better nutrition. Collectively, these countries employ technological innovation, market incentives, and nutrition-sensitive programs to strengthen food systems.

Canada, Germany, and UAE (High-Income Countries): Canada prioritizes innovation through the Living Laboratories Initiative, clean agricultural technologies, sustainable fisheries frameworks, and targeted nutrition programs such as Nutrition North Canada. Germany advances smart farming, the Farm-to-Fork Strategy, sustainable arable farming policies, and consumer-focused initiatives like Nutri-Score labeling to encourage healthier diets. The UAE promotes food security through sustainable agriculture investments such as the Ziraai Initiative and Wheat Farm Project, alongside nutrition and food redistribution programs like the UAE Food Bank. These high-income countries leverage technological innovation, environmental

¹⁶ Meena GL, Burark SS, Singh H, Sharma L. Electronic-National Agricultural Market (e-NAM): initiative towards doubling the farmers' income in India found. *Int Arch Appl Sci Technol*. 2019;10(2): Article 2.

¹⁷ Rai R. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana: An assessment of India's crop insurance scheme. 2019. Orfonline.Org. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/pradhan-mantri-fasal-bima-yojana-an-assessment-of-india-s-crop-insurance-scheme>



sustainability, and structured nutrition policies to ensure resilient and sustainable food systems.

Lessons Learn

- i. *Adopt an Integrated Food Security Framework that combines production + social protection + nutrition:* Nigeria should integrate agricultural productivity programs with social protection and nutrition interventions to achieve holistic food security. Coordinating farm support, school feeding, and cash transfer policies within a unified framework would improve farmer incomes, nutrition outcomes, and overall policy effectiveness.
- ii. *Strengthen Market Systems, Risk Management, and Strategic Reserves:* Transparent markets, crop insurance, and strategic grain reserves are critical for managing food shocks and stabilizing prices. Nigeria should modernize agricultural markets, expand insurance coverage, and strengthen storage and logistics systems to enhance resilience and reduce losses.
- iii. *Invest in Sustainable Innovation and Climate-Resilient Agriculture:* Technological innovation and environmentally sustainable practices are essential for long-term food security. Nigeria should scale up sustainable climate-smart agriculture, irrigation, mechanization, and inclusive agribusiness development to build a resilient and future-ready food system.

Areas for Legislative Intervention

The following measures are recommended:

- The National Assembly (NASS) may wish to increase allocations for agricultural development, nutrition initiatives, and social protection

schemes in the national budget. This bolsters critical frameworks such as the National Multi-Sectoral Plan for Food and Nutrition (NMPFAN), which requires over ₦262 billion to achieve its objectives.

- Legislators may consider strengthen laws guiding food production, processing, labeling, safety standards, hygiene practices, and quality controls to mitigate adulteration and contamination. These measures would ensure broad access to nutritious foods and strengthen public health protections nationwide.
- Legislators can adopt laws mandating integrated supervision of nutrition and food security initiatives across ministries, mitigating silos in Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). Simultaneously, institute subnational nutrition offices and architectures for synchronized multi-sectoral approaches.
- NASS may wish to provide legal protections for farmers confronting insurgencies, ethnic disputes, and soaring input expenses, especially in precarious areas such as Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states. Strategies may encompass farmland defense funding and scrutiny of agricultural initiative shortfalls.
- NASS may wish to amend agricultural laws to heighten output, aid smallholder farmers, and advance climate-resilient methods despite insecurity and environmental shifts. This entails promoting tech integration through frameworks like



the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP) 2022–2027.

- NASS should mandate the creation of systematic data collection and monitoring frameworks to track progress regarding farming activities, outputs, and challenges, supporting evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

By implementing these recommendations, legislators can provide a strong framework to expand food, improve year-round food availability, and bolster resilience against climate variability and economic challenges.

5. Conclusion

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Nigeria's escalating food insecurity demands immediate and decisive legislative intervention to safeguard national stability and human dignity. By enacting robust policies for agricultural modernization, climate-resilient farming, equitable resource distribution, and robust oversight mechanisms, the National Assembly can transform this crisis into an opportunity for sustainable prosperity. The time for rhetoric has passed; lawmakers must act with urgency and unity to feed the nation, fortify its future, and uphold the constitutional mandate to promote welfare for all Nigerians.