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Closing the Gender Gap in Nigeria's Agriculture Sector

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Executive Summary

The agriculture sector plays a crucial role in the Nigerian economy, in terms of its contribution to GDP, employment, household income and poverty alleviation. However, statistics have shown that the sector's performance continues to decline over the years. The decline in the sector's performance among other factors is partly attributable to the unequal access by male and female farmers to farm inputs and resources, such as land, credit facilities, assets, information and extension services. While effort had been made by the government to improve the sector's productivity through massive investments, other factors limiting the performance of the sector include the out-dated National Gender Policy of 2006 which does not reflect current issues on gender and development, especially in line with the SDGs.

The experiences of Malawi, Uganda and Rwanda showed that the Nigerian government needs to take concerted efforts to support women farmers, especially in the area of access to agricultural resources. Statistics indicate that Rwanda, Uganda and Malawi performed better than Nigeria in gender equality. This is based on the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Gender Gap Index, which ranked Rwanda (9th out of 153 countries), Uganda (65th), Malawi (116th) and Nigeria (128th). Hence, the need for an appropriate institutional and clear legal framework, which is currently lacking in Nigeria, to mainstream gender issues in overall government's agricultural policies, projects and programmes. Based on the analysis in this brief, the following recommendations are suggested to assist in closing the gender gap and ultimately enhance the performance of the sector:

- i. Sections 3 and 6 of the National Agricultural Land Development Authority Act may be amended to ensure equal access to agricultural land for men and women.



- ii. The National Assembly may also wish to amend the Land Use Act to ensure that Governors take into consideration gender and other inclusivity issues in the exercise of the powers granted under the Act.
- iii. The 2006 National Gender Policy is out-dated and needs to be revised in the light of local considerations and international development commitments, especially the SDGs. Emerging issues like climate change and inclusive livelihood mechanisms should be incorporated into the policy.
- iv. The National Assembly should engage with the executive, especially the Ministries of Agriculture and Women Affairs, and civil society organisations to ensure gender issues are mainstreamed into government agricultural programmes, projects and policies.
- v. While some other countries like Rwanda have a National Gender Commission to promote gender causes, the need for the streamlining of government agencies in Nigeria makes this an unviable option. However, the capacities of existing institutional frameworks like the Ministry of Women Affairs should be enhanced to coordinate and implement the revised and updated National Gender Policy.

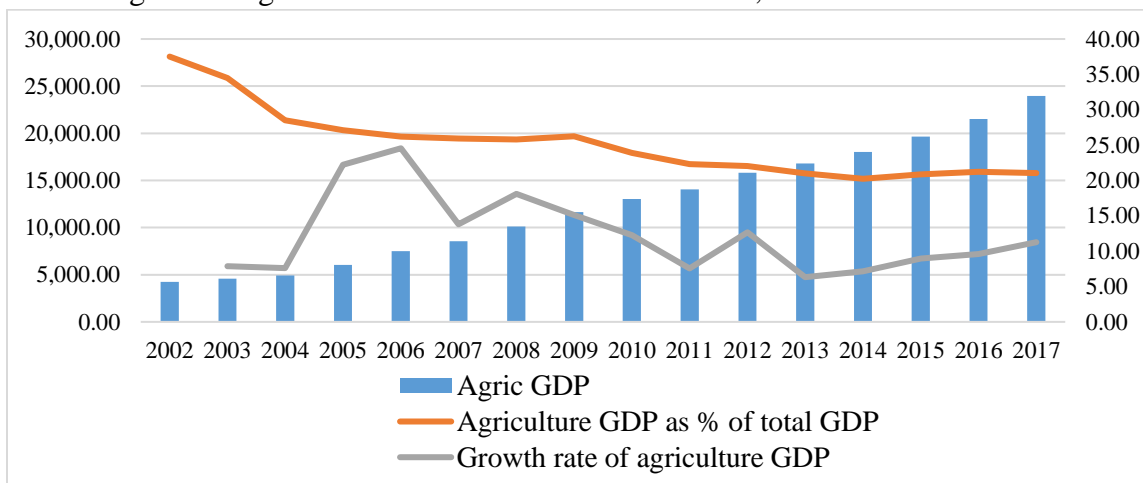
1.0 Background

The agriculture sector plays a crucial role in the Nigerian economy, in terms of its contribution to GDP, employment, household income and poverty alleviation. Although the GDP of the sector has increased from ₦1,508 billion in 2002 to ₦23,952 billion in 2017 (see Figure 1), its contribution to total GDP has continued to decline in recent years. The sector contributed 37.52% of total GDP in 2002, but this has fallen to 21.66% in 2019. In addition, the sector's contribution to export has remained very low at 2% in recent years¹. The consequences of declining agricultural productivity is dire. Agricultural production may be unable to match population growth, thereby creating the possibility of a food security crisis and undermining the attainment of the hunger and poverty-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹ NBS, 2019. National Bureau of Statistics Annual Report. Abuja, Nigeria.



Figure 1 : Agriculture GDP and share in total GDP, 2002-2017



Source: Data obtained from CBN Statistical Bulletin

The agricultural sector in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges and constraints such as access to farm inputs, finance, government neglect, lack of mechanization and more recently, climate change and farmers-herders’ conflicts. However, an often ignored cause of the decline in the performance of the agriculture sector is the gender gap in the sector. According to data from the General Household Survey conducted by the World Bank and the National Bureau of Statistics, about 57% of all Nigerian households participates in agriculture, including 60% of male-headed households and 48% of female-headed households². But there is a 18.6% (gender) productivity gap between male and female farmers in Nigeria³. That is, average female-managed agricultural lands are 18.6% less productive than their male counterparts. The study further noted that closing the gender productivity gap will result in 2.8% production gains, higher monthly household

² Oseni, G., Goldstein, M. and Utah, A. (2013). Gender dimensions in Nigerian agriculture. Policy Brief Issue 6 (October), Africa Region Gender Practice, the World Bank Group, Washington, DC.

³ Mukasa, A.N and A.O. Salami (2016), “Gender productivity differentials among smallholder farmers in Africa: A cross-country comparison”, Working Paper Series No.231, African Development Bank, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.



consumption by 2.9%, and raise about 1.2% of households with female-managed lands out of poverty.

2.0 Causes of the Gender Gap in Agriculture

The gender productivity gap in Nigeria’s agriculture sector is attributable to unequal access to farm inputs and resources, such as land, credit facilities, assets, information and extension services. A report by Sahel Capital⁴ found that Nigerian women farmers receive less than 10% of the credit offered to small-scale farmers and are unable to access agricultural inputs like high-yield seedlings and fertilizers owing to their high prices. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), in its latest National Gender Policy in Agriculture report⁵, noted that “although women represent between 60 and 79% of Nigeria’s rural labour force, males are five times more likely to own land than females”. Gender inequality is also reflected in access to other key agricultural inputs as shown in Table 1 below. The enormity of the unequal access of men and women to agricultural land and other resources limits women’s efforts to exploit land-based livelihood strategies, and undermine overall inclusive socio-economic development.

Table 1: Distribution of key agricultural inputs, by gender of household heads (2010)

Access indicators	Female-headed households	Male-headed households
Distribution of farm household	11.8	88.2
Average land owned	0.29	0.91
Inorganic fertilizer	15.9	44.4
Organic fertilizer	1.5	5.6
Fertilizer free	0.9	2.9
Pesticides/Herbicides	9.3	37.2
Irrigation	1.8	4.3
Animal traction	2.0	30.0
Machines	18.9	24.6
Tractors	0.9	6.1

Source: National Bureau of Statistics;

Note: All figures are in %, except average land owned which is in hectares.

⁴ Sahel Capital (Mauritius) Limited (2014). “The role of women in Nigerian agriculture”. Sahel Capital Partners & Advisory Limited. Volume 7

⁵ FMARD (2019). National Gender Policy in Agriculture. Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Abuja, Nigeria.



On a broader note, the National Gender Policy of 2006 is out-of-date and does not reflect current issues on gender and development, especially in line with the SDGs. One of the gender equality targets of the SDGs is to give women equal rights to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other form of resources. However, emerging issues related to gender mainstreaming in socio-economic and environmental policies are not captured in the National Gender Policy of 2006. At the current trend, Nigeria is unlikely to meet the gender targets in the SDGs. The Land Use Act and the Agricultural Land Development Authority Act do not mainstream gender into access to land in Nigeria. Unlike Rwanda with a National Gender Commission Act, gender mainstreaming in government policies, projects and programmes are not deeply rooted in Nigeria. While there is an existing National Gender Policy in Agriculture (NGPA) that seeks to complement existing policies in the agricultural sector, there is limited synergy with other policies and existing laws, thereby making it difficult to implement the policy.

3.0 Experience of Other Countries in Closing the Gender Gap in Agriculture

Some countries in Africa have introduced measures to address the problem of unequal access to agricultural resources in particular, and gender gap in agriculture productivity in general. Lessons from these countries can provide a guide for Nigeria on what to do to close the gender gap in access to agricultural resources and enhance the productivity of women farmers in Nigeria.

Table 2: Selected Countries' Experiences

Country	Measures adopted to combat gender inequality in the agriculture sector
Malawi	Malawi implemented gender responsive participatory approaches to capture female needs and priorities. Support for groups like the Women Farmer Groups have led to improvement in women's participation and learning in agricultural development initiatives. The government also introduced gender appropriate bicycles and motorbikes to provide transportation for women extension officers.
Uganda	In 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries (MAAIF) established a Climate Change Task Force for the agricultural sector, which carries out situational analysis, stakeholder analysis and consultations with central and local government stakeholders to identify climate change impacts and proposed



	<p>ways of addressing them in the agricultural sector. The Task Force identified and formulated thematic areas to address the gender gaps and facilitate the development and implementation of a gender-responsive agriculture policies. There were also efforts to increase the number of women extension agents, with support from international organisations.</p>
Rwanda	<p>The government enacted the National Gender Commission Act to support gender mainstreaming in all government ministries. It also implemented laws governing land that guarantees equal rights on land access, ownership and utilization for both male and female. Land are registered in the names of both husband and wife, while children are included as legal beneficiaries. A Gender Monitoring Office was also established to effectively monitor gender mainstreaming and upholds gender accountability for inclusive sustainable development. Rwanda is one of the best performing countries in the world in terms of gender equality, and these measures may have partly contributed to this feat.</p>

Source: Author's compilation

The review of selected country experiences showed that the Nigerian government needs to take concerted efforts to support women farmers, especially in the areas of access to agricultural resources. Rwanda (9th out of 153 countries), Uganda (65th) and Malawi (116th) performed better than Nigeria (128th) in the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Gender Gap Index. Although there is no empirical evidence to suggest that there is a causal link between the adopted measures and the gender performance, the data is indicative of a positive correlation. While there are no one-size-fit-all approach, an appropriate institutional and clear legal framework, which is currently lacking in Nigeria, is required to mainstream gender issues in overall government policies, projects and programmes. The experiences of these countries underscore the need to give special attention to the peculiar challenges women farmers face.



4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Widening gender gap in agriculture sector is currently a major factor undermining agricultural sector performance. Unchecked, this has the possibility of creating a food security crisis, and undercutting government's effort to reduce poverty. Based on the analysis in this brief, the following recommendations are suggested to close the gender gap and ultimately enhance the performance of the sector:

- i. Sections 3 and 6 of the National Agricultural Land Development Authority Act may be amended to ensure equal access to agricultural land for men and women
- ii. The National Assembly may also wish to amend the Land Use Act to ensure that Governors take into consideration gender and other inclusivity issues in the exercise of the powers granted under the Act.
- iii. The 2006 National Gender Policy is out-dated and needs to be revised in the light of local considerations and international development commitments, especially the SDGs. Emerging issues like climate change and inclusive livelihood mechanisms should be incorporated into the policy.
- iv. The National Assembly should engage with the executive, especially the Ministries of Agriculture and Women Affairs, and civil society organisations to ensure gender issues are mainstreamed into government agricultural programmes, projects and policies.
- v. While some other countries like Rwanda have a National Gender Commission to promote gender causes, the need for the streamlining of government agencies in Nigeria makes this an unviable option. However, the capacities of existing institutional frameworks like the Ministry of Women Affairs should be enhanced to coordinate and implement the revised and updated National Gender Policy.

