

Songhai Farm Initiative and Agricultural Development in Rivers State

Dagogo, Doctor Farah

Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumini, Port Harcourt
doctordagogo5@gmail.com

Abstract: This work examines Songhai initiative farm and agricultural development in Rivers State. The Songhai farm, since its inception in Rivers State, has invested in a rural transformation strategy in agriculture which was referred to as green rural agro-revolution. It was a well-established agricultural initiative for training, production, processing, research and development centre for sustainable agriculture that takes a holistic approach to linking producers locally to meet consumers at home and abroad in market quantity. The Songhai initiative farm trades only in organic products and enforces its own internal standards for organic agriculture through its training programme and through its internal quality control system for the traceability of its products. However, this lofty agricultural initiative went into extinction due mainly to irrational conception of the benefits of such engagement. To address the issues herein, we employed the Rational Choice Theory so much espoused by Mancur Olson with its basic assumption that rational choice indicates that objectives, whether selfish or unselfish, should be pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achievable results. A sample size of 200 respondents was used for the study with a specific target on four (4) local government areas that share boundary with Bunu Tai, which is the location of the farm. Finding shows that if such farming initiative like Songhai farm were present before the discovery of oil, the culture of agriculture could not have been so relegated as it is today. In this regard the work recommended among others things that Songhai initiative farm be sited in all the local government areas of Rivers State because of its benefits.

Keywords: Songhai, Development, Agriculture, Initiative.

I. Introduction

Agriculture as the life blood of any nation holds its very importance in Nigeria and its subordinate States. In Rivers State, agriculture is an important branch of the economy. Indeed, it represents the ideal livelihood source and potential means of income in most rural communities of the state and contributes to the reduction of rural-urban migration. This sector in Rivers State bureaucratic organ is presided over by the ministry of agriculture through which the Songhai Rivers Initiative was anchored. Such farming initiative combines livestock, aquaculture and agro tourism and other purposes like research, training, production, demonstration as well as development of sustainable agricultural practices. Terms of agric and agro base practices, with special focus on the rural areas and urban slums in Rivers State was the main idea. This Songhai farming scheme was sighted at Bunuin Tai Local Government Area of the State.

Songhai Rivers Initiative farm has different unit functions execution referred entirely to as unit of a unique feature. They include all of the following; Administrative center and hospitality, technology and industrial complex, production, cow and goat farm, concrete fish ponds, earth pond, fish hatchery, artificial lake, greenhouses and earthworms, broiler production, cassava processing unit , feed mill, rice mill machinery production, brick production barn, poultry Free

pasture, banana farm, pineapple orchard, cassava and moringa planting units, coconut production unit, animal feed, mango for chips, juice, orange for juice and inputs for animal processing and snail production unit (Okoye, 2010), p. 10).

Records prove that the emergence of Songhai Initiative farm in Rivers State led to the production of yam, cassava, cocoyam, maize, rice and beans in marketable quantity for the entire state. The federal ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in a sample survey carried out in 2015 estimated that about 40% of the rural farmers in Rivers State and its inhabitants were benefiting from the Songhai initiative farm to boost their local farming by means of raw materials and other proceeds (Rivers State Ministry of Agriculture, 2015).

Apparently, Songhai's scheme is to impose mass agricultural production, research and development of agricultural practices and their sustainability, so their model seeks to develop new approaches or flights and the agricultural organization to rely compulsively or largely on observations and composites associated with topical aesthetic sense, dependent subjective fulfillment and the vibrant communities of business and research institutions (Okoye, 2010, p. 14). The consequences here have been a rich, waste-free integrated agricultural model that promotes rural growth through training, technological adaptation, and a strong business and marketing strategy.

Statement of the Problem

The pursuit for food security is dependent on self-reliance through sustainable farming which influences the involvement of many countries, both developed and developing, in farming schemes of different sorts. Such concerted efforts in agro-business and farming scheme have been very conspicuous in some countries of Africa today. We have examples of such schemes in countries and areas like the Gezira farming scheme in Sudan, the Alto Benin scheme of Bolivia, Uganda Nyakashaka farming scheme, the Songhai farm of Binin Republic, replicated in some areas in Nigeria including Bunu, Tai, Rivers State and the Western and Eastern Nigeria farming scheme to mention a few (Ojoko, 2004, p. 33). However, it is a categorical statement that the initial euphoria that welcomed this scheme in Rivers State was later dampened because this scheme was not able to fulfil its objectives. Somehow, the Songhai farm, Binin Republic (an initiative replicated in Rivers State) seem to be a success story and the Rivers State government sent some youths to learn the art of farming there (Igbanibo, 2012).

In his own assertion, Anowor (2010) avers that:

In partnership with Songhai international, Porto-Novo, Republic of Binin, as technical partners, its major objective and adaptable technologies in agriculture make people socio-economically viable, self-reliant and help to change the perception that agriculture is an occupation of the poor.

Consequently, the Songhai Rivers Initiative, in order to promote values and inculcate discipline of agro-farming amongst youths, involved about 105 youths across the 23 local government areas of Rivers State. These youths were trained for 18 months in various specialized agro-farming at the Songhai Headquarters at Porto-Novo, Binin Republic. Accordingly, 50 of them were absorbed after the training into the centre as junior animators, basically to acquire knowledge that will empower them to start their own agro-business in their respective localities, with the support of the centre (Anowor, 2021, p. 17).

With the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) as its parent organisation, the Songhai Rivers Initiative (SRI) became the nerve centre of an agricultural development programme. Considering that over 70 percent of farmland in Rivers State is less than 2 hectares, the Songhai Rivers Initiative focuses on transforming subsistence farmers into active commercial entrepreneurs and generating sustainable income (Okoye, 2010, p. 8). Correspondingly, this farming scheme was not a stand-alone deal, but rather operates within a cluster industry, which is directly linked to 6 regional farms through the application of innovation. Again, it has an agreement with the Songhai International Centre in Porto-Novo, the terms of which agreement expressly state that:

The Songhai International will run the Songhai Rivers Initiative (SRI) for five years. Within this period under review, they will also employ appropriate experts and professionals from Rivers State, who are going to work behind them and understudy them, so that by the time they are leaving in five years, that culture has permeated the entire way in which work is done in Songhai Rivers (Peple, 2012).

Regardless of this brilliant and calculated effort by the administration of former Governor Chibuike Rotimi Ameachi to propagate agriculture and food security in Rivers State, the lofty idea was thrown away by the successive regime.

Indeed, the Songhai Rivers Initiative, like every other agricultural facility, scheme or programme was not subject to scrutiny to ascertain whether its capital investment and the result of its activities and engagement in content so far are in consonance with its philosophy and objectives before its abandonment.

Subsequence to the context or circumstance of these problems presented herein, the research chooses to provide answers to the following pertinent questions: (i) what positive influence has the philosophy and objective of Songhai Farm Initiative had on agricultural production and distribution of food stuffs in Rivers State? (ii) What impact has the scheme on economic empowerment of the people? (iii) Has the farming scheme been able to sustain the test of time in terms of poverty alleviation?

Objectives of the study

The general aim of this study is to examine the Songhai Farm Initiative and agricultural development in Rivers State. The specific objectives arising from our stated problems would be:

- i. To investigate the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm initiative on agricultural production and distribution in Rivers State.
- ii. To ascertain the impact of the farming scheme on economic empowerment of the people.
- iii. To examine its self-sustainability in terms of poverty alleviation.

Research Questions

1. What positive influence has the philosophy and objective of Songhai Rivers Initiative on agricultural production, and distribution of food studs in Rivers State?
2. What impact has the scheme on empowerment of the people and economic development?
3. Has the farming scheme able to sustain the test of time in terms of poverty alleviation?

Hypothesis

The following statement guided this research:

- i. The tendency of the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm to improve on agricultural production is consequential to food security.
- ii. The more the people are engaged in functional farming scheme the greater the possibility of eliminating economic decay.
- iii. The sustainability of any agricultural or farming scheme is dependent up on the character of the state.

II Literature Review

Songhai Farm Initiative

If we are to make progress on both economic needs and human demands, African's food production need to be at least twice what it is now, by the middle of the 21st century drastically. Our inability to meet up with any genuine increase will sincerely retard economic prominence and add to our generation's uncomfortable degree of poverty, hunger, food-insecurity and disease. Given this fact, every effort of the rich and the poor, government and non-governmental

organizations, and all in between should endeavour to show interest in the idea of the continued improvement and expansion of food production within Africa, in such manner that will improve our natural resources foundation (Uphoot, 2002, p. 25). As though maintaining enough food provision is not a guarantee to secure food security and economic successfulness, yet it is a necessary tool. It is very fundamental that enviable attention be given to agro-business and farming schemes in a holistic manner given an ideological independence, in order to forestall the futuristic danger.

Doubling food production will be a difficult task, with at least one-third less land available per capital by 2050, even with reduced rates of population growth. The supplies of water available for agriculture will probably be reduced even more, and neither crops nor livestock can survive without adequate water (Uphoff, 2020, p. 30).

All through the period of advancement of agricultural extension in Nigeria, its main objective include experimental production of export crops, primarily for the British market – by the central department of agriculture. His central department, in order to complement such ideas, pursued a policy aimed at improving the quality of the produce, introducing agricultural education and establishing a rudimentary extension services to accommodate the youth and women as at then (Ojoko, 2004, p. 10). In contemporary Nigeria, for instance, the Songhai International (an independent conception of a Nigerian), the brolly for Songhai farms in collaboration with other Songhai farms around different countries of Africa undertake a curriculum, contrived as an accelerator for a wider, multiple partnership programme to advance opportunities for the youth, women and men alike in order to inculcate agri-business entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills embedded in disciplined creation of wealth and investments in commercially workable agri-business in designed West African States (Okoye, 2010). The general concern is yet to generate adequate opportunities and advancement in agricultural schemes as an important aspect that affects the very essence of life technologically.

Agriculture has been one of the progressive sectors of the world economy in technological terms. However, many millions of farmers, indeed the majority worldwide have not been able to take advantage of these new opportunities, because of cost and other constraints. In some areas, indeed new technologies have led to displacement and increased poverty for rural households (Uphodd, 2002, p. 23).

According to Ojoko (2004, p. 10), Shell rural community development in its agricultural schemes aim directly at improving the lot of small farmers, who make up 70 percent (%) of the population in Nigeria and contribute between 80-90 percent of the nation's food production. The objective basically is to help farmers and encourage non-farmers to participate and grow from subsistence to a commercial level of farming, thereby improving their level of income, eliminate hunger, poverty and criminality amongst youths, and yet no emphasis on the new technological model. Creating an alternative to what could be regarded as unrealistic approach by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), the Songhai model was introduced in Nigeria. In 2002, Songhai model centres were established in Amukpe, Delta State; in 2010, Songhai model centres were established in Bunu Tai, Rivers State, and Adani, Enugu. Nigeria gained the lead in Songhai model replication. Several Nigerian states, including Enugu (Heneke), Lagos (Avia), Katsina (Dutsinma, Sabke, and Maruwa), Cross River (Abi), and Ebonyi (Abakaliki), applied the Songhai model in 2011 and 2012 (Okoye, 2010, p. 28).

Songhai international, based on its general philosophy and objectives, is an extension space that produces functional individuals who function essentially in line with the contemporary advancement in agro-farming and businesses to create a sustainable agriculture that will become a weapon of mass construction, food sufficiency, and poverty alleviation (Anowor, 2010, p. 9).

Given the foregoing realities, literature of the genuine approaches to contemporary agricultural advancement geared towards food security, poverty alleviation and increased productivity in Nigeria generally and Rivers State in particular, this study is specifically designed to critically examined the philosophy and objective of Songhai Rivers Initiative (SRI) on agro-farming and

its intermittent result in production and distribution.

Agricultural Development

Some scholars have worked on the concept of agricultural development. According to Aziegbe (1989, p. 45), the meaning of agricultural development has evolved over time in line with the constant meaning of "development". The meaning of development has evolved from its former narrow conceptualization of economic growth expressed in terms of economic aggregate GNP to a more boring conceptualization as a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth. , reducing inequality (among) the sexes and eradicating absolute poverty.

Agricultural development is confused with rural transformation. They are not the same thing, because while "transformation" implies a change in form, appearance, nature, condition, or character, "development" implies gradual growth or advancement through progressive change, while both mean something that change, development means change with speed and direction.

Considering the nature of development, a recent UNDP study characterises agricultural development as “a process of socio-economic change, involving the transformation of agrarian society in order to reach capacities and need of the people”. Obioha (2003, p. 15) regrets that the disparate meaning of agricultural development has given rise to efforts to articulate ways of establishing priorities and time phasing between and among both productive and social service activities. These are further complicated by problems arising from financial manpower and institutional resources in rural agricultural development. We can therefore define rural agricultural development as “a broad based reorganization and mobilization of the rural masses which include women so as to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with changes consequent upon this” (Nwabara, 1995, p. 74).

This definition has three important features:

- (1) Improving the living standards of the subsistence population involves the mobilization and allocation of resources so as to reach desirable balance overtime between the welfare and productive services available to the rural subsistence population.
- (2) Mass participation requires that resources be allocated to low income regions and classes and the productive services actually reach them
- (3) Making the process self-sustaining requires development of appropriate skills and implementing capacity and the presence of institutions at the regional and national levels to ensure effective of existing resource and to ensure the effective mobilization of additional financial and human resources for continued development of subsistence sector. Self-sustenance means involving, not reaching the rural people through development programmes.

According to William (1978, p. 72), a government or international organisation could engage in private or public agricultural development. It is distinct from community-based development activities, which are incorrectly referred to as community development. Community development should complement agricultural growth, not replace it, in cases where the government is fulfilling its expected role. Agricultural development is a process of planned improvements for which one or the other strategy is taken to better or transform the lot of the populace. Rural agricultural development is a method for guaranteeing that the poorest segment of the population receives a portion of the benefits of economic activity. It is the means through which the provision of social services to rural populations should be integrated with the development of economic growth, which is not just an economic issue. It is more accurately characterised as a social phenomena with cultural, political, and economic dimensions (Bello, 1986, p. 44). In actuality, agricultural development is the most practical and long-overdue means of delivering government infrastructure and services to the doorsteps of Nigeria's dense rural population.

III Theoretical Framework

The paper employ the Rational Choice Theory of Mancur Olson. Generally, it can be presumed that rational choice theory started in the 19th century, and even beyond. However, we decided to begin with Mancur Olson and his major work as postulated in Akikibofori (2018). “The entire logic of collective action”, based on Olson’s line of argument is replicated on the fact that rational behaviour is not certainly selfish or unselfish. Here “Rational” distinctly indicates that objectives, whether selfish or unselfish should be pursued by means that are efficient and effective for achievable results (Olson, 1965, Akikibofori, 2018). For instance, it is essential to bear in mind that all human choice according to Hardin (1982) is a dynamic process. Hence, humans take time to pull some choices through, thus the condition governing them, might change over time. Basically, a choice often gives room to another that rationally enforces growth. Africa, very rich in agricultural potential, continues to import food to feed its people as a result of rational choice defects. Rural area and producers are constantly neglected and over exploited. Food transitional corporations in alliance with indigenous elites have initiated a dependent food policy which has mortgaged political stability (Ihonvbere, 1989). The rational choice approach of the people remains redundant to exploit the available resources to change these perceptions of Africa development in its entity.

Consequently, rational choice theories infer that humans are rational in nature and in that regard they need their entire actions on whatever they see as the greatest productive way to achieving their ambition. This rational nature of man is what is supposed to be employed in the Songhai Farm Initiative for the best of results to be achieved to the benefit of all and sundry in Rivers State and Nigeria at large in terms of food security.

IV Methodology

The paper adopted both case study and descriptive design. The use of case study enabled the researcher to examine the differences cases of farms initiative in Africa and particularly in Nigeria while the use of descriptive design helped the researcher to sample the opinion of the respondents on the successes and challenges of various farm initiatives in Nigeria and Africa in general.

Area of Study

The study area of this work is Songhai farm and the four (4) Local Government Area of Eleme, Oyigbo, Gokhana, and Khana located around Bunu community in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State. This farm has in it an administrative centre, a few centres for production, some stables where horses are kept both for sale and tourism, a store that has all sorts of things to buy, including fresh juice, clay pots, water filters and chicken. The farm is 3.14 square kilometres in length and breadth, about 20 times the size of Songhai model in Binin Republic. As an integrated farm it combines livestock, arable farming, fisheries, snail farming, piggery and poultry.

Population of the Study

The study population is 184,678 that consists of men and women, youths (boys and girls) including those from Tai the immediate local government area and the four surrounding Local Government Areas, which are Eleme, Khana, Gokhana and Oyibgo (National Population Commission, 2016).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The random sampling technique was used in this study. The sample is 200 respondents drawn from different categories of persons including staff of Songhai farm through a random sampling technique. In this regard, sampling was limited to staff of Songhai farm, farmers (including: men, women, youths), taking into consideration the host community and the surrounding Local Government Areas of Eleme, Khana, Gokhana and Oyigbo.

Instrumentation

The paper developed and administered a ten-item structured five-point questionnaire to collect data, on respondents independent perception of the positive and negative influence and relationship between the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm in Rivers State and its

production, distribution, poverty alleviation and socio-economic development.

In mode of administration, who are adequately exposed (including the youths) respondents were served each with a copy of the questionnaire and given some time to respond in writing while respondents who are not adequately exposed were subjected to interview with the instrument questions and each of their responses were filled on their behalf. Entirely all the administered questionnaires were retrieved as the researcher did a proper follow-up of the respondents to ensure that the questionnaire were comprehensively retrieved given the sensitive and significant nature of this study.

Reliability and Validity of Instrument

Our questionnaire reliability was detected by original examination apart from the ones exploited for the study. Here, the popular Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient was established to be 0.77. In correspondence with the outcome, the instrument was face-validated by two agronomist and two sociologist in addition to it believable esteem of 3.5 on the FOG Legibility Index Number (Maxwell, 2004, p, 67).

Methods of Data Analysis

The respondents' independent perception of the positive and negative influence and relationship between the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm in Rivers State and its production, distribution, poverty alleviation and crime reduction were computed by simple percentage employing the equation below: $\text{Table 1: \% = positive response} = (\text{strongly agree} + \text{agree})/200 \times 100\%$ $\text{Negative Response} = (\text{strongly disagree} + \text{disagree})/200 \times 100$ chi-square (χ^2) statistical analysis was used to examine the connection between the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm and its outcome in terms of production, distribution, poverty alleviation and crime reduction.

V Data Presentation

Before exploring the research questions at this stage of the study, it will be proper to present in a tabular form the outcome of some interviews with some members of staff of the Songhai Farm.

Table 1: Benefits of Rivers State Songhai Initiative from in-depth interviews with Songhai management:

Benefits	Number of Mentions
Creates jobs	9
Community benefits	7
Builds capacity or skills	6
Creates strong work culture	5
Addresses environmental degradation, reduces waste	3
Develops entrepreneurs	3
Develops infrastructure, rural areas	3
Improves regional economy	3
Improves the perception of agriculture as employment	3
Self-sustaining project	3
Builds market linkages	2
Empowers community	2
Garners government and community support	2
Reduces food costs	2
Builds awareness of food security	1
Provides research space	1

Source: Field Research, 2021

Table 2: Key Challenges of the Rivers Songhai Initiative from In-depth Interviews with Songhai Management:

Challenges	Number of Mentions
Issues with crops and farming methods (see subgroups of challenges below)	11
Crops not suitable to the environment	6
Crops not profitable	1
Lack of soil test	2
Outdated farming methods	2
Issues with management (see subgroups of challenges below)	9
Benin staff do not take suggestions from managers	3
Benin staff has culture clash with Nigerian staff	1
Benin staff not concerned with employee welfare	2
Bureaucratic bottlenecks	1
General management problems	1
Management is confused about bottom line	1
Project needs more time to develop	3
Security issues	3
Funding concerns	2
Underdeveloped tourism potential	2
High operating costs	1
Inadequate labour	1
Lack of government oversight	1
Needs auditing	1
Needs better prioritization	1
Needs more efficient marketing	1

Source: Field Research, 2021

From the two tables above, it is obvious that the Songhai Farm has its benefits and challenges. Ideally, what should be done is to increase the benefits potentials while there should be a control on the challenges for this farm to make progress to the benefit of the people of Rivers State and all other dependants on this project.

Now we have to move on to addressing the research questions put forth in the on-set of this study for proper analysis as presented below:

Research Question 1: What positive influence has the philosophy and objective of Songhai Rivers Initiative on agricultural production, and distribution of food studs in Rivers State? (Refer to table 1). From equation 1 and 2

$$\% \text{ positive response} = (90 + 100)/200 \times 100 = 95\%$$

$$\% \text{ negative response} = (5 + 3)/200 \times 100 = 4\%$$

$$\% \text{ undecided} = 2/200 \times 100 = 1\%$$

From the given result, it depicts that 95% of the total respondents sampled agreed that the philosophy and object of Songhai Rivers Initiative has influenced positively the agricultural production and distribution of food stuffs, in Rivers State. We have just 4% of the respondents disagreeing to the staff.

Research Question 2: What impact has the scheme on empowerment of the people and economic development? The analysis in table 1 which represent the research elicited response from the field clearly demonstrated that a high percentage of 95 (%) as against 4% maintained that the youths and women benefited enormously from the farm as both substantial ad-hoc and contract

workers. This is in tandem with the averment of one traditional ruler during our interview session in Bunu Tai:

Well I cannot criticize them now. But what is there is that they are doing fine with us, they were helping my boys, my women and other inhabitants here because we had to work with them and that opportunity helped seriously to empower the youth and eliminate petty crime and restiveness (Field work, 2021).

Research Question 3: Has the farming scheme able to sustain the test of time in terms of poverty alleviation? Again from the response of the structured questionnaire sampled on respondents, 95% supports the government while 4% are in disagreement. Meaning that, their perception of the relationship between the farm and poverty alleviation remains realistic. Hence, we concluded the data analysis by stating that out of the sampled respondents, an average of 58.8% strongly agreed, 35% agreed, 3.5% disagreed and 1.1% strongly disagreed, while 0.8% was undecided. However, wherein the calculated chi-square value of 547.5 is entirely greater than the calculated table value of 55.8 (at 36 degree of freedom, and 5% coefficient level), the null hypotheses is hereby rejected. Therefore, it goes to show that there is a statistical implication in association between the philosophy and objective of Songhai farms and the people in terms of production and distribution of food stuffs, poverty alleviation and empowerment and socio-economic development in Rivers State.

VI Discussion of Findings

Based on the respondents' response and the subsequent data analysis, it can be cited that the Songhai farm's philosophy and objectives has dramatically influenced agricultural proceeds, empowerment of the people, their socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. A statistical implication as shown in table 1 has a correlation between the philosophy and objective of Songhai farm in Rivers State. Whereas the philosophy states that: the Songhai farm will serve as an extension space that produces functional individuals who function to create a sustainable agriculture that will become a weapon of mass construction for food sufficiency, and poverty alleviation (Anowor, 2010, p. 26), the objectives of Songhai farms include:

- i. Develop a programme that interconnects agriculture with industry and commerce.
- ii. To cultivate human capabilities to empower people and groups.
- iii. To widen the state's socioeconomic spectrum and contribute to economic growth via aggressive production, processing, and selling of agricultural goods and associated services.
- iv. Maximize commercial agriculture and agricultural tourism in the state of Rivers.
 - v. To halt the growing trend of rural-to-urban migration among high school graduates and
 - vi. To expand food production for both domestic use and export (Anowor, 2010, p. 26).

From the philosophy and objectives stated herein, we could deduce that the perception of Songhai Rivers Initiative is similar to an idea that preoccupies the minds and holds the attention with the methods that brought us the Green Revolution and imposed some reserved considerations for opportunities that increased food supply as at then. For instance, if the skills evolved by Songhai were present before the discovery of oil, we could not have relegated agriculture to the background as we have regrettably done today.

Implication of the Findings

Globally, the agricultural sector is proportional to greater percentage of the unemployed, as a major source of income and livelihood and labour absorption. However, effort to consolidate agricultural inputs through viable opportunities has continued to lack access to its productive resource as a result of inefficient administration, lack of physical infrastructure, farming implements and credit facilitates. According to Okoye (2010, p. 15), the Songhai Rivers Initiative was designed to fill this gap because, when fully operational, it will stop the subpar agricultural output caused by antiquated farming practises and replace it with cutting-edge

contemporary technology in the agriculture industry. As a radical step to impose food sufficiency, poverty eradication, and youth empowerment in Rivers State, women and youths were required to undertake training in order to acquire an entrepreneurial culture with the option to drive their own farm units. Therefore, the management of Songhai Farm transforms farming into a technologically based business that attracts young people and even unemployed graduates to take advantage of the opportunity to become large commercialised farmers using the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) 's instrumentality based on the concept of training. As it was categorically stated in this averment:

We teach them how to recycle things that are considered to waste to enable them apply acquired skills into their practice. For instance, what is considered to be waste is used, like the food we eat and the crumbs, instead of disposing them; you bring them back, and use them to create what we call “mug guttery” which you use to feed the fish. Again, the model teaches farmers entrepreneurial skills and how to get more value from their primary products. It provides participants with access to a network of satellite farms (Peple, 2010).

The basic idea behind such enduring training is to have a mother Songhai farm connected to subsidiary or smaller farms across the state with the capacity to boost agricultural production and to stretch food sufficiency, poverty alleviation and youth empowerment. Since independence in 1960, our agricultural productivity is still where it was because less than 1% of GDP is being ploughed back into it. The United States of America, France, Great Britain and even China with their alarming population growths, got to where they are today in terms of food sufficiency and poverty alleviation because agriculture were subsidised and opportunities given to commercialized farming. Commercial farming requires huge capital investment for the procurement of large expanse of policy, land and labour saving machinery, specialization, managerial capability and alertness (Okaba, 1999, p. 39). These itemized features are the ingredients needed for successful commercial farming, which can only be attainable through a realistic approach from the government.

VII Conclusion and Recommendations

The characteristics of African counties which were dominated, enslaved and colonized is the manifest absence of craftsmen able to apply their knowledge to modern science and technology for development in all ramifications. In this circumstance, every avenue of natural self-actualization became eroded and distorted, while opening the channel for reliance and consumption of what the colonised do not produce or need with addicted mentality. These propositions challenged Rev. Father Godfrey Nzamujo who saw the characteristics of Africans as being advantageous rather than an impediment came up with a farming model first at Songhai in Porto-Novo Binin Republic with a small number of persons and in the event of time was replicated in other countries of Africa.

Originality by virtue of introducing new ideas in agricultural practices, geared towards food sufficiency, poverty eradication and development in Africa was key. However, the methodology and mechanism of Songhai International influenced the replication of such farm in Rivers State by former Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, because to him underdevelopment is not a separate problem that can be solved bureaucratically in isolation from other factors like agriculture and technology. Indeed, the sociological implication is a robust agricultural scheme that would generate food sufficiency, poverty alleviation, and youth empowerment that will drastically eliminate criminality amongst the vulnerable youth population as its philosophy and objective.

Recommendations

In order to break away from this long and tedious recital problems prevalent in our country's agricultural enterprise (as observed by Rev. Father Godfrey Nzamujo, the founder of Songhai farm) and move Nigeria and indeed Rivers State in the direction of a self-reliant agrarian economy, a radical farming and agricultural blue print has to be evolved. This can possibly be made realistic in the following ways:

1. There is the need to reintroduce the Songhai farm initiative for the improvement of the local economy, job creation, and food security in Rivers State given its virtues.
2. Maximum emphasis in all fields of agriculture in this context should be conceived and directed towards refining and improving indigenous skills to promote productivity in farming, and inculcating in the perception of our youth that farming or agriculture is an attractive means of employment and not occupation of the poor.
3. There should be market accessibility policies that will become favourable to create market both within local government headquarters and urban slums partners, such that, where there are bottlenecks, or man-made situations that prevent or impede the free flow of agricultural products, could be checked and possibly put to extinction.
4. There is the need for prudent management of the resources invested in the Songhai Farm Initiative for it to yield positive food security dividends.

References

1. Akikibofori, J. S. (2018). *Contemporary sociological theory*. Glory of the Latter Housing Publishing Co.
2. Altieri, M. A (1994). *Biodiversity and rest management in agro ecosystems*. Hayworth Press.
3. Anowor, O. (2010). "Government intervention and economic development: Lessons from Songhai development initiative farm in Rivers State Nigeria". Retrieved on the 27th of July, 2021 from www.songhaifarm.org.
4. Aziegbe, S. A. (1989). "Women and their participatory role in rural agricultural development". A Paper on Social Mobilization and Development Presented at Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, January.
5. Bello, I. (1986). "Local government as agency of rural agricultural development in Nigeria". *Development outlook journal*, Vol. 1, No. 6.
6. Igbaniho, S. T. (2012). "The defunct Rivers State School to land scheme: A dream deferred: Can the objectives of the Songhai farming scheme in Rivers State be achieved? *International journal of arts and humanities*, 3, pp. 4-20.
7. Ihonvbere, J. (1989). *Political economy of crisis and underdevelopment in Africa: Selected works of Claude Ake*. Jad Publishers Ltd.
8. Maxwell, O. G. A. (2009). "Conceptualization of petroleum crisis and technology education dysfunction in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria". *Journal of the centre for ethnic and conflict study*, 1(1), 100-112.
9. Nwabara, D. O. (1995). *Sociology of rural development*. Opinion Research and Communications.
10. Obioha, P. (ed) (2003). *Women and Rural Agricultural development in Nigeria*. Rowan and Litter Field.
11. Ojoko, S. (2004). *Agricultural extension theory and practice*, Votex House.
12. Okaba, B. (1999). *African indigenous institution and societies*. Osia Int'l Publishing Co. Ltd.
13. Okoye, G. (2010). "Why Amaechi brought Songhai farm to Rivers State". Retrieved on the 27th of July, 2021 from <http://www.riversstaterssda.gov.ng>.
14. Osila, K. (2012). "Songhai: Creating world class farmer in BunuTai". *The Tide Newspaper*, 412, pp. 18-20.

15. Rivers State Ministry of Agriculture (2015). "About us". Retrieved on the 27th of July, 2021 from <http://www.riverstateministryofeducation.org.ng>.
16. Pepple, N. (2012). *Songhai: Creating world class farm Bunu Tai*. Pearl Publishers.
17. Uphoff, N. (2002). *Agro ecological innovations: Increasing production with participatory development*. Earths Publication Ltd.
18. Williams, S. K. T. (1978). *Rural agricultural development in Nigeria*. University of Ife Press.