



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: isrg j. multidiscip. Stud.

ISSN: 2584-0452 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjms/>

Volume – IV Issue - VIII (August) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



NIGERIA–FAO COLLABORATION AND FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES, 1978–2023: IMPACTS, CONSTRAINTS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Muhammad Awwal Adamu^{1*}, Chigbata Benjude Chikezie², Yahaya Ismail³

¹ Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Abuja, ORCID ID: 0009-0006-3370-8787

² Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Abuja

³ Economics Department, University of Abuja, ORCID ID: 0009-0006-7876-9524

| Received: 04.08.2026 | Accepted: 08.08.2026 | Published: 10.08.2026

*Corresponding author: Muhammad Awwal Adamu

Abstract

Nigeria's persistent food insecurity remains one of the most critical development challenges confronting the country despite its vast agricultural potential. Since the late 1970s, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has collaborated with successive Nigerian governments to enhance agricultural productivity, strengthen institutional capacity, and improve food and nutrition security. This article examines the impacts and limitations of Nigeria–FAO collaboration between 1978 and 2023. Using a qualitative historical research approach, the study draws on documentary evidence, FAO evaluation reports, government publications, and scholarly literature. The findings indicate that FAO interventions contributed significantly to agricultural development through support for smallholder farmers, natural resource management, fisheries development, pest control, and institutional strengthening. However, the sustainability of these interventions has been constrained by insecurity, farmer–herder conflicts, climate change, weak governance structures, macroeconomic instability, and persistent regional inequality. The article argues that long-term food security in Nigeria requires integrated strategies that combine agricultural development with peacebuilding, climate adaptation, and institutional reform. By situating FAO interventions within Nigeria's broader political economy, the study contributes to debates on development partnerships and food security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Food security, FAO, agriculture, insecurity, climate change, Nigeria

Introduction

Food security has remained a central development concern in Nigeria since independence. Although the country possesses extensive arable land, diverse agro-ecological zones, and a large

agricultural labour force, food production has consistently lagged behind rapid population growth. Structural weaknesses in agricultural systems, overdependence on rain-fed farming, climate

variability, environmental degradation, and policy inconsistency have undermined the country's capacity to attain sustainable food security.¹

Since the late 1970s, Nigeria has partnered with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to address these challenges. FAO interventions have focused on improving agricultural productivity, strengthening institutions, enhancing natural resource management, and responding to food emergencies.²

Despite these efforts, Nigeria continues to experience widespread food insecurity, particularly in rural and conflict-affected regions. This article critically examines the impact and challenges of Nigeria-FAO collaboration on food security between 1978 and 2023. It argues that while FAO interventions produced measurable gains, their effectiveness has been significantly constrained by insecurity, climate change, economic instability, and weak governance. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing more sustainable food security strategies.³

Methodology and Sources

The study adopts a qualitative historical research methodology. This approach enables a longitudinal examination of policy evolution, institutional collaboration, and sectoral outcomes over time. Primary data were obtained through oral interviews, which provided demographic information and insights into FAO's operational impacts at community and institutional levels. Secondary sources include academic literature, journal articles, government documents, FAO evaluation reports, and institutional publications.

Historical analysis allows for the identification of continuities and changes in Nigeria's agricultural development trajectory and provides context for understanding current food security challenges. The qualitative approach also facilitates interpretation of socio-economic and political factors shaping agricultural outcomes beyond quantitative production statistics.

The study adopts a qualitative historical research design. Data were drawn from secondary sources, including FAO evaluation reports, Central Bank of Nigeria statistical bulletins, National Bureau of Statistics publications, World Bank reports, academic journals, theses, and policy documents.⁴

These materials were complemented by oral interview evidence used to contextualize community-level experiences of agricultural interventions. Qualitative content analysis was employed to examine patterns, themes, and institutional trajectories. This approach enables a deeper understanding of long-term

development processes and the structural factors shaping food security outcomes in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework: Food Security and Development

Food security is understood as a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.⁵ The concept encompasses four interrelated dimensions: availability, access, utilization, and stability. In Nigeria, failure across all four dimensions has contributed to persistent vulnerability. Development literature emphasizes that food insecurity is not solely a production problem. Benson argues that poverty, inequality, and weak institutions are central determinants of hunger in Africa.⁶

Similarly, Chenery and Strout highlight that agricultural stagnation in developing economies reflects structural and institutional constraints rather than resource scarcity alone. These perspectives provide a foundation for assessing FAO's role within Nigeria's broader political economy.⁷

Food security is commonly understood as a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for an active and healthy life. Benson emphasizes that food security in Africa is inseparable from structural poverty, institutional weakness, and unequal development patterns. Early development theories, such as Chenery and Strout's two-gap model, underscore the role of external assistance in addressing capital and foreign exchange constraints in developing economies. FAO interventions in Nigeria reflect this logic by providing technical support and institutional capacity where domestic systems remain fragile.⁸

However, later scholarship questions the effectiveness of aid in isolation. Collier argues that institutional quality and governance largely determine development outcomes. In Nigeria, persistent governance deficits have limited the effectiveness of agricultural assistance, including FAO-supported programmes.

Literature-Based Discussion

Scholarly literature consistently identifies structural vulnerability as the core of Nigeria's food security crisis. Azih's analysis of the Nigerian agricultural sector demonstrates that limited technology adoption, weak rural infrastructure, land tenure constraints, and policy inconsistency have undermined productivity.⁹

These weaknesses reduced farmers' resilience to environmental and economic shocks. Benson situates Nigeria within Africa's broader food insecurity landscape, emphasizing that access rather

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*. Rome: FAO, 2022.

² World Bank, *Nigeria Development Update: Turning the Corner—From Reform to Results* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023)

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 1–2

⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 3–4

⁵ World Bank, *Nigeria Development Update: Turning the Corner—From Reform to Results* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023)

⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*. Rome: FAO, 2022

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 7–15

⁸ H. B. Chenery and Alan M. Strout, "Foreign Assistance and Economic Development," *American Economic Review* 56, no. 4, 2004, Pp. 23–25.

⁹ World Bank, *Nigeria Development Update: Turning the Corner—From Reform to Results* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2023)

than availability is the dominant constraint. Even during periods of increased production, widespread poverty and unemployment prevent households from obtaining adequate food. This explains why agricultural growth has not translated into improved nutrition outcomes.¹⁰

Political economy studies further reveal the role of inequality, Fabio and colleagues demonstrate that regional polarization has intensified disparities between northern and southern Nigeria. These inequalities shape agricultural performance, poverty prevalence, and exposure to conflict, reinforcing spatial patterns of food insecurity. International development scholarship offers insight into the limitations of external assistance. Chenery and Strout argue that foreign aid succeeds only when domestic institutions possess sufficient absorptive capacity.¹¹

In Nigeria, weak implementation mechanisms and governance challenges have limited the sustainability of FAO programmes. Kenneth and Snidal's concept of "orchestration" explains this dynamic: international organizations depend on national actors for implementation, reducing their ability to enforce outcomes.

Climate change literature identifies environmental stress as a major driver of conflict and food insecurity. Brown and Crawford link climate variability to livelihood collapse and instability in West Africa.¹²

FAO assessments similarly show that drought, desertification, and flooding have intensified farmer–herder conflicts in Nigeria's northern regions. Environmental degradation compounds these pressures. FAO studies on natural resource management highlight deforestation, rangeland depletion, and soil erosion as key threats to agricultural sustainability. These processes disproportionately affect smallholder farmers, who lack adaptive capacity and financial buffers.¹³

Conflict has emerged as one of the most severe constraints on food security. FAO humanitarian reports document how banditry, insurgency, and communal violence have reduced cultivated land, disrupted markets, and displaced millions. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North East and rising banditry in the North West illustrate the direct relationship between insecurity and food systems collapse. Economic instability further undermines food access.¹⁴

Caprio and Demirgüç-Kunt emphasize the importance of long-term finance for productive sectors. In Nigeria, limited agricultural credit, inflation, and currency volatility constrain investment. Central Bank and NBS data reveal that rising food prices

disproportionately affect poor households.¹⁵ Human development studies reinforce these findings. UNDP indicators consistently rank Nigeria in the low human development category.¹⁶

Abah's research demonstrates that weak institutions and inequality undermine development interventions. Food insecurity thus remains both a cause and consequence of underdevelopment. Collectively, the literature underscores that food security in Nigeria is multidimensional. FAO interventions addressed critical gaps but operated within a structurally constrained environment.

FAO Interventions and Agricultural Development

FAO programmes in Nigeria focused on crop production, livestock development, fisheries, pest management, and institutional capacity building. Support for irrigation, improved seeds, fertilizer reform, and extension services enhanced productivity in several regions. FAO initiatives also promoted dietary diversification through fisheries and livestock development.¹⁷

In fisheries, particularly around Lake Chad, FAO supported livelihoods through improved processing and resource management. In pest control, FAO interventions addressed transboundary threats such as fall armyworm and avian influenza, strengthening surveillance systems and farmer awareness. Institutionally, FAO provided policy advisory support, data systems development, and capacity building for federal and state ministries. These interventions contributed to improved planning and coordination.

Economic Implications for Food Security

Agriculture remains central to Nigeria's economy, employing over 70 percent of the labour force and contributing significantly to GDP. However, poverty remains widespread, especially in rural areas. World Bank and NBS data indicate high poverty incidence in northern regions, reinforcing food insecurity. Rising food prices, unemployment, and inequality undermine household resilience. Conflict-affected areas experience food prices up to 50 percent higher than neighbouring markets, deepening vulnerability.¹⁸

Food security remains one of Nigeria's most enduring development challenges despite the country's vast agricultural potential and abundant natural resources. Since independence, Nigeria has implemented numerous agricultural policies and partnered with international organizations to address persistent food shortages, malnutrition, and rural poverty. Among these partnerships, collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO, has been central to national efforts aimed at improving food production, rural livelihoods, and natural resource management.¹⁹

¹⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 22–23

¹¹ J. Benson, *Food Security in Africa*, London: Routledge, 2004, Pp. 17–18

¹² FAO, *FAO in Nigeria: Resilience and Food Security Programme*.

¹³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 19–20.

¹⁴ Caprio and Demirgüç-Kunt, "Inequality, Polarization, and Conflict," *Journal of Development Studies* 45, no. 6, 2009, Pp. 938–939

¹⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 13–14

¹⁶ OCHA, *Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023*

¹⁷ FAO, *FAO in Nigeria: Resilience and Food Security Programme*.

¹⁸ J. Benson, *Food Security in Africa*, London: Routledge, 2004, Pp. 20–22

¹⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*. Rome: FAO, 2022

From the late 1970s, Nigeria's agricultural sector experienced structural transformation influenced by oil revenue dependence, declining public investment in agriculture, and increasing reliance on food imports. The oil boom era of the late 1970s and early 1980s reduced incentives for domestic food production, contributing to food deficits and rural underdevelopment. As agricultural productivity declined, FAO engagement became increasingly important in supporting policy formulation, technical assistance, and institutional capacity building.

However, food insecurity in Nigeria is not solely a problem of production. It is deeply connected to insecurity, climate variability, poverty, inequality, weak infrastructure, and governance failures. According to FAO and other development assessments, conflict and insecurity, particularly in northern Nigeria—have emerged as the primary drivers of acute food insecurity. These dynamics have disrupted farming activities, displaced millions, weakened markets, and undermined rural livelihoods.²⁰

Agricultural Transformation and Efficiency

Bhatia's work on agricultural efficiency highlights the importance of technological adoption, institutional coordination, and farmer incentives in improving productivity. In Nigeria, FAO-supported irrigation schemes, fertilizer initiatives, and value-chain development aimed to enhance efficiency but faced constraints from poor maintenance, limited ownership, and insecurity.²¹

Similarly, Benson's later analysis stresses that food insecurity persists not because Africa cannot produce food, but because political, environmental, and economic systems prevent stable access. This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where production gains are frequently offset by conflict, market disruption, and climate shocks.

Crop Production and Irrigation

FAO's involvement in Nigeria's crop production focused on improving irrigation, seed systems, and farming practices. Large-scale irrigation schemes initiated during the late 1970s and early 1980s through River Basin Development Authorities expanded water infrastructure but suffered from high operating costs and weak community ownership. As a result, many schemes became non-functional.²²

FAO subsequently promoted small-scale irrigation, particularly through the development of Fadama lands. These low-lying fertile areas supported dry-season farming and improved household food security. Rice, vegetables, and legumes cultivated under FAO-supported schemes contributed to income diversification and reduced vulnerability to rainfall variability.²³

Despite these gains, declining soil fertility, fragmented landholdings, and limited mechanization continued to constrain productivity. FAO-supported reforms in fertilizer policy—shifting

from consumption subsidies to domestic blending—represented important institutional progress but were unevenly implemented.

Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry Development

Livestock remains a critical component of Nigeria's agricultural economy, contributing significantly to GDP and rural livelihoods. FAO initiatives supported animal health, feed resources, and pastoral systems. However, competition over land and water intensified farmer–herder conflicts, particularly in the Middle Belt and northern states.

The encroachment of farmlands into grazing routes, weak enforcement of grazing regulations, and declining traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms exacerbated violence. These conflicts not only disrupted food production but also undermined national cohesion and rural stability.²⁴

In fisheries, FAO interventions targeted artisanal fishing communities and aquaculture development. Nigeria's large demand–supply gap in fish production highlighted the sector's importance for nutrition and employment. Yet policy weaknesses, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation limited sustainable growth.²⁵

Forestry programmes focused on conservation, agroforestry, and community-based resource management. FAO-supported initiatives enhanced awareness of environmental protection, but deforestation rates remained among the highest globally due to population pressure, fuelwood dependence, and weak enforcement.

Impact of FAO's Support on Nigeria's Food Security Efforts

Collaborative efforts between Nigeria and the Food and Agriculture Organization were designed to promote food security through improved agricultural productivity, institutional reforms, and sustainable natural resource management. Over time, FAO interventions emphasized a transition from earlier approaches that placed limited attention on accountability and efficiency toward strategies prioritizing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.²⁶

These reforms emerged from institutional self-assessment, external evaluations, and policy critiques, which highlighted the need for more effective programming in food security. Greater emphasis was placed on employment creation and livelihood sustainability, particularly among poor households for whom food access remained a primary concern.²⁷

Nigeria's irrigation potential is estimated at approximately 2.0 million hectares, of which less than 900,000 hectares have been developed. About 55 percent of this potential lies in northern Nigeria, while approximately 20 percent is located in the humid southern zone, with the remainder in central and western

²⁰ FAO, *FAO in Nigeria: Resilience and Food Security Programme*

²¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 4–5

²² FAO, *FAO in Nigeria: Resilience and Food Security Programme*.

²³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 15–16.

²⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 17–18

²⁵ J. Benson, *Food Security in Africa*, London: Routledge, 2004, Pp. 23–25

²⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022*. Rome: FAO, 2022

highlands. Fadama lands alone account for nearly 0.94 million hectares of irrigable land.²⁸

During the oil boom era under the administrations of General Olusegun Obasanjo and President Shehu Shagari (1978–1984), the federal government launched large-scale irrigation schemes through the River Basin Development Authorities with FAO support. Over 160 dams—including Adarice, Bakolori, Jebba, Challawa, and Dadin Kowa—were constructed to support irrigation development. However, many of these schemes later became non-functional due to high operational costs, inadequate maintenance, and weak community ownership.²⁹

FAO subsequently promoted small-scale irrigation, particularly through the use of low-cost motorized pumps. Approximately 55,000 hectares of Fadama land were brought under cultivation by smallholder farmers, with rice and high-value vegetables such as tomatoes, cabbage, okra, and pumpkins emerging as major irrigated crops.

Impact on Food Production

Transformations within Nigeria's agri-food system created both opportunities and challenges for food and nutrition security. FAO-supported interventions contributed to dietary diversification, expanding consumption beyond staple crops to include horticultural produce and animal protein such as fish, meat, eggs, and dairy products. Processed and semi-processed foods increasingly penetrated rural markets, with more than 70 percent of household food expenditure directed toward such products.³⁰

This shift heightened demand for value addition, food quality, and safety standards. On the supply side, FAO interventions expanded income opportunities, as the production of livestock products, fruits, and vegetables yielded significantly higher returns per hectare than cereal cultivation. Policy reforms supported by FAO included a major shift from consumption-based subsidies toward production-oriented support. Initiatives aimed at expanding rice production increased yields from approximately 3.5 to 7.5 tons per hectare, resulting in an estimated 2.1 million metric tons produced by about 150,000 farmers by 2019.³¹

Similarly, fertilizer initiatives implemented through public–private partnerships—particularly Nigeria's collaboration with Morocco for phosphorus imports—improved access to fertilizers and strengthened domestic blending capacity. These reforms marked a transition from fertilizer subsidies toward local manufacturing support. Food security remains one of Nigeria's most enduring development challenges despite the country's vast agricultural potential and abundant natural resources.

Since independence, Nigeria has implemented numerous agricultural policies and partnered with international organizations to address persistent food shortages, malnutrition, and rural

poverty.³² Among these partnerships, collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been central to national efforts aimed at improving food production, rural livelihoods, and natural resource management. From the late 1970s, Nigeria's agricultural sector experienced structural transformation influenced by oil revenue dependence, declining public investment in agriculture, and increasing reliance on food imports. As agricultural productivity declined, FAO engagement became increasingly important in supporting policy formulation, technical assistance, and institutional capacity building.³³

However, food insecurity in Nigeria is not solely a problem of production. It is deeply connected to insecurity, climate variability, poverty, inequality, weak infrastructure, and governance failures. FAO assessments consistently show that conflict has emerged as the dominant driver of food insecurity in the country.³⁴

FAO Interventions and Agricultural Development

FAO-supported programmes in Nigeria have focused on crop production, irrigation development, institutional strengthening, livestock health, fisheries development, and forestry conservation.³⁵ Irrigation initiatives expanded through both large-scale schemes and smallholder-based Fadama agriculture, contributing to dry-season farming and income diversification. Nevertheless, maintenance challenges, weak ownership, and insecurity limited the long-term effectiveness of many projects.

Challenges to Food Security and FAO Implementation

Despite these contributions, FAO programmes faced major constraints. Insecurity emerged as the most significant challenge. Farmer–herder conflicts, banditry, and insurgency led to widespread displacement and farm abandonment. Climate change further intensified vulnerability through droughts, floods, and desertification. Flood disasters between 2018 and 2022 displaced thousands across multiple states, while desert encroachment reduced grazing and farming land in the north.³⁶

Macroeconomic instability also undermined food access. Rising inflation, declining purchasing power, and dependence on oil revenue increased vulnerability to global shocks, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Weak governance, corruption, and policy inconsistency limited programme sustainability. Many initiatives failed to scale beyond pilot stages due to inadequate funding and institutional continuity.

Insecurity and Food System Disruption

Insecurity represents the most significant constraint to food security in Nigeria. Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, banditry in the North West, farmer–herder conflicts in the Middle

²⁸ FAO, *FAO in Nigeria: Resilience and Food Security Programme*.

²⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*, Rome: FAO, 2018, Pp. 10–11

³⁰ FAO, *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*

³¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier Human Development and the Anthropocene*, New York: UNDP, 2020, Pp. 106–108

³² R. Bhatia, *Agricultural Development and Efficiency*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, Pp. 110–111.

³³ FAO, *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*

³⁴ R. Bhatia, *Agricultural Development and Efficiency*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987, Pp. 112–118.

³⁵ FAO, *Nigeria: Country Programming Framework 2018–2022*

³⁶ Fabio Sánchez, Andrés Solimano, and Miguel Székely, “Inequality, Polarization, and Conflict,” *Journal of Development Studies* 45, no. 6, 2009, Pp. 938–939

Belt, and communal violence across southern states have collectively displaced millions and disrupted agricultural cycles.³⁷

FAO and humanitarian assessments indicate that conflict has restricted access to farmland, reduced market participation, and increased food prices. The destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods has deepened vulnerability, particularly among women, children, and displaced populations. The persistence of violence illustrates that food insecurity in Nigeria is both a cause and consequence of conflict.³⁸ Without addressing security governance, agricultural interventions alone cannot achieve sustainable outcomes.

Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

Climate variability significantly affects Nigeria's food systems. Floods, droughts, desertification, and rising temperatures have reduced agricultural productivity and intensified competition over natural resources. FAO assessments emphasize that northern Nigeria faces heightened vulnerability due to aridity and declining water availability, while southern regions experience flooding and coastal erosion.³⁹

Major flood events in 2012, 2018, and 2022 destroyed crops, displaced communities, and disrupted supply chains. These climate shocks underscore the need for climate-resilient agriculture, early warning systems, and integrated natural resource management.

Land degradation, deforestation, and soil erosion further undermine productivity. FAO-supported conservation initiatives have made progress, but unsustainable practices persist due to poverty and weak institutional enforcement.⁴⁰

Economic Constraints and Structural Challenges

Nigeria's heavy dependence on oil revenue has weakened agricultural development. Economic downturns, inflation, currency depreciation, and declining public investment have constrained farmers' access to inputs and markets. According to World Bank and UNDP assessments, poverty remains widespread, particularly in rural areas.⁴¹

Macroeconomic instability has reduced purchasing power and increased food prices, disproportionately affecting poor households. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities in Nigeria's economic structure, reinforcing the urgency of agricultural diversification.

³⁷ P. Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, Pp. 20–22.

³⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier—Human Development and the Anthropocene*, New York: UNDP, 2020, Pp. 109–110

³⁹ Fabio Sánchez, Andrés Solimano, and Miguel Székely, "Inequality, Polarization, and Conflict," *Journal of Development Studies* 45, no. 6, 2009, Pp. 941–942.

⁴⁰ P. Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, Pp. 18–19

⁴¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2020: The Next Frontier—Human Development and the Anthropocene*, New York: UNDP, 2020, Pp. 112–118

Livestock, Fisheries, and Forestry

FAO livestock programmes emphasized disease control, feed management, and pastoral resilience. However, competition over land and water resources intensified farmer–herder conflicts, particularly in the Middle Belt. FAO fisheries programmes aimed to close Nigeria's fish supply gap and enhance nutrition, yet infrastructure limitations and environmental degradation persisted.

⁴² Forestry interventions promoted conservation and agroforestry practices, though deforestation remained widespread due to fuelwood dependence and population pressure.

Violence Against Farmers in some States in Nigeria

Table: Recorded Incidents of Violence Against Farmers in Selected States

S/N	State	Local Government Area	Nature of Violence	Year
1	Kaduna	Birnin Gwari	Gunmen attacks and kidnapping	2020
2	Kaduna	Chikun	Herder–community clashes	2017
3	Kaduna	Giwa	Farmer–herder conflict	2017
4	Kaduna	Igabi	Banditry and kidnapping	2022
5	Kaduna	Ikara	Banditry and kidnapping	2022
6	Kaduna	Jaba	Banditry and kidnapping	2017
7	Kaduna	Jema'a	Banditry and kidnapping	2020
8	Kaduna	Kachia	Banditry and kidnapping	2020
9	Kaduna	Kaduna South	Communal clashes	2019
10	Kaduna	Lere	Farmer–herder clashes	2019
11	Kaduna	Kagarko	Communal clashes	2017
12	Kaduna	Kajuru	Communal clashes	2017
13	Kaduna	Kaura	Communal clashes	2016
14	Kaduna	Sanga	Communal clashes	2017
15	Kaduna	Zangon Kataf	Communal clashes	2017
16	Kogi	Ibaji	Farmer–herder clashes	2018
17	Enugu	Isi-Uzo	Farmer–herder clashes	2020
18	Enugu	Igbo-Eze North	Kidnapping and clashes	2018

⁴² P. Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, Pp. 17–39.

Conclusion

The collaboration between Nigeria and the FAO from 1978 to 2023 has made meaningful contributions to agricultural development and food security through technical assistance, institutional strengthening, and livelihood support. However, insecurity, climate change, governance challenges, and economic instability continue to undermine these gains. Sustainable food security in Nigeria requires integrated strategies linking agriculture, peacebuilding, environmental management, and institutional reform.

This study demonstrates that sustainable food security cannot be achieved through agricultural programmes alone. It demands political stability, inclusive development, environmental stewardship, and coordinated national and international action. Strengthening Nigeria–FAO collaboration within a broader development–peace nexus offers a viable pathway toward a more resilient and food-secure future. The findings reveal that FAO interventions contributed meaningfully to agricultural development, institutional strengthening, and humanitarian response. However, their effectiveness was constrained by insecurity, climate change, environmental degradation, economic instability, and weak governance structures. With sustained commitment and structural reform, the country possesses the potential to transform its agri-food system into a foundation for long-term development and stability.

Contributions to knowledge

The study reveal that FAO interventions contributed meaningfully to agricultural development through irrigation expansion, support for smallholder farmers, promotion of livestock and fisheries development, fertilizer reform initiatives, and institutional capacity building. These efforts enhanced productivity, encouraged dietary diversification, and strengthened elements of Nigeria’s agri-food value chains. However, the sustainability and overall effectiveness of these interventions were significantly constrained by persistent insecurity, farmer–herder conflicts, climate change, weak governance structures, inadequate funding, and macroeconomic instability. Rising food prices and declining household purchasing power further undermined food access, particularly among vulnerable rural populations.

The findings suggest that effective food security requires integrated approaches that combine agricultural development, security reform, environmental management, and social protection.

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