

# The impact of Taraba state agricultural development programme (TADP) on rural famers in Taraba state Nigeria

## Abstract

Agriculture presents the only viable opportunity to Nigeria's economic development in the face of the recent economic challenges. The Agricultural Development Programme (ADPs) is one of the structural platforms established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to support the State Government effort in the development of agricultural projects. After 25 years of its existence, studies to assess the impact of the agency on the quality of life of rural farmers in the state have not been explored. This study examines the activities of the Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) from inception to dates and the challenges of the agency. Primary and Secondary data were used in this study. Primary data includes personal observation and interviews with officials of the TADP and key informants. The findings of the study shows that despite the good intention and policy design of the TADP, the programme has not faired well in the state. Some of the challenges that constrained the agency's activities include poor funding, shortage of extension service staff, lack of mobility for proper supervision, lack of working materials, lack of publicity and campaigns and increasing population of farmers. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that government should increase funding to the agency, employ more extension service staff and increase the capacity of the agency through training of workers.

**Keywords:** agricultural, development, impact, programme, rural, taraba state

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## Introduction

The recent fall in oil prices in the international market and continuous destruction of oil pipelines and facilities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has greatly affected the country's economy in recent times. The economy of the country which have for several decades relied heavily on oil exploitation for about 90% of its national income have continued to witness dwindling resources and poor revenue. The effects of several decades of neglect of other key sectors such as agriculture, industrialization, solid mineral resources and tourism is playing out clearly in the economy today. This has resulted in shortage of foreign exchange, inflation, reduced value of the national currency, reduced national income, inability of the government (both State and Federal) to pay workers salary promptly, increase in hunger, high cost of food stuff, general rise in poverty and unemployment among others. The present economic reality in the country shows that the only way out of the present economic recession is going back to agriculture.

The Agricultural Development Programme (ADPs) is one of the structural platforms established by the Federal Government of Nigeria to support the State Government effort in the development of agricultural projects. The idea emanated from the Third National Development plan where it was realized that rapid economic development cannot be achieved within defective institutional framework.<sup>1</sup> ADPs were established in 1975 as three enclave projects in Funtua, Gombe, and Gusau.<sup>2</sup> These first ADPs in Nigeria were each covering a specific region within a state. Their early results impressed both the federal and state governments, and there was pressure to replicate the approach across the whole states of the federation.<sup>3</sup> By 1989 all Nigeria's then 19 states had ADPs which was later extended to the present 36 states of the Federation. Presently, ADPs have evolved into state-wide project which covers the whole states of the country.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the ADPs are state organizations for grass root agricultural

development aiming at increasing the income of rural farmers and crop production. The ADPs were designed to improve the traditional systems of production and raise the productivity, income and quality of life of the small scale farmers who provide over 90% of the gross domestic food supplies of the country. Following the expiration of the World Bank funding for the project, the activities of the ADPs has dwindled considerably in recent times. The story is much pathetic for the Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP). Thus, this study examines the activities of the TADP from inception to dates and the challenges of the agency.

## Background of TADP

The Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) is a parastatal of the Ministry of Agriculture. It is one of the World Bank Assisted projects that formed part of the phase II Multi-State Agricultural Development Projects (MSADP II) whose loans terminated on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1995. It started in the then Gongola State, as Gongola State Agricultural Development Programme (GADP). Following the creation of Taraba State in 1991, TADP was established by an edict. The agency started functioning from January, 1992. In 1992, all the (MSADP II) projects of which Taraba was one, were redesigned. The redesigned exercise placed Taraba ADP with the potential of better performance and it later became World Bank disbursement effective in November, 1993. The TADP was then jointly funded by tripartite arrangement of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and Taraba State Government (TRSG). The loans were Agricultural Technology Support Facility (ATSF) and National Fadama Facility (NFF). The decision to go for the loan was informed by the need to ensure maintenance of funding of the programme activities for a targeted period of two years after which another World Bank Loans would be sought, The main goal of TADP is to contribute

to the attainment of food sufficiency and security in the State and the country at large and raise the income and standard of living of 288,000 farm families in the state particularly, rural communities. These goals were intended to be achieved through the following specific objectives;

To strengthen agricultural services through a unified extension services and On-Farm Adaptive Research (OFAR).

- a. To intensify the provision of inputs and capacity of Cooperative Financing Agencies (CFAs) for rural savings and mobilization
- b. To increase participation of the private sector and small farm holders
- c. The improvement of Livestock production and health
- d. To increase food production in the State.

After 25 years of its existence, studies to assess the impact of the agency on the quality of life of rural farmers in the state have not been explored. Thus, the probability of TADP achieving increase in foodstuff and income for rural dwellers in the state is yet to be ascertained. Also, the likelihood of farmers having easy access to extension service and farming inputs such as improved seeds, pesticides and fertilizer for farming activities in the state has not been investigated. This study intends to fill this knowledge gap by appraising the activities of Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) and how it has impacted on the lives of rural farmers in the state or otherwise.

## Material and methods

The required data for this study were generated through both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were generated through personal observation and interviews with officials of the TADP and key informants. The interviews with the TADP officials focus on the achievements of the programme and the projects so far executed. Effort were made to ascertain some of the infrastructures already provided to the rural dwellers in the area and the services provided to the people especially in the areas of extension services, provision of inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizer, loan and pesticides as well as involvement of the people or grass root mobilization of the rural farmers. Key informants such as individual farmers with years of experience in the state were interviewed on their experience in farming and relationship with the agency's activities. The data from field observation involved a visual assessment of some of the infrastructures provided by the TADP as well as works executed in parts of the state. Secondary materials that were relevant to the study were reviewed. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

## Result of the findings

### Institutional structures of TADP

**The core sub programmes in the ADP are:** Extension services with three (3) components which include; (i) Extension proper, (ii) Media support and (iii) Women in Agriculture (WIA) and the Agric Technical Services which has the following components: Research, Seed multiplication, Livestock, Fisheries, Agro-forestry and Land use. There are five (5) other supporting sub programmes which include: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME), Engineering services, Rural Institutions Development (RID) or Commercial Department, Finance and Administration.

**There are four (4) operational zones in the state, namely:**

- 1) **Zone I** comprised of Ardo-Kola, Jalingo, Lau, Karim-Lamido, Yorro and Zing LGAs with headquarters at Zing
- 2) **Zone II** has Wukari, Ibi, Gassol and part of Bali (Garba-chede/Dakka) LGAs with headquarters at Wukari
- 3) **Zone III** comprised of Takum, Donga, Ussa, Kurmi, part of Bali (Bali/Suntai) LGAs, and Yangtu Special Development Area (SDA) with headquarters at Takum
- 4) **Zone IV** has only Sardauna LGA because of its difficult terrain with headquarters at Gembu

### Extension sub programme and its objectives

The main objective of the extension sub programme of the TADP is to reach out to 288,000 farm families with various well-researched and proven technologies using Village Extension Agents (VEAs) and adopting the Unified Agric Extension System (UAES) approach. To achieve this mandate, the sub programme is divided into three (3) components viz:- General extension, Media support and Women in Agriculture (WIA) with the aim of achieving the followings;

- a. To regularly train the Village Extension Agents in modern methods of farming and extension skills.
- b. To establish relevant demonstrations that would encourage farmers to adopt modern farming technology for an increased crop, fisheries and livestock production.
- c. To organize and implement a supervisory programme for supervising extension staff.
- d. To ensure proper coordination of extension activities so that livestock, fisheries and crops are covered.

### Women in agriculture (WIA) component

This component is headed by Head of WIA who works under the Director of Extension services. The component was established as a result of the need to improve women involvement in Agricultural production through the extension services. About 80% of women workforces in Taraba State are engaged in different agricultural activities such as crop production, fish farming, poultry production, food processing, preservation, storage and marketing. The service of this component is geared towards improving the livelihood of the rural women. The component came into existence in 1988 with the mandate of assisting to identify, simplify and transfer new technologies for the betterment of women in the State and with the view to reducing drudgery associated with on-farm and off-farm activities.

### Media component

The Media outfit of the extension sub programme has the mandate of educating and enlightening the farmers on new technologies using the mass media (Radio, Television, Village cinema, posters etc). In addition, it serves as the image maker of both the TADP and the Ministry of Agriculture through coverage and airing of all agricultural activities of the agency in the state. The relevance of the media outfit at this point cannot be over-emphasized because of its importance in showcasing government intervention and investment in agriculture.

### Achievements of TADP

TADP recorded some achievements during the period it enjoyed funding of its programme activities. Some of the achievements include;

- i. 4,301 supervisory field visits to Village Extension Agents (VEAs) were made.
- ii. 8,325 field visits to farmers farm by Village Extension Agents out of 44,160 targeted farms were made.
- iii. 4 Management training plots on maize and rice out of 12 target was established.
- iv. 3 On-Farm Adaptive Research (OFAR) out of 6 target was carried out.
- v. Technology Review and Training meetings were held.
- vi. 6,475 Small Plot Adaptive Technique (SPAT) on crops were established out of annual target of 10,500.
- vii. 18,340 contact farmers out of annual target of 18,400 were reached out to by VEAs.
- viii. About 3,095.85 litres of assorted agro-chemicals were sold to the farmers.

### Challenges of TADP

For some years now, the objectives of the extension sub programme have not been achieved for the following reasons;

- I. Lack of funding of most extension activities: Apart from imprest of ₦200,000.00, the TADP has no fund to sustain its routine activities in the state. Despite the Taraba state government claim that agriculture is one of its area of priority, the state allocated

only ₦2.3billion representing 3.35 percent of the total budget in 2016. The Federal government on the other hand allocated 1.6 percent of the ₦12.2 trillion total budget to the agricultural sector.<sup>5</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the Maputo declaration of 2003 which recommends allocation of 10% of annual budget to the agricultural sector. At the Second Ordinary Assembly of the African Union in July 2003 in Maputo, African Heads of State and Government endorsed the “Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa” in which they recommend for increase annual national budgetary allocations for agriculture to at least 10% and to ensure a growth of the agricultural output of at least 6 % annually.

- II. Shortage of Extension Service staff: The staff situation in the agency is very pathetic because many have retired and some died. The staff losses have not been replaced because of the embargo on employment in the State. Some of the extension agents from the TADP were later seconded to Taraba Agricultural Product Marketing Agency (TAPMA)<sup>6</sup> and FADAMA sub programme. In fact, the staff situation is very bad not only for the extension sub programme but also for the other sub programmes within the agency and Ministry of Agriculture in the state (Table 1). The Table reveals the agency require 371 staff to operate but only had 102 staff at the moment. This gives a shortfall of 269 staff. Extension Agent/Farmers’ ratio in the state is 1:4,800 farmers. This is in sharp contrast to the recommended ratio of 1:1,000 farmers.

**Table 1** Staff distribution in TADP

S/N	Category of staff	Number required	Number on ground	Shortfall
1	Acting Director	1	1	-
2	Chief Extension Officer	1	-	1
3	Chief WIA	1	1	-
4	Chief Media Officer	1	1	-
5	Assist Chief Media Officer	1	-	1
6	SMS (WIA) Hqtrs	1	1	-
7	Zonal Extension Officers	4	4	-
8	Zonal SMS (WIA)	4	1	3
9	Block Extension Agents	30	1	29
10	Area Extension Officers	7	7	-
11	Block Extension Supervisors	30	17	13
12	Village Extension Agents	288	60	228
13	Camera Men	2	1	1
	Total	371	102	269

Source:TADP (2016)

#### 1. Lack of mobility for proper supervision

For the training and visit system of extension service to work effectively, there is need for utility vehicles such as Hilux and Pick-Up vans for principal officers in the Extension Sub programme and motorcycles for the field staff. Provision of the vehicles will enable the extension workers follow their schedule to the letter and their impact would be better felt by the farmers and the general public.

#### 2. Lack of working materials (Extension kits)/Inputs for demonstrations

These working materials include rain boots, rain coats, measuring tapes and measuring scales for demonstrations and field visits. They also include inputs such as seed, fertilizer and agro-chemicals. They are very essential in the agricultural business but have not been provided by government for demonstrations for more than ten (10) years now (interview 2016 a).

### 3. Lack of publicity and campaigns

Over the years, the media outfit of the Taraba ADP has been neglected. All its equipments inherited from the defunct Gongola State days are non-functional. Without mincing words, the Ministry of Agriculture and the TADP have recorded a certain degree of achievements but these have not been known because of lack of publicity.

### 4. Increase in the number of farm families

The number of farming families has increased over the years. This increase also call for more support by way of increase in extension services and demand for farming inputs such as improved seed, fertilizer and agro chemicals among others;

- a) Non implementation of the MTP (Management Training Plot) approach as an alternative to SPAT (Small Plot Adaptive Technique).
- b) Unlike Bauch State Agricultural Development (BaADP) which runs 9 meteorological stations and Jigawa State ADP which collects meteorological data for 21 stations within their (JSMWR, 2000), Taraba State ADP has no any meteorological station of its own but relied on 3 meteorological stations of the Upper Benue River Basin Development Authority (UBRBDA) 1 Nigerian Meteorological Agency station at Ibi LGA. This also affects efficient agricultural development policy design and planning.

## Discussion

The Federal Government of Nigeria is presently pursuing the 'Green Alternative Policy' which attempts to reposition agriculture to be the arrow head of the present administration. This policy has replaced the previous policy of agricultural transformation agenda of past administration. However, the beautiful policy exists only on paper. The farmers in Nigeria bought a bag of fertilizer at ₦15,500 (\$45 USD) (at exchange rate of ₦350 per \$1) and 60cl herbicide at ₦1600 (\$4.6) per bottle. Most of the farmlands have been worked over the years resulting in impoverished soils in many places in the state. This is further worsened by the increasing prevalence of insect pest that destroy the crops. Thus, farming activity in the state is becoming increasingly difficult without fertilizer and herbicides. The shortage of labour has greatly affected the size of farmland cultivated by the farmers. The Agricultural Development Programme has served tremendously in bridging this gap by providing rural infrastructures and farming technologies to the rural farmers. However, the state government recently auction some of the old agricultural processing equipment at the agency premises with promise of purchasing new ones soon. Government has been paying lip service to the issue of assisting local farmers and subsidy. No country in the world that do not subsidize agriculture.

The costs of farming have been on the increase while the farmers are becoming increasingly helpless in the face of the economic down turn. The traders and middle men have been maximizing the opportunity by exploiting the farmers through traditional micro credit arrangement known as *bada kaka*.<sup>7</sup> The soil type and quality of a place matters a lot in agriculture but this is not the case in the study area. There is no soil laboratory in the agency, Ministry of agriculture or State as a whole. This has left the farmers on trial and error in the choice of crop for a particular area. The activities of TADP flourished during the period of the loan facility. This was the time when the agency's programme

was well funded. The premise of the agency then was a beehive of activity. After the period of the loan facility, the activities of the agency began to decline. The agency was left to manage the meagre financial resources provided by the state government as running cost. This also stopped with time. Many staff of the agency transferred their services to other government Ministries and departments. Thus, the agency has been inactive in its operations and programmes in the past one decade. The farmers in the state are now at the mercy of few intervention programmes from the state Ministry of Agriculture that comes up once in a while. This development has greatly affected agricultural productivity in the state.

## Conclusion

This study has examined the activities of the Taraba State Agricultural Development Programme (TADP) from inception to dates and the challenges that have constrained the activities of the agency over the years. The findings of the study shows that the ADPs performed successfully in their early years of existence. This inform the replication of the programme to all states of the federation. The TADP started very well from the onset but after the expiration of the World Bank funding programme, the activities of the TADP began to decline. This was made worst other challenges which includes poor funding, shortage of extension service staff, lack of mobility for proper supervision, lack of working materials, lack of publicity and campaigns and increasing population of farmers.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were suggested;

- a. To revive the activities of the agency, there is need for the State government to increase funding of the programmes.
- b. Government should employ more extension service staff to the agency.
- c. There is need to increase the capacity of the agency through training and retraining of staff on the most recent farming technology in existence.
- d. Government can do well by supporting the agency with working materials particularly extension service kits and farm inputs to support the extension work of the agency.

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None.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declared there is no conflict of interest.

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