

# Agricultural Infrastructure Deficit and Production of Export Commodity Crops as the Epicenter of Food Insecurity in Africa, Nigeria

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## Abstract

From colonization through the 2007-2008 world food price crisis, Western governments and philanthropies have supported a multitude of programmes to transform agriculture in Africa and connect farmers to commercial supply chains. This approach, however, cannot cause an increase in productivity because the continent cannot supply what it cannot produce. A more realistic approach would have been one that connects the supply base to modernized production infrastructure well suited for agricultural mechanization and industrialization. The colonial experience affected most of the world, creating patterns of unequal relationships between a European core and a periphery of dependent lands. In Africa, agricultural production for local food security has not been of interest to the West; the emphasis has been on producing more export raw materials for their manufacturing and industrial sectors. The pretense is that the continent would earn enough foreign exchange with which to then buy food. This paper emphasizes the fact that this Western-based interest has not only underscored and strongly infiltrated the content of agricultural production policy in the continent, but has also, over time, denied the continent the possibility of building agricultural infrastructure for local food security, subsequently keeping her as a resource-dependent economy with several potential pitfalls as associated with the “resource curse” and Dutch Disease. The paper argues that even though there are abundant mineral resources in the continent which can yield higher foreign exchange, the interest of the West to keep the continent trapped in economic imprisonment and resource-depend-

ence, has consistently emphasized export commodities without local value addition, thus creating a deficit in agricultural infrastructure development. With the large expanse of arable lands in Africa, this situation could be reversed so that the continent stops making agricultural development policies and actions based on whatever financial support or market access comes from the West. Africa must chart a path from within on how to enact sustainable agricultural infrastructure development for food security in the continent.

## Keywords

Agriculture, Infrastructure, Export Raw Materials, Food Security, Food Insecurity

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## 1. Introduction

With the passing of the United Nations' highly contested Food Systems Summit in 2021, the task of "feeding the world" has taken on a newfound urgency. However, one point apparently lost by the Summit's attendees is that the project of agricultural modernization, which many of them have supported for decades, is only making food insecurity worse, especially in Africa (Al Jazeera, 2021); and it is so mainly for lack of the right agricultural infrastructure for food security. For many people, the African continent evokes images of poverty, disease, hunger, and corruption (Ogwu, 2023). Even worse, these images conjure a sense of hopelessness. People believed similar things about China, Brazil, and India not too long ago, but now that these countries are economic powerhouses, the narrative has changed. Yes, it is true that today, Africa is home to millions of people who are caught in civil conflicts and vulnerable to starvation (Elumelu, 2016); but how could this present narrative be changed, especially on a food security basis?

Agriculture is crucial to the prospects of development in Africa. It is evidently the source of food supplies both for the rural population and the expanding urban sectors. In many cases and in many countries on the continent, it also provides the bulk of exports to support the external balance of payments and is the source of raw materials for processing and manufacturing sectors. Less obviously, perhaps, it is a source of capital for investment in non-agricultural sectors, especially in countries where mining and industry are relatively unimportant. It is also evident that the raising of agricultural productivity has proved to be a very difficult task (Dickenson et al., 1983), notwithstanding the availability of a large expanse of arable lands. For example, in Nigeria, between January and March 2021, the agricultural sector contributed 22.35% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Statista, 2023). Over 70% of Nigerians engage in the agriculture sector mainly at a subsistence level (Advameg Inc, 2023), and despite its contribution to the economy, Nigeria's agricultural sector faces many challenges which impact its productivity. These have been identified to include a poor land tenure system, low level of irrigation farming, climate change, and land degradation. Others are low tech-

nology, high production costs and poor distribution of inputs, limited financing, high post-harvest losses, as well as poor access to markets. These challenges have stifled agricultural productivity, affecting the sector's contribution to the country's GDP, as well as increasing food imports due to population rise, hence declining levels of food sufficiency. Between 2016 and 2019, Nigeria's cumulative agricultural imports stood at N3.35 trillion, four times higher than the agricultural export of N803 billion within the same period (ibid).

The government has implemented several initiatives and programs to address the situation, including the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), Nigeria-Africa Trade and Investment Promotion Program, Presidential Economic Diversification Initiative, Economic and Export Promotion Incentives, the Zero Reject Initiative, Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP), Action Against Desertification (AAD) Program, among others. All these efforts aim to increase agricultural productivity in order to provide sufficient food to meet domestic demand, as well as an abundance of commodity crops for export to the international market. Further, they aim at reversing forest loss and degradation, promoting sustainable management of natural resources, rehabilitating degraded lands, and reducing erosion and climate vulnerability (Statista, 2023). Yet, food supply remains insufficient as prices continue to increase all over the country.

In this inquiry, postcolonial influences, resource-dependency economy, and data on Africa as a continent are interchangeable with those from Nigeria, and attempts will be made, on the one hand, to look at the several potential pitfalls associated with the "resource curse" and Dutch Disease, and on the other hand, at agricultural production in Africa, in Nigeria under two major foci: agricultural production of commodity crops or raw materials for the export market, and agricultural production for achievement of national food security in Nigeria, in Africa. The paper will try to present the central point of food insecurity in Nigeria as emanating from the negative colonial legacy on the continent, which truncated the traditional development processes (Biersteker, 1978; Dickenson et al., 1983), as more attention was accorded to the production of export commodity crops as agricultural raw materials at the expense of food production for the locals. The paper will also attempt to show that this singular persisting negative colonial legacy is to be blamed for the present lack of agricultural infrastructure for food security in Nigeria, in Africa.

## 2. Methodology

The methods of research adopted in the conduct and presentation of this discourse are interpretive-historical in approach. In a strict sense, all research involves interpretation. However, the materials and data presented in this paper are based on an existing body of historiography relevant to the debate on why poverty and hunger persist in Africa. The paper tries to address events and situations, most of which occurred in the past. The paper is thus an inquiry into the social, eco-

conomic, and political phenomena within the complex contexts of the process of development in Africa, in Nigeria, with an eye on explaining these phenomena in narrative form and in a holistic fashion. The paper searched for and collected evidence on the root causes, in the past and in the present time, of poverty and food insecurity in the continent, and subjected them to analysis underlined by the interpretive process.

Two related but distinct theoretical frameworks, dependency theory and postcolonial theory, are used in analyzing the relationships between the West and Africa, specifically Nigeria, particularly in the complex context of colonialism and postcolonial imperialism. The relevance of these two theories to the debate of this paper is more than obvious. Dependency theory, developed in the 1950s and 1960s by economists like Raul Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, argues that the economic development of certain Global South countries is conditioned by their dependence on more powerful Global North economies. Postcolonial theory, developed by scholars like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, focuses on the cultural, social, and political legacies of colonialism and imperialism. Nevertheless, while the present discourse is underscored by dependency theory when focusing on economic relationships and structural inequalities, postcolonial theory fits in to emphasize cultural, social, and power dynamics herein. In their mix, both theoretical frameworks are used to critique power structure imbalances and inequalities created by colonialism, imperialism, and globalization in Africa, especially in Nigeria.

The results are then organized and evaluated in order to constitute them into an interpretative narrative whose presentation is logical and credible. The promotion of export commodity crops over staple food crops in Africa, especially in Nigeria, is interpreted through the lenses of dependency theory and postcolonial theory. The fact that the World Bank Group has yet to properly finance agricultural infrastructure for food security in Africa is very obvious and is made manifest by the continued depletion of many African countries' foreign exchange reserves due to heavy food import bills, as well as the increasing levels of hunger and poverty indignation among the larger population of the continent. The epicenter of this discourse is that, notwithstanding corruption, poor governance, etc., in many African countries, the recorded successes in agriculture in Africa have mainly come from the production of raw materials for the West, while production for food security on the continent continues to be insufficient due to a lack of agricultural infrastructure. The failure of the World Bank in this direction still abounds.

### **3. The Theoretical Framework: An Overview of Dependency Theory and Postcolonial Theory**

Dependency theory and postcolonial theory are two related yet distinct theoretical frameworks used to analyze the relationships between societies, economies, and cultures, particularly in the context of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization.

Dependency theory, developed in the 1950s and 1960s by economists like Raul Prebisch, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein, argues that the economic development of certain countries (typically in the Global South) is conditioned by their dependence on more powerful economies (typically in the Global North). The core ideas are:

- Unequal exchange: The global economy is structured in a way that perpetuates unequal exchange between core (developed) and periphery (underdeveloped) countries.
- Exploitation: The core countries exploit the periphery countries, leading to the underdevelopment of the latter.
- Structural dependency: The periphery countries are dependent on the core countries for technology, capital, and markets, which hinders their ability to develop autonomously.

Postcolonial theory, developed by scholars like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, focuses on the cultural, social, and political legacies of colonialism and imperialism. Key aspects include:

- Cultural imperialism: The imposition of dominant cultures (often Western) on colonized or marginalized cultures, leading to the suppression of indigenous cultures and knowledge systems.
- Power dynamics: Postcolonial theory examines the power relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, highlighting issues of representation, voice, and resistance.
- Hybridity and identity: The theory explores how colonialism creates hybrid identities, cultural ambiguities, and complex power dynamics in colonized societies.

The differences between Dependency Theory and Postcolonial Theory include:

- Focus: Dependency theory focuses on economic relationships and structural inequalities, while postcolonial theory emphasizes cultural, social, and power dynamics.
- Scope: Dependency theory is primarily concerned with economic development and underdevelopment, whereas postcolonial theory encompasses a broader range of issues, including culture, identity, and representation.
- Theoretical roots: Dependency theory draws from Marxist and structuralist thought, while postcolonial theory is influenced by poststructuralism, postmodernism, and literary theory.

Similarities and Relations between Dependency Theory and Postcolonial Theory:

- Critique of power structures: Both theories critique the power imbalances and inequalities created by colonialism, imperialism, and globalization.
- Focus on the Global South: Both theories prioritize the experiences and perspectives of societies in the Global South, highlighting the need to challenge dominant narratives and power structures.
- Interdisciplinary approaches: Both theories draw from multiple disciplines, in-

cluding economics, sociology, literature, and cultural studies.

- Complementary perspectives: Dependency theory can provide insights into the economic structures that shape global relationships, while postcolonial theory can offer a deeper understanding of the cultural and social implications of these relationships.

### **Suitability of the Theoretical Framework to the Debate Context**

The relationship between Nigeria and its colonial past illustrates the intersection of dependency and postcolonial theories. On a dependency theory basis, Nigeria's economic dependence on oil exports, often controlled by foreign companies, plus export commodity crops destined for the West, are seen as legacies of colonialism and factors in its economic challenges. Equally, on postcolonial theory grounds, the cultural impacts of British colonialism in Nigeria, such as the imposition of English as a dominant language, can be analyzed through postcolonial theory to understand issues of identity, representation, and cultural hybridity. In summary, dependency theory and postcolonial theory offer complementary perspectives on the complex relationships between societies, economies, and cultures in the context of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. While dependency theory focuses on economic structures and inequalities, postcolonial theory explores cultural, social, and power dynamics. Both theories are useful for understanding the complexities of global relationships and the legacies of colonialism.

This paper, as stated earlier, thus deploys these two theories in the historical interpretation of a selected body of historiography, in the context of the effects of export commodity crops to the West on poor agricultural infrastructure and food insecurity in Africa, specifically in Nigeria. The promotion of export commodity crops over staple food crops in African countries, especially Nigeria, can be interpreted through the lenses of dependency theory and postcolonial theory.

## **4. Background**

“When you look at other countries that have made it, they developed on agriculture, first for the purpose of food security; second, for the purpose of processing what they get from their farms, which is for the beginning of the third, to give it out as export, which is for the purpose of foreign exchange, and fourth, as a means of generating employment for the youth” (Obasanjo, 2022). These stages are not descriptive; they have an inner logic of continuity with the traditional process of development (Smith, 1776), and the pattern of classical capitalist development (Oswaldo, 1973). These traditional processes and patterns are what colonialism truncated and caused countries like Nigeria to derail on achieving the basic stages of the development process (Okonkwo, 1998). Instead of supporting the ongoing tradition of agriculture for food security first in the continent, colonialism truncated that process with the imposition of agriculture for export commodity crops as raw materials for manufacturing in the West.

Based on the 1996 World Bank Food Summit, Food Security is defined as “...when

all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). As already pointed out above, in many cases and in many countries, agriculture also provides the bulk of exports to support the external balance of payments, and is the source of raw materials (commodity crops) for processing and manufacturing sectors in the industrialized countries. Now, most African countries have large reserves of solid, liquid, and gaseous minerals which are well suited in sizes and demands for the export markets. So, earning foreign exchange to support the external balance of payments from these mineral sources should not constitute a constraint to such countries. Further, most African countries have a large expanse of uncultivated arable land for agriculture; even the desert-dominated nations are today partnering with Israeli and Chinese farmers to grow food in the deserts. So, land and land-related resources abound for agriculture. However, in pursuit of the self-interest of the West (America, Japan, and the European Union), right from the colonial era, attention has been more on development of those agricultural products in Africa which supply the raw material needs for Western processing and manufacturing sectors. But this same West is not interested in the development of those agricultural productions in Africa which could lead to food sufficiency or food security in the continent, logically though, as it were in agreement with Adam Smith (1776) who saw “economic behavior as primarily guided by the fundamental factor of self-interest without interference from outside authorities.” This has been the underlying principle of Western interventions in Africa; the achievement of the self-interest of the West, at all times and at all levels, be it at the World Bank, the multinationals, or any other institutions or agencies, regional, bilateral, and multilateral. It is a process that started with the negative impacts of colonialism in the African continent.

The Western approach to agriculture in Africa, specifically in Nigeria, with the intent of assisting the continent to earn its highly needed foreign exchange, is not only meaningless but also baseless; when there are other alternative sources of export products in the liquid, gas, and solid minerals, as well as other sectors from which more foreign exchange could be earned and is indeed being earned. For example, the top mineral-dependent countries in Africa and their solid mineral export earnings (2020 to 2022 estimates) are: Botswana leading the pack with minerals (diamonds) accounting for about 92% of its total exports and \$5.5 billion to \$6 billion. Other countries heavily reliant on solid minerals exports include Guinea (87% gold) with \$4.7 billion; Mali (85% gold) with \$2 billion; Burkina Faso (84% gold) with \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion; Zambia (79% copper) with \$4 billion to \$5 billion; and the Democratic Republic of Congo (77% copper) with \$10 billion (Infoguide Nigeria, 2024; 360 mozambique, 2024; Rao, 2024; Ericsson & Lof, 2019).

The bottom line is that today in Africa, in Nigeria, the indignity of food insecurity and poverty is increasing as there is virtually no agricultural production infrastructure to support food security. As pointed out above, for instance, between

2016 and 2019, Nigeria's cumulative agricultural imports stood at four times higher than agricultural exports within the same period. On a larger scale, the current situation is that there exists more agricultural infrastructure for the production of export raw materials than for food production on the continent. With colonialism, the West not only displaced local agricultural priorities and thus truncated the expansion, on the stages of growth or the natural progress of opulence, of the traditional farming culture which in the pre-colonial period ensured food sufficiency for the people, but also deprived the continent of the opportunity to gradually build up its necessary agricultural infrastructure for food security; this is tantamount to the displacement of indigenous production capability (Biersteker, 1978). Today, some of the persisting culminating outcomes are that, "...as Nigeria makes efforts to ensure that agriculture plays a key role in its quest for revenue diversification, stakeholders in the sector have charged the Federal Government to bridge infrastructure gaps to aid agribusiness development in the country and ensure food security. Indubitably, some of the greatest problems confronting rural farmers and communities in Nigeria are the absence of critical infrastructure such as motorable roads, storage facilities, and irrigation facilities among others" (Okojie, 2019).

## 5. The Debate

By the time European expansion began, the countries that now comprise the Third World had nurtured highly complex civilizations with high levels of cultural, technical, and social development. Some of these areas were not "undeveloped" or "underdeveloped"; rather, they were what Buchanan (1967) called "pre-developed", with societies that had achieved a high degree of cultural, economic, and political development before the arrival of Europeans, and in some cases, in advance of progress in Europe itself. Their relative backwardness today is due, at least in part, to the impact of European colonialism on their development, which created a particular pattern of relationships between colonizers and colonized, and profoundly distorted the internal structures and patterns of the colonized territory. European expansion affected most of the world, and created a pattern of unequal relationships between a European core and a periphery of dependent lands (Dickenson et al., 1983). This trend has not changed even in present modern times. Ignacy Sachs (1978) reveals how "the Third World is in fact becoming poorer and poorer, trapped in an economic imprisonment clearly engineered by the Western industrial states." So, the impact of multinational corporate investment in underdeveloped countries has not only led to tensions in relations, but has also generated a great deal of controversy and debate within the academic community (ibid). This debate is still ongoing. For example, in the concluded Global Financial Summit in Paris (June 2023), the Ghanaian President had, amongst others, said: "We can no longer continue to make policy for ourselves in our country, in our region, in our continent on the basis of whatever support the Western world or France or the European Union can give us. It will not work, it

has not worked out, and it will not work out. Our responsibility is to chart a path that is about how we can develop our nation ourselves” (Al Mariam’s *Commentaries*, 2023). An overview of the post-World War II literature on economic development presents four major and sometimes competing strands of thought: the linear-stages-of-growth model, theories and patterns of structural change, the international-dependence revolution, and the neoclassical free-market counter-revolution. In recent years, an eclectic approach has emerged that draws on all of these classic theories (Todaro & Smith, 2003).

However, the basis of development growth has been explained by Gutkind (1964) as the “principal process of transformation” and by Smith (1776) as the “natural progress of opulence” but from a non-economic standpoint. Now, from a purely economic standpoint, theorists of the 1950s and early 1960s viewed the process of development as a series of successive stages of economic growth through which all countries must pass. It was primarily an economic theory of development in which the right quantity and mixture of saving, investment, and foreign aid were all that was necessary to enable developing nations to proceed along an economic growth path that had historically been followed by the more developed countries. Development thus became synonymous with rapid, aggregate economic growth. But this process in Africa, up till now, has been truncated by the West in policy and action at different levels. As Rostow (1960) wrote in the opening chapters of “The Stages of Economic Growth”, “It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off into self-sustaining growth, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption. These stages are not descriptive, they are not merely a way of generalizing certain factual observations about the sequence of development of modern societies; they have an inner logic and continuity. They constitute, in the end, both a theory about economic growth and, more generally, even if still highly partial, a theory about modern history as a whole.”

Now, the advanced countries, it was argued, had all passed the stage of “take-off into self-sustaining growth”, and the underdeveloped countries that were still in either the “traditional society” or the “preconditions” stage had only to follow a certain set of rules of development to take off in their turn into self-sustaining economic growth (Todaro & Smith, 2003). Arguably, Nigeria could be said to have been in “the preconditions for take-off into self-sustaining growth” at the time colonization started with the British bombardment of Lagos in 1851 (Okonkwo, 1998). However, as a highlight to this debate, this discourse posits that the interest of the West, colonial and postcolonial, in export raw materials from the African continent for their manufacturing and industrial sectors, promoted and still promotes policies and financial investments (through the World Bank, multinational corporations, and other international agencies and institutions) in the production of export commodity crops. In this interest of the West, in policy and action, we can locate the historical processes associated with the changes that led to the emer-

gence of the gap that now differentiates the Third World from the Industrialized West. The pursuit of this interest distorted the process of traditional growth and hampered the natural progress of opulence in Africa, in Nigeria, whose fundamental requirement would have been agriculture for food sufficiency first, and the infrastructure therefrom. The reasons for the increasing level of poverty in Africa, in Nigeria today, could easily be situated in the consistent lack of food production infrastructure; the continent having been subjected to producing export raw materials for the West without building capacity to fight hunger, the indignity of poverty, and food insecurity.

## **6. Understanding the Mix of Export Commodity Crops and Staple Food Crops in Nigeria, in Africa**

The export commodity crops and staple crops mix maintains the same pattern in Nigeria as well as in other African countries. However, the main body of this section will dwell more on the pattern of the mix based on the situation and data from Nigeria, while at the end of this section the same pattern will be shown to prevail at the level of the majority of African countries. Now, some of the major export commodity crops and staple food crops in Nigeria are as follows:

Export Commodity Crops:

- 1) Cocoa: Nigeria is one of the world's largest cocoa producers, exporting cocoa beans, cocoa butter, and cocoa products.
- 2) Sesame Seeds: Nigeria is a significant exporter of sesame seeds, particularly to countries such as China, Japan, and Turkey.
- 3) Cashew Nuts: Nigeria exports cashew nuts mainly to India and other countries for processing.
- 4) Rubber: Natural rubber is another exported commodity crop in Nigeria.
- 5) Palm Oil and Palm Products: Nigeria exports palm oil, palm kernel oil, and other palm-based products.
- 6) Cotton: Cotton is grown in Nigeria and contributes to textile production and exports.
- 7) Ginger: Nigeria exports ginger mainly to countries like China, India, and the US.

Staple Food Crops (mainly consumed locally):

- 1) Yams: A major staple food in Nigeria, widely cultivated and consumed.
- 2) Cassava: Cassava (and products like garri, fufu) is a key staple food crop.
- 3) Maize (Corn): Maize is grown and consumed locally, and is used in foods like cornmeal (pap).
- 4) Rice: Rice is both a staple food and is increasingly grown commercially in Nigeria.
- 5) Sorghum: Sorghum is a drought-resistant staple grain in northern Nigeria.
- 6) Millet: Millet is another staple grain, particularly in drier regions.
- 7) Cowpeas (Beans): Cowpeas are a common protein source and staple in many Nigerian diets.

#### Export Commodity and Staple Crops Mix:

Apart from the export of the major commodity crops as listed above, Nigeria also exports several staple food crops to other countries, especially to the West, with strong contingency on food insecurity in the country throughout the year, all with the aim of increasing non-oil exports and earning more foreign exchange. Such staple food crops include:

1) Yams: Nigeria is the world's largest producer of yams, and they are exported to countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.

2) Cassava: Nigeria is also the world's largest producer of cassava, and it is exported to countries such as China, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

3) Sesame Seeds: Sesame seeds are a significant export crop for Nigeria, with major destinations including Japan, Turkey, China, and the United States.

4) Ginger: Nigeria is among the top producers of ginger, and it is exported to countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and China.

5) Cowpea (Beans): Cowpea is another staple crop in Nigeria that is exported to countries such as India, Pakistan, and some European countries.

6) Rice: While Nigeria is a major importer of rice, it also exports some varieties to neighboring West African countries.

7) Maize (Corn): Maize is grown and consumed locally in Nigeria, but some varieties are exported to countries such as Niger and Benin.

8) Sorghum: Sorghum is another staple crop in Nigeria that is exported to countries such as the United States, China, and some European countries.

Because of the dependency's structural, exploitative, and unequal exchange, where the global economy is structured in a way that perpetuates unequal exchange, among others, between core (developed) and periphery (underdeveloped) countries, these crops are not only very important for food security in Nigeria but are rather exported to shore up the country's non-oil exports, which saw a 20.79% increase in 2024, reaching \$5.456 billion. Cocoa beans alone accounted for 30.55% of total non-oil exports. At the continent level, the general trend in Africa is that while solid minerals are significant for many African countries, as explained earlier, the majority of them still rely on agricultural exports. Africa's 42 resource-dependent countries still rely on agricultural exports as opposed to non-fuel minerals or energy/fuel exports (InfoGuide Nigeria, 2024; Wigmore Trading, 2021).

### Potential Pitfalls of Nigeria as a Resource-Dependent Economy

Having presented above the mix in export commodity crops and staple crops in Nigeria, in Africa, it is obvious that Nigeria and other African countries, as resource-dependent economies, face several potential pitfalls associated with the "resource curse" and Dutch Disease. For better understanding and relation to the subject of debate, explanations of concepts with a breakdown of these challenges and possible mitigation strategies are as follows:

#### Potential Pitfalls:

1) Resource Curse (Paradox of Plenty) is the phenomenon where countries rich

in natural resources (like oil, gas, or minerals) experience slower economic growth, increased corruption, and poorer development outcomes compared to countries with fewer natural resources. Nigeria, in this context, manifests the following features:

a) Over-reliance on Oil: Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports (90% of export earnings, 70% of government revenue pre-2015). This reliance makes the economy vulnerable to global oil price fluctuations.

b) Neglect of other sectors: Focus on oil can lead to the neglect of agriculture, manufacturing, and services, reducing economic diversification.

c) Corruption and Rent-Seeking: Resource wealth can fuel corruption, mismanagement, and rent-seeking behaviors, as seen in Nigeria's history of oil revenue mismanagement.

d) Income volatility: Oil price volatility leads to boom-and-bust economic cycles, affecting budget planning and long-term investments.

2) Dutch Disease is a situation where increased revenues from a natural resource (e.g., oil) lead to currency appreciation, making other exports (like agriculture or manufactured goods) less competitive globally, potentially shrinking those sectors. The following features of Dutch Disease are common in Nigeria:

a) Naira Appreciation: High oil revenues can strengthen the Naira, hurting non-oil exports (e.g., agriculture, textiles).

b) Sectoral Shifts: Resources and labor might shift to the booming oil sector from other productive sectors, leading to deindustrialization or reduced agricultural output.

3) Other challenges include:

a) Environmental Degradation: Oil extraction in the Niger Delta has caused environmental damage, impacting local livelihoods and ecosystems.

b) Social Tensions: Resource wealth can lead to conflicts over revenue distribution, as seen in Nigeria's history with oil-producing regions (Biafra separatist tensions and militant groups in the Delta).

c) Lack of Economic Diversification: Overdependence on oil hampers resilience to external shocks.

Some Mitigation Strategies:

Nigeria and the majority of African countries face risks of the resource curse and Dutch Disease not only due to their heavy reliance on oil and other minerals as main sources of foreign exchange earnings, but also as a result of strongly sustained policies that promote the production of export commodity crops over staple food crops. The present situation is compounded by the export of large quantities of staple food crops to the West, as indicated above under the mix of crops, with cassava, maize, etc. as some of the crops. Mitigation of the potential and real pitfalls will require economic production diversification led by massive agricultural infrastructure development, prudent fiscal management, transparency, investing in other sectors, and strengthening institutions. These mitigation strategies are attainable if Nigeria is able to implement reforms consistently, manage

political challenges, and adapt to global dynamics.

## 7. Understanding Food Security, Food Insecurity, and Deficit Food Systems in Africa, in Nigeria

“Africa’s food import bill stood at about US\$35 billion in 2016, and it is projected to rise to US\$110 billion by 2025. In addition, Africa’s agribusiness sector is projected to reach \$1 trillion in 2025, driven by the continent’s rapidly growing middle class. Weak inter-regional integrations and poor output growth have dampened the prospect of intra-Africa trade, which stood at 16.6% in 2017, relative to peers such as Europe (68%) and Asia (59%). Africa’s agricultural sector is bedeviled by a weak value chain. For instance, out of the US\$62 billion in agricultural products exported by Africa in 2017, only US\$12 billion were classified as processed goods. About 90% of Africa’s agricultural exports to non-African markets are dominated by primary or semi-processed products, while about half of intraregional trade is associated with processed products. With the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), these gains can be strengthened at a much higher pace. Consequently, it is expected that the AfCFTA would help to support Africa’s agri-business, create new regional markets for farmers, strengthen the agro-value chains, and significantly reduce agricultural imports from outside the continent. AfCFTA aims to foster agricultural transformation and advancement in Africa in order to promote food security and competitiveness through the improvement of regional agricultural value chains and investments in production and marketing infrastructure. It is believed that easy access to regional importation of food products can help countries achieve food security” (Oyaniran, 2020).

The four main dimensions of food security are: availability (which addresses the supply side of food security, determined by the level of food production, stock levels, and net trade); economic and physical access to food (an adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household-level food security); food utilization (commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food; sufficient energy and nutrient intake are the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, and diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food, combined with good biological utilization of food consumed—this determines the nutritional status of individuals); and stability of the other three dimensions over time (even if food intake is adequate today, one is still considered to be food insecure if there is inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors such as unemployment and rising food prices may have an impact on food security status). For food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously (FAO, 1996). In Africa, the existing lack of agricultural production infrastructure hampers the achievement of any of the above objectives on a sustainable basis.

“The World Bank Group works with partners to build food systems that can

feed everyone, everywhere, every day, by improving food security, promoting ‘nutrition-sensitive agriculture’ and improving food safety. The Bank is a leading financier of food systems. In fiscal year 2022, there were US\$9.6 billion in new IBRD/IDA (International Bank for Reconstruction/International Development Association) commitments to agriculture and related sectors” (ibid). Conversely, a country is said to be food insecure if agriculture contributes less than 30% of its GDP. In Nigeria, agriculture contributed between 23% - 24% of its GDP in 2021 and 2022, while Sierra Leone scored about 60%. Chad had 54% and Ethiopia 38%. It is important to ensure adequate and constant domestic food supply to meet the needs of the population. The target is often to exceed the minimum supply need of the country, so that the excess can feed the domestic processing and manufacturing industry, or be exported to earn foreign exchange. Most of the developed economies have solid food security infrastructure to ensure regular food supply that can last for up to five years, even in the face of difficult challenges, such as war, insurrection, and natural disasters. They are able to dip into their food reserves to send food relief to other countries that are facing such difficulties. This is not so, however, with African countries. The little they have almost disappeared completely during the COVID-19 outbreak, and they started begging for aid. This is because the “food system”, including the enabling policy environments and cultural norms around food in Nigeria and Africa, is poor. Ideal food systems would be nutrition, health, and safety-driven, productive and efficient (thus able to deliver affordable food), environmentally sustainable and climate-smart, as well as inclusive. To realize this, continued investment must be made in agricultural research and development, paving the way for programs and policies based on sound evidence. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), “conducts research and offers policy support on a range of food system issues from farm-level productivity to development of inclusive food value chains to nutrition education—providing evidence for design of food systems that give people equitable access to nutritious, sustainable diets and contribute more broadly to development and well-being” (IFPRI, 2023).

“Agriculture is the mainstay of developing economies, underpinning their food security, export earnings, and rural development. According to the [World Bank Group \(2025a\)](#), the development of agriculture remains one of the most effective tools to end extreme poverty, boost shared prosperity, and feed a projected 9.7 billion people by 2050. To achieve this, agriculture in 2050 will need to produce almost 50% more food, feed, and biofuel than it did in 2012. However, agricultural productivity in Sub-Saharan Africa has continued to fall short of expectations and would need to more than double by 2050 to meet increased food demand and avoid food insecurity” (Etuk & Ayuk, 2021). The relevance of agricultural infrastructure to achieving this cannot be overemphasized, especially when “the agricultural sector remains the largest employer in Nigeria, employing more than 36% of the labor force” (Oyaniran, 2020), notwithstanding its low average GDP contribution of 24% to the national economy. This deficit becomes worrisome as it is

this infrastructure that creates the backbone of agricultural production modernization or industrialization.

## 8. Nigeria's Export of Agricultural Raw Materials, Minerals, and Food Import Bills

Damilola Odifa (Damilola, 2022) examined the top ten agro-commodities exported by Nigeria in 2022 and identified that cocoa beans, sesame seeds, cashew, and seven others topped the list of agricultural commodities Nigeria exported in 2022, generating N427.6 billion in revenue in nine months. Year-on-year, the value of the top agricultural commodities exported increased by 14.9% compared to the N372.2 billion recorded in the corresponding period of 2021. In the third quarter of 2022, agricultural exports accounted for 1.4% (N84.21 billion) of the total exports valued at N5.93 trillion. The value of superior quality cocoa beans exported in nine months stood at N119.69 billion, accounting for 27.99% of total agricultural exports in the country within the same year. Nigeria's exports of sesame seeds from January to September 2022 stood at N101.29 billion, accounting for 23.69% of the country's total agricultural exports within the period reviewed (NBS, 2023). The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) has described Nigeria as a major player in the cashew industry, with a rising market share in global cashew production and an annual average production of 5%. The country earned N16.93 billion from shelled cashew between January and September 2022. Cocoa is a revenue and foreign exchange earner for Nigeria, and the country is the largest grower of the crop with 250,000 metric tons (ICO, 2023). The commodity was mainly exported to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Indonesia, the United States, Malaysia, and Canada. Nigeria is also among the top growers of sesame seeds globally, thus making the seed an important component of Nigeria's diversification plan. The export destinations of the commodity in the period under review were China, Japan, Vietnam, Turkey, Greece, and Germany. Nigeria currently produces 220,000 to 240,000 tons of cashew, lower when compared to its African peers such as Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. It exported cashew nuts in shells to the West, to the tune of N60.89 billion in the nine-month period, accounting for 14.24% of the country's total agricultural exports within the period reviewed (Odifa, 2023). It is noteworthy that more than 80% of the country-destinations of commodity exports from Nigeria are Western countries. This situation will contrast with minerals (oil and solid) export country-destinations as will be presented below; in this case, a greater percentage of mineral exports went to China and other Asian countries.

The most exported solid minerals from Nigeria are the three commodities of zinc ores and concentrates, as well as silica sands and quartz. China was the major destination of Nigeria's exports during the year under review, followed by Malaysia and Vietnam. An audit report by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) showed that these commodities, out of 26 minerals exported in 2017, accounted for 73.81% of total exports. While China accounted for

68% of total export value during the year, Malaysia and Vietnam accounted for 6.5% and 4.4%, respectively (Adegboyega, 2019). Generally, the distribution of gross domestic product (GDP) across the economic sectors in Nigeria in 2021 shows that agriculture contributed around 23.36%, while 31.41% came from industry, and 43.79% from the services sector (Statista, 2023). The oil sector contributed 6.21% to the total real GDP in the first quarter of 2023, down from the figure recorded in the corresponding period of 2022 and up from the preceding quarter, where it contributed 6.63% and 4.34%, respectively (NBS, 2023).

As earlier pointed out, “Africa’s agricultural sector is bedeviled with a weak value chain. For instance, out of US\$62 billion in agricultural products exported by Africa in 2017, only US\$12 billion were classified as processed goods” (Oyaniran, 2020). In whichever way commodity export earnings are compared to the food import bill to the continent, the fact remains that countries in Africa will never be able to earn enough foreign exchange to cover their food import bills. This fact puts into question the Western sustained pressure on Africa to grow and export agricultural raw materials in order to earn foreign exchange with which to buy food. The enviable position of the oil sector in the Nigerian economy over the past decades as a major foreign exchange and revenue-generating sector notwithstanding, the agricultural sector has remained the largest and arguably the most important sector of the economy. Even as the GDP contribution of agriculture to the economy has seemingly stagnated around 23% in recent times, the sector still employs about 65% of the labor force in the country (Okonkwo, 2009). It still holds the abundant potential for enhancing and sustaining the country’s food security.

Now, from the foregoing, the fallacy of the Western-promoted and supported “agricultural products exports to earn foreign exchange” is made manifest. The figures above show that Africa’s food import bills surpass the continent’s foreign exchange earnings from agricultural commodity exports. It is equally evident that oil and solid minerals exports generate more foreign exchange earnings for Africa; the cases of Nigeria, South Africa, and Botswana are well known, while agriculture still stands out as the largest employer of labor on the continent.

## 9. The Fallacy of Development Policy and Support from the West

A clear case, elaborated above, has been made for the existence of other sources of foreign exchange products in Africa, especially from the mineral extraction sectors of the economy. In which case, if the West were true and sincere in assisting Africa to increase its capacity to earn foreign exchange, the emphasis would have been on such alternatives and on the development of African capacity to feed its population. Instead, the West has focused its interest on the production of raw materials for its manufacturing and industrial sectors, not on the growth of food production capacity in Africa.

Now, let us take a look at what happened with agricultural production pre-in-

dependence in Nigeria; it appears to agree with Adam Smith (as in [Smith, 1776](#)), who viewed “economic behavior as primarily guided by the fundamental factor of self-interest without interference from outside authorities.” Before the decade of the 1960s, the dominant role of agriculture in Nigeria’s economy was taken for granted. With very little support (and little or no interference) from government, Nigerian agriculture was able to grow at a sufficient rate to provide adequate food for an increasing population, raw materials for a budding industrial sector, increasing public revenue and foreign exchange for the government, as well as employment opportunities for an expanding labor force. The little support provided by the colonial government for agricultural development was concentrated on export crops like cocoa, groundnut, palm produce, rubber, and cotton, as self-sufficiency in food production seemed not to pose any problem worthy of public attention ([FGN-APN, 1985](#)). The colonial government had no plans on how to lay the foundations for food security and agricultural production in Nigeria; rather, they distorted the production arrangements and trading patterns they met in the country and superimposed what suited themselves ([Okonkwo, 1998](#)). For example, there was no economic planning in the real sense of the term dictated by the socioeconomic base in Nigeria; Sir Hugh Clifford, the Governor of Southern Nigeria at the time, opposed the launching of a development program for Nigeria. The earliest signs of the cooperative movement in Nigeria could be traced to the development efforts of the colonial masters calculated to serve their own aspirations. So, with the passing of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, the first cooperatives were established in Nigeria; the aim was to curb the monopolistic activities of the middlemen and to protect and encourage commodity export trade. Unlike other economic sectors, the government came out with a cooperative law in 1935 ([Ijere, 1980](#)). Problems in Nigerian agriculture, however, became evident from the first decade of the country’s independence (1960-69). These indications were clearly seen in increasing food supply shortfalls, rising food prices, and declining foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exports. However, not much rational concern was shown because the problems were thought to be the temporary effects of a series of crises which eventually culminated in the civil war (1967-70) ([FGN-APN, 1985](#)). Sadly, today, agriculture in Nigeria is not faring better; food provision is in serious decline while export raw materials are now reduced to one or two items, the impacts of which are the high levels of poverty and hunger among an increasing number of Nigerians. Further, “the second decade of Nigeria’s independence (1970-79) witnessed a rapid deterioration in the country’s agricultural situation. Not only were there widening food supply-demand gaps and rising food import bills, there were also rapid declines in government revenue from agriculture, in foreign exchange earnings from agricultural exports, as well as in the labor force required in agriculture. The situation was further compounded by the residual effects of the civil war, severe droughts in some parts of the country, government fiscal and monetary policies, and above all, the oil boom, which created additional serious distortions in the economy and accelerated the

labor exodus from agriculture” (ibid). The interventions from multinational corporate investments not only led to tensions in North-South relations but also generated a great deal of controversy and debate within the academic community. In his book, *The Discovery of the Third World*, Ignacy Sachs (1978) demonstrates how the Third World is, in fact, becoming poorer and poorer, trapped in an economic imprisonment engineered by the Western industrial states. The de-masking is superb, buttressed by facts taken from both capitalist and communist sources. In this path-finding book, the author undertakes to resolve this controversy by presenting a systematic evaluation of two alternative contending theoretical perspectives on the effects of multinational investment on the social structure, patterns of consumption, income distribution, displacement of indigenous production, transfer of technology, and balance of payments of developing countries.

After making his own assessment of the alternatives to the multinational, Biersteker concludes that critics of multinational corporations are generally more accurate than mere conventional writers. Based on the evidence from Nigeria’s manufacturing sector, he demonstrates that multinational corporations contribute to a net financial outflow, employ more capital-intensive technologies, and provide support for some local “comprador” groups. They appear to transfer technology to the host country, but they also contribute to some form of displacement of local production and encourage some “inappropriate” patterns of consumption. He finds their effect on income distribution much less clear. Nevertheless, the displacement of indigenous production can assure the dominance of the multinational corporation. Displacement of an alternative, indigenous form of production only increases the underdeveloped country’s dependence on the multinationals. It also increasingly reduces the autonomy in decision-making that would otherwise have been conducted by indigenous entrepreneurs (Biersteker, 1978).

## **10. Some Outcomes of World Bank Food Security Finance in Africa: The Reality of Getting Infrastructure Finance Right**

In the World Bank-Blog publication on “Getting Infrastructure Finance Right: Beyond brick and mortar: Key lessons learned on the impact of infrastructure on economic development” (Vagliasindi & Gorgulu, 2023), a paper that synthesized 300 studies over 40 years, representing one of the most significant attempts to date to understand the impact of infrastructure on development outcomes, the research demonstrates the overwhelmingly positive contribution of infrastructure, despite some caveats related to mixed results and certain unintended consequences. Main takeaways from evidence-based country and region-specific research demonstrate how access to electricity and transport infrastructure, among others, is critical to supporting output and productivity, jobs, human capital formation, and alleviating poverty as well as inequality.

Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent, and events in it could constitute a true picture of what could be happening in any other African country on an average basis; no correlation analysis is actually needed to confirm

this assertion. Equally, there would be no need to over-labor the obvious when the reality of poverty on the continent cannot be matched or corroborated by the expected impact and outcome of the World Bank Group's strategy towards food security in Africa. The Group claims to be working "...with partners to build food systems that can feed everyone, everywhere, every day by improving food security" (World Bank Group, 2025b). The reality of poverty among a large number of the population of Nigeria (probably more than three-fourths of the nation's total population) is less fortunate. They may have little or no shelter and an inadequate food supply; a fallacy of the World Bank Group's food security intervention. Their health is poor, they often cannot read and write, they are often unemployed, and their prospects for a better life are uncertain at best. The indignity of poverty among this large number of poor Nigerians is manifest in their living conditions: they live where many small clusters of tiny huts dot a dry and barren land. Each cluster contains a group of extended families, all participating in and sharing the work. There is no money income here because all food, clothing, shelter, and worldly goods are made and consumed by the people themselves—there is a "subsistence economy". There are no roads, schools, hospitals, electric wires, or water supplies, and life here seems to be much as it must have been thousands of years ago. In many respects, it is a stark and difficult existence. Moreover, the facts of the reality of poverty in Nigeria show that, consistently, many more people are becoming poor; the rate of increase in the number of the poor is greater than the rate of population increase in the country. The majority of those who engage in agriculture still operate at the subsistence level (Todaro & Smith, 2003). As such, sustainable "development must be redefined as an attack on the chief evils of the world today: malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, slums, unemployment, and inequality. Measured in terms of aggregate growth rates, development has been a great success. But measured in terms of jobs, justice, and the elimination of poverty, it has been a failure or only partial success" (Paul P. Streeten as in Todaro and Smith 2003). What thrives more in Africa today is export-oriented agriculture, but not the agriculture that builds infrastructure for food security for the people of the continent.

Even with projects like the Commercial Agriculture Development Project (CADP) for Nigeria, whose objective is to strengthen agricultural production systems and facilitate access to markets for targeted value chains among small and medium scale commercial farmers in the five participating states (Lagos, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu, and Cross-River), the value chains are: palm oil, cocoa, fruit trees, poultry, aquaculture, and dairy, with maize and rice as staples. There are two components to the project: the first being agricultural production and commercialisation—this component will provide resources to facilitate the adoption of appropriate and existing agricultural technologies. It will also support staple crop production systems to complement the country's food security initiatives and develop domestic export markets. There are four subcomponents: technology demonstration and adoption; support to staple crop production systems; market facilitation;

and capacity building. The second component is rural infrastructure. This component will provide resources for the construction of new roads, rehabilitation of existing ones, and maintenance of roads to communities, and selected agricultural activities. There are two subcomponents: network of farm access roads and rural energy (IRVAPP, 2023).

Nevertheless, in an assessment conducted by Etuk and Ayuk (2021) on the CADP, it was found that even though the CADP impacted the poverty level of beneficiaries positively, it was not pro-poor; hence, there is a need to ensure that the poor are effectively targeted in designing development intervention programs. In consideration of the empirical results obtained from this study, Etuk and Ayuk (2021) concluded that with the implementation of the CADP, there is a reduction in the poverty indices of the beneficiaries. Specifically, the Po index for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicates that 1.4% and 3.6% of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries respectively are living below the poverty line. The poorest among the poor of the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries account for 45.15% and 71.43% of the poor population respectively. This indicates that the CADP is poverty-decreasing. On commercialization, they found that the programme led to a statistically significant increase in the commercialization index of beneficiaries. Beneficiaries had their commercialization index increased by at least 0.9%. The pro-poorness of the CADP was analyzed by computing the PEGR (Poverty Equivalent Growth Rate) and the PPGI (Pro-Poor Growth Index) Kakwani and Pernia indices. The results from both indices show that the poor received proportionally less of the benefit of growth than the non-poor, implying that the CADP was not pro-poor. Since the CADP decreases the probability of being poor and increases the commercialization index of participants, if the project is to be continued, the following implementation options are recommended: the project should be scaled up to accommodate more beneficiaries. The project design and targeting mechanism should be reviewed to make the programme pro-poor. Availability of an up-to-date social register would prove indispensable in targeting the poor. These options should also be a policy takeaway for other agricultural intervention programmes in Nigeria (Etuk & Ayuk, 2021).

## 11. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite its potential and present contribution to the economy of the continent, the agriculture sector in Africa faces significant infrastructure deficit challenges. These challenges negatively impact productivity and food security in many nations and countries in Africa. In all parts of the continent, domestic demand for food still outweighs local production despite interventions by development partners, whose interest has not only been unfavorable but has also been promoting an unequal pattern of relationships with Africans, in line with the negative legacy of colonialism.

So, the fallacy of Western-supported and -influenced policy, as well as its actions in Africa, has been more problematic than beneficial—policy that focuses

more on making various governments in Africa more concerned with encouraging the production of export commodity crops to the detriment of staple food crops in order to earn foreign exchange. The foreign exchange thus earned is then used to import food that could have been produced and processed in situ, thus impacting food security infrastructure. The currency of this Western-induced mindset still guides the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, which in May 2023 advised farmers to prioritize the production of economic crops and trees to tap into the huge potential of export to the international market. The Council would provide the needed awareness, technical support, capacity building, and tips on how to access the international market through export. With economic crops and trees, farmers will make more money through export and use part of the profit to buy food, with so much change in the bank. This is the position of government in many African countries, particularly in Nigeria, where food import bills have consistently surpassed revenues from exports of agricultural products since the 1970s.

This unequal relationship pattern has created a quixotic mindset in African leaders. Being colonially entrenched and presently sustained by threats and subterfuges to coerce these leaders, even through various development agencies, this mindset has continued to be unsympathetically exploited by some developed nations to further boost their own economies and permanently impoverish the African continent.

The way forward remains that, in recognition of the pre-colonial and present development potentials of the African continent, and being very much aware of the effects of the prevailing particular and unequal pattern of Africa's relationship with the West, more than ever before there is a need for Africa, and for Nigeria, to: jettison the quixotic mindset which has made African leaders dependent on Western-originated development policy, especially on the production of agricultural raw materials for export as a way of earning foreign exchange; emphasize the exploitation of other abundant minerals in the continent for the purpose of foreign exchange revenues; and fundamentally charter the continent's own path in agricultural infrastructure development for food security, guided strongly by locally grown policy detached from the influence or interest of the West and consolidated from within.

The provision of the needed infrastructure for the production of substantial staple food crops must therefore be given priority in all domestic production by Africans, if food must be made available to the people in order to permanently remove the present state of food insecurity in the continent.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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