



Assessment of Food Security and Sustainable Development in IKERE Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the relationship between food security and sustainable development in Ikere Local Government Area (LGA), Ekiti State, Nigeria. Food security is a critical component of sustainable development, especially in areas where there are problems of poverty, environmental degradation, and lack of infrastructure. Premised on this background, the study examines factors influencing and enhancing food security in Ikere Local Government Area; investigates the major agricultural practices in Ikere Local Government Area. The study also explores the impacts of food security on human development in Ikere Local Government Area; and the impacts and effectiveness of government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area. Furthermore, the study identifies the challenges confronting food security and proffers ways by which government can improve on food security in Ikere Local Government Area. In the same vein, the study discusses the nexus between food security and broader sustainable development goals, highlighting the importance of addressing underlying systemic issues to achieve long-term sustainability. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys, interviews, and observations to evaluate the current state of food security and its relationship with sustainable development in Ikere LGA. The findings revealed various factors influencing food security, including secure land tenure and access to land, favourable weather conditions, access to water for irrigation for farming during dry seasons, availability of fertilizers and modern farms equipments and implements, high agricultural production and sustainable farming practices, and adequate infrastructure, roads and transportations networks. The study therefore recommended the need for the establishment of Special Agricultural Zone (SAZ) in Ikere LGA, provision of access roads, creation of storage facilities, adequate support and guidance to the farmers and construction of small scale industries in the local government area.

Keywords: Food Security, Development, Sustainable Development, Agriculture and Environment.

Introduction

One of the most challenging issues in the world at present is how to provide adequate food to more than seven billion people around the world. Food security is a complicated, multidimensional idea that is typically impacted by geography, culture, and environment (EIU, 2018). In recent time, both developing and developed nations of the world continue to face difficulties in achieving complete food security. Food security has become a significant focus in today's world's sustainable development. One of the main points in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) discussed the purpose of the action was to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Targeted food security interventions, such as food assistance in the form of food stamps, direct food relief, or indirectly through subsidized food production, help to mitigate the issue in developed countries. In these areas, food insecurity has considerably decreased as a result of these initiatives. Though, less successfully, developing nations use similar strategies. The disparity in the outcomes could be caused by a variety of factors, including a lack of resources, a shorter intervention period, or different systems, the majority of which are naturally heterogeneous.

Food security is a crucial component of human development on a global scale. When enough safe and nourishing food is available to everyone at all times to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, then there is food security. This is when everyone has physical, social, and economic access to food. When a family members do not experience hunger or food insecurity, they are said to be food secured (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2012). Furthermore, Food security is the availability, affordability and accessibility of [food](#) in a given state and the ability of individuals within that state to access, afford, and source adequate foodstuff. The availability of food irrespective of class, gender or region is another element of food security. Similarly, [household](#) food security is considered to exist when all the members of a family, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, [healthy](#) life (Food and Agricultural Organization, 2012).

Moreover, states around the world are struggling with food insecurity, which has a negative impact on sustainable development and continues to slow down social and economic progress. For example, over 800 million people worldwide, the majority of whom are smallholder farmers who rely on agriculture for a living and to feed their families go to bed hungry every night. Although, urban slums have grown rapidly in the last ten years, almost seventy-five per cent of the impoverished in developing nations reside in rural areas. Research has demonstrated that when it comes to decreasing poverty, growth in the agriculture sector from 'farm to fork' is at least twice as effective as growth in other sectors (USAID).

No doubt, an unprecedented food crisis is afflicting Africa. The ripple effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine are putting millions of people at risk of starvation. These effects are on top of the already devastating effects that conflicts, extreme weather, slowdowns and downturns in the climate, and the COVID-19 pandemic are having on the most vulnerable. Similarly, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report (2023), the Sahel and West African states are dealing with an unprecedented food crisis. Chronic insecurity, poverty, a lack of availability and limited access to essential social services are some of the long-standing structural problems that have led to this state of affairs. The effects of COVID-19, recent socio-economic shocks, extreme climate change, and the geo-political environment, are all aggravating the food crisis.

The situation in Nigeria, like any other African country is not different, recent estimates put the number of hungry people in Nigeria at over 53 million. Nigeria is facing the twin problem of hunger and poverty despite its natural position as a green area with huge resource endowment. Nigeria's agricultural performance in recent times remains inadequate and also witness low productivity. It is a reflection that the past strategies and programmes for development of agriculture have not all led to a dramatic turn around, and this is demonstrated by the widening food gap. The gap in food demand and supply is met mainly from food importations.

Rising unemployment, poverty, and inflation are other factors pushing up the cost of living and negatively affecting people's access to food and living conditions. These factors also exacerbate the issue of food insecurity. Natural disasters continue to have an impact on food production, availability, and affordability. This is especially true of floods, whose frequency and occurrence are largely due to the effects of climate change. In 2022, for example, over 675,000 hectares of farmland were washed away and destroyed by floods, according to a report published by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). One can only imagine the extent of the impact of this scale of destruction of farmlands on agricultural activities and food production across the country. Farmers, the majority of whom are small scale farmers, lost not only crops and harvests, but also farm animals, poultry, fishery, and farm implements to the raging floods.

Therefore, this research work is a critical study of the food security and sustainable development in Ikere Local Government in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Recent developments in Ikere local government area and Ekiti State at large have shown that hunger, famine and inadequate of food supply has increased the intensity as some developmental problems in the society such as chronic fatigue, malnutrition, weakened immune system, infertility, and others in some communities in the local government area. Increasingly, hunger, famine, inadequate food supply are now recognized as a security-related humanitarian problem that needs to be tackled by States on a local, national, regional and international level. It is a well known fact that hunger, famine, food scarcity and food inadequacy exacerbates humanitarian problems and crises (Babatunde, 2023).

Research Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to ascertain the relationship between food security and sustainable development in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

The specific objectives are to:

- a) examine factors influencing and enhancing food security in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
- b) investigate the major agricultural practices in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria;
- c) explore the impacts and effectiveness of government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria; and
- d) identify the challenges confronting food security and proffers ways by which government can improve on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Literature Review

Food security can be defined as ensuring that every citizen has access to enough food for a healthy, active life at all times. At the very least, food security is the ability to obtain food in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without turning to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping mechanisms) and the ready availability of safe, nutrient-dense foods. Food security is the condition that exists when all citizens' at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Maxwell, Jennifer and Babu V. (2013).

Development is the improvement of people's well-being and quality of life. It goes beyond economic factors to include education, healthcare, social equality, and other aspects that contribute to human welfare. It is difficult to draw a universal definition for the concept of development. Meanwhile, scholars have given so many definitions based on their area of specialization. Scholars such as (Pye, 1966), Rostow (1960) view development as

westernization, it is shifting from the level of traditional to the level of innovation. Development involves measurable and qualitative growth in economic and socio-political space of a particular country (Ezeibe, 2009). It is the steady growth of anything, be it a nation or person to some degree that develop better or more progressive. Dzugba, views development as a progression of constructing new houses. The scholar goes on to describe development as a form of new buildings that have been planned and built together on the same piece of land (Dzugba, 2002).

According to Familugba & Adedayo (2020), Sustainable development as a concept is a victim of definitional pluralism. It is a difficult word to define. However, attempts have been made by scholars to conceptualize sustainable development. (Gboyega, 2013) defines sustainable development as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. It implies improvement in material well-being of all citizens, not the most powerful and rich alone, in a sustainable way such that today's consumption does not jeopardize the future. In simple term, sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Relationship between Food Security and Development

The need for food has increased over the past 50 years due to the extraordinary population growth. Due to rising population-related food demands, the productive potential of farmed systems has stalled or even decreased. The lack of cropland and declining productivity are major contributors to the world's food shortages, which in turn cause hunger and malnutrition in people everywhere. Natural ecosystems must undergo massive transformation in order to meet rising demand (Lawrence, Lyons, & Wallington, 2010). The primary reason why humans have used so much land is to find more easily accessible, dependable, and productive food sources (Kannan, 2015). Global challenges face food production systems. These include supplying the world's expanding food demand, lowering the rate of hunger and poverty, and ensuring environmental sustainability. The sustainability of global agricultural production is linked to the high prevalence of starvation, hunger, and malnutrition worldwide, especially in developing nations (Shah, Fischer, & Van Velthuizen, 2008).

Approximately 852 million people worldwide suffer from chronic hunger today. The only way to sufficiently feed this expanding population and lower the rate of hunger is to greatly boost agricultural yields. However, the ability of nature to supply food has long since been outpaced by the demand for it. For this reason, implementing a sustainable development strategy is crucial to guaranteeing long-term food security. The green revolution, biodiversity loss, livestock and fishery depletion, desertification, and climate change, all have an impact on the intricate relationships between food security and sustainable development (Pond, Buford, & Dan, 2009).

National development is the steady rise in per capita income that results in a continuous improvement in the country's economic status. Sustained economic growth, which is typified by high productivity and efficiency of resources invested in production, is what leads to economic development (Ayinde, 2019). It is a well-known fact that without agricultural development, no nation can experience economic development. In order to meet local consumption, provide raw materials for the processing industries, maintain national reserves, and engage in export, it is necessary to achieve food security and sustainability through the abundance of crops and livestock (food accessibility, affordability, utilization, and quality) (Ayinde, 2019). Due to the positive linear correlation between food insecurity and its derivatives (Otekunrin, Momoh, Ayinde, and Otekunrin, 2019), food insecurity and its derivatives are used as indicators of economic development, which explains why the SDGs prominently mention it.

The growth of food security must be maintained for Nigeria to develop. Without doubt, putting food on the table for the average Nigerian requires an increase in production activities in the mining, metallurgy, and industrial sub-sectors, particularly if it encourages export (as in the case of Nigeria being a net exporter of urea). Without enhancing the human capital component of the economy, no economy can grow sustainably (Otekunrin 2011; Awoyemi, Odozi, Otekunrin, Ehirim, 2015; Ayinde, 2019). Food insecurity is a major social and environmental disruptor that has serious implications for planetary health, which refers to the state of natural systems and the health of human civilization. It also negatively affects human physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development throughout the life course.

The SDGs of the United Nations are all connected to food security. To meet the SDGs, countries must have improved food security governance built on sound, sustainable, and equitable agriculture (Perez-Escamilla, 2017). The goal of food and nutrition security is to provide enough protein, energy, and nutrients for a healthy lifestyle. In terms of food production, food systems and agricultural systems are similar. However, food systems also refer to the various organizations, methods, and tools that control how food is accessed, processed, transported, and sold. Four categories comprise the activities of the food system: food production, food processing and packaging, food distribution and retailing, and food consumption (Capone, Bilali, Debs, Cardone, and Driouech, 2014).

The Nigerian government did not giving up on her efforts to lessen extreme poverty, hunger, and food insecurity among her population. In order to address food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, a number of nutrition-sensitive policies and programs with effective frameworks have been developed. While many haven't yet produced encouraging outcomes, some have been impacted positively to the economy.. The Nigerian government is working to restore agriculture to its rightful place in the country's economy. Some of the policies and strategies enacted by Nigerian government aimed at reducing the level of food and nutrition insecurity are mentioned below (IITA, 2017; Olomola, 2017; Otekunrin et al. 2019):

In 2002, the National Planning Commission set up the National Committee on Food and Nutrition and the Committee came up with Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) policy in various sectors and among various social classes. (Otekunrin et al, 2019; Olomola and IITA, 2017). In 2016, the Ministry of Budget and National Planning reported that the policy had not produced the necessary improvement in nutrition, which led to a revision for better performance (FGN, 2016; Olomola, 2017; Otekunrin et al. 2019). Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) was designed in 2011 by the Federal

Ministry of Agriculture having food security and agricultural productivity as the focal targets of the program. The main components of ATA as highlighted in Olomola and Nwafor (2018) and Otekunrin et al. (2019). Also, National Social Investment Programs (N-SIP) that were launched in 2016 aim to reduce the incidence of food and nutrition insecurity in the nation by providing economic support to food and quality livelihoods for the most vulnerable individuals (groups) in society.

Various scholars had carried out research work on the relationship between food security and sustainable development in the past. Andohol (2012) examined Nigeria's Food Security Programmes using secondary data s obtained from CBN statistical bulletin and Bureau for Statistics covering variables such as staple food production, population growth rates, inflationary rate, and Minimum rediscount rate, values of the agricultural guarantee loans, food import bill, total import bill and Real GDP. The work was based on the Malthusian theoretical framework. It was revealed that Nigeria staple food production is experiencing a downward trend, with Adhoc agricultural polices counteracted by government monetary and fiscal policies. The study recommended that improvements are required in these diverse and complex factors leading to food crisis, and that government should always be mindful in its monetary and fiscal actions, which are counteractive to agricultural strategies put in place.

Metu, Okeyika & Maduka (2016) evaluated food security situation in Nigeria from 1991 to 2015. The paper shows that there is a shortfall in domestically produced food in Nigeria because the growth in the population of Nigeria is at the rate of 3.2% while the growth in food production has been less than one. This shows that demand for food (population) is greater than the supply (agricultural production) because of factors such as inconsistent government policies, environmental degradation and non-sustainable agricultural production. The paper also shows that Nigeria depends so much on food importation. To achieve sustainable food security in Nigeria, the paper recommends an improvement in environmental management in other to increase agricultural productivity.

Asayehgn (2016) attempted to find and understand the relationship between food availability and economic growth. A review of existing secondary studies indicates that food insecurity, low food intake and the variable access to food endemic in Ethiopia, is not due to the lack of economic growth and income distribution. Rather, excluding transitory food insecurity, chronic food insecurity in Ethiopia seems to derive directly from inflationary pressures, resulting from excess in the money supply, population growth, budgetary deficits, imprudently addressing the "supply side" of food production during favorable seasons, the lack of adequate storage systems for stocking food items that could be used to tackle food insecurity during shocking periods, a fragile natural resource base, and weak institutions. Particularly for policy makers, the study's findings contribute to an understanding of some of the crucial factors that could lead to a reduction of food insecurity and help to design advance strategies to alleviate food insecurity in Ethiopia.

Swietlik (2018) examined the relationship between the level of economic growth and the state of food security in selected regions and countries in the world during 2012-2015. The source of the information was secondary data from GUS (Central Statistical Office), the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and Global Food Security Index reports. The analyses showed significant territorial differences between levels of GDP and food security. It was apparent that higher levels of GDP were associated with higher levels of food security, and the biggest improvements in food security occurred in those countries with the fastest rise in GDP per capita. The high correlation between these indicators shows that the basic condition for improvement in world food security is economic growth and growth in real incomes, especially in poorer countries.

Fernandes & Samputra (2022) opined that food security can be achieved by being carried out simultaneously alongside the growth of economy at the macroeconomic level. Despite many countries of the worldwide still carry out economic growth policies in order to improve food security, it was observed that the issue of causal relationship between economic growth and food security is still debated. Fernandes & Samputra (2022) used a systematic mapping review to analyze the relationship between food security and economic growth. They discovered that empirical gap in the relationship between economic growth and food security with 76.92% supporting the correlative relationship between economic growth and food security, while the other 19.23% claimed that there is no correlation, and 3.85% explored the relationship between economic growth and food insecurity.

Ojimadu (2022) examined the relationship between food security and economic development in Nigeria using time series data spanning between 1980 and 2018) sourced from CBN bulletin and World Bank development indicators. Auto Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) was used in analyzing the relationship between food security and economic development. The result revealed that food production index had a positive insignificant long run relationship with economic development. This is because food production is expected to increase the productivity of the economy, reduce the importation of staple foods, and increase a Nations foreign earning. Nigeria however is still a net importer of food, thus its insignificant relationship with economic development in Nigeria. Hence, Ojimadu (2022) concluded that food security significantly impact on Nigeria's economic development. It was recommended that, Nigeria should reduce her food importation and that government should direct and prioritize the agricultural sector, as that will not just ensure it attains food security, but will increase employment, and income to the populace.

Methodology

This study adopts survey design to examine the relationship between food security and sustainable development in Ikere Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study population comprised of individuals, households, farmers and agriculturists, agricultural extension officers, business owners, local government officers, community leaders, market traders, members of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), healthcare professionals, academicians, youth and women representatives and others residing in Ikere local government area. Purposive sampling techniques was adopted. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research objectives, such as individuals and households facing food security challenges. The study sample is one hundred and fifty (150). The data for this study was collected through primary sources through questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents to elicit information for the purpose of the research only and the respondent was assured the confidentiality of the information provided.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Respondents Bio Data	Frequency	Percentage
1	GENDER:		
	Male	53	35.33%
	Female	97	64.67%
	Total	150	100%
2	Age Distribution:		
	18-25	19	12.67%
	26-40	41	27.33
	41- 55	51	34.00%
	55years and above	39	26.00%
	Total	150	100%
3	Educational qualification:		
	Primary Education	12	8.00%
	Secondary Education	45	30.00%
	Tertiary Education	82	54.67%
	No Formal Education	11	7.33%
	Total	150	100%
4	Religious		
	Christianity	120	80.00%
	Islam	27	18.00%
	African Traditional Religious (ATR)	3	2.00%
	Total	150	100%
5	Occupation/Groups Affiliation:		
	Farmers and Horticulturalists	21	14.00%
	Agricultural Extension Officers	11	7.33%
	Market Traders	20	13.33%
	Community Leaders	17	11.33%
	Local Business Owner	18	12.00%
	Local Government Officers	9	6.00%
	Women Representatives	19	12.67%
	Academics Staff	10	6.67%
	Healthcare Workers	5	3.33%
	Members of NGOs	5	3.33%
Artisans	8	5.33%	

	Youth and Students	7	4.67%
	Total	150	100%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024

Findings on Research Objective 1

Table 2: Factors Influencing and Enhancing Food Security (Availability, Affordability, Accessibility) in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Secure land tenure and access to land	28	18.67%
Favorable weather conditions	25	16.67%
Access to water for irrigation for farming during dry season	23	15.33%
Availability of Fertilizers and modern farms equipments and implements	20	13.33%
High agricultural production and sustainable farming practices	16	10.67%
Adequate infrastructure, roads and transportation networks	12	8.00%
Favorable and well-implemented government policies in Ikere Local Government Area	11	7.33%
Adoption of innovations and new technologies in agriculture		
Political stability and the absence of conflict	9	6.00%
	6	4.00%
Total	150	100%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 2: Above shows various factors influencing and enhancing food security (availability, affordability, accessibility) in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. This is evident from respondents' responses. The majority of respondents 28 (18.67%) agreed that secure land tenure and access to land responsible for food security Ikere Local Government Area, while 25 (16.67%) of the respondents indicated favourable weather conditions. It revealed that 23 (15.33%) of the respondents indicated access to water for irrigation farming during dry season. In addition, 20 (13.33%) agreed on availability of fertilizers and modern farms equipments and implements; 16 (10.67%) agreed on high agricultural production and sustainable farming practices; 12 (8.00%) of the respondents agreed on adequate infrastructure, roads and transportation networks contributed to food security in the local government, 11 (7.33%) agreed on favourable and well-implemented government policies in Ikere Local Government Area; 9 (6.00%) agreed on adoption of innovations and new technologies in agriculture while 6 (4.00%) of the respondents agreed that political stability and the absence of conflict in Ikere Local Government Area serves as factor that enhanced food security in the area. It was indicated that all these factors influenced and enhanced food security (availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption) in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Findings on Research Objective 2

Table 3: The Major Agricultural Practices in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Crop Rotation Farming System	46	30.67%
Subsistence Farming System	32	21.33%
Cover Cropping Farming System	24	16.00%
Livestock Farming System	22	14.67%
Monoculture Farming System	13	8.67%
Precision Farming System	8	5.33%
Green House Farming System	5	3.33%
Total	150	100%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024.

The Table 3 revealed the distribution of respondents based on their opinion on the major agricultural practices in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data showed that 46(30.67%) respondents indicated that crop rotation farming system is the major agriculture practices in the area. 32(21.33%) respondents indicated subsistence farming system as agriculture practices in Ikere LGA; 24 (16.00%) respondents indicated cover cropping system; 22 (14.67%) agreed on livestock framing system; 13 (8.67%) indicated monoculture farming system; 8 (5.33%) respondents indicated precision farming system while only 5 (3.33%) respondents indicated green house farming system. This shows that all these agricultural practices contributed to food security (availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption) in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Findings on Research Objective 3

Table 4: The Impacts and Effectiveness of Government Policies on Food Security, Availability, Affordability, Accessibility and Wholesomeness for Consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Improvement in Long-Term Investments in Agriculture	33	22.00%
Increase in Farming inputs and outputs	28	18.67%
Increase in Sustainable and Subsistence Farming Practices	25	16.67%
Reduction in Post-Harvest Losses	22	14.67%
Higher Crops Yield and Sufficient Food Supply	17	11.33%
Improvement in nutritional awareness and access to nutritional food	14	9.33%
Food price stabilization	11	7.33%
Total	150	100%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 4 presents responses on the impacts and effectiveness of government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data showed that 33 (22.00%) respondents indicated that the various government policies initiated or embarked upon at different times, has led to improvement of long term investments in agriculture in the Ikere Local Government Area; 28 (18.67%) respondents indicated increase in farming inputs and outputs; 25 (16.67%) respondents indicated increase in sustainable and subsistence farming practices; 22 (14.67%) respondents indicated reduction in post-harvest losses; 17 (11.33%) indicated higher crops yield and sufficient food supply; 14 (9.33%) agreed on improvement in nutritional awareness and access to nutritional food; while only 11 (7.33%) respondents indicated government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria has led to food price stabilization. This shows that various government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government has been contributing to sustainable development in the area.

Findings on Research Objective 4

Table 5: The Challenges Confronting Food Security, Availability, Affordability, Accessibility and Wholesomeness for Consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of rural roads and transportation network	32	21.33%
Lack of improved seedlings and farm implements	25	16.67%
Inadequate storage facilities and poor post-harvest management practices	23	15.33%
Lack of access to microcredit loans to invest in modern farming technologies		
Incessant attacks on farmers and farmlands by herdsmen's	21	14.00%
Insufficient support and guidance from agricultural extension officers	20	13.33%
Limited access to water for irrigation farming during dry season	17	11.33%
	12	8.00%
Total	150	100%

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024.

Table 5 established the challenges confronting food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Majority of the respondents 32 constituted 21.33% claimed that lack of rural roads and transportation network

served as the major challenges to food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government Area. Besides, 25 (16.67%) of the respondents also indicated lack of improved seedlings and farm implements; 23 (15.33%) agreed on inadequate storage facilities and poor post-harvest management practices; 21 (14.00%) opted for lack of access to microcredit loans to invest in modern farming technologies. In addition, 20 (13.33%) agreed on incessant attacks on farmers and farmlands by herdsmen's; while 17 (11.33%) indicated insufficient support and guidance from agricultural extension officers and only 12 (8.00%) of the total respondents indicated limited access to water for irrigation farming during dry season.

Discussion of Findings

It was gathered that secure land tenure and access to land, favourable weather conditions, access to water for irrigation farming during dry season, availability of fertilizers and modern farms equipments and implements, high agricultural production and sustainable farming practices, adequate infrastructure contributed to foods security in Ikere Local Government Area. In addition, roads and transportation networks, favourable and well-implemented government policies, adoption of innovations and new technologies in agriculture political stability and the absence of conflict in Ikere Local Government Area serve as factor that enhanced food security in the area. All these factors enhanced food security (availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption) in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

It was also gathered that crop rotation farming system, subsistence farming system, cover cropping farming system, livestock farming system, monoculture farming system, precision farming system, greenhouse farming system are the major agricultural practices in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. For instance, majority of settlers in Ikere Local Government engages in both subsistence and commercial framing system. The Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti (BOUESTI) operates greenhouse farming system. In addition, there are individuals, corporate bodies who involve in livestock, monoculture, cropping, and precision farming system in Ikere Local Government Areas.

The impacts and effectiveness of government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption were noticed in Ikere Local Government Area in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The data gathered indicated that the various government policies initiated or embarked upon at different times, has led to improvement of long term investments in agriculture, increase in farming inputs and outputs, increase in sustainable and subsistence farming practices, reduction in post-harvest losses, higher crops yield and sufficient food supply, improvement in nutritional awareness and access to nutritional food, food price stabilization. This showed that various government policies on food security, availability, affordability, accessibility and wholesomeness for consumption in Ikere Local Government has been contributing to sustainable development in the area.

It was evident that Lack of rural roads and transportation network, lack of improved seedlings and farm implements, inadequate storage facilities and poor post-harvest management practices, , lack of access to microcredit loans to invest in modern farming technologies, incessant attacks on farmers and farmlands by herdsmen's, insufficient support and guidance from agricultural extension officers, limited access to water for irrigation farming during dry season served as impediment to the production of food, as evidenced in increased cost of transportation, food spoilage, increased prices, and hindered the timely and efficient movement of food from farms to markets in Ikere Local Government Area. All these poses threat to sustainable food security and agricultural development in the area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed that farmers in Ikere Local Government Area engaged in crop rotation, subsistence, cover cropping, livestock, monoculture, precision, green house farming systems and the farmers in the LGAs faced challenges ranging from lack of rural roads and transportation network, lack of improved seedlings and farm implements, inadequate storage facilities and poor post-harvest management practices, lack of access to microcredit loans to invest in modern farming technologies, incessant attacks on farmers and farmlands by herdsmen's, insufficient support and guidance from agricultural extension officers, limited access to water for irrigation farming during dry season. In most cases, this led to wastage of agricultural produce.

In improving food security in the Ikere Local Government Area, there is need for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in provision rural roads and transportation network, supply of improved seedlings and farm implements, storage facilities, microcredit loans and other basic amenities in the area. This will go a long way in activating and motivating agricultural production in the area. This will also encourage the young adults to stay and engage in farming activities and at the same time reduce rural-urban migration, political thuggery and motor-cycle riding syndrome among the youth. The private organization will act as a go-between for the farmers and the government on a local and global level, ensuring that their needs are met and advocating on their behalf to ensure that their produce is fit for consumption both domestically and abroad. Farmers' income levels and the government's Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) will rise as a result.

The Ikere local government area authority should work on establishment Special Agricultural Zone (SAZ). The zone will be a reserved area for farming and other agricultural development purposes. There is need for construction of access roads, creation of storage facilities, adequate support and guidance for the farmers and construction of small scale industries in Ikere Local Government Area, this will help to absorb the farm produce and process it for further consumption for the purpose of creating job opportunities and reduce poverty level of the people in the local government area.

The Government of Ekiti State and Ikere Local Government Area Authority must ensure that people have sufficient food and aligning short-term assistance with a long-term development strategy. The State government and the local government area authority must also intensify efforts towards

achieving ‘a free from hunger and malnutrition’ by 2030. **Moreover, development partners within Ekiti State need to address many challenges related to co-ordination of agricultural extension service.** There is also need to invest in smallholder farmers which many of them are women and elderly ones. This effort will enhance agricultural production through an operational emphasis on farmers at a risk of food

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