

Policy Integration and Policy Principle: The Nigerian Agricultural Sector in Perspective

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Abstract: Global environmental problems have become the concern of all and sundry. Various policy principles have been put in place to checkmate the intensification of these anomalies, especially global warming, ozone layer depletion and climate change. The anticipation is that States in the global polity should have a corresponding environmental policy framework that is in tandem with global environmental laws. Various sectorial activities in real time have adverse effects on the environment, and these include the extractive industry as well as agriculture. Agriculture is the major source of livelihood and sustenance and employs a reasonable percent of the Nigerian population, yet various practices in this arena are however destructive and inimical to the environment. Deforestation, over-grazing, bush burning and a host of other unfriendly practices contributes to the degradation of the biosphere. In recent time, the new framework is policy integration. This work however examines the degree of policy integration and policy principles in Nigeria's environmental framework, with emphasis on the agricultural sector. It is observed here that inspite of the noble environmental laws and policies in Nigeria; the integration of environmental principles to agriculture cum its full implementation is relatively poor. The thrust of this generally boils down to poverty and the lack of a decent and honest monitoring system. An awakening towards policy reconciliation is recommended.

Keywords: Agriculture, environment, policy, policy integration, policy principle, Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Modern society has become increasingly more complex and confronts us with perhaps more and even more intricate policy problems that are not easily solved. Although these problems may be addressed policy wise, yet more often than not there are no clear-cut implementations cum integration of the policies to areas necessarily required. Many states or countries have ample policies that are incongruous with the implementation. Thus making it look like there are no policies at all. For sanity to exist in the society, states policies must be implemented to a reasonable extent, thus showing state exclusivity in social control.

The Nigerian State demonstrates its sovereignty or sovereign authority in the society through the instrumentality of policy or public policy as the case may be. As such, the State as it were has exclusive monopoly of legitimate exercise of force. This exclusive monopoly of legitimate exercise of force enables the State to formulate and impose its will and decisions over all and sundry. Without the formulation of policies and the enforcing of these policies, the society would definitely become a free for all to unleash mayhem. The government is able to compel obedience from all, especially for instance; the monthly sanitation exercise. This means, ordinarily no one wants to do such an exercise, but the government is able to compel obedience through a system of policy regime.

The present situation of the World is how to manage and conserve resources to meet the need of future generation, thus emphasizing sustainable development. In view of this, various environmental policies have been generated so as to guide behaviour. In line with this, each State in the global polity is expected to formulate policies that are in tandem with global environmental principles. In diverse of ways of course, most countries are in line with this and Nigeria is not left behind

per se. In certain circumstances, the trouble is not the formulation of these policies, but the integration of these policy principles with sectorial activities essentially to underscore environmental protection. But of course, the integration of policy with principles is basically the cornerstone of environmental protection and development.

Therefore our task here is to examine the extent of policy integration and policy principles in the environmental framework of Nigeria. Our focus is particularly on the agricultural landscape. We maintain here that policy integration with principle is relatively poor in this part of the world. It is rather in theory and not identifiably practical, especially in the dimension of agricultural practices and sustainable environmental development. Thus, the work is divided into four sections. Section one deal's with the introductory aspect, while section two is concern with conceptualizing 'policy'. The third section is an operationalization of the concept of environment, and lastly, the fourth section discusses issues in policy integration and the environment with a view to the agricultural landscape.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING POLICY

In this section, the objective is to discuss the meaning of policy. We set out here to bring to the fore, various understandings of the concept as adumbrated by some scholar's. First and foremost, Anderson [1] sees policy as a purposive cause of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of common concern. In agreement with Anderson, Thomas Dye [2] defines the concept of policy as whatever government chooses to do or not to do. This definition in consideration with that of Anderson emphasizes that policy should rightly be placed on what government actually does, or even will not do, but not reducible to what government proposes to do [3].

According to Carl Friedrich [4], policy simply denotes:

"A proposed cause of action of government providing obstacles and opportunities . . . proposed to be utilized and overcome in an effort to reach or realize an objective or purpose."

This definition is however inactive of the propositional character of a policy. In totality, such a definition completely fails to see the action –oriented character of a policy. With regards to this definition, it more or less means that government does not possibly actually do anything. Ofoeze [5] maintains that a policy should of certainty designate what is actually done, rather than what is proposed in the way of action. Without much ado, to us policy simply denotes a course of action adopted for specific purposes. This of course means a policy is not just some construction, but is rather adopted or formulated to meet a target. We can add here by saying that policy is necessarily the foundation for action, and this comprises of both the vision and the plan. Clearly, in whichever way policy is defined, the important point to take home is fundamentally that policy or policies as it were are the instrumentalities of State operations and activities that engender development. Such development may be in various dimensions whether agricultural, banking, education, etc. But the goal in whichever way it is looked upon is to activate a focus of Prevention, Avoidance, Protection and Infallibility.

III. WHAT IS ENVIRONMENT?

It is a factual statement when we say that human life is completely tied with the environment. This understanding has however generated the increasing global importance of the word environment. The term environment has been defined as the conditions, circumstances and influences under which an organization or system exist [6]. It is frequently used to refer to the circumstances in which man lives. The environment includes everything around us. It includes the trees, forest, birds, rivers, houses and even the people we see. The environment cannot be understood to mean just the trees and rivers, as some naturally say. Adeyemo [7] posits that environment is usually understood to mean the surrounding conditions that affect people and other organisms, interactions between people and their environment. On the other hand, [8] stated that as man affects the quality of the environment, so the environment affects the quality of man's life.

The environment interplays with man, as well as man the environment. Thus man and the environment have totally become quite "commensalistic". The environment is not an isolated system but one which interacts within a complex and interdependent social and economic force. Resources for man are found in the environment; as such man interacts with the environment to gain access to social survival in terms of food and clothing. As a result of the growing and ever increasing population, with concomitant migration to urban centre, man's interaction with the environment has equally increased. Hence this increase has led to the destruction of the environment ruining man's commensal relationship with the environment.

This destruction comes in manifold, especially in the production of food. Preparation for planting season compels man to engage in bush burning – a process perceived as enhancing soil fertility, but actually increases agricultural emissions of methane and carbon dioxide [9]. These emissions are a major contributor of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere which leads to global warming and climate change. Furthermore, industrial production of goods especially oil exploration and exploitation has doubtless degraded the environment astronomically. The flaring of gas, oil spillage, etc are all ways man has caused a great change to the negative on the environment. The quest for industrialisation and sustained development in Nigeria and the attendant improvement in the quality of life of the populace has taken its toll on the environment [10]. The effects of different industrial sector activity on the environment vary enormously but it is an incontrovertible statement that damage is being done to the environment worldwide. Without disputation, [11] and [12] agreed that environmental degradation denotes deterioration in the environment, that could have a deleterious effect on human health, harm living resources, ecosystem and material property and impair amenities or interfere with other legitimate uses of the environment.

This has provoked a graduation from the concept of development for the environment to that of sustainable development. Meaning that we must not compromise the ability of the future generation from seeing or enjoying what we are now. The concept of sustainable development of the environment was given clear definition by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). According to the commission, sustainable development is:

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” [13].

Following this, therefore, States are expected to formulate policies and laws that stimulate sustainable development in all facets of the environment, otherwise called environmental protection laws.

IV. POLICY INTEGRATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT: AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IN PERSPECTIVE

Having operationalized the environment, we turn our attention to comprehend the degree of policy integration and principle in the light of agriculture in Nigeria. A policy first and foremost is information, and as such can be better organized to achieve whatever purpose. Policy integration clearly is the ability to define, reconcile and manage policy interactions and relationships. It dramatically reduces the risk of unintended consequences arising potentially from conflicting objectives. Policy integration necessarily reflects the background of international policy context [14]. On the global scene, Principle No 3 of the Rio Declaration on the environment provides that the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations [15], this involves protecting the environment through policy regimes; which introduces us to environmental impact assessment (EIA).

Environmental impact assessment for all practical purposes simply implies a systematic investigation into the positive and negative consequences of a proposed development project on the natural and human environments on the short-term and long-term. It is basically undertaken to identify, predict and assess future social impacts associated with a project on the environment [16] so as to have a clearer picture on the mitigation strategy. In view of this, to protect the environment from adverse social impacts of projects many countries have bought-in into this paradigm shift and have introduced it, policy wise to all sectorial activities of the economy including agriculture. Yet in many dimensions the basic problem remains policy integration.

In recent times, environmental concerns have provoked increasing demands for policy integration, and this however calls for a consideration of the notion of synergy in various platforms. Environmental concerns not only require policy framework but a new approach of integration of various sectors for sustainable development and this is the essence of policy integration. The integration of agriculture into environmental concerns is crucial for sustainable environmental development (SED) as well as sustainable agricultural development (SAD) and this constitutes the priorities of policy integration and policy principles. Sustainable agriculture refers to the ability of a farm to produce perpetually based on long-term effects of various practices on soil properties and processes essential for crop productivity, and the long-term availability of inputs. According to [17], sustainable agriculture is geared towards three main issues, and these are environmental stewardship, farm profitability, and prosperous farming communities. Though there may be conflicting

interests between policy-makers and sectorial operators, yet institutional conditions are one means of promoting policy integration. Definitely, this must involve the sharing of information and appropriate mechanisms for consultation.

The agricultural sector is crucial to the growth and development of a nation, particularly Nigeria. The sector strongly impacts on food security, employment, industrialization efforts, quality of life, economic growth, to a certain extent, a nation's position in international relations and trade. According to [18] the contribution of agriculture to poverty reduction cannot be overemphasized. The sector's contribution to the GDP of Nigeria is particularly stable in recent time at 40% and employs no fewer than 55% of the population [19], [20]; [21]). This very fact underscores the reason environmental concerns in agricultural practices should be integrated into policy principles for sustainable development.

Agricultural practices and engagements generally constitute the basic source of livelihood and existence in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. More than 90 percent of Africa is rural, and 90 percent of farmland is equally rural, which shows that sourcing and making a living emanates from the environment [22]. Cattle rearing form a part of agricultural practices, and over-grazing is a major source of worry to the environment. In Nigeria, especially in the rural areas, deforestation and hunting has menaced the environment. The rampant slashing of trees and burning of tropical forests is second only to the energy sector as a source of greenhouse gases. These GHG are basically a great source of contamination to the biosphere and atmosphere which leads to global warming and other inimical disasters that amounts to destruction of farmlands, life and properties.

Indecent and illicit ways and means are utilized in fishing, hence "chemicalizing" the water and making it toxic for aquatic life and existence. Poverty is a significant persistent problem in the developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. An estimated 1.1 billion people live on less than a dollar per day and their number is not expected to decline. As such, these people engage in agricultural practices that degrade the environment [23]. Thus, the combination of poverty and the lack of appropriate agricultural technology and land constraints usually interact to resonate environmental degradation.

International agricultural policies negate the destruction of the ecosystem, especially deforestation, over-grazing and illicit farming systems, and these are contained in the policy principles of the Rio Declaration, Montreal Protocol, Kyoto Protocol, etc. The new legal framework for rural development 2007-2013, according to [24] puts a clearer emphasis on improving sustainability by promoting the right balance between competitive agricultural production and respect for the environment. The process of integrating agriculture and environmental policies calls for synergies, the introduction of measures seeking environmental protection into common agricultural policy (CAP) and the development of agricultural practices that preserve the environment and safeguard the rural areas as well. Hence, policy integration in the agricultural landscape would definitely highlight the need to correctly assess the relevance of farming practices and their impacts on the environment [25]. In line with international standard, Nigeria has adopted environmental laws meant to direct activities in various dimensions. The Nigerian Policy on the Environment is essentially to:

"restore, maintain and enhance the ecosystems and ecological processes essential for the functioning of the biosphere to preserve biological diversity and the principle of optimum sustainable yield in the use of living natural resources and ecosystems" [26].

In the direction of agriculture the policy states thus;

"The emphasis should be the promotion of ecologically sound and profitable farming systems and suitable rural development programmes principally aimed at small scale farmers. In order to increase agricultural productivity, vigorous programmes have to be established and supported to ensure proper use of natural resources and judicious application of agricultural inputs" [27].

Furthermore, as explained by [28],

"The experience gained in the implementation of the agricultural policy over the years and the recent trends in agricultural development worldwide have necessitated the formulation of more focused sub-sectoral policies. The most recent efforts in this direction are the: Land Resource Policy, National Cooperative Development Policy, National Seed Policy and National Policy on Integrated Rural Development".

The above according to [29] underscores the need to review the National Agricultural Policy to include National Agricultural Extension Policy (NAEP), which of course also borders on environmentally friendly practices to introduce farmers into this framework and effectively nurture extension workers to this extent. As a matter of fact, diverse

programmes had been in place to promote policy integration with policy principles in Nigeria. For instance, the National Policy on Integrated Rural Development (NPIRD) is a framework aimed at developing the rural areas in a more coordinated and sustainable manner to achieve national food security and to make sure rural farmers engage in appropriate and friendly agricultural practices [30].

However, in spite of the various environmental laws Nigeria has adopted, the country has not been able to completely implement a proper integration and enforcement of these principles. Hence, illicit agricultural practices are persists in Nigeria, and raises environmental concerns [31]. Garba [32] maintains that Nigeria's forests is being depleted on a daily basis, and this is clearly due to rising population, migration, land hunger, poverty and starvation. Farming system in Nigeria, Aster [33] posits is basically endeared towards bush burning, and this immensely corrodes the environment. Illicit agricultural practices in Nigeria as stated by Aster are as a result of weak policy regime and not generally as a result of lack of policy integration. He emphasised that weak infrastructure and inconsistencies in government policies have always been a major obstacle in the development of environmental laws in Nigeria. We are definitely of the view that there are strong environmental policy regimes in Nigeria; as such inconsistency in government policies is not a matter of concern here but the implementation and enforcement of these regimes.

V. CONCLUSION

The present circumstance of the World however calls for quick response to global international environmental principles. This however requires policy integration in the right direction. The foregoing has shown that agricultural practices in Nigeria especially in the rural areas are inimical to the environment, and necessarily needs to be prohibited to save mankind from environmental cataclysm. There is need to have dynamic farming systems capable of adapting to the challenges of climate change, and this requires sustained implementation of environmental policy.

We reckon therefore that the increasing complexities of the environment calls for greater transparency in policy decision-making, this must revolve around policy reconciliation. The need to stimulate the infrastructural system of Nigeria is of course very fundamental here. The National Policy on the environment in Nigeria is great, but we recommend a strong system of implementation of the inherent noble ideas so as to align with international guidelines. A new system of enlightening rural farmers must be in place, necessarily the capacity of extension workers must be built and re-built in this direction to inform and educate rural dwellers cum farmers on sustainable farming practices.

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