

Food Security

AN ARSENAL

FOR PEACE & NATIONAL SECURITY

The place of food security in national security has not been top on the agenda for discussion. It is therefore one for deeper deliberation in this forum for peace. **Food Security is said to exist when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, (FAO, 1996).** However, although **national security** has long been recognized as a notoriously ambiguous phrase, experts agree it is anything that threatens to degrade the quality of life of a people, whether from foreign or domestic source. Although the term, national security, conjures up images of the military and arms, there is increasing concern over threats from non military sources. U.S President Harry S. Trauma rightly said **“national security does not consist of an army, a navy and an air force. It rests on a much broader base; a sound economy”**.

Nigeria's Minister of agriculture, Dr. Akin Adesina (CON), told a house of Honourable members that **“Peace cannot be got on an empty stomach”**. This agrees with a known adage that **“a hungry man is an angry man”**. Rep. McGovern (D-MA) reacting to how cuts to food programs affect America's national security. Said **“food issue isn't a question of charity. It's an issue of national security. “What now happens when desperate people can't find or afford food and the anger that comes from people who see no future for their children except poverty and death”?** he asked.

The answer is evident in the internal instability that rocked over 40 nations in 2007 / 2008; leading to the overthrow of some democratically elected governments. **Food security is now increasingly being recognized as a nation's first defense against anarchy and revolutionary conflicts.**

I am therefore persuaded to agree with Dwight D Eisenhower that **“beyond a wise and reasonable level, -- money spent on arms may be money wasted----. National security requires far more than military power. Economic and moral factors play indispensable roles. Any program that endangers our economy could defeat us”**, he concluded.

World power, America, has rapidly elevated food security from a national priority to the position of national security. Vice President, Biden, says **“Investments made to ward off food insecurity and prevent its recurrence can prevent the**

vicious cycles of rising extremism, armed conflict, and state failure that can require far larger commitments of resources down the road.” To America's secretary of state, Hilary Clinton, **“ending hunger is not only possible, but it is both a moral and strategic imperative.”** For her **“Food security is not just about food. It is about security”**.

For most African countries, Nigeria inclusive, it is a double delight - **the absence of external threat and 'Agriculture, our economy'**. Revisiting the International Encyclopaedia of 1968 which defined national security as **“The ability of a nation to defend its internal values from external threats,** African nations need to defend its internal values from internal threats. Solution to issues that could cause national trepidation and threaten internal disquiet can be found within Agriculture. Food security is consequently our arsenal for national security.

However, how well food security functions as national security depends on how best the policies are stretched to impact on social issues, using agriculture as the provocateur of **“life chain”**. The foundation piece of agriculture is the mirroring of the status of the citizens. All things are floored when the foundation is weak or shaky. So far, in most developing countries, the provocateur is wobbling and the impact is not so well felt. We must have to define the basics very carefully to get every other thing right. We need to have a fresh insight of how the beginning must start. It is essential for us to set out a proper foundation and platform for a viral, strong and progressive nation nay continent. It is an issue of practical urgency; day to day exigency of life. I will reserve an expanded conversation for another forum.

