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Summary: Food Security in Nigeria's Changing Climate



Policy should be the expression of collective vision, said Amara Nwankpa, but Nigeria lacks a system of consultation.

Climate change, population growth, inadequate infrastructure and needs for capacity building: Nigerians are not turning a blind eye on the challenges for achieving food security for their country. They have many ideas and are developing solutions to address these issues.

We invited **Sara Baroud** (Care International), **Sarah Karinge** (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), **Elisabeth Leiner** (Caritas Austria), **Amara Nwankpa** (Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, Nigeria), and **Brigitte Reisenberger** (FIAN) to discuss with us. CDR partner **Hermann Bürstmayr** (Department of Crop Sciences) led through the evening.

REVIVING AGRICULTURE

Nigeria possesses large oil reserves and can count on income through exports; agriculture fell behind. Now, the country wants to reduce its dependency on food imports and strengthen domestic agricultural production.



Sarah Karinge showcased the example of cassava that provided an income to female farmers.

How can such a revitalization of the agricultural sector be achieved? How can profitability for farmers be increased and can economic options be created? A recent film by the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation wants to shed light on several initiatives that are currently being taken, ranging from livestock breeding approaches to integration of commercial players, from soil fertility management to inclusion of unconventional solutions like vertical farming/ in silico farming in urban environments.

SMALLHOLDER FARMING AND LARGE-SCALE FARMING

Agriculture is a diverse sector, also in Nigeria, but most farmers are smallholders, explained Amara Nwankpa, often managing less than 1 ha. In the film, a representative of a bank institute that gives microcredits to smallholders is interviewed. He says: "The Nigerian farmer of today is a smallholder farmer, and the Nigerian farmer of tomorrow is gonna be a smallholder farmer". The question now seems to be how to offer economic opportunities to these farmers, how to enable their access to the market, to knowledge and inputs.



I'd rather think of peasant farmers as rights holders, not just as beneficiaries of the SDGs, said Brigitte Reisenberger.

Diverse strategies were portrayed in the film: one of them is aggregation of smallholders into larger units. Care has experience with farmer field business schools, aggregating farmers per village for savings and loan associations, as well as for provisioning of affordable inputs, explained Sara Baroud.

Another option could be contract farming; however, this was discussed controversially. Brigitte Reisenberger feared for farmers being ushered into contract farming for lack of alternative options: farmers might get a share of the benefit, but at the price of losing control over what and how they produce.

Sharecropping was also discussed. Similar to contract farming, share cropping arrangements also hold many risks, as explained by Elisabeth Leiner from Caritas, for example if farmers rent out their land and depend on a business partner for irrigation and other services.

Industrialization is an alternative strategy. Though, as Leiner reminded the audience, it is not clear at which prize for smallholder farmers industrialization would come. Generally, it became clear in the discussion that the audience feared for smallholders being squeezed out of business by larger companies.

REDUCING RESOURCE CONFLICTS

Conflicts between sedentary crop farmers and transhumant pastoralists have become more frequent. Public ranches are now introduced to reduce conflicts over resources between these two groups. Space for cattle can be rented, in exchange, ranches include access to veterinary services and supply of fodder by crop farmers. This proposed concentration of smaller, mobile cattle herds into larger stationary units was received sceptically.

REGULATING TRADE WITHOUT POLICY DISTORTIONS

Besides bottlenecks in production, trade also limits which markets the agricultural sector can enter. Sarah Karinge drew attention to the asymmetry of agricultural trade policies. While CAP, the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU, envisages mandatory compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary regulations for African products entering the EU market, there are no such requirements for European products being exported to the African markets, she said.

INNOVATION – BUT HOW?

It became evident at the evening that Nigeria is country with many facets, where low input systems and high-tech systems exist and operate side by side: the challenge will be how to reconcile these different approaches and to create spaces for all to prosper - and how to avoid leaving power imbalances unaddressed.



Share cropping arrangements come with risks and dependency, said Elisabeth Leiner.



We need to work towards policy coherence, demanded Sara Baroud, advocacy for smallholder farmers and intervention should go hand in hand.



Hermann Bürstmayr stressed the need to discuss initiatives for innovation from the South.

* Link to the Film "Swallow" by the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Iduy5ff0NQ&feature=youtu.be>

University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences

Centre for Development Research

Peter Jordan Straße 76/I

1190 Vienna

www.cdr.boku.ac.at

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Text: Rosana Kral

Photos: Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation (teaser picture), and Rosana Kral/CDR (1-6)

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