



Food: Weapon for Peace

Policy Recommendations

1. The activities of the various actors working to ensure food security should be harmonised and properly coordinated
2. Technological innovation and usage should be at the heart of food security programming in the region.
3. Programmes like agricultural extension services should be provided in local languages to improve food production.
4. Political will on the part of government and other political actors is needed to prevent remote and immediate causes of violent conflicts.
5. Livelihoods programmes should be mainstreamed into solving food insecurity and hunger, as they are closely related to poverty and the inability to purchase food.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of **Nextier SPD**.

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The Government of Nigeria has encouraged tens of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return to their homes and begin the process of rebuilding their lives and livelihoods as its counterinsurgency troops have liberated many communities in their 'Operation Last Hold' against Boko Haram insurgents. However, the euphoria of homecoming has often been cut short by the reality of food insecurity on the ground as the terrorists did not only [destroy homes, but had also wiped out critical survival protocols](#) including public institutions, farmlands, and fishing ponds in much of the troubled North-East.

Food and nutrition are key components of any post-conflict reconstruction. This is the position of all the leading institutions and thinkers in the space. [The Food and Agriculture Organization \(FAO\) and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations](#) emphasise this point in their position on the Committee on World Food Security. Oxfam International and several other aid organisations [stress the need for food security in conflict recovery](#), community reintegration and sustainable peacebuilding programming in fragile states. Therefore, if the level of food insecurity in North-East Nigeria is not effectively managed, it may undermine [Buhari's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan](#) which is geared towards achieving the [Vision 20:2020](#)¹. Quite importantly, it will undermine efforts to rebuild the lives that have been significantly impacted in the North-East region of Nigeria.

Following the deepening humanitarian crisis in Boko Haram-ravaged North-East region of Nigeria, this edition of Nextier SPD Weekly examines the challenges of food insecurity in the area and makes recommendations on how they can be addressed.

The violent campaigns of Boko Haram in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states

have resulted in the death of nearly 20,000 Nigerians, displaced over [1.7 million persons](#) and caused several thousands to flee as refugees across the sprawling borders with the neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroun. Many of the IDPs in both government and private camps have suffered further abuses in the hands of officials and the risk of infiltration by Boko Haram fighters. These abuses and the liberation of some communities by Nigeria's counterinsurgency forces have encouraged many of the IDPs to return home in the last few months. For example, in the first week of August 2018 alone, [a total of 5,317 arrivals and 1,177 departures were recorded](#) by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Emergency Tracking Matrix in Borno and Adamawa states.

However, providing adequate quantity, quality, and variety of food for victims of complex emergencies has been difficult for the government of Nigeria. [The European Union \(EU\), Oxfam and Development Exchange Centre \(DEC\)](#) have used their Pro-Resilience Action (PROACT) initiative to aid over 35,000 farming households in Kebbi and Adamawa States. [A similar EU-funded project \(Produce and Sell - PROSELL\)](#) was recently launched in Jalingo, targeting 300,000 persons in 30,000 farming households. Additional donations have come from the U.S. Government's 'Feed the Future Initiative' as well as the African Development Bank's 'Feed Africa' strategy with the aim of boosting farmers' productivity and income.

Despite the foreign interventions and the establishment of the National Food Security Council by the Buhari administration, [over 3.7 million people across 16 states](#) remain food insecure on account of massive

1. Nigeria's Vision 20:2020 is the economic blueprint that articulates how the country will become one of the world's largest 20 economies by the year 2020, with a target of over US\$900 billion USD in gross domestic product.



insurgent attacks, internal displacement, rising food prices, climate change, inadequate water supply, lack of preservation of perishable produce, poverty and population growth. A number of key policy actions are needed to address the fundamental drivers of food insecurity in North-East Nigeria.

1. Government of Nigeria should harmonise the activities of the various actors working to ensure food security. At the moment, there is a lack of coordination and synergy between the various actors (donor agencies and government parastatals) that are formulating and executing different policies to guarantee food security in North-East Nigeria. As a consequence, there is duplication of efforts, waste of resources and ineffective outcomes. As a matter of urgency, there is need to know who is doing what, when, and how.
2. Technological innovation should be at the heart of food security programming in the region. It should be used to broaden agricultural activities in the North-East in all areas of crop production, livestock management and irrigation and water supply. This will extend agriculture and animal husbandry beyond the current subsistent level to large scale production, and help ensure adequate food security.
3. There is need to prioritise agricultural extension services which should be provided on a regular basis in local languages by experts to ensure practical knowledge of modern agriculture. This will lead to improvements in crop yield, livestock productivity, produce storage and preservation, etc.
4. Government and other stakeholders should muster the political will to address the immediate and remote causes of conflicts, internal displacement, and food insecurity. Furthermore, government should invest in peacebuilding activities to forestall future occurrences. Conflict issues such as farmer-herder clashes should be

tackled with all sincerity of purpose to reduce them to the barest fraction possible.

5. Livelihoods programmes should be mainstreamed into solving food insecurity and hunger, as they are closely related to poverty and the inability to purchase food. Food insecurity, as a failure of governance, means that it has to be tackled as a structural violence against local population by committing to achieving the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), taking a leaf from Peoples Republic of China, which lifted millions of its population out of poverty and hunger under the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals)
6. There is need to prioritise discussions on how to rethink Nigeria's economic models on agriculture and investment in food production. Archaic pastoral practices are another source of conflict in Nigeria. There is need to revise Nigeria's Land Use Act as a first step in addressing that problem. There are other issues around the political economy of agricultural planning, politics of fertiliser supply, and other political considerations that contribute to food insecurity in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nodal state² in the sub-region cannot not afford to be food insecure, as the neighbourhood effect of this will put the entire sub-region and the whole of Africa into crisis. There is the need for food insecurity to be understood as not just an economic failure of the state, but a social, cultural and political failure. Therefore, limited food availability and lack of access to adequate nutritious food of great quantity, quality, and variety which are culturally acceptable to Nigerians is nothing but a violation of right to food. Nigeria's policymakers should constantly be reminded that there is preliminary evidence connecting food insecurity to political violence. There is need to understand the systematic relationship(s) between local food resources and insurgency.

2. A nodal state, in this context, is a country whose activities and internal politics is most probable to shape or impact the dynamics in the region.