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The Defunct Rivers State ‘School to Land’ Scheme: A Dream Deferred. Can the Objectives of the Songhai Farming Scheme in Rivers State be Achieved?

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Abstract

Ensuring food security and self-reliance through farming made many countries to embark on farming schemes such as the Gezira in Sudan, Alto Beni in Bolivia, Nyakashaka of Uganda, farming settlements of Eastern and Western Nigeria and the “School to Land” scheme. The initial euphoria that welcomed these schemes was later dampened because they didn’t fulfil their objectives. Presently the Songhai Farms, Benin Republic is a success story and the Rivers State government sent some youths to learn the art of farming

there. Will the objectives of the Songhai Farms succeed in Rivers State? This is the bottomline of this paper.

Introduction

The question of food security has been uppermost in the minds of the world leaders. Hence, in all their policies and actions, efforts have been geared towards ensuring that their respective countries become food baskets where their people can be well fed to enable them face other societal challenges. A popular adage has it “if wishes were horses, beggars will ride”. The implication of this adage is that in as much as the world leaders are all craving for feeding their nationals, natural disasters, wars, political instability, and corruption in most instances truncates the lofty ideas of these leaders. The negative implication of these problems on most nations of the world is that they are short of food to feed their teeming population. Hence, the need for thinking consciously and adaptively of farming schemes that will provide the food needs of the nations become expedient. Let us briefly look at farming schemes in Nigeria and other countries of the world before taking a glance at the situation in Rivers State which is the case study of this paper.

Statement of the Problem

Precisely in 1984, the then Administrator of Rivers State, Police Commissioner Fidelis Oyhakhilome, took a giant step to transform Rivers State as the food basket of the Nigerian nation by embarking on the School-To-Land programme. It was not only meant to be a food basket but ostensibly to be a training ground for young secondary school leavers to imbibe the essence of farming and self-employment. The enthusiasm and accolade the programme received made this author to assess the programme in 1985/86 as his Master Degree Thesis at the University of Ibadan.

Less than ten years of the inception of the School-To-Land programme, it encountered many political, economic and social problems that led to its demise. Problems in the fold of lack of continuity due to different government that took the mantle of governance after the tenure of PC Fidelis Oyhakhilome; poor accountability on the sale of the farm products and the hydra-headed problems of bureaucracy because the then scheme though it was orchestrated that it was independent, the interference and interruption by officials of the State Ministry of Agriculture was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

Furthermore, none of the then one hundred and fifty (150) young farmers that were trained at Iriebe and Bunu farms took to farming as a means of livelihood thereby defeating the very essence of the School-To-Land farming scheme.

Hence it is very interesting or surprising hearing the present Governor of Rivers State Rt. Hon. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi orchestrating the need and essence of introducing the model of Songhai Farms in Porto Novo, Benin Republic to Rivers State. The Songhai Farm has the same objectives as the School-To-Land programme; the exception being that it is a private organisation that is in partnership with international bodies mainly to train young men and women on the need of self-reliance, self-employment and championing the essence of farming so that the nations of Africa can be self-reliant in food production.

The government of Rivers State sent one hundred and ten (110) secondary school graduates to Porto Novo to learn that art of modern farming; modern farming in the fold of livestock, afro-forestry, poultry, aqua-culture, and market gardens to mention a few. The first batch of trainees was in Benin Republic for one and half years for the training out of which fifty (50) graduates are presently in Bunu Songhai Farms in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State practicing what they learnt.

The bone of contention is: will this farming scheme survive? Would it fail as other farming schemes in Rivers State or Nigeria? That is the big question.

Objective of Study

The main objective of this study is to know whether the Bunu Songhai Farms in Rivers State can withstand the murky waters of politics and interference by government officials and survive the test of time so that it can be the cynosure of all eyes and other governments to emulate.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the managerial and organisational acumen of the Bunu Songhai Farms in Rivers State if properly planned will be emulated by other governments that will be interested in similar farming schemes.

It will serve as a pot-pourri for training youths to be self-reliant and desist from negative societal values in the fold of militancy, robbery and youth restiveness. At least peace and security will be given a chance in the society.

Methodology

This is a comparative study in respect of the School-To-Land programme that is demised and non-functional and the Bunu Songhai Farms that is in currently in operation. In actual fact, the Bunu Songhai Farm site is the same farm site that was used by the School-To-Land programme.

The observational and interview method of collecting data was employed in gathering primary data. Unstructured observational method was applied where the principles of participant observation was used. While interacting with the young farmers at their respective farming units, the researcher observed the Bunu Songhai Farm site as a “visiting stranger” and as an “attentive listener” (Lokesh, 2009). Series of questions were asked and their responses recorded. While keen observation of the farming zeal of the trainees was also noted. This method of observation is what Gold (1958) called ‘Observer-Participant’ *“where the researcher acts primarily as an observer, entering the setting only to gather data and interacting only casually and non-directly with individuals or groups while engaged in observations”*.

Literature Review

Classic Cases of Farming Schemes

(a) The Gezira Scheme in Sudan

In this scheme, peasants, young school leavers and unemployed persons were settled in large scale modern farming enterprises with a centralised management that co-ordinate the farming activities of the settlers. A major difference of this scheme when compared with other agricultural schemes, especially the Nyakashaka and the Nigerian farm settlements was that most of the settlers were under the umbrella of their families. In other words, they were grouped as family type farmers.

The settlers were trained and assisted by agricultural extension officers, technical experts and administrators. In fact, Schickele (1968) had this to say about the management and impact of the Gezira Scheme:

The centralised management of the production of one basic cash crop on the tenants holding, through well trained technicians and administrators, introduces a modicum of economic and technical efficiency, producing a dependable core of income to tenants and the government and provides

a practical means of educating the farmers in the ways of scientific farming and commercial market transactions.

In fact, most of the settlers had wide areas of opportunities in developing their skills in farming, managerial activities and responsibilities. Thus, the Gezira Scheme was widely respected in the world, for they were able to feed themselves and inculcated the act of farming into many young and energetic youths in Sudan. It really solved the problem of unemployment and food shortage.

(b) The Alto Beni Project in Bolivia

The Alto Beni Project was started to ensure that most of the uncultivated but fertile lands were well utilized. The Alto Beni and Carrasco areas of Bolivia were found to have good climate and soils to produce perennial crops for domestic use and export.

In the valley of Alto Beni, five planned settlements were established in which different families were stationed. Each family was allocated about 10 – 12 hectares to plant on. The five settlements conducted their activities co-operatively. Each settlement has a community centre that has storage facilities, warehouses, a health centre, a school, sleeping quarters for the staff, a kitchen, mess hall and an oven for baking bread. A central camp was built in the centre of the scheme with living quarters for the administrator and his staff.

In this project, the settlers cut across all types of people and each of them underwent medical examination before they were taken to the farm settlements. Torrioco (1968) said income earned by the settlers increased tremendously about 50% greater than it had been in their former homes. Secondly, most of the settlers were greatly committed and had positive attitudes towards the project. Torrioco (1968) said this might not be unconnected with the conducive climate, medical attention, schools and other social services that were provided.

However, in 1965, government subventions toward the programme plummeted. This greatly hindered the progress of the project. With the absence of fund, most feeder roads connecting the project were not maintained, thus compounding the problem of the settlers. They found it difficult to transport their commodities to the cities and most infrastructures needed for the project were not forthcoming. For lack of roads and for reasons of personal preference, most of the settlers abandoned the villages at

the farm sites. These problems contributed to the untimely death of the project.

(c) The Land Resettlement Scheme in Kenya

It is worth clarifying from the onset that this scheme was not exclusively planned for young school leavers as it was at Nyakashaka and the farm settlement in the Mid-Western Nigeria. Rather, the settlement scheme in Kenya was open for everybody especially the unemployed and the landless group of people. Of course when we talk of the unemployed in Kenya, it also includes the young school leavers.

One of the objectives of the scheme was to improve the political and social climate, especially the unemployment situation in the country. Another objective was to introduce a significant number of African farmers to improve their methods under supervision, so that they would produce an estimated £8.3 per acre from land that formerly produced no more than £4 – 5 per acre.

Under the scheme, three types of settlements were established namely, the high density scheme, the low density scheme and the yeoman scheme. The high density scheme is the most important in terms of its largeness and coupled with the fact that it absorbs both the landless and unemployed Africans with little or no capital or agricultural knowledge. Each settlement under this scheme had 300-400 settlers on about 10,000 acres (about 30 acres per family). Each of the settlements consumes about £25 to £70 per annum. They were sponsored by Britain and West Germany. By June 1966, 23,660 settlers had been established on about 70 settlements covering about 0.7 acres. The low density schemes are exclusively for experienced farmers with working capital. The Yeoman scheme is meant for wealthy and experienced farmers. The planned net income was about £250 per annum. This scheme needed a great deal of capital per settler.

In each of the schemes, things are done co-operatively via a multi-purpose co-operative society. These co-operative societies collate, bulked and sold most of the agricultural commodities that are produced in the schemes.

The schemes had a lot of impact on the settlers and in the overall production of food in the country. For instance, Maina and McArthur (1968) said “*agriculturally, the schemes had permitted the maintenance of production from most of settled land with only minor interruptions.*” In most cases, the

settlements were producing far more than their predecessors and this process of intensification was certain to occur almost everywhere.

Secondly, socially, it gave a number of destitute people land which in the course of time, they will own outright and so it had played to relieve the acute problems of the landless and unemployed.

(d) The Nyakashaka Resettlement Scheme in Uganda

The Nyakashaka farm settlement scheme was established by the Church of Uganda to provide prospects for productive farming for young school leavers that are unemployed. They were to be commercial tea growers in the Ankole District of Western Uganda.

The farm settlement scheme was sited in 3,000 acres of land that is relatively isolated and in a sparsely populated hill country at an altitude of roughly 6,000ft. The main objective of the farming scheme was to serve as a source of employment for young school leavers and to inculcate in them the noble ideas of modern farming. It was also hoped that the peasants in the locality would perceive that farming of a type within their capacity could otherwise provide a good livelihood (Hutton, 1973).

Principally, settlers of the scheme were trained for three years during which they were subjected to various types of discipline. This was kept to a minimum so that they can feel secure and responsible for their farms. During the training, each of the trainees was given a loan of £20 that was used for house building; also they were given pocket money.

After the period of training, each settler was given a piece of land to cultivate. He does everything by himself. If in need of assistance, extension officers were sent to them during which time the problems are discussed and solutions made. All technical instructions were given to him individually on his own land so that he was involved in what he learned. As an independent settler, he was expected to repay his loans in instalments by deductions made through the Nyakashaka Co-operative Society for each pound of tea sold.

The Nyakashaka Farming Scheme had a tremendous impact on the financial side of the settlers. As months and years roll by, most of the settlers were able to make about £20 per month. Even the least efficient of the settlers also made his mark in terms of finance. However, the hard working and long established settlers made more money.

(e) The Farm Settlement Scheme in Western Nigeria

The farm settlement scheme in Western Nigeria was modelled upon the Israeli Moshavin with some differences (Aron, 1968). It should be stated from the onset that the introduction of this farming scheme was to serve as a means of increasing the production of agricultural commodities and serving as a source of employment for the people that are employed.

The main objectives of the Western Nigeria Farm Settlement Scheme are to attract young educated persons to take up farming and discard the negative ideas they have on farming as well as to demonstrate that by careful planning, farms can be established and operated by young educated farmers with reasonable assistance in form of advice and loans from government and other sources which will provide a comfortable standard of living for the owners, comparable with or higher than that gained by persons of their own status in other forms of employment.

Failure of the Scheme

According to Roider (1968) in 1962/63, 130 out of 620 settlers left the settlement, discouraged by the hard life on the settlement, the crop failures, the size of their debts and the authoritarian behaviour of the staff, a compulsory saving scheme and delays in paying the food allowance of £2.10s.

Secondly, shortage of fund was another fact that contributed to the failure of the programme. Out of a total expenditure of £41 million in 1961/62, the Federal Government was able to provide only £8 million and there was no aid coming from outside. The greatly hindered the life span of the scheme.

Thirdly, politicking with the programme also caused its failure. Political considerations were given more premium than economic considerations in the sitting of the settlements. Because of the need to gain political support there was always the temptation for impatience and unnecessary speed in implementing the farm settlement programmes.

Fourthly, the Civil War also played a major part to the failure of the scheme. Many resources that should have been used for the scheme were diverted for military purposes thus hindering the farm settlements in meeting up their planned targets.

(f) The School Leavers’ Farm of the Mid-Western Nigeria

The School Leavers Farm in the Mid-Western Region was started in 1964. This was after the success and achievement of the Western Nigeria Farm Settlement Scheme was eulogised and became the cynosure of all eyes. The Mid-Western government felt it would be proper to develop a farm settlement that would be exclusively meant for young school leavers that graduate in their hundreds flooding the labour market without securing any job. They also thought it would serve as a source of employment to the youths so that they could inculcate in them the noble ideas of farming.

The first batch of school leavers recruited for the scheme were sent to the farm training institutes where they were trained in the act and practice of good farming. On their graduation, they were allocated some acres of land where they put what they had learnt into practice. The young farmer cleared his land, planted his seeds, sold his products himself and hired labour when his family labour became inadequate. In fact, he was the owner-operator of the farm. However, he was assisted by agricultural extension officers when the need arose. The government gave them short-term loans which the young farmers used to buy subsidized seeds and seedlings from the government.

Olatunbosun (1964) said the *“the farmers were given the opportunity to make most of their decisions with minimum interference from management authority – the community development organiser was there merely to advise them rather than issue instructions, assign jobs or hire labour for them”*. This shows that the young farmers were relatively free from control by the government. In terms of the attitudes of the young farmers towards the scheme, Olatunbosun (1964) said they exhibited favourable attitude because it reflected in their general good disposition and high morale. The school leaver farmers were highly committed because they regarded themselves as owner-operators rather than government employees.

Failure of the Scheme

The school leavers’ farm in the Mid-Western Region did not survive the test of time. This was because there were no funds to sustain the farming programme. With no financial aid coming from anywhere, most of the school leavers abandoned the farms for greener pastures. In addition, most of the commodities produced in the farms were not competing favourably in the world market due to poor marketing strategies by the commodity boards and

poor market prices. Hence most of the young school leaver farmers were highly discouraged and abandoned the farms.

(g) The Farm Settlement Scheme in Eastern Nigeria

The government of Eastern Nigeria followed the step of their Western Nigeria counterpart by establishing six less costly Israeli's Moshav-type farm settlements. Each of the settlements consisted of six (6) villages of 120 farm units with a nucleus containing all the common services.

The Eastern Nigeria Farm Settlement Scheme aimed at reversing the trend of migration from rural to urban areas by making rural life more attractive and congenial than it has been hitherto. It also sought to provide some employment and livelihood for primary school leavers who cannot be absorbed in industry, public service and commercial houses at the prevailing level of the regions development. Ojimba (1975) said "*the farm settlement scheme in the Eastern Region was meant to revolutionise the traditional farming system and to teach the Easterners how to produce cash crops through the application of modern agricultural methods*".

The settlers took part to manage the community's affairs which included the mill processing and co-operative marketing of their products. Thus the farm settlement provided a practical demonstration of a new organization's approach to farming and rural settlement. The settlers secured title on their own holdings which they operated and from where they drew an income.

Failure of the Scheme

There was shortage of funds, in fact, in strict financial terms; it received only 21 percent of the £36,821,000 allocated for primary productions in the six year plan.

Acquisition of land for the scheme always resulted in altercations between owners of the land and the traditional chiefs that were ready to give out the land to the government. Surveyors that ventured into these disputable lands were threatened; hence the government always found it very difficult getting land for the farming scheme. This led to hundreds of acres of land unused for the purpose.

Thirdly, there were delays in the training of extension staff. The output of agricultural assistants and assistant agricultural superintendents in 1963-64 did not only fall short of the planned target, but was also below the 1962-63 output. Finally, the outbreak of the Civil War did not only disorganise and

disrupt the programme; it put a final end to the whole programme. It was never resuscitated.

The Rivers State ‘School to Land’ Farming Scheme

The ‘School to Land’ Authority was headed by an Executive Director who was ably supported by an Executive Secretary. They co-ordinated all the affairs pertaining to the farming scheme in all the local government areas where farm sites were located. The School to Land Authority was made up of different units among which are the transport, planning, recording, commercial, administrative, input and maintenance units. Furthermore, each farm site is headed by a Farm Manager. These managers were specialists in different fields of agriculture.

The School to Land Authority was autonomous; hence it was not under the State’s Ministry of Agriculture. This was mainly to insulate it from the effects of red tapism associated with the Civil Service structures. However, to ensure speedy implementation of government policies in the Authority, a Governing Board was constituted to ensure proper control and implementation of policies. The Board was slated to meet every week till the end of the planting seasons.

Why the ‘School to Land’ Scheme Failed

Lack of political will by subsequent governments led to its downfall. It is pertinent to state that after the tenure of Governor Fidelis Oyakhilome, other governors were not so enthusiastic about the scheme. The inaugural Governing Board was dissolved and new boards constituted to satisfy the acolytes of the governors in power. Hence, lack of continuity was a bane in the progress of the School to Land Scheme. In fact, each Governing Board that was constituted thought of what it will gain from the scheme rather than thinking of its well being.

Secondly, forceful occupation of lands by the government to serve as School to Land schemes did not augur well with the owners of the land. This was the case at Iriebe farm lands in Oyigbo Local Government Area. The farmers were not ready to learn new farming methods from the School to Land Extension Officers. However at Bunu-Tai farmlands in Tai Local Government Area, the people voluntarily donated 3000 acres of land to the farming scheme and were very co-operative and enthusiastic about the scheme.

Again, poor funding by the state government was a major problem. In fact, after the tenure of Governor Fidelis Oyakhilome, the initiator of the scheme, other governors did not allocate much funds to the scheme. In fact, a former Chairman of the Governing Board by name Chief Akiagba, opined that since regular funds were not forthcoming, they resorted to selling the farm products to meet the needs of the scheme. Chickens, eggs, maize, and other farm products such as okra, ogbono, cassava, and cowpea were sold to raise money to pay the young farmers in training. This action by the management of the scheme did not go down well with the then government of Chief Rufus Ada George. In a swift reaction, the Governing Board was dissolved and the life of the School to Land scheme came to an end.

Furthermore, when the scheme was thriving relatively well, it was observed that in the quest of instilling discipline and farming ethics into the young farmer, the authorities were dictatorial. This autocratic penchant instilled fear and trepidation in the young farmers. As at then, a young farmer had this to say *“what they say goes and they don’t have to say it twice. You don’t have any say, you can’t complain to anybody, you are quite defenceless”* (Uhor, 1986).

In addition, recruitment of youths into political cleavages by politicians seeking political offices was the last straw that broke the camel’s back. These youths were given arms and were well remunerated to commit atrocities in order to foster the dictates of their sponsors or mentors. The monies given to them were by far higher than the stipends being paid the farmers as allowances. Hence, some joined militia outfits that destabilised the relative peaceful atmosphere Rivers State was known for especially within the precincts of Port Harcourt, Oyigbo and Tai Local Government Areas.

Songhai Farms of Benin Republic

Songhai Farms is a centre for training people in the latest art of farming through constant researches and development. This centre was the handiwork of Father Godfrey Nzamajo who was bent on seeing the development of Africans by making them to imbibe the tenets of self-reliance and adaptation.

Segla (2009) said the Songhai Farm is a *“centre for training, for production, research and development of sustainable agricultural practices”*. The main objectives of the farming scheme are to project the following methods of farming to wit:

- ◆ Through the use of local resources, traditional and modern methods,

- ◆ Through the hybridization of traditional and modern agricultural practices,
- ◆ Through the instruction and implementation of effective management,
- ◆ Through the encouragement of individual and communal responsibility and initiatives,
- ◆ Through the inclusion of diverse opinions (Segla, 2009).

It is important to state that the Songhai Centre is an autonomous institution that is self financing through the finances generated by its own activities and efforts. Also, it sought assistance from international bodies that partners with it in order to realise its lofty objectives. These bodies include USAID (United States Agency for International Development), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), IDRC (International Development Research Centre), to mention a few (Segla, 2009).

Bunu Songhai Farms, Tai Local Government Area, Rivers State

The Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) is a government parastatal that is in charge of human capital development. The agency advertised and recruited one hundred and ten (110) young school leavers from all the local government areas of Rivers State and sent them to the Songhai Farms in Porto Novo in Benin Republic for a one and a half year training programme that spanned from November/December 2008 to April 2010. At the end of the training programme, the trainees were examined on written and practical farming work. Out of the total number (being the first batch of trainees), only fifty (50) graduates were retained to continue the art of farming at Bunu Songhai Farm site. It is hoped they will later serve as master trainers for the subsequent batches that will be recruited by the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency.

However, the remaining sixty (60) trainees that also graduated but who probably did not excel as the other fifty (50) are to be given seed funds by the State government to acquire land and practice what they learnt at Songhai Farms in Benin Republic to generate income and have a means of livelihood.

The Bunu Songhai Farm site is divided into different units namely: livestock, crops, bio-gas, aqua-culture, market gardens and poultry. The crop unit is made up of pineapple, pawpaw, plantain, orange and mango plantations.

Livestock unit has such animals as quails, grasscutters, concrete fish ponds, pigs, snails and cows. Market garden comprises of planting carrot, pepper, cucumber, and cabbage to mention a few. The poultry unit has broilers, layers, chickens, ostriches, ducks, hens, guinea fowl, etc. There is an artificial Songhai lake that is under construction to satisfy the aquaculture needs. Furthermore, there are rice mill and soya feed mill where feeds are prepared for the animals and fishes.

The Bunu Songhai Farms orchestrate the principle of integrated farming where it is believed that all the farming units propagate the principle of symbiosis where all the needs of the farming units are sought for within the farm site. Hence they hardly seek assistance or feeds outside the farm site. There are also mechanical and automobile workshops; a powerhouse, stabilized brick production unit and various agricultural machineries.

It is pertinent to state at this juncture that the Bunu Songhai Farms in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State is totally in the control of the parent body – that is the Songhai (Centre) Farms in Benin Republic – with Prof (Fr) Godfrey Nzamajo at the helms of affairs. The administrative staff is made up of personnel that were personally recruited by Fr. Nzamajo.

It is expected that in the near future, Prof (Fr) Godfrey Nzamajo and his team will formally hand over the farming scheme to the Rivers State government. The fear is whether on handing over, the farm will not suffer the fate of its precursors. Indeed, pertinent questions arise as to the likely fortune of the farming scheme after its expatriate staffs might have left. Can the State government live up to the standard set by Benin Songhai Farms? Will the Governor set up a conscientious team of dedicated and committed personalities to look at the affairs of the farm? Will the excesses of red-tapism associated with government bureaucracy not stifle the good objectives of the farm? Will the farm be insulated from government intransigence and be associated with international bodies that partner with the parent body? Time will tell!

The young farmers are paid the sum of N35,000 per month; where Songhai Farm pays N5,000 and the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA) pays N30,000. To say the least, this is a pittance that must be improved upon by the government. This is because these young energetic and vibrant farmers can easily be susceptible to conscienceless politicians who can lure them away with high sums of money to engage in negative societal vices.

The Bunu Songhai Farm site has an administrative block and ten blocks of stabilized brick apartments that are for lodging. There are blocks for research, information and communication technology unit, restaurant for holiday makers or tourists. In all, the structures at Bunu Songhai Farms are more advanced, sophisticated and alluring than that of the defunct School-To-Land programme that was bedevilled by problems of nepotism, corruption, political manoeuvrings and which was built on sandy foundations that totally collapsed after a short time.

Some of the young farmers that were observed and interviewed in their respective units such as Mr. George of the Grasscutters Unit, Miss Maureen Odinze of the Poultry Unit, Mr. Allen Ikechukwu of Market Garden Unit, Mr. Friday Ayika of the Piggery Unit and Mr. Victor Adokiye of the Bio-gas Unit were unequivocal in their view that the agricultural industry is lucrative and immediately on disengagement, they will put into practice what they learnt in both Songhai Centre Benin, and Bunu Songhai Farms Nigeria. Although full of praise for the Governor of the State, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi who made it possible for them to be given the opportunity to be in this noble profession, they opined that the scheme should not be given to the State Ministry of Agriculture and that the farming scheme should partner with other international bodies in order to withstand the vagaries of political and economic changes in the State in particular and the country in general.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the objectives of the Songhai Farms are quite heart-warming. They imbue in the young farmers the principles of modern farming methods and self-reliance. It is hoped that its adoption by the Rivers State government would be supported by political will, consistent and coherent agricultural policies, proper funding and committed partnership with foreign bodies such as USAID (United States Agency for International Development), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation), IDRC (International Development Research Centre) to mention a few.

Implications

The implications of adopting the Songhai farming scheme in Rivers State are two prongs, to wit: it will offer employment opportunities to youths, relatively enhance the growth of the rural areas as well as check youth restiveness and militancy. The second ambit of the implication is that if the

scheme is not properly implemented; the people of the State might lose confidence in most governmental projects because they will see them as a means of siphoning tax payers money and white elephant projects.

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