

# Access to Land for Sustainable Agriculture Practices in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Agriculture plays a crucial role in Nigeria, for several reasons. It is a sector that employs the majority of the country's working population. The persistent hunger and malnutrition in the country requires the creation of the favorable conditions for easy and permanent access to quality food for all the population. This entails developing integrated local food production system, ability to feed adequately local markets all over the country and excess for export. One of the major challenges of agricultural practices in Nigeria is that of poor access to land for sustainable agricultural production. The study therefore focuses on how land is accessed for agricultural practices as a panacea for sustainable economic development. Data for the work were sourced from the secondary sources from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics and National Population Commission (NPC). The 36 states of the federation were collapsed into the six geopolitical zones.

The objectives include determining the available land in Nigeria, available hectares of land in each zone, the population density in each zone and the tenure and land administrative System in each zone. A critical review of each zone was made in term of issues and constraints relating to land use. Descriptive statistics was also used for the analyses of the obtained data and it was observed that land tenure, land value and land uses among others affect substantially access to land for agricultural practices for sustainable economic development.

(Keywords: agricultural practices, land, land tenure, sustainable economic development)

## INTRODUCTION

The need to develop the human race and the attempt not to jeopardize the future necessitated the body of knowledge known as sustainable development. Brundtland (1987) defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There are two major concepts of sustainable development, they are the concept of needs in particular, the essential needs of the poor people to which overriding priority should be given; the idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organizations on the environmental ability to meet the present and the future needs (Ugochukwu, 2012).

There are seventeen goals of sustainable development; these goals take an exhaustive look at the present by focusing extensively on the contemporary issues that require urgent attention. Moro (2016) further defined sustainable development "as a development in which a community of people can decide in a free and democratic way its own future and work together to achieve it". He also opined that "development is no longer a model nor the reaching of a status or set of pre-established technical and social assets; it is an original transformation process led by a country's people in which public policies are aimed at widening the space of opportunity for all individuals expanding available choices and making the transformation possible".

The collections of the seventeen goals otherwise known as global goals are very broad and interdependent, yet they have a separate list of targets to achieve (UNDP, 2015). One of the global goals particularly goal eight focuses on decent work and sustainable economic growth.

Sustainable economic development is the dream of all political leaders, economists, managers, and all human beings. Moro (2016) further said that "Africa as a continent has the world highest percentage of people living in poverty and faces many demanding socio-economic situations". The continent economic development needs multi-dimensional approach. The Nigerian economy has become a source of worry to both the leaders and the led making it difficult for the managers of business to make the decision for a sustainable business. Recently, the Nigerian economy came out of recession and efforts are being made by the government to have alternative sources of revenue to the government apart from oil.

Emphasis has now shifted from oil to agriculture in order to sustain the economic growth and development. For improved agricultural practice and to ensure sustainable economic development access to land is very vital.

Land is the most valuable possession of mankind. It is an important asset of any country; without land there can be no country. The wealth of the nation and its economic development are dependent on the state of land and its usage (Ndukwe, 2013).

Access to land is determined by the type of land tenure system experienced in that particular region. Land tenure is a manner in which a party occupies or holds land. Societies formed the rules that regulate land tenure in order to control land ownership in the country. Land tenure therefore can be described as a set of rules, duties, and rights that define the obligations and privileges of persons in references to the land. Agwu (2017) defined land tenure system as "the method of management with regards to distribution, use, acquisition and exploitation of specific areas of land". Agwu (2017) further broke land tenure system into five types (i.e., communal, individual, inheritance, leasehold and gift tenure system).

This paper therefore makes a critical assessment of how land is accessed for agricultural practices to ensure sustainable economic development in Nigeria.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study include:

- to ascertain the available hectares of land in each geo-political zone in Nigeria.
- to determine the population density in each geo-political zone of the country.
- to examine the land tenure system and land administration policy in each of the geo-political zones of the country.

## THE STUDY AREA

Nigeria is an African country on the Gulf of Guinea with many natural land marks. Nigeria is located on the west-coast of Africa. It lies within the latitude 40N and 140N north of the equator and longitude 30 and 150 east of the Greenwich Meridian. Nigeria covers 910,768 km<sup>2</sup> land areas and 13,000 km<sup>2</sup> water areas. The total land and water area for the country is 923,768 km<sup>2</sup>. Going by the 2006 population census, the total population of the country is 186,053,386 while the population density is 204 km<sup>2</sup>. Abuja is the capital city.

Nigeria climate is tropical with two marked seasons: The dry season, lasting from November to March with the dry dust laden north easterly winds blowing across the country. The rainy season is from April to October; during this period, the moisture laden south westerly winds blow from the coast bringing in the rains. There are six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, with thirty-six states, Abuja the Federal capital territory; and seven hundred and seventy-four local government areas (Wikipedia, 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Source

Data were sourced from the secondary source. The data were from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics and the National Population Commission. Nigeria has 36 states and 774 local government areas. These were collapsed into the six geo-political zones for analysis since the tenure system, population density and the land administration policy are similar in each zone.

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods of simple percentages and histogram were used for the analysis.

## Findings

**Table 1:** Percentages of Land in Northern and Southern part of Nigeria.

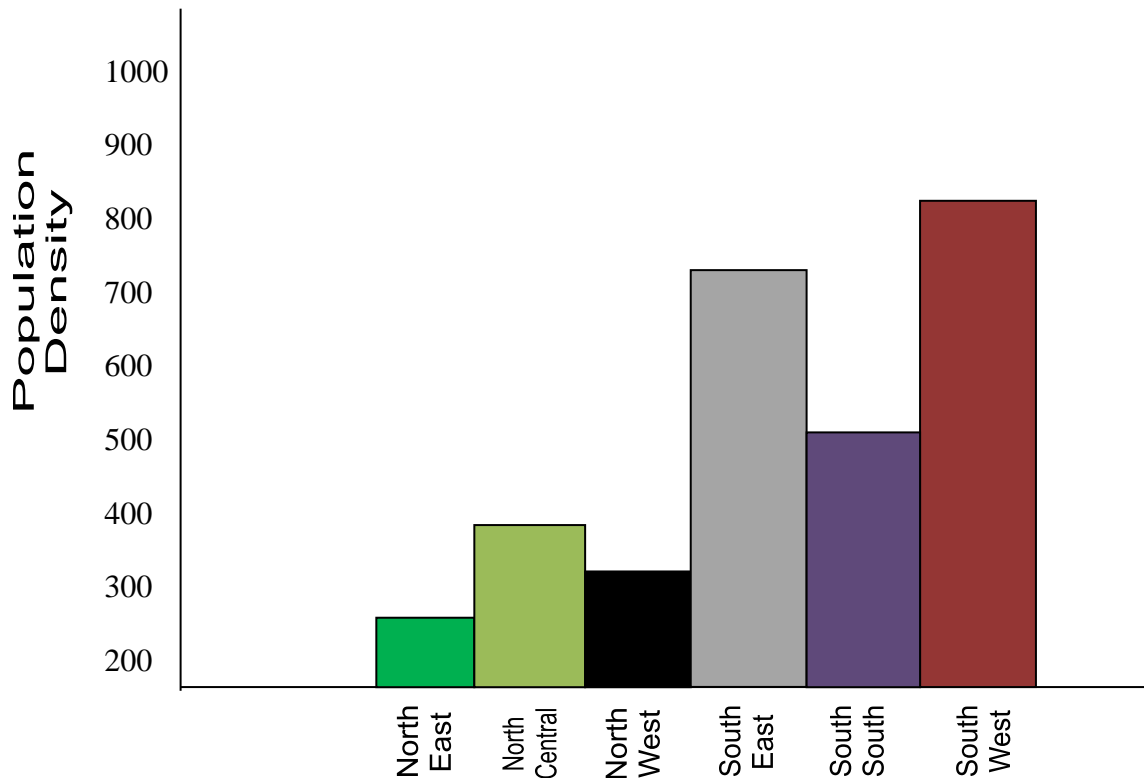
Zone	Available Land km <sup>2</sup>	Percentages%
Northern	738,414	79.18%
Southern	194,354	20.82%
Total	932,768	100%

Source: Author's computation (2018)

**Table 2:** Hectares of Land in the Six Geopolitical Zones of the Country.

Zone	Available Hectares of Land km <sup>2</sup>	Percentages%
North Central	22,405,900	24.02%
North East	28,541,900	30.60%
North West	21,734,900	23.30%
South East	3,129,800	3.36%
South South	8,981,600	9.63%
South West	8,185,200	8.78%
Total	93,276,800	100%

Source: Author's computation (2018)



**Figure 1:** Population Density in Each of the Six Geopolitical Zone in Nigeria Source: Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2016)

## DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the percentages of available land in Nigeria. From the table, the northern part of the country has 79.18% of the available land while the southern part has 20.82% in the country. From this, it is shown that there is more land for agricultural practices in the northern part of the country.

Table 2 further shows the available hectares of land in each of the geopolitical zones of the country. North-East geopolitical zone has the highest available hectares of land; this is closely followed by North Central and North West in that order.

In the southern zone of the country, the south-south region has the highest available hectares of land followed by the south-west and south-east, in that order. This further confirms the availability of more land in the northern part of the country than the southern part. However, in the south-south region, there is a higher rate of environmental degradation as a result of oil exploration and that reduces the quality of the land for agricultural practices.

The vegetation type and the climate characteristics, in the south-south and south-east affect agricultural practice. In the south-west, there is pressure on the land and most agricultural activities are on the subsistence level. Some areas also experience incidences of environmental degradation as a result of erosion, leaching, etc. This affects the productivity of land. The incidence of Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, incessant clashes between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the north-central and inter ethnics conflicts in the north west also affect agricultural practices.

Figure 1 presents the population density in each of the six geo-political zones of the country. Population density in the number of people per kilometer square. With the statistics, the south-west has the highest population density, closely followed by south-east, south-south, north-central, north-west and north-east, in that order. Where we have higher population density, it clearly shows that the zone is urbanized. This accounts for too much pressure on the available land for various land uses. In an urban environment, there are pressure on the available land for different land uses to satisfy the larger population. To this effect, land becomes very expensive in the

southern zone of the country because of the pressure on the available land.

Contrary to the fact that the land use Act of 1978 is the Act purposely enacted for land administration in Nigeria, the two major geopolitical zones, the northern region and the southern region, experience different types of tenure system. The southern region experiences a freehold system in which individuals, families, communities, etc. hold land as private properties. However, in the northern region, leasehold is enjoyed, and it is granted by either customary law or the government. This makes access to land easier and cheaper in the northern region than the southern region where higher compensation is paid to the owners. Also, the incidence of land grabbers in the southern part of the country cannot be ruled out because of the value attached to it and the pressure on the available land.

## CONCLUSION

Agricultural practices are everywhere in the country. There are farmers in each of the zones and there is land for farming. However, access to land for agricultural practices as a panacea for sustainable economic development is the focus of this work. Therefore, all due processes must be followed in order to meet the target. There is enough land for agricultural practices in the north as compared with the south. Sustainable agricultural farmland will be easier to access in the northern part of the country than the southern part. However, the challenges of the herdsmen are a point of concern because of the sinister effect it has on the farmers. Farmlands are destroyed daily by the herdsmen and this affects agricultural production in the region.

Land in the northern part of the country is also cheaper and more accessible as compared with the southern part which is more expensive. Also, the leasehold tenure system in the northern region is friendlier than the freehold tenure system in the south. It is therefore concluded that there is available land to access for agricultural practices in the country, but accessibility is easier and friendlier in the northern part than the southern part.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this work:

- (i) The government should expedite actions on land reform policy in Nigeria.
- (ii) Land tenure systems must be incorporated into the land administration policy for the country.
- (iii) To ensure sustainable agricultural practice within the country, the Bureau of Land in each state should be saddled with the responsibilities of making land available for the agriculture users.
- (iv) The government must ensure that sustainable agricultural farmland is free from litigation and other issues to attract the farmers.
- (v) The government must address the incessant clashes between the herdsmen and the farmers and subject the available land to proper land uses that will be devoid of rancor and acrimony.

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## APPENDIX

S/N	States	Hectares of land	Population	Land area in km <sup>2</sup>	Population density
1	Abia	490,000.00	2,833,999	4,900.00	578
2	Abuja	760,000.00	1,405,251	7,609.00	185
3	Adamawa	3,870,000.00	3,168,101	38,700.00	82
4	Akwa-Ibom	690,000.00	3,920,208	6,900.00	568
5	Anambra	486,500.00	4,182,032	4,865.00	860
6	Bauchi	4,911,900.00	4,676,465	49,119.00	95
7	Bayelsa	905,900.00	1,703,358	9,059.00	188
8	Benue	3,080,000.00	4,219,244	30,800.00	137
9	Borno	7,260,900.00	4,151,193	72,609.00	58
10	Cross River	2,198,700.00	2,888,966	21,787.00	133
11	Delta	1,710,800.00	4,098,391	17,108.00	240
12	Ebonyi	640,000.00	2,173,501	6,400.00	340
13	Edo	1,918,700.00	3,218,332	19,187.00	168
14	Ekiti	543,500.00	2,384,212	5,435.00	439
15	Enugu	753,400.00	3,257,298	7,534.00	432
16	Gombe	1,710,000.00	2,353,879	17,100.00	138
17	Imo	528,800.00	3,920,208	5,288.00	741
18	Jigawa	2,328,700.00	4,348,649	23,287.00	187
19	Kaduna	4,248,100.00	6,066,562	42,481.00	143
20	Kano	2,028,000.00	8,183,682	20,280.00	404
21	Katsina	2,356,000.00	5,792,578	23,561.00	246
22	Kebbi	3,698,500.00	3,238,628	36,985.00	88

S/N	States	Hectares of land	Population	Land area in km <sup>2</sup>	Population density
23	Kogi	2,774,700.00	3,278,487	27,747.00	118
24	Kwara	3,570,500.00	2,371,089	35,705.00	66
25	Lagos	367,100.00	9,013,534	3,671.00	2,455
26	Nassarawa	2,873,500.00	1,863,275	28,735.00	65
27	Niger	6,892,500.00	3,934,899	68,925.00	58
28	Ogun	1,640,000.00	3,728,098	16,400.00	227
29	Ondo	1,582,000.00	3,441,024	15,820.00	218
30	Osun	902,600.00	3,423,635	9,026.00	329
31	Oyo	2,650,000.00	5,591,589	26,500.00	211
32	Plateau	2,714,700.00	3,178,712	27,147.00	117
33	Rivers	1,057,500.00	5,185,400	10,575.00	490
34	Sokoto	2,782,500.00	3,696,999	27,825.00	133
35	Taraba	5,628,200.00	2,300,736	56,282.00	41
36	Yobe	4,660,900.00	2,321,591	46,609.00	50
37	Zamfara	3,793,100.00	3,257,298	37,931.00	99

**Source:** Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2016)

### SUGGESTED CITATION

Adewoye, O.A. 2019. "Access to Land for Sustainable Agriculture Practices in Nigeria". *Pacific Journal of Science and Technology*. 20(1):167-172.

 [Pacific Journal of Science and Technology](http://www.akamaiuniversity.us/PJST.htm)