

Building policy coherence into Nigeria's agri-food system



INITIATIVE ON
National Policies
and Strategies

Options for more effective coordination and integration

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Introduction

Based on consultations with stakeholders this policy guidance brief presents co-developed recommendations for effective policy coordination and opportunities for enhancing policy coherence across Nigeria's agri-food system [comprising food, land, and water (FLW) sectors]. It uses the findings of a study on agri-food policy coherence in Nigeria, including desk policy reviews, key informant interviews, institutional surveys with key stakeholders and group discussions during a validation workshop. Key highlights include the following:

- Policy coherence (see Box 1) is a necessary and a sufficient tool for policy effectiveness in positively transforming agri-food systems in Nigeria;
- There is high normative policy coherence (coherence of policy objectives with relevant impact areas). FLW sector policies reviewed by the authors align to the key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to food and nutrition security, poverty reduction and livelihoods, health, gender equality, youth and social inclusion, climate adaptation and mitigation, and environmental health and biodiversity;
- Horizontal policy coherence (coherence between different food, land and water sectoral policies) exists, but there are contradictions. For instance, the goal of agricultural mechanization and use of inorganic agro-chemicals in the Agricultural Promotion Policy (2016), may constrain efforts at the conservation of flora and fauna ecosystems indicated the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2020);
- Vertical policy coherence (coherence between different administrative units) is planned in principle, across federal, state and local governance levels, but a lack of coordination and harmonization in the implementation of policy objectives lead to duplication of efforts and policy ineffectiveness;
- Financial policy incoherence is an important challenge. Budgetary allocations across the different governance levels do not match the investment demands across food, land and water sectors;

- Developing and effectively implementing a long-term policy agenda is critical for agri-food system transformation in Nigeria. The CGIAR Initiative on National Policies and Strategies (NPS) seeks to enhance policy coherence through knowledge generation with federal, state and local decision-makers helping them to identify and address sectoral interdependencies and build synergies for more harmonized implementation of policy and governance frameworks.

BOX 1. What is policy coherence?

Policy coherence analysis has been identified as a critical tool for improving policy efficiency and effectiveness, and the achievement of the SDGs (Parsons and Hawkes 2019). It is defined as an outcome where various policies are aligned so that efforts in one policy area do not undermine efforts in another and can even reinforce those efforts where possible. For the purposes of this brief, four main types of policy (in)coherence were explored. These are: Normative coherence – coherence of each policy across several impact areas; Horizontal coherence – coherence between different policies; Vertical coherence – coherence between different administrative units; Internal and Financial coherence – coherence between the objectives and the means of a policy.

Contextual issues

Farming in Nigeria (Source: Igwemba. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Farming_in_Nigeria.jpeg; Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0)



Nigeria ranked 15th out of 179 countries on the fragile states index in 2023 (Fund for Peace, 2023). Partly due to severe floods in many of its states, food inflation is estimated to have pushed five million people into poverty (World Bank, 2023). Situated within the West Africa region, Nigeria's population of more than 225 million people is growing at an annual rate of about 2.7%. On the Global Hunger Index, Nigeria ranked 103rd out of 121 countries in 2022. Malnutrition, measured as the average protein supply in grams/capita/day is worsening and the prevalence of undernourishment is increasing. Nigeria's FLW systems are challenged by widespread insecurities including terrorism and violent conflict between farmers and herders. These conflicts disrupt and destroy agri-food systems by displacing farmers, loss of agricultural assets and stored foodstuffs, and disruption to markets. Already, the conflicts have worsened conditions in existing fragile resource environments, slowed development progress and escalated the food and nutrition insecurity of the nation's vulnerable women and children (World Food Programme, 2022). The agriculture sector also suffered a severe short-term shock of a 13.1% loss in output (USD 1.2 billion)

during the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 (Andam et al. 2020), with Covid-19 policies such as restricted human mobility triggering a long-term hike in food prices due to reduced hired labour for production and reduced market supply.

Governments in Nigeria have embarked on several policies to facilitate access to agricultural land and water that can support efforts at making the nation food secure. However, policies on food, land and water sectors have often been enacted in silos under respective ministries, departments, and agencies, where the challenges of these sectors are often multi-layered and interconnected (FAO, 2011). There is also persistent duplication in the formulation and implementation of development programs as well as unfavourable land tenurial arrangements and land grabbing.

Complexities in Nigeria's FLW sectors result in poor coordination, inadequate funding, and limited policy scope, hampering the achievement of desired agri-food outcomes. A need for more horizontal, vertical, and financial policy coherence remains paramount, to ensure effective harmonization and coordination in policy implementation at all levels of governance.

Research approach

A total of 19 FLW sectors-related policies were reviewed to determine the extent of normative coherence. Four out of the 19 policies, namely: Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016); National Water Resources Policy (2016); National Policy on Food Safety and its Implementation Strategy (2014); and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2020) were selected for in-depth study using the NPS Policies and Institutional Landscape Analysis (PILA - See Policy Guidance Brief No.5). The analysis was done in consultation with policy think tank representatives, researchers, public policy makers, development agencies, civil society organisations and farmer-based organisations. To further explore the findings of the study, stakeholders at a validation workshop were asked three key questions: 1) What are the critical policy incoherence experiences in Nigeria's food, land and water sectors?; 2) How can policy incoherence be addressed?; and 3) What should be done to ensure food, land and water policies in Nigeria are able to better respond to future crisis?

Key findings

The policy analysis indicated a high extent of normative policy coherence in all 19 reviewed FLW sectors policies. The formulated policy intents and targets generally align to key SDGs. For instance, the Agriculture Promotion Policy, seeks to enhance domestic food requirements, and exports at quality levels sufficient for market success. The National Water Resources Policy puts water at the centre of food, health, education – and peace. It also seeks to eradicate poverty by, “reducing poverty through the delivery of efficiently operating irrigation schemes”; it is however not clear on how gender and social inclusion issues will be mainstreamed across specific objectives.

Most of the FLW policies significantly complement one another (achieving horizontal coherence), by promoting food self-sufficiency and improved livelihoods, especially for rural dwellers through access to potable water, enhanced irrigation programs for increased food productivity and better access to farmlands for the marginalized within communities. The stakeholders mostly perceived that various projects, programmes and initiatives being implemented in the agri-food system are relevant for attaining the objectives of the selected FLW policies. However, some policies like the National Water Resources Policy (2016), Agriculture Promotion Policy (2016) and the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2020) have contradictory objectives. For example, the promotion of agro-chemicals utilization to enhance crop productivity under the Agriculture Promotion Policy can lead to the presence of chemical residues in crops and water bodies to trigger food safety challenges and destroy ecosystems.

In principle, there is relatively harmonious coordination (vertical coherence) of formulated policies across different tiers of government in the country. Through budgetary provision, alignment with operational structures and common frameworks for reporting, monitoring and evaluation the federal, state and local government administrative units are organized and complement each other. Public policy stakeholders indicated that for all four policies, the federal, state and local government administrators seek synergies between policy objectives and effective coordination of their implementation activities. However, inadequate institutional resources such as quality data, ICT infrastructure, limited technical expertise on managing incoherence, and low financial investment results in policy ineffectiveness across the three levels of governance.

The four policies analysed were found to be financially incoherent. Funding for the achievement of targets in the formulated objectives, plans and projects remains limited. For instance, the federal government in 2023 earmarked N228.4 billion (USD 251.3 million) for the Ministry of Agriculture, an increase of 5.8% over the 2022 allocated amount. However, the allocation is still below the Maputo Declaration and commitment to investment in agriculture of a minimum 10% of the overall national budget of N 21.83 trillion. The average annual national financial commitment fails to meet up to the annual investment requirements of the FLW systems, leading to policy ineffectiveness in addressing critical socio-economic and agri-food challenges.

Stakeholders at a validation workshop highlighted the major challenges as fragmented implementation of policy, operations stuck in sectoral silos, and contradictions and duplication of efforts across FLW sectors all helping to reinforce policy incoherence. The most critical issue for stakeholders was the discontinuity of implementation of existing FLW policies whenever there was a change in ruling political party. This is mainly due to lack of political will with each new government following a manifesto which may or may not align with existing national development plans.

Ways forward and recommendations

There is a clear need for long-term agri-food system transformation, including effective coordination and alignment of all development partner projects and investments, and cutting across all governance levels. Specifically, food sector transformation in Nigeria should consider the following:

- A long-term agri-food policy framework: The CGIAR NPS Initiative could build stronger collaborations with public policy makers in Nigeria's FLW sectors, supporting the development of a long-term transformation policy agenda.
- Institutional capacity strengthening:
 - Provide policy analysis tools and train public policy officials at federal, state and local levels on the use of tools to support implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agri-food policy performance.
 - Functional partnerships for policy coherence: support public policy officials with models/pathways to establish and maintain effective partnerships for inclusive policy making.
 - Incentivize inter-agency collaboration to deal with uncertainties, policy shocks and other unforeseen crisis. Support engagements between agri-food sectoral ministries to foster strong collaborations; in particular between the Federal Department of Fishery of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security, and the Ministry of Water Resources (especially the department of dams) and parastatals like the River Basins Development Authorities.
- Policy platforms and engagements: Support the establishment of a national technical committee in the form of an agri-food systems working group, bringing together diverse stakeholders for inclusive public policy making processes. This platform should be leveraged to foster the implementation and monitoring of a long-term agri-food transformation agenda. This will also enhance the sharing of information on programmes and projects in the system to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Provision of adequate funding in national budgets based on the needs of the formulated programmes, projects and interventions that are derived from each sectoral policy, so that sustainable funding of project and/or policy implementation in all relevant sectors can be achieved.
- Put in place appropriate legislation and policies that provide pathways for government and relevant agencies to adapt to crisis. For example, grain reserves or food banks can be built in different zones to supply food when disasters such as floods occur.
- There should be clear institutional frameworks and political will, that ensures continuity in implementing past policy objectives, rather than new governments abandoning existing projects and designing new ones based on their political party manifesto. The concept of institutionalizing a national technical committee or working group in agri-food system transformation devoid of party-political influence is therefore critical.

Coherent policies will contribute to effectively addressing the complexities of FLW sectors and their capacity to contribute to socio-economic development. It will also minimize risks and vulnerabilities, support sustainable investments, and reduced inequalities for enhanced FLW systems transformation.

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Further reading

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