

The African Food Revolution: An Historical Appraisal

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Abstract: This study examines the African food situation in specified historical epoch beginning from the pre colonial period till the post colonial era. It traces the origin of many crops prevalent in Africa as a product of slave trade and European voyages of the West to Africa or preferably the imperial world. Against this background, the colonial era severed relations in sex and gender by further segregating between cash and food crops thus relegating the later as economically unviable. Be that as it may the independent African states as examined introduced strategies to checkmate food crisis yet elements of national insincerity and the presence of neo imperialist agencies remains a hydra monster Africa must address.

Key words: European voyages, colonial era, crops, epoch, food, Africa

INTRODUCTION

The economics of African food system has over the decade's elicited topical and provocative discourse among leaders of the comity of nations. The discourse has become both controversial and analytical as varied shades of professionals-economists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, agronomists, ecologists, geologists, agro-engineers, soil scientists politicians, demographers etc. have delved into discussions on how to achieve a radical restructuring of the agro-systems among African peoples with the aim of averting the food crises which now and again threaten the region in a decimal syndrome. The importance of food in the life of the people need not be overemphasized.

Food constitutes the most essential ingredient in the survival of any community followed by shelter and clothing. Without food life ceases. It is the life wire of any people's existence and a peoples food culture portrays their developmental quotient. This is why, governments all over the world pay primary attention to its food economy. The implication of this is that any government that neglects the agricultural sector of its economy is simply preparing the people for inevitable doom.

The objective of this study is to brief analyze the revolutionary trajectory of the African food culture in historical perspective. The study high lightens the dismal circumstances African countries are currently facing in the global food crises particularly as it hits the Blackman's continent. It delves into the food culture during the 3 distinct periods of history namely, the pre-colonial times, the colonial regime and independence era. A brief theoretical perspective utilizing macro economic approach (The Richardo's Theory of Economic Development) is used to prove that the utter negligence meted to the

agricultural sector by most African governments following the discovery of crude oil or some other quick yielding resource revenue was the root cause of lack of capital formation and subsequent tempestuous hiccups experienced in the overall economy. The study concludes by stating the obvious that African countries trail behind the other continents in their food consumption pattern which explains why the overwhelming majority of the 850 million hungry and malnourished people across the globe are found in Africa (America.gov, 2007).

By food is meant essentially the root crops, grains, vegetables, fruits, water and animal protein. Basic dietary requirements stipulate that these must be taken in their acceptable caput intake, meaning that the energy giving foods, the vitamin rich vegetables and fruits, the fat giving enable oils and plant proteins must be combined with an acceptable minimum per caput animal protein intake to achieve at least the recommended 59.18 g per caput daily food allowance (Okongwu, 1988).

In comparison with other continents, it has been demonstrated that among the developing countries while food production increased substantially in Asia, it grew little in Latin America and actually fell dismally in Africa where major famines, political convulsions and instability were endemic in the 1980s and 1990s (Upton, 1977) even as the picture has not been ameliorated in the new millennium going by the recent political explosions experienced in Zimbabwe, Angola, Sudan to mention but a few. Citing example with Mozambique, the war launched by the opposition against the Frelimo piloted government with the Republic of South Africa playing behind the scene maneuvers shows that agricultural products were severely affected as the war began to take its toil. Between 1981-1983 not only that the export products the major source of the country's gross domestic product fell

by 70 and 90% as it applied to cashew nuts and sugar, respectively. Mozambiquans were denuded of their food supplies as the railways system was obliterated meaning that food produced in the rural areas could not be transported to the cities. The net effect was that the near total destruction of the rural infrastructure and economic flow led one third of the population being forced to leave their land, move to towns or flee to neighboring countries or safe areas within the country (Nilsen, 1995). Hunger, malnutrition and epidemic followed and with a coalescence of other factors, the dietary energy intake and daily caloric intake per head remained progressively at low levels in Africa.

BACKGROUND SITUATION OF AFRICAN FOOD CULTURE

The pre-colonial era: In depth studies into the food culture of Africans show that in the pre-colonial era, the people were self sufficient in food production. The basic crops consisted of indigenous foodstuffs such as grains consumed mainly in the drier environments such as the Sahelian zones while those in the wetter areas fed mainly on root crops. Agriculture, the main stay of the economy was almost practiced by every body. Nevertheless gathering of wild grains, grasses, vegetables, fruits, nuts, snails, mushrooms and other forest products provided additional sources of food (Ikpe, 1994). To this must be included products of hunting, fishing, sea food and edible insects as well as domestic rearing of animals practiced everywhere the nomadic animal husbandry of the Fulani of northern Nigeria being outstanding. Using Nigeria as an area of study, Elizabeth Isichei divided the production areas into the types of food crops cultivated and consumed thus giving birth to the cereal, yam and cassava complex in addition to the animal husbandry category.

Origins of the food crops: It has been demonstrated that while some of the food varieties consumed today were indigenous, others were introduced from abroad through trade, religious or colonial contact with foreigners. Thus from earliest times domestication of crops such as rice, millet, wild cotton, guinea corn, palm tree and kola nuts was engaged by Africans but as time went on, some category others were imported such as Asian yam, banana, plantain, coconut, palms, sugar cane and Asian rice. From the Americas came pine apple, pawpaw, guava, potato, tobacco, maize, cassava etc (Faluyi, 2003). The evidence of Porteres for instance shows that rice with its varieties such as *Oryza brevilegata*, *Oryza barthii*, *Oryza glaberrima* was domesticated in the middle Niger

area the so called Niger bend and the Senegambia basin around 1500. In the pre-colonial era, Sokoto, Rima and Hadeja river valleys were very influential rice cultivation zones.

However, another opinion has it that rice was introduced the first time into West Africa by the Portuguese in the 15th century (Li, 2003). Millet on its own was domesticated in the oasis of Hoggar in the Sahara desert at about 6100 BC from where it probably spread south ward into the Sahel region of Africa (Ikpe, 1994).

In the same fashion wheat was associated with the Arabians following the Islamic influences from North Africa in the 14th century (Jamillah and Beth). In the southern wetter areas such as southern Nigeria yam known as dioscorea was introduced by the Portuguese who in turn brought it from Asia and the Pacific islands as the account of the celebrated missionary G.T. Basden shows. In any case, a conflicting claim by the Igbo to who yam is the king of crops and a measure of wealth shows that it originated in their clime and the Igbo myth even has it that Ahajioku, the god of yam taught the ancestor Eze Nri how to cultivate yam. From the east of the Niger, the staff of life as Basden called yam whose importance he compared with the life wire role of potatoes among the Irish, spread to other parts of Nigeria and Africa maintaining the varieties of white, yellow, guinea and water yams (Ikpe, 1994).

On its part, cocoa yam is believed to have been introduced into Africa by Indonesians who settled in the island of Madagascar about 400 AD from where it spread to East Africa and other areas. Like cocoa yam, plantain (*Musa paradisiaca*) and bananas (*Musa sapientum*) also came from Madagascar reaching first the East African coast and from thence to the interior of the continent (Ikpe, 1994). An entirely different version claim it to have been introduced from Asia into the Horn of Africa even as another historical view point claimed it was the Portuguese who brought it to Africa in the 16th century. Perhaps the most important crop is cassava or *Manihot utilisima*. It is believed to have been brought by the Portuguese into the Congo area during the 15th century from where it spread into the interior reaching warri, Nigeria in 1516 AD when the portuguese made a present of cassava flour and cassava cuttings to the Olu of Warri as recorded in the Itsekiri historical traditions. Cassava spread with electrifying speed becoming popularized in many parts of Africa. For instance in Western Nigeria in the 1850s the ex-slaves returnees from the Americas and the Caribbean made it their staple food. It is however, believed that cassava was widely cultivated in Dahomey (Benin Republic) in the 1790s from where it spread to

such Yoruba towns like Abeokuta and Ibadan as a result of long standing culture and contiguity with Dahomey. A notable product which has played a significant role in the food culture of the people is palm tree or *Elia gaimensis*. Its calorific content in addition to being a major source of fats, coloring flavours to soup, source of palm wine and local gin (Kaikai) and a whole lot of associated products is believed to have been indigenous and domesticated in the palm belt rainforest area which earned it the name palm forest. The trade became revolutionized in the aftermath of the abolition of slave trade. Its widespread importance in the southern zone of Nigeria from where it spread to other parts of Africa is likened to the importance of olive tree to the Mediterranean people. There is yet a litany of other crops whose history cannot be mentioned here for lack of space. These include: the bread fruit, cocoa, hot pepper, beans or cow pea, kola nuts, vegetables, food seasonings such as melon, groundnut, castor beans, ginger and a host others. The evidence of geographers, historians and travelers abound that Africans had surplus food and were indeed self sufficient in food production. Writers such as Daryll Forde, Richenda Scott, Richard Lander, the German traveler, Ulsheimer, John Adams, El-Omari, Hierich Barth, Leo Africanus etc., all showed in their rich historical documents that the people produced many goods foods of all kinds such as plantains, bananas, yams sweet potato, lemons, oranges, pineapples etc., John Adams showed that the Yoruba were fine looking people and seems as if they came from a land of plenty being stout, healthy and full of vigor.

The writings of El-Omari, Hierich Barth and Leo Africanus showed that in spite of the dominance of the 3 grain types: sorghum, millet and fonio making the area valuable to famine if there was any crop failure there was nevertheless impressive abundance of other food crops such as beans and wheat. It was the importance attached to food granaries that earned some people the revered title of Sarkin Norma (king of farming) which is common throughout Hausa land.

Food situation during the colonial era: The advent of colonialism in Africa did not radically change the pattern of food consumption and culture. In most places the government was quick to notice the existing food self-sufficiency which not only produced enough for the local populace but surpluses for the market. In any case, production was subsistence even as land was communally owned which debilitated against large scale commercial farming. The respective governments ameliorated the problem of food shortage in some areas such as Northern Nigeria by vigorous opening up new

areas through transportation. In various colonies and protectorates, other measures were resorted to improve people's health. This was the case in Nigeria where in 1947 a Nutrition Adviser to the medical department in the person of N.B. Nicol was appointed to make assessment with the intention of correcting areas of concern.

This study showed that 95% of the population had dietary deficiencies which was corrected by making animal protein as well as protein rich rice available in the southern parts of the country while in the North where vitamin deficiency caused lots of diseases, consumption of vegetables and fruits was recommended (Ikpe, 1994). Other measures of improved health status was embarked upon such as enlightenment and propaganda campaign, introduction of new strains of crops such as soya bean, vegetables, fruits trees (mango, guavas, citrus, etc.) groundnuts, iodine salt, food yeast, locally canned food (as established in Kano Nigeria for example), skimmed milk imported fish powder and lastly inauguration of expanded nutrition programme. Farm settlements were established such as Sokoto and Gwandu mechanized rice schemes and in the east, the Abakaliki rice growing settlement.

To resolve the troublesome issue of crop diseases, the government introduced improved seedlings resistant to diseases such as cassava mosaic, cow peas resistant to root knots and even new varieties of yams and seed multiplication. During the World War II, exhortation was made on the populace to intensify food production as part of the people's win-the-war-effort. The government officials went to the interiors to purchase food and sell directly to the soldiers as well as mine and construction workers at controlled prices.

A very significant impact of the colonial economy was the concentration on the production of cash crops to the detriment of food crops to feed the local populace. In some countries like Nigeria, it could be said there was no clear cut demarcation between the subsistence production and cash crop as both types of production complimented the other. However, this cannot be true of countries such as Angola, Kenya, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Mozambique, Algeria, Cameroon, etc.). In these places, the adversity of the export or cash crop mentality destabilized the food consumption. It was worse for the majority others particularly those with large white settlements and/or the control of land by colonial companies. There a radical plunge towards malnutrition marked the condition of the African people's lives (Oculi, 1986).

The explanation is that in an effort to concentrate in the production of cocoa, sisal, cotton, coffee, tea, tobacco, palm produce, etc., for export, the colonial administration made a profound neglect of the vital policy issue of developing sources of protein to feed not just

the people but farm animals like cattle, chicken, goats, sheep, camel, etc. This was in spite of the fact that animal sources of protein were abundant in colonies such as Senegal, Mali, Uganda, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, etc. There was also profound neglect of cereals and other sources of dietary energy.

This study of the economy came to be labeled collectively as the subsistence sector meaning it was unmonetized and of secondary importance even if it was the livelihood of the colonized peoples. Another aspect of the negative of policy was that in those countries where the male population was taken away in massive numbers to provide cheap labour in other territories such as the upper volta Mossi people going to Ivory coast or Rwanda groups moving to Uganda or yet in others where land was massively taken away from Africans, food production capabilities were drastically reduced the stage for immediate and future food shortages. On the whole, poverty and malnutrition was weightier on the high side as a result of the cash crop economy. Compounded with this is that the export of colonized peoples were bought at extremely low prices. The result was that the people were bought at extremely low prices. The result was that the people could not balance their pattern of production by developing the means of purchasing food from the high-protein and cereal-producing economies. This pattern of production and consumption is illustrated by the 1970 FAO estimate which showed that 67 million people in Africa lived below the lower limit of adequate protein and energy supplies representing 25% of the total population. The implication is that most African countries emerged from colonialism between 1960-1980 with poverty clearly manifested, the income per head rated as low as 57.9% in Tanzania, 43% in Sierra Leone, 43.1% in Chad (all in US dollars). In imitation of the colonial officials, a European mentality developed among the people particularly the elites who developed the taste for white man's food. The superiority and dominant culture of imperialism was entrenched when in effort to bridge the gap created by the people, the food culture of Europeans was copied by the Africans who desired to meet up with the standards.

Writing on this development in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) Audrey Richards commented that most of the people rushed with relics to imbibe the foreign culture and tried to out do each other to eat, dress and imitate the culture of the white conqueror. This was how bread and tea for instance made their in road into the food culture of the people starting with the city elites from where it percolated down to the unskilled workers and to the down stream remote villages. The implication is that certain food items not common among the people had to be massively

imported as the case with wheat for baking and oval tin, coffee, butter, margarine, sugar, milk, etc., thus creating room for the food importation dependency which has since then formed part of the African culture and mentality. Lastly, the colonial over lords in effort to achieve food hygiene created the health department which legislated against diseases and food contamination. This saw the emergence of sanitary inspectors (Igbo land known as the ubiquitous Umu ole ala) whose areas of jurisdiction covered the markets, abattoirs, schools, canteens, restaurants hospitals, residential houses particularly, the back yard, kitchen, toilets and they ensured that hygiene disposal was maintained at all times.

Post colonial era: At the dawn of independence beginning in 1957 and stretching up to 1980s. African countries on the superficial level experienced no food shortages. The was the view of a consortium of studies undertaken in the nascent countries as those of the Michigan University USA based study on rural development in Nigeria showed. This was the optimism displayed by P. Bohannan among other leading anthropologists which stated in a publication made in the late 1960s that Westerners visiting Africa should keep in mind that no malnutrition is to be found there. Everybody has enough to eat, the study maintained. But the opposite statement was more valid. A truer picture presented by Africans themselves and western economists, physicians, geographers, nutritional experts and biologists showed a combined testimony of somber reading. Even Nigeria regarded as model of African country, serious anemia was found in half the population even before to Biafran war, vitamin shortage among two fifth of the population and malnutrition, primarily protein deficiency among one fifth. This figure was worse among the other countries of tropical Africa with one quarter inhabitants showing symptoms of infant mortality affecting one-third of children. In combination with parasitic worms which sapped the strength of men and animals, it made worse nutritional deficiencies and aggravated malaria making it expensive to eradicate. The erroneous notion that there was no cause for alarm and no justification for campaign for food production in the 1970s caused dangerous complacency among the African leaders who were taken unawares by the menace that was to follow.

In countries where the coalescence of white settler plantation/corporation domination of land and forced labour continued, hunger and malnutrition took their tolls. This was the case in Mozambique (like many others) which was seen as a bread-basket for Portugal while her indigenous population were starved of the same crops such as rich, meat, milk, egg and maize which they

produced in abundance but were exported. In others like Nigeria the complacency was eroded by divisive and tempestuous politics which neglected food production entirely. The effect showed in the civil war era when Nigeria was enveloped by food crises leading to severe malnutrition and kwashiorkor in the war town and economic blockaded Biafra. The result was widespread starvation and loss of the thousands of lives attracting international attention which ameliorated the menace through charity food relief mainly bankrolled by the Catholic Caritas organization. These included rice, corn meal, stock fish, salt, canned foods, assorted beverages and wheat flour.

Outside the besieged Biafran enclave, it was no rosy story as food shortages commenced and was worsened by crop epidemics which ravaged farms throughout the 1970s. This called for continued massive food imports to cushion the starting effect. The net effect is that people developed the taste for these imported items and gradually relegated to the background the production of local food and even the desire to eat them.

DROUGHT, WARS AND ECOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY

The arch enemies: A review of Africa agricultural economics carried out by some experts show that food security is low in part because of natural disadvantages that stand in the way of adequate food production. Unlike Asia and Latin America, Africa has a natural resource base less suited to productive agriculture. The African soils tend to be poor even by the standards of tropical countries; they are highly weathered, acidic and generally low in fertility. Rainfall tend to be scarce or excessive or extremely violent or unreliable. An estimated two third of the continent is subject to high risks of drought and some 46% has <75 days of rainfall a year, too little even to raise millet (Jstor, 2008). The temperature tend to be too high causing excessive evaporation in semi-arid zones and depleting soil organic matter in deforested zone.

To this must be added the menace posed by the advancement of the Sahara desert which shows an average of >1.8 miles annually and this degree of expansion is not untrue of the Kalahari and other deserts. In a situation where only narrow strips of land are favoured by rainfall, the rest gradually transform into savannas and later into deserts. The result has been severe drought and famine which now and again hits the region's young and brightest countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Angola and Mozambique. In concert with evil wars, these countries plus a dozen others such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria etc., suffered recurrent droughts in

the 1970s undermining political stability and creating an avalanche of refugees estimated at 9 million, representing >50% of the world's total (Uba, 1990). The Italian based Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reported that over 70 million people in Ethiopia, Sudan, Angola, Mozambique were facing drought and war induced starvation and massive displacement.

The situation was so bad that in 1974, Emperor Haile Selassie (like a number of his contemporaries) was overthrown in military coup d'état in relation to the Hidden Famine which hit his kingdom. The greatest Achilles heels besetting the African food economy since the 1970s has been the rapid structural changes owing to the emergency of petrodollars economy. In the oil producing nations such as Nigeria, Angola, etc., there was a sudden growth of non agricultural urban labor and flow of cash into the hands of millions of families leading to unprecedented demand for exotic foodstuffs and other foreign goods (Ojo, 1991). The prices of essential commodities soared. Farmers could not produce enough and even so they were discouraged by the relatively cheaper prices of the imported alternative which gradually flooded the markets following the food import liberalization enacted by the respective governments.

The net effect was that new opportunities offered in non agricultural sectors caused mass migration of labor force to the glittering cities leaving the farms denuded of virile young men and women.

AGRO PROMOTION REFORMS AND CAMPAIGN

Despite the liberalization of food imports, the African governments did not lose sight in their interest for food production. In Nigeria for example, the military government embarked upon the National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP) which was launched in 1973 to achieve food self sufficiency and to boost cash crop export. The third Development Plan of 1975-1980 allocated N3 million to the Agro sector and the Nigerian Grains Board was set up to purchase and store excess food crops. In addition, to these were the setting up of 11 river Basin Development Authorities, the integrated rural development scheme, the small holder credit scheme and farmers, cooperative union. In 1977, the Operation Feed the Nation was launched. Farm implements were procured in very large quantities as well as fertilizers, agro-chemicals, improved seeds, etc. All hands were exhorted to be on deck in the fight to eradicate hunger and promote the nations Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

An emergent ugly dimension among African states is the out of proportion politicization of food. This was the

situation where the national party of Nigeria government in Nigeria in effort to win a second term messed up the green revolution project which it embarked upon under the auspices of the World Bank Food Strategy Mission. Rather than pursuing its incremental food policy with apostolic zeal, it saw the answer in increased food importation, placing rice Import License under the aegis of the corrupt Presidential Rice Tax Force.

Accentuated by the glut in the oil market leading to drastic fall of petroleum revenue, the government tottered and fell to a military putsch in the wee hours of the new year in 1984. By the middle part of the 1980s, the African leaders appeared to have woken from their doldrums. They had come to reckon the dangers inherent in the monoculture nature of their economies and negligence meted to the agricultural sector, a situation brought about by the vector of oil exports as it for instance applies to the oil exporting countries. But following the reverse oil shocks of the early 1980s, the rising population growth which doubled its 1965 figure and projected at 700 million by year 2000 (World Bank Report) (Uba, 1990) and low capital agricultural productivity which it feared would increase the regions food imports to >240 million ton a year by the year 2020, the World Bank and other fiscal regulatory bodies put pressures on African leaders to revamp their economies and inaugurate the necessary reforms. It was to this effect that in 1986 in a special United Nations session on African's economic crises, held in New York, the then chairman of the organization of African Unity (OAU), Abdou Diouf on behalf of Africa's leaders admitted past failures publicly and openly pledged themselves to economic reforms designed to spur appreciable long-term solutions to the socio-economic hemorrhage plaguing the continent since the 1970s.

Out of the 64 countries that adopted the structural adjustment programme in negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1989 about 30 were from sub-Saharan Africa (Obasanjo, 1989). It was to this effect that the countries embarked on the stringent, courageous and daring economic reform programme which was to usher them into the 1990s and beyond. But while for instance the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) of Ghana witnessed stringent and consistent progress those of Nigeria and a host others were fated to abysmal failures courtesy of unfocused leadership and implementation hiccups wrought by corrupt public officials.

The report of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), an agency of the United Nations faulted the argument of the World Bank and IMF the promoters of SAP arguing that of all the countries of Africa that embraced the programme, non was a success story each

was a story of woes (Ekpu, 1989). It is for this reason that the commission initiated the search for an African alternative to SAP. The reality of the matter is that there was virtually no sub-Saharan African country where the average man was not worse off in the days of SAP than he was at the beginning of the eighteens. Indeed the hunger and deprivation associated with the crushing adjustment programme was what triggered riots in Algeria, Sudan and a host of others. In Nigeria SAP was the catalyst for the nation wide riots of May 1989 which spilled from one university campus to another and soon engulfed the entire nation leading to destruction of lives and property of untold magnitude (SAP Sparks Riot, 1989).

However, the situation, the respective governments went to the ridiculous extent of depleting their country's foreign reserves and accentuated it with indiscriminate foreign borrowing to finance food export bill as SAP analgesic. Thus the \$12 million dollars debt incurred by the NPN government in 1983 was outrageously increased by the military government in subsequent years to over \$30 billion.

But the antidotes to the bad situation continued to worsen it. It was so bad that with the mass retrenchment of workers plus the debilitating effects of the devaluation of the local currencies and run-away inflation, an ugly scenario was witnessed where people, unable to access food to feed their families, resorted to scavenging of refuse dumps for food scraps. In Nigeria, the government reacted to the ugly situation by inauguration of a number of poverty alleviation programmes among which was the Directorate of Food, Land and Rural Infrastructure, the National Land Development Agency and the National Directorate of Employment which sought to channel the energies of the youthful university graduates and school leavers to the farms. As has always been the case, African political leaders are experts in policy formulation but very poor at their implementation.

A plethora of factors led by corruption which became endemic in the polity stalled the execution of these programmes leaving them epileptic and largely rhetoric. Mass exodus of the farms followed and food importation resumed with alacrity. In Nigeria, the government made another step by revocation of the redundant grains board but as nature forbids vacuum, in their place the parasitic food marketing associations developed and since the 1990s, their treacherous role has made food prices very exorbitant. By their activities, these middle men use their cartel to block the producers from reaching the markets particularly the urban centers and by their nefarious activities, distort the supply chain and cause artificial scarcity and inflation. The ridiculous low prices they offer

farmers kill incentives to produce. Since the 1990s, a new food culture has emerged which manifest in the introduction of the African fast food culture into the cities from where they are gradually making their entry into the semi-urban centers. In Nigeria these include such pioneers as Mr. Biggs, Tantalizers, sweet sensations, chicken republics and a host of others that followed:

Their greatest patronizers are the youths and students of affluent backgrounds but generally, the middle class families especially the corporate staff of the banks and financial institutions as well as those of oil conglomerates and multinational blue ship firms who scarcely have enough time to take care of their family meals, hence they resort to patronizing these alien cuisines. But their unchecked nutritional make-ups, mostly un-attuned to the clime have been among the causes of medical complications common in the society.

At the advent of the new millennium, African governments came once more to face the Herculean task of revamping their economic in the face of challenges posed by globalization and its attendant inequalities. Marked by its North-South divide, it witnessed in the 1990s at tremendous growth of the economies of USA, the European nations and Japan but in the 3rd world countries particularly sub-Saharan African living standards fell and 40% of the people lived below poverty line (Uba, 1990). Amidst exhortation from the World Bank and other international regulatory bodies, the African governments went back to the drawing board and fashioned out new economic reforms as survival strategy.

In Nigeria for example, the Obasanjo administration in concert with technocrats under its service, tried to encourage local industries by placing blanket ban on the importation of a litany of sundry goods or products which hitherto made Nigeria their dumping ground. The presidential initiative on cassava as well as other agricultural products began to boost the cultivation and industrial processing of these food items not only for local consumption but for export. The government for instance mandated local bakeries to include at least 10% of cassava flour in their production at the same time it reformed the distressed banks and mandated them to release at least 10% of their net profit for loans towards the small scale industrial production which agro-investment was to benefit immensely. But inconsistency and insincerity in policy implementation plus the ever present hydra-headed of corruption could not allow the new measures to see the light of day. The consequence is that in the present world food crises which aggravated since the year 2007, the government has been unable to save her nationals from imminent hunger and food shortages. It sought the solution in the

importation of rice to cushion the effect of the global crisis for which reason it entered into bilateral agreements with the reluctant Asian governments of India, Indonesia and Malaysia, placing an order of N80 billion for the commodity which would span over six months with duty and levy charges waived. But 5 months after the waiver, aimed at reducing cost, the price of rice still ranges between 8,000 and N6,000 it used to be before the hike in price in early 2008.

This is explained by the hoarding of the commodity by importers who store it in their warehouses in anticipation of further higher rises even as others smuggle it at high cost risk into the nation via the porous borders.

CONCLUSION

The African food and economy has demonstrated impressive growth journey, traversing the traditional pre-colonial era to the present day. It has in stock enviable varieties of root crops, vegetables, oil seeds, grains, legumes, beverages, fruits, condiments, seasonings and animal protein. But the revolution has been very slow in all its ramification particularly in terms of technological modernization and achievement of self-sustainability. It is true that some African countries have appreciable food supply but they have not achieved food-self sufficiency talk less of food security.

The later is measured in terms of futuristic dimension which means that a nations food situation are judged in terms of how it withstands tempestuous or periodic shocks such as those brought about by drought, famine, civil disturbances, etc., over a period of time say 1 year. The fact that the agriculture is still in its subsistent stage and in relative technological backwardness leaves a sour taste in the mouth. The food situation among African countries has proved right the views and contention of economic historians elucidated in the Richardo principles that no industrial or economic development takes place in any nation unless it is preceded or accompanied by a rise in agricultural productivity (Hallet, 1981).

The relegation to the background or second fiddle position which most African government treated and still treats the agricultural sector following the discovery of crude oil or some other quick yielding revenue such as solid mineral resources, tourism or cash crop export has not argued for the well being of the people. The cumulative effect is that in the course of food production negligence accompanied by high taste for foreign food, a culture of massive food imports followed and these has been at the root cause of general underdevelopment which has enveloped the African countries in their post-colonial years.

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