



English En Français

Search

FREE HEADLINES: [Email](#) • [RSS](#) || [My Account](#)

[BY ALLAFRICA](#) [MYAFRICA](#) [TRAVEL](#) [BLOGAFRICA](#) [SOURCES](#)

[HotNow!](#) [Countries](#) [Topics](#) [Development](#) [BizTech](#) [Entertainment](#) [Sport](#) [Africa/World](#) [Governance](#) [Multimedia](#) [Innovation](#)

THIS  DAY

Nigeria: Bracing Up for Food Crisis After the Floods

23 OCTOBER 2012

Crusoe Osagie examines the impact of the recent floods on food supply, government's prior plans to increase tariff on rice, and a likely need for massive importation to avert crisis

Irresponsible Import Dependence

In the last three decades Nigeria has lived dangerously, depending on other nations of the world for food and fuel. So dependent on other countries has Nigeria been that practically all commodities essential to the survival of any economy are imported.

The nation's survival strategy has been pathetically simple: engage the major oil companies to produce crude oil, sell at the international crude oil market and use the proceeds thereof to import food to feed the teeming population; petrol and diesel for energy supply; cement for construction, fertiliser for crop production; even toothpick makes the list of items heavily imported into Nigeria. What a shameful and dangerous way to live as a nation!

When available statistics revealed that Nigeria, a country with massive potential for rice production, was rated the largest rice importer in Africa and the second largest importer of the commodity in the world, spending about N1 billion daily on rice importation, it was clear that urgent steps had to be taken.

With an annual rice importation bill of about N360 billion, the current minister of Agriculture, Dr Akinwunmi Adesina, introduced a radical plan in his Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) to boost rice production and progressively cut down dependence on the importation of the essential commodity.

Unfortunately, with the flood waters surging all over Nigeria in the past few weeks and major farm lands in the country now under water, Akinwunmi's plan to make Nigeria self-reliant in rice production appears to hang in a balance.

Raging Floods

Major rice-producing states are seriously affected by the flood that has ravaged the country. Parts of Kano, Ebonyi, Kogi, Niger, Edo States, and others that are in the nation's rice production belt, have been devastated by the flood. Farms have been submerged, access roads obliterated and farm input materials destroyed.

Reports from some of the ravaged areas of the country reveal that concerns on food security are coming at a time when the Federal Government is contemplating the implementation of increased tariffs on importation of rice and eventually stopping importation by 2015.

The 2013 budget currently being discussed in the National Assembly proposes a 10 per cent duty on imported polished rice, a step taken to give locally produced rice a chance in the Nigerian market and boost local rice supply. But with the current flooding disaster and the attendant destruction of farmlands, the federal government may need to reconsider its plan to increase the tariffs on rice to prohibitive levels.

In the coming months, it will become clearer, just what level of crisis this disaster has thrust the nation's agriculture into. But before then, the government must ensure that it does not place barricades on the path of retreat, should there be a need to run to safety.

Concerns over food security were raised recently by the Minister of Environment, Hajija Hadiza Mailafia, who spoke to State House Correspondents after a recent meeting of the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

Mailafia revealed that several thousand farmlands had been destroyed by the ravaging floods across the country. She said, "The consequences of the floods are that there are huge losses of farmlands, there are likely threats to food security, and we are likely going to have challenges that have to do with the health of the people in some areas".

Although Adesina disagrees with Mailafia, saying: "the team that came for a meeting with me today, I brought them from the [International Water](#)

Management Institute (IWMI), Colombo, Sri Lanka, to help us look at how we can manage the flood situation in places where farmlands are under water.

"They have visited flooded areas in Kogi State. Their assessment is that, in terms of food production, the flood is not as serious as people say. There are lands that can and should be used for food production. On the basis of that, it is localised. No basis to think we are going to have a food crisis," he added.

But analysts believe it might be better to err on the side of safety by making sure it is easy to import as much food as possible should the crisis escalate.

Farms in Peril

Kano State has equally been badly affected by the floods resulting in disruption to rice production in the State. In a statement by an association of rice growers in the state on Monday, rice farmers in the state lamented that about 95 per cent of all rice farms have been destroyed by the floods.

According to the statement, the worst affected areas include Warawa, Doguwa, Wudil, Gabasawa, Ajingi and Gaya local governments. These, the statement noted, were the areas that were producing rice in large scale. They predicted that the prices of food stuff, especially rice and maize, would go up this year as a result of the disaster.

In Plateau State where the government said the flood that affected eight local government areas in the state had washed away eight bridges and rendered more than 10,000 people homeless, the state's Commissioner for Information and Communication, Abraham Yijap, told journalists after the weekly executive council meeting that more than 100 villages and 4,000 hectares of farmlands were destroyed.

Yijap said the local governments included Kanam, Wase, Shendam, Lantang North, Lantang South, Mikang, and Qu'an Pan, Jos East and Jos North. "Unfortunately and tragically, Plateau has been affected by another flood disaster after the one in Jos North," he was quoted to have said.

The commissioner said several crops had also been washed away by the disaster. He also said the situation would lead to likely shortage of food supply in the state as the areas ravaged were mainly agricultural areas.

In addition to this, the state's Commissioner for Environment, Mrs. Sarah Yusuf, said the floods had caused the death scores of people in Jos. Addressing journalists in the state capital recently, Yusuf said the warning by her ministry was to prevent more deaths as a result of the impending flood.

Meanwhile the Bayelsa State Government has temporarily closed all schools in the state, as a result of rising water level all over the State. Iworiso-Markson disclosed that the order is with immediate and indefinite.

Reports from the North Central zone said that in Kogi State alone more than 600,000 people have been displaced by the floods as revealed by a top government official.

According to him, education, agriculture, health and roads are some of the sectors already identified to have been badly affected. He expressed regret that communities ravaged by the flood were the food basket of the state, saying that the situation constituted a threat to food security and health of the people.

In addition to these, more than 4,700 inhabitants of communities in Edu Local Government Area of Kwara State, namely Bele, Emi, Faigi, Tswatako, Patako, Tada, Shonga, Edogi, Dukun, Yemagi, among others, were also rendered homeless due to a heavy rain early last week.

Similarly, over 3,200 hectares of rice plantation under the authority of Tada-Shonga Irrigation Scheme in Edu Local Government Area, also in Kwara have been washed away by flood.

Based on all these reports, experts have warned in reaction to the budget that increased tariffs in the absence of adequate local production would lead to steep rice prices, adding to the inflationary pressure already in place.

They called on the federal government to review the proposed tariff structure with a view to maintaining sanity in rice prices for the average consumer of the staple food.

FAST FACTS

1. Nigeria is the largest rice importer in Africa
2. She is the second largest rice importer in the world
3. Total rice consumption in Nigeria is about 5 million tonnes per annum
4. Local rice production output is about 2.2 million tonnes per annum
5. Budget 2013 proposes a 10 per cent increase in rice importation tariff

Ads by Google

[Earthquake Alerts](#) Get the latest updates on occurrence, impact and more.

[www.ubalert.com](#)

[First-aid Kit](#) Be prepared for emergencies Offices, Factories, Showrooms

[www.emer-aid.com](#)

[The Shocking Truth About](#) Realistic Self Defense - What the Masters Won't Tell You!

[www.Street-Self-Defense.com](#)