

*Full Length Research Paper*

# The Qur'anic sustainable remedy to the global food crisis: Nigeria as a case study

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Agriculturalists, economists and experts from different fields of studies have raised alarm on food crisis. All of the theories propounded did not proffer a sustainable remedy to the invisible catastrophe. Therefore, views of the experts of various fields in both advanced and developing countries were examined. It was discovered that a feasible alternative to sustainable remedy to the global crisis not yet explored is that proffered by the Qur'an. The discussion commenced with the Qur'anic narration on the first food crisis ever witnessed on earth. Reasons and factors responsible for the present global food crisis were examined and compared with the Qur'anic submission on the factor that causes the food crisis. As regards the history of food crisis around the world and in Nigeria, steps taken by the Nigerian government as advised by different experts and agencies were also analyzed. The concept of the Qur'an on the effect of food crisis on the citizenry ended this part. Suggestions put forward by experts and the Qur'an on the global food crisis such as the World Bank, public opinion in doubling financial support to the sector, provision of modern storage facilities, preparation of seeds and distribution of fertilizers to appropriate quarters and period. The recommendations on a sustainable remedy as inferred from the Qur'an and agricultural experts which can boost productivity and enhance availability within a short period ended the discussion.

**Key words:** Nigeria, Quranic sustainable remedy, food crisis.

## INTRODUCTION

Agriculturalists, economists, and experts from different fields of study have raised alarm on the food crisis. Governments and people of different countries have been on red alert on this same issue but all theories propounded by the aforementioned experts are yet to proffer a sustainable remedy to this global crisis. The research examined the theories of the experts in both advanced and developing countries, and it was discovered that the Qur'anic remedy was not explored which could serve as a sustainable remedy to this global crisis. The paper begins with the Qur'anic narration on the first food crisis ever witnessed on earth and this is followed by expositions on the reasons for the food crisis as given by experts and the Quranic submission on the factors that cause the food crisis. A brief overview of the food crisis around the world and Nigeria in particular is given attention while steps taken by the government as suggested by experts of different fields and agencies were critically examined. The effect of the food crisis on the citizenry occupies another main discussion. The

Quranic narration on the effects of the food crisis also concludes the discussion. From the analysis of different steps suggested by experts, it is found that the solution proffered by the Qur'an gives a permanent sustainable remedy to the global food crisis in the world at large and Nigeria in particular. Rising of food price have made basic staple food like rice and corn unaffordable for many people, pushing the poor to the extreme poverty because they can no longer get enough to eat (Staff, 2008).

## THE FIRST GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS EVER WITNESSED ON EARTH

Allah says:

قال الملك إني أرى سبع بقرات سمان يأكلهن سبع عجاف وسبع سنبلات خضر  
وأخر يابست يا أيها الملأ أفتوني في رؤياي إن كنتم لرؤياي تعبرون

Meaning:

The king (of Egypt said: "I do see (invasion) seven fat kine, whom seven lean ones devour, and seven green ears of corn, and seven (others) withered. O ye chiefs! Expound to me my vision if it be that you can interpret visions: Q. 12: 43.

وقالوا أضغاث أحلام وما نحن بتأويل الأحلام بعالمين

Meaning:

"They said 'A confused medley of dreams; and we are not skilled in the interpretation of dreams': Qur'an 12: 44.

يوسف أيها الصديق أفتنا سبع بقرات سمان يأكلهن سبع عجاف وسبع سنبلات خضر وأخر يابست لعلي أرجع إلى الناس لعلهم يعلمون

Meaning:

O Joseph (he said) O man of truth! Expound to us (the dream) of seven fat kine whom seven lean ones devour, and of seven green ears of corn and (seven) others withered; that I may return to the people and that they may understand: Qur'an 12: 46.

قال تزرعون سبع سنين دأبا فما حصدتم فذروه في سنبله إلا قليلا مما تأكلون

Meaning:

(Joseph) said: For seven years shall ye diligently sow as is your wont. And the harvests that ye reap, ye shall leave them in the ear, except a little, of which ye shall eat: Qur'an 12: 47.

ثم يأتي من بعد ذلك سبع شداد يأكلهن مما قدمت لهن إلا قليلا مما تحصنون

Meaning:

Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what ye shall have laid by. In advance for them, (all) except a little which ye shall have (specially) guarded: Qur'an 12: 48.

ثم يأتي من بعد ذلك عام فيه يغاث الناس وفيه يعصرون

Meaning:

Come after that (period) a year in which the people will have abundant water and in which they will press (wine and oil) (Abdullahi, 1984): Qur'an 12: 49.

The Qur'anic explanation on the history of the food crisis on earth as mentioned in the Qur'an is self explanatory. One will see that Prophet Yusuf did not only interpret the vision of the king alone by showing what would happen, but also suggests the measures to be taken for dealing with the calamity when it occurs. He said, there would be seven years of abundant harvest with diligent cultivation.

They should take a little for their sustenance and store the rest that will be harvested during the years. It is better to preserve the stored harvests from the pests that attack corn heaps when they have passed through the threshing floor. Then, this would be followed by seven years of dreadful famine which would devour all the stores which they would have laid by in the good years. They must be careful even during the famine to have special arrangement in saving a little for seed, when they should be helpless even when the Nile brought down abundance of water from the rains at its sources. This will be a symbol of a very abundant year, following the seven years of drought. The Nile will bring abundant fertilizing waters and silt from its upper reaches; and there would probably be some rain also in other parts of Egypt. The vine and the olive trees which must have suffered in the drought would now be revived, and yield their juice and oil seeds. Plants such as linseed, Sesamum, and the castor oil plant, must have grown as there was irrigated land to spare from the abundant grain crops. The people's spirit will now revive to enjoy the inner products of the earth, when their absolute necessities had been more than met in their grain crops.

## THE HISTORY OF GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

### A brief on food riots around the world

A lot of articles and public opinions were published in the United States of America which highlighted the global food crisis such as the following.

The skyrocketing commodity prices that have made the farm belt one of the most prosperous regions of the United States have had a rather different impact on large areas of the developing world. Prices of food stuffs had escalated. 41% increase in price since October 2007, pushing many people over the line from poverty into privation or even hunger (The Skyrocketing in the Washington Post Company, 2008).

Higher food prices appearing in the United States in an April 2007 report by the Government Accountability office showed that transportation and other overhead costs now consume 65% of U.S. food aid dollars. This was attributed to higher fuel prices and U.S. Laws that require most grain shipment to go out on relatively expensive U.S. flagged cargo vessels. Even some commented "Why does so much food have to travel the high seas in the first place? Because U.S. law requires that the government buys all food donations from U.S. products (The Skyrocketing in the Washington Post Company, 2008: 17).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a branch of the United Nations has identified 36 crisis countries, 21 of which are in Africa. The World Food Programme is another United Nations agency and it was estimated that it will need \$500 million on top of what

donor nations have already pledged to fill what the world food programme calls a global “food gap”. Therefore, economists and some relief organizations such as CARE, advised U.S. government to buy the grains from US farmers and donate it to famine zones especially, in Africa. President Bush proposed it to the law makers in the House and Senate rejected it even refusing to include it in their respective versions of the farm bill (The Skyrocketing in the Washington Post Company, 2008: 18). Situation in Haiti was outlined by Spiegel (2008) captioned: “Global Food Crisis: The Fury of the poor”, he summarized the situation as following.

For many Haitians, the mud biscuits are their only food. They taste of fat, suck the moisture out of the mouth and leave behind an after taste of dirt”.<sup>6</sup> It often causes them diarrhea, but they help to numb the pangs of hunger. Some say: “I am hoping one day I will have enough food to eat, so I can stop eating these”. Eventually, the shortages triggered revolts in Haiti in April, 2008. A crowd of hungry citizens marched through Port au-Prince, throwing stones and bottles and chanting, “We are hungry: in front of the Presidential palace, tyres were burnt, and people died”.

Iraq and Sudan, once the bread baskets of the Arab World, are nowadays dependent on the World Food Programme. The civil war in Sudan made more than 2 million people in refugee camps completely dependent on food aid (Spiegel Online International, 2008: 2). In Dubai, most of the supermarkets have pledged not to raise the prices of 20 staple foods for at least one year. The goal clearly, is to prevent dissatisfaction within the cities among the Indian and Pakistan construction workers, because without them, the enormous hotels, museums and artificial islands with which Dubai is making such a stir in the world would not exist (Spiegel Online International, 2008: 2).

In Egypt, thirty-two million of Egypt's population of 80 million lived on (\$1.58) a day and 16 million on even less. The price of cooking oil has risen by 40% within a year. Inflation jumped to above 12% in February, 2008. Mr. Saad Ibrahim, owner of a small snack shop in Cairo in a neighbourhood behind al-Azhar Mosque sells dishes like noodles and chickpeas in tomato sauce, and his shop is in a good location. Nevertheless, most of the faithful worshippers are now quickly passing his shop after Friday prayers and this made him lament that he had fewer customers every day (Spiegel Online International, 2008). In Jordan, which has a modern system of agriculture, the cost of staple foods has increased by 60% within a year. Mr. Hassan Burendi – a vegetable seller said “I can hardly sell my vegetables anymore”. The situation made King Abdullah of Jordan say “I fear the return of the 1996 Food riots, when angry citizens clashed with police in the city of Karak” (Spiegel Online International, 2008: 3).

In Nigeria, the inception of the food crisis was traced by economists and experts of different fields of study to

2003 and 2004 when the fuel prices jacked up. The prices of wheat and rice were stable in the late 2003 and early 2004 despite the hike in fuel price. However, in April 2004, rice prices moved higher by 56% and in April, 2005 by 61%. The outbreak of bird flu also led to the high price of chickens. The flu made some of the poultry farmers suffer enormous financial loss and this led to the high price of all the livestock (Okunmadewa, 2009). Professor Okunmadewa (2009) drew attention to Food Riots across the world and said that, in America, 75,000 people demonstrated in food riots likewise in Cameroon, Senegal, and Somalia but Nigerians persevered, as no food riot had never been recorded in the history of the Nigerians.

### Reasons for the global food crisis: Economists and other experts' perspective

There are several reasons for the global food crisis. The World Bank President Robert Zoelick (Spiegel Online International, 2008) and several Agricultural Economists agree with the following reason for global food crisis:

1. The world population is growing constantly, while the amount of arable land is declining. Climate change is causing a loss of agricultural land, irreversible in some cases, as result of droughts, floods, storms and erosion.
2. Because of changing eating habits, more and more arable land and virgin forests are being turned into pasture for livestock. The yield per acre in calories of land given over to pasture is substantially lower than that of arable land.
3. The World Bank wants developing countries to introduce market reforms, including the abolition of protective tariffs, a move that often causes massive damage to local agriculture.
4. The resulting high oil prices leads to energy crops being cultivated instead of grain crops for food or animal feed.
5. Millions of people displaced by civil wars need food, and yet they themselves are no longer capable of producing food.

Okunmadewa (2008) added further the following reasons for Nigeria's food crisis to be:

- i. Rising of oil price
- ii. Depreciation of dollars
- iii. The Indian ban on rice exportation
- iv. Unrest and political instability
- v. Lip-services which had been paid on storage of agricultural products by Nigeria Government.

### The Qur'anic perspectives on the reasons for food crisis

وضرب الله مثلا قرية كانت آمنة مطمئنة يأتيها رزقها رغدا من كل مكان فكفرت

بأنعم الله فأذاقها الله لباس الجوع والخوف بما كانوا يصنعون

Meaning:

God set forth a parable, a city enjoying security, quiet and abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place, yet was ungrateful for the favors of God, so God made it taste hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought (Abdullahi, 1984): Qur'an 16: 112.

The fundamental reason mentioned by the Qur'an for the food problem is ingratitude to God's favour. Gratitude to God would be shown in various ways according to Yusuf Ali as follows:

- i. Forgetting or refusing to acknowledge the true source of the favour
- ii. Misusing or misapplying the bounty, as by committing excess in things lawful or refusing to share them with God's other creatures when the need arises.
- iii. Falsely ascribing to God any prohibitions we may set up for ourselves for special reasons or because of our special idiosyncracies (Abdullahi, 1984).

In the Qur'an, we can see the reasons for the food crisis in Nigeria and the world at large. Price increase of fuel caused the high price of food in Nigeria which eventually led to serious inflation. The crude oil on which the Federal government relies, and which increase the Nigerian foreign reserves are not used for the benefit of the people. In spite of the net gain accrued from crude oil, the citizens buy the product at a high rate, while the wind fall hanged on the three tiers of Nigerian government. The proposed removal of government subsidy on fuel price termed deregulation worsens the negative impact of the high price on other sectors even before the implementation of the policy. The Nigerian government imports food from developed countries such as maize and meat from USA and rice from India/Pakistan. These developed countries had ceased the exportation, because they are turning these products into other product for their domestic utility. For example, America is turning corns into Bio fuel instead of wasting their money on crude-oil on which Nigeria's budget relies heavily.

The effects of the food crisis as the Qur'an stated are: i) Hunger and ii) Terror.

In Nigeria, a nation of 140 million inhabitants and with \$60 Billion in its foreign reserve, her citizens and government can only boast of the following:

- i. High Inflation of all commodities including fuel and other related commodities.
- ii. Increasing poverty, which widens the gap between the high and the low, thus, wipes out the middle class due to the low-income of its civil servants.
- iii. Worsening malnutrition of the citizens. The economists

said, "Nigeria has really reached the apex of 99% inflation" (Okunmadewa, 2009).

iv. Windfall out of oil price has reached \$60 billion and as a result, the government is planning to withdraw \$10 billion to be shared among the three tiers of government in the country while the citizens are wallowing in abject poverty.

## Terror

Terror grips the public office holders in Nigeria and wealthy men also suffer from arm bandits and even the poor innocent citizens fell victims during their operations. Bad governance of previous Nigerian governments have led to misappropriation of Allah's bounty while a negligible percent of its citizen stash away billions of Naira in their private accounts by not carrying out projects already paid for and by importing subsidized fertilizers which is distributed to wrong hands. The government claims that there is an increase in food production through various viable mismanaged agencies but food productivity growth is declining. The result is that the wealthy men are not free from the attack of the hoodlums, youths infested by hunger engaged in arm robbery, and kidnapping of innocent poor ones in order to belong to the high class in Nigeria. Nigerians are desperately looking for livelihood and therefore, trained and untrained thugs who erupt daily to exploit the politicians and public office holders whom they believe did not have welfare for the masses in their hearts.

As the poor ones are wallowing in abject poverty, the high classes are being enshrouded with terror, fear, unrest, and witch hunting either by the citizens or by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Without proper management of good resources in the nation, we may continue to witness the food crisis.

## Steps taken by various countries to curb global food crisis

Since most of the developed and underdeveloped countries rely on World Bank (2008), the 10 points plan for overcoming the global food crisis (<http://www.worldbankorg/.htmextrd/foodcrisis>, 2008) are as follows:

- i. Since high fuel costs have resulted to higher agricultural costs, falling of food stocks and shifting of the use of land from food production to bio-fuels production, the world Food Programmes should fully fund the emergency needs of people.
- ii. Safety nets should be initiated and this involves distributing food in schools, offering food for works to quickly help those in severe distress.
- iii. Seeds and fertilizers should be made available

promptly to farmers for the next planting seasons.

iv. Double the spending on agricultural research and development over the next five years through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

v. Agricultural business: There should be more investment in agricultural business so that the private sector's ability to work across the value chain would be exploited.

vi. Risk management: development of innovative risk management tools and crop insurance to protect poor farmers and help build food security.

vii. Bio fuels: Ease policies to subsidies, mandates and tariffs on bio fuels derived from corn and oil seeds should be initiated. Policy makers should consider (safety valves) to ease these policies when prices are high. The choice is not limited to bio fuel or food.

viii. Export ban: Removal of export bans that had led to even higher world prices. Twenty-eight countries have imposed such controls. Removing this ban could have a dramatic effect.

ix. World Trade Organization: This organization should consider the removal of agricultural subsidies and Tariffs and create a more efficient and fair global food trade.

x. Collective action: Countries should work together to counter the global food crisis.

Among the steps taken by the World Bank to curb the Global Food Crisis through new deal on Global Food Policy are:

i. Creating a \$1.2 billion rapid financing facility to speed up assistance to the neediest countries.

ii. Boosting overall agricultural lending to \$6 billion over the next year.

iii. Launching of risk management tools and crop insurance to protect poor countries and small-holders.

iv. Nearly doubling agricultural lending to Africa from \$450 million to \$800 million and to Latin America from \$250 million to \$400 million.

v. Supporting over \$1 billion in new projects in agriculture and rural development in South Asia.

vi. Doubling lending for social protection, nutrition and food security, and social risk mitigation to \$800 million over the next year.

vii. Providing \$100 million to Bangladesh to help address the food crisis.

viii. Providing \$100 million to hard hit Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali and Niger to meet additional expenses of food imports and to buy seeds for the new season.

ix. Providing grants to Djibouti (\$5 million), Haiti (\$10 million) and Liberia (\$10 million) to feed poor children and other vulnerable groups.

x. Providing grants to Togo, Tajikistan, and Yemen over the coming season.

xi. Working on irrigation and water management in

Ethiopia, fertilizer use in Malawi, market access for small holders in Senegal, and crop diversification in Mali and Uganda.

xii. Preparing a food crisis related emergency operation to help Honduras tackle effects of rising food prices.

xiii. Providing financial assistance to Kyrgyz and Tajikistan for nutritional supplements to pregnant women, lactating mothers, infants and small children.

xiv. Conducting rapid needs assessments for countries impacted by crisis, including Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Sierra-Leone and Togo.

xv. Urging major grain producing countries to lift or refrain from bans on food exports.

xvi. Working with other donors and agencies on the Africa Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development in Sub-Saharan Africa  
(<http://www.econ.worldbank.org/external>, 2008).

The plans had not really addressed some causes of the food crisis such as crop short fall from natural disasters. The Qur'an bluntly put man's effort as commendable but no matter how serious, with labour, and application of modern equipments, the power of productivity belongs to Allah where He says:

أفأرأيتم ما تزرعون وءانتم تزرعونه أم نحن الزارعون ولو نشاء لجعلناه حطاما فظلمتم نفكوهون إنا لمغرمون

Meaning:

See ye the seed that you sow in the ground? Is it you that cause it to grow, or are we the cause? Were it our will, we could crumble it to dry powder, and you would be left in wonderment. (Saying): we are indeed left with debts (for nothing): indeed are we shut out (of the fruits of our labour) (Abdullahi, 1984): Qur'an 56: 63 to 67.

The aforementioned quoted verses of the Qur'an expatiate one of the reasons given by the World Bank President and several agricultural economists for this global food crisis that "Climate change is causing a loss of agricultural land, irreversible in some cases, as a result of droughts floods, storms and erosion" (Robber, 2008: 2). Going through all the solutions proffered by the experts of different fields of studies, one can see that none of them gives a consideration to the divine happenings and its solution. A geographer could predict that rain will fall, geologists or agriculturalists could identify a pasture land but who cause the farm products to grow and come forth with profitable productivity except the Creator who is in possession of life and death.

The aforementioned quoted Qur'anic verses made it clear that no matter how we adopt ultra-modern agricultural equipment, the extent of farm productivity lies ultimately with Allah. One of the incidents I witnessed in

Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria in 1990 confirmed this assertion. A colleague and an Agricultural science teacher in a secondary school cultivated about 2000 heaps, sowed guinea corn and applied fertilizer for an appropriate period as an expert. But he abandoned the Mosque and forgot to follow his labour with prayer, thinking the hard labour without Allah could yield a fruitful productivity. I admonished him to work and at the same time to give Allah his due such as observation of five obligatory prayers, and special supplication prayer on the farm so that Allah can crown his efforts but he ignored my advice. Eventually, the guinea corn started growing vegetative instead of bearing seeds. It grew up higher than normal. This is how the efforts of our brothers became fruitless. Nigerians are increasing in Agricultural production but less in productivity.

Going through the verse and reasons given by the experts, when Allah intends to punish a nation or community, He sends down to them drought, or excess of rain and floods, erosion or storm which will destabilize their properties including their farms. Allah confirms that no matter the agricultural methods applied, the productivity of any enterprise is with His permission. Even on the livestock, where we contact the bird flu. What are the solutions we proffer for future occurrences for these catastrophes? There is no solution yet except the one proffers by the Divine Lord in the Qur'an.

## **NIGERIAN AND NIGERIA GOVERNMENT ON THE FOOD CRISIS**

Many countries took emergency steps on the food crisis such as restructuring food exports, setting limits on food prices, rigorous, extensive analysis and consultations on way out, food safety net programmes, reduction in import duties, as well as, lifting of ban on rice importation among others. The Agricultural Machineries and Equipment Fabrications Association of Nigeria (AMEFAN) (The Nation Newspaper, 2008a: 26) raised alarm and advised the Federal and State Governments to evolve long-term measures for solving the food crisis. The association is ready to partner with government to produce basic farm machineries and urges the government to discourage rice importation and other food items. The association feels that the remedy to food crisis could be found in the 'promotion' of local fabrication of basic agricultural machineries and processing equipment coupled with discouragement of food importation.

Another group, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) also suggests other steps to be taken for a short-time and long-term measures. In a conference organized in Lagos at the Century Hotel, the group urges the Federal government to draft soldiers, policemen and Youth Corps members into agriculture to boost food output. The group also suggests that adequate funding of the agricultural sector by those in authority would help to avert a

looming economic crisis. The group advised the government to show seriousness on re-distribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. Incessant power failure makes the industries-produce at sub-optimal level and small scale enterprises to go under fizzle. A majority of Nigeria's civil servants spend 70% of their income on food.

Therefore, the time has come to release the country's grain stock and food reserve into the market with urgent measures to be taken to force down the prices of food stuff in the market place. The association submits that for a short-term measure, the Federal and State government must work out subsidies on food, food imports and food production ingredients such as fertilizer (The Nation Newspaper, 2008b).

## **Nigerian Government's response to the food crisis**

The government ordered for the immediate release of part of the country's grain stock and food reserve into the market. The government stood firm on awarding licenses to individuals on cement importation and tried to force down the price to ₦800.00 per bag when the importation materialized. This forced the skyrocketed cement price to come down even before the ₦800.00 per bag policy was implemented. Federal government distributed the fertilizers to states and local governments at subsidized rate, though, failed to ascertain if it went to appropriate quarters and hands at the affordable subsidized rate or not. Federal government has started sounding a warning on raising the price of fuel in the country from next year. National Assemblies of Nigeria also raised alarm on the food crisis and promised to have special debates on it. Both their short and long term measures are yet to be disclosed. So far, the Nigerian government focuses on consumers of food but neglect its producers. Kwara State Government prioritizes food production, but the impact is yet to be felt at the market. Although, most of the Agricultural agencies owned by the government are aware of this global food crisis, none of them has given the public an insight into the short and long term measures to avert this crisis.

## **Qur'anic remedy on the food crisis**

Qur'an 12:47 indicates the solution to the crisis where he says:

قال تزرعون سبع سنين دأباً فما حصدتم فذروه في سنبله إلا قليلاً مما تأكلون

"For seven years shall you diligently sow as is your want and harvest a little, of which you shall eat". The government is advised to pump more funds to agricultural production while monitoring closely the resultant mass production obtained with modern equipment. The suggestion of the Oodua People Congress on driving

soldiers, police and corps members into farms seems to be useful. It was done and found workable. It forced down the price of food stuff during the military regime of Bukhari/Idiagbon when all the public civil servants irrespective of cadre and discipline had at least a farm. During this time, secondary and primary school farms were also improved and yielded a fruitful result. Price of food stuff drastically decreased without any government's enforcement.

The Qur'an urges Nigeria government and Nigerians to repeat the same for both short and long term measures and if this is done for three years, Nigeria will be exporting a lot of food stuff. The Qur'an also says that the harvests that you reap shall last for years. We should eat a little out of our production.

There is one aspect of farming that needs improvement. All the peasant farmers and large scale farmers harvest at the same period. Because of lack of modern storage facility, much of the farm produce could not be preserved for many years. In more advanced countries, government buys the farm products from farmers and stores them for distribution even as food aids to needy countries. If majority of Nigerians embark on farming, applied modern equipment sublet to them at cheaper rate, provided prepared seeds and fertilizers at appropriate period, large farm produce will be the result at the same time. If the government buys their farm products at a reasonable rate and keeps in modern silos for preservation, it will definitely encourage the farmers and within few years, the problem of food crisis will be overcome. Few years later, Nigeria will be subsequently among the largest exporter of food stuff in Africa if not in the world because of the natural gift of Allah, that is, pasture land.

The Qur'an clears it that no matter how the earth or land is fertile, no doubt, it will be inflicted with climate changing, which may lead to drought or storm, where He says:

ثم يأتي من بعد ذلك سبع شداد يأكلهن مما قدمت لهن إلا قليلا مما تحصنون

Then will come after that (period) seven dreadful (years), which will devour what you shall have laid by. In advance form them, (all) except a little which shall have (special) guarded: Qur'an 12: 48.

The oil boom with an unexpected high price of crude oil made the Nigerian government neglect agriculture because the few wealthy ones feel that the high price of the food stuff gulps only 0.2% of their income and forget that majority are suffering.

Qur'an 16 verse 112 spelt out the way out for Nigerian government and its citizens by saying:

وضرب الله مثلا قرية كانت آمنة مطمئنة يأتيها رزقها رغدا من كل مكان فكفرت بأنعم الله فأذاقها الله لباس الجوع والخوف بما كانوا يصنعون

God sets forth a parable, a city enjoying security and

quite abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place, yet it was ungrateful for the favour of God, so God made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought. The verse describes Nigeria as a city, which Allah abundantly blessed with all kinds of mineral resources, enjoying security but injudiciously distribute the wealth of Allah in their possession. We see this in recent situations in the country:

- i. The president of the present administration declared his entire asset when he was a Governor while others who promulgated the law declined. When he was elected as the President of Nigeria in 2007, he also declared his asset. His colleagues in political offices are yet to make declaration of their assets. Is it because, they possess unlawful wealth or what?
- ii. Federal government imports fertilizer and distributes it at a subsidized rate but most of these political office holders give the distribution paper to their relatives who in turn sell the articles to peasant farmers at quadruple the price. The question is how many among these farmers could afford the price?

#### Distribution from excess crude oil

The Federal government proposed to withdraw \$10 billion from the foreign reserve to be shared among the three tiers of government but is yet to receive the approval. It is the same government that refuses to use out of this external reserve to subsidize fuel to its citizens. Everything in Nigeria relies on fuel and if the price of fuel comes down, the traders, farmers, civil servants and common citizens would enjoy the dividends of democracy. But instead, our government is giving another red alert to increase the fuel price by January, 2009 despite the advice and reasons agreed upon by experts of both advanced and developing countries that the global food crisis centres on the high fuel price of each country. If the proposal of the Federal Government got approved at least each state will share not less than ₦50 billion and eventually as usual we may not see any beneficial project carried out with this money.

The same government who caters for political office holders, and reviews their allowances and their gratuity for a period of four years finds it difficult to cater for teachers at all levels, civil servants and the masses that get their livelihood from the aforementioned cadres of workers through patronizing them at the market. The government finds it difficult to give the workers minimum wage of ₦50, 000.00 per month. Is the government telling us that a country does not have enough money to cater for the workers while the chairman of a political party in a local government earns ₦120, 000.00 for just being local government political meeting coordinator?

Nigerians are graduating every year from our tertiary institutions. The government creates a lot of schemes which can make these graduates to have self-reliant jobs. How many innocent brilliant graduates benefit from these schemes? Instead, the dividends are distributed at ward level of each local government. Award of contracts is based on familiarity not competency. Where is the justice in Nigeria, unqualified people get into political offices; a citizen who had been alleged of corruption in the last few years got re-appointed to political offices in the country. Although, the government claims that previous office holders no longer enjoy immunity but only few who run foul of their political mentors had been prosecuted.

Nigeria is on the verge of having a food crisis which can be quickly averted if a just redistribution of the nation's wealth favours the masses. 10% of the population is stinking rich while 90% are wallowing in abject poverty. A decade ago, Nigerians could be classified into high class, middle class and masses. But recently, the gap between middle and high classes has increased so much that the middle class does no longer exist. A grade level 12 officers in the civil service was among the middle class but the high cost of food stuff, transportation and accommodation has gulped his income and pushed him into the class of the masses. The masses are hungry, the wealthy men are fearful of the masses' as a reaction to their unlawful accumulations. For this, the wealthy men consequently lodge their money into foreign accounts from which these developed countries develop their country. Is it not an immoral act for these developed countries that are aware of the debts owed by Nigeria as a country and still they keep billions of Naira in political officers' accounts in their country without returning the money to government treasury for development?

Due to incessant power outage which dragged some of the talented artisans and craftsmen to be commercial motorcycle riders, while few graduates from our tertiary institutions turned to commercial motor drivers. Foreign investors signified interest in Nigeria but most of the existing industries that improve the livelihood of our youth are breaking down due to the aforementioned reasons. Nigerian governments have been planning since a decade ago to overcome the problem in the energy sector but to no avail. The situation has not improved because people who do not know anything about the sector, such as a state chairman of the ruling party, gets a contract to supply items such as transformers while qualified graduates in electrical/electronic engineering are ignored.

Nigeria is endowed with brilliant, diligent youths who could handle the agricultural sector properly if the government involves them in improving farm production. Most of Agricultural Research resources centres owned by both Federal and State governments carry out research every day, and they produce seeds to be planted but how many sincere peasant farmers have

access to this government effort?

To avert the food crisis, justice needs to be done by the Federal government not only pumping money to agricultural sectors but also assisting the peasant farmers with modern equipment and giving a thorough supervision to the government fund pumped into the sector as the national dailies' editorial comment advised the Federal government in the caption: "The idea behind the ₦200 Billion agricultural fund will be laudable if corruption and red tape do not stand in the way". The Federal government through the Debt Management Office (DMO) and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has floated a ₦200 Billion credit for commercial agriculture. The package was described as part of government's response to the current global economic/food crisis. The United Bank for Africa and the First Bank of Nigeria as the fund's managers. The new scheme targets corporate/large scale integrated commercial farms with assets of ₦350 Million excluding land and capacity to grow such asset to ₦500 Millions in three years while Nigerian Agricultural Corporate and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB) targets small and medium-scale farmers.

Factors responsible for the failure of the agricultural sector to produce enough food for the people are multifarious such as the following; the gross neglect of agriculture over the years, poor funding, poor extension services and lack of loans to the practical peasant farmers and successive government have invariably demonstrated ambivalence towards research institute in general. For instance, less than one percent of Gross National Product (GNP) is spent on research annually. Results of numerous agricultural researchers are gathering dust in the various cabinets of Nigeria ministries because there is a clear skilled extension worker to impart to the farmers. Various river basins and rural development authorities have not made any appreciable impact on local food production almost 33 years after their inception and despite the huge investments in irrigation schemes, most of the equipment at the basin are not working such as one of the biggest Ogun/Osun River Basin in Itoikin along Ikorodu/Ijebu-Ode road, Nigeria. Its dam can irrigate several hectares of farmland but the place is now a parody of its former eminence. These basins had failed to supply water to over 90 farmers in each of their areas.

The Qur'an gives a remedy to another major cause of food crisis that is, drought, erosion, storm, climate change and so on. Allah says:

فقلت استغفروا ربكم إنه كان غفارا يرسل عليكم مدرارا ويمددكم بأموال وبنين ويجعل لكم جنات ويجعل لكم أنهارا ما لكم لا ترجون لله وقارا وقد خلقكم أطوارا

Meaning:

Saying 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord, for He is off-forgiving; He will send rain to you in abundance give you

increase in wealth and sons; and bestow on you rivers (of flowing water) what is the matter with you, that you place not your hope for kindness and long-suffering in God. Seeing that, it is He that has created you in diverse stages: Qur'an 71: 10 to 14.

The enumerated system of governance in Nigeria glaringly shows the great extent of oppression and unjust distribution of Allah's abundant resources blessed to the country. There are some parts of the country specifically in Southwestern Nigeria who need not to cultivate heap or apply fertilizer before they reap mass productivity, and some even plant thrice in a year but yet these areas are not having food surplus. Because Federal government scheme on agriculture did not reach the appropriate quarters.

The World Bank seems to regard Nigeria as a nation that is blessed with everything. Because going through the Programme of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, both have no plan for Nigeria. The immorality of the citizens also contribute to the food crisis, for instance, a farmer, be it large or small scale who produce vegetable at large quantity prefer to export the farm produce at getting exorbitant profit than selling it to its citizens at cheaper rate. Unless we return to Allah, we cannot seek forgiveness for sins committed which our conscience and Allah know better.

Some agricultural experts suggest four salient points that Saudi government adopted as a method on agricultural sector which helped the country to overcome the food crisis and was able to transfer from a food importer to an agriculturally self-sufficient nation being able to feed its population, accommodate the teeming millions of pilgrims who flop to the kingdom during 'hajj' and 'umrah' without causing a food crisis and these salient points are:

- i. Saudi government created hundreds of purpose-built farms. Several boreholes are sunk and diesel pumps and irrigation implementation installed to ensure that crops are adequately watered even during a drought.
- ii. The areas to be cultivated are prepared by clearing and leveling the land so that water from rain or irrigation will not wash away the top soil but sink directly into the ground.
- iii. Access roads are built to connect the farms to major roads to help in evacuating farm products to major markets. Comfortable houses are built for farmers and their families, and powerful generating sets are provided for the farmsteads.
- iv. The farmsteads are allocated to professional farmers (and not politicians) on a soft loan basis.

With the aforementioned views of expert, the following additional recommendations will definitely cater for short term and long term measures for averting the food crisis in Nigeria and at any place that boldly adopts the

recommendations:

- i. Fuel price for the Nigerian citizens must be subsidized to the minimum level such as N40.00 per litre while smuggling fuel into the neighbouring countries should attract the same penalty as cocaine pushers.
- ii. Lift ban on importation of food stuff. Let our men at Nigerian borders stop harassing small scale traders for importing goods into the country. It will force the high prices of these commodities down. For instance, a bag of rice got to ₦10, 500.00 by April, 2008 but now the price seems to be stagnant at ₦7,000.00/₦6,700.00 as from July, 2008 (Interview with Alhaja Salamat Lawal of shop 129A, 2008). With massive production of our professional farmers in modern way both local and imported rice will be at par in cost.
- ii. The government should encourage all parastatal, government workers, and cooperative societies to embark on farming either on a large or small scale that will take care of immediate needs and to put the agricultural sector among the priority of the three tiers of Nigeria government by having adequate funding. The young brilliant graduates of agricultural economics will be employed in the six geo-political zones of the country to identify certain farm products which consume less energy and give high productivity.

The genuine experts posted to these geographical zones will be employed to monitor the following:

- Safety nets: Such as distributing the released grains from the country reserve to the masses.
- To prepare seeds and fertilizers: For the coming planting season. Not just delivery alone but to monitor how they were planted and how they apply the fertilizers at appropriate period.
- Risk management: The government should use these experts to develop innovative risk management of tools and crop insurance to protect poor farmers and help to build food security. However, the government needs to double its financial allocation to research.
- Storage facilities: This can preserve our farm products for at least five years. For instance, yam can only be preserved for a year. They can still carry out more research on these seasonal food stuff and crops. We refresh ourselves with fresh fruits at anytime in Makkah. How do they preserve it? Why can we not have fresh mango, banana and orange throughout the year in Nigeria? We can take an example from the Saudi government who use the Qur'an as a pivot of governance.

If AMEFAN promised to produce cassava flour as a substitute to wheat flour, what of yam, rice, beans, millets, guinea corn and so on. Therefore, our agricultural research institute should investigate what those items can be turned into as substitute. Nigeria government can resuscitate community boards at these six geo-political

zones with new method and not the old method used in olden days for cocoa board in the Southern part of the country. This will give an open policy to the farmers and each zone will produce massively, our government should govern its subject in transparency and accountability when it comes to buying and paying for the farm products by the board. FADAMA, a community based society on Agricultural production, could also be properly funded and monitored.

Our experts or Agriculturalist should be sponsored for training in and outside the country to expose them to modern equipment and methods on how such application could fit into their own locality. Since Nigeria pasture land can be used to plant varieties of seeds, the peasants and the professional farmers should be tasked and assisted on how to improve production through irrigation in order to harvest farm produce throughout the year. Nigeria is a nation blessed with a lot of resources. As crude oil had been discovered in many geo-political zones which make Nigeria government to be rest assured of buoyant foreign exchange reserves, we can still embark on agricultural sector which will double our status as a giant of Africa when we started granting Food Aids to developing countries and even developed countries in the nearest future. Welfare of farmers at the rural areas needs to be improved. They should have permanent social amenities, such as good roads to transport their products to urban areas at cheaper transportation rate, good schools equipped with adequate teachers, and with access to what goes on in the world, access to modern farm equipment, opportunity to sell their product at minimum profit range. If all these are done, surely, the farmers who have chosen farming as their profession will be ready to serve humanity.

In conclusion, it is unfortunate that malnutrition has affected a large proportion of our large population. About 38% of our population is affected and this has a serious

effect on the life expectancy of our people which is 44 years for females and 52 years for males. Let us adopt the remedy and solutions supplied by the Qur'an and nations and abide by the Qur'anic views (Saudi Arabia) eventually; our nation will surely become a major exporter of food stuff in the nearest future. Therefore, let the government make the seeds, agricultural inputs and equipment available, accessible and affordable to all interested Nigerians.

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