

## **Agriculture Promotion Policy and Income Generation by Small-Scale Palm Oil Producers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State**

**Peace Effiong Jonah**

**Email:** peeinvest22@gmail.com

**Unwana-Abasi S. Udoh**

**Email:** Unwanabasi06@gmail.com

**Phone:** 08023139391

**Atairet Clifford Atairet**

**Email:** atairetatairet@aksu.edu.ng; atairetatairet@yahoo.com

Department of Public Administration

Faculty of Management Science

Akwa Ibom State University

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined agriculture promotion policy and income generation by small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District, Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study examined whether the agriculture promotion policy created access to credit facilities for palm oil producers and if it impacted productivity among small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted an ex-post facto research design. The top-down approach served as a theoretical framework to explain government agricultural policies and income generation. Data used in the research were obtained from secondary sources. Findings from the study revealed that the agriculture promotion policy has not been effectively implemented in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. It was further revealed that palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District do not have access to credit facilities for palm oil production, thus they rely on crude implements and labour-intensive techniques for palm oil processing, leading to low-income generation. Based on the findings, it was recommended, among others, that the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Agriculture should ensure adequate access to credit facilities to small-scale palm oil producers in the State. Also, government and stakeholders in the agricultural sector should encourage greater productivity by prioritising the provision of basic farm inputs such as fertilisers, chemicals and improved oil palm seedlings to small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom State.*

**Keywords:** Agriculture, agriculture promotion policy, palm oil, income generation, credit facilities.

### **Introduction**

Agriculture is a crucial sector for every state's economy, offering significant potential for job creation, food security, and poverty reduction. Nigeria has a lot of potential in agriculture, but the sector faces many problems, such as low productivity, poor infrastructure, and a lack of credit. These are some of the problems that militate against the agricultural sector as well as farmers' welfare, who form the major population in Nigeria. Sequentially, various administrations in

Nigeria have enacted and implemented various policies aimed at resuscitating the agricultural sector. Interestingly, former President Muhammadu Buhari initiated the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) in August 2016 to help revitalise the agricultural sector and promote food security. This policy was particularly delineated to restructure the agricultural sector and guarantee food security, create employment opportunities, as well as diversify the economy to increase Nigeria's foreign exchange. Ensuring food availability and sufficiency for every household in the country is one of the focal points of this policy. World Bank (2013) opined that security involves physical and economic access to sufficient food for all household members without undue risk of losing that access. Therefore, to ensure adequate food security, there is a need for the government to prioritise the agricultural sector and not depend on the importation of finished goods and foreign aid from donor agencies.

Agriculture promotion policy was also geared towards attracting private-sector investments in agriculture, boosting agricultural outputs, and improving the living conditions of farmers. The policy planned to do this by assisting farmers, enhancing access to credit, upgrading infrastructure, and promoting the use of improved technology in farming. The principal objectives of Agricultural policy are to attain self-reliance, create jobs, boost food production and also act as a catalyst for Nigeria's economic growth and prosperity. Unfortunately, Fasoranti (2006) observed that despite the ambitious objectives of agricultural policy, many programmes encapsulated in this policy failed due to poor conception and implementation, and often duplicated existing efforts.

Nigeria is one of the leading exporters of oil palm in the world. Palm oil production constitutes a major source of livelihood for rural households and also significantly contributes to the GDP of the country. Akwa Ibom State is noted as the epicentre of palm oil production in Nigeria; hence, implementation of this policy revolves around palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom State, North West Senatorial District. It is worth noting that palm oil production is one of the major cash crops in Akwa Ibom State, especially Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District and is predominantly grown by smallholder farmers. It is also expected to serve as a source of major ingredients for staple food as well as raw materials for industries. The quest for development is one of the major preoccupations of a typical rural community and Nigeria, as a developing country, has a more significant population living in rural communities with certain characteristics such as the near absence of the necessary infrastructural facilities required to meet the needs of the modern man (Ataire et al, 2021).

However, smallholder oil palm farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District are faced with the challenge of a lack of credit facilities by the government to accelerate and promote palm oil production within the senatorial district. Consequently, this has resulted in poor output, continuous use of traditional and crude palm oil producing machines, labour-intensive production and low yield. Furthermore, the income generation capacity of palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District has continuously declined, thus making the government's agriculture policy in this regard questionable. Akpabio & Udoh (2023) opined that there are several problems associated with the concept of agro-cultural system of development in Akwa Ibom State, such as lack of electricity, local manpower, crude implements, uncivilized processing methods, traditional and cultural barriers, religion, poor maintenance culture, lack of innovations, lack of dignity in labour, lack of government patronage, poor state of infrastructure including industrial facilities, bad road network to the market place, high cost of transportation, poor waste management and environmental hazards and so on. Accordingly, there is an increasing focus on incorporating innovations from the fourth industrial revolution into various businesses, economies and universities, and the agricultural sector is not an exception (Ibanga et al., 2024). Consequently,

these problems affect the growth of the sector and the welfare of farmers, especially small-scale farmers who are the majority of farmers in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. It is against this backdrop that this study aims to assess the implications of credit facilities on small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Top-Down Approach**

The central focus of the Top-down approach is that policy implementation begins with a decision made by the central government. A top-down approach, also called forward mapping, is a means of studying policy design and implementation that considers the highest-level policy designers' goals and traces the policy's design and implementation through the lowest-level implementers (Birkland, 2015). Major proponents of the Top-down approach include: Herbert Simon (1947) and Stephen Convey (1989).

The top-down approach centres on the decision made by the central government as a starting point, thus identifying the tractability of the problem and the ability to structure implementation, as well as the non-statutory variables affecting implementation. The application of the Top-down approach in government aims to advise governments to have clear and reliable goals, limit the extent of change necessary, and place responsibility for implementation with an agency sympathetic to the policy's goals (Signé, 2017). According to Birkland (2015), some of the critical assumptions of the top-down approach are as follows:

1. Policies contain clearly defined goals against which can measure performance.
2. Policies contain clearly defined policy tools for the accomplishment of goals.
3. The existence of a single statute or other authoritative statements of policy characterises the policy.
4. The policy is an "implementation chain" that "starts with a policy message at the top and sees implementation as occurring in a chain."
5. Designers have good knowledge of the commitment and capacity of the implementers. Capacity encompasses the availability of resources for an implementing organisation to carry out its tasks, including monetary and human resources, legal authority and autonomy, and the knowledge needed to implement policy effectively.
6. The implementer assumes that these features are present or overcome any problems suggested by these assumptions.
7. The focus then is on creating the proper structures and controls to encourage or compel compliance with the top's goals.

Agriculture promotion policies are some of the policies enacted by the central government to address the challenges of food shortage, increase crop production, create employment for the rural dwellers, thereby leading to increased income generation by the local farmers and also increase foreign exchange earnings. Agriculture promotion policies as promulgated by the past administration suffer poor implementation as a result of a lack of clear goals and objectives, as well as the target beneficiaries of the programme. Some of the programmes embedded in these policies subtly meet the needs and demands of the rural farmers and are often shortchanged over time. Most of these policies were only imposed by the central government on the rural farmers without their input, which resulted in poor implementation of the programme as well as policy somersault.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP)**

The overall goal of Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) was to engender food security, create employment opportunities, boost foreign exchange earnings and economic diversification. Private investors were not left out of this policy, as it was aimed at attracting private investment in agriculture and improving the standard of living of the rural farmers. According to Ifeoma (2019), the government of Nigeria, in 2010, embarked on a new journey of reforming the agricultural sector of Nigeria with the implementation of a strategy officially known as the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), which was based on the principle of viewing agriculture as a business. The ATA recorded success in a lot of areas especially in input supply but failed to meet the desired targets on infrastructure, production, market access, input and financing, and Nigeria still spends billions importing food. The guiding principles reflect a strong desire for policy stability but have new elements added to reflect the lessons learned from the ATA. These guiding principles are:

- i. Seeing agriculture as a business that should be led by the private sector in partnership with the government
- ii. Viewing agriculture as a key to the growth and security of the economy in the long run.
- iii. Ensuring the government carries out its social responsibility concerning food security
- iv. Promoting enterprise development throughout the value chain stages.
- v. Prioritising the expansion of crop production for both the domestic and export markets
- vi. Ensuring production is market-oriented
- vii. Ensuring sustainable use of natural resources (water, soil, land)
- viii. Encouraging the participation of all stakeholders
- ix. Ensuring accountability and due process to uphold the integrity of the policy
- x. Addressing issues of nutrition, especially for the vulnerable groups
- xi. Promoting linkages within the sector and between the sector and other sectors (Ifeoma 2019).

A new policy, the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP), was developed in 2016, building on success and lessons from the ATA and has the following four priorities: food security, import substitution, job creation, and economic diversification. Some of the ways to achieve these goals are assisting farmers to access credit facilities, providing modern farm implements and upgrading farm infrastructure. Agriculture production policy also focuses on improving food production and addressing various challenges faced by rural farmers.

According to Lokpobiri (2019), the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) focuses on the following areas:

1. Addressing the challenges in the agricultural sector and unlocking Nigeria's full potential in the sector.
2. Recognising agriculture as a business, ensuring food security as a fundamental human right, and factoring in environmental sustainability and climate change.
3. Productivity improvements, assembling in private sector investment, and institutional repositioning, to enhance agricultural development in Nigeria.
4. Identifies core challenges in the agricultural value chain, starting from production through domestic consumption to export markets, and sets out a roadmap towards addressing the challenges.

In making sure these guiding principles are upheld, the APP identified matrices of constraints limiting the productivity of the sector and proposed policy interventions that can be used to manage

and reduce these constraints. It was acknowledged by the Ministry of Agriculture that, moving the Nigerian agricultural sector closer to unlocking its full economic potential, constraints must be identified, mapped and prioritised. Fatokun (2015) believes that the Nigerian agricultural sector has the potential to trigger the development of the manufacturing sector through the provision of raw materials, reduce the unemployment rate, reduce rural-urban migration and bring about infrastructural development in neglected rural areas.

### **The Concept of Income Generation**

Income generation refers to the process of gaining or increasing income or money that an individual or business receives in exchange for providing a good or service after investing capital. It can also be defined as small-scale projects that create an income source to individual beneficiaries or beneficiary groups whilst promoting the principal right of self-determination and the objectives of integration, reputation and reintegration (FAO, 2011). Income generation also involves diverse economic activities geared towards self-employment and utilising human resource capital for self-benefit and the society at large (Udoikah & Ndaeyo, 2021). Ideally, agriculture is one of the ways incomes can be generated, and through agricultural proceeds, rural farmers can sustainably meet their source of livelihood, with dignity. Agriculture is seen as a source of income generation for rural households in Nigeria and also an engine for economic growth and development. Abdullahi (2013) observes that the ability of a household to exchange or move surplus from a region of comparative advantage to a region with less potential within a country or across national borders is an important ingredient towards the growth of agriculture and improvement of rural livelihood. On the other hand, income generation is seen as a major determinant for security while taking cognisance of other economic factors like high cost of transportation, insecurity and infrastructural decay, which are a plethora of factors affecting rural farmers and the vulnerable population. However, as conversely observed by Okoruwa et al. (2020), the promotion of income-generating activities is not a recipe that can be applied in any type of situation.

### **Agriculture Credit Facilities**

Agriculture is seen as a pivot that drives the Nigerian economy, specifically, in terms of employment generation, food security and income generation. It involves the production of food, feed, fibre and other goods by the systematic growing and harvesting of plants and animals (Iganiga & Unemhilin, 2011) cited in Adewale et al. (2022). Credit facilities are some of the tools that facilitate the modernisation of agriculture and promote farmers' participation in agricultural activities to ensure adequate production and food security. Mohsin et al. (2011) opined that credit cannot only eliminate financial constraints but can also provide the incentive to adopt new technologies that would otherwise be achieved at a very slow pace. Credit in this context means the use of or possession of funds and services without immediate payment (Mgbakor et al., 2014). It can also be attributed to various forms of money lent or agricultural credit, which includes trade credit and bank credit. In a nutshell, agricultural credit comes in various forms and includes the seed, fertiliser with deferred payment, tractors and modern farm implements, labourers, storage facilities, etc. Mgbakor et al. (2014) defined credit as the capacity to borrow. Farm credits are several instruments used to finance agricultural transactions, which come in various forms like loans, notes, bills of exchange and bankers' acceptances. These financing options are geared directly towards meeting the specific financial needs of farmers, which are determined by planting, harvesting and marketing cycles. On the other hand, short-term credit finance is meant to meet various operating expenses, while intermediate-term credit is used for farm machinery and long-



term credit is used for real estate financing (Adebayo et al. 2008) cited in Adewale et al. (2022). Credit is also a financial support that farmers can get to bridge the gap between their income and expenditure incurred in a particular farming season. It is an important instrument for enabling farmers to acquire command over the use of working capital for enhancing their productivity and income. Thus, credit is an essential ingredient in the growth strategy of the agricultural sector (Mohsin et al., 2011).

### **Agriculture Credit Facilities and Small-scale farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial Districts**

The benefits of credit facilities to small-scale farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District have been identified as a major ingredient to agricultural development. Access to credit facilities is a catalyst for agricultural growth and development. According to Shephard (1997), as cited in Christiana (2019), a credit facility is a determinant factor that provides access to all the resources on which farmers depend and also serves as a source of funds for farmers, which can be utilised in the production process. Ogundeji (1998), cited in Christiana (2019), also observed that agricultural businesses, like any other business, can be financed through personal savings, friends or family assistance, or credit institutions.

According to the reports by FAO (2000), rural farmers need adequate credit facilities to allow investment in their farms and small businesses. This is because the negative impact of credit has paralysed most farmers, especially rural farmers, for many decades now. To bring succour to this trend, the United Nations (UNRISD, 1975) advocates the granting of micro-credit facilities, particularly to the rural poor, to boost their farming activities. Also, Olagunju & Adeyemo (2008) reported that the reason for the fast decline in the contribution of agriculture to the national economy is a lack of credit from the central government and inefficiency of various credit institutions that should have brought relief to the rural farmers. Thus, it becomes imperative to improve the economic condition of farmers to be self-reliant in food production and also provide the necessary tools and equipment to enhance productivity.

Unequal access to credit facilities has been regarded as the major constraint faced by rural farmers in Nigeria, as in most developing countries in the world. Despite the availability of some of these credit facilities, most rural farmers find it difficult to access them (FMARD, 2012). This can be attributed to a lack of information and collateral securities among farmers. Ebong (2002) is of the view that palm oil production and marketing is a business activity that has influenced the flow of goods and services from the producer to the final consumer as it involves, amongst others, assembling, sorting, storage, processing, grading transportation as well as financing of all economic and agricultural activities. Thus, the provision of credit facilities to palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom State becomes imperative due to the rigorous and laborious stages involved in the processing of this agricultural produce, as these credit facilities will assist farmers in easy processing. Therefore, the persistent lack of credit access to palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District has significant consequences for their household-level outcomes, as well as technology adoption, agricultural productivity, food security, nutrition, health and overall welfare of the farmers' households.

### **Palm Oil Production in Akwa Ibom State**

Oil palm is a perennial crop that originated in the tropical rainforest of West Africa. The origin of the oil palm can also be traced to South America in the 16th century and to Asia in the 19th century. Although in the 1970s, Asia became the major oil palm producer in the world, followed by Africa,

in recent decades, the domestic consumption of palm oil in West Africa has increased more rapidly than its production. After centuries as the leading producing and exporting region, West Africa has now become a net importer of palm oil (Udo, 2012). These are due to the social, economic and environmental impacts and have affected the production and commercialisation of the product. Oil palm is one of the important economic trees which has diverse economic value and benefits. All components of the oil palm are of economic importance, like the fronds, the leaves, trunk and the roots, which can be used for other purposes like palm wine, palm kernel oil, broom and palm kernel cake. According to Akangbe et al. (2011), oil palm is referred to as a crop of multiple values due to its economic importance. In the view of Olagunju (2008), oil palm has been shown to serve as a livelihood resource for many smallholder farming families in rural areas, which is the reason it is called a communal cash crop.

Oil palm in Nigeria has virtually been stagnated and relegated as a result of the massive discovery and commercial exploitation of crude oil in the early 1970s; thus, oil palm was mostly domesticated (Ohimain et al., 2014). This has also resulted in a drastic reduction in the contribution of the agricultural sector to the country's GDP (Akpan et al., 2012). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Global palm oil production in 2016 stood at 58.8 million tons, with Indonesia contributing about 60% of the global production and Nigeria being the largest producers in West Africa accounted for only 7% (Kajisa et al., 1997, cites in Sunday et al. (2019). In Nigeria, 80% of oil palm production originates from dispersed smallholders who harvest semi-wild plants and use manual processing techniques (PIND, 2011). Oil palms are of different species and are widely spread across the Southern part of Nigeria. According to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Akwa Ibom State has been identified as the third largest producer of palm oil and kernel in Nigeria (FMA, 2002). In Akwa Ibom State, one of the States of the Southern region of Nigeria, palm oil production and processing are among the sustainable livelihood activities available for most vulnerable populace in most rural communities (Patrick et al., 2013). Oil palm production is a strong weapon used to fight hunger and poverty in the rural areas, and it also plays a major role in the dietary needs of most Nigerians (Ekenta et al., 2017). According to Olunode (2001), in rural communities of Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Rivers States, palm oil processing was originally done by women while men engaged in its marketing. Over the years, the oil palm processing business has taken a different dimension as a result of the newly introduced mechanically operated mills and processing systems. The technological change aims at transforming the processing techniques of oil palm from the traditional method to the modern method of production in order to reflect the new scientific economic system (Olunode, 2001, cited in Udoh et al., 2015).

### **Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District**

Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) was launched by the Nigerian government in 2016 to revitalise the agricultural sector through better productivity, food security, and the provision of employment. More specifically, in a bid to extend the policy to the rural farmers, the Akwa Ibom State government, through the DAKKADA Global Oil Palm Farm, has assisted oil palm farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District in the following ways:

**Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District**

S/N	Agriculture Promotion Policy	Local Governments	Target Beneficiaries	Support Programmes
1	Provisions of Oil Palm Processing Tools and Equipment	Ukanafun	Women Cooperative Groups	Elven oil palm processor Machines 3 digester screw presses 9 palm fruit strippers 16 clarifiers 4 digesters 2 cutting platforms 3 sets of palm nut crackers 4 nut/fibre separator 18 sterilisers Borehole projects
2	Training of Oil Palm Nursery Operators for Improving Seedlings and the use of Modern farm inputs	Ukanafun and Ikot Oku Ikono	Nursery operators and the use of modern oil palm tools and equipment	Training of Twenty-five active nursery operators Twenty-six (26) fabricators of agricultural machines in the state have been trained Sixty-eight (68) oil palms received training on modern techniques of oil palm production Reading and interpreting design drawings and improved machine production technologies Business Management
3.	Provisions of fertilisers	Ika	Oil Palm farmers	Provisions of fertilisers and other inputs, and extension services to ensure good performance of the oil palm plant Inputs and extension support to ensure a good yield.
4.	Provisions of improved Palm Oil Seedlings	Ukanafun	Oil Palm farmers	Provisions of 18,000 improved oil palm seedlings
5.	Welfare Package	Ukanafun	Oil Palm farmers	Supply of cassava cuttings to ensure that farmers earn some income before they can derive benefits from the oil palm.

**Sources:** akwaibom.gov.ng



### **Constraints to Palm Oil Production in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District**

There is a dearth of in-depth empirical analysis of the problems facing oil palm production in Nigeria, particularly in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State. Some of the factors affecting oil palm production include:

- 1. Market Fluctuation:** In the course of palm oil and kernel processing, challenges such as price fluctuation and a complete drop in the market price of palm produce are often experienced. Obviously, in the dry seasons, the oil palm often yields at its highest rate, which concomitantly leads to downward price fluctuation. A reverse is also the case during the rainy seasons that mark the scarcity of palm fruits, which often leads to a high price of the product in both the local market and the international market. According to Ebong & Udongwo (2005), palm oil and kernel prices have never been stable due to the role of the Ibo middlemen who dominate the retail palm oil and kernel business.
- 2. Storage:** Adequate and effective infrastructure, such as storage facilities, has undermined oil palm production in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. The prices of oil and kernel seem to go down during the dry seasons due to a lack of storage facilities, and this is often the season of bounty harvest for the producers. This is following the view of Ekong (2005) who observed that mass production of perishable goods does not favour the nature of the rural economy since there is are shortage of storage facilities.
- 3. Poor Transportation Facilities:** Scholars such as Alaga et al. (1993) and Ehirim (2004) cited in Udoh et al. (2015) have identified other challenges associated with the production and sales of palm produce to include poor transportation system, preservation of products produced in bulk as well as hoarding of products by both producers and marketers.
- 4. Lack of Credit Facilities to Oil Palm Farmers:** Inadequate credit facilities to local farmers in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State have posed a great challenge to palm oil production in the region. Most small-scale oil palm farmers in these local governments do not have access to government grants, loans and other credit schemes that would have boosted their palm oil production. Thus, they rely solely on subsistent production, which in turn affects their output. The following factors have contributed to the low level of productivity and inability of the agricultural output to improve the livelihoods of the rural farmers: limited access to credit services, poor infrastructure, and small land holdings (Ogato et al., 2010). Access to credit is one major link in the chain of agricultural development. According to Shephard (1997), cited in Christiana et al. (2019), credit determines access to all of the resources on which farmers depend. Credit serves as a source of funds to farmers that can be utilised in the production process. Ogundeji (1998), cited in Christian et al. (2019), stated that agricultural businesses, like any other business, can be financed through personal savings, friends or family assistance, or credit institutions.

### **Government as a Barrier to Agricultural Development**

It is a fact that most Nigerian farmers live in the rural areas and depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood. Mogue et al. (2008), cited in Tiri et al. (2017), argued that before an effective government investment programme can be designed and implemented, it is important to have a clear understanding of the pattern of public spending on agriculture. Over the years, government policies and programmes on agriculture have been inconsistent, unharmonized and discontinuous.

Consequently, these have led to numerous economic and political disturbances. Endemic corruption of some agricultural practitioners has been considered as one of the divergent problems affecting agricultural development in Nigeria (Tiri et al., 2017). More so, Ani (2007) stressed that the best programmes in agricultural development are those determined by the local people and extension staff working together. By this, corruption would be minimised to some degree among practitioners in the agricultural sector in the rural areas. Okuneye & Adebayo (2002), cited in Tiri et al. (2017), observed that the major setback to food security in Nigeria is attributed to inconsistent and unfocused government policies, which have, over the years, affected food production. Stern (2001), cited in Ibanga (2015) and Atakpa & Akpan (2023), decry the fact that developing countries in general are criticised for their high level of corruption in the machinery of government, and Nigeria falls well below average on key governance indicators, including corruption.

In another development, poor leadership has also constituted a barrier to agricultural development in Nigeria. Leadership, whether good or bad, will reflect either negatively or positively on a state's socioeconomic and political environment (Tiri et al., 2017; Udoms & Atakpa, 2021). Ademola (2008) argued that leadership in the public service have been engaged in reckless use of government properties and has been channelled to corrupt practices. Significantly, they have no vision of development to accompany the efficiency of repression they inherited. Incessant change of government policies and lack of continuity of government agricultural policies and programs are also some of the challenges that affect the agricultural sector in Nigeria. There have been several attempts to encourage productivity in Nigeria's agricultural sector, but the intermittent changes in government and subsequent government policy changes brought agriculture to a crossroads (Tiri et al., 2017). In Nigeria, more specifically, cases abound where governments have failed in their responsibility to provide the political support needed for effective implementation of agricultural policies and programmes and their sustainability. Thus, every successive government initiates its programmes and maliciously discontinues most programmes or projects of its predecessors soon after assuming power (Ibanga, 2015).

Poor agriculture policy implementation also constitutes a major problem faced by oil palm farmers in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. According to Ataire et al, (2021), implementation means getting things done. It could also mean carrying out, fulfilling, and completing a given objective. Most agriculture policies, which would have generated income to rural farmers, are subtly implemented thus, these policies become a mere academic exercise and paperwork. Ibanga (2015), citing Sabatier & Mazmanian (1983), is of the view that policy implementation seems to be the final step that follows policy formulation and is held as "the process of carrying out a basic policy decision". He opined that there is a mixed reaction among scholars about whether policymaking and policy implementation should be considered as distinct steps, with the latter following the former, or both being parts of the policymaking process. Therefore, it is argued that poor implementation of agriculture policies and programmes by various policy makers has significantly affected income generation.

### **Discussions of Findings**

Findings from the study reveal that the agriculture promotion policy has not been effectively implemented in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Consequently, oil palm farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District are still relying on crude instruments and labour-intensive techniques for the production of palm oil for both subsistence and commercial purposes, thus affecting income generation. This aligns with the findings of Akpabio et al. (2023), who

unravelling some of the constraints to agriculture policy implementation, which include a lack of electricity, local manpower, crude implements, uncivilised processing methods, etc.

It is also revealed from the study that palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District do not have access to credit facilities for palm oil production. They therefore rely on their meagre income to buy improved seedlings, fertiliser and modern palm oil processing tools. This lack of credit facilities has greatly reduced the income generation of palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. This finding is in tandem with those of Bolarinwa & Oyeyinka (2005), who observed that inadequate credit provision and poor marketing systems have reduced agricultural productivity drastically to the extent that food importation has been on the increase in recent years.

The study further revealed that poor agriculture promotion policy implementation has significantly affected income generation in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. It is revealed from the study that most agriculture promotion policies lack government support for proper implementation. This aligns with the findings of Ibanga (2015), who states that in Nigeria, there have been many instances where governments have failed to provide the political support needed for implementing and sustaining policy initiatives. Thus, most agriculture promotion policies in Nigeria have not been sustainable.

Lastly, it is also revealed that oil palm farmers in most local governments in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District have benefited from the government agricultural promotion policy. These benefits come in the form of provisions of improved palm oil seedlings, provisions of fertilisers, improved seedlings, provisions of oil palm processing tools and equipment, etc. This finding is in agreement with Babatunde et al. (2019) that the APP positively impacted farmers' productivity and income of smallholder oil palm farmers in Nigeria. Ijie (2023) found that the introduction of the policy had significantly led to an increase in the income of smallholder oil palm farmers in Edo state.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined the agriculture promotion policy and income generation of small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom State. Despite the numerous programmes and policies undertaken by the Akwa Ibom State government in collaboration with the Federal Government to boost palm oil production in Akwa Ibom State North West Senatorial District, these programmes have been bedevilled with some constraints, which include lack of access to credit facilities, market fluctuation and storage of agricultural produce. These in turn lead to a decrease in outputs, which is insignificant to meet the nation's food security level, and that is why prices of foodstuffs are escalating beyond the reach of the majority. Also, despite various agriculture policies enacted by various administrations, there seems to be poor implementation and sustainability of those policies; thus, most government policies and programmes suffer setbacks at the implementation stage. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that an agriculture promotion policy, if effectively implemented, can enhance access to credit facilities and boost productivity for small-scale palm oil producers in the Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District of Akwa Ibom State.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. The Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Agriculture should ensure adequate access to credit facilities to small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom State. The palm oil producers should be linked to credit institutions, especially the newly established NIRSAL Microfinance Banks, where

CBN's N200 billion oil palm intervention fund is domiciled to enhance increased production and processing of oil palm products.

2. Government and stakeholders in the agricultural sector should encourage greater productivity by prioritising the provision of basic farm inputs such as fertilisers, chemicals and improved oil palm seedlings to small-scale palm oil producers in Akwa Ibom State.
3. There should be a grassroots consultation on various government policies and programmes to carry the rural farmers along in government agriculture policies.
4. Lastly, the government should prioritise agriculture promotion policies and sustainability. When these policies are properly implemented, it will bring about a concomitant increase in income generation by palm oil farmers in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District.

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