

The Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Deepening Food Insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examined the impact of Covid-19 on deepening food insecurity in Nigeria. Adopting a qualitative method of research which utilized content analysis of secondary data collected for the study, the paper argued that the onset of Covid-19 pandemic worsened Nigeria's food challenges in the following dimensions: first, the Covid-19 caught up with the country at the embryonic stage of food import restrictions via border closure aimed at encouraging domestic food production and boosting food self-sufficiency. Thus, the policy was yet to gain grounds even as the people were still grappling with the challenge of inflation that was triggered by the food import restrictions in that Nigeria had been a net food importing nation. Secondly, the Covid-19 pandemic set in when the impact of the policy on food self-sufficiency supported by the federal government credit facilities to farmers were yet to yield the requisite dividend. Addressing the different dimensions of food insecurity among Nigerians within the period under review while drawing inference from pre-covid-19 pandemic period, the study concludes that indeed Covid-19 pandemic has deepened food insecurity due to lockdown effects of restricting the movement of farmers which isolated them from work.

Keywords: Covid-19, Farmers, Food insecurity, Lockdown, Nigeria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

There is growing concern about the potential and real impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa's agricultural and food systems of which Nigeria is one. This should ultimately be a priority for leaders across the public, private, and development sectors because about 650–670 million people in Africa, roughly half of the population, already face food insecurity. Of this number, it is reported that over 250 million people are considered to be severely food insecure (Pais, Javram, va Wamelen, 2020). Paradoxically, agriculture happens to be a major and essential economic hub in Africa that make up 23 percent of the continent's GDP. In sub-Saharan Africa, Agriculture it creates employment for close to 60 percent of the working population. Yet still, while it is on record that Africa exports food and agricultural products that standing between \$35 billion and \$40 billion annually, \$8 billion annual flows through intra-regional trade in same products, Africa disproportionately import food and agricultural products that worth between \$45 billion and \$50 billion a year as well as \$6 billion worth of agricultural inputs annually (Pais, Javram, va Wamelen, 2020).

Even though it has been reported that Africa's participation in the global market for agro-food products has been on the steady increase in the last half century, as exports grew by 4 percent and imports by 6 percent each year, however the reality is that the exports are comprised mainly of cash crops (cocoa, fruits and nuts, coffee, tea and spices), which have relatively limited markets in Africa, while most agro-food imports are basic food products, such as cereals, vegetable oils, sugar, meat and dairy products. The vast majority of imports are sourced from outside the region (e.g. wheat, sunflower oil and dairy products from Europe; rice and palm oil from Asia; maize, poultry and beef from Latin America). The point of departure is that the essence of extra-African food import is to aid fill the food shortage trend which inadvertently makes the most part of the continent food dependent. As a consequence the food dependent nature of the continent has in the past exposed them to shocks of a global nature, such as the food price spikes of 2007-08 (FAO, 2020).

More than the previous external shocks the COVID-19 pandemic has the capacity to exert a significant supply shock in the region. In fact the FAO (2020) forecast has it that given the highly labour-intensive agricultural production in most African countries, there is tendency for the COVID-19 lockdown-related

shortages of workers may compromise farming activities, as well as transportation and distribution farm produce to the consumers. Therefore, the above impacts on domestic food production and distribution may be compounded if countries are unable to manage pest and disease outbreaks due to restrictions on movement. Coupled with dependence on extra-regional imports for food, African countries have the likelihood of becoming vulnerable to disruptions in international logistics and distribution, in addition to production problems in other countries. This could result in food shortages and raise food prices, thereby creating emergency problems of food insecurity amongst the populace.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a report shows that about 670 million people in Africa, or half the continent's population, were already facing food insecurity, out of which 250 million people were severely food insecure. This problem has been worsened by the spread of COVID-19 in the following ways: lockdown measures that introduced serious economic and food price shocks, pronounced risk of food and income security, impact of border restrictions introduced to slow the spread of the virus on production, transportation, and trade of food across the continent (Lashitew and Kanos, 2020).

Deducing from the African wide narrative, the study focuses on the Nigerian situation in particular, to examine what ways the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the food insecurity crisis in the country.

Concept of Food Insecurity

For us to understand what food insecurity is, it is important to define food security, because food insecurity is the variant of food security. Excerpt from the 1996 World Food Summit expressed that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. FAO (2020) therefore identified four main dimensions of food security from the above submission of the World Food Summit:

- **Physical Availability of food:** Food availability addresses the “supply side” of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels and net trade.
- **Economic and physical ACCESS to food:** An adequate supply of food at the national or international level does not in itself guarantee household level food security. Concerns about insufficient food access have resulted in a greater policy focus on incomes, expenditure, markets and prices in achieving food security objectives.
- **Food utilization:** Utilization is commonly understood as the way the body makes the most of various nutrients in the food. Sufficient energy and nutrient intake by individuals is the result of good care and feeding practices, food preparation, diversity of the diet and intra-household distribution of food. Combined with good biological utilization of food consumed, this determines the *nutritional status* of individuals.
- **Stability of the other three dimensions over time:** Even if your food intake is adequate today, you are still considered to be food insecure if you have inadequate access to food on a periodic basis, risking a deterioration of your nutritional status. Adverse weather conditions, political instability, or economic factors (unemployment, rising food prices) may have an impact on your food security status. Thus, for food security objectives to be realized, all four dimensions must be fulfilled simultaneously. Judging from the above for scenarios which must be fulfilled before a country could be said to be food secure, Nigeria is food insecure in all its ramifications as we shall see later in the succeeding sections.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources. In 2014, 17.4 million U.S. households were food insecure at some time during the year. Food insecurity does not necessarily cause hunger, but hungerⁱⁱⁱ is a possible outcome of food insecurity (Healthypeople.gov, 2020).

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2017) divides food insecurity into the following 2 categories:

- **Low food security:** “Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.”
- **Very low food security:** “Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.”

Healthypeople.gov (2020) further gave conditions under which food insecurity could occur. Thus,

- food insecurity may be long term or temporary;
- it may be influenced by a number of factors including income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability;
- the risk for food insecurity increases when money to buy food is limited or not available.
- unemployment can also negatively affect a household's food security status. High unemployment rates among low-income populations make it more difficult to meet basic household food needs. In addition, children with unemployed parents have higher rates of food insecurity than children with employed parents;

- neighborhood conditions may affect physical access to food. For example, people living in some urban areas, rural areas, and low-income neighborhoods may have limited access to full-service supermarkets or grocery stores;
- lack of access to public transportation or a personal vehicle limits access to food. Groups who may lack transportation to healthy food sources include those with chronic diseases or disabilities, residents of rural areas, and some minority groups;
- adults who are food insecure may be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes and health disparities. For example, a study found that food-insecure adults may be at an increased risk for obesity;
- food-insecure children may also be at an increased risk for a variety of negative health outcomes, including obesity. They also face a higher risk of developmental problems compared with food-secure children. In addition, reduced frequency, quality, variety, and quantity of consumed foods may have a negative effect on children's mental health.

The above signs of food insecure populace are noticeable in Nigeria, and much more during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns in the country as discussed in the subsequent sections.

The Food Security Situation Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that 4 in 10 Nigerians were living below the national poverty line, and millions more were living just above the poverty line, making them vulnerable to falling back into poverty when shocks occur (www.worldbank.org, 2020) and this makes them to be food insecure since they do not have the capacity to purchase food with balanced diet. There was already a shortage of food supply for Nigeria's growing population even before the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020. WHO in 2018 reported that Nigeria is burdened by three key malnutrition indicators: anemia, overweight, and stunting. WHO further defined malnutrition as the deficiencies, excesses or imbalances in a person's intake of energy and/or nutrients. Most often than not, the average Nigerian has misconstrued malnutrition to mean hunger, which however is an important predisposing factor to malnutrition (Obadofin, 2020). A country was considered 'burdened' by a malnutrition indicator depending on whether the national prevalence was greater than a certain cut-off. Stunting was measured in children aged under 5 and its burden limit was 20% or more. Anaemia among women of reproductive age (15–49 years) had the same 20% or more cut-off, and for overweight women (18+) this was 35% or more. Countries with sufficient data (data available across all three indicators - 141 in total) were analyzed over the three malnutrition indicators. Table A3 details which countries suffer from one, two or three burdens (Global Nutrition Report, 2018).

In addition, the relatively poor performance of the agriculture sector in Nigeria has resulted in rising imports of food to cater to the need of the growing population of the nation. The nation faces gross food security challenges. Therefore, because local production in the sector lack the capacity to meet the demands of the 200 million people in the country, augmenting with imported food has become necessary. It is estimated that only about 100,000 tons of wheat are produced locally against an annual demand of over 3 million tons. The production of rice and fish which is highly consumed amongst Nigeria still falls below the quantity demanded. Quoting the report of National Bureau of Statistics, Obadofin (2020) stated that between 2006 and the first half of 2019, Nigeria spent 38.24 billion Naira on agricultural goods import to augment domestic production. These goods include rice, sugar, wheat flour, fish, poultry, beef, milk, etc. Despite the increase in rice production from an annual average of 7.1 million tons in 2013 and 2017 to 8.9 million tons in 2018, imported rice still finds its way to the country to feed the ever-growing population. With the closure of borders, it is only expected that the food supply for imported food will drop. We add here that the supply of imported rice started dropping and the impact of programme of the Federal Government to boost domestic agricultural and food production having closed the Nigerian borders in 2019 was yet to materialize before the onset of COVID-19 pandemic.

A detailed report provided by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) (2020) aptly captured the food insecurity situation of Nigeria before the COVID-19 pandemic. According to this report, in spite of the oil, agriculture remains the base of the Nigerian economy, providing the main source of livelihood for most Nigerians. However, the sector faced many challenges, notably an outdated land tenure system that constrains access to land (1.8 ha/farming household), a very low level of irrigation development (less than 1 percent of cropped land under irrigation), limited adoption of research findings and technologies, high cost of farm inputs, poor access to credit, inefficient fertilizer procurement and distribution, inadequate storage facilities and poor access to markets. All these factors have combined to keep agricultural productivity low (average of 1.2 metric tons of cereals/ha) with high postharvest losses and waste. Furthermore, even though agriculture still remains the largest sector of the Nigerian economy and employs two-thirds of the entire labour force, the production hurdles have significantly stifled the performance of the sector. "Over the past 20 years, value-added per capita in agriculture has risen by less than 1 percent annually. It is estimated that Nigeria has lost USD 10 billion in annual export opportunity from groundnut, palm oil, cocoa and cotton alone due to continuous decline in the production of those commodities". Food (crop) production increases have not kept pace with population growth,

resulting in rising food imports and declining levels of national food self-sufficiency. The main factors undermining production include reliance on rainfed agriculture, smallholder land holding, and low productivity due to poor planting material, low fertilizer application, and a weak agricultural extension system amongst others (FAO, 2020).

Another contradiction is that while Nigeria remains the continent's leading consumer of rice, one of the largest producers of rice in Africa, it is simultaneously one of the largest rice importers in the world. For instance, in 2008 alone, Nigeria produced approximately 2 million MT of milled rice and imported roughly 3 million metric tons, including the estimated 800,000 metric tons that is suspected to enter the country illegally on an annual basis (FAO, 2020).

Moreover, the country is the largest producer of cassava in the world, with about 50 million metric tons annually from a cultivated area of about 3.7 million ha. Nigeria accounts for cassava production of up to 20 per cent of the world, about 34 per cent of Africa's and about 46 per cent of West Africa's. The national average yield of cassava is estimated at about 13.63 MT per ha, as against potential yield of up to 40 metric tons per ha. However, the crop is predominantly grown by smallholders on small plots for family consumption and local sale. Large scale commercial plantations are rare (FAO, 2020).

The Nigeria fisheries sub sector contributes about 3-4 percent to the country's annual GDP and is an important contributor to the population's nutritional requirements, constituting about 50 percent of animal protein intake. In addition, the sub-sector generates employment and income for a significant number of artisanal fishermen and small traders. Although capture fisheries has now been declining, Nigeria has a big potential in both marine and fresh water fisheries including aquaculture. In spite of this high potential, domestic fish production still falls far below the total demand, which was estimated at 2.2 million metric tons per year in 2008. As a result, the country imports about 60 percent of the fish consumed. To reduce the level of fish imports, aquaculture has been selected as one of the priority value chains targeted for development in the next four years. The National Aquaculture Strategy Plan has just been finalized with the assistance of FAO to guide support for the value chain (FAO, 2020).

In the case of Livestock, about 60 percent of the ruminant livestock population is found in the country's semi-arid zone and mostly managed by pastoralists. Domestic production of livestock products is far below the national demand, resulting in large imports of livestock and livestock products. Except for eggs, the domestic production of animal products is less than half the demand for beef mutton and goat meat, while for milk and pork products it is less than quarter the demand. In essence, about 30 percent of live animals slaughtered in Nigeria are imported from neighbouring countries. Like other subsectors, livestock industry development is constrained by low productive breeds, inadequate access to feeds and grazing lands, frequent farmer – pastoralist conflicts, lack of processing facilities and low value addition and low technical inputs in the management of the animals, including diseases (FAO, 2020).

The above is coupled with fact that the general prices of food in Nigeria had already increased after the government shut its borders, particularly those with neighboring Benin Republic in an effort to stem the smuggling of rice prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (Adeshokan, 2020). This was the stage of Nigeria's food security condition before the COVID-19 pandemic set in to worsen the situation. The impact of the pandemic on food security in the country is examined in the next section.

Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security in Nigeria

President Muhammed Buhari on March 29, 2020, declared a total lockdown in the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos State, and Ogun State. Several state governments including Edo, Kano, Enugu, Bauchi, Kaduna, and Kwara states have also declared total lockdown. The ban includes a social association, mobility, non-essential economic, and leisure activities. Though this was a grand measure to curb the spread, the national lockdown is having an economic effect that has led to tightening of credit access to farmers, limited access to inputs for farmers, limited access to transport services to transport food, and border closures limiting food imports. These constraints are beginning to have ripple effects on food production and transportation, leading to tremendous hike in food prices and limiting the population's access to nutritious food (Obadofin, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic led to rise in food prices. For instance, as at April 2020, food inflation rose to 15% when compared to that of December 2019 which was 14% (www.pwc.com, 2020).

Corroborating the above reports, FEWS NET (2020) stated that COVID-19 and measures to prevent its spread have driven the food needs of most Nigerians even higher, especially conflict ridden areas of the North East. Besides food shortage, following the drop in international oil demand which is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, there was a decline in revenue with multiplier effects of depreciation of the Naira and inflation which pushed up prices of food. Consequently, the reduction of access to income of households due to restriction of movement rendered poorer households vulnerable due to their inability to meet their basic food needs. This situation was further complicated by the farmers' limited ability to engage in planting for the agricultural season due to movement restrictions and contractions in household income, which reduced the

farmers' ability to purchase agricultural inputs. Furthermore, even when the government began easing movement restrictions in early June, food security among poor households across Nigeria the ripples of the pandemic continue to impact on them negatively due to a combination of measures that remain in place and a general economic slowdown at global and domestic spheres. For example, the disrupted inter-state movement and cross-border movements between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which had affected the migratory labourers following border closures, was reported to have had a sharp decrease in the supply of agricultural labour demand and wages, creating a decline in income from domestic and international remittances. This decline in agricultural labour demand affected income negatively for many seasonal labourers and undermined seasonal agricultural activities.

Citing a World Bank report, FEWS NET (2020) revealed that nearly 20 percent of respondents interviewed reported that cultivating less land than they typically do, while nearly 10 percent of the respondents indicated that they planted fewer crops. Thus, when combined with the conflict in the Northern Nigeria, there is likelihood that there will be a below-average national main season production. Subsequently, across major markets, prices of imported foods increased from near average levels to 30 to 100 percent above that of 2019 and the five-year average. Thus, the high food prices and decreasing incomes reduced poor household's purchasing power, especially for those of highest concern in conflict-affected areas where prices were already higher relative to other parts of the country and among poor urban households.

Live responses from Nigerians were recorded by Obadofin (2020). According to this reports, in Nigeria, the pandemic has began to impinge on food availability and supply. Speaking to one of the local farmers in Lagos State and an executive of the Amuwo Agric YES Cooperative Agriculture Society Alhaja Badru, she lamented that she and her members have not been able to visit the farms since the lockdown, and even feared that hoodlums may begin to attack the little produce left on the land. In addition, restricted access to markets for farmers may also facilitate spoilage and wastage of highly perishable foods. She further explained that it is a planting season for the wet season farmers across the country. Considering this information, and the restricted movement, agricultural experts have posited that shortage of labor, access to farming essentials such as fertilizer and seedlings will begin to affect productivity and consequently harvest in the long run.

Furthermore, an interview with a residence of Abule-Ado, Mr. Abdulhafeez, in April 2020 revealed that a bowl of garri (1.3kg) which formally sells for 400 Naira is now being sold for 800 Naira (\$2). Another residence and store owner in the area said that there has been an increase in the prices of foodstuff generally, and basic household needs such as milk, groundnut oil, and soup condiments. Subsequent interview with Ms. Haruna, a baker who lives at Berger, revealed that the prices for baking ingredients and other essential commodities increased; the prices of icing sugar increased from 5,500 naira to 7,100 naira. Even pure water increased from 12 bags for 1,000 naira to 11 bags for 1,300 naira. For her, this spike in prices of consumables and baking materials has really affected her business. Subsequent interviews with Rotimi Akindele and Seyi Ayanwale who lived at Abule Egba and Ipaja respectively, revealed similar effects of the lockdown on hike in food prices and also transport fare to get the foodstuffs. For these reasons, Rotimi said that he had to reconsider what was a priority for him. He explained that since having food in his stomach was most important, he decided to get foodstuff he could afford and skip consumption of fruits and some foods he considered to be luxury at the moment. Checking the quantity and quality of his food consumption was his mitigation plan since they were spending double their usual family budgets on foodstuffs (Obadofin, 2020).

Recalling the NBS statistics, Obadofin (2020) reiterated that the Consumer Price Index for most foods ranging from potatoes, yam, and other tubers, bread, to fruits and vegetables increased between March and April. With the lockdown due to COVID-19, food prices have drastically increased in the states across Nigeria. Hence, the drastic hike on food prices coupled with a reduced supply of imported food is a big strain on food consumption on Nigerians.

The pandemic lockdown has left Nigeria worse-off than before in terms of food insecurity prone malnutrition. As stated earlier, Nigeria still remains one of the worst-hit by malnutrition in the Sub Saharan region, with children and women in their reproductive age most affected. If the the figures of the of the 2018 NBS Demographic Health Survey and 2017 Nutrition of the Federal Ministry of Health Nutrition Division records are anything to go by, then the nutrition level of the country under the COVID-19 lockdown would be worse. For instance, The 2018 NBS Demographic Health Survey revealed that 37% of children under age are stunted, 17% severely stunted and 7% wasted. 22% are underweight and 7% are severely underweight, in while in 2017, the report of the head of the Nutrition Division, Federal Ministry of Health, Chris Isokpunw projected that the country needs 279,536 billion naira (\$912million) to address malnutrition in all states in five years (Obadofin, 2020).

To further attest to the devastating impact of the pandemic on food security, World Bank statistics stated that in Nigeria, about 2 million children suffer from acute malnutrition and the nation has the second highest burden of stunted growth in the world. It is against this backdrop that the school feeding program was developed to ease the percentage. The program whose objectives include providing food for children, especially

the required dietary intake, has served over 8.6 million Nigerian children. Thirty states have currently joined this program, including the Lagos State government who joined January this year. However, with the pandemic, the program which benefits school children across the country has been suspended due to the closure of schools. This has saddled the benefitting parents, especially low-income earners, with an increased responsibility to provide for these children. For those who cannot, the children would most likely have to go through the scourge of hunger and malnourishment until the pandemic is over putting them at greater risk of contracting and falling ill from Covid-19 (Obadofin, 2020).

Xinhuanet (2020) reported that the outbreak of COVID-19 has increased food insecurity in four major states of Nigeria. Citing the latest report of the National Bureau of Statistics on the impact of COVID-19, Xinhua stated that food insecurity appears to be prevalent across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the states of Kano, Lagos and Rivers. In Rivers and FCT, in particular, 79 percent and 72 percent of households respectively reported having to skip meals since the onset of the pandemic. According to the report, 'households in all four states are drawing down their savings and borrowing money to cover their living expenses, which may leave them more economically vulnerable and reduce their investments in human capital in the future' (NBS cited in Xinhuanet, 2020). The report further stated that due to the critical food shortage, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) approved four Nigerian firms to import 262,000 tons of maize as food shortage looms. The firms comprise Crown Flour Mills Limited, Premeir Feeds Company Limited, Chi Farms Limited, and Wacot Limited.

The lockdown rules by the federal government have led to food supply chain problems with a lot of farmers on the receiving end. As commercial transportation wound down to a halt and roadblocks littered the streets of Lagos and Ogun state, movement of food and agricultural produce proved difficult (Adeshokan, O. (2020).

In the case of the Northeast, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a slowdown in production and intra- and inter-regional agricultural trade, including the movement of key agricultural commodities. The region's food supply chains were affected, with the closure of wet markets and retail stores in densely populated urban areas for significant periods of time during April-May. This is coupled with the surge in Boko Haram attacks that were sustained throughout May, preventing farming households from accessing food and livelihood support in some areas. Due to low productive capacities, the majority continued to depend on humanitarian assistance for survival. Regulations governing the movement of cash and the absence of information and communications technology infrastructure remains a significant challenge to providing targeted local government areas with social protection measures such as cash transfers (Corporazione Internazionale (COOPI) (2020)..

Efforts Made by the Government and Non-State Actors to Contain Food Insecurity during COVID-19 Pandemic

It is logical for the government to impose lockdown however; some of its policies on movement of agro-food products from points or regions of production to the places they are consumed were either not really clear or ineffectively executed. This view was contained in a statement released by a logistics company known as Kobo360 which detected confusion over the government's directive on regulations of trucks. This made less than 3000 trucks involved in the flow of essential good parking their vehicles out of fear that if caught circulating, both the trucks and goods would be impounded. The company then called on the government to clarify the restrictions so that cargo drivers can move without harassment from security agencies, to ensure continued flow in the food supply chain (Adeshokan, 2020).

However, in an attempt to alleviate problems of acute food in the country, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) announced a fund that policy experts have argued is too small to matter. The government has also announced a freeze on loan repayments for farmers and small businesses as part of incentives to boost food production and distribution of food in order to reduce food insecurity. On the contrary, the challenge of lack of data and infrastructure rendered these palliatives marginal and a "very little trickle-down in government's activities" (Adeshokan, 2020).

In theory, food supplies should be exempt from most of the restrictions in place against the coronavirus and available for transportation. However, small scale farmers have been unable to access supplies and even their markets, leading to business losses. This situation prompted Fashina to suggest that the government needs to be better strategic in dealing with the virus and providing the basic essentials.

There were evidence of extortion and brutality against the truck and bus drivers who were involved in the haulage of agro-food products during the lockdown. These extortions and brutality contributed in not only creating further scarcity of food, but heightening the prices of food. Besides, when trucks conveying perishable food items were allowed to park on state borders for days and sometimes weeks, they perish and contributed to the costs and scarcity of products.

II. CONCLUSION

The paper had explicitly discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened food security in Nigeria via lockdowns, social distancing and other safety measures to nip the community spread of the virus on the bud. In the process, restrictions distribution of food items were stalled thereby further deepening the food insecurity as prices were hiked sometimes beyond the reach of the poorer households. Besides, food production and harvesting were stalled due to restriction of movements. When such happened, the forces of demand and supply took its course whereby, when food items are in large supply, the price fall and vice versa.

We therefore recommend that the government should partner with the NGOs, private partners and international organizations to creatively devise a sustainable strategy for assisting the farmers with incentives and credit facilities that could encourage and enhance productive agriculture. Besides, the road infrastructure of agro-food basket communities should be put in order so that there would be smooth and cheaper means of transporting food items from zones of production to that of consumption. There should be an effective mechanism to check the excesses of the security operatives who extort transporters conveying food items to markets, which add to the cost of food. Also, the excesses of the middlemen which sometimes arbitrarily increase the price of food items should be checked. Incentives and credit facilities should henceforth be given to the real farmers by on the spot assessment of farmlands and regular visits of farms to ensure that real farmers received the credit facilities and not politicians and pseudo farmers.

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