

A REVIEW ON HOMESTEAD GARDENING AS A CONTRIBUTORY PANACEA TO CURRENT HOUSEHOLD FOOD SCARCITY DUE TO FUEL SUBSIDY REMOVAL IN NIGERIA.

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***Abstract:** The impact of removing fuel subsidy by federal government of Nigeria as declared by the elected President Asiwanju Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the 29th of May 2023 on the economy of Nigeria as a nation is explored, with studies addressing its effects on the nation's fiscal deficit, socio-economic characteristics, and poverty levels. The fuel subsidies removal has intensified the challenges of food scarcity in the nation of Nigeria, leaving many households in dire straits. Most families report allocating over 85% of their income to food provision and the depreciation of the naira have driven food inflation to above 30.64% therefore contributing to a surge in the consumer price index. As a result, the position of homestead gardening which is the intricate, multi-level integration of different crops and trees in conjunction with animals that are domestic surrounding a household in aiding nutrition and household food security is examined, highlighting its potential to provide diverse nutrient-rich foods and alleviate malnutrition. Challenges associated with establishing home gardens, such as access to land, capital, and cultural acceptance, are identified, emphasizing the need for policy interventions and community engagement to promote its adoption. It further underscores the importance of integrating homestead gardening into agricultural policies and providing extension services to support gardeners in managing pests and diseases. Studies reveal the significant economic and social benefits of home gardening, including increased household income, improved mental health, and strengthened community resilience. It concludes with a call to action for policymakers to prioritize investments in homestead gardening initiatives as part of broader strategies to address food scarcity and promote sustainable livelihoods in Nigeria.*

Keywords: Homestead gardening, Food scarcity, Fuel subsidy removal, Household, Food scarcity.

Introduction

The fuel subsidies removal has intensified the challenges of food scarcity in the nation of Nigeria, leaving many households in dire straits. Most families report allocating over 85% of their income to food provision, while others find their earnings insufficient to satisfy their needs nutritionally. Considering this, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the removal of fuel subsidies, examining both its positive and negative aspects and its impact on food prices in Nigeria. Additionally, it explores the potential of homestead gardening as a viable solution to alleviate current household food scarcity.

Fuel Subsidy and Removal Process

The Fuel subsidy was initially introduced In Nigeria in the 1970s in reaction to the shock in the oil price of 1973.

These entailed government discounts on the market pricing on fossil fuels, allowing consumers to pay less than the usual market rates (Ovaga & Okechukwu, 2022). While they were partially removed in 1986, they remained in place until 2012, when the government suddenly eliminated them, sparking massive protests demanding their reinstatement. This action was indeed carried out later that year. Since that time, fuel subsidy payments in Nigeria have skyrocketed. By 2022, these subsidies had reached ₦4trillion (US\$ 6.088 billion), making up 23 % of the nation's budget of ₦17.126trillion (US\$25.87 billion) for the same year. Consequently, Nigeria found itself unable to sustain fuel subsidies by 2023, prompting the government to announce their removal in June of that year (Ozil & Obiora, 2023).



Implications of the Fuel Subsidy Removal

Deliberate fuel subsidies removal by the federal government has been supported by various studies, suggesting several potential uses for the funds previously allocated to these subsidies. These include directing funds towards critical civic infrastructural development (Majekodunmi, 2013; Bazilian & Onyeji, 2012), investing in other economic sector (Gidigbi & Bello, 2020; Ogunode, Ahmed, & Olugbenga, 2023), addressing the current budget deficit exacerbated by fuel subsidy contributions to fiscal deficit in Nigeria (Adagunodo, 2022), and reducing government borrowing through payments and debt reduction (Okongwu & Imoisi, 2022), among other purposes.

However, various negative implications have also been forecasted, some of which have already become evident. These include a short-term decrease in the rate of economic growth (Houeland, 2020), high inflation and diminished purchasing power (Mohammed, Ahmed & Adedeji, 2020), as well as increasing in poverty and vulnerability in the short term (Raji, 2018), among other challenges.

Implication of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Household Food Security

The declaration of the removal of the subsidy by the newly elected President, Asiwanju Bola Ahmed Tinubu on the 29th of May 2023, has had a traumatizing impact on citizens. Akintayo (2023) noted that the price of petrol, now at ₦617, has led to significant increases in transportation costs, as well as food prices and other items, sparking anger among workers and the public (Yunusa et al., 2023). The high cost of living has surged, with transportation fares rising by over 200 % since the removal of the subsidy. Prices of food items and other goods have also experienced remarkable increases. Akintayo (2023) reported that a civil servant, Omolola Ayodele, informed The PUNCH correspondent that life had become unbearable for her family since May 29, describing it as the worst they have ever experienced in about 10 years.

Jayeola and Abimbola (2023) stated that subsidy removal and the depreciation of the naira have driven food inflation to 30.64%, contributing to a surge in the consumer price index to 26.72% in September 2023. They added that the upsurge in September's food price rises was propelled by increases in the prices of fat and oil, cereal and bread, yam,

potatoes and other tubers, meat, fruit, fish, milk, and vegetables, eggs, and cheese.

The Director-General of the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dr. Chinyere Almona) also emphasized that the escalating food price is now a pressing worry for the citizens as well as the government. The rate of inflation on food has gotten to distressing levels, painted by data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), which placed food inflation in Nigeria at 33.9 percent as of 15th of January 2024 (Olushola, 2024).

Homestead Gardening

Kumar and Nair (2004) well-defined homestead garden as the intricate, multi-level integration of different crops and trees in conjunction with animals that are domestic surrounding a household. On the other hand, a home garden is considered to be the farming of a small space of land, which could be located at the rear of a residence or within a walkable distance from one's home (Odebode, 2006). Both concepts focus on cultivating land close to the home to fulfill various family and household needs (Igwe, et al., 2014).

Ijah *et al.* (2022) describes home gardens as a farming system where land nearby, either around the house or within walking distance, is used to grow crops primarily for household consumption, with any surplus often sold for additional income. This system is ancient, dating back to the beginning of human existence. Home gardens can be located at the back, front, or sides of a house, or in a nearby field, and are typically fenced or situated within a fenced property. These gardens are also known as kitchen gardens, backyard gardens, compound gardens, or rooftop gardens, and they represent one of the earliest forms of agriculture.

Additionally, this farming system integrates various physical, social, and economic functions on the land surrounding the family home. Home gardens have a long history in many tropical regions, where they feature a diverse mix of plants, including trees, shrubs, and herbaceous species, growing in or near the homestead. They often incorporate animal husbandry, snail farming, and aquaculture. This system is the most prevalent and culturally significant agroforestry practice among rural communities.



Potentials of Homestead Garden in Addressing Food Scarcity in Nigeria:

Provides Food and Nutritional Security

Homestead gardening has been recognized worldwide as a significant supplementary source that contributes to nutritional and food security including livelihoods. It enhances household food security and nutrition by offering direct and swift access to various foods that can be harvested on the field, processed, and consumed by members of the family every day. Consequently, it holds the potential for enriching diets in Nigeria, particularly for the most vulnerable low-income population, by providing a means to make food readily available (Nwaneke & Chude, 2017).

Source of Diverse Nutrients

According to Zerihun et al. (2011), homestead gardening offers a variety of natural and fresh produce that enhance both the quality and quantity of nutrients accessible to the household. Households having gardens procure over half of their supply of fruits and vegetables, along with minor staples like cocoyam, cassava, plantain, sweet potato, yam, herbs, medicinal plants, and reared animals for protein. Additionally, it can be used as a targeted policy scheme tactic to afford expectant and breastfeeding mothers with nourishing and healthy food, thereby promoting breastfeeding (Nwaneke & Chude, 2017).

Independent Source of Income

The sale of produce from the garden and the reared animals often represents the primary source of independent profits for wives and mothers. The sale of home gardens produces meaningfully enhances the monetary status of families. Home gardens have been identified as a means of providing for those who are unemployed and those with low incomes in rural communities (Glover, 2004). They serve as avenues for economic empowerment (Alaimo, Reischl & Allen, 2010) and potential methods for ensuring food security for the impoverished. Additionally, they can be seen within the framework of a broader food security strategy of the nation (Zerihun et al., 2011), as they provide households with additional resilience against rising national food prices.

Food Accessibility and Availability

Homestead gardens are typically situated close to the home, as they are owned and maintained by the household primarily to supply food (Johnson-Welch et al., 2000). Therefore, the most significant social advantage of

homestead gardening arises from its unswerving contribution to family food security through enhancing the accessibility, availability, and utilization of food products (Galhena et al., 2013). It can thus be regarded as an integral aspect of agricultural practices and systems of food production in Nigeria, serving as an effective tool for mitigating hunger and malnutrition amid the current food crisis (Zerihun et al., 2011; Aworinde et al., 2013).

The levels of insecurity in Nigeria as far as food is concerned and the threats to life posed by issues such as banditry, kidnapping, and land grabbing (Oladele et al., 2020), along with the spikes in food prices can be abated if homestead gardening is promoted because of its veritable ability to address food insecurity.

All Year-round and Daily Food Supplies

A home garden provides families with the confidence of round the year constant availability of fresh fruits, vegetables, cereals, and legumes, effectively fighting food insecurity a major factor contributing to poor complementary feeding practices in Nigeria (FMH, 2005). A well-established home garden makes a substantial contribution to daily food requirements, meeting households' needs for non-staple foods like vegetables, fruits, coconuts, root crops, legumes, etcetera. A year-round supply of food to households illustrates that home garden has been instrumental in augmenting food availability to the households, thus contributing to food security (Bushamuka et al., 2005).

Social and Recreational Benefits

Raymond et al. (2018) stated a variety of psychological, environmental, social, and physiological benefits connected with home gardening. Although it is often a solitary commitment, most people who work in gardens value the various types of social interactive activities that normally take place during significant social garden activities or in engagement with those passing by. They also highlighted the importance associated with connection to nature and attention restoration, place attachment, minimizing anxiety and stress, enhanced mood, pride and satisfaction, self-esteem increase, and the bravery to embrace life changes, along with significant educational or learning opportunities (Ijah et al., 2020). Consequently, homestead gardening allows regular physical activity causing improvement in mental health and fostering engagement at the social level and connections with the environment (Blake & Cloutier-Fisher, 2009). Moreover, it can enhance community and household ability to withstand political or economic



instability (Buchmann, 2009) and can also enhance social justice as well as equity outcomes (Raymond et al. (2018).

Challenges to Homestead Garden Establishment in Nigeria

The establishment of homestead gardens in Nigeria is not without significant challenges. As access to sufficient and suitable land for establishing home gardens, as well as the lack of possession and traditional rights are crucial restrictive influences (Hoogerbrugge & Fresco, 1993; Mitchell & Hanstad, 2004). Other restraints are limited access to credit or capital, inadequate access to seeds, other planting materials, water, little or no advisory and extension services, limited accessibility to labour, and markets access restriction. Additionally, Ijah *et al.* (2020) indicated in their study that the inadequacy of farm inputs, pest and disease attacks, and poor fertility of the soil were the three main problems facing the establishment of homestead gardening in Nigeria. Furthermore, Galhena *et al.* (2013) mentioned the cultural acceptance of homestead gardening as another significant constraint in certain parts of Nigeria.

Existing Research Contributions.

Igwe *et al.* (2014) examined the Economic and Social impacts of home gardens on the livelihoods of farms in Abia State households, Nigeria. Their findings, based on sixty households in Abia, indicated that homestead gardening has both economic and social implications for the livelihoods of farm households. They emphasized the need for comprehensive enlightenment campaigns in farming communities to ensure a thorough understanding of home gardening and its proper integration into family life due to its numerous benefits.

Oladele *et al.* (2020) in a similar study on the influence of home gardening on Food Security of Households, focused on Home Gardeners of Igabi Local Government Area in Kaduna State, Nigeria. They concluded that homestead gardening is a valuable tool for addressing food insecurity among households and the nation, provided it receives serious attention from policymakers. The study recommended the integration of home gardening into farming systems by agricultural policymakers the provision of adequate extension services for disease and pest management, supply of better-quality farm inputs to home gardeners by relevant government authorities. Additionally, it suggested promoting awareness among people to cultivate land around their homesteads.

Conclusion

Amid unprecedented hike in food prices because of fuel subsidies removal, embracing homestead gardening as part of our daily activities cannot be overemphasized if we are going to withstand and survive the current food scarcity in the country. Considering the immense benefits of food and nutritional security, a source of diverse nutrients, a good source of income, provision of accessible and available food, daily and year-round food supplies, and the social and recreational benefits, it becomes imperative. With resolute determination by the government and individuals to overcome challenges associated with homestead gardening such as land ownership, access to credit or capital, access to water, planting materials, and seeds, among others, individual households will be able to experience at least mild if not total food security during this time of famine.

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