

# The history of agriculture in nigeria from the colonial era to the present day



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The agricultural history of Nigeria is intertwined with its political history. This is discussed broadly in the context of the varying constitutional frame works, viz: Colonial, the Internal Self Government and the Post-1960 periods, according to sectors. Crop Production: The period of the colonial administration in Nigeria, 1861-1960, was punctuated by rather ad hoc attention to agricultural development. During the era, considerable emphasis was placed on research and extension services. The first notable activity of the era was the establishment of a botanical research station in Lagos by Sir Claude McDonald in 1893.

This was followed by the acquisition of 10.4 kms of land in 1899 by the British Cotton Growing Association (BCGA) for experimental work on cotton and named the experimental area Moor Plantation in Ibadan. In 1912, a Department of Agriculture was established in each of the then Southern and Northern Nigeria, but the activities of the Department were virtually suspended between 1913 and 1921 as a result of the First World War and its aftermath. From the early 1920s to the mid 1930s, there was a resurgence of activities and this period has been called the 'Faulkner Strip Layout' era in honour of the Director of Agriculture, Mr. O. T.

Faulkner, who devised a statistical design for experimental trials in green manuring, fertiliser projects, rotational cropping systems and livestock feeding. From the late 1930s to the mid-1940s, there were significant intensification and expansion of research activities, and extension and training programmes of the Agricultural Departments. Additional facilities for training of junior staff in agriculture were provided, as well as scholarships

for agricultural students in Yaba Higher College and Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad.

The intensification of hostilities during the Second World War (1939-45) led to the slowing down of activities and the call to Departments of Agriculture to play increasing roles in the production of food for the army and civilians in the country and the Empire. Production of export crops like palm products and rubber which could not be obtained from Malaysia as a result of Japanese war activities in South-East Asia, and such food items as sugar, wheat, milk, eggs, vegetables, Irish potatoes and rice whose importation was prevented by naval blockade of the high seas increased.

A special production section of the Department of Agriculture was set up to deal with the situation. On the research side, attention was devoted largely to the possibilities of evolving permanent systems of agriculture that were capable of replacing rotational bush-fallowing systems prevalent in the country and realising the promises of mixed farming in the north. During this period, the WAIFOR (West African Institute for Oil Palm Research) in Benin was started and the research on cocoa was intensified at Moor Plantation, Owena near Ondo and at Onigambari near Ibadan.

Achievements of the period include the development of 'Alien Cotton' in the south; rice cultivation in the Sokoto, Niger, Ilorin, Abeokuta Colony and Ondo provinces; the introduction of wheat cultivation in the more northern parts of the northern provinces; the expansion of production of such export crops as cocoa, oil palm and groundnut; development of agricultural implements as well as designing farm buildings; intensification of

horticultural activities; the development of a marketing section of the Department; the extension of the Produce Inspection Service to cover all principal export crops; investigations into the possibilities for organised land settlement schemes; and investigations into the possibilities of irrigation in northern Nigeria.

The period of Internal Self Government, 1951-60, began with the reorganisation of the Departments of Agriculture in 1951, with a Director and an Inspector-General of Agriculture in each region. By October 1954, the post of Inspector General of Agriculture was abolished as a result of constitutional developments which led to independence of the Regional Departments.

The Federal Department of Agricultural Research was retained since constitutional provisions placed agricultural research on the concurrent legislative list, while extension work remained a regional responsibility. The research findings of the Federal Research Stations were to be transmitted through Regional ministries responsible for agriculture and natural resources. There was also the setting up, in 1955, of a Technical Committee of the Council of Natural Resources made up of Federal and Regional Ministers and officials for the formulation of national research programmes as well as the co-ordination of Federal and Regional research activities. Regionalization of agriculture created a great awareness of the need for intensification of activities in both the research and extension fields. This led the Regions to expand, considerably, their research and extension activities in agriculture.

The post-1960 was one of extensive planning and regional competition in agriculture. Concentration of attention on commodity exports, the utilisation of taxation policy by the Marketing Boards as an instrument of development finance, and the belief that food production activities could take care of themselves without any governmental intervention, became the official farm policy. Under regional independence, the agricultural history of the nation entered a new phase of modification of traditional practices, in view of the incapacity of food production to meet the needs of the rising population and the inability of producers to reinvest in land.

These maladies were worsened by the inability of the then Federal Government to play a leading role in the nation's agricultural modernisation. Before the middle of the 1960s, a Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources was set up, and a phase of consolidation and co-ordination of projects for agricultural development began. In 1966, Federal initiative and control of the nation's agriculture were set in motion. This step in the right direction became more manifest with the creation, in 1967, of 12 States and the increased efforts to evolve a co-ordinated perspective for agricultural development in Nigeria.

Livestock Livestock production in Nigeria was dominated by nomadic pastoralism long before the advent of the British Colonial Administration. The immediate interest of the colonial government in livestock was with the health and hygiene of the domesticated cattle. Thus, the Nigerian Veterinary Department was established in 1914 with its head quarters at Zaria.

In 1924, a small veterinary laboratory was established in Vom for the production of rinderpest serum. Increased field services raised the demands on the laboratory hence the production of vaccines and other biological products was added to the functions of the laboratory.

The recognition of the advantages of Vom as the centre for veterinary research and for vaccine production, coupled with the major emphasis on the health aspects of live stock production, led to the transfer of the head quarters of the Nigerian Veterinary Department from Zaria to Vom. In October 1927, proposals for the establishment of a Stock Farm were made to the Government. The stated objective was 'to turn out, by purely selective breeding, male stock for use as stud by native stock owners.' It was proposed that three breeds, namely, the White Fulani, Gudali and Shuwa represented by a dairy herd of about 20 heads each be stocked at Shika. By 1934, it was fairly certain that either sweet potatoes or cassava could be fed to the cattle, as sources of energy.

At about that time too, it was realized that there is a heavy and growing export of cattle of the hoof from the North, and the intensity of this demand naturally fluctuates with the price of southern produce. Thus with price ruling high for palm oil in the South and low for cotton in the North, a prospective farmer is subjected to variations in his costs and returns. Such variations urged the planners to introduce the 'Mixed Farming Policy.' The policy was typified by the importation of six pullets and one cockerel of the Rhode Island Red breed from England in 1933 to Agege where crops like maize, cassava, yam, oil palm, kola, coffee, pineapple and citrus fruits were already cultivated.

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The role of educational advancement in agricultural development in Nigeria was given prominence at an earlier stage. The value of an elementary education in the three Regions to farmers was appreciated and it was suggested that the introduction of a new interest into farming, such as the production of livestock in the Southern Provinces of Nigeria, would attract more educated youths into agriculture. A scheme was started in Katsina Province for teaching sons of farmers the best husbandry methods. Instructions were essentially practical in nature and were centred on mixed farming. Similarly, the study of management of livestock was introduced to the Ibadan Agricultural School where the Education and Agricultural Departments co operated to train both teachers responsible for the management of school farms and the agricultural assistants for the Department of Agriculture.

By 1938, three Conferences of West African Agricultural Officers had been held. Besides, the numerous attempts made between 1924 and 1938 to introduce fodder and browse plants into Nigeria (especially at the Veterinary Station, Vom, the Agricultural Station at Samaru and at the Stock Centre at Shika) were reviewed. The need for concerted effort at pasture and grassland management and improvement was adequately documented and a call for more co-operation between the livestock farmers and the traditional agriculturists was made. This was the beginning of organised efforts towards range management for livestock improvement in Nigeria. In 1940, milk-buying units were established in areas of the Jos Plateau and butter was produced on commercial scale.

The production of cheese and bacon was undertaken shortly after and this became intensified during the Second World War. After the War, livestock produce assumed considerable importance, while in 1948 the operations were taken over by the Department of Commerce and Industry. A Veterinary School was established at Vom in the early 1940s to train Nigerians for animal health work. A Livestock Investigation Centre (LIC) was also set up as auxiliary to the school and laboratory. Later, an Egg Production Unit was created to supply fertile eggs for virus research, vaccine for both the Veterinary and the Medical Departments and Poultry for research work and vaccine testing.

The Nigerian Veterinary Department played a very prominent role in the early history of livestock development in Nigeria. Indeed, by the end of the 1939-45 War, the Department had become internationally recognised and requests were made by the administration of most of the other West African Territories to the veterinary laboratory in Vom for the supply of vaccines. The serious nature of trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) in man and animals was also of great concern to the Colonial Administration in the West African Territories and the need to control this disease led to the establishment in 1947 of a West African Institute for Trypanosomiasis Research (WAITR).

A main laboratory to study the animal was sited in Vom-on the Jos Plateau, an ideal location since the tsetse fly vector was absent in that area. Prior to 1951, the Nigerian Veterinary Department had its headquarters, laboratories and a school in Vom, with field offices in each Region. With the coming of regional governments, the Nigerian Veterinary Department was split into separate regional departments.

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The Director of Veterinary Services became the Inspector-General of Animal Health Services, while the designation of the regional heads remained the same, except for that of Northern Region which was changed to Director of Veterinary Services. The post of Inspector-General carried executive authority in the regions only in so far as matters connected with hides and skins trade were concerned. In October 1954, with the introduction of a new Constitution, the Regional Departments became completely autonomous.

The post of the Inspector-General of Animal Health Services was redesignated as the Director of Veterinary Research, responsible to the Federal Government and with executive authority for veterinary matters in Lagos. In 1967, when 12 States were created in Nigeria, each state assumed responsibility for veterinary matters, within its boundaries. The initial breeding policy designed to improve livestock in Nigeria concentrated on the locally available breeds of animal. About 1950, there was a modification of this policy, whereby exotic breeds of cattle were introduced to upgrade the local stock.

The Western Nigeria Development Corporation (WNDC) established the Upper Ogun Ranch for the commercial production and distribution of cattle. In the Eastern Region, South Devon cattle were introduced at the Obudu Ranch. Friesian bulls were imported to the farm at Agege in Lagos; the Teaching and Research Farm at the University of Ibadan obtained foundation stock of cattle from Shika. Extensive facilities were also established for research in piggery and poultry.

The administrative machinery for agricultural development and co-ordination was also modified. Technical committees established for the various aspects of primary production were modified. The Veterinary Technical Committee was replaced by the enlarged National Livestock Development Committee which reported to the National Council for Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Livestock Meat Authority, established to serve the northern states, had recently been empowered to act on a national scale in collating data and conducting surveys as well as in researching into various aspects of livestock production, slaughter and marketing in Nigeria.

**Fisheries** The history of fisheries development in Nigeria is a comparatively recent one, although reports have shown that a fishing company operated from the coastal waters of Lagos long before 1915. Deliberate efforts at developing the country's fisheries can be said to date back to the Second World War when, because of the naval blockade of the high seas, the then Colonial Administration decided to develop the country's local resources, including fisheries. A fisheries organization was established in 1941 as a Fisheries Development Branch of the Agricultural Department of the Colonial Office and a Senior Agricultural Officer was appointed to conduct a survey of the industry and its possibilities.

The headquarters was sited at Apese village and later at Onikan in Lagos, from where, assisted by a part-time voluntary officer, preliminary experiments in fish culture in brackish water ponds at Onikan were carried out and surveys were conducted on the canoe fisheries of Apese village and Kuramo waters around Victoria Island, Lagos. A small fisheries school was also established at Onikan. Early in 1945, the Fisheries Development branch  
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was temporarily transferred from the Agricultural Department to the Development Branch of the Secretariat. A Fisheries Development Officer was appointed and a Five-Year Plan for Fisheries Development was formulated and incorporated in the Ten-Year Plan of Development and Welfare in Nigeria, laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 13th December, 1945.

From this date to 1947, the Branch became a section of the Department of Commerce and Industries with a Principal Fisheries Officer in charge. In addition to the brackishwater fish culture experiments and canoe fisheries surveys, other activities were initiated. Small motor fishing crafts were acquired for exploratory fishing in the estuaries, lagoons and creeks. It was considered ' that these fisheries should receive priority treatment at this stage in Nigeria over sea fisheries'. This was in spite of the earlier reports on the fishing company which showed that suitable trawling grounds existed off Lagos at depths of 18-65m. Other activities undertaken included tests of rice growing in tidal mangrove swamps, where such an activity could be combined with fish farming, and improvements in the social conditions of the wholly fishermen populations of two small villages in Lagos. Between 1948 and 1950, major efforts were made at extending the artisanal fisheries programme to other coastal areas of Nigeria. An active extension service was established to demonstrate the benefits of improved fishing techniques and gear to the coastal canoe fishermen.

In addition, trawling surveys were undertaken in the vicinity of Lagos and Cameroon's and a sub-station was maintained at Opobo for several years before it was closed down due to lack of funds and personnel. A start was

also made in fish culture in inland areas by the construction of experimental ponds and the stocking of the then existing ponds and reservoirs.

A Fish Farmer was appointed to extend this aspect of production and this culminated in the establishment in 1951, of a 160ha industrial-scale fish farm at Panyam on the Jos Plateau. By the end of this period, the branch had grown to become the Federal Fisheries Services under the Federal Ministry of Economic Development. Between 1952 and 1957, the bulk of the marine biological research was performed by the West African Fisheries Research Institute (WAFRI) at Freetown, Sierra Leone; a unit was maintained at Birnin Kebbi to conduct research into the fisheries of River Sokoto. In consequence of Nigeria's and Ghana's withdrawal of their support, the WAFRI was disbanded with effect from 31st March 1957; the fisheries research activities of the Federal Fisheries Service were expanded to take care of this function.

Under the 1954 Constitution of Nigeria, the fisheries organisation was split between the Federal and Regional Governments. The Federal Fisheries Service of the Federal Ministry of Economic Department was headed by a Director with laboratories and headquarters in Lagos. The Western Region Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources was headed by a Principal Fisheries Officer. Its headquarters and offices were at Ibadan and a Sea Fisheries Section at Lagos, a Marketing and Distribution Section at Warri, Organisation and Inspectorate at Epe and Fish Culture Section at Ibadan and Asaba. The Eastern Region Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture was under the charge of a Principal Fisheries Officer and the headquarters at Aba and an outstation at Opobo. The Fisheries

Section of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Northern Region was under the

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charge of a Senior Fisheries Officer while the headquarters was located first at Baga and later at Malarnfatori, Lake Chad. In addition, the Northern Region Fish Farm at Panyam was placed under the administration of the Region's Ministry of Trade and Industry, and was under the charge of a resident Fish Farmer. The Federal Fisheries Service had the constitutional responsibility for fisheries development and research in the Lagos Federal Territory and research in any other part of the country where the Regional Government invited it to carry out any specific research activity.

In practice, however, the Western Region Sea Fisheries Section in Lagos, sited in the same compound as the Federal Fisheries Service, catered for all fishermen whatever their origin and whether they actually lived in Western Region Territory or in the Federal Territory. So the Federal Fisheries Service left all Lagos fisheries development work to the Western Region fisheries Division. It concerned itself, instead, with the development of the modern fishing vessels (trawlers) including their licensing; the planning of a fishing terminal for Lagos; and also with research. The Regions never requested Federal assistance towards research. They either tried to conduct research themselves or asked for international multilateral (FAO/UNDP) or bilateral (USAID) help.

Thus, the Federal Fisheries Service had to, on its own initiative, identify regional research needs and carry out what studies it felt were needed. On such initiatives, the Malarnfatori station was established on the Lake Chad; the Brackish water fish-farming project was developed at Buguma; and studies were initiated at the Kainji Dam site. The period 1956-66 witnessed great expansion in Nigeria's fishing activities. In the coastal trawler fleet, <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-agriculture-in-nigeria-from-the-colonial-era-to-the-present-day/>

from a single registered trawler in 1956, the fleet was built up, by 1960, to 13 while the total fish catch increased ten-fold during the period.

This level of production was sustained up to 1963 but catches fell in 1964-66, following heavier exploitation of the Lagos fishing grounds. By this period, however, commercial quantities of prawns had been discovered in the eastern parts of the country and many of the vessels converted to prawn fishing, thus reducing the pressure on the fish stock. By 1970, the fishstock had fully recovered and the expansion of inshore fishing activities was becoming so rapid that plans were then made to regulate fishing in order to conserve the rather limited resources. The period also saw a considerable increase in the artisanal fisheries.

This has been attributed to the concentration of fishing activities close to the rich grounds; higher money returns for efforts; general improvement in processing, storage and distribution methods; improvement in the type of fishing craft used and, especially, to the higher gear efficiency due to a complete changeover to synthetic fibre. The general result was that the contribution of fisheries to the country's QDP quadrupled between 1960 and 1970. Fisheries Service left all Lagos fisheries development work to the Western Region fisheries Division. It concerned itself, instead, with the development of the modern fishing vessels (trawlers) including their licensing; the planning of a fishing terminal for Lagos; and also with research.

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1970. Agricultural Development Since IndependenceThe 1962-1968 development plan was Nigeria's first national plan.