

Agriculture: Wealth, Health or Poverty Multiplier?

Ogbole Samson*

Soilless Farm Lab (Eupepsia Place Limited), Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:** Ogbole Samson, Soilless Farm Lab (Eupepsia Place Limited), Nigeria.

Received: March 04, 2020; **Published:** March 10, 2020

Agriculture employs the highest number of individuals - catering for well over 50% of the population, it employs highest number of females and responsible for about 20% of the GDP of the nation; but, the poorest and unhealthiest people in the country are farmers. Agriculture is one of the few sectors that can legitimately employ anyone irrespective of educational background. The need to ensure zero hunger, zero poverty, stop the impact of climate change and clean water all depends on agriculture, yet those responsible for agriculture are fighting under the weight of poverty and various diseases.

There is a need to find a way to ensure the lives of the farmers and work environment of farmers are improved as this will automatically ensure well over 50% of the population lives above the poverty line. In this piece, I will be discussing how we can ensure sustainable farmland yields healthy investment returns while providing broader economic, social and environmental benefits.

There is a need to change the mindset of farmers to see agriculture as a business beyond being custodian of parental values and inheritance. Many businesses and investments entail trade-offs between personal profits and wide-boundary costs by externalizing environmental, social or economic issues. However, using the triple bottom line, farmers will act as investors thus recognizing that some of the greatest returns are achieved when environmental, social and economic interests are aligned. Sustainable best-practices for managing farmland also reduces environmental pollution, enhances food quality and safety, and stimulates the local economy by creating quality jobs and keeping money spent on food within the local economy. Some things just make good sense. There is a need to teach local farmers how to manage farmland with best-practices that in addition to increasing profitability, yield the following benefits:

Environmental

There is a need to help the local farmers understand the impact of farming activities they currently practice in terms they understand. We would also have to show alternatives which won't be hard to adopt, it is not about bringing in high technologies but rather little technologies that won't cost much, and ease of usage for the farmer. These will help combat:

- **Climate change:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon dioxide.
- **Pollution:** Keep the air, water and soil clean and free of pesticides and fertilizers.
- **Land and water:** Develop healthy, rich soils to hold water and reduce the risk of flooding and erosion.
- **Biodiversity:** Native habitat restoration, crop rotation and smart landscaping to recover and encourage beneficial plants and wildlife.

Social

The farmer is the ultimate doctor in every society as the quality of food affects directly the quality of life in the area. There is also a need to have agriculture for the locals formalized as they are responsible for feeding the nation, especially at a time that the middle-class

farmers are disappearing. It will be important to create an insurance scheme, help them build a proper business model and also ensure the following:

- **Health:** Sustainable farming contributes to better diets, and more nutritious and safer food. We would have to find a way to formalize the market systems, storage and push for responsible consumer culture.
- **Justice:** The enhanced margins for local, organic food (due to price premiums or direct-to-consumer sales) support good farm jobs with fair pay and provide decent conditions for farm workers.
- **Policies:** The need to have policies that enables women to own land, create a tax break for farmers as enjoyed by larger conglomerates and have incentives for farmers beyond fertilizer distribution, wheelbarrow sharing, to real impact like access to irrigation, soil cover, cluster use of farm mechanization at a reduced cost without bottle necks to access such.

Economic

The growth of the economy will be directly dependent on the farmers push to move out of the poverty line considering it caters for over 50% of the population. The need for consumers to not discriminate against food, reduce food waste, create storage centers, push for urban farms as it is easier than asking for roads and transport to be sanitized:

- Return on investment: Local, organic food yields superior cash flow due to the production of abundant food with fewer costly inputs, plus organic and local price premiums.
- Green jobs: Local food systems create local job growth in an essential line of work.
- Multiplier effect: Replacing imports with local production keeps money circulating in the community.
- Food expenditures in the Nigeria are ~ \$1 billion per year.

If the livelihood of the farmer remains below the poverty line, the youths irrespective of the promotional videos, and push from the government won't still be enticing. Oil and gas, entertainment, banking and lots of other sectors don't need to break their backs to get youths interested in their sectors. The average age of the other sectors is well below 30, only in agriculture is the average age of the farmer 60, so if we remain with hoes and cutlasses, we would soon have to depend on food import despite the best effort by the government. Making agriculture sexy is the way out. Agriculture for the youths should be able to help them create wealth, health and secure a future!.

Volume 6 Issue 4 April 2020

©All rights reserved by Ogbole Samson.