

NATURAL RESOURCES UTILIZATION — MAKING MORE LANDS AVAILABLE FOR NIGERIA'S GREEN REVOLUTION*

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INTRODUCTION

IN this address, one initially finds it conceivable to define 'natural resources' simply as endowments of nature. But in this fast-moving 20th century, when man's mastery over his environment has widened considerably, such a definition may be considered too simplistic to be adequate for the purpose at hand. Consequently, a more inclusive and perhaps more adequate conception of natural resources may be that which defines them as resources 'which exist in nature' and over which humans have exercised some authority of management and control.

In addition to products of agricultural enterprises such as livestock, fishes, forest products and wildlife, occupation which have emanated from the existence of natural resources include hunting, lumbering and ranching. In this context, the list of natural resources include aesthetic beauties such as sand beaches, skislopes, rocks and mountains. But perhaps the greatest and most valuable natural resources in existence are MAN and LAND. Together, both have 'established' a relationship which has endured since time immemorial.

MAN AND LAND IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

One of the oldest concepts since the creation of man is the concept of land. Man's dependence on land is almost if not wholly total for food, raw materials, clothing and shelter. It is a universal phenomenon that in all human societies, land is the basis for any social and economic interaction.

A working definition of 'land' regards it as 'the surface part of the earth above
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the sea.' Although this definition appears to ignore the useful submarine features such as the continental shelf and oyster beds, nevertheless it adequately serves our purpose.

Within this definition, a number of land forms exist such as swamps, flood plains, lake shores, and coastlines which constitute wet lands, while highlands, valleys, rocky outcrops, rolling plains and arid features make up dry land.

Historically, the great river valleys have played significant roles in attracting various human groups during the early stages of migration stimulated by the adoption of agriculture as the primary activity of man.

It is notable that the highlands and swamps provided refuge for various human groups during the process of intergroup competition for land. It is also notable that the high plains of the geographical northern parts of Nigeria have supported most of the pastoral life and grain crops farming.

In common with most human societies, land is of fundamental importance within man's economic activities. This importance lies not in its mere existence *per se*, but in its value to society; its degree of utilization. That is why immediately man exercises rights of use over land, issues relating to land tenure start to emerge.

In such a predominantly agrarian society like Nigeria, the significance attached to land is pervasive. Its importance reflects in the kind of social, political and economic organisations which prevail in the different Nigerian communities.

In the process of such organisations and reorganisations, a gamut of complex sets of relationships evolve. These relationships are interpersonal, inter-ethnic

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and inter-societal if not 'inter-territorial.' These relationships were established for security purposes, that is, to limit, regulate and control individual rights of access to land. The emerging rules specified in no uncertain terms what an individual or group could or could not do with land. Sanctions were imposed on whoever violated these rules.

Nigeria is comprised of hundreds of ethnic groups where ownership of land depends on being affiliated to an identifiable group or community. Since there is no Nigerian without this affiliation, it follows that at least in theory, there should be no landless Nigerian. In fact however, it would be more correct to say that *there is no land in Nigeria without an owner.*

As the Nigerian society becomes more complex both in organisation and in the visible manifestation of the effects of modernization or economic development, friction and sometimes violent clashes on land issues arise between communities, families and individuals throughout the country. Because of this, it often became a nightmare trying to obtain land in Nigeria, particularly where land feuds were endemic.

This stresses the point that in Nigeria, as in most of the world's poor countries, land is a major, sensitive asset which must be fully brought into planning and decision-making process.

This is essential in order to develop realistic model of landmanagement which would ensure that Nigeria's lands are used to benefit all Nigerian citizens. These statements hold, with even stronger force for Nigeria's crop and livestock farmers. This is because for this occupational group, land constitutes their major input. Most Nigerian farmers utilize rural land which to them is not just a factor of production but also represents an entire biotic complex. To the Nigerian farmer, land is his home and work place, the sym-

bol of life, the very quintessence of this existence and as he fervently believes 'man belongs to the land and not land to man.'

Viewed in this manner, it is more appropriate to attribute ownership in the Nigerian context to a generation continuum so that in the words of a Yoruba chief in 1912, the land belongs to 'a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless members are still unborn.'

Having this in mind, the notion of individual ownership of land has been considered a foreign anathema in Nigeria's traditional laws and customs, land belonging to the community, village or family and never to the individual; what every individual has or should have is equal access to land. Consequently, no individual citizen is normally allowed to alienate, hoard or claim exclusive ownership right to land. Later in the process of development however, the society advances and land users become more aware of the potential value of land. Land in that state becomes an object of considerable monetary gain.

The important submission in this section of the paper is that each human society works out complex arrangements for dealing with problems which arise with land ownership and use rights. The Nigerian society has been no exception. Therefore in trying to understand the problems, a researcher must be aware of the social, economic, political, historical, legal and changing technological factors which may subtly be at the roots of land problems.

LAND AVAILABILITY IN NIGERIA

The entire Nigerian territory covers an area of 98.3 million hectares or 356.670 square miles (923,775 sq km). Out of this total land area, it is estimated that 74.0 million hectares are cultivable. But less

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than 50 per cent of the latter is actually being cultivated. The figure for cultivated land as percentage of cultivable land in Nigeria is 44.83 per cent as compared with 90 per cent in the United Kingdom, 58 per cent in the United States, and 75.0 per cent in India. With a total land of 98.3 million hectares, and an assumption of 70 million people, there is an average of 1.4-1.5 hectares per caput of Nigerian population.

Table 1 shows that even this low figure has never been achieved in Nigeria in terms of estimated available arable land per capita.

TABLE 1:

Estimated Available Arable Land (hectares per Capita) In Nigeria, 1961—1970

<i>Year</i>	<i>Readily Available Arable Land per capita</i>
1961	1.391
1962	1.356
1963	1.322
1964	1.290
1965	1.258
1966	1.227
1967	1.198
1968	1.168
1969	1.135
1970	1.104

Source: Federal Republic of Nigeria Second National Development Plan 1970—74, Lagos 1970.

The usual assumptions in calculating figures in Table 1 are that 10 per cent of the land area are in forest reserves, and 15 per cent are in permanent pastures. In addition to these, 34.8 per cent of land is under arable and permanent crops so that about 40.5 per cent represents the area that can be brought into use. These and

the situation portrayed in table 1 underline the fact that Nigeria's lands are presently underutilized for agricultural purposes. If one considers in addition the land requirements for various livestock (8,263 million cattle, 18.099 million sheep, 23.146 million goats, 0.505 million pigs and 122.437 million poultry in 1974/75), then it is possible to postulate the necessity for tackling problems of land utilization in order to meet the target of self sufficiency that is the current objectives of Nigeria's Green Revolution.

The opposite question is: why is Nigeria's lands underutilized? The solution has not been as simplistic as the question seems but a review of the constraints to availability of lands in Nigeria holds a relevant attraction.

VARIATION IN POPULATION DENSITIES IN NIGERIA

While it seems apparent that cultivable land in Nigeria exists in abundance, yet one factor that militates against full utilization is the uneven distribution of the land in terms of population density. For instance, while Lagos State is said to be the mostly dense-populated (1375 persons per square mile), even more so than Imo (953) and Anambra (794), Gongola has 569, Plateau (252) while Niger State (190) was indicated as having the lowest population density in the country. The implication of uneven distribution of land resources — both quantitatively — in terms of population is that while certain areas are advantaged in terms of higher amount (and possibly better quality) of land, other areas experience land shortage.

In terms of meeting future requirements therefore, the need is to raise the level of agricultural technology through selective mechanisation particularly accelerated clearing of thick bush.

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A less probable solution lies in a deliberate effort to redistribute population in order to even out the unequal distribution of land. But political realities in Nigeria may tend to make this an unworkable proposition.

The demographic, physical, climatic and edaphic (soil) factors discussed in this section give credence as to why less than 50 per cent of Nigeria's agricultural lands are being used for food crop production or mixed farming. Despite the sometimes severe limitations imposed by these factors, agriculture is still the primary occupation of Nigerians and still claims prominence among at least 75 per cent of the Nigerian population.

While efficiency in land use and equity in the distribution of land resources are mostly desired, it should not be forgotten that the existence of limitations have the tendency of reducing further the amounts of land either already committed or available to be committed to agriculture.

The most feasible long term solution to the problems discussed above is to understand the various factors (demographic, physical, climatic and edaphic) as they exist and prevail in various forms in all the States. The factors should then be related to the ecosystem within the entire biotic complex. These are likely to provide the basic facts as a preamble to planning for effective utilization of Nigeria's land resources.

LAND AVAILABILITY AND THE GREEN REVOLUTION

The Green Revolution, postulated as a policy towards achieving self-sufficiency in food production in Nigeria within the next few years, poses a challenge: that of making more lands available for crops and livestock production at the initial stage, and providing the relevant supporting systems to sustain the expected higher levels of production.

With regards to land, there is little about that all States have to expand land allocation in the food sub-sector. Although figures are hard to come by, estimates of land allocation to the food subsector in the Third Development Plan, 1975—80 are shown on Table 2.

TABLE 2:
Land Allocation to the Food Sub-Sector
in the 1975—80 Plan.

<i>States</i>	<i>Amount of land allocation (acres)</i>
Oyo, Ondo, Ogun	761,100
Benue, Plateau	64,250
Imo, Anambra	163,000
Kwara	227,000
Lagos	40,750
Bendel	109,300
Kaduna	80,000
Rivers	64,000
Cross River	66,400
Borno, Bauchi, Gongola	66,400
Sokoto, Niger	n.a
Kano	225,350

Source: The States' Third National Development Plans 1975—1980.
n.a. = not available

Although the ambitious plans for increasing areas of land use in the States during 1975—80 are as shown in Table 2, the degree of achievement in terms of amount of lands actually used is not known.

What is however known is that numerous factors interact to limit the amount of lands actually used for agriculture in many parts of the nineteen states in Nigeria. These factors may be considered as pressure-generating factors on Nigeria's land use.

1. At least 80 per cent of Nigerians live in rural areas. Even with the much talked about migration, it is clear that the future stability of Nigeria's agricultural economy depends on the future of rural areas. In the latter, the need for land at every growing season is a reflection on the increasing demand for more land, a situation that is more serious in areas of land concentration.
2. The advent of wealthy capitalists, or the 'petty bourgeoisie' class on the agricultural scene, following a series of events from the spate of retirements from the civil service in Nigeria has meant that large areas of land in many parts of the country have 'gone commercial' while many small farmers have suffered land deprivation. Further, in Cross River, Bendel and Ogun States, plantation agriculture has tended to draw the rural labour force away from other forms ('subsistence') of agriculture.
3. Although we mentioned earlier that 10 per cent of Nigeria's lands are in forest reserves, forestry plays a dual role in land use. As a restorer of the ecological balance, forestry arrests aridity. But as a competitor for land, forestry constitutes a pressure generating factor by obstructing food cropping when land is withdrawn from the latter, or when stumping makes food crop production difficult. This incidence is becoming a significant factor in Oyo and Ogun States in particular.
4. Existence of thick, almost impenetrable natural jungles means that high costs are involved to clear them. Relative inaccessibility and ecological limitations make dense natural forests unsuitable for farming. These have effectively put a limit on amount of cultivated lands in Bendel, Rivers, Cross River,

Anambra, Benue, Kwara, Ondo, Ogun and Lagos States.

5. The existence of water shortage during the growing seasons in many States puts pressure upon existing land use. In the attempt to combat this incidence, many States have resorted to irrigation. Further, the River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA) have been established as the executing agencies for irrigation and water resources programmes of the Federal Government.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that States such as Kano and Borno could possess more active farms, but for the arid conditions. Apart from these, perennial or seasonal water shortages-caused by rapid run-offs or high evapotranspiration-occur in Anambra, Imo, Oyo, Niger and Kwara States which experience reasonably high rainfall.

6. Urbanization and industrialization programmes often serve to attract the attention of prospective young farmers. This is a major part of the migration picture, as the urban-industrial centres draw labour from the land and more output is required from dwindling agricultural land.

One of the consequences is the high cost of labour which has become prohibitive for the average Nigerian farmer.

A feasible solution lies in raising the level of investments in farming, that is, making farming more capital intensive. In addition, the proliferation of cooperatives as well as embarking on bold programmes of modernising the rural areas are vital. In this context, such programmes include electrification, better infrastructure of roads and water supply, school,

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health as well as recreational facilities.

The rural-urban migration should not be considered as an irreversible process in Nigeria. Rather, it should be perceived as a reaction to the incidence of dwindling opportunities in land. It symptomises the disadvantages of rural life.

The virile young labour force that desert rural areas mention the following as part of the causative factors:

- poor information and communications
- absence of essential facilities
- excessive drudgery of routine living
- sense of isolation and neglect.

Removing the causative factors is a better prescription than a mounted campaign to 'go back to the land.'

7. Non-agricultural uses of land follows closely the above (6). Non-agricultural purposes continue to encroach upon available agricultural land in Nigeria.

Although industrialization generates demand for more agricultural products and should lead to concentrated use of land, and latter together with labour and capital resources are continually withdrawn from the rural sector.

With the existence of Nigeria's urban centres, and the growing needs of the 19 state capitals for urban housing and business purposes limited availability of agricultural lands are likely to persist.

One cannot but mention the Abuja phenomenon in this regard. Here one sees it in the context of withdrawing 8,000 sq. km. of good agricultural land for largely urban purposes. Well over 90 per

cent of the new F.C.T. is taken from Niger State.* Whether agriculture will be practiced in Abuja, what type of agriculture and to what significance, remains to be seen.

8. The effects of mining operations have increased in Nigeria. There is coal in Anambra State, Tin in Plateau State, Limestone in Ogun, Sokoto, Anambra, Cross River, Bendel, Kwara and Benue States. These often have adverse effects on local agricultural land.

In the oil areas of Rivers State, this writer observed some of the worst effects of oil extraction on local farmlands — in Bomu near Alesa-Elеме, One, Omoku and Ahoada, among others. As more minerals are found and worked, it is conceivable to expect that more agricultural lands will be affected. This means that prudent, long term land planning is required.

The practice of allowing mined lands to fall into complete neglect and disuse is to be discountenanced for a policy that restores such lands into agriculture.

*A research designed to study the effects of Abuja on Niger State has just been announced.

IMPLICATIONS OF LAND PROBLEMS: LAND USE ACT AND THE GREEN REVOLUTION

IT may be submitted, following the above considerations that the facilitation of easy access to land, and the continued security of that access for a prolonged period of economic activity are the salient elements of land availability in Nigeria.

But with the existence of aforementioned issues, problems and pressure-generating factors conditioning land use

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and availability in Nigeria, the result has been the emergence of an array of practical bottle-necks in the path of the Nigerian land user. These have constrained land supply from the human standpoint.

These human factors are *ignorance, illiteracy* and *poverty*. As a result of the existence of these human factors, vast areas of Nigeria's lands remain unused, much of what is used is really abused and 'mined' without paying attention to conservative practices, and much land is wasted.

If the Green Revolution-in the Nigerian context of a policy designed to achieve and maintain self-sufficiency in food and animal production is to be achieved in the near future, then access to land must not only be made available, its security must also be guaranteed.

In recent times, efforts were made to attempt a restructure of the man-land relationship in Nigeria so as to remove most of the inconsistencies within the existing land tenure systems in Nigeria and provide a single frame for all land use/ownership. We refer to the Land Use Act (No.6) of 1978.

The unique features of the Act are as follows:

1. In one fell swoop, landlordism-tenancy was abolished and ownership of all lands were vested in State Governments.
2. As a result of (1), powers of granting use rights and collecting rents therefrom were abolished.
3. The Act made provisions for Nigerians to acquire statutory rights from urban areas and occupancy rights from local governments.
4. Grant of statutory rights of occupancy by State Governors entitles a citizen to only 0.5 hectare. Customary right of occupancy

may be granted by local governments to individuals or organisations for purposes of agriculture, residence and others. Customary grants are limited to 500 hectares for agricultural (crop) purposes and 5000 hectares for livestock ranching (beef and dairy cattle, sheep, goats).

5. Administrative and supervisory functions of the Act are performed by the Land Use Allocation Committee in the urban areas and the Land Allocation Advisory Committee in the rural areas.
6. Rights of occupancy whether statutory or customary are revocable by the Governor. The rights are non-fragmentable, non-divisible, non-transferrable without authorization, and inheritable with all the obligations. The latter includes payments for unexhausted improvements in previous usage as well as payment of a fixed and adjustable rent.
7. State Governors and appropriate Local Government Councils can approve mortgaging of these rights.
8. The Act empowers the Governor to issue certificates of occupancy and to levy rents, impose penalties, extend, curtail or even waive conditions that pertain to statutory rights of occupancy in the urban areas.
9. The Act was predicated upon the basic concept of 'public purpose' or 'overriding public interest.' This principle justifies compulsory acquisition by the State for 'public purpose', the latter being lands required for LGA, State or Federal Government purposes, lands required for mineral exploitation, and for uses which have developmental inten-

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tions such as building hospitals, schools, barracks, and so on. Land users are to be compensated.

10. Penalty for breaking provisions of the Act was put at ₦5,000 fine or one year imprisonment.
11. Operations of the Land Use Act are not subject to the power of a court of law although provisions are made for appeal to an arbitration tribunal.
12. Having been enshrined into the Nigerian Constitution provisions of the Land Use Act are not easily amended or expunged. This can only occur under the strict conditions of constitutional amendment, that is those stipulated under section 9 (2) or the Constitution.

That section stated that in order to change any part of the constitution, an Act must be supported by not less than two thirds majority in either House of the National Assembly. Further, the Act to change it must be approved by resolution of the Houses of Assembly of not less than two-thirds of all the States.

In examining the above 12 of the features and stipulations of the Act, the intention was to solve the following tenure-related problems:

- security of tenure
- lack of uniformity in user right code
- fragmentation of landholdings
- excessive subdivision of land
- non-provision of land for non State indigenes
- interminable litigations
- dubious land titles
- fraudulent land practices
- absentee landlordism
- excessive land rents

These problems appear solved on paper. In practice, however, much controversy rages as to the workability of the Act and the desirability of introducing a 'socialists' measure into a patently 'capitalist' society. It however remains for economists, planners, real estate agents and other social analysts to make a continuous study and assessment of the conduct and performance of the 1978 Land Use Act in terms of its effectiveness and capability to deal with the problems.

a recent (1980-81) study of the workings of the Act with respect to functions of the L.U.A.C. in some urban areas and the L.A.A.C in some rural areas of Kaduna and Kano States revealed that the Act would have worked better if adequate groundwork had been provided before its enactment.

For instance, allocation of land for the cases examined was found to be skewed in favour of the elite group and against the lowest socio-economic cadre. The workings of the Act appeared to have in fact, been 'neutral' to the performance of agricultural activities of the farmers.

While the Act purportedly leaves the smallholder-farmer unhindered it is difficult to expect the situation to remain so, considering the nature of the Nigerian society, and the dynamic socio-economic, political and administrative structures under a note sounded earlier on the human factor.

To reiterate on that note, we shall make a three-fold concluding submission. *Firstly*, the extent to which man exploits land is largely determined by the extent to which he is conscious or made conscious of his natural environment, the land available, alternative uses for his land, existing technology and extent of his rights (tenure) to use that land.

It is a fact that the Nigerian land user operates under massive ignorance of unknowns. Hence, there should be education about the interrelated nature of land use. Nigerians must be made aware of the

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importance of human relationships that have developed among Nigerian communities over the centuries as the individuals gain access to land. Nigerians need to appreciate the need, therefore, to both preserve and conserve land for future generations.

Secondly, the more literate a society is, the better information is disseminated and ideas are communicated. With the advent of U.P.E. and other opportunities for reading, counting, writing and measuring, more Nigerians should kill ignorance and become more aware of the potentiality of Nigeria's land resources. Documentation and research are, of course, essential aids to understanding this potential. Even educated officials need to be 'literate' in land data research, interpretation and analysis.

Thirdly, many Nigerians are too poor to pay for rights to acquire a square metre of land, whatever provisions the Land Use Act may have made. Further, this poverty is aggravated as the services of a surveyor are beyond the reach of an average Nigerian — in terms of paying for such services. Thus poverty does not enable the land holder to put his land to the best possible use.

The dimensions of poverty in land matters are: it 'offers' opportunity to land speculators to dispossess subsistence farmers, it attracts potential farmers away to urban centre, resulting in higher cost of farm labour; and it perpetuates itself, that is, the poor remains basically poor.

The call is therefore for a concerted and rational land policy which would provide for equitable distribution of Nigeria's land resources in the 1980s.

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