Growing the Agriculture Sector in Nigeria

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A Report of the CSIS GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
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Introduction

The administration of Muhammadu Buhari took office in Nigeria in May 2015 against a backdrop of mounting economic crisis. Just one year earlier, Nigeria had overtaken South Africa to become the continent’s biggest economy, but optimism quickly faded as oil prices fell and production declined due to renewed militant activities in the Niger Delta. The resulting economic slowdown, which was confirmed as a recession in the summer of 2016, focused minds on the long-neglected task of reducing Nigeria’s reliance on the petroleum sector, which accounts for 11 percent of GDP but 95 percent of the nation’s export revenue. Included in the election manifesto that brought President Buhari and his All Progressives Congress (APC) to power was a pledge to move the economy away from oil, in part by reviving the agriculture sector.

There are good reasons for the administration to focus on agriculture. First, it is a sector with high growth prospects, particularly if value chains can be developed that turn raw commodities into processed goods for domestic consumption or export. Second, although agriculture already employs more than 70 percent of the population, there are opportunities to expand both the number and variety of jobs in the sector by making it easier and more attractive to farm. In addition, by diversifying the agriculture sector, it can be made more appealing to a vast youth population that is turned off by farming but might be attracted to processing, marketing, and other business opportunities along the value chain. Third, the Buhari administration is keen to become more self-sufficient in food to prevent increasingly scarce foreign exchange leaving the country to buy commodities that can be produced at home. Finally, the food emergency in northeast Nigeria brought on by the Boko Haram insurgency and the government’s response to it has underlined the importance of expanding the agriculture sector in order to advance food security and nutrition.

While the rationale for prioritizing agriculture is sound, many reforms will have to be enacted if the sector is to flourish. This paper examines some of the missing ingredients, looks at what Nigeria and its international partners are doing to try to provide them, and profiles some promising new agricultural initiatives in both the public and private sectors.

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The Situation Today

Previous essays in this series have traced the demise of Nigeria’s agriculture sector from independence to the present day, and looked at the initial steps taken to revive agricultural production under the Goodluck Jonathan administration. President Buhari and his minister of agriculture and rural development, Audu Ogbeh, inherited a strategy—the Agricultural Transformation Agenda—that provided a platform to build upon. In particular, the ATA sought to reorient agriculture from a development activity centered on the smallholder farmer to a more dynamic, profit-driven enterprise that connected the farmer to a value chain of processors, distributors, and retailers. One of the signature initiatives of former agriculture minister (and current president of the African Development Bank), Akinwunmi Adesina, was to reform and streamline the agricultural input system to ensure that farmers received subsidized fertilizer in a timely fashion via credits delivered to their mobile phones. The Growth Enhancement Support (GES) scheme succeeded in reaching more farmers, but the quantities of fertilizer delivered to recipients were inadequate and corruption continued to bedevil the program.

The prominence of agriculture in the APC manifesto created high expectations that the Buhari administration would take swift action. Instead, it took a full year for the new government to make a significant policy announcement. When it finally came, in June 2016, the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) sensibly emphasized the importance of continuing and building upon the efforts of the previous administration. However, while the APP provided a lengthy and convincing analysis of the problems in the agriculture sector, the solutions it proposed were short on detail. Furthermore, public statements on the importance of agriculture have not been matched by financial commitments. The proportion of the federal budget allocated to agriculture was only 1.25 percent in 2016, far short of the 10 percent budget commitment made at the 2003 African Union summit in Maputo. The lack of sustained financial commitment to agriculture is mirrored at the subnational level, where few of Nigeria’s 36 states have prioritized the sector.

Barriers to a More Productive Agriculture Sector

In an attempt to understand the main barriers that prevent Nigeria’s agriculture sector from becoming an engine for economic transformation, job growth, and food security, CSIS visited Nigeria in the summer of 2016 to interview a range of agricultural experts. They included government officials, donor representatives, staff from UN organizations, agricultural researchers, business leaders, and farmers. Information from these interviews—

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and analysis of the APP and previous Nigerian policy documents—suggests that the following roadblocks deserve most urgent attention:

- **Uncompetitive environment for agribusiness.** The structural impediments that damage other sectors of Nigeria’s economy and make it uncompetitive in global markets are particularly harmful to agribusiness. They include an unreliable power supply, dilapidated irrigation systems, overcrowded ports, and poor roads. For example, it takes an average of 6–8 days to move a truckload of tomatoes along the country’s main transport corridor, from Jibiya in the far north to Lagos in the southwest. Unless the cargo is refrigerated—and invariably it is not—it will perish before reaching Lagos port. On top of these infrastructure deficits are governance shortfalls—an abundance of bureaucracy, corruption, overlapping responsibilities between the three tiers of government, and unclear policies including, for example, a constantly shifting list of items that are prohibited from being imported. The World Food Programme (WFP) encountered many of these problems when it returned to Nigeria in 2016 after a hiatus to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the northeast. It found that its desire to procure local commodities was thwarted by high prices and policy confusion. According to a WFP procurement specialist, the cost of 1 metric ton of rice was $1,100 in Nigeria, compared with less than $500 in Cameroon. Palm oil produced in the south-south region of Nigeria cost $1,800MT, while vegetable oil from Cameroon was $1,400MT. In addition, UN organizations involved in the relief effort were experiencing delays of up to 10 weeks in importing emergency commodities because Nigerian customs officials were trying to levy taxes on them, in violation of an official understanding that they were duty-free.

- **Poor inputs.** Access to quality inputs remains a major challenge for farmers, despite—even because of—the GES scheme and other efforts. A survey carried out by NOI Polls Ltd in November 2016 found that lack of fertilizer was the biggest barrier faced by farmers in their operations, with 61 percent of interviewees citing it as their number one concern. Nigeria does not produce enough fertilizer to meet its needs and restrictions placed on the transport of urea-based fertilizer, due to fears it was being repurposed into explosives by Boko Haram, have hampered distribution. Seed availability is another significant problem for farmers. The research pipeline for new seed varieties is broken, and poor quality or counterfeit seed has flooded the market in the absence of a functioning regulatory system. Low rates of access to mechanical farm tools such as tractors and crop sprayers prevent farmers from utilizing their labor and their land efficiently. Land access itself is an enduring problem because of insecure tenure and harmful policies at the local level that limit the rights of nonindigenes. Nigeria scored poorly for its land governance policies in a 2017 survey of the business climate for agriculture, conducted by the World Bank. Of the 62

- **Poor market access.** In too many parts of Nigeria, farmers simply do not have access to a market for their goods due to underdeveloped value chains. For example, fields lie fallow in Katsina State not because nothing can be grown there but because the dearth of nearby processing facilities means that the market for produce is limited to the immediate surroundings. The absence of adequate storage facilities for their goods means many farmers face the choice of selling immediately after harvest when prices are at their lowest or allowing their produce to rot. The APP notes that Nigeria’s estimated demand for tomatoes is 2.2 million tons per year. While annual production is 1.5 million tons, almost half—0.7 million tons—is lost postharvest.\footnote{Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, “The Agriculture Promotion Policy, 2016–20,” June 2016, 9, https://www.tralac.org/images/docs/10154/nigeria-agriculture-promotion-policy-2016-2020.pdf.} The head of a U.S. social enterprise working to boost agriculture in Nigeria observed that “when it comes to food, Nigeria doesn’t have a production problem, it has a processing problem.”\footnote{Interview with founder and CEO of U.S.-based social enterprise working in Nigeria, Washington, DC, July 13, 2016.} Export markets remain underdeveloped, partly because Nigerian agricultural goods are uncompetitive and do not meet international phytosanitary standards.

- **Access to credit.** Nigerian banks are wary of extending loans to farmers. In the survey conducted by NOI Polls, 35 percent of farmers cited access to credit as the main barrier to their operations. In the south-south geopolitical zone, the figure was 59 percent.\footnote{Poll of 1,000 Nigerians, conducted on the week of October 31, 2016. For more details, see NOI Polls, “Nigeria’s Agricultural Sector Still Dominated by Subsistence Farming; as Farmers Call for More Support.”} Loans to the agriculture sector account for only 1.4 percent of total bank lending.\footnote{Kay Ugwuede, “NIRSAL guarantees over N61bn loans to agriculture,” *Business Day*, July 29, 2016, http://www.businessdayonline.com/nirsal-guarantees-over-n61bn-loans-to-agriculture/.} Nigeria has undertaken several initiatives to try to promote more lending to the agriculture sector, notably the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL), launched by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2013, which guarantees loans extended to farmers and offers rebates to recipients who pay back the money on time. However, the ongoing recession has choked lending and by September 2016 the average interest rate of loans to the agriculture sector had risen to 26 percent.\footnote{Marcel Mbamalu, “Agric, Others Suffer Setback as Lending Rates Favour Governments,” *The Guardian*, October 31, 2016, http://guardian.ng/news/agric-others-suffer-setback-as-lending-rates-favour-governments/.

- **Lukewarm political commitment.** Too often, Nigerian governments have offered rhetorical support for agriculture as a tool of economic diversification but failed to implement policies or provide budgets to match their ambitions. Legislation aimed at improving the enabling environment for agriculture has sat in the National Assembly, sometimes for years, without finding its way into law. One U.S. embassy official
suggested that as many as 15 relevant bills were awaiting approval. They include a bill that would allow private-sector development of the railways, thereby removing a serious impediment to the movement of goods; and a bill to introduce a regulatory system for fertilizer.

- **Neglected agricultural research system.** Nigeria’s agricultural research system, the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, has stagnated and become disconnected from the priorities of Nigerian farmers. The system has been starved of federal funding and become overly reliant on foreign donor funds.

The Buhari administration’s agriculture policy, the APP, identifies most—if not all—of these issues, and sets out a broad agenda to tackle them in order to achieve the twin objectives of becoming self-sufficient in food and developing vibrant export markets. Its proposals include developing domestic value chains for commodities like rice, wheat, maize, and soya beans; strengthening agricultural export markets for products including cocoa, cassava, oil palm, and sesame; providing a better enabling environment for agricultural development by improving infrastructure, designing clearer policies, and improving working relationships between the tiers of government; and providing better inputs, tools, and training that allow farmers to increase their yields.

It is important to note that government attempts to stimulate the agriculture sector can only advance Nigeria part way along the road toward economic transformation. A truly dynamic agriculture sector will only grow if the private sector takes the lead, as the APP acknowledges. However, some of the Buhari administration’s actions hint at government reluctance to cede space to the private sector. Notably, the e-wallet scheme to distribute subsidized fertilizer directly to farmers was revived in September 2016. By reinstalling the government to the position of major purchaser and distributor of fertilizer, the decision was likely to act as a disincentive to private-sector innovation and improvement.

**U.S. Engagement on Agriculture**

U.S. engagement on agriculture has sought to incentivize Nigeria’s shift toward a more market-driven approach. Indeed, the marquee policy toward Nigeria is called MARKETS II, an acronym for Maximizing Revenue and Key Enterprises in Targeted Sites. The five-year, $60.5 million program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), works primarily with smallholder farmers, seeking ways to improve their productivity and profits. It does this by providing inputs, improved technologies, and training to farmers and linking them to markets for their produce. MARKETS II focuses on five agricultural value chains: cocoa, cassava, rice, sorghum, and aquaculture. It also has a secondary interest in developing

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16 Figure current as of August 2016. Interview with chief of party of U.S.-funded development project in Nigeria, U.S. Embassy Abuja, August 1, 2016.
18 An earlier phase of MARKETS operated from 2005–10, with a total budget of $52 million. A 14-month-long “bridge” project filled the gap between MARKETS and MARKETS II. The project, which ran from January 2011 to April 2012, had a budget of $9.5 million.
soybean and maize as a source of fish feed for its aquaculture value chain. The value chain approach means engaging with a broader set of players beyond individual farmers—including processors, credit organizations, suppliers, and transporters.

MARKETS II is aligned with Feed the Future, the global hunger and food security initiative established by President Obama in 2010. However, Nigeria is not one of Feed the Future’s 19 focus countries, even though its budget is larger than most fully fledged Feed the Future partners. This means MARKETS II is not subject to the vigorous reporting requirements that require Feed the Future programs to work in specific country regions and achieve demanding targets to reduce poverty and stunting. As a result, MARKETS II has been able to operate in a wide geographic area but has not been able to generate the detailed data that helps prove its impact. The program has operated in 25 of Nigeria’s 36 states and, at the time of its mid-term review in 2015, calculated that it had reached 691,000 rural households with agriculture or food security assistance, or both.

With MARKETS II scheduled to end in 2017, there is an opportunity to review and refresh the approach to agricultural development in Nigeria. Changes appear to be on the horizon. The country team is coming under pressure from officials in Washington to become a more traditional Feed the Future program by focusing on fewer states that present the most compelling targets of opportunity. Kaduna, Kebbi, Plateau, and Akwa Ibom states are among the potential candidates suggested by U.S. officials. There are also suggestions that the Nigeria program will work even more closely with the private sector, where most of the dynamic activity in Nigerian agriculture takes place. Under this approach, future engagement with the government would be through public-private partnerships only. In addition, officials are looking to pivot toward the northeast and link agricultural development more closely with efforts to increase food security. A livelihoods program run by USAID in two northwestern states, Sokoto and Kebbi, where malnutrition rates rival those in the northeast, offers a potential model to emulate. The program has worked with some of the poorest farmers, using a mixture of cash transfers and technical assistance to increase agricultural productivity and generate income.

Promising Approaches

Nigeria is a large and diverse country that defies easy characterization. While it is true that the agriculture sector is underperforming and that good policies often fail to translate into good practice, there are plenty of ongoing activities and potential projects—both at the federal and state levels—that offer reason for optimism. The following examples illustrate the diverse range of innovations being deployed by the Nigerian private sector, government, and foreign partners to address some of the main barriers to productivity outlined above:

19 In addition, Nigeria benefits from a Feed the Future West Africa program that seeks to increase regional trade in staple crops and livestock, build regional agricultural capacity, and promote resilient agricultural practices.
21 Interviews with USAID and MARKETS II staff, Abuja, August 1, 2016.
• Expanding market access through the Nigeria Expanded Trade and Transport Project (NEXTT). The NEXTT Project, run by USAID, has focused on increasing business opportunities along the Lagos-Kano-Jabiya corridor, Nigeria’s most important internal transport route. The project has taken practical steps to increase traffic flow along the route, which suffers from chronic congestion. Limited capacity at Lagos port means that trucks clog the southern stretch of the route, causing traffic jams stretching as far as Ibadan, almost 100 miles north. One of the solutions has been to work with the Ministry of Transport on a tender to build truck stops so that vehicles awaiting entry to Lagos port can pull off the road rather than blocking it for other users. NEXTT has also provided seed funding and consultancy services to businesses seeking to establish themselves along the corridor. The majority of beneficiaries have been agribusinesses, including a company that makes starch from cassava for use in beer making and export-driven companies producing cocoa, ginger, and cashew. The chief of party is bullish about the opportunities, explaining that “We depend on a proactive private sector and people come to us. There are more than enough entrepreneurs here.”

• Securing credit for farmers: Anchor Borrowers’ Program (ABP) and capitalization of Nigeria’s Bank of Agriculture. The Nigerian government has undertaken several promising initiatives intended to stimulate and increase the flow of credit to farmers, both large and small. The Anchor Borrowers’ Scheme, introduced in 2015 by the CBN, has tried to incentivize domestic production of rice and wheat, two agricultural commodities that have traditionally been imported in huge quantities. The ABP seeks to incentivize smallholder production by providing loans of up to 250,000 Naira (equivalent to $800 at the time of publication) at competitive rates of interest (9 percent per year), to be used to buy agricultural inputs. In addition to advancing credit, the ABP seeks to link farmers to processors, such as rice millers, to ensure that producers have a guaranteed market for their product. The scheme is still in its early stages and has set itself very demanding—arguably unattainable—goals that include increasing the share of agricultural loans as a percentage of overall bank loans to 7 percent, dramatically increasing the utilization of rice mills, which currently work at around 50 percent capacity; reaching 1 million farmers; and creating 2 million jobs across the value chain. However, observers are hopeful that the scheme will make a positive contribution. An Abuja-based agricultural entrepreneur said the ABP has potential and applauded the program for being market-driven, making its financing decisions based not on a predetermined budget but on a needs assessment of the farmer and the potential market for his production.

Other initiatives to extend credit to farmers include the decision, in December 2016, to recapitalize the state-run Bank of Agriculture with 1 trillion Naira with the objective of extending loans to 25 million farmers at interest rates fixed at a ceiling of 10 percent.

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22 Interview with NEXTT chief of party, U.S. embassy Abuja, August 1, 2016.
23 Using the official exchange rate of 314 Naira to the dollar, accessed on February 17, 2017.
25 Interview with country manager of agricultural commodities exchange, Abuja, August 2, 2016.
percent. The initiative—if successful—could significantly boost agricultural production but few details were released about measures to limit the traditionally high number of nonperforming loans.

- **Reducing postharvest loss and advancing credit through warehouse receipts.** Another approach to increasing farmer access to credit while addressing the very high levels of postharvest loss has been to develop an electronic warehouse receipt scheme. Africa Commodities Exchange Ltd (AFEX), a holding company set up by Nigerian and U.S.-based investors, is trying to link farmers and commodity merchants with agricultural and financial markets. One of the ways it is doing this is by strengthening the warehousing system in Nigeria, in part by leasing and rehabilitating government grain storage facilities. For a small fee, farmers can deposit their produce at these facilities, confident that it will be safely and securely preserved. In return, they receive a receipt grading the value of their produce that can be used as collateral. In this way, participating farmers can hold back their product and sell when the price is right, rather than immediately after harvest. To date, AFEX has developed a network of 60,000 farmers across eight states and hopes to expand the model, including the development of mobile warehouses to reach less accessible areas.

- **Repurposing the agriculture sector to address food security and poor nutrition: developing domestic production of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) and high-energy biscuits.** The food crisis in the northeast has focused attention on the need for food security and nutrition to be an integral component of the strategy for increased agricultural production. Currently, none of the specialist food products that international humanitarian organizations are procuring for the relief effort can be sourced within Nigeria. A 2015 study calculated that approximately 320,000 children received RUTF each year, which had to be imported at the cost of $16 million. This situation contrasts with the experience of a much poorer country like Malawi, which is more accustomed to food insecurity and has developed domestic production of items like RUTF that can be sold directly to the WFP and other UN organizations. In principle, Nigeria is well-placed to develop these specialty products because it already produces their key ingredients, which include wheat, peanuts, soy, and palm oil. What is missing are the integrated value chains that allow these products to be grown and processed in sufficient quantities, at a competitive price.

This situation may be about to change. A partnership that includes Nigeria’s wealthiest business leader, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and several domestic banks, has succeeded in securing a license for a Nigerian pharmaceutical company, Tyonex, to produce RUTF. In addition, the consortium has received technical and operational input on manufacturing RUTF from international

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27 Interview with country manager of agricultural commodities exchange, Abuja, August 2, 2016.
organizations like the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO), including how to comply with strict phytosanitary standards and ensure that the product has the correct nutritional content. At the same time, a Nigerian firm, Inter-Heritage Productions, has struck an agreement with a Nigerian parastatal, the Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO), to undertake domestic production of high-energy biscuits and RUTF. The company is looking to work with farmers and processors in the Niger Delta to develop the value chains for these products.29

Looking ahead, there are strategic opportunities to address Nigeria’s underlying problem of malnutrition, a crisis that extends beyond the northeast. Ambitious plans have been unveiled by the Nigerian government for a national school feeding program. The project, launched in June 2016, would provide one nutritious meal each school day to every pupil in primary years 1 to 3—an estimated 5.5 million children—to be funded by the federal government. State governments would be expected to fund similar initiatives for older children. If successful, the Home-Grown School Feeding program has the potential to stimulate local agricultural production and processing by providing an enormous, ready-made market, albeit at significant up-front costs to the treasury—particularly if it targets all children, and not just the poorest. However, the project has fallen victim to the economic recession and its rollout was delayed after it received a smaller budget than it had envisaged. State-level school programs have also sputtered. A school feeding program in Kaduna State was abandoned in October after 1.1 billion Naira ($3.5 million at the time of writing) was spent in just seven months, partly because the project attracted a huge influx of additional pupils into the public school system.30 However, there may be opportunities to revive the program if funding problems can be overcome and the tiers of government work together more effectively to design and operate such a complex initiative.31

- **Harnessing research capacity to develop quality inputs: using soil mapping to develop appropriate fertilizer.** Approximately 70 percent of the fertilizer used in Nigeria is a generic brand containing a fixed ratio of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium regardless of the fact that the balance of nutrients in the soil varies dramatically across the country.32 Through its Nigeria Agro-Inputs Project, USAID is working with the private sector to produce blends that best suit the local soil conditions. Their partnership utilizes soil analysis commissioned by the Nigerian government, including the production of a geo-ecological map of Nigeria. According to a USAID official, some farmers are seeing 30 percent better yields as a result.33

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29 Meeting with Nigerian entrepreneur, Abuja, July 31, 2016.
31 At the time of publication, the program had been launched in seven states: Ebonyi, Zamfara, Anambra, Enugu, Osun, Ogun, and Oyo.
32 USAID official, U.S. embassy Abuja, August 1, 2016.
33 Ibid.
• **Attracting youth into agriculture: Smart Tractors.** A number of programs are under way to attract youth into the agriculture sector and overcome the fact that, as one agricultural expert puts it, “Young people are not willing to use hoes.” Among the most interesting is a public-private partnership established by USAID with two agribusiness firms, Babban Gona and Hello Tractor. The project seeks to increase mechanization in agriculture by providing access to “smart tractors” for 45,000 smallholder farmers. Smart tractors have been developed with smallholder farmers in mind; they contain various attachments that can be customized according to the crop being grown, they are equipped with GPS devices to track usage, and they can be hired via SMS messaging and mobile money. Youth are being specifically targeted to operate and maintain the tractors and are receiving training through the Youth Agripreneur Program, run by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, based in Ibadan.

**Recommendations**

As Nigeria seeks to diversify its export economy and haul itself out of a crippling recession, attention is turning toward the long-neglected agriculture sector. This renewed focus is welcome and long overdue. The agriculture sector recorded growth in every quarter of 2016 even while the overall economy shrunk. Agricultural growth not only has a positive impact on GDP, it has the potential to create jobs and boost food security. The federal government has made some attempts to prioritize agriculture but has yet to match its vision for the sector with a significant budget to implement its plans, nor has it managed to establish fruitful working relationships at the state level. Furthermore, economic decisions such as the placing of an import ban on 41 products—many of them foodstuffs—have done more harm than good because they have not been accompanied by serious efforts to stimulate domestic production. The rising cost of consumer goods that has resulted from these policies has had the effect of taking money out of the hands of smallholder farmers that they might otherwise have used for agricultural investment.

The best way for the Nigerian government to show its commitment to transforming agriculture would be to put the conditions in place to incentivize farmers and processors, attract investment, and increase competitiveness. Policy consistency and predictability are particularly important. It should then step out the way to allow the private sector to take the lead, assuming a regulatory role instead. As a leading source of technical and monetary assistance to Nigerian agriculture, the United States should encourage this process in its engagement with the host government. Other priorities for the United States to consider include the following:

- Use the impending end of the MARKETS II program as an opportunity to make a fresh commitment to the agriculture sector in Nigeria. Take the opportunity to rethink a strategy that has been fairly successful but also wide and shallow. In a country as large and diverse as Nigeria, a budget of less than $25 million a year does not go far when it

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34 Interview with member of MARKETS II staff, Abuja, August 1, 2016.
35 Doya, “Nigeria Plans $3.2 billion Capitalization for Farming Lender.”
is spread across the majority of the 36 states. While it is difficult to narrow the focus when markets cross state boundaries and there is political pressure to treat each region equally, the United States should consider working in fewer states and on fewer value chains. A more strategic approach would allow the United States to pursue only the very best opportunities for either market expansion or improving food security—goals that do not always overlap in the same location. In other words, turn Nigeria into a more traditional Feed the Future partner country but try to avoid taking on the restrictive requirements and rigid production targets that come with that status.

- Give more attention to the challenge of malnutrition/poor nutrition and integrate the agricultural productivity and food security agendas more closely. Place special emphasis on the northeast, which has not been a focus area of MARKETS II, identifying agricultural development programs that help accelerate the recovery effort and place the region on the path to economic revival and food security. Lend technical support and strategic focus to national programs that—if implemented in the right way, with the necessary buy-in—have the potential to boost nutrition, such as the Home-Grown School Feeding Program. Provide technical assistance to Nigerian efforts to produce food security-enhancing goods like RUTF and high-energy biscuits, giving particular attention to developing the value chains that support them. Emphasize nutrition as an important driver of economic growth and prioritize it accordingly in national and state-level plans.

- Provide diplomatic support and technical assistance to the Buhari administration to incentivize full implementation of the APP and coordinate other donors to do the same. Nigeria’s history of producing good plans that never see the light of day suggests that constant encouragement will be needed in order to turn the APP from a document into a reality. Step up support to organizations such as the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) that provide independent policy analysis and capacity-building assistance to the Nigerian government.

- Consider ways to attract more interest and investment from the U.S. private sector in Nigerian agriculture along the length of the value chain and urge the host government to do the same.
About the Author

Richard Downie is deputy director and a fellow with the CSIS Africa Program, as well as a consultant for the CSIS Global Health Policy Center. In these roles, he analyzes emerging political, economic, social, health, and security trends in sub-Saharan Africa with the aim of informing U.S. policymakers, the U.S. military, and members of Congress. His CSIS publications include Sustaining Improvements to Public Health in Ethiopia (March 2016), Improving Relief and Development Responses to Climate Variability: Emerging Lessons from the 2015–2016 El Niño in Southern Africa (October 2016), and Promoting Accountability in Nigeria’s Health System (February 2017).

Downie joined CSIS following a decade-long career in journalism, primarily at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), where he worked as a senior broadcast journalist. He is a contributor to the Africa section of Freedom House’s annual report, Freedom in the World. He is a frequent commentator on Africa policy issues for national and international media organizations and has given testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Downie holds a master’s degree in international public policy from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a B.A. in modern history from Oxford University.
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