



## THE POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract:**

The politics surrounding food security and climate change within the field of global environmental politics is a highly debated topic. Like many developing nations in the twenty-first century, Nigeria has had significant setbacks, most notably in relation to food insecurity. This study used primary and secondary data collection techniques within the framework of a historical research design to examine the politics of climate change and food security in Nigeria. While primary data was obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) held in six states across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones—Rivers State (South-South), Lagos State (South-West), Enugu State (South-East), Benue State (North-Central), Borno State (North-East), and Kano State (North-West), secondary data was gathered from online sources, journals, and print media. A qualitative data analysis approach was used to comprehend the secondary data and address the research objectives. In its analysis, the study took into account the public interest theory. The study discovered that political instability, regional politics, and self-serving objectives prevented prior Nigerian governments' agricultural programs from reaching food security. The researcher recommended diversifying Nigeria's economy away from a reliance on fossil fuels and putting more of an emphasis on renewable energy to boost agricultural food production in light of these findings.

**Keywords:** politics, climate change, food security, Nigeria

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## 1. Introduction

Climate change refers to significant changes in the natural elements of the atmosphere, leading to negative outcomes such as alterations in weather patterns. These changes may include a typical level of rainfall, precipitation, temperature fluctuations, cloud density, or appearance. Robinson (2018) states that climate change has led to numerous problems, including conflicts, shortages of natural resources, droughts, floods, food insecurity, and political instability, among others. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 1992, to which Nigeria is a signatory, provides policy guidelines for countries globally to evaluate the effects of rising greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere and to implement measures to stabilize or reduce them, thereby protecting environmentally sustainable economic and political development.

According to Ikene (2001), Nigeria currently faces numerous challenges related to sustainable development. Issues such as food insecurity, political instability, the safety of lives and property, and national stability remain persistent concerns. Despite significant recent efforts, progress in combating poverty and achieving sustainable food production and preservation has been slow, and improvements in key development indicators have not been solidified. The politics surrounding climate change are clearly influenced by the fossil fuel industry's lobbying and dissemination of disinformation against science and scientists, which hinders climate change action. On March 31, 2014, Working Group II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, supported by 193 governments, released a pivotal report warning that climate change has already affected natural resources and human systems on every continent and poses "*severe, pervasive, and irreversible*" future threats such as resource shortages, food insecurity, and political instability (International Energy Agency, 2012).

Climate negotiations and politics are characterized by a wide range of interests, with each state employing unique strategies, behaviors, statements, and bargaining processes based on their national interests. These negotiations alter the normative power structure and offer opportunities to analyze new participants in international politics. The business practices of the fossil fuel industry fundamentally contradict the science of climate change mitigation, as they invest hundreds of millions of dollars in lobbying and donations in Washington, D.C., opposing legislation aimed at climate change action (Spross, 2018).

Field (2014) notes that numerous fossil fuel companies are responsible for funding and orchestrating targeted anti-science disinformation campaigns designed to confuse the public, sabotage scientific research, and discredit scientists, all in an effort to weaken the impact of climate change on sustainable development. Nonetheless, they persist in lobbying against climate change legislation on a scale that surpasses even that of the Big Tobacco industries (e.g., British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands, China Tobacco, Japan Tobacco, and Philip Morris International) at their peak. In 2012 alone, individuals and political action committees linked to the oil and gas sector donated \$70 million to U.S. candidates and political parties and funded over 800 lobbyists at a cost exceeding \$149 million. The coal-mining sector contributed an additional \$13 million in donations

and \$18 million in lobbying. Fossil fuel industries spend an order of magnitude more than those supporting alternative energy sources, which allocated \$2.5 million for donations and \$28 million for lobbying in 2012. This discrepancy in spending appears to have significantly influenced the climate change debate in Washington (Field, 2014). However, it is not possible to definitively prove that lobbying directly leads to rhetoric or voting against climate change action; nevertheless, there is a strong correlation between politicians' positions on climate change and the size of their contributions from the fossil fuel industry.

The Nigerian delegation was headed by the then Honourable Minister of Environment, Mrs. Amina Mohammed, who was effectively represented by the then Minister of State for Environment, Alh. Ibrahim Usman Jubril, during the first week of the conference. Additional Honourable Ministers present in the second week of negotiations included the Ministers of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Audu Ogbah, and of Water Resources, Engr. Suleiman Hussaini Adamu. In addition to actively and effectively engaging in high-level negotiations, the Honourable Minister coordinated three side events organized by Nigeria to showcase ongoing climate-related initiatives and reforms aimed at enhancing Nigeria's climate resilience as it pursues a sustainable low-carbon development path to achieve its food security and sustainable development goals (UNFCCC, 2022).

Having signed the COP-21 Paris Climate Change Agreement at the 71st UN General Assembly in September 2016, Mr. Buhari emphasized Nigeria's dedication to implementing the nationally determined contributions developed by the UN and other policies aimed at combating climate change and promoting sustainable agriculture for food security in Nigeria during his statement.

According to Channels Television in 2016, Mr. Buhari also drew the international community's attention to the pollution and environmental degradation in Ogoni land caused by oil extraction, and he appealed for international assistance in Nigeria's cleanup efforts. Additionally, he sought support for the revitalization of the Lake Chad basin area. The president participated in two Africa-focused segments: a discussion titled "Moving from Commitments to Action with Intended Nationally Determined Contributions and African Renewable Energy Initiative" and the Summit of African Heads of State. Mr. Buhari was accompanied by world leaders and policymakers from 197 countries, who collectively addressed the challenges posed by climate change for the first time since the Paris talks in December 2015.

Unexpectedly, in 2016, governors from southern Nigeria convened a meeting in Asaba, Delta State, and proposed an anti-grazing bill known as the Asaba Accord to address the conflicts between farmers and herders, particularly in the southern region of Nigeria. However, upon learning of this, President Buhari described the governors' demands as having legal ambiguities (The Nation's Daily, 2021). It is important to recognize that these events are geopolitical issues impacting food security, driven by environmental resource scarcity resulting from climate change.

## 2. Statement of Problem

Despite international agreements on climate change, such as the Paris Agreement, the failure of industrialized nations and big fossil fuel industries to meet emission reduction targets hinders global and national efforts to mitigate climate change. In Nigeria, political instability, inconsistent policies, and lack of political will further complicate the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices (Laville, 2019). As a result, Nigeria faces challenges such as flooding, water scarcity, and rising food prices, contributing to food insecurity. Effective action, including the use of renewable energy for agriculture, is needed to address these issues.

The deliberate violation of international treaties regulating the consumption of natural resources and the exploitation of global commons for selfish gains, particularly by developed nations, poses a significant challenge to mitigating climate change and achieving food security in countries like Nigeria. For example, despite initially committing to the Paris Climate Agreement, the United States withdrew in 2017 under President Donald Trump, disregarding the impact on less developed nations such as Nigeria. Similarly, the 1963 Nuclear Test Ban Treaty between the U.S., Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, which banned nuclear tests in certain environments, has been repeatedly violated, further disadvantaging third-world countries.

Over the years, Nigeria has experienced various democratic and military governments, but none have successfully adopted climate change mitigation policies in line with global emission reduction targets. This failure has negatively impacted agricultural sustainability, food security, and livestock production. Reasons for this include political instability, regional interests, inconsistent policies, and a lack of political will. Despite international treaties aimed at addressing climate change, the influence of powerful nations and lobbying by fossil fuel industries against climate science has impeded progress, both globally and in Nigeria.

Laville (2019) points out that lobbying by fossil fuel industries is most active in democratic, fossil-fuel-intensive economies such as Canada, Australia, and the U.S. However, these industries also operate in third-world nations like Nigeria, where companies like ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, Total Energies, and Chevron continue harmful practices such as gas flaring, paying only fines to the government without curbing emissions.

As a result, Nigeria faces climate change-related challenges, including severe flooding, water scarcity, depletion of natural resources, deforestation, and wildlife loss. These issues exacerbate conflicts between farmers and herders due to scarce resources and lead to rising sea levels, diseases, and escalating food prices, contributing to food insecurity.

### 2.1 Objectives of the Study

The study's general objective is to examine the politics of climate change and food security in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are to examine:

- 1) The level of implementation of climate change policies in Nigeria.
- 2) The effect of government policies and legislation on climate change and food security in Nigeria.
- 3) The effect of climate change on food security in Nigeria.

## 2.2 Research Questions

- 1) What is the level of implementation of climate change policies in Nigeria?
- 2) What is the effect of government policies and legislation on climate change and food security in Nigeria?
- 3) What is the effect of climate change on food security in Nigeria?

## 3. Methodology

The study primarily employed a qualitative approach using a historical research design. In this research, historical research design was utilized to analyze data collected from various sources. Secondary and primary methods of data collection were employed in this study. Both secondary and primary data were utilized in this study. The secondary data was collected from textbooks, journals, seminar papers, internet sources, and newspapers obtained from various libraries, including the National Library in Ogun State and the USIS in Lagos. The primary data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) conducted across six states representing the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The selected states included Rivers (South-South), Lagos (South-West), Enugu (South-East), Benue (North-Central), Kano (North-West), and Borno (North-East).

Thus, there were six FGD groups across the selected states, with each group comprising six participants drawn from six different local governments within each state. For instance, in Rivers State, one participant came from each of the following local government areas: Ikwerre, Etche, Obio-Akpor, Emuoha, Ogba-Egbema-Ndoni, and Port Harcourt City. In Enugu, participants were selected from Enugu East, Enugu South, Enugu North, Igbo-Etiti, Nkanu East, and Ezeagu. In Lagos State, participants came from Oshodi-Isolo, Ikorodu, Lagos Mainland, Agege, Kosofe, and Ibeju-Lekki. In Kano State, the local governments selected were Kabo, Dala, Kunchi, Ajingi, Bagwai, and Dambatta. In Benue State, participants were drawn from Agatu, Gboko, Guma, Apa, Gwer East, and Buruku. Finally, in Borno State, participants were selected from Gwoza, Chibok, Dikwa, Kakawa, Kwaya and Maiduguri.

The states were randomly selected based on their geopolitical classifications, with the rationale being that they are among the most populated and significantly affected by floods, droughts, food scarcity, and the depletion of environmental resources. The analysis relies on a qualitative approach to secondary data. This secondary data was examined qualitatively to evaluate the historically collected information, either to support or challenge theoretical claims regarding climate change politics and food insecurity in Nigeria.

## 4. Analysis and Results

The conversations and responses given to the researcher by the FGD participants across the six states of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria formed the foundation for the analysis and results of this study. The researcher's questions were answered differently by the participants due to their different locales and level of impact from climate change, politics and food insecurity in Nigeria.

### 4.1 What do Nigerians think about climate change politics? Do you think politics has negatively affected food production in Nigeria currently?

Throughout their lives, most Nigerians have constantly experienced changes in weather variations, including the rainy and sunny periods. Also, there is a very hot period, which is not favorable to living organisms, including human beings. However, these changes have now taken a different dimension in the past years with excessive and irregular raining and sunny patterns, and conflicts between herders and farmers. This is now heavily affecting our farming system and livestock production here in Nigeria.

According to Alhaji Aminu (2024), in an FGD session in Kobo of Kano State,

*"I am a farmer and a livestock owner here in Kano for over forty years, I have been into livestock management here in Kobo. Oftentimes, I have recorded much livestock mortality due to drought and too much heat coming from hot weather, and this is actually killing my business. I wish the Nigerian government could actually facilitate better farm loans for farmers like me to enable me to install solar power for water supplies, electricity, etc. This will aid my livestock production."*

According to Mr. Elekwach, FGD (2024),

*"Here in Etche local government area of River State, farming is our main occupation, which means there is abundant food. But all these is now in the past because, as I speak, our farmlands have been taken over by shell BP in the name of oil exploration, this exploration usually causes us heat because shell locations are very close to our homes and residences. They have destroyed our farmlands without paying us anything in return, rather, they align with the government to take our lands. Every new government that comes has its own plans, which do not favor citizens and their farm activities."* (Elekwach, FGD 2024)

According to Mr. Azubuike's FGD session (2024),

*"Emuoha is one of the satellite towns in River State, I have lived and worked here for a very long time as a secondary school teacher. They have a very rich and fertile soil for agriculture, which makes the cost of livelihood cheaper. Foodstuffs are very affordable. But currently, so many oil companies are operating within our environment, farmland is*

*becoming scarce because when they discover oil on a particular piece of land, the government automatically bars citizens from entering such land without an alternative. Do Nigerians believe that renewable energy can enhance food security in Nigeria and the rest of the world? What do Nigerians really think about food production, cost, supply and preservation in recent times compared to a couple of years ago?*

*I am a university lecturer; I live here in Kakawa local government of Borno State. I understand much about climate change and renewable energy says Mr. Abdulahi. I think that by now, Borno State should be distributing energy from solar and wind to neighboring States. This is considering the temperature and atmosphere here. Here in Borno, it is very difficult to get sufficient water for farming and feeding livestock. Why can't we replicate what we are seeing in other countries here in Nigeria instead of running from pillar to post looking for a solution for food insecurity. (Abdulahi, FGD 2024)*

*"Borno State is richly blessed with a vast size of land, enough to cultivate commercial agriculture that could even sustain the entire Nigeria", says Mr Buji from Gwoza local government.*

*"But agriculture policies in Nigeria are not regular and sustaining. Despite the security challenge here over time, our people still go about their usual farming to produce food for themselves. But as a livestock owner, my experience in livestock management is very terrible considering the level of scarcity of resources and poor governance towards providing adequate security that could reassure some level of confidence in the minds of farmers who may want to continue their farming activities." (Buji, FGD 2024)*

I come from the Maiduguri local government area of Borno State, what we have experienced here over the years is the effect of government policies as several administration changes, they tend to institute a new agricultural policy, abolishing the existing one, undermining whether it is serving its purpose or not, so far, their selfish interest is met says Abubakar (2024):

*"I am saying this because food production and supply have dropped drastically in recent times here in Maiduguri compared to some 20-30 years ago as a result of regular rainfall and off-season flooding affecting our usual farm activities. I have an idea of climate change, the duty to mitigate its impact on citizens and their farm activities is purely a positive drive from government policies. I expect our dear country Nigeria to immediately adopt a radical/aggressive approach towards the implementation of the use of green energy for food." (Abubakar, FGD 2024)*

## **4.2 What Can the Nigerian Government Do to Ensure Food Security and Reduce Cost While Preserving the Environment?**

*"Research has proven that oil palm is a source of power, which means we only need to invest more in oil palm production to produce more renewable biofuel. Nevertheless, from*

*all indications, I don't think our political leaders in this country would want to do that because of their selfish interests. They want the messes to continuously depend on them for survival."* (Obodo FGD, 2024)

### 4.3 Summary of FGD Session in the Six States

**Table 1:** Summary of FGD Session from Six States in the Six Geo-political Zones

North-West Kano State & LGA Reports	South-South River State & LGA Reports	North-Central Benue State & LGA Report	South-West Lagos State & LGA Report	North-East Borno State & LGA Report	South-East Enugu State & LGA Report
Kabo, Dala, kunchi, Dambatta, Ajingi and Bagwai	Obiakpor, Ikwere, Etche, Emuoha, ogba-Egbema-Ndoni and Port Harcourt city	Agatu, Gboko, Guma, Apa, Gwer-East, and Buruku	Oshodi-Isolo, Ikorodu, Lagos Mainland, Agege, Kosfe and Ibeju Lekki	Gwoza, Chibok, Dikwa, Kakawa, Kwaya and Maiduguri	Enugu-East, Enugu-South, Enugu-North, Igbo-Etiti, Nkanu-East, and Ezeagu
Drought, lack of continuity in governance and excessive rainfall causing scarcity of food	Gas Flaring, regular changes in government policy and activities of oil multi-nationals polluting the soil and causing scarcity of food,	Insecurity and Conflict between Herders and farmers, flooding causing food scarcity, regular changes in government policy	Flooding, over population/congestion, due to rural-urban migration, causing food scarcity. Lack of sustainable agriculture policy	Drought, excessive heat orchestrated by climate change, causing scarcity of food, political instability	Insecurity emanating from farmers and herders' crises, causing food insecurity. Regular changes in government policy

Source: FGD, (2024).

**Table 2:** Distribution of Participants Opinion and Breakdown on States and Their percentages on Variables that Were Discussed during the FGD Session as Causes of Food Insecurity. For Example: Politics/political Instability, Insecurity, Climate Change

States/Variables	Politics/Political Instability (%)	Insecurity (%)	Climate Change (%)
Rivers	100%	80%	100%
Enugu	100%	100%	100%
Kano	60%	50%	100%
Lagos	100%	80%	100%
Benue	100%	100%	100%
Borno	60%	80%	100%

Based on the information presented in Table 2, the opinions of various participants from each state reveal several insights. The study established six focus group discussions (FGDs) across six geopolitical zones, with participants drawn from six local government areas in each state. The data in each column reflects the views of the majority of participants in the FGD. For instance, in Kano State, all six participants unanimously agreed that the lack of continuity in government policy, drought, and excessive rainfall driven by climate change are significant factors contributing to the current rise in food prices and food insecurity in both Kano and Nigeria as a whole.

In Rivers State, all six participants from different local governments shared the view that the activities of oil multinationals, such as Shell and ExxonMobil, as well as

frequent changes in government policy, are responsible for food insecurity. They noted that government expropriation of farmland and water pollution have severely affected their agricultural productivity.

In contrast, in Benue State, five out of six participants identified insecurity and political instability as significant causes of food scarcity, while one participant attributed food scarcity to flooding. Meanwhile, in Lagos State, all six participants strongly agreed that political instability, government ineptitude, and rural-to-urban migration have led to overpopulation, resulting in food scarcity due to demand exceeding supply.

In Borno State, all six FGD participants concurred that unsustainable government policies, alongside heat and drought driven by climate change, are the primary factors behind food scarcity. Lastly, in Enugu State, all six participants from the six local governments agreed that political marginalization, policy inconsistency, and insecurity from herders-farmers conflicts have displaced farmers, contributing to food insecurity, a situation exacerbated by climate change.

These findings indicate that climate change and political factors are fundamental causes of food insecurity in Nigeria. Conflicts between farmers and herders stem from resource scarcity resulting from climate change, while the government's reluctance to adopt an anti-grazing bill proposed by South-South governors exacerbates the problem. Additionally, gas flaring and oil exploration contaminate farmland and contribute to global warming and climate change, leading to food shortages. Although the government benefits from oil multinational activities, host communities face negative consequences. Consequently, rural residents often become frustrated and migrate to cities, resulting in urban congestion and overpopulation, as seen in Lagos State. Drought and excessive rainfall are also manifestations of climate change.

These challenges can be addressed if the government prioritizes tackling these issues over political interests. By confronting these problems head-on, Nigeria could effectively mitigate food insecurity.

## 5. Conclusion

Climate change is a global crisis that has led to the scarcity of natural resources, severely affecting food production and security in Nigeria. Despite the Nigerian government's participation in numerous climate change conferences, it has failed to fully implement the recommended climate change policies, merely acting as a signatory to these agreements. Although various agricultural policies aimed at promoting sustainable food production have been introduced by different administrations, the government has struggled to maintain these policies due to political interests and a lack of continuity in governance. However, embracing renewable energy is crucial for achieving sustainable agriculture and food security in Nigeria.

Nigerian politicians must prioritize the long-term well-being of future generations over personal or selfish interests when developing climate change policies. Establishing a new set of democratic institutions, starting with revitalizing the currently ineffective geopolitical zonal structure of the country, is essential. These new institutions would help

ensure that immediate actions are taken to promote environmentally sustainable agricultural practices that can secure food for the nation.

### 5.1 Recommendations

Nigeria should diversify its economy away from fossil fuels to focus on agricultural food production. The government ought to invest in renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, geothermal, hydropower, oceanic, and bioenergy, as well as other manufacturing sectors. This shift aims to create a clean and secure environment for humans and other living organisms while striving for food security and sustainable development both in Nigeria and globally.

The Nigerian government should adopt a leadership approach that emphasizes policy consistency and continuity to achieve sustainable development goals. This approach will help minimize geopolitics and regional marginalization, fostering a national interest that promotes development and the overall happiness of the population, in line with utilitarian principles.

There should be a provision for national adaptation policies that offer clear guidelines for the integration and implementation of strategies, programs, and activities designed to mitigate the effects of climate change on food production and preservation in Nigeria and worldwide.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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