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Lecture Title:

**UNVEILING NIGERIA'S DYSFUNCTIONAL GOLDMINE: A
CHRONICLE OF THE NEGLECTED AGRICULTURAL
POTENTIALS IN AN EMERGING ECONOMY**

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This Second (2nd) Inaugural Lecture titled:

**UNVEILING NIGERIA'S DYSFUNCTIONAL GOLDMINE: A
CHRONICLE OF THE NEGLECTED AGRICULTURAL
POTENTIALS IN AN EMERGING ECONOMY**

Was delivered under the Chairmanship of:

The Vice-Chancellor,

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Our Highly Esteemed Royal Highnesses Here Present,

My Lords, Spiritual and Temporal,

Members of my Nuclear & Extended Families,

Distinguished Students of History Department & the Entire Al-Hikmah University Students,

Gentlemen of the Print & Electronic Media,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

Bismillahi Rahamoni Raheem

To Allah SWT, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful, we give all the praises and adoration for His mercies and protection, and for giving me the grace to stand before you all this day to deliver the Second (2nd) Inaugural Lecture of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria's Premier Islamic Faith-based University. Today's Inaugural Lecture, though the Second in the history of this University, is unique as it is the first of its kind to be delivered by a historian from one of the pioneer departments in this University - the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. My sincere gratitude is expressed to the Vice Chancellor and the entire Management of Al-Hikmah University for giving me the opportunity to deliver this Inaugural Lecture.

My Background and Choice of History as a Career

The Vice Chancellor sir, today's Inaugural Lecture is coming from an individual whose parents, though had no opportunity of formal education, laboured day and night to ensure that I got quality education. I have emerged from the Raji-Laoye family of Oponda Compound, Aran-Orin, Irepodun LGA of Kwara State, Nigeria. This illustrious family's guiding principles have seven (7) parameters, viz: the fear of, and trust in Allah; sincerity of purpose; uprightness in all spheres; hard-work and dedication to duty; prudence or financial discipline; community/selfless service; and, providing support for the weak or the less-privileged. It was in pursuit of these principles that my late father and his children are well known with a popular appellation: *Omo am'ete olee* (descendant of those that provide sustenance for the weak). My father also served as the Treasurer (*Akapo*) Aran-Orin Muslim Community for more than 40 years – a position he held till his demise in August 2016. May Allah grant him *Aljanah Firdaus, Amin*. His exemplary record and legacy of truth and financial accuracy probably made the Muslim Community to still bequeath that position to my younger brother, Alhaji Jamiu Shola Raji.

These family qualities and humble background seemed to have beamed into my early life and upbringing a visible light of discipline, respect and hard-work. Although my original thought was to pursue a career in Law, the family conception that "Lawyers

are secretive, and that the legal profession is not for godly people” took me to the humanities. It is important to state at this point that history was the least of the career options that I could initially conceive, even when I was the most outstanding final year student of History at ECWA Secondary School, Igbaja in 1980. Again, I did not see great prospect in History even when I won the University Scholar Award for History at 200 and 300 Levels, University of Ilorin, during 1985/86 and 1986/87 academic sessions respectively. My deep interest in History as a profession gradually began to thrive when I finally received the Departmental Prize as the best graduating student in the Department of History, University of Ilorin, during the October 1988 Convocation, where I was privileged to have a warm handshake with the then Vice Chancellor (Prof. Adeoye Adeniyi). After the event, my Project Supervisor and Mentor, Dr. S.A. Balogun, strongly advised that I should return to the Department for my Master’s degree programme immediately after completion of the N.Y.S.C scheme. Indeed, I became more interested in pursuing a career in History when I later saw the transcript of my academic records at the undergraduate level and noticed that I obtained “A” grade in the Long Essay (Project) – a grade which my Supervisor (Dr. S.A. Balogun) said no student had ever earned from him in his close to two decades of teaching career in the University as at that time.

The Master’s degree programme that I did in the Department of History, University of Ilorin, was a rigorous but smooth and interesting academic endeavour. It was completed at record time, with a glowing remark on my M.A. Dissertation from the External Examiner, Professor O. Adewoye (who later became the Vice Chancellor, University of Ibadan) that read thus: “Very lucid and well-researched work ... A little more effort would have made this worth a Ph.D Thesis”. It became quite clear to me at that point that I have the potentials to build a career in the field of HISTORY. Almost immediately, I registered for my doctoral programme at the University of Ilorin. Although I was neither a Marxist nor a radical Leftist at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, my wide exposure to socialist literatures during the Master’s degree programme, especially the highly persuasive postulation by Karl Marx that ‘all human actions, be it religious, social, political, cultural or altruistic, have economic undercurrents’, naturally informed my interest in economic history. Thus, my research

focus from the early 1990s to date has been economic history, with good flair for social history and inter-state relations.

As I was basking in the euphoria to earn Ph.D degree at age 29, the political crises that followed the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections coupled with the prolonged ASUU strike up to the late 1990s came to delay the early realisation of the dream. Although there were also attempts by detractors to run rings round my neck, it was by Allah's grace and strong determination to succeed that led to the successful completion of the Doctoral programme in 2002. As the battle to earn a doctoral degree eventually ended, this swiftly opened for me a vista of opportunities for teaching at the University of Benin in 2002 and the Niger Delta University in 2003. Even when such good offers were waiting for me, destiny did its wonder by putting the South-South appointments on hold until Al-Hikmah University was licensed in 2005. From January 2006 to date, with Allah's guidance, I have laboured vigorously to reach the pinnacle of my career that offers justification for today's celebration.

Introduction

The agrarian base of the Nigerian economy dated back to the pre-colonial period. It was agriculture that largely provided sustenance to the economy of the ancient kingdoms and empires in pre-colonial Nigeria. This trend continued well into the British colonial period when agriculture stood as the largest employer of labour within the colonial economy. The British authority placed much emphasis on cash-crop production in order to provide a regular and ready source of raw materials for European manufacturing industries (Corwin, 2003). Thus, Nigeria's regional governments, and later the Federal Government up till early 1970s relied much on agriculture. With the oil boom era, agriculture suffered a severe setback from which it had not fully recovered (Akinjogbin & Osoba, 1980).

Although for almost five decades, Nigeria's annual budgets have always been built around crude oil exports, it is still widely believed, especially by economic historians, that agriculture represents the most viable sector that can spur growth, guarantee food security and enhance long-term sustenance for the Nigerian economy. It is evident that current output level for each of the diverse sub-sectors of agriculture is far below the national aggregate production capacity (Raji, 2014). This abysmal situation constitutes

a drain on the nation's foreign exchange and has informed the choice of today's Inaugural Lecture titled: *Unveiling Nigeria's Dysfunctional Goldmine: A Chronicle of the Neglected Agricultural Potentials in an Emerging Economy*.

Agriculture and the Nigerian Economy: A Brief Historical Background

The Neolithic civilisation (i.e. agricultural revolution) that took place about 2 million years ago, which was characterised by the domestication of different species of plants and animals, brought to limelight the relevance of agriculture to the survival of man and the sustenance of the world economy. Various historical source materials, notably archaeological, linguistic, ethnographic, anthropological and oral evidences have vividly mirrored agriculture as the dominant occupation of man in pre-historic Africa, including the inhabitants of the Nigerian region as reflected by excavations from sites in Igbo-Ukwu, Uturu-Ugwulle and the Nok region (Obayemi, 1976).

Therefore, the Nigerian economy, from the ancient times, had incorporated crop and livestock production into its operation as agriculture engaged a significant proportion of the populace. Agriculture provided the fulcrum upon which the pre-colonial Nigerian economy was sustained. Based on the gamut of available historical records, including Allah's injunction on the need for man to engage in agriculture (Qur'an 80:26-32), it can be surmised that agriculture, with the support of the blacksmithing industry (Raji, 1997), provided a great quantum of sustenance to the economy of pre-colonial Nigerian states.

Agriculture provided the indisputable background for human civilisations and industrial revolutions. All belief systems in Nigeria had given the needed support to agriculture. Long before Islam got to Nigeria, the purveyors of traditional belief systems made agriculture the foundation of the economy. For instance, several Nigerian communities held the New Yam festival in high esteem as a cultural heritage. The essence of polygamy in pre-Islamic Nigeria was to have more labour for greater farm output. As from the 11th century, Islam also aided agricultural expansion through the trans-sahara trade network. In fact, apart from gold, silver and ivory, other key articles of trade in the flourishing commerce between North Africa and the Nigerian region were products of agriculture such as pepper, kolanuts, hides and skin, tobacco and ostrich feathers (Trimingham, 1962; Akinwumi & Raji, 1990). By the close of 19th century,

Christian missions in Nigeria also began to offer support to agriculture as new cash crops (e.g. cocoa, coffee and rubber) were promoted by the missionaries (Ajayi, 1965; Bowen, 1968; Adegeye & Dittol, 1985) to complement kolanuts, cotton, tobacco, groundnuts and palm-produce that were indigenous to Nigeria (Lovejoy, 1980). This trend was sustained till the era of British colonial rule when agriculture stood as Nigeria's largest employer of labour and the main source of government revenue, contributing 65 percent to GDP.

As from the post-1945 era, the regional governments gradually began to promote the British colonial economic model by placing emphasis on cash crop production (Fanon, 1966; Ikime, 2005). In fact, each region eventually specialised in specific forms of cash crops such that the Northern Region promoted groundnuts and cotton, the Western Region focused on cocoa and kolanuts, and the Eastern Region emphasised the cultivation of rubber and palm produce – all in export quantities (Ekundare, 1973). Thus, Nigeria's regional governments, and later the Federal Government after independence, up till the early 1970s, relied heavily on agriculture as a major source of government revenue. Agriculture also provided the nation's food requirements, with empowerment and employment for its work force.

As from the mid-1970s, a period that coincided with the oil boom era, agriculture suffered a speedy decline from which it has not been able to regain its glory (Akinjogbin & Osoba, 1980; Oyemakinde, 2003). With a rising population and without a corresponding increase in food output, the scourge of food scarcity and food insecurity began to manifest in Nigeria by the early 1980s. Rather than promoting self-sufficiency through support for local food production, the Shagari government's immediate response to the raging food crisis, as from 1981, was to resort to mass importation of rice and other essential food items into the country. Therefore, since the early 1980s, Nigeria has been battling with food crisis – a serious nightmare that has persisted till the present time.

Nigeria's Previous Agricultural Reform Policies and Performance Index: Motion without Movement

The Vice Chancellor sir, various governments in Nigeria had attempted to initiate policies meant to reform agriculture, among which are the following:

- i. the Strategic Grains Reserves Programme (SGRP) of the Gowon-led regime by mid-1970s meant to provide adequate storage facilities to avoid post-harvest wastages;
- ii. the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) of the Obasanjo military regime that targeted the use of improved seedlings to enhance farmers' productive capacity;
- iii. the Green Revolution programme of the Shagari administration meant to expand the land cultivated by farmers and to ensure provision of financial aid to farmers through the Agricultural Development Banks;
- iv. the River Basin Development Authorities designed to fully coordinate Fadama agriculture and develop irrigation processes;
- v. the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) of the Shagari administration with branches in all states to promote extensive land cultivation and raise crop output;
- vi. the Strategic Grains Reserve Scheme of the Buhari-led military regime;
- vii. the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), especially its agricultural development scheme designed to empower youths, including the women folk, to produce essential food crops on commercial scale to support the nation's food requirements;
- viii. the National Agricultural Lands Development Authority (NALDA) of the Babangida-led military regime which focused on the effective utilization of cultivable lands across the country;
- ix. the Agricultural & Rural Management Training Institute (ARMTI);
- x. the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) with focus on the development of feeder road network to open up the rural areas;
- xi. the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP);
- xii. the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM);
- xiii. the Agricultural Revitalization Scheme of the Obasanjo civilian administration in 2002 to fully exploit the array of potentials in the nation's agricultural sector especially those set within the ambit of the national cassava value-chain;
- xiv. the Root and Tuber Expansion Programme;

- xv. the Transformation Agenda of the Yar'Adua/Jonathan Administration that aimed, via the *e-wallet* scheme;
- xvi. the Subsidy Re-Investment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) launched in 2012 by the Goodluck Jonathan; and,
- xvii. the Anchor Borrowers' Scheme of the Buhari administration that has focused, since 2019, on the promotion of an inclusive economic growth through support for rice farmers and producers of other key foods to ensure national self-reliance and curb food importation.

The great challenge faced by Nigeria over the years has been that the reform options listed above, good as they appeared to move agriculture forward, had not brought meaningful development to that sector. Government policies designed to transform agriculture are politicised while the huge yearly budgetary allocations to that sector had only amounted to colossal waste due to inconsistent policies, corruption and mismanagement (Timamy, 2007).

It is saddening that Nigeria's agricultural potentials have always been left to go down the drain due to long years of neglect. As such, hunger, acute poverty and unemployment have ravaged the nation. Agriculture is not given its rightful place in Nigeria even when it is quite critical to the process of capital formation in any given economy. In fact, as stated in Qur'an 2:168 and 12:47-54, Allah enjoins man 'to raise crops and breed livestock to feed himself, his household and the larger society,...and for profit'. This concept had engaged Ricardo's attention in his *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1969) that dealt with the contributions of agriculture to the process of capital formation. This concept was ignored by Nigeria during the oil boom era when agriculture was neglected and its contribution to national GDP fell from 50.28 percent in 1970 to 45.01 percent in 1978; at 36.42 percent in 1983, it dropped to 26.03 percent in 2000; and from 22.36 percent in 2012 (CBN, 2013), it nose-dived to 16.28 percent in 2020 (Raji, 2021).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The Vice Chancellor sir, this Lecture will adopt Hobson's Theory of Imperialism which sees European colonial expansion in Africa during the 19th century as essentially based on economic interest. To Hobson, the rapid growth of the British economy in the 19th century was due to the full exploitation of Africa's agricultural, labour and trade potentials (Robinson & Gallagher, 1965). The conceptual framework for this Lecture is built around seven fundamental issues, viz: neglect, policy disconnect, agricultural endowments, poor export produce, the 'Nigerian factor', unpreparedness of policymakers to learn and migrate Nigeria from weak industrial base, and the concept of positive peace.

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, let me state that the problem of the agricultural sector in Nigeria is not that of potential but rather sheer neglect. Since the mid-1970s, large revenue proceeds from crude oil exports had turned agriculture into an occupation for the very poor, uneducated and less-privileged Nigerians. Over-reliance on crude-oil exports as major source of government's revenue soon turned Nigeria into a mono-crop economy.

Policy inconsistency is a major challenge facing the agricultural sector, and by extension, the entire Nigerian economy. Nigeria probably has the highest proportion of policy disconnect in Africa. Government rarely adopts recommendations by seasoned experts that could aid reforms. Policy goals and reform initiatives are often riddled by inherent contradictions. A vivid example is the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM) that has agric mechanization as its core mandate; yet, government took \$1.6 billion loan to acquire tractors from Brazil (Awotunde, 2021).

It has been observed, and rightly too, that Nigeria is richly endowed, and predominantly an agro-based economy. Nigeria's land and water-resource potentials have the capacity to make the country self-sufficient in terms of domestic food requirements, and also to be Africa's largest exporter of food and fish products (Anyanwu, et al. 1998). The agricultural sector employs more than 65% of the nation's workforce (Ojo, et al. 1993; CBN, 2008). Apart from crude oil, agriculture contributes substantially to the nation's GDP. But sadly, government does not place much value on this important revenue earner and goldmine. Thus, government's poor attention and the

people's apathy, as Raji (2015b) suggests, had accounted for the prevailing dismal state of agriculture and other key sectors of Nigerian economy.

It is evident that all advanced economies of Europe, America and Asia place high premium on agriculture for adequate food supply to feed the populace; for raw materials to feed and sustain their agro-allied and other related manufacturing industries; and, for exports to earn good foreign exchange. Such advanced or fast-growing economies have made industrialisation the secret of their successes. It is, perhaps, a compelling driving force to greatness. Thus, as Sanders (2003) asserts, 'industrialisation is the most efficient route to national power, and the sooner a nation adopts and sustains it, the better for such a nation and its people'. Nigerian leaders pay regular visits to such countries and clearly see how industrialisation has aided their transformation into leading global economies. The mistake often made by Nigerian policymakers is that they frequently visit advanced countries mainly for jamboree; they do not learn from others.

The quality of a nation's export produce determines the proportion of her foreign exchange earnings, currency worth in the global market and level of economic development. Nigeria's raw export produce, mainly crude oil, limits her chances of earning good foreign exchange. Thus, both Ricardo (1969) and Scott (2001) opine that 'a nation that exports raw produce only derives minimal returns'. Most industrial economists and petroleum chemistry experts share this view on production relations in the oil industry. For instance, from a barrel of crude oil that currently sells for about \$70 in the global, a minimum of \$200 is realised by an oil-refining state after processing the crude into PMS, AGO, gas, diesel, grease, aviation oil, lubricants, and other derivatives (Bassey, 2021). For 65 years running, Nigeria has been exporting over 2 million barrels of crude oil daily (Raji & Abejide, 2016). At present, Nigeria ranks as the world's 6th largest exporter of crude oil; yet, and sadly too, Nigeria is the only OPEC member-nation that does not have functional refineries. For this ineptitude, Nigeria during the years 2015-2021 wasted a whopping sum of ₦8 billion daily (about ₦3 trillion annually) as subsidy payments to fraudulent importers of petroleum products (Onyekpere, 2017). The ugly scenario of Nigeria's inability to refine crude oil also applies to the solid minerals and agricultural sectors where the country takes delight in the export of raw tin, coal,

limestone, cocoa, groundnuts, yam, mango, cashew etc. that are often poorly priced in the international market.

Again, the ‘Nigerian factor’ is an antithesis; it negates development in all sectors. Agriculture represents one of the key areas of our national life that systemic corruption, lack of accountability and gross indiscipline had grounded almost to a halt. Government’s huge investment in agriculture to attain food security had not yielded positive results due to the corrupt or fraudulent practices of those who formulate and implement the nation’s policies through diversion, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, thereby breaking the trust (*Amaanah*) that Allah has placed on them as leaders (Qur’an 4:2; 4:29 and 4:58). Thus, Nigeria’s dismal performance in agriculture over the years, as Timamy (2007) avers, has more to do with the squandering of resources than a lack of them.

Lastly, the prevailing trend in the international system and the emergence of the idea of “positive peace” has made the concept of National Security to be no longer synonymous with sufficient military strength in terms of war arsenals and other forms of weaponry as well as military personnel. The more realistic approach now includes economic strength, internal cohesion and modern technology.

This implication of the foregoing is that agriculture (which guarantees food security) is critical to the promotion of peaceful co-existence; and, a nation endowed with sophisticated weaponry and military personnel but rocked by perennial food crises only secures a hard and fragile peace. This aligns with the view of MckNelley and Dunford (1996) that agriculture is an important pillar of national security, industrial growth and economic development that a nation must possess and preserve. In the same vein, food security is one of the 14 SDGs of the United Nations. The UNDP has clearly stated that to achieve food security by 2030, each country must “double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale food producers, pastoralists and fishers, ...” (Olatunji, 2022). Unless concrete steps are taken, and such steps are sustained, Nigeria may not be among those countries that would achieve the UNDP food security target by the year 2030.

Unveiling Nigeria's Huge Agricultural Production Potentials: Goldmine in a Dysfunctional State

Vice Chancellor Sir, please permit me to say, with emphasis, and as a historian, that the abysmal state of comatose into which Nigeria's agricultural sector had been exposed for decades is a product of deliberate neglect, elite conspiracy, fraud, policy somersault and misplacement of priority. This author has been able to elicit these from the concepts already analysed to provide the framework for this Lecture. Evidently, the agricultural sector's value-chain symbolises a huge fusillade of opportunities which, if well harnessed, would enable this critical sector to reclaim its age-long status of serving as the mainstay of the nation's economy. Some of Nigeria's key agricultural potentials include:

i. Rice Production

One of the most important food crops with export potentials in Nigeria is rice. It is a gold mine that could generate substantial foreign exchange earnings for the country. At present, rice is a regular diet for most Nigerian homes and indeed globally. Rice production has potentials to generate revenue for government, eradicate hunger and poverty, provide jobs for youths, boost foreign exchange earnings, and help contribute meaningfully to GDP growth rate. The United States and China - leading producers and exporters of rice in the world today- had attained and sustained this feat due to the right focus placed on rice cultivation and processing, policy consistency, and adequate funding with active private-sector participation. It is possibly due to this abundant rice potential that a former Agriculture Minister, Akinwumi Adesina, once remarked that "Nigeria has no business importing rice" (Roberts, 2013, p.19). Nigeria has not attained an optimal level in production of rice due to neglect by potential farmers, threat of flooding, and the problem of insurgency/banditry.

With good support and funding, and at an annual output of 25million tons, Nigeria can earn over N6.5 trillion from rice proceeds (Raji, 2014a). The 2019 Anchor Borrowers' Scheme for rice farmers powered by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) is a step in the right direction. With close monitoring and judicious utilisation of the fund, an estimated 500,000 jobs would be created within the rice value-chain who would serve as farmers, millers and marketers.

ii. Cocoa Production

Nigeria has good and abundant fertile land potential for cocoa production on commercial scale. In fact, cocoa was one of Nigeria's export commodities that gave sustenance to the nation's economy during and after colonial rule (Ekundare, 1973; Okuneye, 2001). This situation has affected the nation's cocoa output over the years. With extensive fertile land in the nation's cocoa producing regions, Nigeria's cocoa output could reach 15 million tons that could generate ₦3.5 trillion annual income (Sanni, 2013; Raji, 2014a).

iii. Palm Produce

Another notable agricultural revenue potential in Nigeria since the pre-colonial era is palm produce. It was given much patronage by the British colonial regime due to the enormous commercial value and high demand it commanded among European manufacturing industries to meet the needs of industrial capitalism. Thus, palm produce was one of the major cash crops that dominated Nigeria's export trade up to the mid-1970s when the rate of its cultivation gradually diminished presumably due to the oil-boom era, the culture of neglect of plantation farming, and lack of modern processing techniques. If Nigeria focuses on palm oil alone, national annual output would hit 15million barrels. Apart from huge job potentials that abound in the specialised stages of cultivation, processing and marketing of palm oil and its allied products, the industry's optimal production capacity would yield over ₦1.5 trillion for Nigeria annually (Raji, 2015b; Williams, 2021).

iv. Groundnuts Production

Long before the discovery of oil, groundnut was among Nigeria's major exports (Crowder, 1962; Ikime, 2005) from which the nation especially the Northern Regional government derived huge revenue. The groundnut pyramids' legacy that Kano was noted for up to the mid-1970s clearly illustrates this assertion (Hogendorn, 1978). It was the oil-boom era that made groundnut producers to abandon it for quick oil wealth. Apart from creating job opportunities for Nigerians, groundnut production, if fully exploited, would yield annual revenue of ₦2.8trillion (Adewale, 2014; Raji, 2015b).



Fig.1: A ground-nut farm, with the processed output packaged (in pyramids) for export

v. Sorghum/Guinea Corn Production

Apart from over 250,000 employment opportunities available within the sorghum value-chain, Nigeria’s estimated annual guinea-corn output stands at 20 million tons with a revenue projection of ₦3.5 trillion (Raji, 2014a).

vi. Tomato Production

Tomato has today become a staple diet for Nigerian homes; it serves as essential nourishment for all dishes. Although tomato has various types, all its varieties are in high demand in the country and beyond. Nigeria’s annual tomato production capacity has the potential to generate ₦750 billion as revenue (Williams, 2021) if current output is sustained and post-harvest losses are reduced in that sub-sector.

vii. Sugar-cane Production

Sugar-cane is a crop of the tropics that has great value-addition to human dietary needs. It is an essential raw material for sugar and related industrial derivatives. Historically, sugar production was central to European and American industrial development process during the 17th and 18th centuries. With large oceans and rivers, Nigeria’s annual sugarcane output is over 20 million tons that could yield ₦2.4 trillion as revenue (Busari, 2004; Odumosu, 2017). This is apart from gainful youth employment sugarcane production would create.

viii. Mango Production

Nigeria’s land and climate provide favourable condition for mango production. The nutritional and medicinal contents of mango have almost made it a necessity for every home. Nigeria’s annual income for mango stands at ₦1.25 trillion (Raji, 2015b). The industry also has the potential to provide job opportunities for thousands of people, mostly the youth.

ix. Orange Production:

Nigeria has the potential to raise 20 million tons of oranges annually that could generate a sum of ₦2.5 trillion as revenue, along with massive employment opportunities as well as empowerment that exist within the orange industry value-chain for the teeming youths across the country (Raji, 2021).

x. Pepper Production

Like tomatoes, Northern Nigerian farmers produce the bulk of pepper for local use and to meet the needs of several agro-allied industries. At present, Nigeria can derive ₦900 billion as revenue from pepper production annually (Roberts, 2020). Again, the pepper sub-sector can engage over 100,000 youths in gainful employment (Raji, 2014a).

xi. Maize Production

Nigeria has abundant maize production potential for local consumption and for exports. For several homes, maize is consumed in one way or the other on daily basis. Nigeria has adequate potential to raise 35million tons of maize that could generate ₦5.2 trillion annual revenue (Raji, 2013; Adewale, 2014). While maize cultivation will create jobs, maize processing for export purposes will open a new investment channel for Nigeria's agro-allied industrial sub-sector.

xii. Wheat Production

Wheat is a notable grain crop in Nigeria's savannah belt. As a food crop with high nutritional value, Nigeria has abundant fertile land to produce wheat in large quantities with huge revenue potentials. The culture of neglect, insecurity and destruction of farmlands by cattle had all combined to limit our wheat output. While 150,000 personnel can be engaged in wheat business, the estimated national output of 10 million tons will yield ₦860billion annual revenue for the nation (Raji, 2015b).

xiii. Cassava Production

This is a viable agricultural produce that has abundant production and huge revenue potentials. Nigeria's annual cassava income, as affirmed by Niyi Adebayo, Hon. Minister of Trade and Investments, can hit ₦5 trillion (Izaq, 2021). While export of cassava and its by-products would generate foreign exchange earnings for the country,

this sub-sector can also create 300,000 jobs for Nigerian youths annually (Ayodele, 2003; Raji, 2016b).

Segun Adewumi, the former President, Cassava Growers Association of Nigeria, once affirmed that if 20% cassava flour is introduced into the bread consume locally, Nigeria will save N250b from wheat imports; that Nigeria could save N800b from imports of ethanol if manufactured locally; and, save ₦500b annually from 1.75m tonnes of industrial starch used in Nigeria if produced locally. Nigeria can also earn good foreign exchange from cassava derivatives used by industries worldwide; Nigeria has the potential to meet her cassava national output targets (Raji, 2009; Williams, 2021, May 23, p.15).

xiv. Medicinal Plants

There are species of medicinal plants found across Nigeria, with most of them left to grow wild in the forest. If the potentials in this sub-sector are well tapped, it would help improve Nigeria's health care delivery system, create jobs and generate ₦300 billion annually (Ayoka, 2011). Thus, a good investment in this sub-sector would promote empowerment and wealth creation, raise GDP growth rate and equally provide foreign exchange earnings for the nation.

xv. Timber Production and Processing

Perhaps, an equally important but mostly undervalued agricultural sub-sector in the Nigerian economy is timber production and processing. It will also generate foreign exchange for government. The annual revenue from timber stands at ₦650 billion (Sanni, 2013).

xvi. Beans Production

Since Nigeria has a favourable climate with good or fertile land for beans cultivation on commercial scale, the projected national output from all species of beans is 75million of 100kg bags that would yield ₦2.5trillion revenue for the country annually (Raji, 2013). It should equally be noted that beans farming, processing and marketing would help create jobs and empowerment for thousands of Nigerian youths.

xvii. Cashew Farming

Huge revenue potential abounds within the nation's cashew value-chain. For instance, Nigeria's cashew juice\nuts annual output and export potential, as the Director-

General, Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), Segun Awolowo Jnr. once noted, is worth \$8.6 billion i.e. approximately ₦4.2 trillion (Hashim, 2017, p. 15). The Nigerian cashew industry also has potential to absorb over 300,000 workers as farm labourers, harvesters, processors, factory workers, produce merchants etc. (Raji, 2014a).

xviii. Poultry Farming

The abundant potential in Nigeria's poultry farming industry is currently under-explored either due to sheer neglect or that current approach cannot result in optimal capacity utilisation. If Nigeria's poultry potentials are properly harnessed, with adequate funding support and key infrastructures, the industry can accommodate an intervention that would bring about the raising of 2,200,000 layers, 1,900,000 broilers, 1,500,000 growers or cockrels and 100,000 matured turkey by each of the 36 states and the FCT, apart from local breeds mostly in rural settlements. Several LGAs in some states can exceed such targets. If the breeding system conforms to set standard, Nigeria can earn ₦4.8 trillion annually (Awotunde, 2021, p. 5). Again, the industry can absorb 1500 personnel in each of the 774 LGAs which amount to over 1million hands as poultry workers, apart from large number of those that would be engaged as marketers of fowls, eggs, poultry feeds as well as drugs/vaccines, etc. (Raji, 2021).

Fig. 2: Flourishing poultry farms showing broilers and layers with eggs ready for market



xix. Fisheries

A proper harnessing of our enormous fishery potentials would create more jobs for our youths; improve the quality of fish produced; and, raise the output level in that sub-sector. Thus, apart from meeting the domestic dietary needs of the populace, Nigeria can be a major exporter of fish products from which ₦2.5 trillion can be generated as income annually (Harry-Jones, 2012; Raji & Abejide, 2015).

Fig. 3: A fish farm in large open plastic tanks, with harvests ready for supply to customers



xx. Snailry

If the nation's culture of neglect can be changed, the projected output of snails would generate employment opportunities for many Nigerians, add great value to the nutritional contents of people's diets, and contribute to economic growth with a potential to generate for the nation a projected annual revenue of ₦65b (Ayoka, 2011).

xxi. Goat Farming

Nigeria's climate adequately favours the rearing of different species of goats on commercial scale. Again, many Nigerians would secure jobs in the breeding, tendering, domestication, processing and marketing of goats and allied products. Thus, goat farming has prospect for job creation and also, can generate annual revenue of ₦750 billion for the country (Hashim, 2017, p.15; Raji, 2014a).

xxii. Sheep Rearing

Another form of livestock production which shares similar peculiarities with goat farming is sheep rearing. The rearing of sheep can also be conducted in almost all the geo-political zones. While sheep farming would create employment for thousands of Nigerian youths to be gainfully engaged as herdsman, suppliers of livestock feeds and drugs/vaccines, sheep merchants etc, it is clear that with good climate, adequate water in brooks, streams and rivers, and extensive arable grazing land, Nigeria has the capacity to raise up to 40 million sheep from where ₦500 billion revenue can be generated annually (Ayoka, 2011; Raji & Abejide, 2014).

xxiii. Cow/Cattle Rearing

Nigeria, mainly the North, has Africa's largest livestock population, with 35million cattle, 72.5million goats, 42million sheep, 31,000 camels, and 750,000 donkeys. Great potential for poverty reduction and job creation lies in this line of

business: livestock foods contribute 27% to the consumer food basket in South Africa; livestock farming also adds 32% to Brazil's agribusiness (Obiaraeri, 2019; Raji, 2014a). Apart from local consumption, Nigeria can derive ₦2.5 trillion from cow sales annually (Hashim, 2017, p. 15).

xxiv. Cow Milk and Cheese Production

Production of cow milk/cheese would create employment fortunes for Nigerian youths in the extraction, processing, products packaging and distribution. Annual milk and cheese yield from 15million adult female cows at ₦45,000 from each can yield ₦600 billion for the country (Raji, 2013).

xxv. Animal and Poultry Feeds Production

One other agro-allied enterprise in Nigeria is production and distribution/marketing of animal and poultry feeds to sustain the varieties of livestock bred across the country. A proper recycling of farm wastes by agro-allied industries will generate huge poultry, aquatic and animal feeds in large quantity that would lead to:

- (a) Job creation for the youths.
- (b) Provision of regular foreign exchange earnings.
- (c) Improvement in the quality and proportion of animal/poultry and aquatic breeds.

Thus, the projected optimal capacity of this industry for both domestic utilisation and exports would generate an annual income of ₦1.5 trillion for the country (Harry Jones, 2012; Raji, 2013).

Vice Chancellor sir, permit me to state at this juncture that the above list is not exhaustive as there are several other crops such as cowpeas, carrots, guava, lettuce, apple, potato, rubber, coconuts, soya-beans, dates, pawpaw, onions, plantain, etc. with high yield and enormous revenue potentials.

National Output Capacity and Revenue Range for Selected Agricultural products in Nigeria

The commodity index and price range for a number of selected agricultural products (mainly food and cash crops) during the year 2021 in Nigeria is as shown below:

Table 1: Figures above are based on author's survey of selected national produce estimates along with the NBS Agro Commodity Price Index for the Year 2021

Commodity	Bag (Kg)	Price (₦)	Est. Annual Output	Est. Income
Drum beans, etc.	100 kg bag	₦36000	75 M bags	₦2.5t
G/Nut	100 kg bag	₦45000	60 M bags	₦2.8t
Garri	60 kg bag	₦10500	120 M bags	₦1.3 t
Maize	100 kg bag	₦12000	350 M bags	₦5.2 t
Onion (Violet)	100 kg bag	₦19000	35 M bags	₦625 b
Palm oil	25 L keg	₦12000	152 M kegs	₦1.9 t
Rice	50 kg bag	₦17500	350 M bags	₦6.5t
Tomato	50 kg bag	₦12500	60 M bags	₦750 b
Soya beans	100 kg bag	₦25000	32 M bags	₦800 b
Guinea corn	100 kg bag	₦17500	200 M bags	₦3.5 t
Pine Apple	100 kg bag	₦15000	20 M bags	₦300 b
Mellon	100 kg bag	₦20000	16 M bags	₦320 b
Cowpeas	100 kg bag	₦17000	15 M bags	₦260 b
Yam	100 kg bag	₦25000	60 M bags	₦1.5 t
Millet	100 kg bag	₦27000	28 M bags	₦670 b
Wheat	100 kg bag	₦25000	34 M bags	₦850 b
Cotton	Per ton	₦135000	2 M tons	₦250 b
Rubber	Per ton	₦240000	1.7 M tons	₦400 b
Cocoa	Per ton	₦230000	3.2 M tons	₦700 b
Coffee	Per ton	₦200000	1.75 M tons	₦320 b
Mango	Per ton	₦125000	10 M tons	₦1.25 t
Cashew	Per ton	₦120000	4.5 M tons	₦510 b
Cashew nuts	Per ton	₦480000	7.5 M tons	₦3.6 t
Coconuts	Per ton	₦156000	0.5 M tons	₦75 b
Cassava	Per ton	₦150000	42 M tons	₦6.2 t
Timber	Per ton	₦250000	3.1 M tons	₦760 b

Sugar-cane	Per ton	₦160000	20 M tons	₦3.2 t
Oranges	Per ton	₦145000	20 M tons	₦2.9 t
Pepper	50 kg bag	₦15000	60 M bags	₦900 b
Shea butter	Per ton	₦150000	3.5 M tons	₦350 b
Kolanuts	Per ton	₦250000	0.9 M tons	₦240 b
TOTAL			Approximately	₦51 trillion

It should be stressed that should the projected ₦24 trillion proceed from cattle, goats, sheep, fisheries, poultry, snailry with timber, medi-plants, and livestock feeds is added to the above, it will sum up to approximately **₦75 trillion annual revenue** from the agricultural sector. Nigeria has the prospect and the potentials to double or triple this projected annual revenue if its critical infrastructures can be properly fixed to enable willing investors expand the scope and capacity of the nation’s agro-allied industries.

My Research Focus and Scholarly Contributions

Vice Chancellor sir, the issue of the role that agriculture plays in the process of economic growth of a developing nation such as Nigeria has engaged the attention of this author since the early 1990s. This began with the publication of an article titled “The Wangarawa factor in the History of Islam in Nigeria” in *Journal of International Islamic University*, Pakistan in 1990. The paper assesses the role of the Wangarawa merchants in providing a boost to the economy of pre-colonial Kano and Borgu that eventually led to the rapid growth of Islam in the region. (Akinwumi & Raji, 1990).

As part of efforts at deepening my research focus on the relevance of agriculture to the economy of pre-colonial Nigeria, a study conducted on the iron-smelting techniques and role of this important indigenous industry to the development of agriculture among the Yoruba led to the publication of an article titled: “Aspects of the Early History of the North-central Yoruba” in *West African Journal of Archaeology*, University of Ibadan (Raji, 1997).

The central role of women in the Nigerian economy has also engaged the attention of this author. My research in this direction led to the publication in 1998 of an article titled “Women in the Economy of Pre-colonial Yorubaland, West Africa” in *Africa*

Update, Central Connecticut State University, New Britain. The paper navigates the role played by Yoruba women entrepreneurs in the fields of agriculture, indigenous manufacturing techniques, market co-ordination, trade and commerce that aided the growth of the region's economy during the pre-colonial period (Raji, 1998). A further research on the notable accomplishments of the women folk in agriculture, trade and industry was provoked following the United Nations' mandate to states as from year 2000 that women should form an integral part of the MDG's targets. Through this effort, three publications emerged, namely: "Women and their role in the economy of Pre-colonial Ilorin, Northern Nigeria" (Raji, 2014), "Women and the production process in Pre-colonial Yorubaland" (Raji & Olumoh, 2014) and, "Women and their Mercantile exploits in Yorubaland before 1900: The gender factor in the distributive sector of the economy in pre-colonial Southwest Nigeria" (Raji, 2021).

Vice Chancellor sir, this author's quest to further promote historical research with a focus on the role of agriculture and agro-allied industries in national development was also vividly demonstrated by publication in 2013 of a paper titled: "Nigeria's Transformation Agenda: The role of Agriculture". The paper focuses on the neglect of agriculture by previous administrations in Nigeria since the early 1970s, with a proposal that the Goodluck Jonathan's administration could only put in place a meaningful transformation agenda if agriculture is re-positioned to take its proper place in the nation's economy (Raji, 2013). Nigeria's food security situation has also become a source of concern to this author which has provoked the publication of three works: "Agriculture and Food security Agenda of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's Administration: How Realistic?" (Raji, 2009), "Agriculture and food security situation in Nigeria" (Raji & Abejide, 2014), and "Agriculture and Food insecurity in a Developing Economy: A Study of the crises in Nigeria's Agricultural sector" (Raji & Abejide, 2015). The key issues raised are that food insecurity forms the bedrock of national insecurity in Nigeria; that food security is critical to national development and only when Nigeria makes food available and affordable for its citizens that poverty eradication, economic growth and national development can be attained; and that, the failure of all efforts at re-positioning agriculture in Nigeria had been due to inherent contradictions associated with the reforms in the agricultural sector of the Nigerian economy since independence.

Some other academic contributions to our knowledge of economic history in published books and learned journals across local, national and international outlets made by this author address a wide range of issues that relate to the role of Christian missionaries in agriculture in Lagos and other parts of Nigeria during the 19th century (Raji, 2016b); colonial economy with a focus on the emphasis placed on agriculture (i.e. cash crop production) by the British colonial regime (Raji, 2011); the poor performance of the agricultural sector which has led to a worsening food security situation in Nigeria as price of food items has continued to soar beyond the reach of many Nigerian since the return to democracy (Raji, 2015b); the relevance of occupational guilds to the sustenance of agriculture and other economic activities among the Yoruba (Raji, 2015a); an assessment of Nigeria's economic resource potentials in agriculture and agro-allied industries most especially the country's abundant crop, livestock and fishery potentials that have not been fully tapped by stakeholders even when the proceeds from agriculture could surpass the revenue derived by Nigeria from crude oil exports (Raji, 2014); and, the impact of petroleum resources on the fortunes of agriculture and the agro-allied industries in relation to the Nigerian economy (Raji & Abejide, 2016).

Vice Chancellor sir, it may be necessary at this point to simply itemise my other research works and contributions to knowledge, due to space and time constraints. These works focus on a wide range of political, religious, cultural and economic issues as well as inter-group/inter-state relations. They include "British conquest and colonial administration of Nigeria" (Lasisi, Ige & Raji, 1999), "The Growth of Islam in Pre-colonial Igbomina" (Raji, 1999a), "Yoruba Traditional Government" (Raji & Danmole, 2004), "The State of Israel: Reflections on why the Arabs could not prevent its creation in 1948" (Raji, 2012a), "Clerical Insurgence as catalyst: The significance of 1817 Muslim rebellion in the establishment of Ilorin Emirate" (Raji, 2012b), "Forms and Significance of ancient African Civilizations" (Raji, 2012d), "Shell's corporate social responsibility towards provision of Quality education in the Niger Delta region" (Raji & Abejide, 2014), "Legal Instruments for the establishment of private universities: The experience of Nigerian Muslims" (Raji, 2014), "The politics of resource control in Nigeria: Example of Niger Delta region, 1990s-2010" (Abejide, Raji & Grundlingh, 2015), "Nigerian petroleum resources management and its impact on the economy" (Raji

& Abejide, 2016a), “Igbomina-Ilorin Relations before 1900” (Raji, 2020), and “The British mining and oil regulations in colonial Nigeria, c.1914-1960: An assessment” (Raji & Abejide, 2016b), among others.

One other important component of my research contributions has to do with students’ project supervision at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. From 1993 to date (spanning through a period of 29 years), I have successfully supervised/co-supervised 2 Ph.D theses, 5 M.A. dissertations and over 150 B.A. Projects/Long essays. While 10 undergraduates and 2 Master’s degree students have been assigned to me by the HOD (History & International Studies) for project supervision in 2021/2022 academic session, the Centre for Peace and Security Studies has equally assigned to me 5 Masters and 3 Ph.D. students for supervision of their dissertations and theses respectively.

Although the views of this author, as expressed in the above-listed academic publications, along with others that are widely spread across five of the seven continents of the world, are there for government to digest, it is difficult to compel our policymakers to adopt such ideas. For most of the advanced economies of Europe, America and the emerging states of Asia, there has always been a symbiotic relationship between the university and the industry. This is one of the challenges that confront research activities in the third world, especially in a country like Nigeria where research efforts of university dons that are designed to promote or stimulate industrial growth for the purpose of national development are often neglected by government.

My Role in Al-Hikmah University Project

The laudable venture tagged Al-Hikmah University Project gradually began by the end of 1999, few months into my membership of AROIF (Nigeria). The task of getting the University registered was initially presumed to be one that would be very difficult, or rather impossible, to be accomplished. This was the mindset that I first had to disabuse and which brought me into first physical contact with the Founder, Alh. (Chief) Dr. Abdul Raheem Oladimeji, *OFR* in November, 1999. At a meeting held in his Adewole Estate residence, I gave *Baba* my words that he only needed to support me with his powerful prayers. By April 2000, I had commenced work on preparation of the

Academic Brief. The Draft Brief was ready in July, 2000 along with some required registration documents that needed to be perfected. After making necessary corrections on the registration documents, especially Academic Brief, Course Synopsis and University Law, as well as extensive consultations and submission of Application Forms, the papers were presented to NUC in June 2001 for amendments. It was at this stage that the NUC advised the Proprietor to put in place a Steering Committee for the proposed Al-Hikmah University.

As stated earlier, few months after the Steering Committee for the proposed Al-Hikmah University was constituted, opportunities started to fly in, especially Lecturing-job offers from two universities in the South-South. It was almost a time for me to start celebrating my relocation to the South-South when a note of caution was sounded by Dr. N.I. Raji (of blessed memory) that I was central to the entire (then proposed) Al-Hikmah University project, that I would be required to defend all the 'books' of the proposed University (i.e. Academic Brief, Course Synopsis, Environmental Impact Assessment Report {EIAR}, University Law, and Physical Master Plan, etc.) before the NUC's Special Committee on Private Universities (SCOPU), that I must see Al-Hikmah as Allah's own project, that I needed to stand by the Founder and ensure that he secured a Licence from the Federal Government. I took to Dr. N.I. Raji's advice, served on both the Steering Committee (August 2001 – July 2003) and the Project Implementation Committee (August 2003 – November, 2005) with a clear sense of sincerity and dedication to duty. Those who had a wind of my UNIBEN and Wilberforce Island offers were shocked that I turned down those offers, as they believed I was leaving certainty for uncertainty. As we were moving from pillar to post all in a bid to register the then proposed Al-Hikmah University, many people out there also thought we were not serious, coupled with their negative perception of the Founder or Promoter as a dealer in arms and ammunition. It was quite surprising that some of such people who did not know where to hide their faces when Al-Hikmah University was finally licensed by the Federal Government were later offered Sabbatical and other juicy appointments by this same University.

As at January 2006 when Al-Hikmah University effectively took-off, I was privileged to have joyfully rendered a six-year service (January 2000 – December 2005)

Pro bono (Fissebilillahi) to support the Founder and make this great Project become a reality. Al-Hikmah Project is quite dear to me. Perhaps this is why from the point of take-off to date, successive administrations have continued to place high premium on my services in terms of value-addition. These include: Pioneer Head, History Department from January 2006 till April 2009; Pioneer Director of Academic Planning (DAP) from June 2006 to July 2011 (during which period the 9 degree programmes we presented for the NUC Accreditation in November 2008 recorded 100% success); and, combined DAP's role with the Directorate of GNS from 2006 to 2010 during which time the Unit facilitated the production of its first and only Book ever till date titled *Essential Topics in General Studies for Undergraduates*, edited by Prof. R.O. Lasisi, Dr. (now Prof.) A.O.Y Raji and Dr. R.K. Omoloso. As the DAP, I also ensured the publication of the university-wide Academic programme, the 1st edition in 2008, and a revised (2nd) edition in 2011.

Having served three administrations as DAP, the University Senate, based on the proposal from the Vice Chancellor, Prof. S.A. Abdulkareem, and the full support of the Founder, Alhaji (Chief) Dr. Abdul Raheem Oladimeji, OFR, approved my appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellor in April, 2011, and I was privileged to have served in that capacity for two terms up till May, 2015. This was the era when Al-Hikmah University witnessed phenomenal transformation as seventeen (17) notable capital projects were initiated, completed and commissioned.

Community Service

Vice Chancellor sir, my zeal for selfless service to the community started to blossom right from my undergraduate days. This began in 1984 when I was elected as Secretary of the Young Muslims Association, Aran-Orin branch. Barely two years later, I was also elected as the National Secretary of Aran-Orin Students' Union, and served in that capacity for two years which brought series of reforms to the Union and the community. More important was the fact that through my initiative, the Union was able to produce Volume 2 of *Alaran's Voice* – the official Magazine of the Union which had its first edition published in 1967. Again, from 1986 to 1988 when I served as the Editor-in-Chief of *The Chronicler* (the Official Journal of the Students Historical Society,

University of Ilorin), I ensured that the Editorial Board rolled out three Volumes of the Journal within the two years of my stewardship.

Having served as the Examination Officer for the Department of History, University of Ilorin from 1993 to 1999, my community service focused on Al-Hikmah University project as from the year 2000. Throughout the 5-long years of registration, I deployed my intellectual, physical and material resources (both day and night) to ensure that the Proprietor's dream came to reality. Part of what I have sacrificed all for the sake of promoting community service and Al-Hikmah University project were the juicy offers from two universities. Vice Chancellor sir, I wish to say aloud that I have no regrets for giving full support to the Founder of this great University for the realisation of his dream.

During the year 2013 when a directive from our regulatory body was going to affect students' enrolment, I quickly rose to the challenge; and with the support and encouragement of the Founder, the Registrar, other Directors, and the Governing Council of Al-Hikmah University, the Abdulraheem College of Advanced Studies (ACAS), Igbaja was established to serve as a feeder for the University. Under my leadership, the state of the art facilities in terms of standard Lecture halls, good hostel accommodation and very beautiful landscaping made ACAS secure from A.B.U Zaria a recognition as the leading IJMB (A' Level) centre in Nigeria. Apart from its role in human capital development, ACAS has provided job opportunities to several categories of Nigerians. For upwards of 8 years on, ACAS has continued to project Al-Hikmah's enrolment drive as graduates of the College are always granted Direct Entry admission, and from which this University, from 2014 to 2021, has realised an income of over N1.5 billion. For the 2021/2022 admissions, ACAS alone would support Al-Hikmah University with more than 200 freshers, thus making institution the most reliable affiliate of this University.

As Director, Centre for Summer Studies (June 2016-May 2020), I laid a solid foundation for the Centre and made it to be self-sustaining. In fact, the Centre was the first in this University to have the resources for an official car which was purchased in 2019. One of the accomplishments of the Centre since it was established has been to ensure that many potential "spill-over" students graduated at record time and with good class of degree. More important is the fact that the Centre not only met but also surpassed its annual revenue targets for four consecutive years under my watch. The Centre also,

for the four years of my stewardship, regularly put smiles on the faces of all Al-Hikmah University staff (academic and non-teaching), including DUAKLIN staff.

From October 2020 to date, I have tried to deliver on my mandate as the Dean of Postgraduate School by injecting quality and standard into Al-Hikmah's Postgraduate admission through a qualifying examination/screening process; offering transfer admission to those who, for one reason or the other, had over-stayed on their Postgraduate programmes in other universities; making Al-Hikmah University Postgraduate programmes to be tuition-friendly; advising Management through Senate to mount more programmes – an initiative that has increased the number of Postgraduate programmes in Al-Hikmah University from 13 in July 2020 to 58 as at September, 2021; and, ensuring that Postgraduate students complete their programmes at record time. These initiatives really helped the Postgraduate School to surpass its admission target for 2020/2021 academic session. This feat will, hopefully, be sustained in years to come. Again, as the School is already concluding arrangements for the publication of a detailed and university-wide postgraduate Prospectus for Al-Hikmah University, the Postgraduate School will soon, *Insha Allah*, roll out the drums to celebrate the first set of Doctoral degree (Ph.D) graduands, under the able, forthright and dynamic leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Noah Yusuf, *fSPSP*.

It is equally relevant to inform the distinguished personalities present here today that three sensitive University Committees the Chairmanship of which the current administration had saddled me with in the last one year have forwarded their reports to Management. These are Committees on University Research Policy, Review of Staff Conditions of Service, and 5-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2026). A full implementation of Reports of the Committees would make Al-Hikmah University become a hub for promotion of genuine research and innovation; make the university attain a more competitive standing to attract and retain the best set of academic and non-teaching personnel; and also, reposition Al-Hikmah University to move to the next level such that by the time the current administration's tenure runs to a close, this great citadel of learning would have fully attained a world-class status.

Certainly, the urge to assist academic colleagues to grow through research and publications has made me to develop keen interest in mentorship. This role began to

manifest as from 2007 when I, in consultation with a colleague (Prof. L.F. Oladimeji), initiated the floating of *Al-Hikmah Journal of Humanities* - the first of its kind in this University. From 2009 to 2016, I served on the Editorial Board of *Springboard Journal*, and from 2017 to date, I have been serving as Chairman, Editorial Board of *Springboard Journal*. I was also a key figure in the debate that provoked the 2012 Conference on Deregulation held at Al-Hikmah University which resulted in the publication of the book titled: *Deregulation of the Downstream Sector of the Nigerian Oil Industry*. From 2016 to date, I have been serving as Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Hikmah Journal of History and International Relations*; and, I also serve on the Editorial Board of *The Nexus: An International Journal of Al-Hikmah University*.

Perhaps, it is important to state that at the inception of this University, I championed the establishment of Al-Hikmah Staff Trust Fund (The Co-operative) and served as its pioneer Chairman for 8 years (2006-2014), along with my able Secretary, Dr. W.O. Salawdeen. We used our initiative and resources to lay a solid foundation for the Co-operative Society from which staff of this University have continued to benefit tremendously from inception to date. From an initial 15 members in April 2006, several hundreds of Al-Hikmah University personnel have now become enlisted as members of the Staff Trust Fund.

My role in Abdul Raheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation (AROIF), Nigeria has equally been noteworthy. Almost 23 years ago, specifically July 1999, membership of AROIF was extended to me, having understood and shared the philosophy, vision and mission of the Foundation. After I have served as an active member of AROIF from 1999 to 2007, and on the recommendation of the President-General and the distinguished members of the Foundation, it is important to state that from August 2008 to July 2012, I was privileged to serve as Secretary-General of (AROIF) Nigeria – the official Proprietor of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin. From January 2018 to date, I have been serving as Chairman of AROIF (Nigeria), to the glory of Allah (SWT). Some notable accomplishments of AROIF in recent times under my chairmanship include the attraction of more members to the organisation, the regular monthly prayer to provide spiritual support and guidance to the University, co-ordination of national and international support for the University, provision of scholarship to support indigent students, and

regular *Da'wah* programmes/humanitarian services to the needy, the vulnerable and the less-privileged in the society.

At community and state levels, my training as a Historian has led to the production of the Book titled *History of Aran-Orin, c.1700-Present* published in 2019 by Aran-Orin Progressive Union (APU). Earlier in 2002, I served as the only historian on the 3-Man Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the *Orangun* of Ila Chieftaincy Dispute. The Report of the Committee has assisted the Government of the State of Osun in restoring a lasting peace in the ancient kingdom of Ila.

Epilogue

Vice-Chancellor sir, it is obvious that Nigeria has not genuinely commenced the process towards national food security, industrial growth and real economic advancement. The history of development of nation-states shows that there is a symbiotic relationship between man and agriculture such that as long as man exists, and the world population continues to grow, the demand for agricultural products would always increase. This is a basic historical fact that has continued to put the developed countries of Europe and America, with the emerging states of Asia, on their toes to give agriculture a prime place in national development. Conversely, the long years of neglect of agriculture and other key sectors of the economy seemed to have made Nigeria to rely on food importation to feed its ever-growing population, with crippling effects on employment generation, foreign exchange earnings and balance of payments. The fact is that Nigerian leaders have refused to learn from history.

The lead that Europe took ahead of Africa from the Age of the Enlightenment up to the era of the Industrial Revolution, placed agriculture at the centre-stage. Agriculture provided the raw materials and other essentials that powered the large industrial estates in Britain, France etc. before and after the 19th century. Within Europe also, German economy which, after World War II was in ruins due to the gore of the Holocaust and other atrocities perpetrated under the command of Adolf Hitler, resuscitated as from the 1950s with emphasis on large-scale agriculture for domestic needs, and for exports. Today, the German economy is the largest in Europe, and one of the largest in the world (Ibelema, 2021, p.48).

Much like Europe, agriculture has ever remained a key component of the American economy. Since the early years of American independence, successive administrations had made agriculture the cornerstone of US national development. In fact, President Thomas Jefferson in the early 1800s gave agriculture a special focus to promote self-sufficiency through rigorous industrialisation that aided rapid transformation of the agricultural sector, such as the Fibre industrial plants in New Orleans, the Carolina Textile Industries, and the Slater's Mills in Rhode Island (Sanders, 2003). By 1850, several other manufacturing plants had also emerged for the processing of leather, rubber and beverages, livestock feeds, flour milling and confectioneries for local needs, and for exports. Unlike Nigeria that abandoned agriculture for crude oil after the Civil War with a declaration to the world by its leader in 1975 that "Nigeria's problem is not that of money, but how to spend it" (Olashore, 1991), the post-civil war reforms in the United States placed much emphasis on agriculture as an integral part of the national economy.

Vice Chancellor sir, Asian nations such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have become rich over the last five decades by diversifying into microchips, semiconductors, rubber products, refined palm oil, beverages etc. through improved technology in agribusiness (Yew, 2000). Such agro-allied products are components of value-added export-oriented agriculture that has been in vogue since year 2000. Currently, 75 percent of global trade in agriculture is in semi-processed/processed products. It is sad as Africa is largely absent in this market; Nigeria exports only raw materials to Asia and the West.

Nigeria, to avert hunger, poverty and destitution, must operate a vibrant and robust political economy with capacity to respond to global changes. Such type of economy should make Nigeria become an agribusiness super-hub within the next ten years by attracting huge investments in fertilizer projects required to expand farmers' output. Thus, good access to quality and affordable fertilizer and other critical but neglected inputs are game changers in Nigeria's push for food security. Experts at the 10th Annual Argus Africa Fertilizer Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco in March 2019 warned that Nigeria's and indeed Africa's agricultural production must be more than double by 2050 in order to meet an ever-growing demand for food (Edochie, 2019). This 2019 assertion

is instructive to Nigeria for which the World Bank and WHO have projected a 400million population by the year 2050.

To cap it up, rural revitalisation strategy should top government's reform agenda. As hardworking and resilient people, Nigerians should individually and collectively make a resolve to reposition agriculture by developing keen interest in this all-important project. Perhaps, the starting point should be from the courtyard or garden in individual homes. Growing pepper, tomatoes, vegetables, okro, lettuce etc. would help reduce our daily/weekly expenses on those essential items that now cost a fortune in the market. For Al-Hikmah University, Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, the bit to offer here is that as a Faculty of Agriculture is already in place, Faculty members and the students of Agriculture must be put on their toes to make Al-Hikmah University become the food basket of the state. At present, that Faculty can generate N0.35 billion annually. This can be a reality as from 2023.

Set within the premise above, farmers in Igbaja district alone have the capacity to generate ten times the income that Al-Hikmah's Faculty of Agriculture can raise. With the right motivation, Ifelodun LGA, and by implication each of the nearly 800 LGAs, with other development councils, across the nation has the potential to generate between 50 and 75 billion naira annually from agriculture. Apart from the revenue that would accrue to local governments, millions of Nigerians would be gainfully employed or empowered as job-creators. While great revenue fortune awaits the federal, state and local governments in this industry, agriculture also has the prospect to contribute about 62 percent to the nation's GDP. Therefore, Nigeria's huge potentials in agriculture and agro-allied industries that are worth ₦75 trillion annual revenue (approx. 5-times the country's yearly federal budget) readily makes the agricultural sector a goldmine that should not be neglected or sidelined into a dysfunctional state.

Conclusion

Our amiable Vice Chancellor and Chairman of this occasion, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, this Lecture has assessed Nigeria's agricultural endowments, and the extent to which we have willfully neglected the potentials, to our collective chagrin. It is already a national embarrassment that even as Nigeria holds

Africa's largest agricultural potentials, poverty and hunger ravage the land while many Nigerians still rely on imported food items for survival. The sheer neglect of Nigeria's huge agricultural potentials is also peculiar to other key sectors: oil and gas, power/energy, mining/solid minerals, transport sector, direct/indirect taxes, tourism industry etc. For instance, the Manufacturing Association of Nigeria (MAN) has lamented that industries in Nigeria lose over \$27 billion (₦13 trillion) annually due to unstable electricity. The World Bank also attests that poor electricity sets back Nigerian economy by \$29 billion annually (Bassey, 2021). Although both the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and Diaspora Remittances pump over ₦20 trillion into the nation's treasury annually (Popoola, 2021, p.15), such funds are often mismanaged – a matter for debate at an academic forum on another day! This only affirms that Nigeria has been badly served by its leaders as shown in their colossal ineptitude to manage its revenue and value-based potentials for national development.

The increased oil-export quantity after the Civil War undoubtedly scuttled Nigeria's agriculture production through lack of visionary planning for sustainable development (Raji, 2009). Perhaps, if this nation had got visionary leaders, crude oil proceeds should have represented a significant value-addition to national revenue pool rather than allow oil exports push agriculture out of relevance.

A genuine and sustained focus on agriculture would also reduce Nigeria's over-dependence on "easy-come easy-go" oil fund. The current structure in which oil revenue sharing rather than productive activity is entrenched is an antithesis of economic logic as it only makes all tiers of government to be lazy and indolent. It has provided a veritable avenue for politicians and the elite to exhibit their greed for power and money (Abagu, 2009). Thus, Nigerian politicians expend lavishly the nation's oil revenue to attract patronage and entrench cronyism as the next election, not the present or the next generation is their mission or interest. The *Economist* (2021) has hinted that oil has a bleak future for Nigeria and other oil-rich nations, much as Allah detests over-dependence on a single resource potential (Qur'an 25:68 and 28:77). Oil could dry up as Allah, the Almighty, has assured us in Qur'an 21:34 that "all matters will cease to exist at its time". Oil is much unlike agriculture that had sustained Nigeria in the past much as it is very crucial to its survival today, and on it this country's future surely depends.

Nigeria's agricultural and other resource potentials must be fully explored and utilised to benefit Nigeria and its people, as stated in Qur'an 5:66 and 34:10-11. Agriculture is a major and most certain path to industrial growth, economic sustainability and national development. For all advanced economies of Europe, China, America and Asia, agriculture plays pivotal role in their industrialization breakthroughs, as Adam Smith, Richard Current, Frank Freidel and other notable economic historians affirm.

It is equally apposite to state that a country, through its government, must design appropriate mechanisms to protect the interest of its farmers at all times. China is a vivid example of a nation that places a high premium on the protection of its farmers. Apart from the provision of over 100 million hectares of land for rice and corn annually, China's Agriculture Ministry co-ordinates the deployment of modern technology with minimal human effort but maximum output, strengthens disaster relief, prevention and control of crop diseases and pests to mitigate the impact of disasters in order to ensure an annual grain output target of 6.5 billion metric tons. Thus, even as COVID-19 pandemic gripped all nations, China recorded a bumper food harvest in 2020. Again, China is already on the right trajectory to have another bumper harvest in 2022 in spite of the severe and terrible floods that buffeted the Chinese province of Henan recently (Izaq, 2021, p. 27). Within Africa, Botswana is a country where farmers enjoy full government support to raise output. The Nigerian government, especially at the federal level, only needs to initiate appropriate policy, stem corruption, and be well-focused and strategic with active private sector participation to harness the huge potentials in the agricultural sector.

Recommendations for Nigeria to Meet National Output Targets in the Agricultural Sector

Vice Chancellor sir, perhaps the big question to ask at this point is that: Can we continue to remain in this sorry state as a people and as a nation? Certainly, the answer is NO. We must take concrete steps to revitalise agriculture as the diverse opportunities that abound within the agricultural industry's value-chain had waited too long for the Nigerian state and its people. To further delay the process of tapping into these

opportunities would only erode Nigeria's quest to attain economic growth and national development. Therefore, this author offers the following recommendations:

- i. Policy reform and consistency: Need for proper planning/implementation, policy consistency and improvement in agricultural policy design, reform and goal-getting mechanisms;
- ii. Adequate funding: Genuine farmers must have access to capital and credit facilities to enable them raise output;
- iii. Improvement and/or expansion of agricultural land holdings to enhance increased access to this critical factor of production;
- iv. Use of modern technology in agriculture: Need to boost farmers' productive capacity with the use of improved farming techniques, e.g. tractors for clearing, cultivation and planting that would ensure departure from the use of hoes, cutlasses and other obsolete farm tools; use of modern and functional irrigation system to ensure optimal utilisation of the country's water;
- v. Development of a functional and realistic national fertilizers policy that would make this core farm input environment-friendly, affordable and available to Nigerian farmers all-year round to improve crop yield and raise the level of output to meet our immediate, medium and long-term national food-demand and export targets (Raji, 2009);
- vi. Sustainable integrated rural development strategy to provide the right motivation for youths to become actively engaged in crop and/or livestock production and processing;
- vii. Provision of quality, accessible and affordable farm inputs better yields e.g., improved seedlings for crop production, and vaccines for fisheries, livestock i.e. animal species and poultry birds;
- viii. Need to address erosion scourge and incessant flood through proper channelisation of running water;
- ix. Active private sector participation in funding agriculture and provision of critical infrastructures;

- x. Need to genuinely address the prevailing national security challenges especially those posed by *Boko Haram* insurgency, herdsmen, kidnappers and armed banditry across the country;
- xi. Good produce management through the use of standard herbicides and pesticides to reduce on-farm and post-harvest losses that often diminish the quantum of national agricultural output;
- xii. Need to give relevance to Agriculture in the Nigerian educational system through a review of the nation's primary and secondary school curricula to accommodate the teaching and learning (with practical components) of agricultural science as a compulsory subject up to the Junior Secondary School level, coupled with promotion of entrepreneurial skill acquisition;
- xiii. Farmers' Cooperatives, most especially in the rural and semi-urban settlements, must be revitalised and given the needed support by government, the organised private sector and financial institutions to enhance members' productive capacity;
- xiv. Need for Nigeria to embrace industrialisation to meet domestic needs and to attract patronage for its huge agricultural export potentials;
- xv. Provision of functional agricultural insurance scheme for commercial or large-scale farmers to assist and reassure investors that, in the event of huge farm losses through natural or man-made disasters, such losses could be mitigated;
- xvi. Nigeria must develop strong institutions that would engender a value re-orientation through a renewed sense of patriotism to make all Nigerians patronise Nigeria-made agricultural products rather than their foreign equivalents, e.g. rice; and,
- xvii. Need for clear-cut mandate to a plethora of specialised universities and agricultural research institutes, and good follow-up actions to ensure that such institutions deliver on their core or assigned mandates.

Vice Chancellor sir, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, a full implementation of the above-stated recommendations really requires a genuine political will on the part of government and other critical stakeholders. For Nigeria to attain its full agricultural potentials that will propel economic growth, it must reposition

agriculture with greater investment, active private sector participation and the adoption of relevant technology. This is the only credible option to be adopted in order to eradicate hunger, reduce poverty rate and create jobs for the over 2 million Nigerian youths who enter the labour market every year. Government cannot continue to wobble and fumble while the agricultural sector's MDAs simply see themselves as expenditure centres, rather than as centres of revenue generation, value addition and quality service delivery. If government at all levels, however, would not be ready to do the needful to make agriculture the pivot of the Nigerian economy, the private sector must rise to the challenge and take the lead. We must avert the looming catastrophe by utilising the huge potentials in agriculture to fight hunger, poverty and unemployment, in order to build a great and prosperous country.

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