



Assessment of Youth Involvement in Agricultural Production: The Case of Sabon-Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

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This study assessed of youth involvement in agricultural production in Sabon Gari Local Government Area. The data used for this study were collected using interview schedule administered to 112 respondents who were selected through multi-stage sampling procedure. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages and means were used to analyze the data. The result revealed that majority (95.5%) of the respondents were males; between 26–30 years of age (33.9%), had formal education (46.4%), married (66.0%); had household size of 1–5 (54.4%); had farm size of 1–2 ha for crops (57.2%), and had a hard size of 1-6 cattle (85.7%). Also, the study also revealed that 69.6% of the respondents were involved in crop production with about (1-5 tonnes) output of major grains. Furthermore, constraints limiting youth involvement in agricultural production were identified as inadequate capital (M=3.8); inadequate modern implements (M=3.7); difficulty in accessing loan (M=3.7); and inadequate extension services (M=3.6). The study recorded effective involvement of youth in agricultural production (79.4%). The study recommends that the youth should form themselves into functional cooperatives so that they can mobilize funds for their farming activities. Furthermore, more extension workers should be employed to enhance extension services delivery especially in fisheries in the study area.

1. Introduction

The insignificant state of youth participation in agricultural production in Nigeria has been a matter of great concern among agriculturist, agricultural researchers as well as administrators. This is because the present high state of decline in agricultural production has dimmed the hope of increasing the level of agricultural production in Nigeria. One of the major setbacks of agricultural development programmes is attributed to the inability of the Federal Government to integrate youth into the main stream of the numerous agricultural development programmes implementation over the years (Ijere, 1992). For a country to attain food sustainability; the agricultural sector must vibrant and the youth encouraged imbibing farming as a noble profession. The poor state of agricultural productivity and low esteem of agriculture has manifested in rural-urban migration, and low interest in agriculture by

the youths. Lack of industrial firms to process agricultural products and skilled labour among others has led to worsening Nigeria food deficit. The realization of this situation led the government to embark on ways to involving youth in agriculture production at secondary school education which made practical agriculture a core subject at the junior and senior secondary school level and agricultural science as a vocational subject.

Youth have the potential to overcome some of the major constraints to expanding agricultural production in developed countries such as pest control, feeding, genetic improvement and protection against predators because they are often more open to new ideas and techniques than adult farmers. They perform an important role in raising awareness on different subjects (Ijere, 1989). Mobilizing the youth for national development is a common phenomenon amongst the western and developing countries. In

such countries as Great Britain, Netherland, Denmark, Germany, the United States of America and Tanzania, the involvement of youth in agricultural production and empowering the citizen and youth to always meet the full needs and deep seated aspiration to be self-sufficient in food production. However, since the youth are the future of any country, it is useful to develop them into patriotic citizens' future progressive farmers and better citizens. The youth's clubs are nurseries for them.

The youth at present, constitute about 60% of Nigeria's population and have the over the years made sufficient contribution to national development. Unfortunately, the present environment makes it even more difficult to explore their full potential in agricultural production. In order to stimulate the interest of our youth in agricultural production, government has to put in place certain measures that will eliminate the associated constraints in agricultural sector. Involvement of youth in agricultural production has suffered nationally in recent years especially in the rural areas. Despite the fast growing opportunities in the agricultural sector, it is alarming and quite incredible to see many rural youth opting out of farming in search of competitive existing white-collar jobs in cities, leading to unprecedented level of rural-urban migration. This is obviously a potent threat to the aspiration of government to achieve food security (Russell, 2001). The overall effect of this scenario is that Nigeria is going hungry by day and resources that could be used to improve on our infrastructure are spent on importation of food into the country. There is therefore on compelling need to boost and sustain youth interest and participation in agricultural production activities.

In Nigeria, it has been observed that a critical issue in the agricultural platform today is poor altitude of youth toward agricultural production. Youth's disillusionment and endemic poverty unemployment is high in most our rural areas in spite of abundant supply of graduate of agriculture. A situation which left about 90 percent of the food supply to aged non-literate farmers. A study in Southwestern Nigeria investigated the level of youth participation activities, interest and the satisfaction. The study revealed that most of the agricultural activities attracted very low interest with no satisfaction derived. The study further showed the socio-economic variables such as family size, years of formal education, farming experience, income, and gender were related to the youth attitude (Okorie, 1977).

In general, an unfavorable altitude of youth towards agricultural production is developing across

many countries. In many rural areas, youth are relinquishing old and adopting new altitude or modifying existing altitudes towards farming in response to the numerous factors already discussed. Therefore, youth will require proper orientation before they can appreciate agricultural and get fully involved.

The implication of this recent trend is that developing countries like Nigeria whose economy rely solely on importation of grain particularly rice, for the feeding of their teeming populations have to go back to the drawing board to formulate more pragmatic policies capable of turning the agricultural production pendulum back to their side. The agricultural future of most of the developing countries may be bleak if the bulk of the agricultural production efforts are left in the hand of aged subsistent farmers who presently constitute the major farming population. The productivity level of the aged farmers cannot meet the food and fiber needs of the rapidly growing population and the aged farmers will definitely phase out on the account of age.

The involvement of youth in agricultural production has failed to gain much recognition in that youth perceived agriculture as a non-lucrative enterprise in contrast with some other forms of enterprise which they considered more profiting, such as the commercial motor-cycling. Among other problems are lacks of logistic support by the stake holders, poor governance, rural-urban migration in search of better job, problems of land tenure system, a profession that is generally look down upon because it is seen to involve long hours of physical work with poor income. However the population of rural farmers are ageing and yet youth still sees agriculture as a going back to tradition farming in spite of abundance of employment opportunities therein. It is therefore necessary to know the level of involvement of youth in agricultural production in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area. The information obtained in this study would help to increase awareness of the actual involvement of youth in agricultural production; hence appropriate policies can be framed in order to enhance their involvement as a necessity for achieving food security.

Youth are regarded as the young people. They are nonetheless a transient category of human beings as sooner or later they leave this category. The definition of who a youth is however depends on who is defining it, for what purpose and in what context (educational, social, religious, legal cultural etc.). The United National defines youth as an individual between 15-24 years of age. This is based on the fact that children attain puberty from between age 12 to 14. Thus by 15 years of age, every individual must have attained puberty and hence no longer a child.

UNICEF (1995) however, categorizes individual from age 15-18 years as children. There is thus interplay of the dividing line. The youth can be regarded as people between the age group of 12 to 30 (Commonwealth, 1976), they are largely unmarried and economically dependent upon their parents or guardian. They may be within school or out of school, male or female, employed or unemployed or serving and apprenticeship.

In Nigerian context a youth is defined as an individual between the age of 15-30 years as the National Youth Service Corps programme recruits individual within this age group (Sanda 1976). However, Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991) regards youth as those between 16 and 40 years. This is further divided into categories i.e. 16-30 and 31-40 (Matured youth). They are of the opinion that a man within the age bracket has much time, energy and opportunities to accomplish his goal in life in consonance with the saying 'a fool at 40 is a fool forever'.

The psychologists on their part conceptualized a youth as an individual in which his/her time, energies and potentials are unable to fund full employment. They are those people with zeal, exuberance, dynamism and volatile in nature. They are high risk takers, want quick result and are more geographically mobile amending easily to change. Thus an individual possessing these attributes, regardless of age can be categorized as a youth. It can therefore be seen that the latter part of childhood i.e. the late teens and the early part of adulthood is regarded as the youthful period.

Youth are major clientele group needed for agricultural transformation in Nigeria. Thus the preparation of any nation for productive life depends on the policies and programmes designed for youth. Studies have shown that children and youth contribute significantly to agriculture (Mgbada, (2000). Aluko and Laogun *et al.* (2000) discovered that 90 percent of youth were found on farms after school hours and duties holiday in rural south west Nigeria. Since youth are energetic with vigor and prone to depletion of this youthful labour force in agricultural production due to rural-urban migration, as youth migrate to make a living for themselves in the urban areas. This is as a result of their disenchantment with agricultural production due to its high energy low income ratio experience over the years from involvement in house hold subsistence farming.

The level of participation and involvement of youth can be seen in both the number of hours spent and the kind of farming activities. Adesope (1999) reported active participation of youth in community development activities of which

agriculture is inclusive. Jibowo and Sotomi (1996) and Roy (2003) collectively reported active participation and involvement of youth and noted the youth active involvement in agricultural production in their research. Adewale *et al.* (2003) noted that the high proportion of youth participated in making ridges and weeding. More than 50% of their respondents took part in planting, application of fertilizer and spraying of chemical. In another study by Roy (2003), it identified agricultural activities such as vegetable, arable crop farming as areas where youth prefer to acquire training. Similarly, Ugwoke *et al.* (2003) in his finding concluded that majority of the rural youth (53 percent) engaged in mixed farming as against planting, only arable crops, (37 percent) and rearing only farm animal (10 percent). The high proportion of respondents in mixed farming may be security against crops or livestock failure. It also keeps the farmer busy all year round. Furthermore, the farm that youth participated in most operation especially bush clearing (81 percent), cultivation (83 percent), planting (84 percent), weeding (79 percent) and Harvesting (74 percent) amongst other. The implication of the above finding centered of the creation of right incentives for youth to enable them improved on agricultural production, since the zeal to participation and involvement in agricultural production is them.

Furthermore, Adewale *et al.* (2003) discovered that all 300 farm children interviewed participated in making ridges and weeding, which further affirmed evidence of youth participation and involvement. More than half of the youth took part in planting, application of fertilizer and spraying of chemicals. Youth can therefore be said to actively contribute to agricultural production through direct involvement and participation in farming activities. In a separate and related study conducted in Imo state of Nigeria, Ogbuke *et al.* (2003) gathered that all of the 70 youth interviewed, majority of the youth (67.5 percent) were part-time farmers while only 34.5 percent were full time farmers.

There are number of factors that affect youth involvement in agricultural production. One of these factors is knowledge. Knowledge has become a key factor in influencing perception and this trend is set to intensify. In the 21st century, knowledge accumulation and application will drive youth perception. According to Asenso-oyere *et al.* (2008) knowledge plays an important play on important role in agricultural production and economic development.

Previous studies too have conducted that those with lower income are more attracted to be part of agricultural community (Roy 2003). Agricultural production is one of the alternatives that they could

choose from. In a recent statistic by the World Bank, it revealed that almost 72% of the poor lived in the areas and as we know the rural areas is always associated with agriculture community.

Also in some countries like the USA and Canada empirical evidence revealed some factors responsible for youth changing altitude toward agricultural production. In these countries recent legislation on adolescent employment or child labour etc, was viewed as capable of further distracting youth attention from agriculture. While government insists that the law is to protect the right of children, many farmers held contrary opinions. Government policies often bypass the youth. For example in Pakistan, although they constitute one fourth of the population, youth face numerous problems. Apart from absence of effective youth development program, the agricultural extension services generally ignore the youth as stakeholders. Idrees (2000) believed that such neglect is one of the major reasons for many young people's low level of involvement in agricultural production.

Another factor which affects youth involvement in agricultural production is lack of land ownership which refers to lack of land to be used on a sustainable level owing to lack of ability to own it on a permanent basis. Land ownership is a deleterious problem in agricultural production and is not limited to age or gender. In order to drastically improve food production, we need to put some policies in place immediately to among others facilities or liberalize land ownership by those interested in agricultural production Onuche (1998).

One of the major factors affecting youth in agricultural production is attributed to educational curriculum which does not offer them the appropriate skills required for rural livelihood. Their education does not add much to the indigenous production practices Kibusika and Semana, (2000). They also stated that while there are general problems of inadequate extension services, the youth face a peculiar problem of lack of access and control of the basis production resources like land. Because of this, many youth did not have freedom to decide on what agricultural enterprise they wish to engage, and sometimes, they do not have direct control over the benefits of their efforts. In addition, (Kibusika and semana (2000) stated that youth lack access to capital to invest in important agricultural chemical and irrigation. While these are lays to modernization of agriculture, the youth with highest potential to try out these technologies have no access to them. They find it difficult to access the available rural credit facilities because they are regarded as dependent and have no securities required to acquire loan.

Ugwoke *et al.* (2003), in their study discovered that the problems constraining youth involvement as perceived by the respondent include such factors as low capital outlay, risk and uncertainty, drudgery, and problem of land acquisition. Other problems identified by the researchers include lack of social amenities, farm location and parental restriction. Those various observation are in consonance with a separate research conducted by Adewale *et al.* (2003) which revealed that of the 300 youth studied, 50.0 percent reported that farming as a professional is a very wire warding because after the farmer must have gone through the back-breaking vigor of primary food production, he is forced to sell his produce at give-away price due to perishable nature of his produce. Another notable proportion of the youth observed the lack of farm inputs are the major problems of farming activities in their community, while others perceived lack of capital for extension as a problem.

In a study conducted by Mohammed (2003) whose study revealed that of 80 youth interviewed, 33.0 percent of them agreed that lack of incentive (material and finance) constituted severe constrains in their participation in agricultural production.

The poor satisfaction of youth with farm life is a bad development for agricultural development since the youth who are supposed to make agriculture as one of their best career are not happy with the way agricultural production is being practiced in their communities. Auta (1992) observed that the youth have been neglected over the years in their premises of erecting agrarian society. Adeyemi and Adekunmi (2006) in their study (assessment of rural youth involvement in arable crop production activities) observed that majority of the problems constraining development of agricultural production could be based on lack of social amenities and farm inputs.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to assess the involvement of youth in agricultural production in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area.

The specific objectives are to:

- i. examine the socio-economic characteristics of the youth;
- ii. identify the type of agricultural production they are involved in;
- iii. assess the level of their agricultural production; and
- iv. identify the factors/constraints militating against youth involvement in agricultural production.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in some selected villages of Sabon-Gari Local Government area of Kaduna State. Sabon-Gari Local Government area was carved out of the old Zaria local government in 1989. It has a total land area of about 2,234 square Km with a population of about 293,270 (2006 Census). It lies on a plateau of about 2200ft (660m) above sea level and it is located between latitude $11^{\circ}11'N$ and $11^{\circ}11'E$ of the equator. Its longitude is between $7^{\circ}50'$ and $7^{\circ}40'E$ of the Green Which Meridian. In addition the area is located at about 74 Km North of the Kaduna State capital. Sabon-Gari Local Government area lies within the region of the tropical savannah climate with distinct wet and dry season. The average annual rainfall is about 1000 – 2000mm and the rain pattern is marked by the dry season from November - April. In this area, the rainfall reaches its peak by the month of August. The seasonal character of rainfall influences the vegetation cover which is green in the wet season and pale brown in the dry season (IAR, 1994).

The main inhabitants of the study area are Hausa and Fulani with a host of other tribes. Farming and trading are among the major economic activities undertaken by the inhabitants. The predominant language in the study area are Hausa and Fulani and the indigenes are mostly Muslims. Apart from that, a number of different ethnic groups who from different part of the country formed part of the population and from these, other tribes such as Yoruba, Igbo, Kataf, Gwari etc also constitute the population.

The youth in study area engaged in agricultural activities such as crop production, livestock management, and marketing of agricultural produce such as maize, cowpea, groundnut, okra, tomato, pepper, onions, rice sorghum soybeans etc however, apart from agriculture, the youth also engage in other activities such as trading, civil service, commercial motorcycle, tailoring, leather craft, mechanics, electrician, welding while others are students.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select respondents for this study. Four wards were purposively selected due to high number of youth. They were: Bomo, Jama'a, Basawa and Dogarawa ward. Two communities were randomly selected from each Ward totaling eight communities. Proportionate sample of respondents were selected randomly using balloting systems. In all, 112 respondents were selected for the study. Structured interview schedule was used to elicit relevant information from the respondents. Personal observation was also used. Secondary data was obtained from literature, textbooks, internets, journals

and other published items related to agricultural production. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean, and percentages.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. Result shows that majority of the youth were male (95.5%); Muslims (97.3); and married (66%). This implies that agricultural production was dominated by male folk and the female might have stayed at home to take care of domestic activities in the study area. Also, majority had secondary school education (51%) and a household size of 1-5 (54.4%). The annual income of majority (59.8%) of the respondents was below ₦100,000. Furthermore, 66.0% were married, while 32.2% were single. This implies that agricultural production was dominated by the married youth and the production is mainly for domestic consumption or subsistence and also for commercial purpose if there is any excess. This could have contributed to increase in their farm productivity since high level of education could encourage adoption of improved farm practices. Also, respondents had a household size within 1–10. This shows that the highest proportion of the respondents was involved in agricultural production for household or domestic consumption.

The result revealed in Table 1 shows that 84.8% of the respondent had income level within 10,000 – 51,000 while 15.2% has income within 52,000 – 93,000 and above. This implies that the youth with lower income dominates the agricultural production. This could be due to inadequate capital to boost production and dependency ratio on them by their household and the struggling to increase their level of income as then plough back some resources to improve their standard of living in the study area.

3.2 Occupation of Respondents

The research result revealed in Table 2 shows that 64.3% of the respondents were farmers, while trading civil service, artisan and other were 38.7%. This implies that the youth in the study area were predominantly farmers and this gives a true picture that if youth were provided with required inputs and incentives, they would produce in excess for market to increase their income, standard of living as well as food security in the study area.

Table 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Gender			
Male	107	95.5	
Female	5	4.5	
Religion			
Christianity	3	2.7	
Islam	109	97.3	
Age (years)			32
16 – 20	24	21.4	
21 – 25	20	17.9	
26 – 30	38	33.9	
31 – 35	25	22.3	
36 – 40	5	4.5	
Marital Status			
Married	74	66.0	
Single	36	32.2	
Widowed/Widower	1	0.9	
Divorce	1	0.9	
Educational status			
Islamic	19	17.0	
Primary	19	17.0	
Secondary	52	46.4	
Tertiary	22	19.6	
Household size			7
1 – 5	61	54.4	
6 – 10	28	25.0	
11 – 15	11	9.8	
Above 15	12	10.8	
Level of Income (₦) per Annum			98,000
< 100,000	67	59.8	
101,000 – 200,000	28	28.0	
201,000 – 300,000	5	4.5	
301,000 – 400,000	3	2.7	
Above 400,000	9	8.0	

Table 2. Distribution of Respondent by Occupation (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Farming	72	64.3
Trading	9	8.0
Civil Service	9	8.0
Artisan	20	17.9
Others	2	1.8

3.3 Respondents' Membership of Association

Table 3 indicates that 84.8% of the youth belongs to youth club and religion association, while only 5.4% belongs to farmers association. The result also indicates that the highest proportion of the youth belongs to youth club and religious association; it shows that these two groups dominate the agricultural production system in the study area. In extension, associations are one of the major linkages to reach farmers in any given community.

3.4 Agricultural Enterprise Engaged in by Respondents

The result in Table 4 indicates that 93.7% of the respondents were involved in crops, livestock and mixed agriculture, while only 6.3% were involved in fisheries and other agricultural production. This shows that the highest proportion of the respondents were more involved in crops, livestock and mixed agriculture in the study areas due to availability of arable land for production.

3.5 Land size Cultivated by Respondents

The result in Table 5 indicates that 89.3% of the respondents cultivate about 1 – 4ha of land per annum, while 8.0% of the respondents cultivate 5 – 6ha and the least 2.7% cultivate above 7ha. This shows that the respondents with small hectare of land dominate the agricultural production in the study areas due to population expansion which leads to fragmentation of agricultural land.

3.6 Respondents' Land Ownership Methods

The result as presented in Table 6 shows that 79.4% of the respondents source their land by lease and inheritance, while 20.6% source their land

through family and other sources of land ownership. This implies that the respondents who source their land by lease and inheritance were more involved in the agricultural production in the study area.

3.7 Respondents' sources of Farm Labour

The result presented in Table 7 shows that 87.5% of the respondents engaged in family and hired labour, while the use of machines and other source of farm labour were 11.6%. This implies that the respondents using family and hired labour were dominant in the study areas. This could be due to the fact that majority of the youth produce at a subsistence level.

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents by Membership of an Association (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Youth Club	34	30.3
Farmers Association	6	5.4
Religious Association	61	54.5
Others	11	9.8

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents Based on Type of Agricultural Enterprise* (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Crops	78	69.6
Livestock	14	12.5
Fisheries	1	0.9
Mixed	59	52.7

*Multiple responses indicated

Table 5. Distribution of Respondents Based on Size of Land Cultivated (Ha) (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 2	64	57.2
3 – 4	36	32.1
5 – 6	9	8.0
7 and Above	3	2.7

Table 6. Distribution of Respondents Based on Land Ownership* (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Family	35	31.3
Lease	37	33.0
Inheritance	74	66.1

*Multiple responses indicated

Table 7. Distribution of Respondent Based on Sources of Farm Labour* (n=112)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Family	49	43.8
Hired	69	61.6
Others	13	11.6

*Multiple responses indicated

Table 8. Distribution of Respondents Based on Constraints Militating Youth Involvement in Agriculture (n=112)

Variables	4 Major	3 Moderate	2 Minor	1 Non	Weighted Sum	Weighted Mean	Position
Inadequate capital	91 (364)	19 (57)	2 (4)	0 (0)	425	3.8	1 st
Inadequate modern implement	86 (344)	17 (61)	8 (16)	1 (1)	412	3.7	2 nd
Difficulty in accessing loan	89 (356)	15 (45)	7 (14)	1 (1)	416	3.7	2 nd
Pest and diseases	78 (312)	24 (72)	6 (12)	4 (4)	400	3.6	3 rd
Inadequate extension services	84 (336)	16 (48)	8 (16)	4 (4)	404	3.6	3 rd
Inadequate basic amenities	76 (304)	21 (63)	11 (22)	4 (4)	393	3.5	4 th
High cost of inputs	68 (272)	24 (72)	18 (36)	2 (2)	382	3.4	5 th
Unrewarding nature of the job	19 (76)	58 (174)	27 (54)	8 (8)	312	2.8	6 th
Inadequate storage facility	16 (64)	34 (102)	58 (116)	4 (4)	286	2.5	7 th
Poor yield	21 (84)	59 (117)	11 (22)	21 (21)	304	2.7	8 th

3.8 Constraints Militating Against Youth Involvement in Agriculture

The result in Table 8 indicate the factors/constraints facing the respondents, inadequate modern implement (3.7); inadequate capital (3.8); high cost of inputs (3.4); pest and diseases (3.6); difficulty in accessing loan (3.7); inadequate basic amenities (3.5); inadequate extension services (3.6) while the moderate, were unrewarding nature of the job (2.8); poor yield (2.7) minor constraints inadequate storage facilities (2.5) and others (2.7). From the result it implies that there were no constraints regarded as none at all facing the youth in the research finding.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

There was a high involvement of youth in agricultural production in the study area. This study has shown some of the socio-economic factor which have led youth involvement in agricultural production such as level of education, age, household size and level of income. Major constraints militating against youth involvement in agricultural production include inadequate capital, inadequate modern implement, and difficulty in accessing loan.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. Functional cooperatives should be formed by the youth in the study area so that they can combine their resources together to employ more farm input, also cooperative would assist the youth to access loan easily from agricultural and commercial banks and these would help to increase productivity and ensure food security. Functional and affective farmers association this could serve as a link or

access to workshops, training and seminars on a regular basis by the stakeholders such as the ADPS Research institute to encourage them boost their agricultural productions.

ii. Extension services should be made available by the youth through the cooperative to increase their knowledge and skills in various method of agricultural production they are involved in. These could lead to increase in productivity, draw attention of more youth to agricultural production which will lead to food security as well as reducing unemployment and rural urban migration by the youth. also the ratio of extension agents to youth should be proportionate

iii. Government should also, help to provide basic infrastructure because these could go a long way in helping the youth to save cost, reduce labour drudgery and save time, and these will in time help the youth to increase their productivity and ensure food security.

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