

# Managing the Challenges of Food Security in Nigeria: A Focus on the First Four Years of the Buhari Administration in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Food security is a vital component of sustainable development and its realization is bedeviled with obvious challenges. Governments in most developing countries in Africa are known to be making frantic efforts to attain this noble objective of the sustainable development initiative. With Nigeria as its major focus, this study examined the extent to which African nations are rising to the challenge of food security. Data was sourced from secondary materials which include books, journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, the internet, etc. the neoclassical theory of a closed linear system (Turner, Pearce, 1972) was adopted as the theoretical framework while the Narrative Textual Case Study (NTCS) Approach was employed as the mode of analysis. Results showed that while African countries are making frantic efforts to manage the challenges of food security, the pace of progress recorded so far is slow due to limited resources in terms of finance and technical know-how. In Nigeria, in particular government policies are also underpinned by political considerations which are not helping matters. The study therefore, recommended that government embraces a more pragmatic and serious approach to address the issue of food security.

### Keywords:

Food security,  
Sustainable  
development,  
Management,  
Government policy,  
Technical know-how

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### **Background to the Study**

In Africa, agricultural output has been lagging behind population growth since the 1960's. The period 1965-1990 witnessed a growth in agricultural production at an annual rate of 1.7 percent while there was annual population growth averaging 2.8 percent. Food imports including food aid in the African region have increased substantially to offset the deficiencies, and in early 1994, represented about 10 percent of the food consumed. Agyare-kwabi (2003) observes that, "at the current growth rates, the food gap is projected to increase to more than nine times the present gap by 2010". The situation is an indication that the African continent faces a number of critical challenges. Topfer (UNEP, 2002: XV), posits that, "the environment continues to deteriorate; social and economic inequality is increasing; and globalization is sweeping across the world, largely leaving Africa behind. Rapid changes in the global economy, in consumption patterns and in population and demographics are having negative impact on the environment. In addition, major environmental disasters in the continent such as recurrent drought and floods have serious devastating socioeconomic and ecological impacts. Poor land policies and management practices, which lead to land degradation and deforestation, contribute to increased food disasters in some risk areas.

Since the 1990 some sub-regions have experienced an increase in the absolute number of undernourished people, approximately 20 percent and 2 percent respectively in Eastern and Southern Africa, Central Africa has more than doubled its number of undernourished people over the same period, largely due to civil strife and insecurity. Much of Eastern Africa has also been affected by unfavorable climatic and drought conditions, particularly in the Horn of Africa. These factors seriously undermined progress toward improving food security and nutrition. Poverty affects the Nigerian Rural Economy. Eteng (2005) added that, "Rural areas are regarded as abodes of diseases, superstition, poverty, lethargy, low income and low productivity". Eteng and Agbor (2006) further stated that, "poverty has a devastating effects on the lives of the people and the grass roots".

One of the goals of Nigeria's agricultural development policy is to ensure that there is enough food reserve at household, state and federal government levels to forestall any threat to the level of food security. The Nigerian government is making frantic efforts to achieve this goal. Government has started by identifying poverty as the major problem of food accessibility, availability and utilization. Poverty leads to insufficient income needed to meet household basic needs. There also other political and socioeconomic problems which lead to food insecurity. To mention but a few, different projects/schemes have been established by different governments in the country with a view to improving agricultural productivity.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

Environmental factors, inconsistent policy pronouncements, unsustainable agricultural productivity and underdeveloped infrastructural facilities are all identified as some of the major challenges of food security in Nigeria. In response however, successive administration in the country had initiated programme towards ensuring food availability and accessibility for the teeming population. As part of the palliative schemes to keep hunger away, Federal Government approved the release and distribution of 65,000 metric tonnes of assorted food from strategic food reserve to cushion the effect of low

yield during the 2007 season while stocking food items in the reserves to guarantee the required level of food security, with a view to adopting a policy of Guaranteed Minimum Price (GMP) of food commodities. The strategy is expected to enhance food security through preservation and storage of items in the rural areas nation. Several other measures are being adopted. The extent to which these measures are succeeding places a question mark on the ability of these administrations to manage the food security challenges which the nation faces. Thus, this study is an assessment of the effectiveness of the efforts of various governments in Nigeria towards an effective management of food security challenges in the country.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the efforts of the Nigerian government at managing the major challenges of food security in the country. Its specific objectives include to:

- a. Assess government's efforts at addressing the problem of poverty among its teeming population.
- b. Examine effort of the government at managing the challenges posed by the environment to the country's food security
- c. Ascertain the prospects of infrastructural development as envisioned by government.

### **Research Questions**

This study will provide answers to the following questions:

- a. How serious are governments at addressing the problem of poverty among the nation's teeming population?
- b. To what extent is the Nigerian government squaring up to the environmental challenges associated with the food security measures.
- c. What are the prospects of infrastructural development in the country consequent upon the effort of government?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Conceptual Clarification**

Sustainable Development: An effective governance requires that a nation considers the fact that truly rational and "effective governance the nation to consider and protect the environment and natural resources on which its current and future development depend. The connections between the environment and development thus provide a powerful rational for environmental protection" enlightened self-interest" (Dernbach, 1998, p.20). it was in this vein that the Bruntland commission published its report in 1987, in an effort to link the issues of economic development and environmental sustainability. In so doing, the report provided the oft-cited definition of sustainable development as, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations General Assembly, 1987, p.43). The key principle of sustainable development underlying all others is the integration of environmental, social and economic concerns into all aspects of decision making. "All

other principles in the SD framework have integrated decision making at their core” (Derback, 2003, Stoldart, 2011). It is this deeply fixed concept of integration that distinguishes sustainability from other forms of policy.

According to Olawumi and Chan (2018) and Sinakon, Pauw, Goossens and Petegen (2018), “sustainable development as, “a complex concept, integrated by economic, social and environmental pillars that need to be harmonized in order to acquire a holistic approach. Ciegis, Ramanauskienė and Martins (2009) and Pierantoni (2004), view sustainable development as, “a complex multidimensional concept involving multiple domains and a combination of efficiency, equality and integrational equality in the economic, social and environmental dimension”. The three dimensions (or pillars) are known as the triple bottom line (TBL) (El kington, 2012).

**Food Security:** The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) State of Food Insecurity for 2010, assess that nearly 1 billion people are estimated to be undernourished, representing almost 16 percent of the population of developing countries. “several indices measuring hunger and the progress in achieving hunger eradication helped in understanding the issue and monitoring the progress in eliminating hunger as well as providing targets for national and international political action” (Clay, 2002).

Concerns about food security can be traced back to the Hot Springs Conference of Food and Agriculture in 1943. Since then, the issue has undergone several redefinitions. However, the conference evolved the concept of a “secure, adequate and suitable supply of food for everyone” - a concept that was subsequently taken up at an international level. Smith (1993) asserts that, “there are now thought to be almost two hundred definitions of food security which is a clear indication of differing views and approaches to the problem; however, the definition that has acquired the broadest acceptance is that of the World Food Summit (WFS) (1996) which states that, “Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutrition food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. The United Nations (1975), in a new approach, defines Food Security as, “availability at all times of adequate World Food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices”.

**Government Policy:** Public Policy determines the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink. It affects the food we eat-how it is harvested, where it is distributed and sold, and how much we pay. Public policy sets limit on air emissions-though, of late, governments seem to be issuing warnings of poor air quality more than doing anything significant to clean up.

Generally, policy is law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of governments and other institutions. Policy decisions are frequently reflected in resource allocations. The word 'policy' is not a tightly defined concept but a highly flexible one, used in different ways on different occasions. Webster's dictionary has a number of closely related definitions which include:

- i. A definite course or method of actions selected (by government, institution, group or individual) from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions to guide and, usually to determine present and future decision.
- ii. A specific decision or set of decisions designed to carry out such a course of action
- iii. A programme consisting of desired objectives and the means to achieve them.

**Technical know-how:** Know-how (or know how) is a term for practical knowledge on how to accomplish something, as opposed to “know-what” (facts), know-why (science), or “know-who” (communication). Know-how is often tacit knowledge which means that it is difficult to transfer to another person by means of writing it down or verbalizing it. Dubickis and Gaile-Sarkane (2017) states that, “the performance of know-how transfer is affected by accuracy of the stated aim, applied teaching, learning and assessment methods and both internal and external environment characteristics of the stake-holders involved in the process”. The opposite of tacit knowledge is explicit knowledge.

*In the context of industrial property (now generally viewed as intellectual property (IP), know-how is a component in the transfer of technology in national and international environments, co-existing with or separate from other IP rights such as patents, trademarks and copyright and is an economic asset (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (1996).*

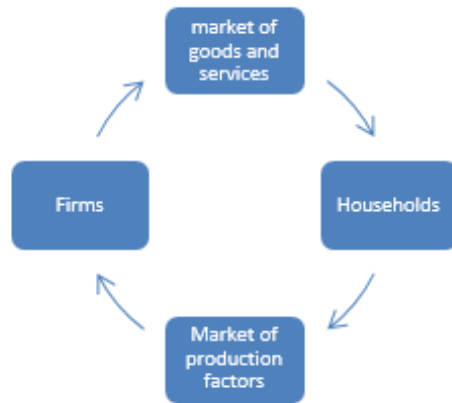
**Table 1: Past and Present Works on Food Security**

Surname of researcher(s) title/year of study timeframe of research	Geographical and content scope covered	Data sources and analytical tools used	Findings/recommendation and conclusion
Metu, Okeyika and Maduka (2016). Achieving sustainable Food Security in Nigeria: Challenges and way forward	Nigeria: key variables in the study include environment, food security, sustainable development. The study evaluated the food security situation in the country from 1991-2015	Data was sourced from secondary materials which include the World development Indicator, etc. it's used descriptive statistics	The results showed that the demand for food (population) is greater than the supply (agricultural production) because of factors such as inconsistent government policies, environmental degradation and non-sustainable agricultural production. The paper recommended improved management to increase agricultural productivity
Okolo and Obidigbo (2015). Food Security in Nigeria: An examination of food availability and accessibility in Nigeria.	Nigeria: the major variables of the study comprised of food security, food availability and food accessibility	Data was sourced from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Statistical Bulletin and Trading Economics. Specifically, population statistics of Nigeria and per capita GDP was sourced from Trading Economics while the rest were source from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). The study employed the Ordinary Least Square Regression Method and graphic trend for analysis.	Result revealed that the coefficient of agricultural credit guarantee scheme fund loan made the highest positive contribution to the availability of food in Nigeria while community/micro finance loan to Agriculture, Fishery, manufacturing and food processing failed the a priori expectation, given that funding agriculture, fishery, manufacturing and food processing should boost agriculture and food availability positively.



### Theoretical Framework

The economic system as a closed and linear system (Turner, Pearce, 1972). This study adopts as its theoretical framework, the neo-classical theory of a closed linear system.



**Source:** Romanian Statistical review no 12/2013

Since the endogenous growth models are in alignment with the basic philosophy of the Solow approach (ie removing both the assumptions of decreasing productivity of capital and exogeneity of technical progress, which leads to deny that in the future, we have the process of convergence between the growth rates of the various countries and to predict the tendency to continue expanding, there is no implicit mechanism to stop (it was in fact, the diminishing marginal productivity of capital which has led to the rest of growth unless it was offset by exogenous technical progress). For classical economists like Malthus, Ricardo, Mill, etc, it is clear that the economic activity was conditioned by the environment. This group of economists believed in the role of the market as an indispensable basis for economic growth. The market would have as a matter of fact, distributed merits and efficiency, generating wealth for all. The theoretical conclusion and confidence by the classics, held only in the short-term context. In the long-run however, the economy would still be found in stationary state which coincides with the mere subsistence level by all. This is due to the full awareness of natural resources as a scarce and limited entity, or as a finite set of national resources, causing a brake on growth. The point of view, "pessimistic" of all the classics in the long-term is well expressed in the studies of Thomas Malthus and Ricardo who watched the constraints imposed by the environment in terms of scarcity of fertile land for cultivation.

Unlike the classical, the traditional neo-classical economists in considering the economic system as a closed and linear system (Turner, Pearce and Bateman), did not take into account, the binding connection between the economic system and the environment. The environment only has an instrumental value. There are resources to be shaped and used in the production function to meet the market equilibrium. The unlimited exploitation of natural resources is commonly accepted as the price to pay for fueling economic growth and provide employment.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs the Narrative Textual Case Study (NTCS) approach for purposes of analysis. Thus, data obtained from secondary materials are synthesized to obtain results. The data to be analyzed were obtained from books, journals, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, the internet, etc. The analysis follows the following order:

**Research Question One (1):** How serious are government efforts at addressing the problem of poverty among the nation's teeming population? The major focus of poverty alleviation by the Buhari administration in Nigeria includes growth, basic needs and rural development approaches.

#### Pre-SAP Era

In the Pre-SAP era poverty reduction was never the direct focus of development planning and management government only showed concern for poverty alleviation indirectly. For instance, the objectives of the First national Development in Nigeria included the development of opportunities in health, employment and education as well as improvement of access to three opportunities. These objectives could lead to poverty alleviation of property articulated and implemented. The Fourth National development plan appeared to be more precise in the specification of its objectives which are "associated with poverty reduction and emphasized increase in real income of the average citizen as well as reduction of income inequality, among others" (Ogwumike, 1987 and 1998). In this period, "many of the programme put it place in the country by government (either wholly or in association with international agencies) had positive effects on poverty reduction although the target population for some of the programmes were not specified explicitly as poor people or communities" (Ogwumike, 1995 and 1998). Some other programmes aimed at poverty reduction were introduced before the Structural Adjustment programme was initiated. They include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) set up in 1977. Free and Compulsory Primary Education (FCPE) in 1977, the Green revolution established in 1980, and Low cost Housing Scheme. Both OFN and Green Revolution were set up to boost agricultural production and improve the general performance of the agricultural sector among other things. These programmes made some laudable impacts; they enhanced the quality of life of many Nigerians. However, "the programme could not be sustained due to lack of political will and commitment, policy instability and insufficient involvement of the beneficiaries in these programmes" (CBN Enugu Zone, 1998).

It is worthy of note that conscious efforts at alleviation poverty began during the era of Structural Adjustment programme (SAP). However, SAP implementation further worsened the quality of life of most Nigerians. The table below presents a summary of poverty reduction programmes by governments in Nigeria between 1996-1997.



**Table 2:** Anti-Poverty Programmes by Government in Nigeria

Programme	Years Established	Target group	Nature of Intervention
Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DFRRI)	1986	Rural Areas	Feeder Roads, Rural water supply and rural electrification
National Directorate of Employment (NDE)	1986	Unemployed youths	Training, Finance and Guidance
Better Life Programme (BLP)	1987	Rural Women	Self-help and rural development programmes, skill acquisition and health care.
People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN)	1989	Under privileged rural and urban areas	Encouraging savings and credit facilities
Community Banks (CB)	1990	Rural residents, micro enterprises in urban areas	Banking facilities
Family Support Programme	1994	Families in rural areas	Health care delivery, child welfare, youth development, etc
Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP)	1997	Rural Areas	Credit facilities to support the establishment of cottage industry

**Source:** Oladeji and Abiola, (1998)

It is good radiance to learn that most of the programmes had varied impacts on poverty alleviation. For instance, “there was a steady and significant rise in agricultural production between 1986 and 1993” (CBN, Statistical Bulletin, 1998). As democracy governance showed up by 1999, government embarked on Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). This aimed at job creation. However, many Nigerians could not feel the impact of the programme (PAP) even by the end of year 2000. More recently government has had to initiate and implement upward salary reviews to ameliorate the situation especially in the civil service. An empirical study by Mustapha (2014) on poverty alleviation measures programmes in Nigeria revealed that successive governments introduce their own measures aimed at the reduction of poverty. Thus, programmes introduced by such governments adopt different strategies which lack coordination. This affects the effectiveness of these programmes.

**Research Question Two (2):** To what extent is government managing the environmental challenges to the country's food security?

Governments recent years have taken the issues of environmental sustainability it has put in place, the National Environmental Policy of 1999- a key policy document which stipulates the principles for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria. Thus, policies and programmes under broad categories of the environmental pillar are related to forestry, brodiversing, pollution control, land degradation, water management, climate change, marine and wastal environment, clean energy and environmental crime. Various natural efforts have been put in place at all levels of governance to promote

environmental sustainability in the context of national sustainable development. For instance, government has created some institutional arrangements for environmental governance. In line with such arrangements, the Federal Ministry of Environment is pursuing its mandate of:

- a. Promoting sustainable use of natural resources.
- b. Restoring and maintaining the economic system , ecological process and preserving biodiversity
- c. Securing a quality environment conducive for good health and well-being of fauna and flora
- d. Raising public awareness and promoting understanding of linkages of the environment.

In addition to the above measures, specific agencies have been created to provide more focused attention to some specific environmental problems. They include the National Oil Spill detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) and National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), which were created respectively in 2006 and 2007. NOSDRA has the mandate to implement the national oil spill contingency plan. NESREA has the responsibility of enforcing all environmental laws, guidelines, policies, standards and regulations in Nigeria. It also enforces compliance with the provisions of all international agreements, protocols, convention and treaties on the environment to which Nigeria is a signatory. From 2007 to 2012, NESREA has developed twenty four (24) Environmental Regulations which have been gazette and are in various stages of operationalization. These regulations have key provisions for environmental control, clean-up and remediation. Other institutions include the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN), National Parks and Environmental Health Officers registration Council of Nigeria (EHORECON). FRIN is mandated to conduct research into all aspects of Forestry, Wildlife Management, Agro Forestry and Forest Products Utilization; as well as train technical and sub-technical personnel for the forestry and agro allied services in the country through its colleges.

In respect of challenges emanating from climate change, government has put in place institutional structures and policies for national implementation of the UNFCCC, the kyo to protocol and any other instruments put in place. The Federal government is also pursuing the implementation of environmental protection and sustainable development of the Niger Delta. An empirical investigation conducted by Osabunhien and Urhie (2018) reveals that, “there is a high level of food insecurity as a result of low attention on food production occasioned by the persuasive influence of oil that become the major export product”. The paper notes that efforts at achieving food security in Nigeria should constitute adequate planning which must incorporate managing the protection of farmers, and the vulnerability associated with agriculture.

**Research Question Three (3):** What are the prospects of infrastructural development in the country consequent upon the effort of government?

The tax system provides opportunities for the government of any country to provide various services to its citizenry. It may therefore be referred to as;

A compulsory payment made by all concerned to the government of a country from which vital services are rendered, without necessarily offering an explanation on how the money generated was spent or equating the services with the money collected (Onwuchekwa and Aruwa, 2014)

Business enterprises are made to pay taxes as their contribution to enhance government position in providing basic facilities such as roads, effective and efficient telecommunication, electricity and water supply. Thus government efforts to raise more revenue for the purpose of boosting the infrastructural facilities in the country a major way of enhancing the nation's infrastructural base. The more taxes the government imposes, the more revenue it can generate and the greater the prospects of providing infrastructures for overall development. In Nigeria, for instance, such prospects are enhanced through effective policies (Fiscal policies) and use of various taxes as listed below:

Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT). "Petroleum Profit Tax of 50% and 85% is imposed on the profits of all corporate entities registered in Nigeria or those that derive income from oil and gas operations in Nigeria (Dike, 2014). Since, the petroleum industry in Nigeria is seen as the largest contributor to the nation's GDP, such tax certainty may be used to generate much revenue for government services. It may therefore be safe to conclude that it is one of the major contributors to the development of infrastructural facilities in Nigeria.

Hence, Azaiki and Shagari (2007) observe that, "countries that are blessed sufficiently to have petroleum, can base their development on this resources". This is the situation in Nigeria: other forms of taxes also enhance government ability to generate the much needed revenue for infrastructural development in Nigeria. These include, value-added tax (VAT), Education Tax. Onah (2013), asserts that, "Value added tax (VAT) is an ideal form of taxation and has contributed immensely to infrastructural development in Nigeria" while the study by Okoi and Afolayan (2015) in their study, revealed that, "VAT should be the second longterm source of the total federally collected revenue in Nigeria".

Empirical studies on the use of tax revenues to enhance government revenue basis for enhanced infrastructural development in Nigeria, yielded quite interesting results. For instance, while Akinwale (2010), in his investigation the inadequacy of infrastructure in Nigeria found that the infrastructural deficiency in Nigeria is not hinged on insufficiency of fund but that of negligence and corruption, Nwite (2015), noted that, "the money generated by government from tax revenue is not evident in the level of development in Nigeria as poverty, unemployment, low standard of living and poor infrastructural facilities still remain at a very high rate.

**Findings:** On the basis of the data obtained in this study, some findings have been recorded;

1. Initially, particularly in the pre-SAP era, poverty reduction was not the direct focus of the Nigerian development programme as the primary objectives of the First National Development Plan included the development of opportunities in health, employment, education and improvement of access to these three opportunities.
2. It is the Fourth national Development Plan that appeared to be more precise in the specification of its objectives which are associated with poverty reduction and emphasized increase in real income of the average Nigerian as well as the reduction in income disparities among Nigerian.
3. Programme in the Fourth Development Plan had positive impacts on poverty reduction
4. The positive effects on poverty reduction in the Fourth Development Plan could not be sustained due to lack of political will, policy inconsistency an insufficient involvement of the beneficiaries in these programmes.
5. Conscious effort at poverty alleviation actually started during the era of Structural Adjustment Programme. However, the implementation of Sap further worsened the quality of life of Nigerians.
6. In recent years, governments have taken the issue of environmental sustainability very seriously by putting in place, a key policy document- the National Environmental Policy (1999) which stipulates the principles for achieving sustainable development in Nigeria.
7. Specifically, the Federal Ministry of Environment is pursuing its mandate of promoting sustainable use of natural resources, securing quality environment conducive for good health, raising public awareness and promoting understanding of linkages of the environment. These programmes certainly improve agricultural practices and food production
8. In addition to other measures earlier enumerated, specific agencies have been created to provide more focused attention to some specific environmental problems such as, national Oil Spill detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA, The national Environmental Standards and regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), etc.
9. The Federal government is also embarking on the implementation of environmental protection and sustainable development of the Niger Delta.
10. Consequent upon the understanding of funding as a major hinderance, government is enhancing the prospect's of infrastructural development through improved fund. To this end, the tax dragnet has being expanded t o include Value Added and Corporate Tax (VAT).

### **Conclusion**

Like most other developing nations, Nigeria is saddled with numerous challenges in her quest to attainment of food security. Interestingly, the nation has meticulously identifies such challenges which include, poverty, environmental pollution and degradation,

infrastructural deficiency and policy inconsistencies, to mention but a few. Good enough, subsequent administrations have been making efforts at addressing this challenges and the current Buhari administration is also doing the much it can to manage the situation. The most interesting aspect of the effort of this administration is the manner in which it is handling the Niger Delta issues. The administration recognizes the fact that the effectiveness of programmes to address the situation hinges on funding. Hence, it has expanded its capacity for funding through effective tax regimes by way of the drive for economic diversification in recent times. This enhances the prospects attaining food security in Nigeria.

**Suggestions:** In view of the findings recorded in this study, the following suggestions have been made:

1. Government should institute direct and specific objectives to achieve food security in the country.
2. The issue of poverty must be addressed.
3. More efforts should be made with regards to revenue generation.
4. Environmental sustainability and efforts at boosting food production through modernized agricultural practices should be enhanced.
5. Enabling laws should be enacted to reduce the problem of environmental pollution and degradation especially in the Nigeria Delta region.
6. Greater emphasis should be placed on the sustainable use of natural resources.
7. Subsequent administrations should be more conscious of the need to avoid policy inconsistencies.

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