

Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project

State Policy Note 2

June 2017

Promoting Rice Productivity in Kebbi State: Linking Data and Policy

Bello Shehu and Abubakar Lolo

Introduction and background to Kebbi State

Kebbi State was created in 1991. It lies in Northwestern Nigeria with its capital in Birnin Kebbi. The state is bordered by Sokoto State to the north and east, Niger State to the south, Dosso Region in the Republic of Niger to the northwest and the Republic of Benin to the west. Kebbi State has a total land area of 37,698,685 square kilometers (KSG, 2017a). Based on projections from the 2006 census figure, the state is estimated to have a population of 4,629,880 (NPC, 2006; 2017). The state is divided into 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and has four emirate councils (Gwandu, Argungu, Yauri and Zuru).

The state, with a mean temperature of 23°C and a maximum of about 40°C, is divided into two ecological zones: the Sudan savanna zone and the Southern Guinea zone in the northern and southern parts respectively. This climate peculiarity supports the production of a wide range of arable crops, roots and tubers, agro forestry, fisheries and livestock. The total cultivable land in the state consists of 320,000 hectares (ha) upland and 170,000 ha of fadama land, with high potential of surface water and extractable shallow aquifer to support medium- and small-scale irrigation activities (KSG, 2017a). The state is traversed by two major rivers, namely River Niger and River Rima, as well as minor rivers of Zamfara, Ka and their tributaries. The vastness of agricultural land comprising upland, fadama and several wetland areas

Key Messages

- There has been a steady increase in rice production in Kebbi State since 2014.
- Similarly, rice yield has increased from less than one metric tons/hectare (MT/ha) in 2005 to a little under 6 MT/ha in 2016.
- The state is on course to be a major hub for rice production in Nigeria.

Figure 1: Map of Kebbi State



Source: Google Maps, <https://goo.gl/maps/xTiagcaNm4P2>

creates an opportunity for all-year-round agricultural activities. The major crops produced in Kebbi State are rice, millet, sorghum, maize, groundnut, cotton, wheat, sugar cane, sweet potatoes and cassava. Sesame, soya beans, bambara nuts and acha are grown as minor crops while vegetables such as tomato, onion, garlic, pepper, carrot and cabbage are also produced.

The Kebbi State Government program for agriculture

Kebbi State has Kebbi Agricultural Development Authority (KADA), which is responsible for the implementation of its agricultural policies.

Under the Agricultural Promotion Policy of the state, the government has instituted key interventions to increase agricultural productivity. These include the National Program for Food Security, which has the following components viz. crop intensification: the fadama development programs (in collaboration with World Bank), medium irrigation schemes and Sure-Trust Fund (aimed at stabilizing the price of rice) (NESG, 2013).

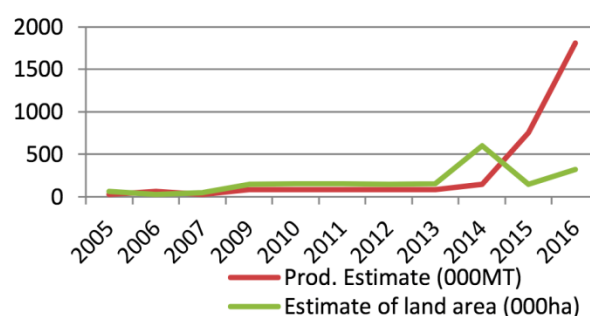
A very important milestone achievement in the rice sub-sector was the November 2016 launching of the Presidential Anchor Borrowers Program (ABP) for rice farmers. To further boost agricultural production, the state government is committed to making agriculture an all-year-round occupation. To this end, the government has focused on the rehabilitation of existing irrigation systems and the construction of new dams/irrigation schemes (KSG, 2017b; CBN, 2016).

Rice production in Kebbi State

Currently, the Kebbi State Government's key focus is on rice crop production to meet the country's demand. This has become necessary sequel to the federal government's 2016 re-introduction of the ban on rice importation through Nigeria's land borders. Rice production in the state has been on the rise from 2005 to date as reflected in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that between 2015 and 2016 the production of rice increased by over 100% from between 751,000 metric tons (MT) to 1,805,000 MT. This sharp rise in production (faster than the rise in land area) could be associated with several government and donor programs in the state. They include the Kebbi Agricultural Transformation and Self Help Initiative (KATASHI) and the New Agricultural Transformation and Self Help Initiative (NATASHI) programs, the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GES) of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of the federal government and the Fadama II & III programs in collaboration with the World Bank.

Figure 2: Trend in Rice Production and Land Area



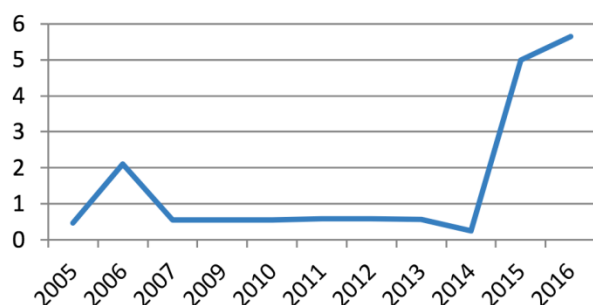
Source: Kebbi State Agricultural Development Project (2017)

Significant increase in rice production started in 2013 as a result of fertilizer availability under the GES. This was supported by efforts in the state under the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Anchor Borrower Program that provided loan packages in both cash and kind to beneficiary farmers. The private sector was also involved. Two off-takers (LABANA and UMZA) emulated the CBN program and provided soft loans to rice farmers.

Rice yield in Kebbi State is significantly higher than the national average of about 1.71 MT/ha (USDA, 2017). As shown in Figure 3, rice yield increased from less than 1 MT/ha in 2005 to about 2 MT/ha in 2006–2007.

This could be largely linked to gains from the KATASHI and NATASHI programs of the state government.

Figure 3: Trend in Rice Yield (MT/ha)



Source: *Kebbi State Agricultural Development Project (2017)*

The KATASHI program launched in 2006 to encourage dry season rice production. The initiative was specifically designed to encourage farmers to cultivate the vast fadama land in the state through the provision of improved rice seed, training and extension coverage. Implementation of the pilot phase involved 3,000 farmers and then expanded to cater for the needs of 30,000 farmers in dry season operations. As a second phase of the program, the NATASHI intervention was launched in 2009. However, failure to sustain the initial gains in the mid-2000s resulted in rice yield decreasing and then remaining below 2 MT.

However, the positive effects from the older programs and more recent interventions—including the GES, the ABP, the Lagos-Kebbi partnership (where rice produced in Kebbi is milled in Lagos) and private sector involvement—explain the recent improvements in rice productivity in the state.

Following the advent of GES program, input availability and affordability coupled with extension support and the present administration's focus on agriculture as outlined above have encouraged an

increase in rice yield to a record 5.6 MT/ha on average¹.

Challenges to rice productivity growth

Some key challenges to rice productivity in Kebbi State include:

- Production is mainly in small holdings scattered around various locations, making mechanization difficult.
- High cost of inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and chemicals.
- Near absence of extension services.
- Limited land access for private investors
- High cost incurred in paddy handling and processing.

Sustaining and improving rice productivity growth in Kebbi State

It appears that to sustain the rice productivity growth, there should be policies on public investments, research and extension for continuous and improved input use. The federal government and the State Ministry of Agriculture should jointly ensure the timely provision of required farm inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds, agro-chemicals and adequate extension services. For its part, the Kebbi State Government, through its policies, should ensure the availability of land to encourage increased commercial rice farming.

Conclusion and key recommendations

Kebbi State has the potential to be a major hub for rice production in Nigeria, as evident from the significant increase in yield over the years under review.

¹ Data from the National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Services (NAERLS) places 2015 rice yields for Kebbi at 2.7 tons/hectare

Some of the key policy implications for increased rice productivity in the state include:

- Farm inputs should be made available, affordable and timely.
- Extension staffs need to be recruited and trained to enhance the process of technology transfer to rice farmers.
- More Public Private Partnerships in agriculture should be fostered.
- Land policies in the state should be reviewed to make access to land easy, especially for private investors.

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This brief was written in collaboration with the research team from Michigan State University funded by the USAID Nigeria mission under the Feed the Future Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP) in Abuja, Nigeria, March 7-8, 2017. It was one of the outcomes of a two-day training workshop on data analysis and interpretation organized by the policy project.

Bello Shehu is Deputy Director, Planning, Ministry of Agriculture at Kebbi State.

Abubakar Lolo is Director, Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation at Kebbi Agricultural Development Project.

This work is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Feed the Future initiative through the Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project, Associate Cooperative Agreement Number AJD-620-LA-15-00001. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.