

## ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES OF THE ANCHOR BORROWERS' PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*To avoid the moribund path of most of the earlier implemented agricultural-based development projects and programmes, this article reviewed the implementation modalities of the Anchor Borrowers' programme while making useful suggestions for effective and sustainable results-based implementation. The article relied on content analyses and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats strategic planning tool to reach its conclusion. While noting the strength of the programme, there is doubt as to the conduct of project appraisal; implementation arrangements are unclear, while overlaps exist in the roles of stakeholders. Thus, the study affirms that political pressure should never be made to becloud sound project preparation, while sustaining awareness for increased programme participation to avoid exclusion and confusion. It is also imperative to put in place a credible results-based framework and modalities for the conduct of baseline and subsequent performance assessment structure for the purposes of learning and accountability to Nigerians.*

**Key words:** Anchor borrowers' programme, results, performance assessment, learning, accountability, Central Bank of Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

Towards enhancing agricultural development and attaining self sufficiency in food production in Nigeria, governments at various levels had implemented numerous programmes and projects, which have evolved over time. These included the Farm Settlement Scheme (1967), National Accelerated Food Production Programme (1972), Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (now Bank of Agriculture) (1973-Date), Agricultural Development Programme (1975-Date), Operations Feed the Nation (1976-1979), Green Revolution Programme (1979-83), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (1985-1993), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (1985-1993), River Basin Development Authorities (1977-Date), Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (1987-Date), National Fadama Development Projects (1990 - Date), Presidential Initiatives on Select Crops (1999 - 2007) and the National Special Programme for Food Security (now National Programme for Food Security) (2002-2018). Others included the recent Agricultural Transformation Agenda (2011), Rural Finance Institutions Building Programme (2012-2017), the Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing

Agricultural Lending (2011-Date), Value Chain Development Programme (2015-2019), Agricultural Transformation Support Programme - Phase 1 (2014-2019) and the Ongoing Central Bank of Nigeria's Anchor Borrowers' Programme (2015 - Date), which is the focus of this study. However, Nigeria suffers from policy instability driven by high rate of turnover of programmes and personnel, which in turn has made the application of policy instruments unstable (Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development (FMARD), 2016). The outcome is an uneven development pathway for agriculture; lack of policy accountability, transparency and due process of law, relating to willful violation of the constitution and subsidiary legislations governing the agriculture sector (FMARD, 2016). This development made the business environment unpredictable, while discouraging investors. In a related development, most of these projects were also largely stand alone with weak linkage to the government's development efforts. The implications of these outcomes are that agricultural GDP declined from 7% between 2003 and 2007 to an average of 4.2% between 2010 and 2013. The share of

agriculture to GDP also declined from 60% in the 70s to 21%, though partly due the rising influence of other sectors (Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development, 2016). Also, the production of major cash crops stagnated or declined, while the country continues to be a net importer of rice, a major staple in the country, put at over 2 million tons, with annual rice import bill of 365 billion naira (FMARD, 2011 and 2015), while the total import bill put at 1 trillion naira (Nelson, 2015). Worse still, poverty remains pervasive put at about 33.1% (FMARD, 2015), while the falling commodity prices, particularly for oil, gave the country no choice but to diversify the country away from oil. Thus, this study was therefore undertaken to ensure that the recently launched Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP) do not go the way of the other agricultural development projects and is properly implemented to contribute meaningfully to the economy, while ensuring food security and enhancing inclusive economic growth.

This study was therefore undertaken to (i) review the ABP implementation modalities and institutional arrangements; (ii) bring up salient issues emerging from the implementation of the programme and (iii) make policy recommendations for sustainable and results-based implementation. This study will provide useful guide to the various stakeholders involved in the implementation of the programme and also suggest direction for a results-based implementation approach.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Insights Results-based Management**

Results-based management is a system which ensures that all activities of an entity contribute to the achievement of desired results. The approach hinges on defined accountability for results and requires systematic monitoring and self-assessment and reporting. According to Coker *et al.* (2015), the results based management took prominence in Nigeria in the 1990s through the operations of the development projects and programmes, but, the real efforts directed at implementing the concept in the public sector in Nigeria was initiated in 2012, with the institutionalization of Performance Management System (PMS) in the public service, through the National Planning Commission (NPC). Swiss and Straus (2005), highlighted the key benefits of the RBM to include helping organization members to stay focused on outcomes, building a stronger results-oriented organizational culture, encouraging managers

to think ahead, proactively choosing new ways of reaching higher levels of performance while helping to empower frontline staff through morale boosting, greater organizational agility, increased customer satisfaction and making them accountable. Kusek and Gist (2004) noted that when the Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) is implemented properly, they provide a continuous flow of information feed back into the system which helps policy makers in achieving results.

### **Overview of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) Anchor Borrowers' Programme**

In Nigeria, the ABP was launched by President Muhammadu Buhari in Kebbi State on November 17, 2015 to initially boost local production of rice and wheat, two of the four products that dominate the country's foods import bill (Chioma, 2016). The programme was initiated by the CBN in its economic diversification drive to achieve a strong and viable agricultural base with more integrated value chains, enhanced food security, fewer imports and higher productivity. The programme was directed at supporting the FGN's key strategic plans of economic diversification; self-sufficiency in food production; stoppage of estimated ₦3.96 trillion annual import bill on wheat, rice, sugar and fish; stoppage of unbridled expenditure of foreign exchange and the 40 billion naira rice and wheat farming under the CBN's ABP (CBN, 2016).

The programme will also diversify Nigeria's economy away from oil, and into agriculture, manufacturing, services, and other non-oil sectors. The key objectives of the programme were to (i) create an ecosystem to link out-growers to integrated millers (ii) ramp up domestic rice production to replace imported rice (iii) increase operating capacity of integrated rice millers; and (iv) increase banks financing to the rice sector; (v) build capacity of smallholder farmers; (vi) target commodities which the country has comparative advantages to produce. The expected outcomes are (i) increased ratio of agricultural lending from 3.72% of total bank lending in 2014 to 7 per cent; (ii) increased capacity utilisation of rice mills from the current level of less than 50 per cent to not less than 80 per cent; and (iii) empowerment of at least one million farmers in each of the selected produce under the programme and (iv) creation of at least 2,000,000 direct and indirect jobs in the processing segment of the above value chains; and reduction of Nigeria's import bill on the identified commodities by at least 30% annually over the specified period.

According to Emefiele (2015), the programme was conceived to complement the Growth Enhancement Support (GES) Scheme, implemented under the Agricultural Transformation Agenda and advance the status of many subsistence GES small-holder farmers to commercial or large contract growers, with attendant increase in agricultural productivity and farm income. The programme cost is put at ₦20 billion, sourced from ₦200 billion the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (MSMEDF), disbursed to participating farmers at single digit interest rate of nine per cent per annum. The programme commenced with a pilot phase in Kebbi State and based on the successes recorded, it initially covered 13 states and was later expanded to 29 states, with 13 participating institutions, covering 233,000 hectares and 8 commodities. The programme is expected to link over 200,000 rice and wheat farmers with reputable millers for off-take of every grain of paddy produced. It will further connect over 600,000 smallholder farmers, comprising 100,000 beneficiaries each in the rice, wheat, oil palm and fish value chains and 200,000 in the cotton value chain within 5 years. It will create at least 1,000,000 direct and indirect jobs in the processing segment of the value chains of selected commodities (comprising rice-300,000, oil palm -200,000, wheat-100,000, cotton-300,000 and fish - 200,000) in the next five years.

The programme is structured into three components, namely out-grower support, training and risk mitigation. Anchor Borrowers' Programme initiative on agricultural development is not limited to Nigeria. In Malawi for instance, the Bill Clinton Initiative supported an Anchor Farm Project which is working with over 56,000 smallholder farmers. The project integrates commercial farming with smallholder farmers and links them to agro-inputs, agronomic knowledge and markets. The commercial farm on its part process access to affordable and quality inputs to serve 56,000 farmers, while the Clinton Development Initiative, which is the donor, provides technical assistance in the usage of agro-inputs, implanting climate smart agriculture and investing in agro-input while demonstrating advanced agronomic technique (Clinton Development Initiative, 2016).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Eboh (2009) described conceptual framework in various ways to include the melting point of theoretical arguments of research, the intellectual driver of research, microcosm or condensed picture of the research problem and

the mental imagery of the orientation (descriptive, explanatory or predictive) of the research. Thus, the ABP conceptual framework cum implementation process is detailed in Figure 1.

### **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)**

SWOT analysis is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Wikipedia posited that it is a structured planning tool that evaluates the aforementioned elements of a project. The SWOT is an approach employed in strategic programme planning, which provides a simple framework for the examination of an entity's internal and external environment. The technique relates resources and capabilities to the environment, with focus on real thematic issues. The components of SWOT are viewed from the internal or external perspectives. While strengths and weaknesses are internal to an entity, opportunities and threats are external factors, outside the control of the entity under consideration (Sule, 2018).

### **Content Analysis**

The Colombia University Mailman School of Public Health (2015) posited that content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data. The institution noted that the technique allows for the quantification and analysis of the presence, meaning and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts. Cavanagh (1997) further averred that content analysis is much more than a naïve technique that results in a simplistic description of data.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study covered the Nigerian state, which is the most populous country in Africa, situated on the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa. The country covers about 91 million hectares of land area with a population of about 170 million. It has a land area of 351,649 sq mi (910,771 sq km) and total area of 356,667 sq m (923,768 sq km). Its neighbors are Benin, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad. The lower course of the Niger River flows south through the western part of the country into the Gulf of Guinea. Swamps and mangrove forests border the southern coast; inland are hardwood forests. The population based on the 2014 estimate is put at 177,155,754 (growth rate: 2.47%), with a life expectancy of about 53 years. The country is made up of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Figure 2).

The economy is predominantly agricultural, with over 70% of the population engaged in farming and related rural enterprises, which their income and well-being depend upon (FMARD, 2015). Secondary data and information used under this study were mainly from CBN websites and Niger State Branch Office of the Central Bank of Nigeria, other internet sources and working documents from Niger State, one of the 14 implementing states. Data analysis was through content and SWOT analysis based on available data and information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Review of Anchor Borrowers' Programme Implementation Modalities

The review of the programme, based on content and SWOT analysis, focused on the transaction dynamics and implementation arrangement, having taken up the overview in the preceding section.

### ABP Implementation Approach

The ABP implementation approach is hinged on three pronged support; comprising the out-grower scheme, which will direct support to the participating farmers, covering issues on farmer and group identification, cluster groupings, linkage to off-takers, farmer registration and Bank Verification Number (BVN) with Bank of Industry and other financial institutions, signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), credit support (kind and financial), monitoring, etc. The second component consist of capacity building of stakeholders, including the extension agents, agro-input service providers, financial institutions, anchor companies and the farmers. The risk mitigation component covers, but is not be limited to issues arising from poor farming techniques, unskilled credit officers, weak management, challenges on the part of farmers, poor quality agro-inputs, market challenges, price volatility, loss of harvests, diversion of output, etc.

### Stages of Programme Implementation/ Transaction Dynamics

The stages of ABP implementation consists of the following:

- I. Sourcing of funds from the ₦220 billion Medium, Small and Micro Enterprise Development Fund to be disbursed to farmers at 9% interest rate, with crop specific tenors;
- II. Identification and verification of targeted beneficiaries (farmers with 1-3 hectares varied cultivable land);

- III. Grouping of farmers into cooperatives linked to anchor companies;
- IV. Training of farmers and certification;
- V. Opening of bank accounts by farmers, with banks and receipt of Bank Verification Number;
- VI. Town hall meeting to discuss with stakeholders (Anchor, Participating Financial Institutions, farmers, CBN, Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs), input suppliers, Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC), etc);
- VII. Reaching agreement on key implementation modalities (economics of production, input supply, agreed baseline price, disbursement modalities, payment terms, cross guarantee by farmers and default consequences);
- VIII. Disbursement to beneficiaries in kind and cash through banks; and
- IX. Strategic monitoring and direction of programme (Figure 3) (Source: CBN, 2016).

### Programme Stakeholders and Their Roles

The programme stakeholders are to work closely with financial institutions, including insurance companies, Nigeria Incentive-based Risk Sharing for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) and the CBN, to create the linkages and transparency required to sustainably enhance the production of the identified commodities. Table 1 highlighted the stakeholders and defined their roles under the Programme. The key stakeholders include the CBN, NIRSAL, FMARD, NAIC, Bank of Agriculture (BOA), state governments/ADPs; anchor companies; financing banks; insurance companies; development partners; farmers/out-growers and programme management team.

### Status of Programme Implementation

Following a successful pilot phase in Kebbi State, progress of implementation varied across the current 29 implementing states, with most states still grappling with farmer identification and registration. As at the time of this article, a total of 70,000 farmers were participating in Kebbi State, with arrangements made for off-takers to buy off the output of out-growers. National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members were also recruited to assist in the documentation of the farmers and their farms. Equally, unemployed graduates were deployed for Train the Trainers (TOT) programme under the initiative, while 105 extension workers were mobilized to assist farmers with loan disbursement arrangement through the BOA.

In Kogi State, 5,000 farmers were registered to participate.

In Sokoto State, 6,265 opened accounts which signify interest. In Kaduna State, about 60,000 farmers were screened and registered, including those who cultivated ginger, soybean, sorghum, maize, rice, with extension service workers trained. Adamawa State registered 120,000 farmers, while Cross River State had commenced farmer training.

### SWOT Analysis of Programme

#### Implementation

The outcome of the SWOT analysis on the Anchor Borrowers' Programme is detailed below.

#### Strengths

- Programme pushed to 29 states following successful pilot in Kebbi State
- Risk mitigation strategy incorporated into model
- Pilot phase implemented to take lessons and make adjustments for the expanded phase
- Operation of a biometric bank verification data base
- Linkage with on-going development programmes and projects
- Training of farmers, extension workers and bank
- Registration of farmers to prevent elite capture
- Employed local institutions to identify targeted farmers
- Collaboration and inauguration of a Rapid Response Implementation Committee by the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria

#### Weaknesses

- The robustness of programme appraisal doubtful, without prejudice to the operations of a pilot phase
- Some aspects of programme implementation are still unclear
- No comprehensive programme Implementation manual
- Roles of stakeholders are overlapping
- Haphazard input distribution system

#### Opportunities

- It will diversify the economy away from oil, and into agriculture, manufacturing, services, and other non-oil sectors.
- Programme will help redistribute income
- Involves large quantum of production and farm business capacity building
- Timely input supply to farmers
- Development of banking culture by farmers

#### Threats

- Government bureaucracy
- Inconsistency of government regarding rice ban and exchange rates
- Elite capture
- Funding constraints
- Weak linkage with on-going projects
- Weak capacity of implementers
- Weak inter-ministerial synergy
- Lack of experience in capacity building, group dynamics, best production practices and business agriculture
- Environmental challenge

#### Issues Arising from ABP Implementation

A general review of the ABP implementation stages threw up numerous issues, particularly at the loan disbursement stage. According to the National Treasurer of the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN), Sadiq Daware (WorldStage, 2018), many farmers complained of not being able to access loan while others were not given the right amount proposed under the programme. He further noted that even though CBN disbursed ₦43.92 billion to farmers through 13 participating institutions, some of these institutions frustrated the efforts of the farmers in accessing the facility while some were not farmer friendly due to complicated transaction procedures and non-consideration of gestation periods of crop growing. Some Banks further insisted that CBN was yet to give specific guidelines on how to disburse the loans. In a related development, agro-input distribution was observed to be haphazard. Some farmers were given fertilizers while others were denied.

Some of the criteria for participation under the programme may likely exclude the core poor and vulnerable groups including the women, given their inability to meet up with the farm holding requirement of between 1 and 5 hectares, as a result of their being disadvantaged in asset ownerships. Several institutions and researchers (World Bank 2012; African Development Bank (AfDB) 2014; Coker *et al.* 2016) have all affirmed the female gender's low access to land acquisition and holdings compared to their male counterpart. Participation in the programme requires stages of farmer registration, which is not without its cost. Aside this, linkage to the Growth Enhancement Support data base under the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), may have been partial, given that fresh farmer registration were being contemplated in some states. Initiating a fresh database amounts to colossal waste of public resources

and thus confirms the existence of government inconsistency in the agriculture sector. Also, going by the interaction with some stakeholders, focus seems to have been more on funds disbursement and recovery, with little attention on the revolving nature of loan after recovery.

This is an important sustainability element of the programme, which should be thrashed at this early stage of implementation in order to avoid failed expectations. According to the Chief Executive of the BOA, Professor Danbala Danju, commercial banks opted out of the programme, because it was not considered profitable (Guardian Newspaper, 2016). Without preconception to the risk component of the programme, basing sustainability on sustained credit source and market may not be proper, sufficient, without sound financial and economic analysis.

Expectations are that proper financial and economic analysis of the programme should have been undertaken at the commencement of the programme, rather than letting political consideration becloud sound economic assessment. Gittinger (1984) established that the capacity to prepare and analyze projects lags in many developing countries. He averred that administrators, even those in important planning positions, continually underestimate the time and effort needed to prepare suitable projects and that so, much attention is paid to policy formulation and planning, that specific projects on which to spend available money and on which much development depends are overlooked. According to him, Ill-conceived, hastily planned projects, virtually improvised on the spot, are too often the result.

**ANCHOR BORROWERS PROGRAMME PROCESS FLOW CHART**

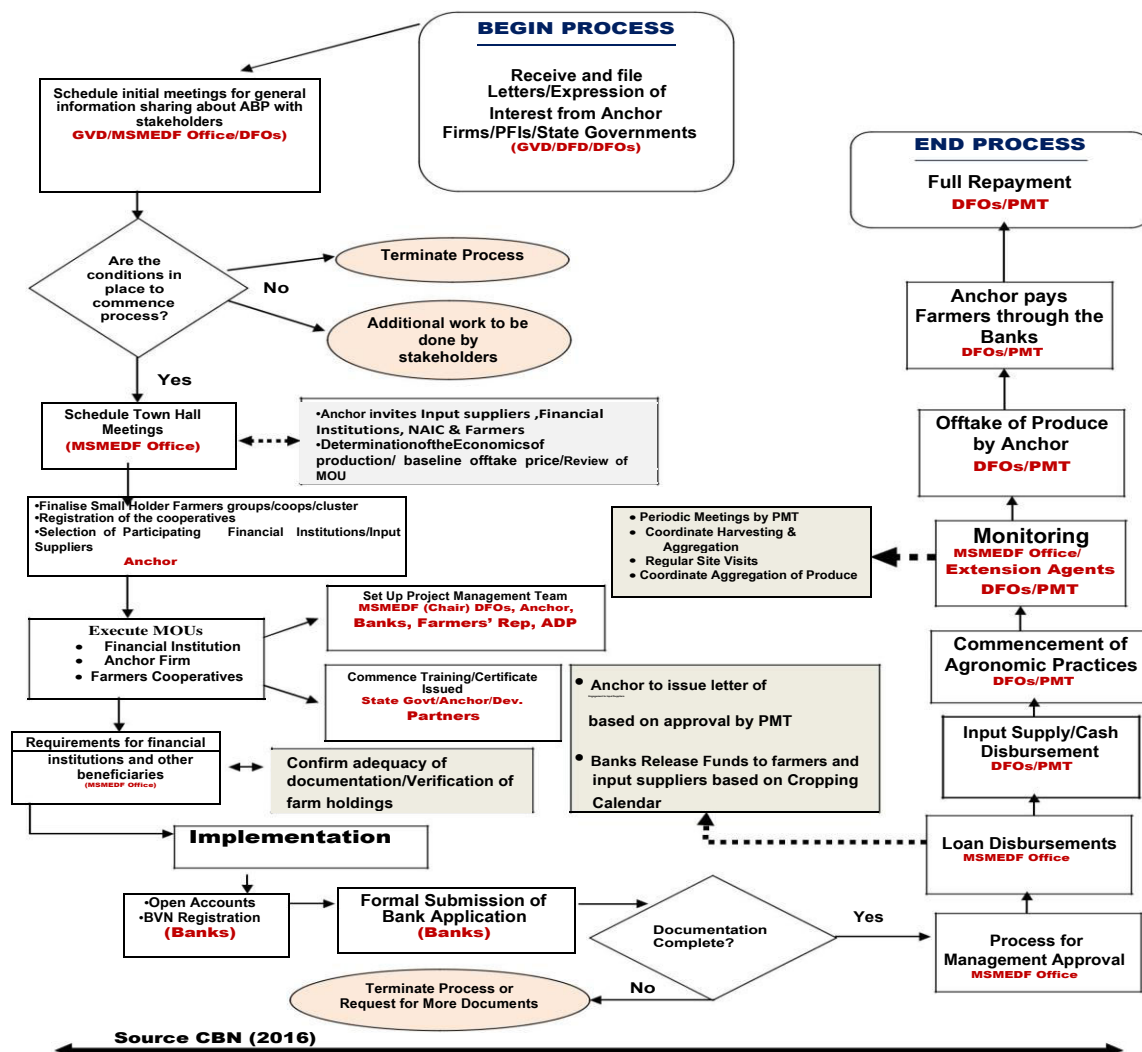


Figure 1: Anchor Borrowers' Programme implementation process, stakeholders and their engagements

**Table 1:** Anchor Borrowers' Programme stakeholders and their roles

S/N	Stakeholders	Roles
1	Central Bank of Nigeria	To provide finance through the Micro Small and Micro Enterprise Development Fund at 9.0 per cent interest rate; Coordinate the entire programme and serve as secretariat.
2	Nigeria Incentive-based Risk Sharing for Agricultural Lending	Shall provide technical assistance to farmers, extension workers and banks and organise farmers into groups/cooperatives.
3	Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation (NAIC)	To provide insurance cover to the projects under the programme.
4	Financial Institutions (Bank of Agriculture, commercial Banks, etc)	To provide financing through the CBN MSMEDF at an all-inclusive interest rate of 9.0 per cent per annum; Disburse directly to co-operatives' accounts and subsequently to the individual farmer's account; Ensure that all payments due to suppliers are made on behalf of the farmers. Shall be expected to identify and collaborate with CBN and NIRSAL to organise farmers into co-operatives; assist in identifying input suppliers for quality assurance; provide extension service experts to support and ensure achievement of the targeted yield.
5	Anchor Companies	Monitor harvest and facilitate full evacuation of produce and buy up produce from farmers at agreed price.
6	Development partners	To provide technical assistance - Shall organise themselves into cooperatives; ensure credibility of members; cross-guarantee one another and abide by the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding; - Must be fully responsible for their farms and agree to work with extension agents attached to them and sell all produce to the off-taker based on the agreed price without side selling; - Shall abide with the agreed terms of lending and repayment.
7	Farmers/Out-growers	

Source: CBN Web site ([www.cbn.gov](http://www.cbn.gov))



**Figure 2:** Map of Nigeria (<http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/nigeria.html>)



In addition, sustainability of the programme largely rests on the assumption of continued ban on rice and operation of reasonable exchange rate regime. Unbanning rice or poor border enforcement and over valuing the exchange rates may diminish the gains of the programme, given the possibility of encouraging importation. Weak synergy of national programmes with development and donor projects and programmes and standardised point of entry has also been one of the key limitations to agricultural growth and development within the country, without prejudgement that some projects have started positive linkage with the programme through MoU. There also seem to be varying implementation approach and unclear beneficiary targeting, without preconception to the fact that the programme was piloted in Kebbi State and the comparative advantage of each of the participating states. While 70,000 farmers are participating in Kebbi State, Sokoto and Kogi States have so far registered 6,265 and 5,000 farmers respectively as at the time of this article, while in Kaduna State, 60,000 have been screened. Adamawa State recorded 120,000 farmers. In Kano State, of the 100,000 farmers slated for the programme, only about 35,000 were able to scale CBN registration guidelines.

Aside these, Kebbi for instance deployed NYSC members for its Training the Trainers (ToT), with arrangements put in place in the other states but though not clear. There also seems to be variation in loan recovery mechanism too; while the BOA is proposing to use collection centres, BOI staff, security agencies, and traditional rulers to recover funds, some of the collaborating institutions are logically using the framework of the registered groups and financial institutions to recover funds disbursed. Reports from Kebbi State (allafrica.com) showed that close political associates of the political class may have been hijacking and displacing real farmers under the programme. In addition, some real farmers have also been unable to access targeted loans, three months into the programme, thus leading to abandonment in some quarters. There are also likely to be limited experience in capacity building, group dynamics, best production practices and business agriculture, thus leading to the use of inexperienced and make shift resource persons for the Train the Trainers in some states.

There have also been cases of weak information on programme's implementation arrangements, particularly at the lower tiers of implementation. Inadequate understanding of the programme's implementation arrangements

may lead to confusion and exclusion. Though, there are programme objectives and strategies guiding the implementation of the programme, there are doubts as to the availability of a comprehensive results framework guiding the implementation of the programme. Above all however, the programme recorded commendable achievements in its attempt at substituting rice import, farmer empowerment through provision of subsidized agro-inputs and starter pack and cash, farmer profiling, development of cooperative and banking culture. The wide scope of targeted value chains further enhanced participation by shades of smallholder farmers. For instance, while majority of the implementing states are focusing on rice and wheat, targeted beneficiaries in Kaduna State covers ginger, soybean sorghum, maize and rice farmers.

### Transaction Dynamics

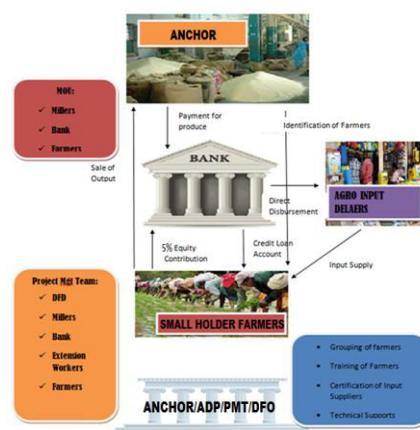


Figure 3: Anchor Borrowers' Programme transaction dynamics

### CONCLUSION

In spite of the perceived benefits of the programme, the article noted and concluded that aspects of ABP implementation arrangements are still unclear due to limited awareness of programme implementation arrangements, roles of stakeholders are overlapping, updated database are still an issue, credible monitoring and evaluation framework are lacking, while cases of elite capture may be prevalent.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the outcome of the review, the study recommended the need for sustained awareness of programme implementation guidelines, review of stakeholder roles, more



inclusive participation, initiation of a credible baseline survey and framework for subsequent performance assessment, while commissioning the conduct of enterprise feasibility, through sound financial and economic analysis.

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