



The forest policies of Nigeria: a cursory analysis

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ABSTRACT

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In an attempt to achieve sustainable forest management, Nigeria has developed two streams of forest policies, with the latter National Forest Policy 2006, being a reviewed version of the former National Forest Policy 1988, as observed during desk investigation. The antecedents, starting from the colonial era to the global International Forest Regimes, which were based on sustainable development principles, contributed to the spate of forestry development in Nigeria. However, the challenges of forestry development still remain, calling for greater in-depth into some aspects of forest policy development that will, amongst others, encourage meaningful forestry research, address poverty alleviation and food security, noting the gamut of non-timber forest products available for development from the Nigerian forests. This invariably will be achieved with greater participation in forestry development including the vulnerable groups. In addition, it is pertinent to state that more robust national forest policies can be achieved through periodic reviews and should therefore be ensured.

Introduction

Efficient forest management can be based on sound forest policy, which in turn depends on adequate and accurate information about the forest estate. Such accurate information can be derived from a successfully planned and implemented national forest programme. The first Nigeria Forest Policy, which was approved in 1988 as part of an Agricultural Policy for Nigeria was aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in wood products through the employment of sound forest principles and techniques, as well as the mobilization of human and material resources (FMEnv ,2002). These views were translated into expecting the policy to address specifically some issues like promoting more rural participation in forestry development, increasing production per unit area, improving the per capita income and technical skill, particularly in wood processing industries, encouraging a maximization of value added of forest produce and fostering of private investments not only in the processing, but also in the regeneration of the resource (FDF, 1999; Kalu and Izeke, 2006). But it was indicated much earlier

(Adeyoju 1975), that two factors which will appear to have influenced Nigeria's forest policy included an urgent need to reserve as much of the natural forest as possible on the one hand, and the ignorance of tropical silviculture, which led to the peculiar system of 'utilization before management' on the other hand.

Various descriptions and definitions (for example Oxford Learners' dictionary 8th edition 2015) emerged, relating to forestry as the science and art of managing and using, for the benefit of mankind, the diversity of natural resources that occur on, and in association with forest lands. This implies that forestry goes beyond trees to include wildlife, the quality of water, land protection for the production of food crops, all types of forest recreation and esthetic values. It can be argued that based on the gamut of sectoral linkages to forestry, the forest policy must be crafted in such a way that these sectors benefit from the implementation of the policy.

The forestry department (FDF, 1999), defined the forest



estate as comprising all those demarcated areas, large and small, which have definitely and legally been set aside for the growth of forest in perpetuity, whether they are government or local administration reserved forest, communal forest areas or private forests. They could be managed as either primary or secondary forest estates, the former consisting of large reserved forests, almost always natural, which are of regional rather than local value, while the latter consists of small, intensively managed plantations and is supplementary to the former. The FAO (2015) defined forest area as land under natural or planted stands of trees of at least 5 metres in situ, whether productive or not, and excludes tree stands in agricultural production systems (for example fruit plantations and agroforestry systems) and trees in urban parks and gardens. Thus for the forest estates to maintain their potentials, the need to ensure the regulation of activities in them through structured policy guidelines, should therefore be emphasized. This paper attempted to present the contents and processes of the forest policies of Nigeria, including the transition from the older to the current policy.

The Policy Concept

Discussions on the development of forest policy and sustainable forest management in Nigeria kicked off with the sustainable development processes and the affiliation of Nigeria to the International Forest Regime (IFR), for the development of a national forest programme. This is because forests globally are recognised as the veritable carbon sink that will mitigate climate change, and contribute to sustainable energy for all. Secondly the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 recognises the role of forestry for environmental amelioration. Thirdly, FAO (2015) stated that forests also do well in terrestrial food production. The illustration in Fig 1, shows the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) which encouraged sustainable forest management, including the Rio based international forest policy dialogue, international institutions and initiatives, as well as trendy topics of international discourse. All these have given teeth to a National Forest Programme (NFP), based on available resources, and driven by needs and interests, as indicated below in Figure 1. Earlier, in 1972, Nigeria shared in the outcome of the proceedings of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, concerning forestry management (FMEHUD, 2005).

The activities in a forest estate show rights of various individuals, societies, groups etc., on some forestry practices. Policies are then developed in order to give effect to good practices in particular, while subjugating less favourable practices. Policy in this context, can be described as a set of frameworks of principles which guide action for the attainment of given objectives (Oxford Learners Dictionary 8th edition 2015). Relevant institutions must therefore be created to ensure dynamic impact of the policy, not only on the special sector, but on the whole economy. The administration of the forestry sector in Nigeria, according to developed policies, cuts across the tiers of government, as seen in Table 1. The communities and the private sector have occasional roles. From the Table, it is seen that policy formulation is the sole responsibility of the Federal Government. But it is expected that the activities of the other tiers contribute information and data required for policy formulation.

Insights into the policy concept revealed that recognition was given to forestry and forest industries as the mainstay of the Nigerian economy in the past. Between the 1980s and 2000s, the sector accounted for about 2 % of the GDP and 8 % of the agricultural value added (FRN, 2006). It was also reported that apart from providing employment to about 2 million people, the Central Bank of Nigeria put the contribution of forestry to Nigeria's GDP at 1.27 % in 1996, 1.22 % in 1998, and 1.189 % in 2000. Already a decline of forestry contribution to GDP is seen over years implying the need for a strong advocacy for a national forest policy which will be an instrument of authority to ensure proper forestry sector development. Such policy will then be developed with the aim to, amongst others;

- a. Ensure that forest production per unit area increase, is sustainable of whatever product or service the forest is established or exists for.
- b. Encourage Improvement in the per capita income and technical skills particularly in wood processing industries, in order to minimize wastage in the case for wood industries, especially the primary ones.
- c. Attract higher resource allocation in plantations of suitable species for the provision of raw materials for certain industries, and to avoid implementation of forestry projects
- d. Encourage a maximization of value added of forest produce, especially the foods/fruits as it is given in the wider agricultural food development context.
- e. Foster private investments not only in



Fig 1. Demonstration of the relationship of the NFP with the IFR Processes. Source: FMEHUD, 2005.

processing, but also in the regeneration of the resource. The focus by the private sector groups for making profit in processing forest products, contributes in less interest at regeneration, an activity considered to usually take some years before any harvest can be done.

Table 1. Summaries of the Roles of Respective Governance Units for the Forestry Sector Development in Nigeria

Roles and Responsibilities for the Federal, State, Local Authority and the Communities.....

i. Federal Government

- ✓ Policy formulation and legislation on national forestry issues
- ✓ Manpower development and training
- ✓ Research and development,
- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation,
- ✓ International Cooperation
- ✓ (Agreements, Conventions,

- ✓ Treaties)
- ✓ Natural resources assessment and auditing
- ✓ Advisory services,
- ✓ Establishment and Management of Model National Forest Estate,
- ✓ Public awareness creation.

ii State Forestry Service

- ✓ consolidation of new and existing forest reserves,
- ✓ management of the forest estate in collaboration with the LGAs and surrounding communities,
- ✓ training of personnel,
- ✓ inventory of resources,
- ✓ awareness creation,
- ✓ enforcement of forestry laws and regulations,
- ✓ monitoring and evaluation,
- ✓ establishment of demonstration plots.

iii Local Government Authority

- ✓ Land-use and ecosystem planning to ensure



- ✓ sustainability,
 - ✓ Forest protection,
 - ✓ Community mobilization
 - ✓ Enforcement of forestry legislation and Bye-Laws,
 - ✓ Monitoring and evaluation,
 - ✓ Establishment of demonstration plots,
 - ✓ Communities awareness campaigns,
- iv. Community level
- ✓ Formation of cooperatives,
 - ✓ Awareness creation amongst members,
 - ✓ Participation in the Protection and management of reserves and free areas.

Justification for Forest Policy

Considering the gamut of problems in the forestry sector, especially deforestation and consolidation of forest reserves, it is rife to ensure that a set of guiding principles are developed in order to address such problems through minimization or outright elimination. Nigeria's involvement with the international forest regime conveys compulsion in addressing forestry development in the country, using laid down rules. For instance, Nigeria is signatory to a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) that entrench sustainable forest management like the 3 Rio Conventions, the CITES, the CMS, Ramsar Convention and the UNFF as already shown in Fig 1. Nigeria is also a member of international organizations like the ITTO, ATO and the IPF. This is because Nigeria has abundant forest resources, including the land use and land cover that involved mainly vegetation of various kinds as listed in Table 2. Also listed in Akindele (2002) are 4,600 plant species including over 560 tree species (with a range of 30 to 70 species per hectare for trees ≥ 5 cm dbh). In addition to these are NTFPs for various uses like medicinal, arts & crafts for sustainable livelihoods, food security, livestock feeds, weaving & dyeing, chewing sticks etc. All these resources must therefore be well guarded. Furthermore, the need to address food security in Nigeria, especially as being championed by the Agricultural Promotion Policy document (FMARD, 2016), makes it mandatory that any policy discussion from any natural resources sector like forestry should make meaningful policy statements for collective efforts towards success. The forest policy however needs to be developed and enforced in order to address specific issues like;

- ✓ Tackling the problems of deforestation.

This has been reported to account for a high percentage problem for forestry development, for instance, it is ranked 73.64 % in Edo state of Nigeria (Kalu and Izeakor, 2006).

- Encouraging sustainable supply of nontimber forest products (NTFPs), which are reputed to contribute in poverty alleviation. Ogunwusi (2013) opined that the forest policy and the land tenure system need to give priority attention towards the development of NTFPs, including bamboo.

Reducing over-exploitation of forest resources, Acquisition of some marginal lands, in order to expand the forest estate; aggressive afforestation efforts; Promotion of transparency, accountability, collaboration and partnerships, and maintaining sustained level for the supply of forest goods and services.

Historical Perspectives of Forestry Development in Nigeria, Prior to the Emergence of the First Forest Policy

As far back as 1822, records already exist of exports of forest produce, mainly from the southern Protectorate of Nigeria (FMEnv, 2006). And preceding this date, is the era of slave trade and industrial revolution, with the concomitant harvest and use of forest products, especially wood / timber for powering of industries and construction of rail tracks then. Furthermore, the report has it that by 1887, the then Governor of Lagos published the sketch of forestry of West Africa. In 1890, Forestry Ordinance was promulgated for constituting Forest reserves and in 1899, a Forestry Officer for Lagos Colony was appointed. Also in 1899, Forestry department for the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria was established, in addition to the first forest reserve. In 1902, a Conservator of Forests for the Lagos Colony and the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria, was appointed. And the first Forestry department was created in Nigeria in 1908 by the Colonial Government.

The jurisdiction of the Forestry department was extended to the Northern Protectorate in 1916.

In the 1920s, Systematic silvicultural research began, during which a comprehensive knowledge of the floristic composition of the forests were acquired.

During the decade of the 1950s, natural reserves were demarcated for natural regeneration. By the 1960s, reforestation through planting in collaboration with peasant farmers continued. Methods were discovered for afforesting savanna areas eg., using Eucalyptus and Pinus species. The need to have a forest policy that will cover 25 % of the total land area of the country was attempted, but approximately 10 % was achieved, of which four-fifths is savanna (Akindele, 2002).



Figure 1. Map of Nigeria Showing the Northern and Southern Nigeria, which were formerly Northern and Southern Protectorates respectively

This is observed in Table 2 below where forest cover includes the forest itself (5.54 %), Forestland of Mangrove/Swamp/Riparian (4.23 %) and forest plantation (0.14 %). The jurisdiction of the Forestry department was extended to the Northern Protectorate in 1916. In the 1920s, Systematic silvicultural research began, during which a comprehensive knowledge of the floristic composition of the forests were acquired. During the decade of the 1950s, natural reserves were demarcated for natural regeneration. By the 1960s, reforestation through planting in collaboration with peasant farmers continued. Methods were discovered for afforesting savanna areas eg., using Eucalyptus and Pinus species. The need to have a forest policy that will cover 25 % of the total land area of the country was attempted, but approximately 10 % was achieved, of which four-fifths is savanna (Akindele, 2002). This is observed in Table 2 below where forest cover includes the forest itself (5.54 %), Forestland of

Mangrove/Swamp/Riparian (4.23 %) and forest plantation (0.14 %).

Table 2. Land Use and Land Cover in Nigeria

Types of Land Use and Land Cover	Percent
Grassland	16.34
Shrub/Woodland/Thicket	32.01
Forest	5.54
Forestland(Mangrove/Swamp/Riparian)	4.23
Forest Plantation	0.14
Crop Plantation	0.17
Farmland 60 % Intensity	13.74
Other Extensive Farmland Area	26.68
Water/Rivers Creeks	0.82
Built up Area	0.33



The 1970s marked the prohibition of the export of all timber products based on the growth of the domestic market. Then there was a projection that the existing timber resources will be exhausted by year 2000, (Lowe, 1984). The 1970s also saw the creation of the Federal Department of Forestry (FDF) as an arm of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Rural Development (FMAWR&RD).

By the 1980s, the FDF was answerable to the Federal Government on forestry matters. Due to the evident oil wealth in Nigeria then, increased industrial development was envisaged within the country. The FDF was mobilized by the Federal Ministry of Industries to produce pulp wood for the pulp and paper industries, which were established then to ensure that the nation is sufficient in paper products. The 1980s also marked the first document production of a Forest Policy in Nigeria, under the FMAWR&RD. Various forestry programs were developed within the FDF then, that were supervised by a newly created National Forestry Development Committee (NFDC) then. A World Bank forestry project called Forestry Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (FORMEU) was executed during this period. FORMEU was also tagged as Forestry I project (Omiyale, 1993).

Table 3. Area of the Nigerian Forest Estate in Selected Years

Year	Area (km ²)	Percentage of Reserved forest to Nigeria's land area
1900	97.13	0.01
1910	2,590.00	0.30
1920	12,145.51	1.34
1930	29,878.24	2.29
1940	59,549.28	6.55
1950	73,320.31	9.07
1983	99,991.92	10.99

Source: Omiyale, (1993).

In the 1990s, further development of forestry programs within the FDF, included the Women-In-Forestry under the second World Bank forestry project (Forestry II) and called Forestry Management, Evaluation and Coordinating Unit (FORMECU). The Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) was also introduced. In addition, a National Forestry Program (NFP) was developed through the contribution of various

stakeholders. Table 3 simply shows a progressive increase in area of the forest estate over decades, up to 1983, when the forest cover attained 10.99 %.

Although the Federal Forestry Department presently regards the percentage forest coverage as approximately 5 % (Anonymous, 2018), the FAO (2015) reported that the forest area (% of land area) in Nigeria was 7.68 as at 2015, then going from a trend of 18.92 % in 1990, as shown in Figure 3.

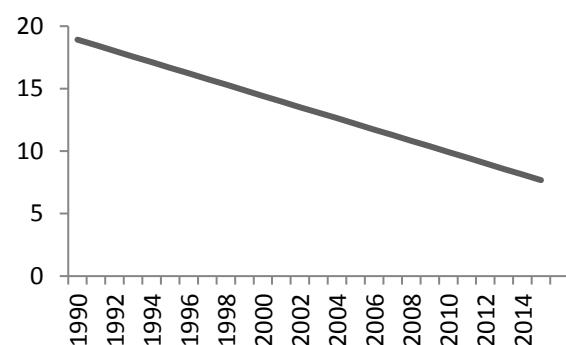


Figure 3. Trend of Percent Forest Cover in Nigeria, between 1990 and 2015. Source: FAO (2015).

At the turn of the century (year 2000 and onwards), and with the creation of the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv), the FDF was ceded from the FMAWR&RD to join the FMEnv. This action was personally observed and interpreted to imply that the protection function of the forests is outweighing the timber and other wood products' function which used to be the mainstay of forestry under the FMAWR&RD. The apparent less attention to the Forestry Sector may have contributed to the forest coverage plunging to as low as averaging 5 % as currently reported.

The 1988 National Forest Policy (NFP), and its Review

The 1988 NFP was referred to as extant national forest policy, included within the document titled Agricultural Policy for Nigeria, and published in 1988 by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2006). The policy, which was described as demand-led, provided goals, targets and implementation strategies for the management, development and use of forests and their products. This was to be achieved by amongst other measures, increasing the forest cover from 10 percent to 20 percent, as couched in the broadly stated objectives. But this objective was not realized throughout the tenure of the Policy.

By 1999, the interest to review the 1988 forest policy was rife. This led to the setting up of a committee to



carry out the process. Study tours were undertaken by the committee to Ghana, Malaysia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, being countries with similar ecological and political setting, according to FDF (2000). The committee members were to broaden their experience and share ideas with stakeholders of those countries in addition. This visitation was followed later (2002 – 2004) by national stakeholder workshops across four geographical zones of Nigeria in order to ensure a consensus policy and an enforceable act. The workshops were planned to be participatory, collaborative and transparent (FDF, 2000).

The main objective of the workshops was to collate inputs from stakeholders across the country on the broad forest policy statement, and the new policy direction, as well as on the draft national forestry act.

Four working groups were used to examine and discuss the issues peculiar to each zone. The states that were covered in each zone are as follows;

- North East , Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba
- North West, Kaduna, Kogi, Katsina, Kano, Niger, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara
- South East, Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi, Rivers, Cross-River, Bayelsa
- South West, Kwara, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Lagos, Edo, Delta.

Successful collation of inputs from the various stakeholders in each zone was realized. In all, 30 policy issues were identified across the four zones, distributed as follows;

- North East meeting recorded 4 policy issues,
- North West meeting recorded 15 policy issues,
- South East meeting recorded 7 policy issues, and
- South West meeting recorded 4 policy issues.

Discussion of each of the 30 policy issues was done under 3 broad titles of 'Policy Statement', 'Objectives' and 'Strategies'. This led to developing the skeleton which formed the basis for the 2006 National Forest Policy.

The 2006 National Forest Policy

This policy which emerged in 2006 June, was also considered weak because it could not be applied without legal backing, (FMEnv 2010). The policy, after stating the need for such, included as background, a plethora of concerns like;

- The economy of Nigeria and the forestry sector,
- The forest resources,
- The Non Timber Forest Products,
- Biodiversity conservation,
- Fuelwood,

- Forest products harvesting and utilization,
- Forest industries,
- Forestry research,
- Employment, safety and security,
- Tourism,
- Factors responsible for the decline in forest resources. These were listed to include exploitation, deforestation, farming, population growth, new settlements, infrastructural development, fuelwood, uncontrolled forest fires, over-grazing, poorly organized industrial exploitation of timber and weak institutional capacity.

Guiding Principles for the National Forest Policy 2006

Based on the government reform agenda then, the principles were crafted along the lines of addressing the factors that contribute to the decline of forest resources, contribution of forestry to the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), mobilization and partnership with the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), tendering administration of forest concessions, accommodation of international forest policy initiatives, as indicated above, and mainstreaming of forestry into the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) then. The principles then threw insights into some issues as listed below;

- Livelihoods and poverty reduction,
- Food security, biodiversity conservation and environmental services,
- Partnerships in governance,
- National forestry legislation,
- International obligation, including carbon credits,
- Forestry valuation ,
- Forest sector investment

It is important to state that based on the guiding principles, of the national forest policy 2006, four years later, 50 principles with recommended priority actions (FMEnv, 2010), were developed for the program on 'Community Based Forest Management' for Nigeria.

Sectoral Issues for the National Forest Policy 2006

The 2006 national forest policy, issued policy statements on 31 sectoral issues, which were also described as Principal Policy Elements. They are as follows;

- forest management,
- Community participation in and outside Forest and Game Reserves,
- private sector involvement and participation in forest development,
- biodiversity conservation, national parks and game reserves of conservation interest,



- Forest industries,
- Forest administration,
- NTFPs,
- environmental services of forests,
- watershed forests and wetland management,
- agroforestry,
- urban forestry,
- poverty alleviation and food security,
- supply of seeds and seedlings,
- forestry research and development,
- forest fiscal policy,
- forest fires,
- pests and diseases control,
- National tree planting campaign,
- Wood fuels,
- drought and desertification control,
- employment, safety and security of personnel and habitat,
- gender issues,
- youth programmes,
- manpower development, training and capacity building,
- education and awareness creation,
- information and data base management,
- land, tree tenure and conflict resolution,
- trade (Internal and External),
- sectoral cooperation,
- national and international cooperation,
- forest sector investment

The elements of support for implementing the national forest policy 2006 included;

- A national forest programme development,
- Forestry legislation,
- Gender and equity,
- Funding mechanism,
- International and regional cooperation,
- Forest sector monitoring and evaluation.

Details of three Principal Policy Elements

1. Poverty Alleviation and Food Security

Forest resources contribute to livelihoods and can complement other key components of poverty reduction through food production, education and primary health care. Food security, through subsistence, is provided through fuelwood, medicines, wood for building or forest materials for building, bushmeat, fodder, mushroom, honey, edible leaves, roots, fruits etc. Poverty alleviation can be achieved also through arts and crafts, using various forest products. In addition, are social and spiritual sites and environmental services like watershed protection and biodiversity conservation.

Policy Statement

The forest policy is aimed at ensuring that forests, apart from providing timber, also provide other arrays of goods and services on sustainable basis in order to improve human livelihoods.

Objectives

- Encourage the expansion of forest reserves to meet the needs of the rural people,
- Sustainably manage forest reserves,
- Reduce Rural-Urban migration, enhance income generation through the promotion of scientific exploitation of non-wood forest products, and engage the rural populace in sustainable agro-forestry practices.

Strategies

- Participatory approach in the establishment and management of forest reserves, community woodlots, windbreaks, etc.
- Promotion of the establishment of multi-purpose tree species indigenous in the savanna and forest ecosystems, including the medicinal plants
- Promotion of agroforestry practices for food security (apiculture, mushroom farming, snail breeding and wildlife domestication)
- Establishment of cooperatives and ensuring appropriate pricing for NTFPs

- **Observation:** the policy statement does not appear to be focused in stating how the challenge of the policy element will be addressed, invariably, no goal is set

2. Forestry Research and Development

Continuous pursuit of new knowledge is essential for the various fields of forestry, hence the need for comprehensive research programme. Ultimate success of the forest policy was perceived to depend largely on the practical application of the results of scientific research. Training schools for forestry at the sub-professional level, as well as training for timber trade and wood utilization, shall be maintained. In addition, identification of professional and post-graduate training is equally important.

Forestry research and development are aimed at promoting intensive activities in the areas of forest conservation, biotechnology, silviculture, agro-forestry, resource assessment, wildlife



management, socio-economic issues and optimum utilization, including the development, exploitation and marketing of NTFPs.

The objective of the policy is to develop appropriate technology for research in various aspects of forestry, wildlife management and forest products utilization.

The strategies include:

- Intensive research and development in all areas of forestry development,
- Identification of research needs of relevant stakeholders
- Facilitation of experience sharing,
- Funding of research eg., from Forestry tax fund, ecological funds,
- Training of forestry staff at all levels to enable them apply the results of research to best advantage

Policy statement also reneges in giving the clear goals to be attained, probably with timelines, so that scientific research results can contribute to the success of the policy.

3. *Gender Issues*

The government will ensure that the vulnerable group, women, youth, the aged and poor people are particular beneficiaries in the development of the forest sector. This is in recognition of the fact that the groups are often marginalized in development processes, and these groups are frequently the most dependent on forest resources for their livelihoods. Strategies for implementing the forest policy specifically account for gender differences in the perception and uses of forest products.

Policy Statement

Actively involve women in forest policy enunciation, implementation and sustainable management of forest resources.

Policy Objectives

- To improve the socio-economic status of women.
- To ensure efficient utilization of wood and non-wood products
- To facilitate women involvement in the conservation and protection of the environment for sustainable use

Policy Strategies

Creation of awareness activities to enable women appreciate the benefits derivable from involvement in forest resources management. Women should be involved in agroforestry.

Developing grass root women promoters' capacity to motivate and empower women on the rights to forest resources management *vis a vis* other development opportunities.

Promoting an environment for visibility and credibility of the group promoters as development agents through the formation of their NGOs at local level, and association at the national level for gaining powerful position for advocacy.

Cultivating a learning and sharing culture, by linking up grassroots level learning and challenges to national and international forums.

- Observation: Not only women, but all vulnerable groups should be involved for the policy statement.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

- Forest policy statements should be focused and organized in such a way that it will be result oriented. The policy statement as observed in the 'poverty alleviation and food security', needs review, likewise that in 'forestry research and development'. The statement under 'Gender issues' also needs review as it is observed not to be well focused at involving all concerned in gender issues for forestry development.
- The objectives of the three Principal Policy Elements need to be quantified in order to put focus on achievements after specified periods.
- The strategies are replete with ideas that may not be easily achieved without an organized institutional mandate. Such institutions should include non-governmental organizations and Forestry Colleges, as listed in Akindele (2002). Others should include government ministries and agencies at the Federal and States' levels, Local government administrations, communities organized actions and the Private sector endeavours.

Recommendations that can help to sharpen policy drives may include:

- Focused policy statements, for instance, the private sector operating in the forest sector, should be prepared to undertake the replanting



of their concession areas after logging, instead of government embarking on reforestation or

plantation development, but this has to be reflected in the policy guidelines. Perhaps the scenario of the 1980s, where the forestry department was commissioned to produce pulpwood for pulp and paper industries, through establishment of plantations of *Gmelina* and *Pinus* species, could have subsisted if the industries themselves were in charge of establishing such tree plantations. Ridiculously, no such industry is reckoned with in Nigeria today. Therefore, it is recommended that policy direction for the private sector involvement in forest industries should be guided to avoid such failures.

- Timber export should remain banned in totality in Nigeria while timber import should be encouraged with free Freight On Board (FOB), to encourage investors and preserve the country's dwindling forest estate (FMEnv, 2002).
- There is need for greater interstate collaboration since the resource is oftentimes contiguous across boundaries.
- Effective information networking , promoting environmental education and awareness at both formal and non-formal levels of the nation's education system is deemed important.
- Greater collaboration between the Forestry departments and the Energy Commission of Nigeria on wood fuel issues, should be encouraged.
- Periodic release of the State of the Environment report, as indicated in FDF (2000) is important to update the citizenry on the situation of the environment, as well as tool for monitoring of natural resources management initiatives
- Encouragement of partnership, both for decision making and implementation, including those in close proximity to the forest should be mandatory.
- The broader national forest programme should ensure proper data collection on forest resources, for proper accounting.
- Community based forest management programmes should be encouraged.
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- Current national forest policy is ripe for review, and the call for review since March 2016,
- should continue, with anticipated commencement of activities.

Taking cue from the global arena, the forest policy should continue to recognize the tenure rights of people living in and around forests, and at the same time managing pressures on forestland for agriculture, biofuels, carbon sequestration and conservation (Ogunwusi, 2013).

Conclusion

The National forest policies of 1988 and 2006 have recognized the position of Nigeria's forests as having been a sustenance pool for mankind, for ages. Though the policies strived to attain 20 - 25 % forest cover for Nigeria, both failed to achieve that due to some underlying causes which the forestry sector alone cannot prevent. Thus, Nigeria's forest cover has continued to remain below 10 %, despite the efforts being made to develop national forest management programmes that will entrench sustainability. The younger Forest policy of 2006, is due for review, and presents another opportunity to improve forest coverage in Nigeria. In addition, policy research efforts in the wider agricultural context will surely contribute in enhancing the forest resources. Efforts should therefore be culminated in putting in place, a national forest policy that can outstandingly enhance the growth of the efforts at addressing poverty alleviation, food security and malnutrition in Nigeria. Thus, the periodic reviews of the forest policies are welcome development.

Finally, it is pertinent to state that the Agricultural sector cannot make huge progress without recognizing the resources that abound in the forests for addressing livelihoods, food security, research and development. The Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet), and other top advocacy groups in Nigeria can champion such an endeavour.

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