



RETHINKING THE FOOD PRODUCTION SYSTEM

The world is facing a food insecurity crisis, and there is need for contingent and actionable measures to avert the looming crisis. Today, the world is confronted by the simultaneous dilemma of conserving natural ecosystems and meeting socioeconomic needs of a rapidly growing global population. Instantly, I was flabbergasted.

At the core of the world's dilemma is the need for increase in food production to feed the ever-increasing world population, while smallholder farmers who are major producers of food in Africa are faced with cultivating the same soil repeatedly for years. This leads to a depletion of soil nutrients, which affects crop production. Also, global warming resulting in irregular

weather patterns, frequent flooding, and increase in temperatures is contributing to some of the challenges smallholder farmers face.

While the agriculture, transport, and energy sectors have been listed as major contributors to over 80% of emissions responsible for global warming, hence, putting in place sustainable agricultural practices will result in profound effects on keeping global temperatures below the pre-industrial level.

A situation in which a lot of governments are reluctant or are taking far fewer steps towards addressing.

Agriculture is immensely affected by climate change and vice-versa. The two are intertwined and complementary, giving rise to

Agrihub Trove is a bi-monthly publication that explores the key issues and challenges faced by agribusiness owners in Nigeria in recent years and shows how they can change their business models and deal with these challenges innovatively and creatively. Written in an engaging and accessible style, the contributors and staffs of Rural Youth Employment Opportunities: Support to integrated agribusiness hubs in Nigeria (IFAD-Agrihub) have drawn on years of experience in the industry to examine the massive changes in the agribusiness sector and share relevant thoughts.

This issue focuses on the role of networking in agribusiness development.

a need for global leaders and stakeholders to create and sustain conversations around these issues on how to foster sustainable climate-smart food systems especially for smallholder farmers.

Presently this is not the situation, these two intertwined factors are linked to other challenges such as water scarcity, food shortages, perennial hunger, biodiversity loss, pests and diseases, malnutrition, widening inequalities, loss of food sovereignty, and ethnic conflicts.

With the future of conventional agriculture looking austere, so are the livelihoods of many people in rural areas who depend on farming. It is imperative an urgent re-examination of the current agricultural system is

carried out. This will allow for understanding how these challenges can be addressed adequately.

The current conventional dynamics on food production is premised on capital intensive investment. It is exhibited through mechanization, over dependency on external inputs and biotechnology. This is in addition to monoculture, cultivation of 'elite' crops and monopoly of farm inputs by global franchise. Consequently, indigenous knowledge is systematically losing relevance, native crops and indigenous seed systems are becoming endangered, quality of soils and waterways is declining, and the cost of agricultural production is rising constantly. This is impeding the productivity of smallholder farmers.

It's worthy of note that current conventional farming systems

in its design is not delivering results that can address food insecurity. It is also ill-equipped to meet the nutritional needs of the world, and the challenge of climate change.

Agriculture is a major driver and catalyst of development. Sadly, the current agricultural system is adversely affecting the natural ecosystem and the productivity of smallholder farmers. Simply put, the system is accelerating environmental problems through ill-informed use of agrochemicals, mechanization and encroachment on fragile ecosystems. This is in a bid to address food shortage and nutrition insecurity, especially through large-scale farms.

On the flipside, the system is also vulnerable to climate change shocks, political conflicts and instability, and disruptions of global economic systems.

Addressing the complex and interconnected challenge of climate change, and the need to feed a rapidly growing global population requires a significant shift from conventional agro-ecological practices. At the core of these practices is an in-depth understanding of natural ecosystems, and the importance of building on this to ensure sustainable food security.

Agro-ecological farming systems draw its impetus and inspiration from a symbiotic relationship between biotic and abiotic factors. Research has shown that this system, mostly advanced by smallholder farmers, taps into indigenous knowledge and also elevates particularly rural dwellers above commercial interest or profit.

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