# YOBE STATE OF NIGERIA
# PEER REVIEW MISSION REPORT
# FOR THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS FORUM

A. State Profile

B. Agriculture

C. Water Resources

D. Challenges

E. Benchmarks

F. Recommendations/Suggestions

G. Conclusion

By

Dr. Abba Gambo
Consultant/Policy Adviser
Agriculture and Water

## A. STATE PROFILE

Created on the 27th of August 1991, Yobe is named after the River-Komodugu Yobe. Located between latitudes 10°30'E to 13°25'N and Longitudes 9°35' to 12°30'E, Yobe State is bordered to the North by the Republic of Niger, to the East by Borno State, to the West by Jigawa and Bauchi States and to the South by Gombe and Borno states. It covers a land area of 47,153 Sq.km, with a population of 2.7 million people according to the 2006 National Census.

The climate is characterized by a single long dry season followed by a shorter wet season. Rainfall averages 250 – 1000mm, with about four wet months in a year. Mean annual temperature is 26°C increasing towards the Sahel, reaching 34.8°C in April. Humidity is low throughout the dry season. Potential evapotranspiration excesses rainfall except for the few months. Excessive evapotranspiration in the state leads to water deficit for most parts of the year.

The State falls under the Savanna ecovegetational zone, with Sahel, Sudan and northern Guinea Savanna. The Sahel has rainfall of less than 500mm per annum. The vegetation consists of thorn bushes and small trees which grow under very dry condition. The Northern part of Yobe is semi-desert or sub-desert steppe. Major trees are Acacia spp, Adansonia, digitata and Balanites aegyptiaca. Central and Southern Yobe have more benign clime, with higher rainfall patterns, lesser temperature and more density of grown natural vegetation. The Hujba-Goniri – Buni-Yadi axis has deep forested areas idle for commercial farming.

## B. AGRICULTURE

Agriculture in Yobe State is characterized by the use of traditional implements as a result of low-level technology. Such implements include hoes, cutlasses, sickles and digging sticks which require much human energy. The rainfall regimes determine the farming calendar and the size of it's harvest is greatly influenced by it's variability. Prolonged droughts often result in disastrous crop failures, loss of livestock and severe famines such as the ones from 1972 – 1974 and 1982 – 1984. Over 70% of the landmass of Yobe is suitable for agricultural activities, with 80% of the land best for rainfed crops and 20% bordering rivers (Fadama) is suitable for irrigation farming. It is an agrarian state, with more than 80% of the population engaged in Agriculture. Major crops cultivated are Gum Arabic, groundnut and cotton (as cash crops), millet, rice, wheat, maize and root crops like cassava, sweet and Irish potato, cowpea, sesame and an array of vegetables as food crops.

The policy thrust of the State Ministry of agriculture is geared towards increased food self-sufficiency and food security with employment and income generation.

Achievements made so far:

- Modernization of Agricultural production through tractorization, 700 units available.

- Development of Farm centres and expansion of the Youth Empowerment Farm Schemes.

- Promotion of Intermediate Technology through purchase of matching bulls, ox-carts, ridgers and inter-row cultivators under the animal traction loan scheme.

- Encouragement and assistance to Farmer Associations and Co-operatives to ensure their involvement in the management of various incentives aimed at promoting agriculture in the State.

- Procurement of assorted grains for the Yobe State Grains Reserve programme, 18,960 MT millet, 12,040 MT sorghum, totaling 31,000 MT.

- Provision of water pumps, tube wells, wash boreholes and accessories to support irrigation farming in the State.

## C. WATER RESOURCES

Based on the UN standard recommendation of 100 litres/day per person and 50 litres/day per livestock, Yobe State does not have the capacity for the provision of 270,000,000 litres per day. The main inland drainage system of the State is the Yobe river and it's tributaries such as Rivers Gana, Bunga, Katagum, Gaya and Hadejia, taking their waters from the Jos Plateau to the Lake Chad. The natural flow of the Yobe River is seasonal with high flows during the rainy season (June – September) and low flows during the dry season (March – May). The reduction in flow is as a result of evapotranspiration recharge of ground water and irrigation activities. River Yobe is the most important river in Nigeria draining into the Lake Chad.

Ground water occurs in exploitable quantity in most of the Chad Basin formation, thus most rural population in the region depends largely on wells for domestic water supply. During the dry season, those wells often become insufficient and some dry out, forcing the communities to go further in search of water. Tabkis or water storage depressions of about 5m in depth are commonly constructed for water storage purposes.

## D. CHALLENGES

- The major challenge is power, for both Agriculture and Water Sub-sectors.

- Only 60% of the total arable land is cropped in Yobe, there is inadequate and inappropriate modern farm machineries to put more land area/hectarages into productive use.

- Inadequate supply of inputs like improved seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, etc.

- Prevalence of pests and diseases particularly the migratory quela birds and locusts.

- Continued dependence on Rainfed Agriculture.

- Lack of free-flow of water from major rivers due to dams constructed upstream, siltation and blockages. (No wonder the Government is vehement in it's opposition to the Kafin Zaki Dam proposed by the Bauchi State Government.)

- Invasion of "Kachalla" or "Typha" grass along major river canals, particularly at the Nguru wetlands.

- Poor processing/storage facilities.

- Absence of good marketing channels, guaranteed minimum pricing agencies and support guarantors.

- Inadequate agricultural extension service delivery.

- Poor infrastructural facilities like roads, portable water, health, energy, etc.

- Continued deterioration of the econ-system resulting from bad practice of human activities like falling of trees, overgrazing, bush-burning, etc.

- Rural – Urban migration of the youths, the active agricultural labour group.

- The ravaging desert, especially in the Northern parts of the State.

- Lack of adequate funding for the Agricultural Sector.

## E. BENCHMARKS

- The provision of 700 units of tractors by the Yobe State Agricultural Mechanization Authority (YOSAMA) at a total cost of ₦4.55 Billion. The highest number of tractors seen in any State.

- Establishment of Yobe Youth Empowerment Farm Programme (YYEFP) to employ the youths on the unutilized land. The target is 1000 ha. The State Government will develop the land and provide all the needed farm inputs. The youths are to manage the farms, and at the end of the harvest, the inputs supplied shall be costed and recovery made through kind.

- Massive procurement and storage of 31,000 MT of millet and sorghum as a food security strategy for critical periods. This was done in relation to the early warnings by FAO of impending droughts in some sahelian African countries, particularly Niger, Mali and Chad. A 1000 kg bag is subsidized for ₦2,000.00.

## F. RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

- The State Government should boost the cash crop – Gum Arabic through massive enlightenment for increased productivity. A special Gum Arabic Agency should be set-up to be the liaison between producers and buyers both internally and externally.

- The sand dunes of the Geidam – Kanamman-Yusnfari-Machine axis should be controlled adequately. Already several hectarages of farmlands have been lost. Similarly, drastic and far-reaching desertification control measures should be put in place in conjunction with the FAO, FG, donor agencies and the private sector. Traditional and Religious leaders should be contacted for further enlightenment on the vagaries of desertification, and the need for a more holistic control measure. Erosion controlling grasses, drought resistant tree species, and artificial "oasis" can go a long way in this direction.

- The Yobe State College of agriculture, Gujba, which used to be very vibrant, should be resuscitated and made more functional with modern agricultural facilities. The State Government can boost it to be a centre of research on "Arid Zone Studies".

## G. CONCLUSION

Though a very young State, Yobe has gotten all it takes to become an agricultural State and a food basket. With her comparative advantage bordering Sahelian country of Niger, Yobe can be a major supplier of food to that country, if the resources are adequately harnessed and utilized for that purpose.