Ogun state government adopts a new agricultural policymaking model

Background: Challenges for the state’s agricultural policy

The Ogun state government has previously tried to exploit the rich agricultural resources of the state. In 2007, the government drafted a policy to cover the six main cash crops. Though this policy helped to outline general steps for government agencies, it did not provide specific policy objectives and strategies that would lead to greater private sector engagement. As a result, crop productivity has not improved, investment has not risen, and farmers’ incomes have remained low.

At that time, PrOpCom was working in Ogun state to improve the market for Ofada rice and thus benefit the state’s poor farmers. This work brought PrOpCom to the attention of the state government, which was interested in partnering with PrOpCom.

After a series of meetings, the government realised that PrOpCom could help them to develop a more detailed, systematically planned rice policy that would help the state better harness the economic potential of the crop. By articulating a specific and more complete policy for rice, the government anticipated that a more business-friendly environment could be created to promote private sector investment and increase the productivity and efficiency of agriculture in the state. In 2008, the state’s Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MANR) then approached PrOpCom for policy support.

During the initial stage, PrOpCom engaged a local policy expert who worked with the MANR to clearly define the comparative advantages of rice in the state. These key factors provided the rationale for government policy and business investment in the rice sector:

- Ogun state is endowed with the ideal land resources for rice cultivation and the human resources to support its production
- Ofada rice is believed to have originated from Ogun state, a concept which businesses could promote in their marketing approaches (see ‘Ofada rice in Ogun state’)
- Ogun’s proximity to Lagos provides a huge market for the state’s rice.

In spite of its potential, the rice industry faced several challenges, such as inadequate access to farmland, high cost of land clearing, non-availability of farm inputs (especially seeds and...
The government demonstrated its commitment to addressing these challenges by collaborating with the private sector to draft the rice policy for the state.

**Strategy: Defining a new policy approach**

The main aim of the rice policy was to promote a private-sector-led rice industry, for which the government would provide a business-friendly environment. Specifically, this involved clearly defining the roles of business and government to enable them to support one another, rather than interfere in each other's affairs.

Such a clearly defined crop policy is attractive to businesses as it remains in place beyond the terms of individual politicians, creating a more stable environment for investment. Well-designed policy strategies ensure that the government does not compete with business, for example through direct procurement; rather, they ensure that the government will support business, for instance through land clearing or titling.

Such policy strategies also help reduce government overspending on goods and services that the private sector could be delivering at a greater scale and efficiency, and allow the private sector to grow to occupy these spaces. With a more enabling environment for the private sector, investment in the rice value chain could increase, leading to improved market efficiency, increased incomes and reduced poverty.

In Ogun state, PrOpCom’s facilitation encouraged active representation and participation of the private sector as the main driver of economic activity. Most importantly, these harmonised policies included:

- **Stakeholder inclusion**: PrOpCom recommended which key stakeholders to include in the policy process, bringing these key groups together, and offered suggestions on how to facilitate an effective dialogue. Through this approach, different positions and interests can be discussed and harmonised.

- **Policy design**: PrOpCom’s approach invites dialogue and participation from multiple stakeholders to achieve these aims. Currently, most political planning in Nigeria follows a top-down approach, with little or no involvement from private sector stakeholders. In contrast, PrOpCom’s approach is all-inclusive and participatory. PrOpCom recommends which key stakeholders to include in the policy process, brings these key groups together, and offers suggestions on how to facilitate an effective dialogue. Through this approach, different positions and interests can be discussed and harmonised.

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The challenges of policymaking

When the policy drafting began, a meeting of major stakeholders in the rice industry – from both the public and private sectors – was held to harmonise their views. The process of harmonising the various opinions was slow, however. For instance, the private sector stakeholders did not accept the first policy draft, claiming it was dominated by the government officials’ inputs.

The need to ensure a balanced mix of public and private perspectives in the policy document necessitated further consultations with the private sector. At one point, the Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RiFAN) even threatened the MANR, claiming they would picket their offices if the policy was not finished soon. While this felt threatening to Ogun state’s permanent secretary of agriculture, it demonstrates the critical sense of empowerment and motivation towards action – among both citizens and the private sector – that can be achieved through an inclusive policy process.

interests will be laid out in a lasting policy document, to which future political parties will be held accountable.

Facilitation: Turning theory into policy

To pilot this new policymaking model, PrOpCom engaged the services of Prof. Adebayo Aromolaran of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, to provide technical assistance to the coordinating team from the state MANR. The consultant’s assistance was necessary to help facilitate the iterative process, rather than provide an expert opinion on the policy’s content.

His work included helping the state’s team to interview stakeholders, collect the data that would inform the drafting process, and facilitate the final drafting process. Once the MANR felt comfortable with this new method, it assumed full ownership of the process, with intermittent support from the technical expert to ensure stakeholders’ opinions were validated.

The participatory drafting process started in February 2009. The output of the various consultations provided the main inputs for the draft policy document, which was later validated during a workshop in October 2009. A wide range of stakeholders attended the workshop, including rice farmers, processors, marketers, input suppliers, financial institutions, related ministries and government agencies, as well as researchers and academics. These efforts paid off; the state governor approved the policy in September 2010.

Implementation: Turning policy into action

The Ogun state government has now started to implement the rice policy. The policy prioritised the high cost of land clearing (due to the state’s thick vegetation cover) as the major constraint to increased rice production; it therefore advocated for government assistance to farmers by clearing land and allocating plots to farmer cooperatives. In addressing this constraint, the government has mapped out the entire state and identified suitable areas for rice production. In addition, the government recently approved roughly ₦280 million (£1.16 million) to buy four heavy-duty land clearing machines to use during the 2011 planting season.

The rice policy identified lack of access to land as another major challenge facing agricultural production in Ogun state. In response, the government, farmers and traditional rulers have collaborated to facilitate pro-farmer land-use reforms. Interestingly, the council of Obas (traditional rulers), under the aegis of the ‘Royal Vanguard’, recently decided to release lands in their respective communities, free-of-charge, to interested farmers for agricultural production (see ‘Impacts on poor people’).

Traditional processing methods, such as this way of drying rice paddy, are often inefficient and time consuming; private sector investment can help to make agriculture more productive and profitable
Though the rice policy has been successfully drafted and approved, both public and private stakeholders are awaiting full implementation. There are concerns that the policy may suffer implementation delays due to the frequent turnover of top personnel in the MANR, as well as the recent political transition in the state. It is anticipated that the Ogun Rice Business Group (a rice advocacy group) will partner with the incoming government to promote the full implementation of the rice policy. Once the private sector also begins increasing its investment, the final impact of this policy will be put into effect.

Scale: Replicating the new policy model

The state government, satisfied with the rice policy drafting process, followed a similar policymaking approach for kola, another major cash crop. “We were motivated to develop the kola policy by ourselves due to PrOpCom’s all-inclusive and participatory approach, which was adopted in preparing the rice policy,” explained Tunji Akinosi, Ogun State Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The Ministry of Agriculture mobilised relevant expertise within the state to provide technical assistance to the kola policymaking team. Thus the entire process – collaboration with the business community and the drafting of the policy document – was coordinated by the State Ministry of Agriculture without the support of an external consultant. According to Mr Kunle Oyesanwem, Acting Director of Planning, Research and Statistics in the Ogun State Ministry of Agriculture, the experience gained by Ministry staff while developing the rice policy was sufficient for coordinating the drafting of the kola policy. In his words, “the two policy formulation experiences have significantly enhanced the technical capacity of our staff to independently coordinate similar processes in the future”.

Impacts on poor people

Alhaji Monsuru Ajayi, a successful Ofada rice farmer, is one of the beneficiaries of a novel collaboration among government actors, business and the traditional rulers. According to Monsuru, the Olu (traditional chief) of Igbogila village, in Yewa local government area (LGA) released 55 ha of land for his farm, while the Olu of Oja-Odan village (Yewa North LGA) released 35 ha of land for him to expand Ofada rice production.

To cope with his increased need for labour due to the larger farm size, Monsuru employed an additional eight full-time labourers on his farms, and four staff in his rice mill at the main market in Ifo LGA. Prior to this, Monsuru depended on his family and casual labourers to meet his farm labour needs. “With my large farm size, many people come to me because they know that I can employ them,” exclaimed Monsuru. In addition to providing jobs for farm labourers, the greater land access increases the potential for the state’s rice output, thus generating income.