

Building Resilience:

**How Africa Can Secure Its Food Future
in a Fragmented Global Economy.**



Kingsgate Advisors Institute Podcast

Kingsgate Brief

EPIISODE 2

MAY, 2025

Topic: Building Resilience: How Africa Can Secure Its Food Future in a Fragmented Global Economy.

Guest:

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Host:

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EPIISODE SUMMARY:

The episode discusses the issue of food insecurity in Africa, the causes and the solutions and the need to build resilience in the supply chain to tackle this food insecurity problem.

Dr. Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Hi everyone, good morning, good afternoon and good evening from wherever you're tuning in to join us for another insightful episode of Kingsgate brief. Today we are going to discuss a very topical issue that I believe that affects everyone, myself, you and every man on the street. This issue is very topical for Nigerians and also within the African context. Also, to-day, I have with me a notable and a distinguished guest who I'm going to read his profile shortly and basically today we'll be talking about building resilience. How can Africa secure its food culture in a fragmented global society? As we know, the world order is changing and a lot of things from the geopolitical scene are changing the way nations see themselves and we are seeing this regional block being formed by other parts of the world.

So the question to us as a region, as a country and even as a continent, is how secure are we when it comes to food and how are we able to build resilience given the context of all that is happening? And to discuss this and more I have with me Major Adebayo Adeleke. Adebayo Adeleke is an experienced supply chain professional with knowledge in risk management, security, geopolitics, indigenous supply chain, security, and trade. He has served for 20 years as a combat veteran in the United States Army. His policy briefs on supply chain, security, and other resources have been featured in the London School of Economics, the African Report, and others. His desire to provide supply chain intelligence for stakeholders to make informed decisions concerning trade and supply chain in the continent led him to start Supply Chain Africa (SCA) – the supply chain data bank for Africa.

He is the founder of the Supply Chain Research and Innovation Hub (SCRIH), a transformative initiative set up to address the intricate challenges facing supply chain management in Africa. His desire to put an end to the food security challenge in Nigeria led him to start the Nigeria Food Security Project, the most comprehensive research project addressing all facets of food insecurity in Nigeria. The Nigeria Food Security Project seeks to establish food security as a national priority, advocate for food security in national security policies and frameworks, promote reforms to support sustainable agricultural practices and food distribution systems, develop necessary frameworks to support building Nigeria's food security and resilience, develop Nigeria food security and resilience index, develop food dashboards for Nigeria at national and sub-national levels, and create a living food security strategic plan for Nigeria.

Ladies and gentlemen, our amiable audience, please join me to welcome this evening, Major Adebayo Adeleke, good evening, sir and thank you for joining us today.

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Dr. Oluwanbepelumi, this is the first time I've heard somebody actually, you know, your name is crafted differently, Oluwanbepelumi, which is the right pronunciation actually, is the full pronunciation of it. Doc, thank you for having me and deeply appreciative of this, you know, I won't be anywhere else but here.

Thank you for what you're doing, for the cause, because everybody that is in the cause of, you know, helping us to evangelise the cost of supply chain on the continent is my friend, so thank you for being a friend and an ally in this journey, so awesome.

Dr. Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: All right, all right, I've actually been looking forward to this because I met you like over a year ago and I've been following your work and I must say that you are a thought leader when it comes to discuss like this. So without further ado, let's dive right into it. So, I'm going to start with this question and I'd like to take your perspective as to how has Africa's heavy reliance on global food and inputs, particularly foods like wheat, rice, fertilisers, how has it exposed the continent to external shocks, giving the example of the likes of Russian-Ukraine war and other trade wars that we've seen, what are the lessons that should shape the future direction in terms of costs?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Ah, yes, you know, conflicts, any conflict rather, Russia-Ukraine war as a prime example, any conflicts, any geopolitical inference, any geopolitical incident and event will shape any course of trade.

Trade, as you know, you are an economist by trade, you know, it's a very interesting construct. Often, I believe, I always said trade runs on a train track of supply chain, you know, there will be no trade without supply chain and vice versa, so it runs on so many things, but the train track supply chain, so the wheat, the corn and several cash crops that are actually being used for our daily consumption and fertilisers, just like any conflict and for any developing country, it exposes the period, because not only that, we can actually produce this commodity, but because of our developmental issues, it's quite impossible not to rely on importation of a lot of these things. Inoculation drugs for livestock is dependent on foreign pharmaceuticals, not that we cannot produce it, but there has been the less of things on our hierarchy of needs.

First things first, if you look at Maslow's hierarchy, I'll try not to, for the most especially, to use Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but if you can actually compare Maslow's hierarchy of needs to a particular adage in Yoruba land, if you may permit me, *won ní ti oúnje bá ti kúrò nínú ise, ise' bùsé* (true) exactly, so Maslow might come up with his own construct, but Yoruba has always in its own adage, believes that food is also, is part of the physical element, those are the things you need to security, and physical security and all those things, those are the nature of things that need to be taken care of, so in our hierarchy of needs, we can't feed ourselves first, we can't do all those things, so talk less of other industrialisation, inoculation of things, so those are things that we'll continue to rely on until we get to that level of building those networks and infrastructures that support this, continue to rely on foreign importations to be able to support this, and that's why any conflicts of any kind, either Gaza and Israel, either Ukraine and Russia, either Pakistan and India, or any other skirmishes that is going on around the world, it's definitely going to affect, you know, supply chains coming, or trade coming into Africa, especially if any of the crops that we're reliant on passes through those trade routes, it will be of rather an interesting issue to deal with, so yeah.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Wow, that's really true, and I see why we still have this direct impact, why we still have this vulnerability as to what happened with global scene, because of the linkages, so I would like to also ask to build on that, in what ways can the African Continental Free Trade Area (the AFCFTA) be leveraged to reduce dependence on global markets and build regional food supply chains, are there ways of which you can take advantage of this provision, or so to speak, or we are just subject to whatever happens in the global scene.

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Again, so that I can properly, articulately address your question, can you please repeat it?

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Oh okay, I was saying that in what ways can the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, that is the AFCFTA, how can it be leveraged to reduce dependence on global markets and also find a way to build regional food supply chains within the African continent?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Absolutely, if AFCFTA is executed, implemented rightly, it will definitely ease the shocks, but in itself too as well, AFCFTA is also dependent on security across the continent, which as we know right now, we have different, is it the Great Lakes, is it the DRC Rwanda, is it the Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, all those areas, is it the north-eastern part of Nigeria, you know, there are so many conflicts across the nation, so ideally, if you look at African continental free trade agreement, if it's operating wholesomely, as supposed to the way it has been crafted, it would have been a completely interesting construct that will have eased some of these things, but unfortunately, that has not been the case, because the AFCFTA is still at the infancy stage, building those things, and ideally, if it's supposed to be operating, it's supposed to be a trade and security blanket and architecture for what is going on in the continent, which is currently absent, so we're back to square one, AFCFTA is not doing the job it's supposed to do, that it has been crafted to do, because the condition as which AFCFTA is operating is not ideal, and secondly, AFCFTA has not put supply chain at the bedrock of its implementation, which is also another issue in itself, so there are two things that are working against it at the moment.

(9:52)

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: I actually agree, like, we've not actually put supply chain at the bedrock that will drive this train, and that's really important, because if we say we want to trade within ourselves, and we don't have the structure in place that will make that trade and movement of goods, you know, easy, it's like we're just building on a keg of gunpowder, you can say that, it's really sad. I want to bring it now to the Nigerian context. Can you still hear me?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Yes, I can

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Okay great, I want to bring it down to the Nigerian context. Now given Nigeria's current evaluation and the FX scarcity that we've always had, and of course that we still have high foreign exchange currently, what can Nigeria do as a country to manage this rising food imports, given that we are a large import-dependent economy, what can we do to actually manage this rising food import, and without deepening inflation, or hurting food security for the most vulnerable population, what can we do to look inwards?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: There are so many ways that we can help in reducing the food inflation that is caused by these importations or whatnot, and a lot of it is actually dependent on priorities and the political willpower of the government at hand, and I know the current government has said on numerous occasions that food security is non-negotiable and whatnot, but, you know, saying it is one thing, actioning it is another thing entirely, putting money to it is one thing, monitoring the money and how the money is spent to make sure that it eases the burden when it comes to food security is another thing entirely. You know, we've accustomed over the course of time, if not, the problem is not particular, it's not synonymous to this administration only, I think it's common to most of the administrations in Nigeria, especially at this republic, in such a way that we dash out money to a lot of these problems, this wicked problem as I call it, and we don't really monitor and follow it to see how it has been done to execution, or it has been done to, it has been executed rather to what is already planned. The same thing in the way we make policy, are the policies being crafted the way, after the policies have been crafted, are they being executed to what, to the impact it was crafted to be, and these are some of the challenges that is going on. So to reduce, to answer your question of, you know, what can they do, what can the country do to reduce this, a few things first. First things first, and I've said this over and over again, anytime I've been asked this question, is, first of all, we have to recognise that food security is an imperative, a national security imperative. We've not really understood the construct and how it is such an important pillar of our national security. We doubt food security, and it causes instability in the government, in the nation, and that in itself can topple a whole nation. So until we realise the impact of what food insecurity can do to the national architecture, we are not going anywhere and once we recognize that, we'll make it a priority in everything that we do, so that we make sure that in our security dealings, because our security is so militarised in a way, you know, everything we talk about security is in a military way, but there are other forms of security that are more powerful than military, which is food, because food is life. If we don't eat, we become agitated, and we become agitated, we act out of, out of our ways, and when that happens, a lot of uproar happens, that's one part. And second part, we need to craft, you know, food security is a national, it's a Nigerian issue, a Nigerian problem. That being said, the federal government issue, but that being said, it's also a state and local government issue. I think we need to mandate it to make sure that as it's affecting the federal government, the state and the local government, I know the local government, they're doing this local government autonomy, it is important for them to also believe that this local government is

where the rubber meets the road. If anything happens to anybody in one particular city, the local government is where they turn to, it's their first form of government that they address, so this is where they look up to for food security.

The reason why this thing is very important in reducing food inflation is because we need to know where to turn to. First of all, we need to first define food insecurity, and then once we define food insecurity, what is involved in food security ecosystem, and then what are the government functions, both from the local government and federal level in addressing this issue and then there are a few things that need to happen immediately. The food storage issue across the nation is lacking. The food supply chain that supports eh, the supply chain rather that supports food in Nigeria is number one thing that is making food inflation really high. We don't have storage facilities. If we have storage facility, we can prolong a lot of food that are out of season, we put them in seasons. If we have good supply chain product, we can prolong the lifespan and the wholesomeness that comes with food. Now, we talk about food security, it's not only about the food affordability, sustainability and availability and food quality and safety. It's also the food wholesomeness and the nutritional part of it as well. That's one thing that we oftentimes neglect. To address this, the food wholesomeness, the food nutritional part of it, ability to make sure that what we are getting, we're getting it right, and it's very nutritious.

For that to happen, we have to be able to preserve the food, the lifespan of the food, but that requires a whole robust supply chain to support it. That in itself, I believe, will take us from really, really deep red to something amber at the moment. So that's where and especially in food inflation as well. The reason why food inflation is high is that food is not available, and food is not available because the supply chain that supports it is poor or absent.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: All right. Thank you so much for that. That's really a well-detailed and well-thought-through answer. You've actually answered what I was going to ask as a follow-up question, which was what can we do in order to mitigate against that? I would still like you to shed a little more light on something you mentioned. You talked about the role of government, the federal government and subnational and even local government.

I want you to probably speak a little more to the role of the sub-nationals and local governments when it comes to food security, because it's easy for us to point accusing fingers to the federal government and just say, okay, this is where we are at. The government is not doing anything, but we might not even take the time to look at what can be done in the very closer government that is to us, which is the local and the subnational. Hence, I want you to just talk a little more to the roles of sub-nationals and local government when it comes to addressing food and insecurity, particularly even in regions where there are issues with insecurity as to the farming, agriculture and all

that, where the stakes are very high. Can you just speak to that, please?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Absolutely. The government needs to provide an enabling environment, and one of the enabling environments is to provide the supply chain infrastructure that is needed. The same supply chain that the food uses, the same supply chain that we humans use to move any goods, to move ourselves, same road network, same this, same that. So when everybody's competing on the same supply chain framework and infrastructure, there is going to be wear and tear. What is the programmatic spending to support those wear and tear, to make sure that this particular infrastructure is not wear down to such a way that it doesn't make sense? A few hours ago, I just returned back from Niger state.

Niger state is the biggest state in Nigeria, and it's notorious for farming. They are very good. They want to feed the whole country. I believe with their landmass, Niger state buy, if the whole state is engaged on farming, they can feed the whole country hands down. But the problem about Niger state, which I also found out, is they have a poor road infrastructure. So regardless of how much you produce, you still have to get those things on those poor roads, and that in itself, you know, I put it on my Twitter the other day, you know, rotting and perishability doesn't happen on the tree, It happens on the road. Once this thing is harvested, the reason why we have a lot of post-harvest losses is because of the supply chain that supports it, and that's hands down. Until those things are fixed, and this is where the government can come in, provide an enabling environment, fix those roads, understand those roads, connect those roads, and provide opportunities for businesses that want to do business in the food security ecosystem, the ability to thrive.

On taxation, excessive taxation, and I know this is your area, excessive taxation, both legal and illegal, is just what's stifling a lot of these things, and these things are passed on to the consumer at large. So it is very, very important to be able to do it, but this is where the government can make it easy. If you can construct roads and provide electrification for a lot of these to provide historic facilities, the private industry, the private sector is potent enough to make the rest happen, but the government has to do its duty, you know, because the full responsibility by Nigerian constitution is the responsibility of the state, and the state in this matter is the federal government. So I hope that answers your question.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Yeah, it does, it does. Just like nails on the head, the role of the federal government cannot be overemphasized. However, the state and the sub-nationals and the local government also have a role to play particularly when it comes to infrastructures that will aid food distribution and food storage, and that's really good. But I want to talk, still on Nigeria now, I want to just take a little diversion from logistics and the likes. I want to also talk a bit now about insecurity itself, not just food insecurity, insecurity itself.

Now with the rise in insecurity in key food producing states like the likes of Kaduna, Benue, and

even Zamfara, and other states that are related in that regard, what coordinated strategies across agricultural security now, not just agricultural sector, even security sector and infrastructure, what coordinated strategies can be done in order to ensure that production is now what we call optimal, and food supply is kind of stable, you know, and the impact on seasonality can be reduced as well. What can be done? What kind of coordinated strategy can we employ?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Every ministry in Nigeria has a security line of effort, what I call security line of effort, women's ministry, ministry of finance. These are called the soft or non-kinetic, things that they can do within their power, you know, encouraging the states, local government, encouraging the people, all these things, funnels into what we call the economic security, because the reason why there are strifes, the reason why we have insecurity, one of them is because of food, people don't have food to eat, they don't have economic power, and those things, well, that's a discontent, and discontent can be easily be engaged by, you know, nefarious actors, which now turn into bad entry and whatnot.

(21:29)

They need money, they need money by all means necessary. What do they need the money for? To take care of their family, take care of their needs, food, you know, so it's the easier of, how we say it, is it chicken or egg, which one comes first? You know, is it food, is it hunger that causes insecurity, or insecurity that causes hunger? Depending on how you look at it, depending on what path actually works in your own domain and area. So, everybody has a part to play, both government, non-government, NGOs, business, academia, and every one of us has a part to play in making Nigeria secure.

I know we've, over the course of time, traditionally, we've made security a function of the government. Yes, it is an institutional responsibility, or, and a fiduciary responsibility of the government, the state, and the thing in this matter is both the federal, the state government, and also the local government. It's their functional responsibility, but therein is also the function of the citizen as well, to hold the government accountable to their security requirement, and also to assist the government in attaining that security posture that it needs to be. So, we are all equally a culprit in this whole security mandate. We're supposed to either challenge the government to make sure that they hold on to their responsibility, or assist the government, rather, in maintaining and to getting that right. So, the issue of insecurity is going to adversely affect the production of food, adversely affect a lot of other things, and also affect labour, because labour is also part of the production of food, processing of food.

So, everything, ideally, in this current Nigeria is tied to insecurity. You know, people can't really farm deep into those wood lines again because of kidnapping, and why are people kidnapping? Because they don't have economic security. So, all these things are all revolving issues. So, policing,

community policing is necessary, is needed, because the security architecture of Nigeria, our security personnel, what we've designed so far is inadequate. The security personnel in Nigeria cannot adequately secure Nigeria's geopolitical landscape. You know, I mean, it's just the nature of the beast. So, everybody, all hands on deck, we have to be, our number one responsibility is to keep ourselves safe, regardless of any government. It's your own fiduciary responsibility as an individual to keep yourself and your family safe. You know, the government has a responsibility to keep those, but you, you are the one, number one person, you have to eat right. That's why the food you're eating has to be the one that nourishes the body, but that's part of keeping your body safe. That's your own personal security that you have to contain, and all these things, but we have to look at it, but I'm not, I don't subscribe to the school of thought that government is a god. This thing government, this that government, this thing government, everything government.

Government is not a god. We have equal responsibility, just like the government, to be part of the solution, not the problem. You know, the moment we keep pointing to the government as the solution every time, we are equally part of the issue. So, we have to, we are, we are fully aware, because people in government, they don't come, they are not aliens. They come from, they come from our society. So, either we are the one, because we are the government. I mean, there's nobody else. It's not like they came from Pluto or wherever. No, they came from our communities. So, you know, we voted them in, so we are equal participants, participants rather, in this old shindig of food insecurity.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: You know, I actually agree with you, all hands should be on deck, this is not the time to play the blame game, in that sense. And also the issue, the relationship between insecurity and food shortage or food insecurity, is really like a chicken and egg situation. One leads to the other, the other leads to the other, also like a vicious cycle. Really, I agree that we all should be security conscious, and we all should work together with the government to ensure that our community is safe, our country is safe. And when it comes to food insecurity also, efforts towards that is actually leading to the same results that we all need. Absolutely, I agree. I totally agree with you. It's not, government doesn't have that magical wand to sort out everything. So, I totally agree with you. All right. I want to divert a little and take our discussion off Nigeria. Just checking, can you still hear me?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Yes, I can

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: All right great. So, I want to take our discussion off Nigeria a bit, and I want to talk a little about climate-related issues and Kenya. So, in the light of climate-induced crop failures that we have seen in Kenya, Kenya is the horn of Africa, like people would like to call it. What role can trade liberalisation, such as the recent import duty waivers that the government has put in place, that policy was put in place, what role can such policy actually play in cushioning

food shocks, and how can such measures avoid undermining local food supply?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: You've described the parameters of trade liberalisation, but trade liberalisation can be defined differently. What is trade liberalisation? Is it a construct of tariffs, free trade zones? Is it a construct of, you know, just no trade? I don't know, because we have to build it. And I do have my reservations, rather, about some of these trade liberalisation. Every country has responsibilities of protecting its citizens and its companies and its organisations therein.

So, if the commodity that I'm receiving from Kenya, rather, I'm going to address the climate-related issue shortly. But let me pause a bit on the trade liberalisation, because we have to be very careful of how we define it, or depending on how we define it, the government of the day and the progressiveness therein. Is it the fact that the matter is, you know, because we do a lot of things in Africa that we don't look to project Africa for over the next 100 years.

We don't do that. We only see, we are very reactionary in our policy and our stand towards what we are trying to do. For now, food security is the bane, is what is really concerning to us. So, we address it by using the now methodology, things to solve concurrently now. But we don't know that the now solution that we are creating might actually be a problem for the future, the future solution. So, those are the things we don't do.

The reason why, when we look at holistic solutions, it doesn't talk about now, it talks about using the lesson learned in the past to take care of the now, but also look into the future and project out how the country is going to shape. And that's where we run into issues, because we always focus on the now to solve the problem without looking into the future. So, this issue of trade liberalisation, I believe we also run the risk of looking at how best to really, you know, what we are trying to do with ourselves as a nation, because yes, climate-related issues are popping up. And to be honest with you, I'm a firm believer that the climate issue, as climate change, has been going on since the onset of birth. I was born in an era whereby decades ago, they'd be like, ah, things have changed. Even when I was born, they were complaining about food issues, about climate issues, about all this, about all that. So, there's always been a climate change. The Nile has always flooded the Sahara and all those things. This has been going on for, it's our ability to understand some of these constructs and say okay this thing, the climate will always change because of human use of it without giving back. Just like we use the soil, overly use the soil without replenishing it. We use the climate, our environment, without replenishing it, it's going to fight back. And these are some of the things, it's not there to be overly used without being replenished, but the fact that we are not making, we are not being, we are not cognisant of the fight back of the environment is one thing. But the climate-related issues and crops, you know, building the resistance, if we actually look forward into what agriculture food security is going to be in the next 50 years, we should be able to anticipate climate related issues and kind of plug it into the solutions that are there. So now that

we haven't done that, we just have to do this catch up pieces and catch up race to it. And that is one of the issues.

So we're combining both of them together. So I understand that some kind of trade liberalisation is necessary to be able to accommodate trade related, you know, crops, importation and exportation. But let's, let us not be carried away because we still have to protect those countries and those farmers, those people in the food ecosystem within our borders. That's the thing that we have to kind of look into, you know, most advanced nations have cracked the code on this. How do I maintain trade within my neighbours to be able to satisfy their needs, because their own stability is also affecting my own stability. If Benin Republic is not stable, it's going to affect Nigeria. If Niger is not stable, it's going to affect Nigeria, if Cameroon is not stable, it's going to affect Nigeria. So but how can I use my trade as a tool to be able to help their stabilisation? How can I use trade liberalisation to as a tool without hurting my own internal, you know, you know, businesses and whatnot.

So these are some of the things that we need to talk about as we continue to construct solutions to combat, you know, food insecurity. These are things that we need to look wholeheartedly on.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Absolutely. And I agree with what you said because for countries like Kenya, while they still try to do austerity policies, they still have to protect their local producers and ensure that because of doing that, you don't miss out on building internal capacities. And also what you said about what you also said about the security of neighbouring countries, how can we use trade, you know, to help security in neighbouring countries? I mean, that's really profound. You know, personally, I've not thought of it that way.

But I think it's really profound because if I want to be saved, my neighbour has to be saved, absolutely, I agree with you. Going forward, I would like to speak on South Africa a bit. And I want to ask, looking at South Africa and how they've advanced to some, if I may say, if you want to compare them to some other African countries like the likes of Nigeria. So as South Africa expands its agri-tech and climate-smart agriculture, how can it remain competitive in global markets? Amidst this rising trade barriers and the likes, and also this EU green deal, while protecting its own domestic foreign, I mean, food system, What can South Africa do? And also for countries like Nigeria, how do we learn from that? How can we learn from South Africa, being our neighbour, in the context of being on the same continent? How can we learn from them? What can we do also to learn from what South Africa has done, particularly as touching the agri-tech and climate-smart agriculture? It's a 2 in 1 question.

Major Adebayo Adeleke: I think South Africa is ahead of us in our ability to collect data, in being able to use the data to leverage with tech and smart agriculture and all these other GSB stuff. I think these things have been in existence. We are just waking up to it and using it to be our stuff, understanding the indigenous methods.

How can we improve on indigenous methods? How can we make it better? I think that's what South Africa has done. But I also want us to pause a bit because the world is globalised and everybody's trying to kind of normalise and measure things from the global perspective. But I think we need to pump some brakes on that.

We need to be able to infuse some localisation in there. I think that's what South Africa has been able to do to a certain degree, able to conceptualise some of these inventions they're bringing in from the Western world to be able to localise it to the indigenous methods. I think Nigeria and other countries around sub sahara Africa need to learn from this as well because not everything that is being given to us is good for us and we need to understand that.

We need to understand that certain things are not universal. If things are not science-based, science is the only thing that is universal anywhere in the world. One is one, two is two in Mumbai and two is two in Kinshasa. But anything that is involved in heart, method, thinking is not universal. It's very, you can easily localise. These are some of the things that we as Africans have to be able to contend with. What has worked in Finland might not necessarily work in Nigeria. We have to do a lot of modification to it because the way we think, our orientation, our culture. In Africa, our cultural orientation and our cultural programming is such a path of ideas. It infuses into our own science and art as well. It changes the way we do things. It changes the way we adopt things. It changes the way we accept things and all those things. So, what South Africa has done in the area of smart agriculture and agri-tech is laudable but I think they can even do more. Ability to continue to understand that. But you have to understand their own indigenous methods. You have to understand their whole then the fact that a lot of these things are widely acceptable even in Kenya. I've seen a lot of great workings there, it's because they're able to understand their own environment and cultural context. I think we've not been able to do that in Nigeria a lot.

We've not been able to really understand our own situation and look at methods that are already there that we can modify to serve or solve our problems. There's nothing out there. How do we create our solution to solve our problems? So inability for us to be able to infuse money into research and development, inability for us to be able to make data as a pinpoint. It's one of the high points of smart agriculture, agricultural period or even our society. Because Nigerian society is not developed or shaped in a way that you can collect data. I mean, I can tell you this because I'm in a data collecting business. It's not in a way and shape whereby people collect data. You can't easily collect data, if you go to a local government, I want the data of how many kids were born in the last 10 years, they will not be able to tell you because they don't have it. How many people died in the last 10 years? Our society is not wired that way and our foundation is not data centric. Whereas other countries' foundations, they can tell you what happened in 1800 or what happened in 1700. Our societies were not developed that way. That in itself is an issue that we have to contend with as a society. So yes, I hope I've answered your question.

(36:55)

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Yes, you have. Yes, you have. And you've talked on experiences that are very profound. What you said about us not taking everything that has been given to us the way it's given to us, It's very important. Contextualising and applying things, you know, suggestions or even samples of what has been done in the past. It's very important. It's important that we contextualise and see how it's applicable and what you said about data is also very profound. Sadly so, that data is a big deal in Nigeria. Not just in Nigeria, across African countries, largely most of the African countries data is still a big deal. And I hope these issues we will take them serious and know that as simple as data is, it's a major engine, a major factor that determines a lot of things. Even for policy making and the likes, we don't have good data that speaks to what is happening. We won't be able to formulate policies that are aligned with the actual problem.

So that's it. Okay, we are concluding now, but I still want to ask a few more questions. First of all, I want to know what your take is. I know you've mentioned this is one of your earlier answers, but I still want you to reiterate and probably speak a little more to this. What are the critical logistics and infrastructural gaps that we've seen in Africa?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Oh, that's too easy.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: In terms of food storage, ports and the like. So what are the major things, and what can we do, because we are looking at solution-oriented discourse. What can we do to actually reduce this gap on our logistics and infrastructure within the African space?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: That's too easy. I'm not even going to be long with any of this. Our road infrastructure is weak. Our ports, all our ports, both human ports and garages, river ports, our sea ports, airports, all the ports need work. Road networks need work. Our bridges need work. What else? Storage facilities is lacking. Our distribution network is lacking. Our data collection for all those things are lacking. So what should we do? Every hand's on deck. I can pile the blame on the government, because they're supposed to set up the conditions for this. But we that are actually part of it, we're not holding the government accountable. And we ourselves, we're not even programmed and fashioned to even collect data and to even help to make this thing a reality, because we as people always look for ways to actually boycott the system that's already in place. So that is the issue.

So our own supply chain infrastructure deficit will require a whole behavioural change on both the government and the citizenry, and know the re-engineering of our port process and reprogramming as well.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Well said. I agree. I agree that we need to hold the government

accountable. We need to really work on enhancing infrastructure. That cannot be overemphasized.

I mean, I've been talking about infrastructural deficits since probably while I was still very little, and sadly so, you know, it's still the same thing we're talking about now. We really hope these pointers will signify that there is a need, that we need to do more. It's important that as a nation, and much more as a continent, for us to feel secure.

So the last question we're going to take today to conclude this discussion is how African countries through AU, that is African Union or G77 platform. How can we collectively oppose export bans or subsidy discussions or other rules from the global fronts that are disadvantageous to us or that are not an advantage for our African food system? How can we form as a continent, as a region and say, this is the card we're playing, this rule does not favour us, and we won't have it. What bar – gaining tools do we have?

Major Adebayo Adeleke: I think the mistake we made in the first place is that we believe that the whole African nation is very monolithic in nature, that it can fall under the AU.

There are certain things I believe collectively we can ban. Things that are going to affect our health, we can ban. Food that is being imposed on us, we can ban.

Food crops, seedlings of crops that are below yield, that have been, you know, reprogrammed, re-engineered to cause havoc, we can ban as collectively. But at the same time, I think every nation has its own jurisdiction, should be able to make those conversations. You know, I don't think the current AU has enough backbone to make such decisions.

I think the sovereignty of every nation should collectively be like, look, this doesn't work well for us. You know, I mean, in my own observation. I think those economic zones, economic, you know, communities, ECOWAS and all this, I think they're actually much stronger when it comes to this than AU at large.

AU, I'm yet to see anything from AU that is collective in nature, that is, you know, binding, a decision that is binding across what, because every sovereign nation still wants to exert their own thing. So, I believe responsibilities is to every sovereign nation, all the 54 sovereign nations on the continent of Africa. AU has some responsibility and I think until those nations cede those responsibilities to AU and they look away, I think until then, I've yet to see those things happening.

(42:26)

So, I'm not going to put too much faith on AU until they begin to. It's just being real, because I believe they are weak backbones. I don't think they have AU as a backbone.

I don't know if I can speak freely on your podcast this way, but I've seen enough to be able to say that they don't have backbone to be able to accept this, because I've seen a lot of actions that they've actually reneged on because they don't have the willpower to be able to pull it. So, I personally will not hold my breath on AU doing certain things only because of this. So, but I believe every sovereign nation has the right to reject what is bad and what is good for them and if they truly understand what is going on in the world and how the world is shaped to operate, they will continue to reject things that is very exploitative in nature and things that is very demeaning in nature, but a lot of those things are going around now.

But that's just my own take on it. I've seen this is a born out of my own opinion of what I've observed.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and that's really good, I agree with you. Africa as a continent, Nigeria as a country, we need to stand our ground, reject what we need to reject because we're a sovereign nation, we should be able to speak for ourselves and overdependence on other advanced economies needs to stop, we need to really bring ourselves out from that. So, thank you so much, Major Adebayo for taking the time to answer all these questions and I'm sure our viewers have really gained a lot. It has been exciting.

Personally, I've gained a lot of things just within this hour of discourse, more perspective, more advanced perspective and also clarity of some of these issues, particularly beyond the shores of Nigeria. Thank you for taking out the time, we're grateful.

I want to speak to our viewers. I'd like to hear from us, please engage with our videos, comment, like, share and if you have any topic you'd like to hear us discuss in coming episodes, you can also put it in the chat box as we drop this video.

Thank you all for joining and staying tuned to this episode. Thank you once again, Major Adebayo for taking the time to join us today.




Major Adebayo Adeleke: It's been a pleasure, thank you so much for having me.

Dr Oluwanbepelumi Olanubi: All right, okay. So, thank you all. I'll see you again for the next episode. Bye.

Major Adebayo Adeleke: Bye.



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