

**NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF AGRICULTURAL  
POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES OF PRESIDENT  
JONATHAN'S ADMINISTRATION (2011-2015)**

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**Introduction**

In May 2011, upon assumption of office as the President of Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan made agriculture part of the transformation agenda of his administration. Since then, the president has rolled out policies in the area of roadmap for power sector reform, youth enterprise initiative, rural development programmes, deregulation of downstream oil sector and a review of the foreign policy to consider Nigerian citizens first. Other policies include non-interference in judicial matters, liberalisation of the press, non-oil export development and transformation of the agricultural sector (Nnawetanrna, 2015). The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, under Goodluck Jonathan, developed an aggressive Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). The focus of ATA was to assure food security, reduce expenditure of foreign exchange on food imports, diversify the economy, generate foreign exchange and create jobs. In a major departure from past approaches, agriculture is now being treated as a business, not a development programme. The agenda is focused on major policy reforms to eliminate corruption in the seed and fertilizer sectors, improve the functioning of

market institutions, establish staple crop processing zones to attract private sector into areas of high production to reduce post-harvest losses, add value to locally produced crops and foster rural economic growth. In addition, the agenda includes improvement in rural infrastructure and access of farmers to financial services and markets (World Press, 2012). The online edition of *Vanguard* (2012) observed that:

The agricultural transformation agenda of President Jonathan is targeted at increasing efficiency and profitability in about 12 selected key agricultural commodities, which include: cotton, cocoa, cassava, oil-palm, maize, soya bean, onion, rice, livestock, fisheries, tomato and sorghum. The agenda would provide about 3.5 million new jobs which are to be from the selected key products, while many more jobs would be created from other future value chains activities, with over N300 billion of additional income in the hands of Nigerian farmers and rural entrepreneurs. In addition, over N60 billion (US\$380 million) will be injected into the economy from the substitution of 20% of bread wheat flour with cassava flour.

In the past, government would have achieved this feat, but their inconsistent policies and changes in leadership have always interfered with these programmes. For instance, Ogunmefun (2013, p. 4) has observed that "Nigeria's development efforts had been characterised by lack of continuity, consistency and commitment to agreed policies, programmes and projects as well as an absence of long term perspective. The culminating effect has been growth and development

without concomitant improvement in the lives of the citizens." The administration of President Goodluck responded to this problem through the Transformation Agenda which covers the period of 2011-2015. Prominent in this agenda is the agricultural policy which states that the country shall:

Secure food and feed needs of the nation, enhance generation of national and social wealth through greater export and import substitution, enhance capacity for value addition leading to industrialisation and employment opportunities, efficient exploitation and utilisation of available agricultural resources, enhance the development and dissemination of appropriate and efficient technologies for rapid adoption (Ogunmefun, 2013, p. 4).

The temptation to have these policies under reported exists, since the media pay attention to information that is mind blowing or human interest oriented. Even though the media may decide to report agricultural activities of farmers or government actions towards boosting agriculture, the frame of presentation may show significant difference from other news events. Framing, in this context, is one important avenue "through which such variations in coverage have been analyzed. *Framing* is an umbrella term under which various communication scholars have scrutinized the practice of selection, emphasis, and presentation to an audience of only a fraction of the available information" (Entman 1993, cited in Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013).

Most people get to understand government policies and programmes based on media reportage of the event in question. Based on these reports, opinions about government officials and actions are formed. This includes opinion about the

president in office and the people who serve in his government. In most cases, people tend to read meanings into the actions of government or its policies. The media do guide people in making meaning out of situations or activities when they read the newspaper or surf the Internet (Heith, 2001). Since public opinion can be affected by news coverage (Carlin and Winfrey 2009; Gidengil and Everitt 2003), knowledge about the coverage of agricultural policies and activities of President Jonathan can be affected by the way the media or newspapers cover them.

The media on their part have always been the bridge between the people and the government that be. In doing this, the media have carried out both surveillance and educative roles to ensure that the people are not left behind by the government that has promised to serve them. As the effort to diversify the economy continues, the media has a key role to play in order to ensure that the people are carried along. Most people still do not know what the policy of government is toward agriculture, and those with knowledge of it, may not know the exact activities of the government towards making the nation an agricultural economy. This raises the issue of the place of the newspaper in covering the agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan. The newspaper, as a medium, provides the needed back grounding relevant to the news stories, details in event-oriented phenomenon and analysis of important situations (Okorie & Oyedepo, 2011 citing Kuye, 2004 and Odulami, 2007). This study sought to look at agricultural policies and activities during President Jonathan's administration through the lens of the newspaper medium in order to ascertain the kind of coverage given therein.

## **Statement of the Problem**

President Jonathan, upon assumption of office, reiterated his commitment to develop the agricultural sector for the common good of all and as an effort to diversify the economy. Since the media are the major means through which government activities are communicated to the people, one expects that the media would make the coverage of the agricultural activities/projects of President Jonathan a priority. The media were used by the government to disseminate the idea of agricultural development. Using the media for this purpose was a welcome development owing to the fact that Adekanye (1995) holds that the problem with Nigeria's agricultural development has been her inability to establish an effective agricultural information delivery system; one of which is timely and systematic transmission of useful and relevant agricultural information from the research station via various communication media to the intended audience and the most serious constraints to agricultural development in Nigeria and in Africa as it were, is the limited access to agricultural information.

One may ask; what prominence, depth, direction and frequency were given to the coverage of President Jonathan's agricultural policies and activities through the lens of the newspaper medium? This study, therefore, sought to examine the extent newspapers covered the agricultural sector under the regime of President Jonathan.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the frequency of newspaper coverage of agricultural policies and activities under the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan.
2. Identify the direction of newspaper coverage of agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

3. Ascertain the level of prominence accorded stories on agricultural policies and activities during President Goodluck Jonathan's regime.
4. Examine the depth of coverage of agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

### **Research Questions**

The study was therefore guided by the following questions:

1. What was the frequency of newspaper coverage of agricultural policies and activities under the regime of President Goodluck Jonathan?
2. What was the direction of newspaper coverage of agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration?
3. What was the degree of prominence given to stories on agricultural policies and activities during President Goodluck Jonathan's regime?
4. What was the depth of coverage of agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration?

### **Media Coverage of Agriculture in Nigeria**

Olakunle (2015) noted that the media are instrumental to the formation of opinion in the society through the information they provide. This means that the quality of decision and behaviour of the people are guided by the available information at their disposal. It is important, therefore, for media practitioners to ensure that the sources of their stories are legible and knowledgeable. Experts should be the ones providing quality information that journalists use in attending to the information need of the people. If experts are consulted for information on agricultural purposes, the quality of information they will provide will be tremendous.

The press as carriers of information contributes to the growth and development of the society in terms of political, economic, cultural, educational, agricultural and social system, etc. In almost all aspects of our lives, the media play a significant role. It will be very worrisome if society exists without having events reported to the people. Agriculture is one of those areas that the media need to play a key role in. As part of her surveillance role in respect to information and news, the media being instruments to development are expected to inform and educate members of the society on specific areas of development such as agricultural activities. The reason for media reportage on agricultural programmes and policies in developing societies, such as Nigeria is due to the large number of people who were involved. Specifically, agriculture has provided employment platform for a majority of Nigerians particularly people living in the rural areas. Agriculture by estimation, accounted for over 80% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) prior to the discovery of crude oil (Kuye, 2004). By 2005, the percentage had then reduced to 41% (Odunlami, 2007 citing Okorie & Oyedepo, 2010).

Agriculture is fast becoming information sensitive and as such, access to information has become a pre-requisite and a valuable resource for agricultural development. This means that information is needed to exploit opportunities in time, raise awareness about the potential negative impact of current choices and to get to know about opportunities of other farmers, in order to search for better opportunities and sustainable solutions (LEISA, 2002). Success in enhancing food production, providing income and job opportunities and ensuring that the agricultural sub-sector performs its manifest functions in furtherance of rural and overall national development, depends largely on the communication system adopted to implement various agricultural programmes (Awojibi & Adekun, 2012).

## **Brief Review of the Agricultural Framework of President Jonathan**

Obeche (2013) avers that President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's government gave attention to the agricultural sector in its Transformation Agenda programme. Part of the agricultural policies of the government was to cut down on the importation of food that can be produced locally, thereby, saving the nation well over N1 .3 trillion per annum on the importation of foodstuff. With this mandate, the then Minister of Agriculture, Dr Akinwunmi Adesina, was given the mandate to reduce the embarrassing food import and ensure food security in Nigeria.

The other aspects of the President Jonathan's agricultural policies were to transform agriculture from rustic farming to mechanized farming, which requires empowering local farmers to adopt modern and cost-effective technologies; ensure the production of improved quality fertilizers; marketing reforms; innovative financing and developing commodity exchange; research and development; competitive exchange rates; and development of storage infrastructure. These new measures were aimed at putting the country in the position of being a major food exporter in the nearest future. The government of President Jonathan also took steps to ensure that funds were made available to facilitate credits from banks to farmers. The agricultural policies also took care to ensure that Marketing Corporations were established for selected agricultural value chains to coordinate the production, investments grades-and standards, market price stabilization, among others for selected value chains in Nigeria Obeche,2013).

## **Empirical Review of Newspaper Coverage of Agricultural Policies in Nigeria**



Atoma (2008) sought to comparatively analyse agricultural news coverage in three newspapers in Nigeria. The three newspapers under study were *New Nigerian*, *Pointer* and *Vanguard* newspapers. The findings indicate a general low level of agricultural news coverage among the three newspapers. The results of the analysis of variance revealed that there is no significant difference in the frequency of agricultural news covered by *The Pointer*, *Vanguard* and *New Nigerian* newspapers; with *The Pointer* (State Government-owned) newspaper recording the highest number of agricultural news; followed by the *Vanguard* (privately-owned) newspaper. However, the *New Nigerian* (federal government owned) newspaper recorded the least number of agricultural news (Atoma, 2008).

Awojobi and Adeokun (2012) assessed the extent to which two national dailies (*Punch and Guardian*) covered agricultural issues in the country from 2007 to 2010. Their study which analysed for daily reportage, space allocation and types of stories published revealed that 70%, 78.8%, 66.3% and 60% of the newspapers evaluated did not report any agricultural issues in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Further findings showed that among those that reported agricultural issues, majority reported 1-2 stories per day which represented 21.3%, 28.8%, 25% and 36% of the total sample sizes in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. It was also revealed that the mean column inch allocation were 27.43, 10.77, 35.89 and 27.52 for 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. The results for the column is against the backdrop that the total column inch allocation to the publication of agricultural issues in 2007,2008,2009 and 2010 were 2194.29, 861.54, 2870.94 and 2201.52 respectively for all eighty (80) editions of the newspapers sampled in each year.

The researchers also found that, apart from 2008, the subject that attracted the highest reportage in the studied newspapers -was the health implications of the consumption of some agricultural commodities. Based on the result of the study, the researchers concluded that newspapers are not likely to make significant contribution to the dissemination of agricultural information for enhanced agricultural production.

Another study by Okorie and Oyedepo (2010) examined the coverage of agriculture in (2007) in the Nigerian press by adopting a content analysis of three selected newspapers: *Guardian, Tribune and Punch*. The researchers noted in the course of their study that the press has contributed to the growth and development of the society in terms of political, economic, culture, education agriculture and social system, etc (Okorie & Oyedepo, 2010). The result of their study .revealed that the newspapers gave low coverage to agriculture, in Nigeria. The researchers recommended that the press should improve its advocacy role by paying more attention to reportage of developmental issues.

Similarly, in a study by Aiyesimoju and Awoniyi (2012) which sought to examine the coverage of agriculture and environment in Nigerian newspapers, it was revealed that issues on agriculture did not receive favorable coverage by the newspapers. The study which was a content analysis was carried out in three newspapers: *The Punch, The Guardian* and *The Sun* between August and September (2011). Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that issues on agriculture did not receive favorable coverage by the newspapers. Three basic issues of national/global interest were selected to ascertain their degree of importance in the three newspapers studied. The issues selected were the most reported issues at the time of study, they were: Gaddafi's capture, Boko Haram and

the Environment. One hundred and fifty one (151) stories out of a total of 454 stories analysed amounting to 33.2% were allotted to environment, 97 (21.3%) stories were published on Gaddafi's trial and capture while Boko Haram had 206 (45.4%) stories reported. The researchers recommended that the press should endeavor to give adequate attention to various issues on agriculture as well as its developmental programmes in its reportage.

In another related study by Fawole and Olajide (2012) which investigated the coverage of gender roles in agriculture in four selected Nigerian newspapers, the result revealed that agricultural stories with males as subject attracted more strategic placement in newspapers than females as subject. The study examined ninety-two articles representing the media coverage from four newspapers. Other findings indicated that newspapers covered more non-gender stories (67.3%) than gender stories (32.6%); and that male roles enjoyed more prominence than female roles. It was also revealed that the total amount of space allotted to females (51.3%) was more compared to male roles (48.7%). Finally, it was revealed that male roles (33.3%) in agricultural news coverage enjoyed more strategic placement when compared to female roles (23.3%). The researchers recommended that civil society groups with focus on agriculture and gender development should mobilize, advocate and sensitize media executives and reporters on the importance of gender-sensitive reporting in the area of agriculture.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the agenda-setting theory first propounded by McCombs and Shaw in 1972, which Izuogu (2009, p. 1) referred to as the "media's capacity to cause an issue to be elevated in importance in the mind of the public through repeated focus or coverage". The theory has its roots in the understanding that the

mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about (Izuogu, 2009 citing Littlejohn, 1999).

The relevance of this theory to the study is that the media can focus on events or phenomenon with the intention of giving it prominence. "With the level of prominence given to a story, readers are more likely to think in that direction. President Jonathan's agricultural programmes and policies can also be given prominence on the pages of newspapers in order to raise people's consciousness in that direction. The more the media cover agricultural issues the more people are likely to think in that direction.

## **Methods**

The research design for this study is content analysis and the unit of analysis is the news stories on agricultural issues during President Jonathan's regime in the selected Nigerian newspapers. The selected national dailies include: *The Vanguard*, *The Nation*, *Guardian* and *Daily Sun*. These national dailies were selected based on their wide circulation and readership. *The Nation*, *Guardian* and *Vanguard* newspapers are national newspapers widely read by the elites, while the *Daily Sun* is a sensational newspaper read nationwide. These newspapers were studied for a period of four years (May 2011 to May 2015), which was the major period of President Jonathan's administration. The population of the study was 5,840 editions of the newspaper, which was got from the 365 editions of each of the newspapers. For each year, the editions for the four national dailies were 1,460 (365 x 4) editions. For the period of four (4) years, it was  $1,460 * 4 = 5,840$

editions. The composite week procedure developed by Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993) was used to determine the sample size of the study which gave 384 editions.

Riffe, Aust and Lacy (1993) as cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 163) demonstrated that "a composite week/month sampling technique was superior to both a random sample and a consecutive day sample when dealing with newspaper contents". Therefore, the editions of newspapers for the months under investigation were grouped according to the months of the year and two editions within the months of the year were selected at random. In all, 384 editions were studied. This means that from each newspaper, 96 editions were sampled. The composite sample was designed in such a way that the editions randomly selected for *The Vanguard* was applied to *The Nation*, *Guardian* and *Daily Sun* newspapers. The study included weekend editions because it is a matter of national interest; issues of national importance do not leave the pages of newspapers even though it is weekend. The units of analysis for this aspect of the study were the straight news, news feature and opinion articles. Others includes: Frequency of coverage (Regularity of coverage), Direction of coverage (Angle of coverage), Placement (Prominence), and Length of Coverage (in-depth). This study used the Coding Sheet as the major instrument of data collation and analysis.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The study content-analyzed 384 editions of the selected newspapers. This aspect of the study was analysed and presented in tables according to the research questions raised in the study. It attempted a step-by-step presentation of data according to the questions raised.

**Research Question One (1): What is the frequency of newspaper coverage of the agricultural policies and activities of the President Goodluck Jonathan administration?**

The analysis in Table 1 below looks at the frequency of coverage of agricultural issues under the regime of President Jonathan. Agricultural issues were compared to other popular events that took place within the period under investigation as suggested by Wimmer and Dominick (2011). Findings revealed that over 64% of the stories coded, based on events that were popular within the period under study, were on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. On the other hand, only 26.3% of the stories coded were on agricultural issues in the country. Thus, there were more stories on Boko Haram than there were on agriculture.

Data in Table 1 show that 196 news stories obtained from straight news, news feature and opinion articles which amounted to 26.3% were on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan, 481 (64.7%) stories obtained from straight news, news feature and opinion articles were on Boko Haram insurgency in the country, while 67 (9%) stories obtained from straight news, news feature and opinion articles were on health issues.

**Table 1: Total Frequency of Coverage**

THEMES	NEWS GENRE				%
	Straight News	News Feature	Opinion Article	Total	
Frequency of Coverage					
Agricultural Policies and Activities	105	49	42	196	26.3%
Boko Haram Insurgency	308	112	61	481	64.7%
Health issues	42	13	12	67	9%
Total	455	174	115	744	100%

**Research Question two (2): What direction did the coverage of the agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan take?**

The presentation of data in Table 2 below reveals that 72.4% of the stories on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan within the period of 2011 to 2015 were favourable to the government in power. This implies that over 70% of the stories on agriculture were reported to indicate that government was doing well in boasting agricultural development in the country.

The data collected in Table 2 indicate that 142 (72.4%) stories from straight news, news features and opinion articles covering agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were favourable, 24 (12.2%) stories were unfavourable, while 30 (15.3%) stories covering agricultural policies and activities were neutral.

**Table 2: Direction of Coverage**

<b>OPTION</b>	<b>NEWS GENRE</b>				<b>%</b>
<b>Direction of Coverage</b>	<i>Straight News</i>	<i>News Feature</i>	<i>Opinion Article</i>	<b>Total</b>	
<b>Favourable</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>72.4%</b>
<b>Unfavourable</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12.2%</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15.3%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Research Question three (3): What is the degree of prominence given to the coverage of agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration?**

Findings from Table 3 below reveal that, within the period under investigation, 84.2% of the stories obtained from straight news, news features and opinion articles on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were placed on the inside pages of Nigerian newspapers. The implication of this finding is that over 80% of the stories on agriculture, as covered, were not given the requisite priority in news placement.

The data presented in Table 3 show that no stories obtained from straight news, news feature and opinion article on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were covered on the front page. However, 13 (6.6%) stories were placed on the back pages, 18 (9.2%) stories on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were placed on the centre pages, while 165 (84.2%) stories were placed on the inside pages. This result shows lack of prominence. In other words, the newspapers did not attach much importance to President Jonathan's agricultural policies.

**Table 3: Total Level of Prominence**

OPTION	NEWS GENRE				%
	<i>Straight News</i>	<i>News Feature</i>	<i>Opinion Article</i>	Total	
Front page	-	-	-	-	0%
Back page	0	6	7	13	6.6%
Centre spread	14	4	—	18	9.2%
Inside page	91	39	3 <sup>^</sup>	165	84.2%
Total	105	49	42	196	100%



**Research Question 4: What is the depth of coverage of President Goodluck Jonathan's agricultural policies and activities?**

The data presented in Table 4 below reveal that 36.7% of the stories on President Goodluck Jonathan's agricultural policies and activities obtained from straight news, news features and opinion articles were covered within the depths of 6-10 inches. This implies that the coverage of agricultural issues was given inadequate attention on the pages of newspapers.

The data presented in Table 4 reveal that 12 stories amounting to 12% of President Goodluck Jonathan's agricultural policies and activities obtained from straight news, news features and opinion articles were covered within the depth of 1-5 inches, 72 (36.7%) stories on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were covered within the depth of 6-10 inches, 62 (31.6%) stories were covered within the depth of 11-15 inches, while 50 (25.5%) stories on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were covered within the depth of 16 inches and above.

**Table 4: Depth of Coverage**

OPTION	NEWS GENRE				%
Depth of Coverage	<i>Straight News</i>	<i>News Feature</i>	<i>Opinion Article</i>	Total	
1-5 inches	12	-	-	12	12%
6—10 inches	62	6	4	72	36.7%
11—15 inches	17	30	15	62	31.6%
16 inches and above	14	13	23	50	25.5%
Total	105	49	42	196	100%

## **Discussion of Findings**

This section is based on the responses/data that address the Research Questions and highlight the implication of the results.

The findings in response to Research Question One indicated that stories on Boko Haram insurgence obtained from straight news, news feature and opinion article were more than stories on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan's regime. This means that there were 64.7% stories on Boko Haram terrorism in Nigerian newspapers and only 26.3% stories on agricultural issues. Therefore, there were more stories on Boko Haram than there were on agriculture. However, considering the fact that only 9% of the stories were on health issues one will appreciate the fact that agricultural issues occupied 26.3% which is above one quarter of the coverage of the three issues coded.

In response to this research question, therefore, it is obvious that the frequency of newspaper coverage of the agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan is low, given that it represented only 26.3% of the entire variables coded. This finding was corroborated by the result obtained by Atoma (2008), which revealed a general low level of agricultural news coverage among the newspapers studied. Similarly, Awojobi and Adeokun (2012), in their study revealed that 70%, 78.8%, 66.3% and 60% of the newspapers evaluated did not report any agricultural issues in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively.

The implication of this finding is that, agriculture is not given sufficient coverage in Nigerian newspapers. With this low level of coverage, the press will need to do more to help put agricultural thoughts in the minds of the people. This is the main idea in the agenda setting theory.

The findings of Research Question Two revealed that 72.4% stories on the agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan from 2011 to 2015 were favourable. The findings of this study differed from the result obtained by Aiyesimoju and Awoniyi (2012) which sought to examine the coverage of agriculture and environment in Nigerian newspapers. Aiyesimoju and Awoniyi (2012) found that issues on agriculture did not receive favourable coverage by the newspapers. The study which was a content analysis was carried out in three newspapers: *The Punch*, *The Guardian* and *The Sun* between August and September (2011). Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that issues on agriculture did not receive favourable coverage by the newspapers.

The implication of this finding is that over 70% of the stories in the four newspapers studied on agricultural issues were in favour of the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. They were either in support of his policies or reporting in favour of his activities or those of farmers within his government. This nature of coverage is likely going to put positive thoughts in the mind of the readers. It can make people see the government proactive in boasting agriculture in the country. As at 2012, studies indicated unfavourable coverage but the findings of this study showed that coverage of agriculture was favourable.

On the third research question, the result revealed that 84.2% of stories obtained from straight news, news features and opinion articles on agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were placed on the inside pages of Nigerian newspapers from 2011 to 2015. This revealed low level of prominence in the coverage of agricultural issues. The media, through the placement of news stories, cause some stories to have better attention and importance over the others.

This is the basic idea behind the agenda-setting theory. The media, invariably, help society to apportion priority to issues by making them prominent (a priority).

The implication of this finding is better understood by the fact that in the order of priority in the placement of stories on the pages of newspaper, the inside page reflects the least priority. When this is compared to the findings of this study, it means that low priority was given to the coverage of agricultural issues in the country.

The result of Research Question Four revealed that 36.7% of the stories on President Goodluck Jonathan's agricultural policies and activities obtained from straight news, news features and opinion articles were covered within the depths of 6-10 inches. This implies that the coverage of agricultural issues was not given moderate attention on the pages of newspapers.

In a different study, Fawole and Olajide (2012) who investigated the coverage of gender roles in agriculture in four selected Nigerian newspapers revealed that the total amount of space allotted to females (51.3%) on agriculture were more compared to male roles (48.7%). Finally, it was revealed that male roles (33.3%) in agricultural news coverage enjoyed more strategic placement as compared to female roles (23.3%) (Fawole & Olajide, 2012). The findings of Fawole and Olajide (2012) showed that more depth is given to agricultural stories with women more than men. In our own study, the depth of coverage of agricultural issues is not much.

The implication of this is that not much depth was given to the coverage of agricultural issues at 36.7% for 6-10 inches. Considering the length of feature and

opinion articles on conventional bases, one would expect that more coverage should be given to issues on agriculture.

### **Summary of Findings**

1. There were 64.7% stories on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigerian newspapers, while 26.3% of the stories were on agricultural issues in the country.
2. Seventy-two percent (72.4%) of the stories on the agricultural policies and activities of President Goodluck Jonathan were favourable to the government.
3. Eighty two percent (84.2%) of the stories on agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan's regime were placed on the inside pages of Nigerian newspapers.
4. Thirty-six percent (36.7%) of the stories on agricultural policies and activities under President Goodluck Jonathan were covered within the depths of 6-10 inches.

### **Conclusion**

The coverage of agricultural issues in the Nigerian newspapers was very poor and negated the current attention the sector was receiving now. This coverage was very low considering the fact that government had reiterated its stand to diversify the economy of the country. The country wants to make a shift from oil-based economy to agriculture-supported economy. With the low coverage given to agricultural issues by the press, it is safe to conclude that the move to diversify the economy would not be an easy one. This is because information is at the centre of

every major progress in government. If the press plays down a particular issue, getting the people to move in that direction will lie difficult.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommend that newspapers in the country should give more coverage considerations to agricultural activities in the country. The more agricultural issues are covered, the more interest it generates among the populace and newspaper readers.

It is also recommended that stories on agricultural issues should continue to reflect opinions of experts and farmers on the growth and developmental steps taken to boost agriculture in the country. This will further create the encouragement needed for people to go into that sector. The more positive stories people hear about agriculture, the more they are likely to embrace the paradigm shift from oil to agriculture-based economy. Now that the country is in recession, people are looking for information that will help them better their lot. If they realize that the agricultural sector will help them, they will certainly explore that option. This is the more reason more favourable stories on agriculture are needed to refocus the public attention on such issues.

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