

## *Original Paper*

# The Operation Green Revolution 1973-1986: Sustaining Cameroon's Planned Development Precept

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### **Abstract**

*This paper studies the Green Revolution and its input to Cameroon's planned development agenda from 1973 to 1986. After attaining statehood, Cameroon like most African states, espoused strategies, aimed at enhancing its socio-economic developments. All these emerged from its foremost planned development policy, introduced in 1960. This policy initially laid emphasis on industrialisation, which was too costly and inert to spur socio-economic growth. Agriculture was thus reconsidered as the basis for real development in the country and the green revolution ideology was adopted to embolden this ambitious quest. Launched in 1973, the revolution did swiftly and hugely enhance Cameroon's socio-economic development, but nevertheless faded due to obvious deficiencies and the setting in of the economic crunch in 1986. This paper argues that despite its merely ideological bearing and hasty end, the Green Revolution remained a very vital spur to Cameroon's planned development programme and propounds perspectives for more enhancing inputs. It is built on primary and secondary data and analysed qualitatively.*

### **Keywords**

*green revolution, development, planned development, agriculture, Cameroon.*

### **1. Introduction**

Cameroon's Operation Green Revolution emerged within the framework of its principle of planned development, which had as central aim, the advancement of economic and social developments (Ahidjo, 1968, p. 54). Agro-industrial structures were innate in the process, through Five Years Development Plans, with an accent on industrial development. Apprehending that industrial development was more exorbitant and slow in reducing poverty and stimulating socio-economic change, greater attention was moved towards improving the country's agricultural economy in the early 1970s (Kum & Kum, 2017, p.

1). It was in this regard that the government of Cameroon adopted a series of incentives, including the “Operation Green Revolution”, for the purpose of meeting this goal. This philosophy was essentially embraced in an effort to meet the country’s food self-sufficiency vision aimed at curbing poverty and launched by President Ahmadou Ahidjo in Buea during the country’s first agricultural show in 1973, it had to act as a prodigious stimulant to agricultural output (Ahidjo, 1978, p. 11). Dawson, Martin, and Sikor (2016, p. 1), document that green revolutions did record huge successes in southern Asia and beyond in the 1960s, benefitting smallholders. Adopting it however, reflected the deep concern Cameroon policy makers had at the time in emulating Thomas Jefferson’s celebrated “agrarian state” ideology that formed the bench mark of the American Republic towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Dongmo, 2008, p. 2). Our concern is: to what extent, did the green revolution enhance Cameroon’s agricultural economy during the period of planning for development? The paper begins by examining the basis of the revolution in Cameroon, its vision and set-up, repercussions, drawbacks and perspective and establishes that it did sufficiently enhance the country’s development goals, despite some hitches, culminating in the economic crisis of 1986.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 *Construing the Basis of the Operation Green Revolution in Cameroon*

Most African economies embraced planned development during the early independence eras the basis for their rapid transfiguration. According to Ahidjo (1968, p. 82), regarding Cameroon, planning was not only necessary, but conformed to the evolution of the world at the time. He appended that the country’s supreme mission of national construction could not be happily pursued without plans as planning was necessary in all fields of national activity (Ibid). This was not therefore an exclusive Cameroon ambition or necessity, but a 20<sup>th</sup> century drive with Russia being one of the earliest and most prominent examples to adopt. Russia launched its first Five-Year Development Plan in 1928, aimed at finding the necessary food, by forced collectivisation of agriculture (Wood, 1978, pp. 68-69). India at independence in 1947 copied Russian techniques, with its First Five Year Plan being implemented in 1950 (Ibid, p. 281).

Gaining inspiration from Russia and India, Cameroon adopted five-year development plans as catalysts for a rapid transformation in the country. This vision emerged from the complex and challenging demands of national economic growth in a freshly sovereign nation (Note 1). It was in view of the preceding developments that a 20-year plan was elaborated in 1960 (Fanso, 1989, p. 170). This plan was to develop three major spheres of the economy: industry, transport and agriculture. Initial efforts to this end were in two medium phases called: First and Second Five Year Development Plans (Phillipe, 1968, pp. 249-254). The first plan (1960-1965) was launched before reunification and did not therefore take into account the entrance of former Southern Cameroons into the total economic configuration of the country. It was idealistic in some of its provisions, as the results achieved partially paralleled stated aims, with very little met in the field of agriculture, which was one of its key points of emphasis (Ndongko, 1975, p. 132).

The Second Five-Year Development Plan (1966-1971) was elaborated under the auspices of the Federal Government. This plan struggled to remedy the defects of the first one, investing a total of 165 million francs CFA, more than three folds that scheduled for the first plan (Ibid). Agriculture was given a pride of place in the plan triggering it to be named, the “peasant plan”, with emphasis on agricultural commercialization, reform and reorganization. It compelled a radical improvement on peasant export production through the diversification of cash crops such as cotton, cocoa and coffee, which increased significantly in volume. Agricultural modernization centres were created in the five geographical areas of the country to coordinate development research and technical aid related to the principal crops grown there, served by these centres (LeVine, 1965, p. 163).

Regional development structures, much like the “Small landholders development authorities” in Rwanda and Malaysia, were encouraged, to combine plantations and agro-industrial structures (Ahidjo, 1976, p. 33). This was in order to effectively develop each region’s economic and social potentials (Ndongko, 1975, p. 45). Ndongko (1974, p. 6) argues that from 1966, Cameroon’s planning was oriented towards asserting, symbolising and strengthening national unity. This was hardly achieved as regional inequalities were rather enhanced as the plans instead established the basis of discrepancies within almost all sectors, with some regions favoured against others (Amin, 2008, pp. 81-82). Friedman and Alonso (1964, p. 4) support this view and argue that the question of social and economic justice in the distribution of economic progress is important, but difficult to handle in terms of regions as well as social class. The major issue with the first and second plans was the difficulty in financing the various projects earmarked.

#### 2.1.1 Drifting from Industrialisation to Agro-Industrialisation

During the foregoing period of the first and second five years development plans, Cameroon’s planning stressed more on industrialization, trusting this was going to briskly attain its expected development goals, despite its financial constrictions. The dominant political sentiment at the time was one of optimism that the country would attain self-sustained growth (LeVine, 1971, p. 161). It is argued that some political leaders at the time did virtually equate development with industrialisation (Zuvekas, 1979, p. 209). This was nevertheless so costly and slow in reducing poverty and stimulating Cameroon’s socio-economic development (Seitz, 1988, p. 15). Collint, Hansen and Win gender buttress these views in the following words:

*Early views of development assumed that most of the impetus for development and economic growth would necessarily come from the industrial sector, which was thought to offer the potential for rapid rates of productivity growth. In contrast, the agricultural sector in most developing countries was seen as backward and stagnant, with limited potential for growth (2016).*

In fact, in agrarian societies, such as those that predominated Africa, agricultural development was an essential prerequisite to overall national economic development. The forgoing views on industrialisation for rapid development did not work and in crafting a third plan in the early 1970s, agriculture was reconsidered as the crucial and most important stage to real development, especially as food insecurity

increasingly became a major concern at the time just as Toenniessen, Adesina, and Devries examine below:

*Most of Africa's people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. These predominantly small-scale farmers face many challenges, including food insecurity, rising poverty, and natural resource degradation. To increase the productivity, portability, and sustainability of their farms, they need greater access to affordable yield-enhancing inputs, including well-adapted seeds and new methods for integrated soil fertility management, as well as to output markets where they can convert surplus production into cash (2008, p. 233).*

It should be noted that a lag in the foregoing sphere made Cameroon's Gros Domestic Product (GDP) to fall from 8 percent in 1970, to 4 percent in 1971 and 3 percent in 1972, urging government to adopt alternative measures to those adopted during the early independence era, in order to elevate the living standards of its masses (Seitz, 1988, p. 15). Hence, rather than depend solely on industrialisation initially perceived as the most practical way out for the country's development needs, agriculture was merged to the former, with the later taking precedence. Ndongko (1995, p. 16) acknowledges this when he opines that one of the most remarkable events in the country's political economy in the 1970s was the promotion of agro-industrial enterprises, based on plantation production.

In a bid to promote agro-industrialisation and plantation agriculture, the third plan extended existing large scale plantations and agro-industrial structures: *Société de Développement du Cacao (SODECAO)*, Cameroon Development Corporation CDC and others) and created new ones: *Société de Développement du Coton (SODECOTON)*, Upper Nun Valley Development Authority (UNVDA), *Société D'expansion et de Modernisation de la Riziculture de Yagoua (SEMRY)* and others. These included projects of integrated development nature: the Rural Migration projects of North-East Benue, Doulo-Ngane and Guider, all situated in the North Region; *Zones d'Actions Prioritaires Intégrées (ZAPI)* in the Centre South and East; the Wum Area Development Authority (WADA) and others (Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development, No date, p. 79). All these trends were to boost production and productivity in all sectors of the economy and reduce rural exodus. This plan was baptized "production and productivity plan" (Ibid).

Unlike the second plan which relied more on external sources, the third one did essentially on national resources (Amin, 2008, p. 82). There was cause therefore to take advantage of the country's most precious means: unused labour of the thousands of youths in rural settings (Ahidjo, 1968, p. 58). This labour force was going to measure Cameroonians' efforts and find a solution for the problem of "disguised unemployment", which was common in the countryside. A series of financial and commercial institutions were equally instituted to assist in this direction: the Cameroon Development Bank, Rural Fund for National Development (RFND) and others, which combined their efforts with those of the National Credit Council, National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB), and Chamber of Commerce to provide loans and material assistance to youths and foregone structures for the purpose of improving on their activities (Ibid, pp. 54-55). This allowed the government to retain a fraction of nominal world

market prices of export crops to finance public consumption and investment needs (Douya, 2008, p. 66). The slogan “grow more food”, launched in West Cameroon in the early 1960s, functioned so well that in the early 1970s, policy makers in the United Republic of Cameroon decided to style it a nationwide mantra (Note 2). Agric-Shows had always been crafted in this part of the country, to accompany this perception. Its first two shows were launched in 1966, in the Wum and Nkambe Divisions. These exhibitions helped change the minds of populations in the areas and youths in particular, who began to look at agriculture as a dignified career and highest in importance for an agricultural economy like theirs (Note 3). The preceding structures and ideas were production targets for agricultural activities during the period of the third plan. It was in line with these that the government of Cameroon launched the Operation Green Revolution during the Buea Agro-pastoral show in 1973 and incorporated as a nationwide political ideology. The section that follows shall examine the green revolution’s vision and set-up, its ramifications and drawbacks in Cameroon.

### **3. Result: Vision and Set-up, Ramifications and Drawbacks of the Operation Green Revolution**

The Operation Green Revolution could be best understood as an increase in the rate of agricultural growth and productivity, based on the application of modern crop breeding techniques to the agricultural challenges of the developing world (Collint et al., 2016). This notion is said to have developed in Asia and Latin America, to address rural poverty challenges and agrarian unrest in the late 1950s and early 1960s, involving a concerted effort, to apply scientific understandings of genetics to the development of improved crop varieties that were suited to the growing conditions of the developing world (Ibid). The Green Revolution delivered a massive and nearly immediate impact in some locations in the developing world, particularly in the irrigated rice-growing areas of Asia and wheat-growing hubs of Asia and Latin America (Dawson et al., 2016, p. 204).

In Cameroon, the Green Revolution was a nationhood-felt, patriotic and naturalist ideology, embraced to ensure that the country’s agricultural production dramatically increased, within the framework of its planned development policy. By this, food production was expected to increase by 2.3 percent per year on average against the 5.4 percent for agricultural products destined for export (Note 4). Cameroon was a predominantly agricultural country given that most of its population lived on the land. It was therefore absolutely indispensable that special efforts be invested, to develop this essential activity and raise the standards of living of all Cameroonians. Anderson and Lorch hold this view in the following terms:

*.... very few countries, particularly in the developing world have experienced rapid economic growth without agricultural growth either preceding or accompanying it. This is because agricultural growth is a catalyst to broad-based development. At the micro level, for instance, it provides eventual savings for entrepreneurial development in the informal sector. At the macro level, it provides raw materials which are a strong base for industrial development (2001, p. 87).*

It is in line with the preceding rationale that the “Operation Green Revolution”, was launched in Cameroon to ensure food self-sufficiency, an aspiration that many developing countries nursed at the

time. This wish evolved and culminated with the country's development-oriented framework (planned development) in what president Ahidjo officially labelled the "*Sahel Vert*" and "*Revolution Vert* in 1973" (Dongmo, 2008). The Sahel vert project was aimed at fighting desertification in the northern part of the country through trees planting, while the green revolution concentrated on promoting the production of high consumption crops like: rice, wheat, bananas, tomatoes, vegetables and corn (Ibid). The green revolution was institutionalized through Cameroon's socio-economic and political agenda of agro-pastoral shows. The maiden show that sanctioned the revolution was jointly organized by the ministries of agriculture (Jean Keutchi) and livestock and animal industries (Sadjo Agokay) in March 1973 (Kum & Kum, 2017, pp. 773-774). This accommodated the burdens of large, medium and small size farmers in search for self-determination and the right to sustainable development. On launching it, President Amadou Ahidjo intimated that this would promote food self-sufficiency and act as a stimulant for the country's agricultural economy (Ahidjo, 1978, p. 11). It was also to assure the rational use of natural resources, by appealing to all Cameroonians to make the maximum use of the soil, their irreplaceable focal point.

The Green Revolution regarded agriculture as a national base for feeding the country's population and also as strength to the country's industry and most essentially, a crucial factor in the strategy for economic growth (Collint et al., 2016, p. 2). It was a complemented effort to Cameroon's initial reliance on industrialisation for the rapid development of the country. This thus implied a steady and forward-looking change in attitudes, goals, means, methods, traditions and vital structures for an effective food sufficiency drive. To boost food sufficiency, the mass production of high consumption commodities such as rice, wheat, bananas, tomatoes, vegetables, and corn, just to name a few became very imperative (Ahidjo, 1978, p. 11). President Ahidjo, in order to add flesh to the foregoing, argued in his own words that: "in an independent and free country as ours, which desires prosperity, for its children, we must not content to produce just enough to eat, to pay our tax, to wear. We must do more" Ahidjo, 1968, p. 59).

The Green revolution's philosophy further called on farmers to form groups to better qualify for government assistance. This was because a bulk of Cameroonian farmers depended on subsistence agriculture and there was need for them to produce not just to feed their families but also indulge on commercial farming, with financial backing from the state. The government of Cameroon took appropriate measures to solve this issue by creating the Rural Fund for National Development, also called the "farmer's bank", through Presidential Decree No. 73/24 of 29<sup>th</sup> May 1973 (Ibid). This institution provided loans to Cameroonians in order to meet the operation Green Revolution's objectives. Generally, its mandate included inter-alia the financial management of specific funds, disbursed by the state, domestic and or foreign bodies, to grant if need be guarantees to loans accorded by commercial banks to certain intervention bodies in rural areas; the provision with the Cameroon Development Banks and commercial banks of joint financing for rural development and above all the distribution of agricultural credits (Jua, 1990, p. 25).

Many agro-industrial projects created during this period, were considerably influenced by the Green revolution's philosophy. For example, the Wum Area Development Authority (WADA), that was to play an important role in promoting and accelerating economic and social development in the rural communities of Menchum Division, assisted in coordinating RFND loans, to farmers or groups of farmers, graziers and craftsmen who undertook agricultural activities considered profitable in the context of the objectives of the economic and social plans of the country (Kum & Kum, 2017, p. 776). It further guaranteed loans granted by created bodies to cooperative societies, as well as farmers and stock breeders; granting advances for purchase of agricultural tools, materials and constructing storage facilities especially for the settlement of young farmers in rural areas. Youths had to show in an efficient manner taste for work, accountability and ability to ameliorate the quality of life in the villages, all in a bid to render the work of the soil its dignity and nobleness (Ahidjo, 1968, p. 45). The next sub-section is dedicated to repercussions of the revolution in Cameroon.

### 3.1 Ramifications

Green revolutions transformed rural economies in many Asia and Latin American countries between 1960 and the 1980s, but their transfers to Sub-Sahara Africa had limited successes, due in part to locally unsuitable seed varieties and the lack of human and institutional capacity (Dawson et al., 2016, p. 204). This did nevertheless generally impart in Cameroonians, the spirit of broadmindedness, innovation and responsibility, spurred agricultural growth that went a long way to meeting government's socio-economic development goals (Fonjong, 2004, p. 20). Cameroon's food self-sufficiency dream initiated within its planned development framework also became a reality especially in the rice production sector, which had been very dismal before 1971. Rice production increased subsequently when the state identified various sites for its extensive cultivation within the ambits of the green revolution: Yagoua, the Mbo Plains, Nanga Eboko Upper Noun and Doume (Ibid). Through this, food insecurity was momentarily alleviated in the country as the cultivation of irrigated rice was encouraged, resulting to a steady decrease in imports.

The Yagoua, Mbo, Nanga Eboko, Upper Noun and Doume sites were developed and financed through the following agro-industrial companies: SEMRY, UNVDA and the *Société de Développement de la Riziculture dans la plaine de Mbo SODERIM* (MINADER, 2009, p. 5). A host of others were created, although not based solely on rice production like the forgoing. Solely rice producing structures benefitted from substantial funding from within and outside (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Cameroon as can be seen on Table 1.

**Table 1. Financial Assistance to Rice Producing Companies between 1976 and 1987**

No.	Name of Parastatal	Period	Amount Benefitted in Billions francs CFA
1.	SEMRY	1979-1987	40 billion francs CFA
2.	SODERIM	1976-1987	7.1 billion francs CFA

3.	UNVDA	1981-1987	7 billion francs CFA
	Total	1976-1987	54.1 billion francs CFA

*Source:* Author's conception from information gathered in MINADER, "National Strategy for Rice Growing in Cameroon", p. 5.

From Table 1 it can be realized that during the operation green revolution period, the state of Cameroon, including some of its partners assisted some major rice producing companies with funds at a tune of 54.1 billion francs CFA. It is documented that this assistance enabled the rice market to grow from 15,000 to 60,000 tons between 1975 and 1980 with the establishment of these agro-industrial projects and accompanying funding (Ibid). They therefore increased the market share of Cameroon's agricultural produce, enhanced revenues in isolated regions, provided jobs (poverty alleviation), supplied local consumption markets with adequate food and brought large scale imports under control.

Realising that economic growth could hardly occur without increased farm productivity and food production from agriculture, Cameroon's Green Revolution mobilized all the country's human and material resources towards agricultural boost. This did greatly work as production and productivity amplified. Poverty was also clipped down and socio-economic developments improved in the country. In other words, agricultural production possibilities were enhanced, ensuring that there was a steady increase in quality and quantity of the agricultural produce that was so direly needed, to feed the country's growing population (Yuh, 1977, p. 76). As a result, incomes grew at more than 7 percent per year due partly to the improved agricultural economy through the operation green revolution from 1973 to 1986 (Bamou & Masters, 2007, p. 9). This improvement could be justified by the factors behind its very foundation as the then Vice Minister of Agriculture, Joseph Awunti (1976) puts in his own words:

*The green revolution calls on all Cameroonians to engage in agriculture in a realistic manner: modify ancient traditional farming methods so as to replace them gradually with more modern and scientific methods; replace low yielding cocoa, coffee, and food crops, planting materials with high yielding disease resistant varieties; readapt agricultural policy to the needs of the nation so as to be able to maintain a proper and careful balance between cash crops and food crops (Yuh, 1977, pp. 76-77).*

The agricultural modernization of Cameroon's food crop farming both as a means of feeding the nation and developing exports was significantly enhanced through the operation Green Revolution (DeLancy et al., 2010, p. 197). Agricultural research on the other hand, which is often cited as the single-best investment in terms of increasing productivity and reducing poverty complemented these efforts (Pingali et al., 2016, p. 140). With scientific research, genetically modified crops became the order of the day within the framework of the country's Green Revolution strategy. This greatly enhanced the development and spread of High Yielding food crop varieties such as: rice, maize, sorghum, millet, root crops and legumes (Ibid). These efforts were realised in a large degree through the creation of research centres and programs in the country

Prominent among research centres and programmes that worked towards meeting the operation green



revolution strategy within Cameroon's planned development framework were the Agricultural Research Institute for Development (IRAD), concerned essentially with research on a wide range of crops: cereals, root and tuber crops, legumes and fruit trees (Bamou & Masters, 2007, p. 10). Related centres were the Ekona Biotechnology laboratory, the Faculty of Agronomy and Agricultural Sciences (FASA) of the University of Dschang and a host of others. Other crops were introduced by the Wum Area Development Authority, such as soya beans, dwarf beans, potatoes, sorghum, yams, guavas, mangoes. These research centres, programmes and incentives made Cameroon to be frequently cited among the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to have achieved satisfactory agricultural development during the period of study (Ibid).

Food self-sufficiency, a goal hardly accomplished by many African countries, was achieved by Cameroon during the period of the Green Revolution, whose prime objective was to grow internally adequate food for the population or have a balance between food imports and exports. This enviable record was thanks to the combination of natural, economic, and political factors (DeLancy et al., 2010, pp. 170-171). This Food self-sufficiency reached by Cameroon in the late 1970s can be said to have been because of its ability to grow adequate food for consumers or stabilize its trade balance, thanks to its agricultural potential and adequate policy planning. This excessive domestic food production led to colossal import substitution and conservation of foreign exchange; release of labour into the industrial sector; provision of raw materials for industrial growth; lowering of food prices, raising real wages and generation of employment in the country.

The Green Revolution was equally the basis for launching Cameroon's self-reliant development strategy in 1975 as a result of the successes it recorded by the revolution in the sphere of food self-sufficiency (Dongmo, 2008). This strategy remarkably subordinated the country's international economic relations to domestic development, depending principally on local efforts and labour (Ibid). Self-reliance favoured a production policy that was more sensitive to local consumption markets, a greater mobilization of financial and monetary policy towards savings and investment and an enhanced labour and income policy in the labour market (Ibid). The shared effect was the movement towards a plantation economy, a process by which Cameroonians were encouraged to be rural agricultural workers. This post green revolution model of popular development was Cameroon's idea geared towards the masses and deserving rural working classes to see into a more sustained agricultural economy. The agro-industry strategy was also one of such incentives, introduced for this same drive. The green revolution through this strategy, provided the impetus for the production of raw materials (food and cash crops) that could be transformed in the country to ensure that domestic consumption and exports of some finished goods were earned (DeLancy et al., 2010, p. 25). Aside these inroads, the green revolution suffered a series of setbacks as seen below.

### *3.2 Drawbacks*

Much of the poverty and hunger in Cameroon's rural communities in the 1960s was caused by the lack of sufficient food production and income generation means from small-scale farming. The Green

Revolution was thus adopted to work toward the modernization of food crop agriculture both as a means of feeding the nation and developing exports. This was however not very utterly successful as farm productivity in some parts of the country remained subsistent due to the incessant use of traditional crop varieties and outdated farming methods (EDIAFRIC, 1967, p. 23). In addition to this problem were increasingly depleted soils, shrinking plots of land due to the lack of interest in agriculture by some Cameroonians; scarce and defective water supply; crop losses from pests and diseases, inequitable land-distribution patterns, in efficient and unfair markets and poor agricultural and transportation infrastructures. Despite its tremendous inroads, the foregoing elements strained the operation green revolution's goals within the country.

The operation green revolution was also variously attacked by some nongovernmental organizations and sharecroppers for its use of genetically modified crops, widespread use of fertilizers and pesticides, and various other technologies relevant to it as these were regarded as not tying with the people's realities (DeLancy et al., 2010, pp. 196-197). In Menchum Division for instance, some of the farmers operating under the WADA Agricultural development programmes: Bloc Extension Farming (BEF); Group Framing (GF) and the Oxen Training and Farming (OTF) rejected some of the high yielding crops species it introduced such as the upland rice, corn and groundnuts on grounds that they had bad tastes and demanded too much attention and care (Kum, 2014, p. 215). Again, many farmers perceived these programmes as coming to embolden seclusion among them, unlike had been their normal communal lifestyle that was reflected at all levels of their daily lives (Note 5). All these tremendously worked down on the philosophy's successes in the area.

Cameroon's oil boom of the late 1970s also slowed down the country's operation green revolution goals in that it introduced a series of resource misallocations. The most fundamental were the classic Dutch Disease emanating due to unsustainable price incentives, which limited investment in smallholder agriculture, making it unattractive and increasing the number of unskilled workers seeking non-farm work (Bamou & Masters, 2007, p. 6). Again, most parastatals, created to accompany the revolution at the time became unsustainable due to poor management and lack of specialists, capable of handling, redefining goals and drawing up suitable programmes for their activities (SCET-Cameroon, 1982, p. 206). This resulted in poor policy implementation and limited financial assistance to smallholder agriculture actors during the boom. There was also under-investment in new technology in the country. Although Cameroon had a significant public agricultural research capacity and development programmes, during the boom there were nevertheless very few incentives for technology adoption, so yields for most crops stagnated or declined (Bamou & Masters, 2007, p. 6).

These problems were entrenched, because development efforts were designed and essentially championed by the state rather than private agencies, even in fields where it had neither the requisite expertise nor comparative advantage (Ngwa & Lambi, 2009, p. 51). For instance, the Cameroon Development Bank (CDB) that was initially supposed to finance development activities in the country, made agriculture the poor cousin of industry by reserving most of its funding for the later (Jua, 1990, p.

25). The state in wanting to reinforce the credits put FONADER at the disposal of farmers, which also rather granted more loans to civil servants or wage earners, than full time farmers (Fonjong, 2004, p. 19). Considering that small farmers constituted the bulk of the rural poor in Cameroon, the importance of loans to them could not be over emphasized. It was in this regard that government took such steps to solve the problems of rural savings and agricultural credits (Ahidjo, 1976, pp. 45-46).

Cameroon government's predominant role in the economic policy of planned development was a severe cause for concern. Government played a strong, significant role in guiding development into sectors of the economy and into geographic areas deemed as priorities. This made the Green Revolution to remain more confined to the production of export crops, reason why in 1986, as the price of crops like cacao and coffee fell drastically in the international market, poverty and food insecurity struck Cameroon, leading forcing the government to change its policy (Global Forum for Rural advisory Services, no date). These political constraints on state support for agriculture were arguably compounded by challenges such as high population densities in areas best suited for agriculture, poor infrastructure and vulnerability to climate change (Blanke, 2017). The once largely self-sufficient economy in food production instead turned to import large amounts of basic foodstuffs, with President Biya, wishing that the country be absolutely free from such dependency.

#### **4. Discussion: Perspective**

As already mentioned in the preceding section, most Green Revolutions in Sub-Sahara Africa failed to achieve expected goals, because rural development initiatives were predominantly crafted and harnessed by states, which laid much emphasis on cash crop production (Dawson et al., 2016, p. 204). In Cameroon, despite espousing the foregoing, its green revolution did also stress on indigenous food crops production and this not only enabled it become self-sufficient in food, but also, the bread basket for many of its neighbours: Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and the Central Africa Republic (DeLancy et al., 2010, p. 11). However, government's insistence on the cultivation of export crops (Cocoa, coffee, Rubber and others), did not augur well for its planned development philosophy, especially due to the short-lived petroleum boom that interposed in the country in the late 1970s and outbreak of the economic crisis in the mid-1980s. Both incidents severely worked down on government's development efforts during the period of study as already discussed in previous sections.

It is therefore with regards to the foregoing that it was necessary for the state to pursue its development goals, forestalling that, no national nor international programme or policy be geared toward discouraging food crop production. In this regard, a strategy like Cameroon's agro-industry, implemented to assist the green revolution needed to be sufficiently activated to serve as a viable alternative for petroleum and cash crops that served as the country's main sources of export income. By so doing, it needed to actually place emphasis on food crop production and transformation which had proven to be a viable source of income and means of feeding the country's population and beyond. For a significant sustainable food production to be maintained in Cameroon, farmers under such strategies

had to be provided access to improved agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizers and chemicals, services, and rewarding markets), to be complemented by some of the most detrimental footraces (transport and credit facilities) to an efficient agricultural system (Kazé, 2015).

There was also need for the involvement of a strong private sector in Cameroon's green revolution approach. This was essential in that this was going to serve as a network for improved input supplies and technologies; farmers' training; the provision of market information; output marketing opportunities; promotion of agricultural cooperatives; commercial banks for agro-loans and machineries dealers for farm implements, wherever smallholder farmers were found in the country (Roy, 2012). Again, establishing business connections between both parties, was going to work toward a win-win solution in which farmers could gain access to factors of production and markets for their crops. This sector could also offer indispensable advice to farmers about the use of farm inputs, techniques and participate in other activities, such as grain milling, vegetable oil extraction, and aggregation thereby creating jobs and wealth for local populations (Blanke, 2017). These are hoped were not only going to help improve agricultural productivity, but enhance the socio-economic and political stability in the country.

Despite the green revolution's emphasis on food crops production, this activity remained almost entirely the responsibility of women, while men concentrated on cash crops. Food crop cultivation, was done, using crude tools like: hoes, sticks and cutlasses which was a great hurdle to this philosophy (Kazé, 2015). Achievements of the green revolution could not be dented given that some efforts had been put in to better the situation, although they remained unsustainable. For these efforts to be viable it was necessary for both groups to be increasingly exhilarated into the modern farming methods propounded by the revolution and also, engage in large scale food and cash crop production. Women needed to be as much as possible urged to refrain from subsistent farming and encouraged to farm for sale and become income earners. The men who regarded agriculture as mainly for the women needed be lured into taking great interest in it as a viable way of livelihood. In fact there was to be an unavoidable desire by both to adhere to the use of modern agricultural facilities such as fertilizers, chemicals, draught animals, tractions, extension programmes and high yielding seed species to have the country's agriculture revolutionised, thereby kindling in them the desire for farming as a business (Kum, 2014, p. 175).

Climate change that has most often worked against agricultural productivity due to extreme weather conditions needed to be paid adequate attention in Cameroon's quest for economic development. This needed to be mitigated through concepts like the FAO's climate smart agriculture (Blanke, 2017). The model could enabled that food security challenges be addressed, through increased productivity and funding from partners, climate adaptation and alleviation practices. By this, the state and other development stake-holders in Cameroon needed to ensure that there was equally the adoption of appropriate technologies, supportive policy frameworks, and public investments, in order to develop and implement effective risk-sharing patterns. Such could enable them, set up a climate smart

agriculture agenda with highly competent staff to ensure that all activities in the agriculture space were fully climate proof and climate smart (Ibid).

## 5. Conclusion

The paper has examined the basis, vision, contributions and impact of the green revolution on Cameroon's planned development strategy from 1973 to 1986. It has remarked that the green revolution, was a key drive to agricultural modernisation in Cameroon during the period of study, despite its intermittent failures and outbreak of the economic crisis in 1986. This paper has equally established that the green revolution helped realise Cameroon's food sufficiency and self-reliant development dreams, through agricultural innovation; extension and creation of agro-industrial structures; improved agricultural research; loans and a host of others. It has also outlined some of the difficulties the state encountered in its efforts towards achieving set objectives during the period of study. Development initiatives failed in Cameroon, because they were predicated on political than economic underpinnings and this resulted in immense adverse outcomes. There was therefore need for the state to have had other stake-holders directly involved for a more sustainable socio-economic development in the country. The paper has rounded up with the undaunted need to stress on food crop production for a sustainable agricultural economy and socio-economic development in Cameroon.

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## Notes

Note 1. Interview with V. G., Fanso (2017). Historian, University of Yaounde I, 72 years, Yaounde

Note 2. National Archives Buea (NAB), File No. 748 QC/a/1966/2, "Agricultural Shows", 1966, p. 6.

Note 3. Ibid. p. 33.

Note 4. Ibid.

Note 5. Christopher, A., and Akwo, M., (2015). Former Extension Farmers WADA, 75 years and 61 years, Wum.