

## **HARVESTING JUSTICE (ISAIAH 58:10): EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF FAITH, FOOD SECURITY, AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA**

**VIRGINIA MALAKALYA SHUAIBU**  
**University of Jos**

### **ABSTRACT**

Food security remains an urgent global challenge, affecting over 820 million people, with Nigeria ranking 10th among 15 West African countries severely impacted by hunger. With a Global Hunger Index (GHI) score of 14.7%, the nation faces a critical situation, particularly among its most vulnerable populations. This study explores the intersections of faith, food security, and sustainable agriculture in Nigeria, focusing on the ethical imperative found in Isaiah 58:10 to “feed the hungry.” The central thesis posits that religious traditions, especially within Christian, Muslim, and Jewish frameworks, possess untapped potential to inform and strengthen grassroots responses to hunger. The study seeks to answer: How do faith communities understand and act upon food insecurity? What theological resources can be mobilized to advance sustainable solutions? Employing qualitative methodology and theological reflection, the research analyses the roles of faith-based organizations, noting that roughly 80% participate in food relief initiatives. These groups harness social trust and moral authority to provide aid, yet persistent obstacles—such as fragmented coordination, inadequate funding, and limited awareness—impede lasting impact. The study highlights the need to embed food security within religious practices and community engagement, fostering collaboration with local partners and advocacy for agricultural reform. This research fills a gap in scholarship by bridging theological ethics with development studies, offering practical pathways for integrating faith-based initiatives into national food strategies. It contributes to knowledge by illuminating the transformative potential of faith communities in building more equitable and sustainable food systems.

**KEYWORDS:** Faith, Justice, Food Security, Sustainable Agriculture in Nigeria

### **INTRODUCTION**

Food security remains one of the most pressing global concerns today, with over 820 million people suffering from hunger worldwide, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations (FAO 6). Nigeria ranks tenth among fifteen West African

countries facing acute hunger, with a Global Hunger Index (GHI) score of 14.7 percent, indicating severe food insecurity (Global Hunger Index 23). This study examines the interplay between faith, food security, and sustainable agriculture in Nigeria, particularly through the theological lens of Isaiah 58:10, which emphasises the moral imperative to “satisfy the afflicted soul.” The research contends that religious traditions provide ethical frameworks and practical avenues for responding to food insecurity.

Faith communities—Christian, Muslim, and Jewish—have historically played significant roles in alleviating hunger by mobilising resources, advocating for the marginalised, and offering community-based support (Catholic Relief Services 17). Approximately 80 percent of faith-based organisations engage in food assistance programmes, drawing on deep community trust and moral authority to address local needs (Bartkowski and Regis 124). Despite these contributions, persistent challenges—such as inadequate stakeholder coordination, insufficient funding, logistical constraints, limited understanding of food systems, and widespread corruption—continue to hinder sustainable progress.

The study uses qualitative theological reflection and policy analysis to explore how religious ethics can shape sustainable agricultural practices and community-driven food initiatives. It advocates integrating food security strategies into worship, religious education, and community outreach, alongside partnerships with local organisations and support for pro-agriculture policies.

This research fills a critical gap by bridging theological ethics with development discourse, offering practical insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners working toward a more just and sustainable food system. At its core, the study affirms that addressing hunger is not only a social responsibility but a deeply rooted moral obligation. As Ehusani asserts, moral responsibility demands care for creation and the equitable sharing of its abundance (57). Human dignity, ecological stewardship, and social justice converge in the fight against hunger—a challenge that requires both spiritual commitment and systemic action.

## **CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

In 1960, when Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule, the prospects appeared promising, and expectations for the young nation were high. This optimism was due to Nigeria being the most populous country in Africa and the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantities in the Niger Delta region in 1956, which promised significant economic growth (Falola 98). Many believed Nigeria would soon rise to take a leading position in Africa and world affairs, serving as a beacon of hope and progress for other colonized nations emerging from the yoke of alien rule.

However, just a decade later, by 1970, Nigeria’s stability and prestige had been severely undermined by political corruption, economic underdevelopment, and repeated

military coups. Most damaging was the civil war from 1967 to 1970, which ravaged the country, divided it along regional and ethnic lines, claimed between 500,000 and 3,000,000 lives, and nearly destroyed the fragile federal bonds holding the Nigerian state together (“Nigerian Civil War,” par. 1).

The geographical area called Nigeria was the creation of colonial masters, not the product of indigenous consensus. Consequently, the people who lived within the borders of Nigeria were known globally as Nigerians, but this designation held little meaning for many, who continued to live in alignment with local identities. The constitutions drafted in the 1950s emphasized regional and federal affiliations, introducing a structure alien to the indigenous political systems. These developments undermined the formation of a unified national consciousness. The constitution determined that positions of power at the national level should emerge from regional representation. As a result, the largest ethnic groups in each region—Hausa/Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the West, and Igbo in the East—came to dominate political power, relegating ethnic minorities to the background. This further deepened the fragmentation of identity and hindered the development of a cohesive Nigerian national identity (“Nigeria - Government,” par. 3).

Thus, by 1960, when Nigeria became an independent sovereign state, it was a state without a nation—a country whose citizens lacked a unified national consciousness. Many Nigerians made concerted efforts to promote a strong central state and a state-run economy through arts, music, and political mobilization. These efforts were intended to foster unity and to promote commonalities while minimizing differences. However, such efforts largely failed due to the increasing trend of consolidating power at the regional level. Official corruption, electoral malpractice, ethnic harassment, political thuggery, and intimidation characterized the political landscape from the First Republic to the present day. Regional identities remained stronger than national identities. The persistent fear of marginalization at the federal level fuelled coups, political manipulations, and instability, trends that still linger in Nigeria’s political scene (Osaghae 121–22). These anomalies in the political arena are very experienced, even in the last elections of 2023.

On the economic front, the First Republic envisioned the expansion of formal education as part of a broader plan to make Nigeria wealthier and economically independent. While colonial development plans prioritized increasing agricultural output for export, the post-independence government focused more on achieving economic autonomy. In the 1960s, emphasis shifted to developing manufacturing infrastructure and industries. Sectors such as tobacco manufacturing, food processing, and beverages experienced significant growth. Import substitution became a central goal, and industrial development expanded significantly in the mining sector, with

petroleum accounting for most of this growth. Crude oil production increased from 46,000 barrels per day in 1961 to 600,000 barrels per day by 1967 (Watts 309).

Between 1960 and 1966, Nigeria's economy grew steadily and diversified significantly. Agriculture, which had constituted 63.4 percent of the gross national product (GNP), declined to 55.6 percent by 1966. Manufacturing grew from 3.6 percent of GNP in 1960 to 6.2 percent in 1966; mining rose from 0.9 percent to 4.8 percent; and the distribution of goods increased from 9.1 percent to 14 percent in the same period (Ekundare 274–76). The national economy showed gradual improvement, with incomes growing at an average rate of five percent between 1963 and 1966. Per capita income rose from ₦48.1 in 1960 to ₦53.8 in 1965, while the overall GNP increased from ₦2,244.6 million in 1960 to ₦3,140.8 million in 1968. These statistics led many to believe that Nigeria was on the path toward economic independence.

However, the military coup of January 1966, followed by subsequent coups, political instability, and systemic corruption, brought an abrupt halt to these developmental aspirations. Evidence is the dysfunctional structures of the then industries littered around the country. And despite economic diversification, the decline in agricultural output was a worrying trend. The drop in agricultural exports and domestic food production was not offset by industrial growth, leading to increased food imports—a trend that continues to this day. This dependence on imported food has exposed the country to hunger, starvation, and chronic food insecurity (Okonjo-Iweala 214). This fact is very much felt in the present administration, when food importation was banned, and food items became so expensive that people began to starve. This goes to say that with food importation, what is produced in the country is not sufficient for its populace.

## **THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The text of the study, Isaiah 58:10, reads: “If you pour out yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desires of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.” This text falls within the chapters designated as Third Isaiah (chapters 56–66), it is within the first chapters of these sections (chapters 56–58) titled: *Prophecies of Judgment against Restoration of Community* (Harper Collins Dictionary 464). The whole of chapter 58 is titled *False and True Worship* in the Revised Standard Version and *Fasting Pleasing to God* in the Jerusalem Bible. Either way, the chapter speaks about sacrificing oneself for others as an act of worship. In this chapter, the Prophet is commissioned by God to reprove the sinners in Zion, especially the hypocrites, showing them their transgressions as both admonition and warning (The International Bible Commentary 993). In response, they intensified their external religious performances like fasting. The text enumerated a lengthy divine invective denouncing the hypocrisy of their fast and contempt for the Sabbath. Showing them that

their devotions are of no value but rather instructing them in the text under review, what matters (Matthew Henry's Commentary 946).

The text admonishes the people to abound in all acts of charity and beneficence, not only to give alms according to the necessities of the poor but to give freely and cheerfully and from the principle of charity (Matthew Henry's Dictionary 947). They must pour out themselves for the hungry (Isa. 58:10a), not only pouring out money and reaching out the hand but to do so from the heart, heartily and without grudges, from a principle of compassion and with tender affection to those in misery. The heart must go with the gift, for both God and the poor person love a cheerful giver. The giving must be generous, that is, plentiful and large enough to satisfy and not just to tantalize the afflicted. The act of pouring out brings to mind a pitcher of pouring water, and water flows freely when poured; nothing stops it, and also conjures images of generosity and refreshment ([www.yahwehishisname.com](http://www.yahwehishisname.com)). Pouring oneself means emptying oneself of self, filling oneself with God, and allowing His living water to flow from one's heart to others.

The text advocates not just the feeding of the hungry, but also the gratification of their desires (Isa. 58:10b), reasoning that humans exist to do all the good they can and to use their bodies, minds, abilities, and estate for the benefit and good of others. The desire of the afflicted is to be healthy, to be in no more pain, either mental or physical ([www.yahwehishisname.com](http://www.yahwehishisname.com)), to feel belong, and not to be sidetracked or treated with scorn. Their desire is also to have dignity, to be identified by name, to have a means of livelihood, to have a purpose and the means of realizing it, to live meaningful lives, and contribute to their quarter. The text challenges one to put their needs before one's own and serve them. One does not just help them, but satisfy their desires, that is, to continue to help until they get their genuine heart's desires and can stand on their own ([www.yahwehishisname.com](http://www.yahwehishisname.com)). Whatever it takes to achieve the above, time, money, possessions, strength, knowledge/expertise, exposure, connections, and the rest must be poured out for others.

By pouring oneself out to the hungry and satisfying the afflicted, one will not only bring light to others' darkness (Isa. 58:10c) but will also experience a transformation in one's own life. God promises that as one engages in these selfless acts, he/she will find God's presence in their midst, and their darkness shall turn to light, signifying hope and renewal. One will become a light in a dark land, within one will be hope, Love, Mercy, and grace. The more one pours oneself out, the more one feeds the hungry and helps the poor and afflicted, the more one will look like Christ. All charity is graceful. Perhaps these people made poor business decisions, ate the wrong things, and smoked all their lives. Maybe they ruined their health by taking drugs or were abused by their spouses; it matters not the "why" of how they hit hard times. What matters is being a Light to them, and that is Grace. The "darkness" is their affliction, their medical issue,

their poverty, their shame, their nakedness, their hunger, their homelessness. But the light within one will shine, and they will see a glimpse of God through one ([www.yahwehishisname.com](http://www.yahwehishisname.com)). This illustrates the principle that true worship is reflected in their actions towards others, aligning with the idea that God desires mercy over sacrifice. This teaching resonates with the command to love one's neighbour, emphasizing that acts of kindness and charity are paramount to a life of faith ([www.thebiblesays.com](http://www.thebiblesays.com)).

The final part in this passage (Isa. 58:10) states, "and your gloom be as the noonday." Some translations say, "your darkness" rather than "gloom." But the meaning remains the same; one's problems will become strangely dim in comparison. If one helps the needy and feeds the hungry, if one truly makes a habit of pouring oneself out for others so that the light of God can shine through one, then one's problems will be as nothing. Compared to having no fresh drinking water, one's water heater on the fritz is no big deal. Compared to having empty cupboards, one's lean food budget is not a huge issue. Compared to the death of a loved one, one annoying cold is nothing to worry about. Compared to having no shoes, one's old or second-hand pair of shoes is not a high priority ([www.yahwehishisname.com](http://www.yahwehishisname.com)). When one helps those in need, one becomes acutely aware of all one must be thankful for. When one helps the hungry, one begins to see how greatly God has blessed one, even if one had previously thought God had been ignoring him/her. When others become the focus of one's life instead of oneself, one's eyes are on their problems and not one's own, and thus, one's "gloom becomes as noonday." One is happy to help them; one's joy comes from serving them. One knows without a doubt God's blessings, and in that, one is content. One's problems are no longer mountains; one's valleys are no longer so vast. In helping others, one ultimately helps oneself, one becomes more like Christ, and it shows in the Light one shines all around.

The text under review calls people to harvest justice by emphasizing the importance of actively pursuing justice and compassion, particularly for the marginalized and vulnerable. The text stresses authentic acts of compassion and justice, rather than empty religious rituals, revealing that acts of compassion and justice have transformative power. It reveals that true righteousness is not solely defined by religious rituals but by practical acts of kindness and justice ([www.talktotheworld.com](http://www.talktotheworld.com)). It calls for people to embody the character of God in their interactions with others and to extend love, mercy, and assistance to those who are in need. It prompts them to examine whether their hearts are truly aligned with God's heart of compassion and justice. In a contemporary context, this verse speaks to people's responsibility to address issues of poverty, injustice, and inequality. It calls them to engage in practical acts of compassion, such as volunteering at food banks, supporting organizations that assist the vulnerable, advocating for systemic change, and standing up for the rights of the

oppressed. It reminds them that their acts of compassion and justice have a reciprocal impact on their own lives. When they extend love and care to others, they experience a deep sense of fulfilment and purpose. Their lives are enriched as they participate in God's redemptive work in the world ([www.talktotheworld.com](http://www.talktotheworld.com)). It is only in doing so that Jesus' command of love is made manifest among people.

## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Humanity has for a long time faced the problem of food insecurity, posing a long-term threat to the existence of countless families and individuals. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization views food security as a condition or a state in which every person (families, communities, state, and the nation) has unhampered and unimpeded physical, social, and economic access to enough, safe, and nutritionally inclined food ("FAO Food Security," par. 1; Barrett, par. 2). Food security assures each person the required diet for an active, energetic, and productive life. This means that food insecurity is the absence or lack of access to enough, safe, and nutritionally inclined food which guarantees a family's and individual's nutritional needs for an active, healthy, and productive life ("FAO Food Security," par. 2; Barrett, par. 2). Food security is commonly understood to consist of four important components: food availability, food access, food consumption (usage), and the constant/sustained assurance of its access. It is also in these four components that food insecurity thrives due to corruption, poverty, and insecurity.

There is a very tight connection between corruption, poverty, and food insecurity. Corruption is both a cause and consequence of poverty, and marginalized individuals may be forced to go into crime and unwanted situations to secure basic needs, while at the same time being disproportionately affected by the consequences of corruption (McDonald, Jenkins, and Fitzgerald, par. 3). It is a known fact that lack of basic needs like food has pushed many people into crimes and unwholesome behaviours.

Those living in poverty may also face barriers and challenges to reporting corruption experiences and cases (McDonald, Jenkins, and Fitzgerald 79). Furthermore, corruption can worsen food security by compromising the ability of the state to provide basic services/needs for its people; land grabbing affecting certain communities; and the misappropriation of food aid. Corruption, poverty, and food insecurity are explicitly mentioned as goals and targets in the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs (United Nations UN the 17 Goals, Department of Economic and Social Affairs). Some of the SDGs include ending poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal 1), ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, promoting sustainable agriculture (Goal 2), and substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms (Target 16.5). But the situation seems to worsen even with what the UN and faith-based bodies are doing to ensure food security.

Food insecurity in Nigeria is caused by many factors, including corruption, insecurity, insurgencies, kidnapping, land grabbing, religious crises, ethnic conflicts, and high transportation costs, leading to constant spikes in food prices. Despite policies formulated by the government and global food agencies such as the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), food prices in Nigeria have remained high. These policies and agricultural initiatives have been largely ineffective, as food productivity in Nigeria has remained low, undermining access, usage, and stability of access to food, leading to a drop in the welfare of families and individuals (Babatunde et al. par. 4). Many individuals and families are in constant struggle to provide food for the family. For many, three square meals are a luxury they cannot afford, and so, they only eat twice, once, or none.

In this depressing picture, corruption has continued to rise in the Nigerian state. It has been argued that corruption significantly influences a nation's food security plan. Government and faith-based organizations' efforts to initiate policies critical to sustained food security programs often conflict with the menace of corruption. Corruption exacerbates the divide between the rich and the poor, deepens inequality, and undermines initiatives designed to assist the vulnerable in society. It can divert national and international efforts aimed at addressing famine, hunger, and sustainable agriculture (Doki et al. par. 5). Corruption in Nigeria is seen everywhere from top to bottom. The dollar rate, for example, influences everything in the market, including locally produced food items.

Corruption tends to thrive in countries with weak governmental institutions (Mauro par. 2; Tanzi par. 3; Mo par. 4; Dridi par. 5). It deepens societal divides, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, hindering governmental efforts at social and economic development and undermining the efforts of international and regional development agencies. Corruption distorts market activities, depriving families and individuals of benefits that should flow to them, such as access to food security. The link between food security and the welfare of families and individuals in Nigeria is well-documented within an environment plagued by corruption (Doki et al. par. 6). Findings show that corruption negatively impacts food security by harming investment, particularly in the agricultural sector, through the misallocation of resources, resulting in decreased output (Mauro et al. par. 7). However, some argue that corruption might expedite bureaucratic processes, referred to as the "greasing the wheel effect" (Leff 1964, par. 8). This perceived positivity associated with corruption is often a forced choice for people who see no alternative to getting things done except through corrupt procedures (Doki et al. par. 9). This is what I call the normalization of corrupt practices, making it look like the most normal thing do thereby not only expecting it but also demanding it.

Faith communities, including Jews, Muslims, and Christians, have made significant contributions to food production, transportation, supply, and sustainability. Faith-based organizations have traditionally intervened in food education, nutrition programs, and farming projects. They are in a strong position to support sustainable agriculture in Nigeria due to their unique and enduring relationship with food. These organizations can play an important role in shaping societal norms and practices concerning food and sustainable agriculture. They must seize the opportunity to engage in global dialogues on faith, food systems, and sustainable agriculture. Emphasizing unique approaches in sustainable food production and distribution, particularly empowering women farmers, is crucial. Highlighting the role of values and culture in securing equitable food futures through sustainable agriculture is essential. Faith-based organizations should act as stakeholders, collaborating to address the food crisis and promote food security. Intensifying food education and increasing knowledge about food security and sustainable agriculture can reduce the limited understanding in this area. Addressing logistical challenges in food distribution and ensuring adequate resource allocation requires proper coordination among stakeholders. Therefore, faith-based organizations must unite and work collaboratively. Although some level of collaboration exists among stakeholders, it needs to be intensified for more positive results.

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA**

Sustainable agriculture encompasses all processes involved in the production, transportation, and consumption of food, as well as all the labour and elements involved as individual food items go from farm to table. In Nigeria, sustainable agriculture is crucial for addressing food security challenges, improving farmers' livelihoods, and mitigating the impact of climate change. Sustainable farming focuses on long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability, reducing the use of natural resources and chemicals while maximizing productivity.

Sustainable farming is vital in Nigeria for several reasons: it helps address food security by ensuring a steady food supply for the growing population and promotes environmental conservation through biodiversity preservation. Moreover, sustainable farming contributes to poverty reduction by creating jobs and increasing income in rural communities. By adopting sustainable farming practices, Nigeria can improve agricultural productivity and minimize negative environmental impacts. This includes implementing organic farming techniques, such as crop rotation and composting, to maintain soil fertility and reduce chemical fertilizer use. Integrating agroforestry systems can help restore degraded lands and enhance biodiversity. Focusing on sustainable farming can bring economic benefits by opening opportunities for value addition and diversification.

Embracing organic agriculture allows Nigerian rural farmers to tap into the growing global market for organic products, increasing their revenue. Sustainable farming practices can also reduce production costs, as farmers rely less on expensive external inputs. Sustainable farming is a crucial approach for Nigeria to achieve food security, environmental conservation, and economic development. By promoting sustainable farming practices, Nigeria can improve livelihoods and safeguard natural resources for future generations. However, challenges persist, including a lack of knowledge and awareness about sustainable farming practices among local farmers. Many are unaware of the benefits and long-term impacts of sustainable practices, hindering widespread adoption. Education and training programs can address this knowledge gap and promote sustainable farming (Ibeawuchi et al 259). A greater number of rural farmers need education, training, and exposure to sustainable farming practices.

Another challenge is limited access to modern farming technologies. Many Nigerian rural farmers lack access to modern equipment and tools, relying on outdated practices that result in lower productivity and inefficiency. The limited availability of agricultural machinery impedes the adoption of sustainable techniques. Investments in technology infrastructure can improve access and promote sustainable farming. Additionally, the high cost of modern farming tools and equipment makes them unaffordable for local farmers. Local production and fabrication of these tools and equipment would make them more available, accessible, and affordable.

For sustainable agriculture in Nigeria, rural farmers need to adopt eco-friendly farming practices that boost yield while preserving the environment. These include crop rotation, agroforestry, organic farming, integrated pest management, and water management. Crop rotation is one of the oldest and most effective sustainable farming practices; it helps restore soil nutrients and reduces pest infestations. By changing the type of crops grown in a field seasonally, farmers can avoid depleting specific nutrients. Legumes like beans and groundnuts fix nitrogen in the soil, benefiting subsequent crops like maize and rice. This method reduces the need for chemical fertilizers, saving money and reducing environmental damage (Adeboye et al 98). Rural farmers have been utilizing this system of farming for decades, and it has been working for them.

Agroforestry combines trees and shrubs with crops and livestock farming, providing multiple benefits, including shade, improved soil fertility, and reduced soil erosion. Tree roots help hold the soil together, preventing erosion during heavy rains, which is especially important in Nigeria's rainy seasons. Trees in agroforestry systems can also provide extra income through the sale of fruits, nuts, or timber. Agroforestry supports biodiversity, naturally controlling pests and improving pollination (Nair 45). In Nigeria, agroforestry is gaining traction, with farmers increasingly integrating tree crops like oil palm and cashew with food crops. However, more needs to be done, especially

for rural farmers who are less aware of these practices (Obadimu et al 221). This is another area where education, training, and exposure are needed for most rural farmers.

Organic farming involves growing crops without synthetic chemicals like pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. Instead, organic farmers use natural methods such as composting, manure, and biological pest control. This method is healthier for consumers and protects the environment by avoiding chemical pollution. Organic farming improves soil health over time by increasing organic matter and promoting beneficial organisms like earthworms and microbes. Healthier soil leads to better water retention and more resilient crops, even in dry periods. In Nigeria, organic farming is gaining momentum as more consumers seek chemical-free food options. Organic farms can also tap into premium markets locally and internationally, where organic produce fetches higher prices (Ibeawuchi et al 260). Rural farmers can be encouraged to venture into organic farming while trying to find crops that are not found in their area. Most rural farmers believe that their land can only yield crops that are common in their area and so do not bother to try unfamiliar crops.

Pest control is a major challenge for farmers, particularly rural farmers, who often resort to chemical pesticides. However, chemical pesticides are harmful to the environment and can lead to pest resistance over time. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a sustainable approach that combines biological, cultural, and mechanical control methods to manage pests with minimal chemical use. IPM encourages the use of natural predators, like ladybirds, to control aphids or spiders to reduce mosquito populations. It also promotes crop diversity, making it harder for pests to thrive. Cultural practices such as timely planting and crop rotation are also part of IPM strategies that can reduce pest outbreaks. By adopting IPM, Nigerian farmers can save money on pesticides, protect their health, and preserve beneficial insects and wildlife (Obembe par. 6). Great mobilization of rural farmers is needed in pest control. Most rural farmers have little or no knowledge of unharmed pest control and find chemical pesticides an easy way to do that.

Nigeria faces water scarcity in many regions, making efficient water use essential for sustainable agriculture. Traditional irrigation methods often lead to wastewater and soil degradation. Techniques like drip irrigation can significantly reduce water usage by delivering moisture directly to plant roots. Additionally, rainwater harvesting can help farmers collect and store rainwater during dry periods, reducing dependency on unreliable rainfall patterns and ensuring that crops receive adequate water year-round (Akinrinde and Adigun 5).

## **CONCLUSION**

The reality of the basic need for food, food security, and sustainable agriculture cannot be over-emphasized. Faith-based organizations, cutting across different

religions, have done impressively in this regard. They believe they are called to work for a world where everyone has sufficient, healthy, and culturally appropriate food; and where those who produce and prepare the food are compensated, respected, and celebrated. The text of Isaiah 58:10 challenges the Israelite and by extension, all Christians and indeed the whole of humanity to pour out their selves in the service of others.

This is but a call to practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, with feeding the hungry as the first one. Corporal works of mercy include feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick and the imprisoned, burying the dead, caring for our common home, and visiting the elderly. The spiritual works of mercy are counselling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the afflicted, forgiving offenses, bearing wrongs patiently, praying for the living and the dead, accompanying the grieving, and defending the faith.

Religion can play a pivotal role in addressing food security challenges by promoting dietary practices that enhance nutrition and sustainable food production. Religious communities often have established networks and resources that can be mobilized to support food security initiatives. For example, religious organizations frequently run food banks, soup kitchens, and community gardens, providing vital support to those in need. These initiatives must be enhanced and expanded for wider coverage and broader assistance.

Faith-based organizations are also instrumental in advocating policies that address hunger and malnutrition. By leveraging their moral authority and community influence, these organizations can push for systemic changes that improve food security. For instance, the Catholic Church's advocacy for the right to food and the elimination of hunger aligns with broader efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, religious teachings often emphasize the ethical dimensions of food production and consumption. Many religions advocate for stewardship of the Earth and responsible management of natural resources. This perspective can encourage sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic farming, crop rotation, and water conservation.

## **WORKS CITED**

- Achtemeier, Paul J., (General Editor). *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. HarperCollins, 1996.
- Adeboye, M. K. A., E. N. O. Iwuafor, and J. O. Agbenin. "The Effects of Crop Rotation and Nitrogen Fertilization on Soil Chemical and Microbial Properties in a Guinea Savanna Alfisol of Nigeria." *Plant and soil*, vol. 281, no. 1-2, 2006, pp. 97–107.

- AdeOluwa, Olugbenga. *Organic Agriculture in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2018.
- Adesina, Akinwumi. *Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Farming in Nigeria*. Springer Nature, 2019.
- Akinrinde, E. A., and J. A. Adigun. "Irrigation and Water Management Practices in Nigeria." *Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2020, pp. 45–52.
- Akinrinde, E. A., and M. O. Adigun. "Effect of Irrigation Methods on the Growth and Yield of Tomato in Nigeria." *Journal of Agricultural Research*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2020, pp. 45–52.
- Babatunde, R. O., O. A. Omotesho, and O.S. Sholotan. "Factors Influencing Food Security Status of Rural Farming Households in North Central Nigeria." *ResearchGate*, 2007, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281582769>.
- Barrett, C. B. "Food Security and Food Assistance Programs." *Handbook of Agricultural Economics*, vol. 4, no. 3, edited by B. Gardner and G. Rausser, Department of Agriculture, Resource and Managerial Economics, Elsevier, 2002, pp. 1–17.
- Barrett, Christopher B. *Food Security and Sociopolitical Stability*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Bartkowski, John P., and Deann K. Regis. *Faith, Hope, and Charity: Religion and Humanitarian Assistance in West Africa*. Baylor University Press, 2018.
- Becka. "Isaiah 58:10." *Christian Blog Yahweh Is His Name*, 4 Mar. 2013, [yahwehishisname.blogspot.com/2013/03/devotional-isaiah-5810.html](http://yahwehishisname.blogspot.com/2013/03/devotional-isaiah-5810.html). Accessed 9 Mar. 2024.
- Bible Study Tools. "Isaiah 58:10." *Gill's Exposition of the Bible*, [www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/isaiah-58-10.html](http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/isaiah-58-10.html). Accessed 9 Mar. 2024.