

Incrementalism Approach and Food Security Policies in Kenya

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Abstract

Kenya has, since independence, experienced food insecurity and, in mitigation measures, designed a number of policies from 1981 to date. Each of the policies appeared to be building on the preceding experiences to improve the food security situation by instituting designs and structures that promoted the use of incrementalism approach to decision making. By conducting a comparative analysis of three food security policies, namely, the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981, the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994 and the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012, the paper established that the changes adopted by the government in food security every time a new policy was put in place were incrementalism in approach.

Keywords

Food Security, Policymaking, Incrementalism, Actors, Policy Initiatives

1. Introduction

Policymaking is an integral part of governance and is the result of cumulative effects of multiple and diverse initiatives on a specific issue, or issues within a broader system. The process is multifaceted involving numerous actors performing diverse activities, such as identifying and defining the problem, generating solutions, formulating policy objectives, forecasting policy outcomes, matching objectives to tools, implementing policies, and monitoring and evaluating outcomes. During the process of policymaking different political and power dynamics unfold causing changes where some policy actors take on different/additional roles, some leave the policy domain while new ones come-on-board (Goyal & Howlett, 2021). Public policy scholars have advanced analytical frameworks and theories to aid practitioners in understanding the policymaking dynamics to improve the policy process. Despite the attempts, policy actors such as civil servants, elected leaders

and think tanks continue to experience uncertainties in policymaking efforts due to: multiple actors with varied interests, roles and preferences; flawed and ambiguous information that is also subject to diverse interpretations; and differences in preferred policy alternatives (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2004). As a result of the uncertainties, policymakers prefer to proceed with the status quo or delay policy changes (Nair & Garg, 2024). The uncertainties in the policymaking process may lead to overestimation or underestimation of the policy problem and faulty design of policy solutions. Hence, while the attempts to enhance policymaking have focused on the process, activities and actors, there is limited attention to the applicability of trial and error or incrementalism approach in formulation of sectoral policies. The argument underpinning incrementalism model is that although public policies are sometimes intensely altered, in most instances, the role of the policy is similar to those from the past (Czapiewski, 2015).

In Kenya, the social-economic and political context of policymaking finds its pillars in the colonial history where centralized systems of governance informed policy problem definition and colonial administrators were the main policy actors. According to Mitullah (2021), the government of Kenya has, since independence, continued with the centralized elitist and incrementalism approach to policymaking in most sectors, especially housing, education and agriculture (Obosi, 2023). However, the country has witnessed formulation of several bureaucracy-driven policies incorporating: inter-sectoral coordination; stakeholder participation and operational strategies in different proportions and levels with respect to changing conditions and needs of the population and environment across the country. The government of Kenya, therefore, targeted a holistic multifaceted food security policy to deal with the dynamic and unpredictable situations including political, economic and climatical factors that transcend regional disparities. The policymaking environment shifted considerably in the 1990s following the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) which necessitated incorporation of governance aspects within the sectoral policy objectives. In Kenya, food security is one of the issues that has attracted several policies since 1980s to counter the incessant droughts, hunger and malnutrition among other aspects of food insecurity. The number of people vulnerable to chronic food insecurity in Kenya ranged from 2.5 million in 1980s, 2.9 million in 1990s, to 10 million in 2010 (Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012). The most affected populations were the elderly, women, children as well as youth and teenage-led households who were vulnerable to the dynamic risk factors such as inter-ethnic conflicts, climate change, drought and diseases.

Amidst the food insecurity arising from different sources and circumstances the bureaucracy as the responsible arm of the government, spearheaded the provision of advice and choice of policy preferences in the form of policy papers and/or sessional papers to guide the process. The different policies formulated which were anchored in the Ministry of Agriculture were complemented by subsidiary policies and designated actors from other ministries and stakeholders in-

tended to provide interventions towards managing the food insecurity situations. By and large, the provisions under each policy did not break new grounds but incorporated add-ons into the preceding policy. The strategies for correcting errors from preceding policies remained limited, a factor that contributed to formulation of over 41 food and nutrition policies since 1981 (KIPPRA, 2021). However, the main food security policies followed major upheavals like the great famine and drought of 1980 in Africa; Structural Adjustment programmes in 1990s and a new constitutional dispensation in Kenya since 2010; hence, the sessional papers of No. 4 of 1981, No. 2 of 1994 and No. 1 of 2012 respectively. This made it difficult to establish whether or not the government of Kenya ever followed any particular approach in the formulation and implementation of its food security policies. By reviewing three food security policies namely, the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981, the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994 and the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012, the article has provided an explanation of the food security policy transitions in the context of incrementalism, irrespective of the policy outcomes. It has been argued that food security policymaking in Kenya has largely been incrementalist in approach.

2. Analytical Framework

The study was based on incrementalism theory to explain why “add-on” changes were included in the policy formulation for successive food security policies. The key proponent of the incrementalism model, Lindblom (1979) argued that decisions and policies are products of give and take exchange model among multiple participants in the policy process. According to Lindblom, it is easier to reach consensus or agreement among stakeholders when the policy issues require limited modifications, hence, decisions on public policy formulation involve making limited changes to the existing policies (Anyebe, 2018). The second assumption underlying incrementalism model is that decision making is characterized by consideration of policy alternatives that differ marginally from the status quo. The third, assumption is that policymakers are to a large extent preoccupied with problems to be alleviated than alternative policy goals to be pursued and therefore a cycle of trials and error (Premfors, 1981). As a result, the policymakers examine problems and make few changes on the existing policies. Given that policymakers operate under conditions of uncertainty about the future, the incremental decisions tend to account for minimal changes to the status quo to reduce the risks and costs associated with uncertainty (Anyebe, 2018). While some government policy actors remain dominant and act as anchors for the subsequent policies, their hierarchical and routine processes situate new decisions in past actions and programmes making them agents of incremental change.

Drawing from the conceptualizations of Lindblom and Anyebe, the article conceptualizes incrementalism to include both the linear minimalist approach (traditional incrementalism) and broad maximalist approach (partisan incrementalism). The minimalist approach assumes that the actors and definition of the policy remain the same. It involves phased implementation of the same policy under hi-

erarchically structured actors. The linear minimalist incrementalism approach involves small changes to existing policies over time. Policy decisions are often made on a trial-and-error basis, with adjustments made based on the results of earlier decisions. The maximalist incrementalism includes transformations within the broad policy including changes in policy initiatives, issues, scope, and actors without shifting away from the main objective. It is anchored on the principle of improving the principal policy through complementary additions in terms of actors, scope and issues. In the circumstances, policies were made through a pluralistic process of partisan mutual adjustment in which a multiplicity of participants focus on proposals differing only incrementally from the status quo (Hayes, 2022). The new proposal is supported by a wider range of actors, as it reduces the risk of major disruptions and allows for more manageable adjustments. The maximalist incrementalism therefore can involve changes in the manner in which additional policy initiatives, actors and scope may be added to a policy objective over time as and when needed without interfering with the original policy objective. This could take the form of supplementary policy positions, sessional papers, specific policy papers, and additional actors generally due to restructuring of responsible government departments which other than appearing to be different, are actually reinforcing the original policy.

In our context, the article argues that the three successive food policies in Kenya involved maximalist incrementalism to the extent that although actors, scope of the policies changed, the main objective of ensuring both access to food in the right proportion and quality to the population remained the same in all the sessional papers of 1981, 1994 and 2012. The parent ministry also remained same while actors and scope were expanded to include responsible units and staff from feeder departments with specific roles such as department of meteorology for weather forecasting and sectoral changes which implied emphasis on the existing policy by reorganizing the governance structure rather than overhauling the existing policies. By incorporating structural, climatical/environmental, economic and governance aspects, the policy design was intended to be and, indeed was, holistic, encompassing and integrative in its incrementalist approach.

3. Methodology

A comparative case analysis was conducted based on a desktop review of secondary data on the three food security policies to establish a trend. The three food security policies, namely, sessional papers No. 4 of 1981, No. 2. 1994 and No. 1 of 2012 were purposively selected because of unique characteristics that supported the analytical framework of the study. From 41 food and nutrition policies formulated by Kenya since 1981, the 3 policies stood out within the respective era, as each emerged after major episodes i.e. great famine in 1980; economic and political reforms of early 1990s and a new constitutional order of 2010 in Kenya. Whereas the famine of 1980 was a major forecasting event that prompted the government of Kenya to formulate a food policy in 1981 incorporating more actors especially those dealing with climate change, food production and distribution to

avoid recurrence of famine situation, the sessional paper of 1994 targeted more on addressing governance issues in distribution of food and accountability to the people, especially wastages and corruption. The food security policy of 2012 was intended to incorporate County governments' role in food security given that the Constitution of Kenya 2010 assigned agriculture and food production to the devolved governments. The policy was therefore, reinforcing the collaboration between County and National governments in addressing food insecurity in the country. The study identified narratives in the policies and organized them thematically to examine the elements of incrementalism in the policymaking process. The thematic analysis focused on examining; the number and nature of stakeholders involved in the policy initiatives, actors, and prevailing policy issues. The data obtained was tabulated under three key parameters for examining how policy alternatives that were considered in successive policies differed marginally from preceding policies or strategies. The impact of the respective policies, potentially arising from successive policies were analysed, with more emphasis on the material differences from the preceding policies. The analysis centred on the following two related research questions: How did the existing food security situation trigger the need for a new policy? What was the incrementalism/value addition to the preceding food policy? The research data analysis aimed at establishing how the number and type of stakeholders influenced formulation of subsequent food security policies. The study examined the differences and similarities in the policy initiatives, strategies, and objectives to ascertain the thread of incrementalism through the subsequent food security policies in the context of how incrementalism contributed to the formulation of subsequent policies. The data was presented in a tabular format to show how the changes in successive policies were formulated incrementally over the years.

The Case Studies

The following case studies selected for the study are briefly described successively: Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981 on National Food Policy, Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994 on National Food Policy and Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012 on National Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981 on National Food Policy (NFP)

The aim of the NFP of 1981 was to ensure that adequate and nutritionally balanced food was available in all parts of the country at all times. The policy noted that the demand for food in Kenya continued to expand due to growth in population which was projected to be increasing at the rate of 4% per annum. The policy highlighted two key problems affecting food security in the short-term as the need to boost production of food and in the long term as need to expand sustainable food production. Hence, the policy emphasised on the agricultural sector as a major actor in meeting the food requirements of the Kenyan population. The policy acknowledged that a section of the population remained malnourished as a result of income inequalities, problems of distribution between geographical zones, seasonal fluctuations in supply and lack of nutritional education among some groups. The policy was a guideline to decision making on all issues related

to food production and distribution to ensure policy decisions in other sectors of the economy align with changes in the domestic and international environment. The key policy objectives were to: increase food production in all areas in the country; emphasize drought resistant crops; establish food commodity monitoring & reporting system; improve monitoring & forecasting of weather condition; regulation of food exports to maintain domestic supply; promote importation of food to meet domestic needs during emergency situations; and to build strategic reserves of up to between 2 - 4 million bags (Republic of Kenya, 1981). In order to achieve the stated objectives, the government deployed the following strategies: expanding storage capacities; developing commercial grain milling plants capacities; providing farmers with reliable outlets; instituting famine relief programmes during temporary food shortages; establishing five Food Policy Committees to coordinate policies and programmes in main food supply areas; improving supply of seeds; improving supply of fertilizers and other farm inputs; providing fertilizer subsidy; improving credit facilities towards greater production; introducing crop insurance; providing extension services; offering short course training on storage methods; intensifying research on new technologies; intensifying marketing & distribution; establishing an information system for early warning; and establishing Food and Nutrition Planning Unit.

Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994 on National Food Policy (NFP)

The NFP of 1994 recognized that food policies in the Sessional Paper No.4 of 1981 were consolidated into Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1986 on Economic Management for Renewed Growth. The main objective of these policies was to improve food production and distribution. In the NFP of 1994, the government set food security as a priority and committed to allocating sufficient resources to its agricultural sector to ensure self-sufficiency in food production. In the strategies outlined to achieve food security, the policy in part 1.11 stated that “*there is a clear need for the country to continue with the major policies spelt out in Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981 on National Food Policy which sets guidelines for decision making on all major issues related to food production and distributions*” (Republic of Kenya, 1994). The key objectives of the NFP 1994 included: increasing food production; promoting drought resistant crops; developing irrigation and drainage potential; establishing National Food and Nutrition Secretariat to manage strategic reserves and early warning system and monitoring/reporting system; wider dissemination of information on weather trends; improvement of marketing, processing and distribution of food; adequate multi-commodity food reserves; liberalization of marketing including importation of food; and boost hard currency reserves for food importation. The government employed the following strategies to achieve the stated objectives: provision of incentives to farmers for improved agricultural production; improvement of storage methods; provision of food relief programmes; incentives for traders and dealers; and food-for-work programmes in rural areas to assist vulnerable groups.

The Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012 on National Food & Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP)

The objective of the policy was to increase the quantity and quality of food available and accessible to all Kenyans for a healthy diet. The policy noted that chronic and acute food insecurity and malnutrition are frequent leading to recurrent emergencies and demands for food relief. The policy positioned food as a basic human right and all Kenyans have a right at all times to access safe and sufficient quantity and quality of food to satisfy their nutritional needs. The policy highlights that out of the 38.5 million people about 10 million suffered from chronic food insecurity and poor nutrition while at least 4 million required emergency food assistance at any given time (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The policy recognized that eradicating hunger and improving nutrition is a collective obligation, hence, it provided a framework that facilitated public and private sector engagements on food security and nutrition policy initiatives.

The key objectives of the policy were to: achieve good nutrition for optimum health of citizens; increase quantity and quality of food available and accessible by all Kenyans; protect vulnerable population from acute food insecurity; improve nutritional value; early warning and emergency management. In order to achieve the objectives, the government set out the following strategies: diversification of food crops, promotion of sustainable food production systems; production of nutrient rich foods; support sustainable irrigation and water management systems; promote better storage methods; maintenance of strategic food reserves to cushion from shortages; development of infrastructure; improve forecasting of climate change; provision of agricultural inputs and finances; support private sector roles in agriculture; cash stock for emergency response; establishment of Multisectoral Food Security and Nutrition Secretariat; and support of special emergency management programmes.

4. Analysis

To analyse the extent to which incrementalism was manifested in the three policies, the paper analyses three key parameters: the policy initiatives, actors and policy issues to explain how the add-on process were infused into the subsequent food security policies in Kenya. The analysis focuses on the key thematic areas and provides a tabulated trend assessment to reveal areas where incrementalism impacted on policymaking and ultimately on policy implementation. The similarities and differences of the three policies are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1 shows that in Kenya, the food policy changes of 1981, 1994 and 2012 were incremental and involved different stakeholders in the successive food security policies hence, provided opportunities for each actor to add value to the policy formulation process. The incremental model was implemented by the government in formulating food security policies in the following ways: from the expected policy outcomes of eliminating nutritional deficiencies and broad self-sufficiency in wide range of foodstuffs in the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981. The government of Kenya expanded the scope in the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994 to include: broad self-sufficiency in the main foodstuffs, stable food supply, adequate food distribution, and increased access to adequate nutritional diet. The incre-

ment of the scope was further in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012 to include improved food accessibility and availability, strategic food reserves, adequate supply of food of acceptable quantity, effective food distribution systems, adequate storage and agro-processing, on-farm and off-farm employment, increased domestic production and access to safe and nutritious food. The expansion of the scope of the succeeding policies implied that new necessary roles were identified in the food production chain hence, addition of respective actors and stakeholders in the policy formulation process. The respective policymaking process involved different actors who possessed different information, guided by diverse values and pursuing various interests.

Table 1. Summary of key thematic areas in the Food Security Policymaking Process.

	Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981	Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994	Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012
Policy Initiatives	❖ Processing & marketing policy to ensure supply		
	❖ Pricing policy to set consumer prices	❖ Food pricing, marketing and distribution policy to protect farmers from price fluctuations	❖ Storage and agro-processing to reduce post-harvest losses
	❖ Agricultural inputs policy to ensure adequate inputs are available	❖ Agricultural inputs policy to ensure adequate and quality inputs	❖ Food trade regulation to imports do not displace local production
	❖ Fertilizer policy to provide subsidies and timely distribution of fertilizer	❖ Agricultural and livestock credit policy to decentralised finance systems	❖ Climate change information for early warning
	❖ Seed policy to ensure improved varieties	❖ Research and extension policy for more productive crop varieties	❖ Irrigation to reduce overdependence on rainfed agriculture
	❖ Research & extension policy to ensure breeding programmes	❖ Food trade policy to regulate importation of cereals	❖ Food safety and public health to ensure safety standards
	❖ Agricultural trade policy to ensure programmes to produce food for export	❖ Nutritional Policy for highly nutritious food	❖ Nutrition improvement
	❖ Nutritional policy to ensure nutritious food	❖ Resource Development policy to prevent sub-division of large farms	❖ National Data Information Systems to assess and monitor production
	❖ Employment policy to create jobs in the agricultural sector to dissuade rural urban migration	❖ Employment policy to create labour	❖ Establish National Drought Management Authority to ensure rapid response
	❖ Resource development policy to regulate land and water utilization	❖ Incentives to motivate farmers	
Prevailing policy issues		❖ Deteriorating terms of agricultural imports & exports	❖ Global food crises
	❖ Rapid expansion of population	❖ Declining production of basic food commodities	❖ Climate change
	❖ Shortage of arable land	❖ Growth in population	❖ High fertilizer prices
	❖ Irregular food supplies	❖ Problems of unequal food distribution	❖ Poor storage (aflatoxin)
	❖ Shortage of basic food commodities	❖ Seasonal fluctuations in food supply	❖ Declining yields
	❖ Storage and handling/post-harvest losses	❖ Shortage of arable land	❖ Storage capacity under utilized
	❖ Declining food production	❖ Lack of nutrition education among sections of the population	❖ Declining soil fertility
			❖ Increased food imports
		❖ Declining land size	
		❖ Lack of credit facilities for farmers	
		❖ Poor irrigation practises	

Continued

Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ministry of Agriculture; Finance; Health; Commerce; Economic Planning & Development; Information & Broadcasting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ministries of Agriculture; Finance; Health; Commerce; Economic Planning & Development; Information & Broadcasting; Livestock Development and Marketing and the Central Bureau of Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ministries of Agriculture; Finance; Health; Commerce; Economic Planning & Development; Information & Broadcasting; Livestock Development and Marketing and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics; Special programmes; Public Health and Sanitation; Fisheries Development; Ministry of Education; State for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands ❖ Departments were: Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, and Kenya Meteorological Department, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Department of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing
Increment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Research & extension policy to ensure breeding programmes ❖ Agricultural trade policy to ensure programmes to produce food for export ❖ Nutritional policy to ensure nutritious food ❖ Resource development policy to regulate land and water utilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Food pricing, marketing and distribution policy to protect farmers from price fluctuations ❖ Agricultural and livestock credit policy to decentralised finance systems ❖ Research and extension policy for more productive crop varieties ❖ Food trade policy to regulate importation of cereals ❖ Resource Development policy to prevent sub-division of large farms ❖ Incentives to motivate farmers ❖ Ministries of Livestock Development and Marketing and the Central Bureau of Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Storage and agro-processing to reduce post-harvest losses ❖ Climate change information for early warning ❖ Irrigation to reduce overdependence on rainfed agriculture ❖ Food safety and public health to ensure safety standards ❖ National Data Information Systems to assess and monitor production ❖ Establishment of National Drought Management Authority to ensure rapid response ❖ Ministries of Special programmes; Public Health and Sanitation; Fisheries Development; Education; State for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands; ❖ Departments of: Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, and Kenya Meteorological Department, Kenya Bureau of Standards; Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing

Source: Author's Compilation, 2025.

It is evident from the table that the most dominant actor in the food security sector was the Ministry of Agriculture whose role was to initiate the policy process, due to its coordination role. In addition to the five stakeholders from the Ministries of Agriculture, Finance, Health, Commerce, Economic Planning & Development, Information & Broadcasting involved in the formulation of Sessional paper no.1 of 1981, two more ministries of Livestock Development and Marketing and the Central Bureau of Statistics were added to the team formulating the Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1994. The need for a more encompassing team for the formulation of policy was emphasized even more in the composition of the Policy of 2012 which added more government ministries and departments including Ministries of: Special Programmes; Public Health and Sanitation; Fisheries Development; Ministry of Education; State for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands. The additional relevant departments were: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service, and Kenya Meteorological Department, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Department of Resource Surveys and Remote Sensing. This was, therefore, a clear indication that each actor added to the respective policy formulation team, was intended to fill in the void that was realized in the preceding policy. The subsequent actors to the respective teams were expected and did add value to the respective team through lessons learnt, so that the previous omission was not repeated.

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that the objective of the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2012 was to address food insecurity and malnutrition by building synergies between policy actors involved in the implementation of the national and sectoral strategies. The policy frameworks focused on enhancing food production, improving access to nutritional food and strengthening self-reliance. In addition to maintaining self-sufficiency, the sessional paper No 1 of 2012 targeted the distribution of food and nutritious diet to the population. By picking up from the sessional paper of 1994 on food security, the FNSP of 2012 focused more on food security through sustainability thereby, adding onto the existing policy, establishing strategic reserves and storage capacities. It emphasized value addition to the farm produce and increased domestic production.

It was also noteworthy that the maximalist incrementalism model in the food security policies was motivated by among other factors, the deliberate effort to respond to the prevailing policy issues at hand. Whereas, the 1981 food security policy was motivated by the domestic deficiencies, hence, need to increase production at the national level, the 1994 food policy was as a result of an effort to respond to the insecurities resulting from adverse climatic conditions, unequal food distribution and deteriorating terms of agricultural exports and imports. This still left room for dependence on food assistance and imports from other countries, a situation which got threatened by 2012. The new policy in 2012 therefore, responded to the rising global food crises hence, need for enhanced domestic production through support to the domestic farmer through agricultural credits and farm inputs, agricultural extension services and increased irrigation to avoid

overreliance on rain fed agriculture. These policies rarely contributed to food security despite the periodic reviews, the problem of food shortage that leads to hunger and starvation, remains a threat to human life every year in Kenya.

Based on the analysis, two key findings have emerged. First, the prevailing food security situation triggered the need for a review of the existing policy by not only looking at the mitigating factors but also bringing on board relevant stakeholders and actors that could facilitate the attainment of the objectives to ensure food security. Secondly, the succeeding policy was an improvement/value addition to the preceding food security policy. It not only increased the scope of the subsequent policy but also the number of actors responsible for the expanded scope so as to facilitate a more encompassing policy.

5. Discussion of Results

Formulation of food security policies is a function of a gradual but steady balance of the triggers based on the performance of the preceding policies and the negotiation capacity of various stakeholders. The prevailing food security situation triggered the need for a review of the existing policy by not only looking at the mitigating factors but also the potential value addition of the succeeding policy. A review of 41 policies in Kenya since 1981 by Kenya Institute of Public Policy and Research Analysis (KIPPRA) showed deliberate efforts by the government of Kenya to infuse value additions to the subsequent food and nutrition policies implemented (KIPPRA, 2021). The literature in successive policies attributed challenges of policy implementation to factors such as inadequate budgetary allocation, low application of modern technology, ineffective inter-sectoral linkages for development, limited access to credit, pre-and post-harvest losses, declining soil fertility, and inadequate marketing infrastructure. There have been differences in emphasis and sequencing in each case, with enhanced outcomes. The decision to implement a policy proposal rather than the diagnosis of the policy problem was the greatest challenge as bureaucracy hardly go for the radical changes due to fear of backlash from the population. The challenges are therefore responsible for the delay or inability of the respective governments to make appropriate decisions in time. The persistence of policy failures or success therefore get determined by the nature of the political system and its influence on decision making, governance capacity and the impact of its limitations on the chances for policy success, and levels of uncertainty in policy knowledge and practice by decision makers (Howlett, Ramesh, & Wu, 2015).

This paper builds on the arguments of the scholars who have acknowledged the contributions of incrementalism approach to public policy process. A series of small incremental steps wins moves towards the policy goal or away from the deplorable condition being addressed by the objectives demonstrated the successes of the policies under review (Daft & Weick, 1984). For instance, in the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981, the policy goal was to maintain self-sufficiency in the production of major foodstuffs and ensure equitable distribution of food of nutri-

tional value to all citizens. The strategy for achieving these objectives involved government interventions such as controlling grain prices and provision of fertilizer subsidies to farmers. The successes that have been noted involved small steps that led to overall incremental success of some elements of the policies. The success of the incrementalism depended on policy capacity of other stakeholders recognizing that a wide range of organizations, such as political parties, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private businesses, and international organizations, as well as multiple government agencies, involved in policy processes and thus, their capacities affect the government's own capacity to perform (Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett, 2015).

The three policies sampled revealed that the various policy initiatives adopted differed marginally from those of the previous regimes and also slightly from the preceding policies. These findings support Quinn's argument that the total pattern of incremental actions does not remain piecemeal in a well-managed organization arguing that in the hands of professional executives, the incrementalism model can be a powerful management technique for strategy formulation (Quinn, 1982). Policymakers must estimate accurately the consequences of all alternatives, although they almost never able to do this because of the question of what consequences will follow from various alternatives. Several factors including political, sectarian, economic and even social may hamper the decisions of the government in one way or another. Others include, adhering to different values driven by different individual or group interests (Pal, 2011) and politics and organizational life, and blame avoidance (Hood, 2010), hence, more convenient to implement the changes incrementally.

The policies implemented by government are intended to be an improvement/value addition to the preceding food security policy to be a political tool to confront the deficiencies in the preceding policies. The argument resonates well with the existing literature since there was no obvious correlation between new policies and the reduction of food insecurity.

It was rational to argue that familiar policy initiatives led to similar outcomes, hence, persisting problems. The findings indicated that policymaking involved adoption of familiar initiatives with very little additions. As a result, some of the preferred policy choices were similar to previous policies. The main reason had to do with the difficulty in securing agreement on objectives by focusing on concrete problems to be alleviated rather than on abstract ideals to be attained. Established policies acquire powerful supporters opposed to any significant changes in policy thereby, compelling policy-makers to prefer building up a reservoir of knowledge through experience with existing policies reviewed in a desired direction hence focus on incremental alternatives (Anyebe, 2018). Under the circumstances, the government decides to include "low lying fruits" and quick fixes at the expense of controversial or revolutionary options like complete overhaul of a previous policy. As Schimmelfenning (2024) observed that "failures" result from shocks that reveal a lack of capacity to maintain common policies. They typically generate a common

interest in policy maintenance, but also distributional conflict about the costs of preservation (Schimmelfennig, 2024). On the same note, some of the domestic factors influencing food security policy plans in Kenya included: liberal trade agreements, dependency on food aid programmes or cheap food imports, and climate change. Hence, a factor of economic shock and environmental replicated the situation in Nigeria whose policymaking process got subjected to economic and environmental shocks caused by drought, famine or change of market policies in the international system that produce undesirable food insecurity conditions (Sulaiman & Migiro 2014).

The state of food security in Kenya led to questioning why food insecurity persisted irrespective of the various policy goals and initiatives. The scenario resonated well with the unsuccessful attempt to implement the incremental housing policy in South Africa which was attributed to endorsement of unrealistic expectations that robust, durable, job-creating economic growth would ensue, and that reconciliation would be fully embraced by white business interests (Bond & Tait, 1997) to the extent that only the value added-ons could be picked. Again, this resonated well with Lindblom's argument that when policymakers choose one of several alternatives, the chosen trade-offs should be made among values with a decision on values preceding any decision on alternatives with unanticipated consequences merely generating new problems to be dealt with at a later date (Premfors, 1981). In the same breath, Howlett, Ramesh, & Wu (2015) attributed this to policy failures to the extent that the persistence of policy failures can be better understood by examining a wide range of factors both within and beyond a policy subsystem, especially the nature of the political system and its influence on the chances for policy success, and levels of uncertainty in policy knowledge and practice (Howlett, Ramesh, & Wu, 2015) thereby justifying the incrementalist approach.

Although the extent to which the policy actors were organized is beyond the scope of this study, the findings affirm that no single actor possesses comprehensive information on the food security problem in Kenya. Excluding key stakeholders could be limiting the flow of evidence and information derived through interaction between stakeholders and the decision-makers. No policymaker could accurately specify the varying value preferences of different individuals or assess the impact of policy proposals on different groups without some input from these groups. Any government action can fail due to malfeasance, fraud, criminal activity, ideological intentions, conspiracies and other kinds of self-defeating behaviour on the part of government officials and decision makers (Howlett, Ramesh, & Wu, 2015). The fact that sources of policy failures lie not only beyond idiosyncratic elements such as the background and composition of policy decision makers but also beyond technical considerations in policy design or implementation which are amendable to correction (Craft & Howlett, 2012).

6. Conclusion

The paper has concluded that maximalist incrementalism approach has been a

powerful management technique for strategy formulation, for adopting context responsive food security policymaking in Kenya. Incrementalism as an approach is most convenient for governments that wish to implement policies piecemeal either to remove what the previous policy wasn't successful on or add value to the succeeding policy being formulated. It is particularly important when the government, therefore, wishes to satisfy the citizens without upsetting segments of the population who were otherwise comfortable with the preceding policy. The success of implementation is dependent on the availability and effectiveness of information infrastructure, human and financial resource management systems, and political support at the disposal of the government, and how they, collectively or individually enhance or detract from the government's capabilities. Secondly, incrementalism presupposes the availability of individuals with analytical skills, machinery and processes for collecting and analysing data, and organizational commitment to evidence-based policy for more effectiveness. It wasn't within the scope of this study to establish how effective incrementalism approach was singly or in comparison to other policy alternatives in implementing policies and we wish to recommend further research on the same.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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