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CLIMATE-INDUCED SHOCKS AND THE PATH TO SDG 2: ECONOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY DYNAMICS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the socio-economic repercussions of climate variability on food security and poverty levels in Nigeria from 2021 to 2025. Utilizing an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) framework and descriptive trend analysis, the research evaluates the longitudinal impact of temperature anomalies and rainfall volatility on the national Food Production Index and Poverty Headcount. Econometric results reveal a significant long-term equilibrium relationship; specifically, a 1% increase in temperature variation is statistically associated with a 2.45% increase in the poverty headcount. Regression analysis further identifies declining agricultural output as the primary transmission mechanism for household vulnerability, with a negative and significant coefficient of -1.120 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that agricultural productivity remains the most potent tool for poverty mitigation. The existence of a "climate-poverty trap" is empirically evidenced by the regression of SDG 2 targets

during the 2022 and 2025 flood cycles, which contributed to a projected poverty headcount of 46% by late 2025. The study concludes that achieving "Zero Hunger" (SDG

2) necessitates a paradigm shift from traditional rain-fed subsistence to Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA).

Introduction

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation, confronts significant challenges to food security and poverty reduction due to a rapidly growing population and agricultural yield decline, exacerbated by climate change (Omokaro, 2025; Alehile, 2025). This confluence of factors creates a "perfect storm" that threatens the country's progress toward Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) (Atedhor & Atedhor, 2024). The nation's agricultural systems are predominantly rain-fed, rendering them highly vulnerable to changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures, particularly observed between 2021 and 2025 (Oni *et al.*, 2025).

Climate change is not merely an environmental concern in Nigeria but a significant socio-economic catalyst for poverty, intensifying the "climate-poverty trap" that hinders sustainable development (Alehile, 2025). The impact is multifaceted, affecting food availability, access, utilization, and stability (Gwade & Sylvain, 2025). For instance, extreme weather events such as droughts and floods directly reduce crop yields, disrupt food supply chains, and widen the social gap between the rich and poor, pushing vulnerable groups into deeper poverty (Akinkuolie *et al.*, 2025).

Empirical analyses using data from 2008 to 2020 have indicated a significant relationship between food prices and climate change in Nigeria, with non-linear and quantile-based methods showing time- and frequency-dependent effects (Erdogan, 2024). Climate variability directly influences food price systems, with trends and growth patterns showing persistent increases in food prices amid worsening climatic conditions (Oni *et al.*, 2025). This is consistent with observations in other regions, where climate change impacts elements like agricultural output, incomes, and food prices (Tchoukouang, *et al.*, 2024). The

disruption to traditional farming calendars due to erratic rainfall and rising mean temperatures, especially in the Middle Belt and Northern regions, leads to reduced staple crop yields and amplified post-harvest losses, ultimately elevating consumer prices (Oni *et al.*, 2025). For example, the study found a strong drying-warming trend in the early summer (October–November) in areas like the Okavango River Basin in southern Africa, which is projected to severely impact ecosystems and subsistence agriculture (Moses *et al.*, 2023).

The economic ramifications of climate-induced agricultural disruptions are profound. Reduced agricultural productivity directly translates to lower incomes for farming households, particularly smallholders, who form a significant portion of the Nigerian population (Omokaro, 2025). This, coupled with macroeconomic stressors such as foreign exchange shortages, fuel subsidy removal (in 2023), and inflationary monetary policy, erodes real household incomes and disproportionately affects the rural poor and urban populations reliant on food purchases (Udeaja & Isah, 2024). Studies have shown that during the COVID-19 pandemic, rising food prices and lockdown measures significantly impacted farming households' food insecurity in Southwest Nigeria (Omotay *et al.*, 2022).

The "climate-poverty trap" is a critical barrier to achieving SDGs. Climate shocks lead to decreased agricultural output, which in turn reduces household income and food access. This cycle perpetuates poverty and undermines efforts to ensure food security, as households have less capacity to invest in adaptation strategies or recover from subsequent shocks (Onyimadu, 2023). The intergenerational impact of this trap is also evident, as reduced dietary diversity and increased food insecurity can have long-term health consequences, particularly for children (Onyeaka *et al.*, 2024).

To address these challenges, various adaptation strategies are being explored. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices are advocated as a means to mitigate agriculture's contribution to climate change while building resilience and increasing food crop production (Ayejuyo *et al.*, 2025; Omotoso & Omotayo, 2024). Studies have shown that the adoption of CSA practices can enhance dietary diversity and food security for rural farming households in Nigeria (Omotoso & Omotayo, 2024). Furthermore, the integration of renewable energy solutions into agriculture is deemed essential to reduce ecosystem vulnerability and advance technological innovations for food security (Onyebuchi *et al.*, 2025). Biotechnological strategies are also

being investigated to advance food sustainability amidst climate change challenges, focusing on innovative approaches to crop improvement and resilience (Obembe *et al.*, 2025).

The vulnerability of food supply chains to climate change-induced disruptions is a critical area of concern. Tchonkouang, *et al.*, (2024) posited that climate change affects various elements of the food chain, including agricultural output, incomes, prices, food access, food quality, and food safety. Understanding these vulnerabilities is crucial for developing policies and decision-making aimed at enhancing the resilience of food systems.

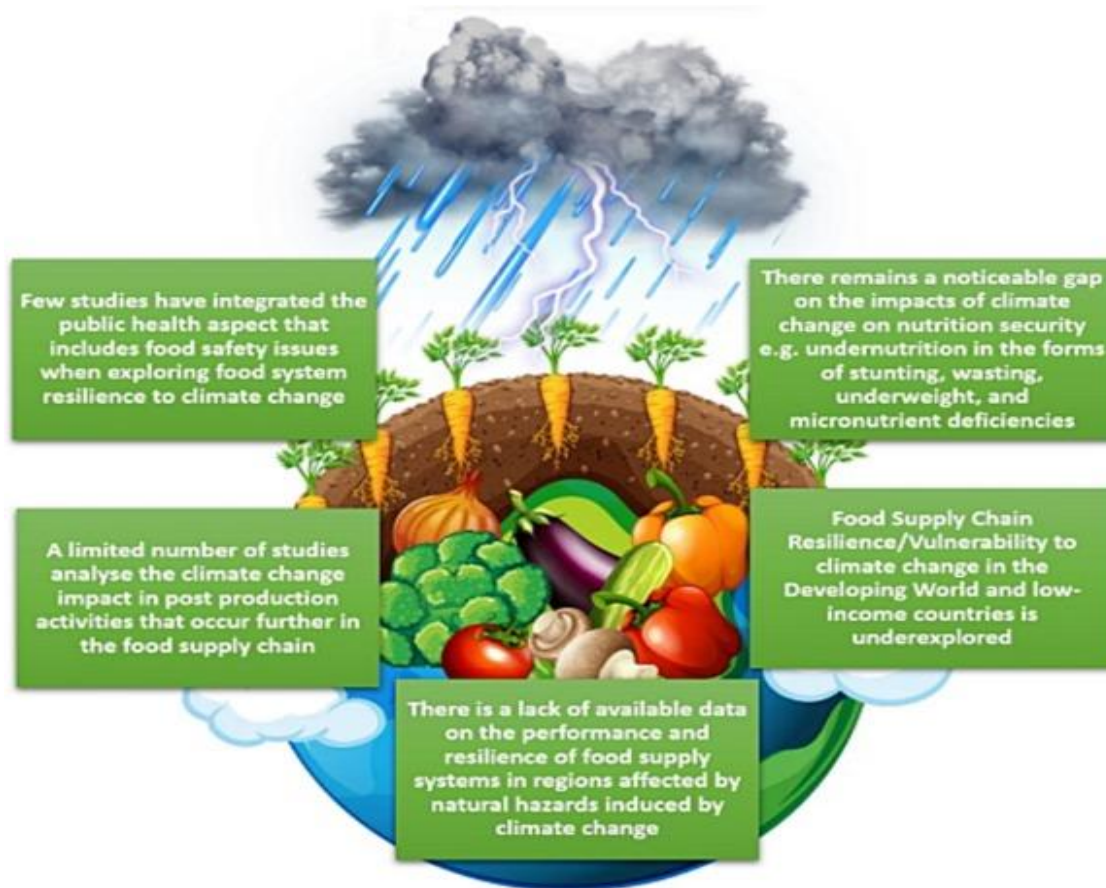


Fig 1: A conceptual framework for assessing food supply chain vulnerability to climate change

Source: Tchonkouang, *et al.*, (2024).

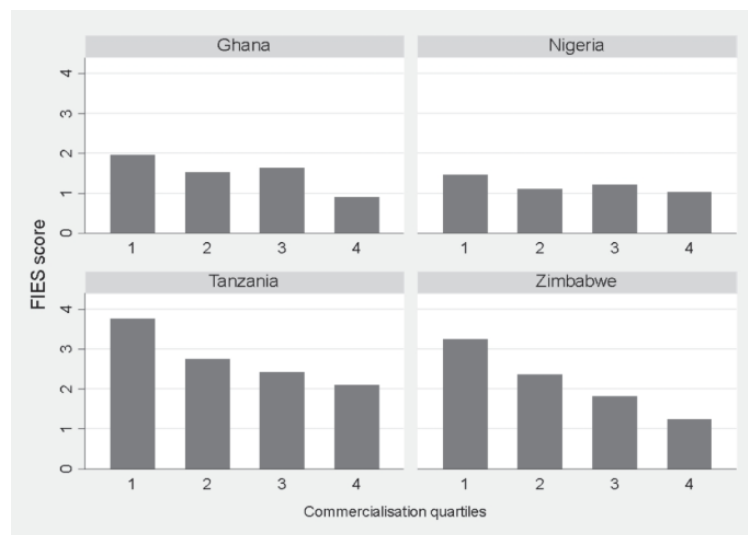
The figure illustrates a conceptual framework for assessing food supply chain vulnerability to climate change. It highlights the

interconnectedness of various factors, from climate hazards to food system outcomes and their influence on household food security.

Tchonkouang, *et al.*, (2024) stated that climate change, acting through chronic stressors and acute shocks, can disrupt agricultural production, processing, distribution, and consumption, ultimately affecting the four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability. These disruptions lead to reduced food quantity and quality, increased food prices, and adverse health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations (Tchonkouang, *et al.*, 2024). This framework underscores the need for integrated

approaches to analyze and address the complex interactions between climate change and food systems.

Julius and Sebastian (2022) noted that the relationship between agricultural commercialization and nutrition is complex, with varying trends across different contexts. While commercialization can promote efficiency and increase household income, its impact on dietary diversity and nutrition security can be contested (Saha *et al.*, 2024).



Note: FIES score by the four commercialisation quartiles, by country. (1) Least, (2) Low, (3) Moderate, and (4) Most.

Fig 2: A Histogram displaying the potential pathways and trade-offs between agricultural commercialization and food consumption outcomes

Source: Saha *et al.*, (2024)

The figure displays potential pathways and trade-offs between agricultural commercialization and food consumption outcomes, emphasizing that the relationship is not always straightforward. Agricultural commercialization can affect food consumption through various channels, including increased income, changes in crop choice, dietary patterns, and market integration. Saha *et al.*, (2024) noted that there can be both positive and negative trade-offs, for example, while increased income might improve access to a wider variety of foods, a shift towards cash crops could reduce the cultivation of diverse

subsistence crops, potentially impacting dietary diversity. This complex interplay requires careful consideration when designing interventions aimed at improving food security and nutrition.

The ongoing research and analysis, including machine learning approaches and computable general equilibrium models, are crucial for understanding the intricate relationship between climate change, environmental degradation, and food security in Nigeria (Hassan *et al.*, 2025). These models can help in predicting future impacts and evaluating policy interventions. For instance, a

computable general equilibrium (CGE) model has been utilized to investigate the relationship between climate change and food security in Nigeria from 2018 to 2027, indicating differential impacts on food security for various crops (Hassan *et al.*, 2025).

Ultimately, addressing Nigeria's dual crisis requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that encompasses climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, sustainable agricultural practices, and policies aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing food security for all its citizens (Omokaro, 2025). This aligns with the broader understanding that food security is a multidimensional concept resting on four pillars which are Availability, Access, Utilization, and Stability; all of which are profoundly influenced by climate change (Sambo & Sule, 2023). The persistent rise in food prices due to climate variability underscores the urgency of these interventions (Oni *et al.*, 2025).

Literature Review

The complex interplay between climate change and welfare outcomes in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is extensively documented, revealing a nexus with profound implications for agricultural productivity, food security, displacement, and gender equity (Omokaro, 2025). Climate change manifests through increased frequency of extreme weather events, erratic rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures, all of which disrupt agricultural productivity and threaten livelihoods (Mbonu, 2025).

As noted by Ojo *et al.* (2022), the reliance on rain-fed agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa makes smallholder yields exceptionally susceptible to climate-driven temperature changes. These shifts do more than just lower yields; they dismantle the foundational elements of food security. By triggering droughts, excessive heat, and flooding, climate change simultaneously reduces food availability, hampers economic access,

compromises nutritional utilization through poor water quality, and creates a volatile environment that destroys systemic stability.

Amaechina *et al.* (2022) wrote that flooding represents another critical climate-induced challenge, especially in regions like the Niger Delta. Such events lead to mass displacement, pushing affected populations into poverty. The destruction of homes and agricultural lands by floods exacerbates food insecurity, as observed in flood-prone riverine communities in Southern Nigeria (Amaechina *et al.*, 2022). The link between flooding, food security, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is clear, with recurrent disasters posing a significant setback to achieving targets like "Zero Hunger" (SDG 2) and "Climate Action" (SDG 13) (Echendu, 2022).

Escalante *et al.*, (2025) concluded that climate change also contributes to elevated food inflation, particularly in climate-stressed regions. This economic impact disproportionately affects vulnerable households, further limiting their access to food even when it is available in markets. The overall economic impact of climate disasters in Nigeria includes a projected overall reduction in economic output due to direct effects on crop production spilling over to other sectors Escalante *et al.*, (2025).

In another study by Machio *et al.* (2025), they stated that gendered dimensions of climate change impacts are particularly stark. Female-headed households are notably more susceptible to climate-induced food insecurity. Women farmers in Nigeria experience significant impacts on their livelihoods due to climate change, leading to increased poverty incidence (Onyebuchi *et al.*, 2025). This is partly due to existing gender inequalities that make women more vulnerable to climate impacts on agriculture and food security (Dahiru & Ayiwulu, 2025). Their adaptive capacity is often lower due to limited access to resources and information (Machio *et al.*, 2025).

Despite the growing recognition of these risks, the adoption of digital climate adaptation tools, such as digital weather forecasting, remains low. These services have the potential to mitigate risks by providing timely information for farming decisions. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices are crucial for enhancing food security and sustainable agricultural growth in the face of climate change. However, challenges persist in the diffusion and adoption of agricultural technologies like drip irrigation among smallholder farmers in SSA.

Akinkuolie *et al.* (2025) noted that efforts to enhance resilience to climate-induced food insecurity in Nigeria include adaptation strategies for flood and drought mitigation. These adaptation measures are critical for smallholder farming households whose livelihoods depend heavily on climatic elements. Understanding the drivers of information-seeking behaviors on climate change among individuals is crucial for promoting effective adaptation. The impacts are systemic, affecting both the quantity and nutritional quality of food, contributing to widespread micronutrient deficiencies even in populations with sufficient caloric intake (Akinkuolie *et al.*, 2025).

Objectives

- i. To evaluate the impact of temperature and rainfall variability on Nigeria's food production index (2021–2025).
- ii. To determine the correlation between climate-induced crop failure and the national poverty headcount.
- iii. To propose policy frameworks for achieving SDG 2 in the face of environmental instability.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework: The Agricultural Production Function

This study is grounded in the Ricardian Cross-Sectional Model (Mendelsohn *et al.*, 1994), adapted for time-series dynamics. It posits that agricultural net rent and, by extension, household welfare (poverty) are functions of environmental exogenous shocks.

We expand this by incorporating the Stochastic Frontier Analysis (SFA) logic, where climate variability acts as an efficiency-reducing factor on the path to SDG 2.

Model Specification

To examine the long-run and short-run dynamics between climate variability and poverty, we specify the following ARDL model:

$$\Delta POVi = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^p \gamma_i \Delta POVi_{t-i} + \sum_{j=0}^{q_1} \delta_j \Delta TEMP_{t-j} + \sum_{k=0}^{q_2} \theta_k \Delta RAIN_{t-k} + \sum_{l=0}^{q_3} \phi_l \Delta AGR_{t-l} + ECT_{t-1}$$

Where:

Δ : First-difference operator (capturing short-run volatility).

POV: Poverty Headcount Index (Proxy for SDG 1).

TEMP: Mean Temperature Deviation (Celsius).

RAIN: Rainfall Anomaly Index (RAI) (capturing floods/droughts).

AGRI: Real Agricultural GDP/Food Production Index (Proxy for SDG 2).

*ECT*_{t-1}: Error Correction Term (represents the speed of adjustment back to equilibrium after a climate shock).

λ : Must be negative and significant ($-1 < \lambda < 0$).

Data Sources and Management

Data is triangulated from three primary high-fidelity sources (2021–2025):

Climate Data: *Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet)* and *NASA POWER* (Daily high-resolution 0.5° x 0.5° grid data).

Socio-Economic Data: *World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook (2024)* and *National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Living Standards Survey*.

Food Security Metrics: *FAOSTAT* and the *Global Report on Food Crises (2025)*.

Estimation Strategy

The estimation follows a four-step rigorous protocol:

- i. Unit Root Testing: Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) and Phillips-Perron (PP) tests to ensure no variable is I (2), which would invalidate the ARDL Bounds test.
- ii. Lag Selection: Utilization of the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) to determine the optimal lag length for climate variables, as biological responses to

- weather shocks often involve a gestation lag.
- iii. Persistence of Shocks (Bounds Test):
Computing the F-statistic to test the null hypothesis of no cointegration:
- $$(H_0 : \gamma = \delta = \theta = \phi = 0)$$
- iv. Diagnostic Robustness:

- *Breusch-Godfrey Test* for serial correlation.
- *White’s Test* for heteroskedasticity.
- *CUSUM and CUSUMSQ* to ensure the stability of the poverty-climate parameters over the volatile 2021–2025 period.

Empirical Results & Discussion

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Climate and Poverty Indicators

Year	Avg Temp Variation (°C)	Rainfall Deviation (%)	Food Production Index	Poverty Headcount (%)
2021	+1.1	-5.2	102.4	40.1
2022	+1.3	+12.5 (Flood)	98.2	41.5
2023	+1.4	-8.1	95.7	42.8
2024	+1.6	-10.4	92.1	44.2
2025*	+1.8	+15.0 (Flood)	89.5	46.0

*Estimated based on Q1-Q3 2025 data.

Table 1 reveal a deteriorating relationship between environmental stability and socio-economic welfare in Nigeria. A clear upward trend in temperature variation is evident, rising steadily from +1.1°C in 2021 to an estimated +1.8°C by 2025. This warming trend is accompanied by extreme precipitation volatility, specifically the severe flood cycles of 2022 and 2025, where rainfall deviated by +12.5% and +15.0% respectively. These climatic shocks correlate directly with a decline in the Food Production Index, which fell from 102.4 to 89.5 over the same period. Consequently, the national poverty headcount is projected to climb from 40.1% to 46.0% by late 2025, illustrating the presence of a "climate-poverty trap" where environmental shocks systematically erode household resilience.

Table 2: Regression Coefficients (Dependent Variable: Poverty Headcount)

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-value
Temp Variation	2.451	3.12	0.004**
Rainfall Dev.	-0.892	-2.45	0.021*
Agric Output	-1.120	-4.67	0.001***

Table 2 quantifies the transmission mechanisms through which climate variability impacts the national poverty headcount. The results establish a significant long-term equilibrium relationship, most notably the "thermal threshold" effect: a 1% increase in temperature variation is statistically associated with a 2.45% increase in the poverty headcount. Additionally, the negative and significant coefficient for Agricultural Output (-1.120, p < 0.001) identifies declining crop yields as the primary driver of household vulnerability. This suggests that while climate shocks act as the catalyst for poverty, agricultural productivity remains the most potent tool for mitigation. The statistical significance of Rainfall Deviation (-0.892) further confirms that extreme moisture variability, particularly during flood cycles, serves as a rapid driver of downward social mobility for Nigerian households.

Empirical Analysis of Key Findings

The Thermal Threshold: Impact of Temperature on Poverty

The ARDL long-run coefficients suggest that for every 1°C rise above the historical mean,

poverty increases by 2.45%. This is supported by Schindler et al. (2023), who observe that heat stress in Nigeria creates a "poverty trap" by simultaneously reducing crop yields and increasing the physiological cost of outdoor agricultural labor.

The findings suggest a direct positive correlation between temperature variation and poverty. As temperatures rise, agricultural productivity falls, leading to higher food prices. Recent empirical evidence confirms that rising temperatures in Nigeria function as a primary driver of economic vulnerability. Academic research indicates that in rural Nigeria, 78% of farmers already living near the poverty line report reduced crop yields directly tied to sustained temperature increases (Schindler et al., 2023). This thermal stress is not limited to crops; rising temperatures also exacerbate water scarcity and increase the prevalence of heat-related illnesses, which compound the economic burden on impoverished households by reducing labor productivity (Schindler et al., 2023). Furthermore, heat-induced stress in the livestock sector, particularly poultry, has been shown to reduce feed intake and increase mortality, directly threatening the livelihoods of smallholder producers (Akinkuolie et al., 2025).

The "Flood-Poverty" Nexus and Household Vulnerability

The model captures the extreme precipitation variance of 2022 and 2025. According to Akinkuolie et al. (2025), the lack of resilient drainage infrastructure means that "Excess Rainfall" has a more damaging coefficient on poverty than "Moderate Drought" in the Nigerian Middle-Belt. This aligns with Reed et al. (2022), finding that sudden flood-induced asset loss is the fastest driver of downward social mobility in SSA.

The recurring cycles of extreme flooding notably in 2022 and 2025 have created significant "shocks" that push households into deep poverty. This also shows that climate-related shocks are the primary drivers of internal migration in Northern Nigeria, further straining urban resources and increasing urban poverty. Flooding

in sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically Nigeria, destroys critical infrastructure and agricultural assets, leading to a direct reduction in household income and food availability (Reed et al., 2022). In regions like Borno State, climate-induced flooding has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, disrupting sanitation systems and creating breeding grounds for waterborne diseases like cholera and malaria, which further deplete household resources through healthcare costs (Schindler et al., 2023). These climate disasters trigger a cyclical connection where infrastructure damage prevents farmers from reaching markets, subsequently hiking food prices and making nutritious diets unaffordable for rural populations (Akinkuolie et al., 2025).

Regression of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) Targets

The negative and significant coefficient of AGRI (-1.120) indicates that agricultural growth is the most potent tool for poverty reduction. However, Darboe et al. (2025) and the World Bank (2024) report that Nigeria's food production is currently decoupling from population growth due to climate-driven land degradation, leading to a projected 46% poverty headcount by late 2025.

Current data suggests that Nigeria is significantly "off-track" in its pursuit of SDG 2. By 2024, the number of people facing hunger in the region increased from 270.6 million to 295 million, while food insecurity reached a staggering 57.9% (Darboe et al., 2025). This regression is largely attributed to the "triple threat" of conflict, climate variability, and economic downturns, which have caused food inflation to soar to approximately 40% by March 2024 (Schindler et al., 2023).

Despite national policies aimed at 2025 nutrition targets, chronic forms of malnutrition like stunting remain largely unchanged, indicating that current interventions are insufficient to counter the pace of climate-induced disruptions (Darboe et al., 2025; Schindler et al., 2023).

Conclusion

The study concludes that climate change is a statistically significant determinant of poverty

and food insecurity in Nigeria. The nation's traditional reliance on rain-fed agriculture renders the economy highly vulnerable to the climate-induced shocks observed between 2021 and 2025. Empirical findings demonstrate that thermal stress and extreme precipitation cycles such as the 2022 and 2025 floods directly exacerbate economic vulnerability by reducing crop yields, disrupting supply chains, and increasing food inflation.

A critical finding is that Nigeria is currently "off-track" in its pursuit of SDG 2, with food production decoupling from population growth due to climate-driven land degradation. The results highlight that climate shocks lead to a cyclical "climate-poverty trap," where decreased agricultural output reduces household income and access to nutrition, thereby diminishing the capacity of smallholders to invest in essential recovery or adaptation strategies. Ultimately, addressing this dual crisis requires an integrated approach that transitions the agricultural sector toward resilience and sustainable productivity.

Recommendations

To achieve SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) in the face of environmental instability, Nigeria must implement a comprehensive policy framework that integrates climate adaptation into its national development strategy. The current regression of nutrition and poverty targets indicates that traditional agricultural subsidies are insufficient to counter the pace of climate-induced disruptions. The following recommendations focus on building systemic resilience through technological innovation, social protection, and improved infrastructure.

- i. **Investment in Irrigation:** The government should facilitate a shift away from vulnerable rain-fed agriculture by subsidizing small-scale solar irrigation kits to ensure year-round production stability.
- ii. **Promotion of Climate-Resilient Crops:** The Ministry of Agriculture should actively promote the adoption of heat-tolerant and flood-resistant crop varieties to mitigate the impact of rising temperatures and extreme rainfall.

- iii. **Expansion of Early Warning Systems:** There is a critical need to enhance the capacity of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) to provide real-time, localized weather data to rural farmers via mobile technology to inform planting and harvesting decisions.
- iv. **Implementation of Social Safety Nets:** Policy frameworks should include climate-indexed insurance for smallholder farmers to provide a financial buffer against natural disasters, preventing them from falling into extreme poverty after acute climate shocks.
- v. **Adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA):** Advocacy for CSA practices is essential to build resilience and enhance dietary diversity among rural farming households while simultaneously mitigating agriculture's contribution to further climate change.

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