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Assessment of the Performance of the National Special Food Security Programme in Benue State, Nigeria

S. Daudu* and A. R. Ajayi**

**Department of Agricultural Extension & Communication, University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria*
E-mail: shimayohol@yahoo.com
***Department of Agricultural Extension, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria*
Telephone: 08051105814, 08082356570; E-mail: adefioye2003@yahoo.com

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ABSTRACT The study assessed the performance of the National Special Food Security Programme (NSFSP) in Benue State, Nigeria. A total of 100 respondents were selected using simple random sampling technique. Data were analyzed by use of percentage and mean statistic. The result of the analysis indicated that there was high performance in the following components: farm intensification, water management, diversification, fisheries, and group management based on performance indices while input distribution, credit and cost recovery and agro-processing recorded low performance. The study also indicted that respondents expressed satisfaction in the implementation of farm intensification, input distribution, diversification, group management, and agro-processing. About four problems were identified as serious to the successful implementation of the NSFSP in Benue. These problems were language barrier in the south-south cooperation, untimely release of funds, lack of means of transportation and untimely supply of inputs. It was recommended that the NSFSP should focus more attention on input distribution, agro-processing, credit and cost recovery.. Also the implementation rating could be improved if increased attention is given to water management, fisheries, and credit and cash recovery implementation. Finally, amelioration of the serious problems identified could improve the low performance indices found in some components. The NSFSP management should: (i) ensure that the expatriates selected to participate in the programme in the South-south cooperation should have a good command of both written and spoken English Language, (ii) funds for the projects should be released in time to procure inputs since agricultural programmes are time-bound and, finally (iii) means of transport should be provided to facilitate improved performance of project implementers.

INTRODUCTION

Food security is said to exist when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Nyam 2005). Food security is the sum of the factors determining whether or not a man, his family, his village, his country and his geographical area are going to get enough to eat (Jazatry 1991). According to Wibberley (2005), food security at household, village, national and international levels require: availability of adequate quantity and quality of locally-grown agricultural produces; accessibility of supplies for urban and land-remote areas (food attainable and affordable); appreciation of the close link between nutrition and health for work and enjoyment; avoidance of undue risk through livelihood vulnerability, hazard and shock (appropriate reserves).

In Nigeria, two-thirds of the population live below poverty line and household food security is inadequate(source). Nigeria is gripped by both income and food poverty, and poor access to the means of supporting rural development being among the causative factors (FGN/WHO 2004). Consequently, in Nigeria, food security which goes with food self-sufficiency and sustainability is still elusive (Nworgu 2006). This is because the agricultural sector has not been able to deal effectively with the problem of food security for the Nigerian people when viewed from the stand points of the nutritional status of Nigerians, household food security and food prices (Vision 2010; Agriculture 1997).

The extent and nature of food insecurity and malnutrition has been confirmed by the UNICEF micro-nutrient survey and a recent Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) study on household food security in Kano State conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The study suggested an expansion of farm out put, secondary agro-based trade and processing as

the most attractive avenue for raising incomes and impressing livelihood and quality of live in rural areas where poverty is heavily concentrated (FGN, FAO 2001).

As a follow-up to the 1996 world Food Summit, Nigeria, one of the 82 Low-income food deficit countries (LIFDCS) requested for assistance under the FAO's National Special Food Security Programme (NSFSP). A tripartite participatory review of the government's request involving FAO, government and beneficiary communities was held in Nigeria in March 1998, an advance allocation was approved under Tripartite Communities Participation (TCP)/Nigeria/ (NIR)/88821 (A) to support the finalization of the formulation of the pilot phase of the NSFPS in Kano State, Nigeria. It was in this context that the Federal and State Governments with the technical support of the FAO became interested in extending the application of the programme for food security to all states in Nigeria. The main aim of the programme is to achieve rapid increase in productivity and food production on an economically and environmentally sustainable basis emphasizing the use of tested technologies, grassroots participation and south-south cooperation (Mero 2001).

In 2001, the NSFSP was extended to all the 36 states of the federation and Abuja, Federal Capital Territory. In Benue State, the National Special Food Security Programme (NSFSP) is being operated in each of the three agricultural zones (BNARDA 2005).

The major thrust of the project focused on innovative approaches for soil-conservation and fertility improvement and water use for crop production, crop intensification and diversification of farm activities supported by an analysis of the constraints to household food security as seen by participants (FGN and FAO 2001). The NSFSP commenced in Benue State in 2002 and is being operated at three sites. One in each of the three senatorial districts in Benue State.

The question now relates to the extent of performance of the programme since its inception. What is the level of performance of the NSFSP in Benue State after four years (2001-2005) of its existence? To provide an answer to this question, the study was designed to assess the level of performance/achievement of the NSFSP in the three agricultural/senatorial zones of Benue State.

The study was designed to assess the performance of the NSFSP in Benue State. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- determine the level of achievement of the predetermined objectives of the programme since its inception;
- determine the level of satisfaction of the operators and beneficiaries with the programme in Benue State; and
- determine the problems militating against effective performance of the programme in Benue State.

Literature Review

Typology of Agricultural Development Projects in Nigeria: In describing the Typology of Agricultural Programme and Projects in Nigeria, Ayoola (2001) succinctly summed up the aims and policy instrument of agricultural programme and projects as follows: The farm settlement scheme (1963) initiated by the old western region was aimed at solving unemployment problems among primary school leavers with policy instrument which included agricultural extension, cooperative societies and credit facilities. The National Accelerated Food Production Project (1972) aimed at enhancing farmers' efficiency in food crop production (mostly grains). The policy instrument included subsidy, credit, adaptive research and demonstration.

Operation Feed the Nation (1976) was a mass mobilization and mass awareness programme on food production. The River Basin Development Authority (1976) was aimed at tapping the potential of available water bodies through irrigation services, fishery development and control of flood, water pollution and erosion. Agricultural Development Project (1985) to enhance the technical and economic efficiency of small farmers and so enhance the living condition of the rural people through improved food production.

Green Revolution (1980): To accelerate the achievement of the agricultural sub-sector objectives.

The National Fadama 1 Development Project (1991). According to World Bank. FGN (2003) was funded with the view to build on some of the success of ADP in operating pump and wash bore based farming. It was aimed at addressing some of the factors that militate against the full realization of the potential benefit of agriculture production activities.

The National Fadama II Development Project (2004). The objective is to sustainably increase

the incomes of fadama user who depend directly or indirectly on fadama resources through empowering communities to the take change of their own development agenda and by reducing conflict between fadama users (Blench and Ingawa 2003).

The National Special Food Security Programme (2001): The aim is to offer a practical vehicle for piloting and eventually extending the application of innovative low cost approaches both technical and institutional to improving the productivity and sustainability of agricultural system with the ultimate objective of contributing to better livelihoods for poor farmers on sustainable basis (FGN/FAO 2001).

Problems of Agricultural Programmes and Projects in Nigeria

Persistent problems of agricultural programmes and projects in Nigeria can be classified into two categories, namely, dwindling commitment of programme sponsors and incessant perturbations in the institutional framework (Ayoola and Idachaba 1989; Ayoola 2001). The effect of poor funding is midstream abandonment of key components as well as poor implementation of others. On the other hand, perturbation at the policy level is manifested in changing perception of the role of government has pronounced effects on the continuity of the over all strategy. Secondly, at the organizational level perturbation arise mostly from frequent changes in leadership.

Amalu (1998) highlighted the problems of agricultural development project in Enugu State to buttress this point. The problems can be classified into four dimensions: (a) institutional development pathways vs framework (b) Externalities (c) internal management and (d) field implementation.

Generally the problems of the present institutional context for agricultural development arose as a result of the following: (i) duplication of responsibilities among extensionists with tiers of government, NGO and private sector, (ii) lack of accountability on the part of government agricultural development agencies to their clients, (iii) general lack of information sharing between different stake holders in the projects (iv) centralization of decision making, and (v) Irregularities and weak financial control and auditing (Conroy 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Benue State is within the middle belt region of Nigeria. It is located between Longitude 6º35'E and 10ºE and between Latitude 6º30 and 8º10'N. The state is made up of 23 Local Government Areas with a population of 4.2 million (2006 Census). The Tiv tribe predominates followed by Idoma and Etulo. More than 80% of the population are farmers. Two distinct seasons exist in the state, the Wet and Dry seasons. The state covers 33,955 square kilometres of land out of which only 23,000 square kilometres is available for arable and tree crop cultivation. Only a little over 600 hectares of land are available under Fadama for dry season agriculture in seasonally flooded areas of the sate (BNARDA 2005).

Study Population and Sampling Procedure: All the farm-families in the NSFSP's intervention sites (Makurdi – Mu/Agboughul; Katsina-ala-Udo-Mbasar/Ikowe and Otobi/Inachi communities) and BNARDA staff involved in the implementation of the NSFSP formed the population of the study.

A total of 80 respondents selected through purposive and simple random sampling techniques formed the over-all sample-size for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection: Data for the study were collected through the use of interview schedule (for heads of farm families) and questionnaire for NSPFS Staff.

Measurement of Variables.: Performance Index: Performance index, was determined by asking the respondent to indicate the target (the expected quantity) and the achieved (actual optimum quantity available at a given time) values in respect of each of the provided innovation. (Aja, 1981, quoted in Ajayi, 2000). The model is given as:

$$I_A = \frac{Q_A}{Q_o} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

Where:

I_A = Availability Index

Q_A = Quantity actually available

Q_O = Optimum quantity at a given critical period

When I_A is ≥ 0.5 or $\geq 50.0\%$ = effective performance

Satisfaction Level: The level of satisfaction of beneficiaries and operators of the programme was measured by asking the respondents to rate in qualitative terms, their level of satisfaction, using a four-point Likert type scale ranging from highly satisfied = 3; moderately satisfied = 2; a little bit satisfied = 1 and not satisfied at all = 0.

The mean satisfaction level was obtained by adding together 0+1+2+3 = 6 which was later divided by 4 to get a mean score of 1.5. The respondents' mean score was obtained on each item. Any mean (x) score ≥ 1.5 was regarded as satisfied, while any mean score less than 1.5 was regarded as not satisfied.

Problems Militating Against Effective Performance: The seriousness of each of the itemized problems was measured by asking respondents to indicate their perceived level of seriousness of each of the problems on a 3-point Likert type scale, ranging from very serious = 2; serious = 1 and Not serious = 0. These values were added to get a value of 3, which was later divided by 3 to get a mean score of 1.0. The respondents' mean score was obtained on each of the items. Any mean score ≥ 1.0 was regarded as being serious, while any mean (x) less than 1.0 was regarded as not serious.

Data Analysis Technique: Performance Index was analysed by use of percentage; Satisfaction level was analysed by use of mean statistic, and Problems militating against the successful implementation of the programme was analysed by use of mean statistic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSION

Performance of the National Special Food Security Programme in Benue State

The National Special Food Security Programme (NSFSP) in Benue State has eight components-farm intensification, input distribution, water management, diversification, fisheries, group management, credit and cost recovery, and agro-processing. Performance of the various sub-programmes under the various components was determined using performance indices. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that as at June 2006, the programme cultivated 284 Ha of cassava instead of 290 ha targeted with a performance index of 97.93%. A 100% performance index was realized in yam cultivation where of the 195 ha targeted 195 ha was achieved. Similarly 118.75% performance index was scored in Rice cultivation where 160 ha was the set target but 190 ha was cultivated. Also in the cultivation of rainfed Maize target of 82 ha was set but 70 ha was instead cultivated with a performance index of 85.36%. In the cultivation of leafy vegetables a target of 34 ha was set but only 10 ha was cultivated with a performance index of 29.41%. In the cultivation of Okro and pepper a target of 20 ha was set but the programme was able to cultivate only 5 ha with a performance index of 25.00%, while in the cultivation of irrigated maize the target set was 10 ha, while 5 ha was actually cultivated, resulting in 50.00% performance index. The implication of these findings is that the performance of the NSFSP was high in cassava, yam, rice and rainfed maize cultivation. This is probably because the crops are regarded as both food and commercial crops. while the performance of the programme in leafy vegetable, okro and pepper and irrigated maize was low. Attention must be given to leafy vegetables, okro, pepper and irrigated maize for improved performance of the programme.

Table 1 also indicates that the programme was able to supply 320 satchets of acid dressing agro-chemicals against the set target of 2700 satchets which showed a performance index of 11.85%. On the other hand a target of 1350 litres of insecticides was set to be supplied but only resulting in a performance index of 36.59%. In the case of fertilizer 900 Metric tonnes were earmarked to be supplied but only 385.5 Metric tonnes was actually supplied, giving a performance index of 42.83%. However, improved seeds recorded 100% performance index because 1200kgs were the set target and 1200kgs were actually supplied, while 2700 litres of Herbicides were the set target but only 803 litres were supplied showing a performance index of 27.74%. The implication of this finding is that only improved seeds recorded high performance in the input distribution components. More attention should be givens to those sub-projects that did not perform well especially fertilizer which is important considering the nutrient deficient nature of Benue State soils.

Table 1 further shows that there was 100.00% performance index in boreholes drilling because the target of 3 boreholes to be drilled was achieved. On the other hand, of the target of 12 water pumps set to be distributed, only 8 water pumps were actually distributed indicating a 66.67% performance index. This implies that the water management component recorded high performance. The performance of the water management component should be sustained.

Results in table 1 indicates that the performance index of 15.50% was achieved in Broilers distribution. The programme distributed

Table 1: Performance indices of the NSFSP farm intensification component as at June, 2006

Component indicator	*Target level (T)*	*Actual level (A)*	*Performance index (%)*
1. Farm Intensification			
Cassava(*Manihot esculenta*) (Ha)	290	284	97.93*
Yam(*Dioscorea rotundata*) (Ha)	195	195	100.00*
Rice (*Oriza sativa*) (Ha)	160	190	118.75*
Rainfed Maize(*Zea mays*) (Ha)	82	70	83.36*
Leafy Vegetable (Ha)	34	10	29.41
Okro(*Hibiscus esculentus*) and Pepper(*Piper nigrum*) (Ha)	20	5	25.00
Irrigated Maize (Ha)	10	5	50.00*
2. Input Distribution			
Seed dressing (satchets)	2700	320	11.85
Insecticides (Litres)	1350	494	36.59
Fertilizer (Metric tonnes)	900	385	42.83
3. Water Management			
Bore holes drilled	3	3	100.00*
Water Pumps	12	8	66.67*
4. Diversification			
Broilers	1600	760	15.50
Small ruminants	8	5	62.00*
Cattle fattening	2	0	0.00
Pigs	156	180	115.38*
5. Fisheries			
Fish pond maintained (No)	25	1	4.00
Fish ponds/dams/lake Stocked (No)	19	19	100.00*
6. Group Management			
Groups mobilized	6	6	100.00*
Groups formed	6	6	100.00*
Male groups Registered	3	3	100.00*
Female groups Registered	3	3	100.00*
7 Credit and Cost Recovery			
Amount of credit Granted (₦)	32,927,290.00	31,047,380.00	94.29*
Amount of credit due for Repayment (₦)	15,778,631.00	3,791,960.00	24.03
8 Agro-Processing			
Fish processing Charcoal Kilns Issued out	11	3	27.27
Cassava processing into Garri machines issued out	16	8	50.00*
Cereal flour milling Machines issued out	5	2	40.00
Rice Milling units issued Out	5	2	40.00

*High Performance Index.
Source: Field Survey, 2006.

only 760 out of 1600 targeted for distribution. In small ruminants, a target of 8 small ruminants was set but only 5 small ruminants were supplied with a performance index of 62.0%. Cattle fattening had a performance index of 0.00% because the set target of 2 cattle for fattening, none was supplied, whereas in the distribution of pigs the target set was 156 but 180 pigs were actually supplied with a performance index of 115.38%. This shows that the performance of small ruminants and pigs sub-component was high, while cattle fattening was low. Attention must be paid to cattle fattening to ensure optimum performance of the programme

Table 1 further indicates that 25 fish ponds were earmarked for maintenance but only 11 were actually maintained giving a performance index of 4.00%. While of the 19 fish ponds/dams/lakes earmarked for stocking all the 19 fish ponds/dams/lakes were actually stocked indicating a performance index of 100.00%. This means that fish ponds/dams/lakes stocking showed high performance while the performance of fish maintenance was low.

Table 1 also indicates that the programme planned to mobilize six groups and this was fully achieved with a performance index of 100.00%. Also, 6 groups were earmarked to be formed and all the six groups were actually formed giving a performance index of 100.00%. The report further indicated that the male groups planned to be registered were three and all the three male groups were registered resulting in a performance index of 100.00%. While of the three female groups earmarked for registration all the three groups were registered giving a performance index of 100.00%. The implication of these findings is that the programme recorded high performance in group mobilization, group formation and group registration by sex. According to Mero (2000), groups are effective in technological transfer which implies that technology will be transferred effectively due to effective group formation by the project.

Table 1 also shows that the amount earmarked for loan was ₦32,927,290.00 but ₦31,047,380.00 was actually received for disbursement to farmers which gave a performance index of 94.29%. In respect of the amount due for repayment the target was ₦15,778,630.00 but only ₦3,791,960.00 was actually repaid resulting in 24.03% performance index. This means the performance of the credit and cost recovery component was low in terms of loan repayment but high in terms of credit granted. According to World Bank (2002), the first National Fadama Project recorded an average of 71% loan recovery at the close of the project. More proactive measures need to be taken to ensure optimum loan recovery.

Table 1 shows that the programme planned to issue 11 fish processing charcoal kilns but was able to issue out only 3 fish processing charcoal kilns which translated to a performance index of 27.27%. Also 16 cassava processing into garri machines were to be issued out but only 8 were actually issued out giving a performance index of 50.00%. In respect of flour milling machines, 5 were targeted to be issued out but only two were actually issued out which indicated a performance index of 40.00%, while 5 rice milling machines were proposed to be issued out on loan to beneficiary groups but only 2 were actually issued out which gave a performance index of 40.00%. This signifies that of all the four assessed sub-programmes in the Agro-processing components, only cassava processing into garri machines scored high performance, while the rest had low performance indices. Emphasis must be given to sub-components that did not perform well.

Satisfaction Level of Respondents Involved in the Implementation of the NSPFS in Benue State

Data in Table 2 reveal that of the eight components implemented beneficiaries were satisfied with the implementation of all the components. These components were farm intensification (x =2.45) input distribution (x = 2.13, water management (x = 1.73), diversification (x = 2.38), fisheries (x = 2.38) group management (x = 2.26), credit and cost recovery (x = 1.68), and agro-processing (x = 1.98). This implies that beneficiaries and BNARDA staff were satisfied with the implementation of the programme.

Table 2: Mean satisfaction level scores of implementing the nine components of NSFSP in Benue State

S. No.	*Component*	*Mean ($\bar{X}$) score beneficiaries*	*Mean ($\bar{X}$) score BNARDA staff*
1	Farm intensification	2.45*	2.25*
2	Input distribution	2.13*	1.75*
3	Water management	1.73*	1.47
4	Diversification	2.83*	2.00*
5	Fisheries	1.87*	1.85*
6	Group management	2.26*	2.00*
7	Credit and cost recovery	1.68*	1.10
8	Agro-processing	1.98*	2.20*

*satisfied
Source: Field Survey, 2006.

On the other hand staff of BNARDA implementing the programme expressed satisfaction with the implementation of farm intensification ($\bar{x}$ = 2.25), input distribution ($\bar{x}$ = 1.75), diversification ($\bar{x}$ =2.00), fisheries ($\bar{x}$ = 85), group management (x = 2.00), and agro-processing ($\bar{x}$ = 2.20). BNARDA staff were however, not satisfied with the implementation of water management component ($\bar{x}$ = 1.47) and credit and cost secondary ($\bar{x}$ = 1.10). This implies that the implementation of water management and credit and cost recovery were not adequate. According to Ayoola (2001) project implementation has always been a bane to agricultural development in Nigeria. Furthermore credit recovery has been a recurrent deterrent in making a demand led agricultural policy implementation.

Problems Militating Against the Successful Implementation of NSFSP in Benue State

Table 3 indicates that of the 16 possible

problems to the implementation of the NSFSP listed in the study beneficiaries considered the following as serious problems to the implementation of the NSFSP. These were language barrier in the South-South cooperation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.48), untimely release of funds x =1.45), insufficient credit facilities ($\bar{x}$ = 1.06), lack of means of transportation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.61), political influence ($\bar{x}$ = 1.13), and untimely supply of inputs (1.05). The implication of these findings is that stakeholders in the NSFSP should note that the six mentioned problems should be solved to ensure effective implementation of this NSFSP.

The study also revealed in table 3 that staff of BNARDA implementing the NSFSP indicated that problems in the implementation of the programme were: language barrier in the south-south cooperation ($\bar{x}$ = 1.20), untimely release of funds ($\bar{x}$ = 1.65), and untimely supply of input ($\bar{x}$ = 1.30). This implies that for the programme to be successfully implemented language barrier in t he south-South cooperation, untimely release of funds and untimely supply of input must be mitigated. According to KIT (2005) in a study carried out in Kenya lack of adequate resources affect stakeholder interaction lead to information distortion. Consequently amelioration of these problem shall ensure effective implementation of the programme.

Table 3: Mean scores of problems militating against the successful implementation of NSFSP in Benue State

S. No.	*Component*	*Mean (X) score Beneficiaries*	*Mean (X) score BNARDA Staff*
1	Due process policy	0.84	0.75
2	Language barrier in the South-South Cooperation	1.48*	1.20*
3	Untimely release of funds	1.45*	1.65*
4	Lack of land	0.35	0.35
5	Inadequate funding	0.66	0.85
6	Insufficient credit facilities	1.06*	0.80
7	Lack of means of transportation	1.61*	0.74
8	Uncooperative attitudes of participants	0.66	0.75
9	Poor motivation of project staff	0.26	0.55
10	Political influence	1.13*	0.94
11	Uncooperative attitude of project Management	0.26	0.25
12	Hostility from project host communities	0.50	0.11
13	Illiteracy of participants	0.86	0.65
14	Communal conflicts	0.57	0.40
15	Untimely supply of inputs	1.05*	1.30*
16	Shortage of project staff	0.60	0.35

* Serious problem
Source: Field Survey, 2006

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the performance of the NSFSP was high in the following components; farm intensification, water management, diversification, fisheries, and group management based on the performance indices. While the following components: Input distribution, credit and cost recovery, agro-processing recorded low performance. Again, satisfaction was expressed in the implementation of the following components: farm intensification, input distribution, diversification, group management, and agro-processing while dissatisfaction was expressed on the implementation of water management, fisheries, and credit and cost recovery components.

Finally four problems were declared as serious to the successful implementation of the NSFSP in Benue State. These problems were language barrier in the south-south cooperation, untimely release of funds, lack of means of transportation and untimely supply of inputs. Generally, the overall performance of NSFSP in Benue State was high.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the major findings of the study. The NSFSP should focus more attention on input distribution, agro-processing and credit and cost recovery components. Secondly, in the credit and cost recovery component, special attention should be given to the cost recovery aspect of the component. On the other hand, to improve its implementation rating, water management, fisheries, credit and cost recovery component implementation should be reinvigorated to satisfy the stakeholders in the NSFSP in Benue State. It is probable that the low performance indices found in some components of NSFSP was due to serious problems identified in the study therefore, the NSFSP management should ensure that:

(i) the language barrier in the south-south cooperation is removed by ensuring that the expatriates selected to participate in the programme have a good command of both oral and

spoken English language; (ii) Fund for agricultural programmes are time-bound therefore, funds for the implementation of the NSFSP should be released in time; (iii) Concomitant with the problem of timely release of funds is the problem of untimely supply of agricultural inputs. Inputs for the implementation of agricultural programmes are also time bound. For the NSFSP to be effectively implemented, inputs should be provided in time; (iv) Finally, means of transport is expedient for successful implementation of agricultural programmes. It is therefore recommended that motor cycles for junior project staff and project vehicles for senior project staff be provided for haulage of personnel and materials for effective implementation of the NSFSP in Benue State.

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