



Ozi Ikòrò

AFRICAN HISTORY · CULTURE · INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

HISTORICAL STUDIES

Dr. M. I. Okpara:

The Architect of The Agricultural Revolution in Eastern Nigeria

By Chuka Odike

Ozikoro.com · Historical Studies · 3 min read

FEATURE
IMAGE

NO FEATURED IMAGE IN THE RECORD

The article carries no featured image, so this panel is left as an honest empty space rather than filled with one.

Ozi Ikòrò
DR. M. I. OKPARA

Dr. M. I. Okpara: The Architect of The Agricultural Revolution in Eastern Nigeria

By Chuka Odike · Historical Studies · Ozikoro.com



Dr. Michael Okpara at the Nõ 10 Downing Street, London, U.K.

Dr. Michael Iheonukara Okpara is often hailed as the architect of the agricultural revolution in Eastern Nigeria. As the Premier of Eastern Nigeria from 1959 to 1966, Dr. Okpara championed policies that significantly boosted agricultural production and modernized farming practices in the region.

His government focused on improving rural development by promoting large-scale farming and self-reliance in food production.

Key initiatives included the establishment of farm settlements, the expansion of cash crops like oil palm and rubber, and the development of agricultural cooperatives.

Under Okpara's leadership, Eastern Nigeria became one of the most agriculturally productive regions in West Africa. He believed that agriculture was the backbone of the economy and placed great emphasis on creating a system where both the government and the people could benefit from efficient farming practices. His policies left a lasting impact on the agricultural landscape and contributed to the region's economic growth prior to the Nigerian Civil War.

Dr. Michael Iheonukara Okpara is known today in his capacity as colonial leader of Eastern Nigeria, and he played an active role in the process of leading the transformation of agriculture between 1959 and 1966. While widely credited with the construction of the Eastern Nigeria agricultural revolution, Okpara directed a number of progressive policies that elevated agricultural productivity and changed it into a more progressive field, marking the region's golden age.

During Okpara's leadership, the government executed strategies focused on rural development and self-sufficiency in food production.

One of the strategic measures that formed his agenda was the creation of extensive farm settlements for youth especially young men and women in order to encourage the production of export crops such as oil palm and rubber. This extensive farm settlement scheme drew inspiration from successful agricultural models in countries like Israel and incorporated surveying lands suitable for cultivation and training local farmers in modern agricultural practices.

Among many accomplishments of Okpara in agricultural reforms, one could pinpoint the Igbariam Farm Settlement as the most important one. Originally conceived to address food shortage in the region, this pioneering settlement had transformed into a major center of agriculture that contributed to the growing of a number of crops and

employing more than a thousand settlers by 1965. Okpara observed the need to ensure that education and the community are involved in the process of these issues and came up with working solutions that most people embraced.

Okpara was so convinced that agriculture was the iron that held the economy of the country and this made him passionately work to ensure that there was a good structure on how the government and the people could benefit from farming activities. He not only supported the agricultural field but also provided a framework for the economic advancement in Eastern Nigeria and turned it into one of the most agricultural developing areas in West Africa during those times. This change had a lasting effect on the agricultural scene and it was a major boost to the economy of the region before the Nigerian civil war.

These Practical visions as well as the programs towards rural transformation by Dr.Okpara have been recognized as an exclusive model that defined the existing policies for agricultural change in postcolonial Africa. He is said to have ruled during this country's most productive time for he was able to meet the needs of the rural people while at the same time building on a culture of self-employment and innovation.

01

References:

- Korieh, Chima J. The Land Has Changed: History, Society and Gender in Colonial Eastern Nigeria. University of Calgary Press.
- Igodo, Christian. Lesson In Leadership And Service. Barnes & Noble.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odi

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explores ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



Ozi Ikòrò

History worth reading.

African history · culture · indigenous knowledge
