

Nigeria Must Shift from an Oil-Producing Nation to an Agricultural Nation

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Reflections from the Life and Legacy of Shadrack Madlion

For decades, Nigeria has carried the identity of an oil-producing nation. Oil has shaped public revenue, political calculations, export strategy, and national imagination. Yet the weakness of this model has also become painfully clear. Dependence on oil has left the economy exposed to price shocks, weakened productive sectors, and limited the country's ability to create broad-based prosperity. If Nigeria truly wants a stronger and more resilient future, it must make a deliberate shift from oil dependence to agricultural strength.

This is not merely an economic argument. It is a national survival argument. Agriculture has the power to generate employment, support food security, stabilize rural livelihoods, reduce poverty, and expand exports beyond crude oil. Unlike oil, whose benefits are concentrated and often politically distorted, agriculture has a wider social reach. It touches land, labor, transport, trade, processing, and local enterprise. A serious agricultural nation builds not only farms, but systems of value, productivity, and human dignity.

One figure whose life helps illustrate both the promise and the tragedy of Nigeria's agricultural struggle is Shadrack Madlion, a Kaduna-based commercial farmer associated with Safari 54 Farms and agricultural advocacy in northern Nigeria. Public reporting confirms that Madlion and members of his family were abducted along the Abuja–Kaduna road after their vehicle was attacked, and that ransom was demanded before they were released. There are also references that connect him to major agricultural advocacy in northern Nigeria and to a large farm summit in Kaduna, though the strongest public records are clearer on the kidnapping episode than on every later detail of the summit narrative.

Madlion's public contribution, however, went beyond private farming. Over several years, he granted interviews to Channels Television and other media outlets in which he spoke as a practical agricultural advocate on food security, agricultural finance, insecurity, ranching, and the need to move policy discussion closer to the realities of the farm. In one Channels Television interview, he argued that agriculture should be discussed in farms rather than only

in Abuja conference circles, a point that reflected his insistence that policy must connect with producers on the ground.

These media interventions were a real contribution to agricultural knowledge in Nigeria. He helped translate farming problems into public policy language that ordinary citizens, officials, and investors could understand. Through his interviews, he drew attention to the weakness of agricultural credit systems, the effect of insecurity on food supply, the case for ranching as a more sustainable livestock approach, and the importance of practical support for producers. In this sense, his role was not only that of a farmer, but also that of a public agricultural educator.

“A nation that cannot feed her citizens is not fit to be called a nation.”

A favorite quote associated with Shadrack Madlion

His contribution also touched market innovation. Daily Trust reported that he created a “Farm to Table” e-commerce platform intended to link farmers to markets, addressing one of the most persistent weaknesses in Nigerian agriculture: the gap between production and commercial access. That initiative reflected a broader understanding of agriculture as a full value chain involving production, distribution, and market connection, not merely cultivation alone.

The deeper value of Madlion’s story lies in what it reveals about Nigeria’s agricultural contradiction. On one hand, the country repeatedly says agriculture is the future. On the other hand, farmers often work in fear, transport routes remain dangerous, rural infrastructure is weak, and agricultural investors are exposed to kidnapping, violence, and policy inconsistency. When a prominent farmer can be attacked and abducted on a major corridor, it sends a message far beyond one individual. It tells investors that food production is risky, that rural enterprise is vulnerable, and that the state has not yet created the level of security needed for agriculture to truly thrive.

This is one of the strongest reasons Nigeria must rethink its priorities. Oil wealth may bring revenue, but agriculture builds nations from the ground up. It feeds people. It employs youth. It activates land. It supports industry through raw materials. It strengthens local economies and can reduce the dangerous overconcentration of wealth in urban and extractive sectors. In a country with vast arable land, varied ecological zones, and a large youthful population, the continued underdevelopment of agriculture is not a lack of potential. It is a failure of policy seriousness. The shift from oil to agriculture, however, cannot be rhetorical. It requires structure.

First, security must become central to agricultural policy. A nation cannot claim to prioritize farming while farmers are kidnapped, rural roads are unsafe, and investors fear movement

between farm and market. The fate of agricultural development is tied directly to the safety of producers. Madlioni was also publicly associated with warnings that kidnapping and insecurity were threatening farmers and food security, and that warning remains relevant.

Second, agriculture must be treated as enterprise, not sentiment. Nigeria often speaks about farming in heroic or nostalgic language, but successful agricultural transformation requires finance, logistics, irrigation, storage, mechanization, extension support, processing, and market access. It also requires political continuity. Agriculture cannot be developed as a short-term slogan attached to each administration. It needs long-term systems that outlive politics.

Third, the country must elevate agricultural role models and institutions. When farmers, agribusiness builders, and agricultural innovators are treated as national development actors rather than marginal private strugglers, the public mindset changes. Part of what makes the Madlioni case compelling is that it symbolizes a type of Nigerian entrepreneur who tried to build production in a difficult climate. Whether in Kaduna or elsewhere, such figures represent the productive class Nigeria should be protecting and multiplying.

Fourth, the government must create a real bridge between agriculture and youth opportunity. Too many young Nigerians see agriculture as backward because public systems have failed to present it as modern, profitable, and dignified. Yet the future of agriculture is not only in hoes and cutlasses. It is in data, storage, genetics, climate adaptation, logistics, agro-processing, and export systems. If Nigeria is serious about reducing unemployment and diversifying the economy, agriculture must be repositioned as a modern frontier of national growth.

There is also a moral dimension to this debate. Oil has often encouraged a rent-seeking culture in which value comes from control over resources rather than from broad production. Agriculture teaches a different national ethic. It ties prosperity to work, patience, cultivation, and renewal. A country that re-centers agriculture is not just changing sectors; it is changing its development philosophy.

In this light, the life and struggles associated with Shadrack Madlioni become more than a personal story. They reflect the fragility of agricultural enterprise in Nigeria and the urgency of building a safer, more serious farming economy. His case reminds us that agricultural transformation is not only about summits, speeches, or declarations. It is about whether the people who feed the nation can work, travel, invest, and live without fear. Nigeria does not need to abandon oil overnight. But it must stop behaving as though oil alone can secure the future. The wiser path is a national transition in which agriculture becomes a true pillar of economic identity. That means policy alignment, security reform, rural investment,

value-chain development, and consistent support for real producers. Until that happens, the dream of diversification will remain incomplete.

In conclusion, Nigeria must shift from being known mainly as an oil-producing nation to becoming a genuinely productive agricultural nation. The case of Shadrack Madlioni, as far as the public record clearly shows, highlights both the potential and the vulnerability of agricultural enterprise in the country. His story is a reminder that agriculture in Nigeria is not failing because the land is poor or the people are unwilling. It is failing where the nation has not yet built the security, infrastructure, and seriousness required for farmers to flourish. If Nigeria truly wants a stronger future, agriculture must move from the margins of rhetoric to the center of national development.

References

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