

Agriculture

Oxfam wants robust budget allotment to agriculture

By Mohammed Kandi

As the need to achieving food security around the world intensifies, the Oxfam International, an international Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) has tasked

the Federal Government to increase its budgetary allocation to agriculture.

In a statement issued recently by the Oxfam Nigeria's Campaigns Manager, Miss Tomi Ademokun, it stated that

the country had not met the conditions contained in the July 2003 Maputo Declaration, which states that at least 10 per cent of national budget be allotted for agriculture.

It stressed further that the

President of Nigeria and eighteen other Africa Heads of States and Governments had endorsed the declaration at the African Union (AU) Summit.

The statement said as part of the crux of the declaration was

that by year 2008, all members who are party to the agreement should allocate and implement increased spending on agriculture by 10 per cent of their annual budgets.

It said: "A current analysis of the 2012 Nigeria's federal budgetary allocation to agriculture shows an abysmal less than two per cent of total allocation to the critical sector."

According to the statement, while Nigeria recently joined the G-8 New Alliance on Food Security and Nutrition, the federal government should increase public investments as promised in the Maputo declaration.

It said that Nigeria should increase the quality of investments for smallholder farmers especially women as the declaration attains 10 years in July.

The statement also added that as the world marks this year's World Population Day on July 11, the 10 per cent budgetary allocation should be ensured for Nigeria to attain food security.

...Advocates more youth involvement in agriculture

Oxfam Nigeria and Fresh Brains Development Initiative (FBIN), both NGOs have campaigned for more involvement of youths in agriculture as part of its programmes marking the 2013 World Population Day and the 10th anniversary of the Maputo Declaration.

The NGOs, according to Dr. Chichi Okoye, Oxfam Country Director, observed that young people had a key role to play in feeding the continent.

He noted that "Everywhere in

the world, it is young people who build their nations; it is young people who set the pace. People are usually very concerned about their young people."

"But when the young people of a society decide that it is time for us to march the nation forward, things begin to happen," Okoye said adding that the youths should strive towards making the difference by working hard to eradicate poverty from Africa.

The country Director also said that farming had become more mechanised, thereby making it easier for the youths to

participate.

Earlier in her remarks, Miss Nkiruka Nnaemago, Founder of FBIN, explained that agriculture provided more than 88 per cent of the country's non-oil export.

Nnaemago, however, said less than 50 per cent of the country's arable land was under-cultivated, adding that there was the need for government at all levels to work together to achieve food security.

Also speaking, Dr Lapidini Marc-Atouga, ECOWAS Commissioner for Water, Environment and Agriculture, urged governments to urgently

address the issue of rural-urban migration.

Marc-Atouga, who was represented by Mr Komian Bossou, Regional Programme Manager at the commission, said there would be more rural-urban migration by 2020.

"This is a big challenge to Africa, so ECOWAS and NEPAD have jointly developed a comprehensive agricultural policy."

"The content of that policy is that everybody should have access to affordable food," Marc-Atouga said.

Association urges large cultivation of potatoes

By Mohammed Kandi

Potato Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN) recently distributed among the farmers in Kuje Area Council, in Abuja, Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) vines worth thousands of naira.

The gesture, which was sponsored by the Hellen Keller International, as part of its sensitization campaign urging Nigerian farmers to cultivate more of OFSP with vitamin (A) content that is good for school children and productive men and women.

National President of POGPMAN, Hon. Bayo Ajibade, said that the sensitization exercise and the vines distribution would be carried at all designated states of the federation to "ignite the multiplication of this particular potato species of potatoes".

Ajibade also informed that his association was ready to support the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) of the Federal Government towards ensuring food security through mass production of OFSP that is very rich in vitamin A.

He said: "OFSP is special orange fleshed sweet potato with content of vitamin A that gives children healthy living together with men and women who are still very productive in child bearing."

"It helps in curing night blindness and a good nutrient supplement for school children. More cultivation of it will generate surplus for women to sell thereby creating wealth," he added.

"This sensitization here in Kuje will be replicated in Mararaba orange market



Officials of the Potato Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN), distributing vine made from the orange fleshed sweet potato to farmers, recently in Kuje Area Council, Abuja.

tomorrow as well as other designated states of the Federation for awareness creation," Ajibade explained.

Also speaking, the Hellen Keller International promotions expert, Mrs Mary Umoh, said the availability of the vine for planting would never be a problem as "there is partnership with Nigerian Research Institute for its surplus production towards increased multiplication for farmers in Nigeria and other sub African countries."

Hellen Keller International is however one of the world's premier international not-for-profit organizations dedicated to preventing blindness and reducing malnutrition.

Premier Seeds boss lauds GES

By Mohammed Kandi

The outgoing Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Premier Seeds Nigeria Limited, Dr. Olaseinde Omodiji, has hailed the Growth Enhancement Support (GES) for its stimulation support to the seed production.

Omodiji, who said the programme has positively affected his company, noted that the initiative of the Agriculture and Rural Development ministry led by Dr. Akinwumi Adesina had brought about "positive revolution" to the seeds sector

through which the commercial banks are now lending to companies operating in seeds production unlike what it used to be in the past."

According to him "the GES of the Federal Government is doing wonderfully well in supporting stakeholders in the production of certified seeds. The support has really manifested in our production and marketing in the recent. We pray for consistency of the programme."

He added that more friendly policy in the sub-sector could make Nigeria dominate the seed sector market in West Africa, stressing that the country "has

what it takes to dominate the market with more of support given to research work on breeding and foundational seeds."

Omodiji also emphasized the need to put in place a very stiff measure on seed adulteration saying it is economic saboteurs that should attract stiffer penalty, adding "standard must be ensured for certify seeds to checkmate quacks in the system."

He however advised that all the staff of the company must support the new Managing Director, who also is a seasoned Professor in the certified seed production thereby thanking "the workers for the cooperative support to take the company where it is today."

AGRO-BUSINESS

Cooperatives can enhance productivity, says Commissioner

AGRICULTURAL cooperatives are essential for boosting productivity and improving living conditions in rural areas, Lagos State Commissioner for Agriculture and Cooperatives, Prince Gbolahan Lawal, has said.

Speaking with *The Nation*, Lawal said by forming cooperatives, agricultural workers would be able to support themselves and establish co-financing mechanisms and social safety nets to protect their families.

He said cooperatives could enhance food security, create jobs, and contribute to improving social integration.

The government, he said, use cooperatives to develop projects among farmers, purchase agricultural equipment and vehicles to transport produce to buyers, as well as to provide training in new technologies.

With the help of cooperatives, he said farmers have been able to manage their activities.

Through the formation of cooperative groups, he said farmers have purchased raw materials in bulk, that

are less expensive for them.

By belonging to cooperative groups, he said farmers are better placed to satisfy bankers' requirements in terms of guarantees and loan repayment capacities than as private individuals.

Consequently, this helps farmers obtain loans easily to finance their investments and protect themselves against risks.

Earlier, while delivering a speech to mark the International Cooperative Day, Lawal, said the development of agricultural cooperatives is a priority by the Lagos state.

This is because the strategy has assisted the government to develop the rural areas and combat poverty and insecurity.

To this end, he said the government was determined to create an enabling environment in which agricultural cooperatives will thrive and has drafted policies, laws, and programmes that take into account the needs and concerns of farmers.

To build the skills of cooperators, he said the government established



•From left: Ayeola, Lawal, Representative of the Lagos State Deputy Governor Hon. Onotayo Aramide and Basorun at the Dinner/Award Night in commemoration of the International Day of Cooperatives in Lagos.

the Lagos State Cooperative College to tackle identified managerial and logistic challenges within the cooperative movement.

So far, he said 704 cooperators have been trained in various aspects of cooperative management.

He said there was a great potential for these cooperatives to create jobs, reduce migration of people from the rural areas.

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Dr Yakub Basorun, said cooperatives

are viable business models that are worth investing in.

He said they have played a key role in strengthening the capacities of farmers in Lagos.

According to him, Lagos State Cooperative Federation (LASCOFED) has provided an opportunity for cooperatives to build their presence in all socio-economic spheres.

The President, Lagos State Cooperative Federation (LASCOFED), Mr Oriyomi Ayeola, said the success story of cooperatives was built

on the fact that savings and credit cooperatives make funds available to individuals and small businesses to create businesses and employment.

Since the last cooperative day, he said LASCOFED has started a farm project at Mojoda Epe.

He urged cooperators to continue to manage their associations prudently to ensure the existence.

Ayeola said cooperatives have made a greater role to play in combating poverty and hunger.

How to grow marine fishery, by expert

THE non-availability of reliable eco-aquatic map is affecting the planned development of marine fisheries, an expert, Prof Martins, Antekhai has said.

Eco-aquatic map is a geographically location of national fresh waters, fisheries resources and marine distribution of habitats and species for commercial and amenity functions.

Antekhai, of the Department of Fisheries, Lagos State University (LASU), said a national eco-aquatic

Stories by Daniel Essie

map was needed to update fisheries resource data through surveys and stock assessments.

He said the map would provide critical information to users in government and the private sector with a comprehensive inventory of fish habitats in freshwater streams and estuaries.

The map, he explained, should consist of information on wetlands, streams, and riparian areas and should provide accurate and de-

tailed information for management, planning, and research of aquatic resources.

Advocating for a geo aquatic mapping of fish and fish habitat, the fisheries expert said the nation possesses suitable and abundant water and land resources for the development of a viable inland fishing and aquaculture industry.

Antekhai said opportunities also exist for brackish water aquaculture.

He said such information should be accessed through the web.

He said there are issues

constraining the development of the sector, which needs to be addressed in a long-term development plan.

The strategy that would increase fish production, he noted, required exploring underexploited and unexploited species.

According to him, the nation's aquatic biodiversity ranks high, due in part to many river systems, diverse geology, and subtropical/temperate climate.

Examining and monitoring this diversity, he emphasised, offers

the opportunity to assess important factors that affect the quality of water resources. The map, he added, would be valuable for evaluating stream water quality and providing biological justification to water quality management decisions.

He said experts would support the project by providing research information through intensive field work that can be used to monitor and manage the nation's water resources more efficiently.

ORANGE Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFSP) vines have been distributed to farmers at Kuje and Mararaba markets in Abuja by the Potato Growers, Processors and Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN).

This gesture, which is part of the campaign to sensitise farmers for more cultivation of OFSP, with vitamin (A) content that is good for school children and productive men and women.

The National President, POGPMAN, Hon. Bayo Ajibade, said the sensitisation and the vines distribution would be done at designated states.

This, according to him, is to aid the adoption of the potato species.

He reiterated the readiness of his association to support the Agricultural Transformation Agenda of the Federal Government by ensuring food security through mass cultivation of OFSP, known to be rich in vitamin A.

According to him, OFSP is a special orange fleshed sweetpotato with vitamin A fortification, which help children to grow healthy and enhance productivity for women within the child bearing age. It helps to cure night blindness and is a good nutrient supplement for school children.

More cultivation of it, he noted, would create income opportunities for women.

Also speaking, the Hellen

Farmers get free potato vines



•Farmers queuing to get free vitamin A fleshed potato vines

Keller International promotions expert, Mrs Mary Umoh, said the availability of the vine for planting would never be a problem as there was a

partnership with some research institute, towards increasing production of the vines for farmers in Nigeria and other sub African countries.

Many beneficiaries commended POGPMAN, promising to join in the campaign to increase the use of OFSP.

VC seeks synergy with WAAPP

THE Vice Chancellor (VC), Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Prof. Olusola Oyewole, has called for improved synergy among the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) and Federal University of Agriculture, as a definite way of generating effective and sustainable outcome for agricultural programmes in the country.

The Vice Chancellor made the call in a welcome remark he delivered at a four-day follow-up meeting of WAAPP activities with selected universities in Abeokuta.

He said such cooperation would serve as catalyst, propelling their common resolve, interest and decision to collaborate with WAAPP-Nigeria.

Oyewole noted that the WAAPP, as a World Bank assisted programme for countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a broad objective of increasing agricultural productivity and promoting regional integration.

He added that the consultative meetings being organised by the WAAPP-Nigeria presented an opportunity to identify ways of collaborating in furthering the development of the nation's agriculture.

The Vice Chancellor disclosed that reports reaching his institution concerning the last consultative meeting in Wukari gave him the impetus to want to associate the more with WAAPP-Nigeria.

FOOD - FARM NEWS

EDITORIAL

Need for more ATA encouragement

The recently conferred award on Nigeria among other countries of the world for putting in place a right agricultural policy that is already checkmating hunger with private sector participation is worthy of commendation.

Receiving the award on behalf of the government, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Adegunmi Adesina said the paradigm shift to taking farming as business has been of tremendous help with private sector committing eighty billion naira into the sector.

To our mind, what this award reflects is a well direct policy focus to specific target areas in the agricultural sector that is already getting positive

response to food security matters. The present administration has indeed proved that past government procurement of inputs and other agricultural machinery has not in any way helped the development of the sector.

We are not in doubt of the credibility of the award based on the drastic reduction of hunger and extreme poverty from 19.3 percent in 1990-1992 to 8.5 to the present date which the Minister said has been possible due to elimination of the corrupt element in the sector as the middle men at the value chain of fertilizers and other inputs who are denying farmers from getting their due right.

All this aforementioned we admired and cherished with opinion of doing more to the sector

through the ongoing ATA that requires more timely necessary logistics since agriculture is time bound. A situation where fund are not timely deplore to achieve a purpose may not be too helpful for the food security advancement of the country.

The FOA award is a signer that the Minister of Agriculture and all his team need to do more to ensure that Nigeria is totally free of food importation so as to create jobs and employment in the country rather than creating elsewhere. It is worthy of note that our country was able to save 180 million dollar last year which would have been signed away according to Dr. Adesina.

At the 40th Agricultural Council Meeting held in Ogun state, stakeholders strongly advocated for more agricultural

encouragement and support for ATA based on the impact the new policy direction has achieved in less than two year which has surpassed the initial speculated time.

Encouragement may not stop at adequate funding alone, but could be extended to attitudinal change of taking agriculture seriously as business with consciousness of time mind set towards everybody doing the best within his capacity to make agriculture grow as business. Availability of mechanized tools for farming is also important so as to remove drudgery and standard provision of other inputs is all measures that must be seriously considered.

The era of states government leaving their responsibility to the Federal must be a thing of the past as agriculture is on concurrent list, we are expecting to see more of the states coming up with projects that they will require the Federal Government partnership rather than leaving everything for the apex government to decide.

Agriculture is practiced in the rural areas and not at the cities and this is why ATA should be more paramount at the states level for creation of jobs for the youths.

In our spirit of asking for more support for ATA development, we might want to commend some of the states that have

positively taken proactive initiative in the area of crops that they have competitive advantage to alleviate poverty of it people and assist farmers.

The more of this that is done will also safe us the harassment of youth restiveness and security challenges, as an idle hands is devil's workshop.

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OFPS floods market as POGPMAN, Hellen Keller Inter

The feasibility of Orange Fleshed Sweetpotato (OFPS) is becoming more prominent in the nation's market places just as Hellen Keller International (HKI) and Potato Growers, Processors, Marketers Association of Nigeria (POGPMAN) have increased the tempo of popularizing the produce for its nutritional advantages to the human health.

Food Farm News' visit to market palaces in Abuja reflected the increasing demand patronage of this particular sweet potato species which sources revealed was due to its richness in vitamin A and serum retinol concentration in young children, adding the produce is good at controlling infection and inflammation diseases.

As part of more sensitizations for OFPS consumption by children and productive adults that HKI and POGPMAN have started distributing the produce vines to farmers so as to increase its production towards meeting demand

At Kuje and Mararaba markets of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja POGPMAN with the financial support of HKI distributed vines worth thousands of naira to farmers so as to enhance its expansion growth for consumptions.

It was an occasion of more awareness creation for the health advantages of the OFPS to children and productive adults which according to the National President of the POGPMAN, Hon. Bayo Ajibade is a very source of Vitamin A for children, and can as well enhance productivity of adults who are still giving birth to children as they constantly consume this particular species.

Hon. Ajibade said the high level of malnutrition among the children due to poverty can be controlled with consumption of OFPS which is very affordable in the market adding it is also good for productive adults for reproduction of healthy children.

He added that the distribution and awareness creation exercise is an ongoing

thing that will be done in all the designated states of the federation for more multiplication of OFSP adding his association is ready to support the ATA of the Federal Government towards ensuring food security through mass production of this particular potato species that has been scientifically attested to be good for healthy living.

At last year stakeholders' meeting on the produce, the senior Special Adviser to the Hon. Minister, Dr. Oredipe had said that mass production of OFSP would be used for school feed programme of children and can as well be processed as flour for further additives to other food products adding the farmers have a lot to gain in its massive production for wealth and health creation.

Also speaking on the occasion, HKI promotions expert, Mrs Mary Umoh said the availability of the vine for planting would never be a problem as there is already partnership with an indigenous research

Institute for the surplus production of planting vine towards planting multiplication by farmers

in Nigeria and other sub African countries

It was an occasion with experiment, as many

participants were treated to OFSP delicacy thereby buttressing the sweetness of the buddy is in the eating.



Cross section of POGPMAN at the OFPS vine distribution to farmers in Kuje and Mararaba markets, Abuja.