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 and Young 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 Lapodini 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 Komlan 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 tomorow 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."

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

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.

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.

Omidiji, 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 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."

Omidiji also emphased 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 seeds production thereby thanking the workers for the cooperative support to take the company where it is today.