

## AGRO-BUSINESS

## Cooperatives can enhance productivity, says Commissioner

**A**GRICULTURAL 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, uses 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. Omotayo 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 Aiyoola, 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.

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

## How to grow marine fishery, by expert

Stories by Daniel Essiet

**T**HE 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

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 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.

## Farmers get free potato vines



Farmers queuing to get free vitamin A fleshed potato vines

Keller International Promotions expert, Mrs Mary Umok, 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

**T**HE 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 disclosed that reports reaching his institution concerning the last consultative meeting with Nigerian Universities held in Wukari gave him the impetus to want to associate the more with WAAPP-Nigeria.

**O**RANGE 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