



THE 7TH AGRICULTURAL POLICY STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM AND 1ST ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY RESEARCH NETWORK (APRNET) IN COLLABORATION WITH JOB & WEALTH CREATION OFFICE, DELTA STATE, USAID/NIGERIA FEED THE FUTURE NIGERIA AGRICULTURE POLICY ACTIVITY AND PILAF-NIGERIA HELD AT HOTEL BENIZIA, ASABA, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST TO 3RD JUNE, 2022.

COMMUNIQUÉ



Figure 1: Group Photograph of Some Participants at the Forum

1.0The 7thAPRNetAgricultural Policy Stakeholders' Forum and 1st Annual International Conference were held at the Hotel Benizia, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria from Wednesday, 1st to Friday, 3rdJune 2022. The theme of the Forum was: "Towards a Resilient and Sustainable Agri-Food System by 2025 in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa". The Forum was organized in collaboration with theJob & Wealth Creation Office, Delta State Nigeria, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) under the USAID/Nigeria Feed the Future Agriculture Policy Activity,and PILAF-NIGERIA.A total of 178 participants were in attendance and 51 papers were presented at the parallel sessions on 3rd June 2022.

2.0 Participants at the forum included the following: Representative(s) of Job & Wealth Creation Office, Delta State, Nigeria, Delta State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Feed the Future Nigeria Agriculture Policy Activity, *PiLAF*, University of Ibadan,Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Ondo State Governor's representative, All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), Partnership Initiative



for the Development of Niger Delta (PIND), Port Harcourt, National Roots Crops Research Centre, Umudike, NAERLS, Zaria, Nigerian Environmental Study Action Team (NEST)/Regional Councilor–Africa, IUCN World Conservation Congress, Marseille, agricultural professionals and professors drawn from the universities (the academia), Agricultural Research Institutes, Youths (YAGEP) and different Farmers organizations, Media, Entrepreneurs, other non-state actors and other agrarian Stakeholders across the country.

3.0 The Hon.Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Dr. Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar was represented by an Assistant Director in the Ministry, Mr. Ibrahim Mohammed. The Chief of Party of the Feed the Future Nigeria Agriculture Policy Activity, Dr. Kwaw Andam; Delta State Chief Job Creation Officer, Professor Eric. C. Eboh; Permanent Secretary of the Delta State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Mr. Ben Agamah; Executive Director, NAERLS, Zaria, Prof. Emmanuel Ikani; Assistant Director of Research & Statistics Division, FMARD, Mr. Emmanuel Itodo; Director, Institute for Gender Studies, UNN, Prof. A. I. Achike, among others.

The APRNet President, Dr. Anthony Onoja, welcomed all participants to the events. He raised concerns over shocks to the agri-food system in Sub Sahara Africa and Nigeria in particular. The sources of the shocks he observed came from the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, volatility in food prices jeopardizing the attainments of the SDGs 2030 especially, eliminating Poverty (SDG 1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), creating safe and decent jobs (SDG 8) taking climate action (SDG 13) by 2030, to transformation the agrifood system to become more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable systems (in Nigeria and SSA) by 2030. He then enumerated the achievements of APRNet in capacity building and bridging policies with research in Nigeria since 2009. He then set the tone for the policy dialogue after acknowledging all who made efforts to make the event successful, especially the Executive Governor of Delta State via the Job & Wealth Creation Office under the leadership of Professor Eric. C. Eboh. He challenged them to come out with evidence that will guide policy in addressing the agri-food system challenges in Nigeria and SSAs. In his message, the representative of Hon. Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) urged the stakeholders to effectively brainstorm and come up with a very robust outcome that will enhance policy implementation of the government towards agricultural development and a sustainable agri-food system by 2025 in Nigeria and SSA. He also commended APRNet and other partners that made the Forum materialize. He, therefore, wished, on behalf of the Ministry, all the participants successful deliberations, with the assurance that the discussions in the forum will be treated with all attention they deserved as soon as the Minister receive the briefs and communiqué from this meeting.



4.0 Other goodwill messages were delivered by the Chief of Party of the Feed the future Nigeria Agriculture Policy Activity, Chief Job and Wealth Creation Officer & Head, Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau, Professor A. Adekoya, Director, PiLAF, University of Ibadan, Permanent Secretary, Delta State Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Mr. Ben Agamah), Mr. Tunji Idowu, The Executive Director, PIND (Partnership Initiative for the Development of Niger Delta) and the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Others are various commissioners present and Presidents of Farmers and Agribusiness Associations.

5. 0 The lead paper was presented by Prof. Eric C. Eboh, Chief Job & Wealth Creation Officer, Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau. on the topic: **“Youth employment and wealth creation through agricultural entrepreneurship: The Delta State model as an evidential case for a paradigm shift”**. The paper set the stage for interactions on the challenges confronting the youths of the state and that of the country in securing gainful employment in the present day of the nation in different sectors of the economy. The paper highlighted the inherent opportunities in Delta State through the Delta State Job and Wealth Creation Bureau office which over four states of the country had already copied for replication in their various states. Also, video documentaries on the Delta State youth agricultural entrepreneurship model were shown to the entire stakeholders during the event.

6.0 The plenary session harvested experts’ opinions and papers on - *Impacts of Ukraine and Global Crisis on Food Systems and Poverty in Nigeria* by Dr. Kwaw Andam, *Building Resilience of the Agribusiness Value Chain in Nigeria* by Dr. Saweda Liverpool-Tasie, *Agricultural Policy Direction in Nigeria: Farm Mechanization and Post- Harvest Losses - A New Thinking* by Prof. Emmanuel, I. Ikani, *Smallholder farmers’ risks and building of resilience* by Mr. Onah Thomas, *Raising food safety and export potential through field management of Aflatoxin in our crops using Aflasafe Technology* by Dr. Abdullahi Ndarubu, *Controlled cultivation of Cannabis for medical and industrial purposes in Nigeria: Perception, Strategy and economic benefits* by Mr. Akinola Samuel Olotu, among other papers

The plenary session also took a thorough look at the agricultural sector as it relates to Resilient and Sustainable Agri-Food System by 2025 in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa at large. They noted that policy inconsistency was a major impediment to the underdevelopment of the sector. The experts consequently advised FMARD to institute a committee that will understudy the policy of agriculture in the country with APRNet leading other non-state actors. This will assist the sector in meeting up the reality of the challenges facing the sector especially as it concerns the sustainable agri-food System by 2025 in Nigeria.



7.0 Other papers delivered include 51 papers on various thematic areas of the conference. The sub-themes are: The following sub-themes are areas of research focus for the conference:

- I. Best and scalable agribusiness models for youth employment generation and sustainable livelihoods;
- II. Agri-food systems Innovations and productivity growth in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- III. Issues around climate change, greenhouse gas (GHG) fluxes in land-based ecosystems,
- IV. Optimizing and conserving the blue economy for Sustainable economic growth;
- V. Quest for a workable Agricultural Policy to drive economic growth and development in Nigeria & SSA;
- VI. Agricultural marketing in Nigeria and other SSA countries: issues, innovations and prospects;
- VII. Leveraging Agricultural Marketing into the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA);
- VIII. Livestock production models and issues in sustainable livestock systems;
- IX. Sustainable Crop production systems and policies; and
- X. Projects working on enhancing smallholder farmers' access to farm inputs and market access.

8.0 In all, the Forum seeks the *consideration* of the concerns and policy recommendations that emanated from the interactions as follows:

1.0 Observations: It was observed that the present circumstance of rising food prices with hunger and malnutrition threatens the fast-increasing population in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

➤ **Resolution:** There is an immediate need for improved food production by the adoption of innovative practices along the value chain level through support services in the area of input supports such as credit facility, development of affordable and sustainable mechanization of farm operations, legislation on affordable insurance policies for farmers, market infrastructural development (storage, processing), and rural road development. The government through FMARD should empower NCAM and the private sector with needed resources to enable them to generate and assemble a prototype of agricultural machinery for agricultural development.

2.0 Observations: It was noted that food safety by farmers still suffers over 40% of in post-harvest agricultural produce losses if the issue is not addressed. 2.The forum also observed the general lack of awareness among professionals, extension workers, and the public on mycotoxin contamination in food and agricultural raw materials, products, and their impacts.

Resolution: 2.There is a need for Extensive Awareness and Advocacy on Mycotoxin contamination in African staples because of the serious impacts on malnutrition and food



security across Africa. Also, as a signatory to the ACFTA, Nigeria needs to promote the quality and safety of raw materials and products to penetrate and sustain its market share on the African continent. Let there be urgency in the provision of communal storage facilities (e.g. cold rooms and silos) by exploring affordable renewable energy-based technology from solar sources for actors along the value chain level. The Forum applauded the awareness campaign by the Raw Materials Research and Development Council, on the impact of *mycotoxin* contamination in agricultural and food raw materials on health, trade, and agriculture.

2. Observations: Climate change impacts negative shocks are increasing rapidly across the country and beyond reducing productivity and availability of healthy and nutritious foods as flooding, desertification, sea level rise, unpredictable planting period and vulnerability of farmers affect food supply. Efforts should be made to reduce carbon footprints in agrifood systems too at country and regional levels.

➤ **Resolution 2:** There is an urgent need for the adoption of Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) practices and capacity building of stakeholders along the agrifood value chain to build resilience and adapt to climate change impacts. The National Climate Change Adaptation Policy should be fully implemented and supported by FMARD.

3.0 Observations: Neglect of some fast revenue-yielding crops in the country is reducing both the foreign and local earning capacity of the nation. The forum observed that the potential of *Cannabis sativa* is not being harnessed by Nigeria and Nigerians because of the negative propaganda of the psychoactive compounds rather than the positive aspects of the constituent cannabinoids (CBD) oil.

Resolution 3: Promotion of neglected and non-utilized agricultural resources such as the cannabis Sativa plant along the value chain for foreign earning is advocated. The Forum is urging the RMRDC to quickly collaborate with other relevant organizations to put in place modalities toward "Controlled Cultivation of *Cannabis sativa* for the production and utilization of the CBD oil by the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, and other industries for the overall economic and industrial growth of the Nigeria and Nigerians.

4.0 Observations: Disjointed agricultural intervention and programme initiatives are unhealthy for the development of the agrarian sector in the nation.

➤ **Resolution 4:** Strengthening of stakeholders' participation in policy formulation and analysis by FMARD is recommended. APRNet, an all-inclusive agricultural policy network formally linked with FMARD should be carried along to deepen its partnership with FMARD to effectively engage more stakeholders in refining existing agricultural and food system policies in partnership with their partners. Synergy is needed among the public, private, and academia to positively engage all stakeholders along the value chain in the agrifood system.



5.0 Observations: The problem of insecurity had brought agricultural activities in different parts of the country to almost a halt

➤ **Resolution 5:** There should be a natural resilient food system that would offer the capacity to respond to shocks such as natural disasters, pandemic, insecurity, and protection of the borders against territorial, national, state, and community harassment of citizens. Genuine community of policy practices that would respond to the crisis in the community and promotes participation of actors in food system value chain activities are needed immediately.

6.0 After due consideration, the forum expressed its profound gratitude to the entire stakeholders for their active participation in the 7th Agricultural Policy stakeholder and 1st Annual International Conference. The forum called on the government of Delta State to scale up its youth's job and wealth creation models that provide lessons from its *Okowanomics* across the entire nation to deal with the agrifood value chain job creation issue. This is because the model is in tandem with the Nigerian Agricultural Sector Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (AFSNS) 2020-2025 of FMARD.

Done this 3rd Day of June, 2022

Signed:

Signed:

Anthony O. Onoja (PhD)
President, APRNet

Emeka C Nzeh (PhD)
Secretary-General, APRNet