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NANTS – TrustAfrica

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COMMUNIQUE AND REPORT

POLICY DIALOGUE ON KEY THEMATIC ISSUES ON AGRICULTURE
Hosted by National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) in collaboration with
TrustAfrica
Abuja, 20th August 2018



Group picture of participants

1.0. Background/Introduction.

Small Scale Farmers (SSFs) in Nigeria make up the greater number of the country's workforce population and produce over 80% of the food consumed in the country. The Nigerian agricultural sector is second largest contributor (about 24%) to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Nonetheless, these farmers appear to be the poorest constituency in Nigeria.

Small Scale Farmers have not been adequately supported over the years by successive administration in

Nigeria. Their voices are scarcely heard, neither are they adequately represented in policy-making process and in governance. This constituency has also been excluded and disempowered, while their concerns and interests are not taken into account or addressed.

Ironically, this is the same constituency that the politicians run to with different kind of promises campaigning for votes during elections even as the 2019 election approaches. Given the above history of neglect, and against the backdrop of renewed global focus on agriculture and small scale farmers (SSF), the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) with the support of TrustAfrica organized a workshop for farmers organizations and networks in Nigeria with a view to awaken the SSFs to enhance their voice worth and capacity to influence policies in and out of the agricultural sector. The workshop also seeks to identify the major challenges, concerns, interests and priorities of farmers well-articulated for effective policy advocacy.

2.0. The Specific Objectives of Workshop

The specific objectives of the workshop are to:

- i. Articulate the needs, challenges and concerns of small holder farmers from across the country, thereby providing them with the right of choice within the context of their livelihoods.
- ii. Facilitate the involvement of farmers in determining the priorities and key thematic areas of investment in the agricultural sector.
- iii. Produce and document the issues and challenges of small scale farmers in Nigeria as a critical instrument for advocacy.
- iv. Propose critical issues for intervention to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and other key policy makers as effective policy influence.
- v. Disseminate vital information to farmers that will help agricultural growth and productivity in Nigeria.

3.0. Participation

The dialogue brought together over fifty (50) representatives of farmers organizations and networks from across Nigeria, public officers, parliamentary Committee representatives, Non State Actors, media, etc.

4.0. Technical sessions

The workshop benefited from: (i) keynote address delivered by Prof Seth Akutson of the Kaduna State University, (ii) presentation of a study on extension service delivery conducted by NANTS in six selected States – Plateau, Nasarawa, Katsina, Niger, Taraba and Benue, (iii) presentation on the agriculture investment and the key concerns and interests of farmers by Dr Innocent Azih, (iv) presentation on the herdsmen-farmers crises by Chris Kaka, (v) presentation on Nigeria's the policy performance: the CAADP implementation, etc.

The objectives of the lead paper – the NANTS survey on extension service delivery in Nigeria include: the assessment of funding availability, staffing, tools and performance of extension services in the selected states, identify government and funded programs for smallholder farmers involving extension services, identify key services being delivered to the farmers through the extension agents in the states, score extension workers performance and proffer recommendations to stakeholders on way to improve extension services delivery to smallholder farmers in Nigeria.

In his keynote address, Prof Seth highlighted many of the issues presenting challenges to the farmers and agriculture in general in Nigeria, and commended NANTS for taking the bold step in providing the platform

for interaction between public sector and Non State Actors. He called on government at all levels to listen to the farmers in order to practically address the challenges of food security in the country in a holistic manner.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

Pursuant to the objectives of the workshop and following the overall presentations, discussions and constructive debates, participants adopted the following as critical challenges facing farmers and agriculture as a whole in Nigeria: the Herdsmen- Farmers crises, poor extension service delivery, climate change (flooding, afforestation, deforestation) and adaptation, weak and conflicting policy frames and approaches, poor agriculture mechanization - Highly labour intensive means of farming, weak processing methods, low value addition [if any], poor market access for farm produce, ineffective organised cooperative unions, difficulty in accessing farming inputs including fertilizers and pesticides, poor voice on the part of farmers to influence policies and decisions that affect them, smuggling and import surge outcompeting local produce, high cost of farm inputs and complementary products, unavailability of modern technology that will increase farm yield, difficulty in access to finance, wide gaps [and lack of synergy] between research institutions and policy findings with the SSFs, poor storage facilities leading to huge post-harvest losses, low level of investment in the sector, high level of illiteracy and poverty amongst the SSFs, poor farm management capabilities, soil fertility problems, overreliance on donor agencies and development partners for extension support, low women participation and poor enthusiasm by preponderance of the youth population, poor infrastructure [roads, electricity, portable water, bridges, irrigation facilities, etc].

Participants highlighted and advanced the following observations, conclusions and recommendations:

Observations and Findings of Extension Service Delivery Survey:

Participants validated the report of the survey and its findings, and particularly highlighted the various following issues challenging extension service delivery:

- i. Absence of agricultural extension service delivery policy at the State level (only Benue State has one which however is not being implemented).
- ii. Inadequate funding (budgetary allocation to agriculture extension is not encouraging).
- iii. Weak human capacity (owing to lack of training and re-training).
- iv. Inadequate staffing (wide EAs to farmer ratio, sometimes 1 to 10,000).
- v. Gender imbalance among Extension Agents-EAs (FAO states that the ratio of male to female EAs is 72:28).
- vi. Poor condition of service (e.g. state workers are being owed several months of salaries)
- vii. Poor staff motivation (remunerations and allowances).
- viii. Lack of mobility for Extension Agents (only in Nasarawa was 170EAs with motorbikes for mobility).
- ix. Poor use and patronage of ICT in extension service delivery.
- x. Low level of adoption of technology by farmers.
- xi. Insecurity and crises in the villages

Following the above identified issues, participants recommended as follows:

- i. **Funding improvement by the States** The need for increased funding to extension service delivery through budgetary allocation, particularly by the Government of the States has become imperative as this will enable the ADPs to execute capital projects, carry out trainings for personnel, engage in distribution of inputs and carry out other activities for the benefit of farmers.
- ii. **ADP and Business-Oriented:** The ADP system is blameworthy considering the number of professionals within and their inability to integrate their skills and expertise towards engaging and developing lucrative/profit-oriented agriculture business services such as fishery and aquaculture,

farming, inputs distribution/sales, etc. The ADP should adopt a business model of generating internal revenue possibly through investment in the intensive distribution of inputs such as seed, farm implements and equipment hiring services, etc. Specifically, the ADPs could also venture into becoming the center for commercialization and multiplication of improved seeds and seedlings, agricultural equipment hiring, etc. thereby generating incomes rather than waiting for and solely depending on Government with cap in hands.

- iii. **Motivation and Mobility for the EAs:** Improvement in the remuneration packages for the EAs and Staff as a way of encouraging them to perform their duties is hereby canvassed. In addition, where EAs are far away from their field duty locations, means of mobility such as motorbikes (with possible support/collaboration with other development partners and institutions) should be provided for them as a matter of policy.
- iv. **Research into use:** Research and development should be integrated as part of agriculture funding at various levels of government, while research into use should be encouraged to enable the ADPs transmit outcomes effectively to SSFs.
- v. **Injection of more blood into the ADP system:** Government should encourage the recruitment of new and young extension agents into the ADPs to help revitalize the workforce. The N-power project which is a two-year project by the Federal Governments would have been good way to start; however, the limitation is that it is billed to end soon, and besides, the N-power graduate employees are not professional extension agents.
- vi. **Need for training and supervision of N-Power Intakes:** Moreover, there is need for training of the already-employed N-power graduate so as to equip them with required skills for extension service delivery. It is unacceptable that: (a) many of the N-Power graduates employed by Government are not purely graduates of agriculture discipline or agriculture extension who are supposed to impact on the farmers. This is an anomaly in a society where there are many graduates from Universities and other Tertiary Institutions of agriculture; (b) there was no provision for training of the intakes to equip them on extension service delivery; (c) the intakes are paid directly by the Government with little or no supervision or monitoring by the ADP; this is absolutely wrong as it negates the principle of mentorship and handholding of the intakes to understudy and adapt with roles and responsibilities to the farmers.

On Herdsmen-Farmers Crises:

Participants enumerated the issues surrounding the subject and recommended the following:

- i. **Dousing the Tension:** The political class, elder Statesmen as well as the media must desist from what appears to be the fueling of the crises through making inciting comments and sensationalism capable of further aggravation and giving the subject matter a religious or ethnic coloration. We specifically call on the media to discharge her responsibility within the boundary of national interest and refrain from overheating the already polarized States.
- ii. **Public Education on Ranching:** The government proposed ranching and funding needs to be implemented in piece-meal and in a bottom-up approach and on a pilot scheme level, but this should however be based on feasibility analysis. More so, massive public sensitization and awareness creation around the subject of ranching is required especially from Government and the NGOs, as a panacea to the current clashes in order to douse the negative perception.
- iii. **Private Sector Investments:** States should be encouraged to open up the space for private sector investment in ranches as this has the capacity of improving IGR and employment generation for the citizens with the attendant reduction in security challenges.
- iv. **Climate Change Mitigation:** Climate change mitigation should be intensified to redress the desertification in the North in order to reduce the migration of herdsmen and their cattle Southward.
- v. **Prosecution of Offenders:** One of the key exacerbating factors on the herdsmen-farmers crises is the inability of Government to effectively prosecute suspects and bring offenders to justice. Government must resolve to mobilize the political will to criminalize sordid acts and penalize

offenders in line with extant laws so as to serve as a deterrence to potential criminals that seek to engage in such brutal exercise of either killing, maiming or destroying homes of innocent citizens. In this regard, Special Courts may be considered in order to expedite the administration of justice and all actions leading to proper and speedy dispensation of related cases for the restoration of public confidence in the judiciary.

- vi. **Decentralization of the Police:** In order to nip further assaults in the bud, while commending the Federal Government on her recent pronouncements regarding the imperatives of decentralization of the Police, we recommend the enhancement of intelligence gathering and sharing as well as the further strengthening of police system through community policing. The civil society organizations (CSOs) on her part should involve in local vigilance and the provision of necessary information to the Police.
- vii. **The Role of CSOs:** CSOs should further keep to her watchdog role/responsibility by engaging in the monitoring of the planned public expenditure on ranches to ensure efficient and effective application of our common resource.
- viii. **Mediation:** NANTS should consider facilitating a mediative interaction between farmers and the herdsmen.

On Nigeria's CAADP Performance and Value Chain Development Advocacy

- i. **Need to Improve Nigeria's Performance:** Participants noted that whereas there are 18 indicators (thematic areas) for evaluation on the CAADP implementation, Nigeria has been able to achieve milestones and is on track in three (3). In 8 indicators, Nigeria failed to provide data for the evaluation, while in 2 Indicator areas, more efforts would be required to push out of the red light. In this regard, participants encouraged Nigerian Government especially the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) to undertake a thorough examination of the country's performance with a view to improving thereupon, particularly with regard to data collection.
- ii. **Attention to JSR and NAIP:** FMARD should facilitate the conduct of a Joint Sector Review (JSR) especially with regard to logistic support for the review team to come up with a draft that would be subjected to validation as well as the production of the final copies of the validated draft. Similarly, the National and Regional Stakeholders' validation of the investment financing and implementation plan for the Agriculture Promotion Policy, (APP) the "Green Alternative should be given urgent attention, in addition to the conduct of Biennial Review in line with the Malabo requirement of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union.
- iii. **Conduct of National Agricultural Sample Census (NASC):** This is supposed to be conducted every 10 years in compliance with FAO's recommendations. The Census is usually carried out in collaboration with the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS), States Ministries of Agriculture, development partners and other relevant stakeholders, and was last conducted in Nigeria in 1993/94. It is sad that since then, all attempts to carry out the exercise have not been successful.
- iv. **National Agriculture Sample Survey:** Conduct of a National Agriculture Sample Survey, which is meant to update the report of the National Agriculture Sample Census before the next round of the Census. Similarly, there is need for capacity development in monitoring and evaluation and the development of an M&E framework as well as sensitization and realigning of the key operations of the sector at national, regional and state levels with the Agricultural Promotion Policy.
- v. **AfCFTA and the small Scale farmers:** The Government through her relevant Agency should conduct an analysis of the AfCFTA on SSFs and their livelihoods especially with a view to making evidence-based decision regarding the market access, safeguard measures and Rules of Origin negotiations.
- vi. **Parliamentary Action:** Highlighted the negative impact of policy summersaults on Nigeria's agriculture; for instance, the GESS (which is a well thought out initiative for farmers) appears to have been abandoned owing to perceived irregularities such as inputs not delivered on time, poor

accessibility or far location of input collection centres which increases transportation burden on farmers. At present, another programme tagged AIMS seem to have replaced the GESS. However, the concept and model of the GESS should be continued so that resources placed in farmers registration and other efforts around the GESS will not go down the drain. The Parliament is hereby strongly invited to institutionalize the GESS or AIMS and other agric-related initiatives that have been identified as successful, with a view to ensuring that they are backed by law to encourage continuity and not easily discarded at the whims and caprices of political leaderships. The Parliament is also called upon to strengthen her oversight responsibility so that budgetary appropriations and other investments in agriculture would be delivering measurable targets and milestones. In addition, the Parliament should reconsider late passage of budgets with particular emphasis on agriculture as this has serious implications on agricultural practices especially given that the sector is seasonal in nature.

- vii. Nigeria-Benin Republic Trade Relations:** The use of the borders and corridors along the Nigeria-Benin Republic routes by smugglers and unscrupulous business actors have continued to create serious negative impacts on local farmers agricultural produce and the domestic economy as a whole. Government is therefore called upon to institutionalize a strong bilateral engagement between the two countries for effective monitoring and checks in order to reduce and eliminate the economic trauma and haemorrhage.
- viii. Appreciation of the Platform:** Lamented that small scale farmers in Nigeria have not been able to mobilize their voices to articulate their common interests and concerns so as to place concrete demands on government especially with regard to specific areas that investments should be targeted or channeled for effective development. Therefore, participants lauded the dialogue opportunity created by NANTS and TrustAfrica, as it provided all agriculture stakeholders the common platform to fully express their challenges, needs and concerns. Participants further called for more regular dialogue sessions for the farmers to continuously take stock of policies and articulate targets, set agenda for government's consideration on emerging issues and best agriculture investment policies, practices and project priorities that benefit farmers specifically and agriculture as a whole.
- ix. Conclusion and Way Forward:** Resolved that the outcomes of the dialogue will be used for an advocacy visit to the relevant Parliamentary Committees as well as the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

6.0.Photo Speak







For: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN TRADERS (NANTS)

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With support from:

