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NANTS – DFID-FEPAR

Communique- Cassava Initiative2013

COMMUNIQUE AND REPORT

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE VALIDATION MEETING OF THE SURVEY ON CASSAVA BREAD INITIATIVE CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN TRADERS - NANTS.

PREAMBLE:

NANTS organized a validation meeting of the outcome of the survey it conducted on the Federal Government of Nigeria's Cassava Bread Initiative (CBI). The survey was undertaken to measure the level of awareness among the population and compliance with the policy among the policy beneficiaries. The survey is part of NANTS project on monitoring budget and policy structures in Nigeria tagged "*Nigeria Agriculture Policy and Investment Observatory*"-NAPIO which is supported by the Federal Public Administration Reform arm of the DFID (FEPAR). The validation meeting which took place at the Nuggets Hotel – Abuja on the 10th September 2013, brought together over 50 participants from the civil society, farmers and their cooperatives, media, government, development partners, and specifically, bread bakers and flour millers.

OBSERVATIONS:

The validation exercise which featured the full presentation of the outcomes of the survey had the following comments and observations collated:

- i. **General Assessment of the Policy:** Participants generally noted that the Cassava Bread Initiative (CBI) is one policy step that is well conceived and undertaken by government in the right direction. Specifically, participants were of the unanimous view that the policy is home-grown and inward-looking, and therefore capable of reducing the massive importation of wheat into the country, saving large volume of foreign exchange, creating jobs and reducing poverty and unemployment among youths.
- ii. **Buy-in and Acceptability among Nigerians:** In addition to the foregoing assessment, participants were of the view that the appreciable level of the CBI acceptability is further reinforced by the outcome of the survey which indicates that about 83% percent of respondents are in favour of or support the policy. It was further noted that adequate

buy-in from the general public is necessary to guarantee sustainable implementation of the policy, thus the need for continuous promotion and awareness creation.

- iii. **General level of Interest in Cassava Bread:** Asked whether they like cassava bread, participants exhibited high level of interest on cassava bread; and this is supported by a whopping 94% of respondents who declared they would like to eat it. Overall, the responses received from the survey show that the acceptance of cassava bread by Nigerians will not be a challenge as long as the bread is good for consumption. Those that are opposed to any means of force or pressure on consumers to patronize the cassava bread are of the opinion that that if the bread is available in the market/shops, cheaper and better, it would receive adequate patronage without any compulsion from government. They preferred the subject should be left to the forces of demand and supply.
- iv. **Commitment to promoting the CBI at the Highest Level:** Participants observed with commendation the very high level of commitment to awareness creation by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (President Goodluck Jonathan) and his Team on the CBI. Participants further noted specifically, with appreciation, that the President and the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, in particular, have consistently eaten and advertised cassava bread publicly thereby living by example and promoting or inviting patronage of the local substitute and initiative among Nigerians.
- v. **Current status of Cassava bread production and availability:** While supporting the policy, participants however observed that cassava bread production level to date is still insignificant and domiciled largely among corporate bakers. It was noted that effective demand is only sustainable at the grassroots; regrettably however, the activities at the flour mills for bakeries located at the grassroots or ‘masses bread’ are still low in comparison with the consumer population.
- vi. **Technical feasibility for realizing cassava bread initiative and flour mills participation:** Participants observed some potential setbacks to the policy as follows:
 - a. insufficient technical competence and know-how among flour mills in effective utilization of cassava derivatives for bread and confectionery production,
 - b. unclear direction in level of modification required for cassava to produce similar types of bread currently in the market,
 - c. inadequate incentives for committing flour mills to cassava inclusion in flour mix,
 - d. insufficient quantity and quality of high quality cassava flour (HQCF) for composite flour blending, etc, as areas needed to be worked upon by the government and the flour millers in order to optimize the policy.
- vii. **Availability of right variety of cassava good for bread production:** For CBI to thrive, participants observed that the right variety of cassava must be readily available. This is necessary given that the survey revealed the fact that some varieties of cassava when used either reduces the shelf life (durability) of cassava bread or gives it an unappealing odour. Participants observed that this is an essential issue that government must deal with in collaboration with Research Institutes and millers, noting that the

Federal Institute of Industrial Research (FIIRO) has for a long time been working on the cassava value chain with very interesting research outcomes, but the problem is that implementation has not been achieved due to the poor application research outcomes by the government.

Cassava Processing Plants and Logistics gap in cassava supply: It was observed that the cassava processing capacity is still low, while wastage and glut is still high in the midst of huge domestic demand for food. Similarly, Participants observed that the supply of cassava to the flour millers remain one of the most critical problems militating against the cassava bread policy, especially given that supply infrastructure (such as transportation and preservation) is grossly inadequate while the understanding of logistics of cassava bulk breaking is poor. Technically speaking, to achieve high quality cassava flour, the peculiar characteristics of cassava must be considered; cassava must be dried and processes within 24 hours of harvest. Otherwise the question of the odor, shelve-life of the bread and other quality concerns would remain a problem once fermentation begins to set in.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. **Make cassava bread more popular and easily identifiable:** To increase visibility and make cassava bread easily identifiable, it is recommended that the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development -FMARD, (especially the CBI Secretariat or Unit) in collaboration with States and Local Governments' departments of agriculture should liaise and consult with bakers to possibly make it compulsory for bakers to write the identity of the bread (type) and the contents of such bread (or other bakery products) on their labels so that consumers can easily identify cassava bread on the store shelves. This way, cassava bread would be further popularized. In addition, sustained campaign at the grassroots level should be intensified to ensure effective participation not only among the elites but also among the common people who are the nucleus for sustained demand for cassava bread in the long run.
- ii. **Need for legislation and Investment in Research:** The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), Research institutes (such as FIIRO), and the Parliament must join efforts at formulating legislations and ensuring adequate budgetary provisions for dedicated thematic research projects on inclusion of cassava in composite flour mix with a view to removing current inhibitors to take-up rates. Wide dissemination of results and practical demonstrations of such research works is also critical to the survival of the CBI. In addition, the development of dedicated cassava fund and other incentives for research and innovation is required particularly for flour millers to enhance research in cassava content of composite flour.
- iii. **Increase effective rate of uptake by the flour mills and the grassroots:** The FMARD (CBI secretariat) in partnership with local governments and bakers' networks (Associations) should work together to provide more incentives and adaptation techniques for local master bakers. This could evolve through the establishment of platforms for local bakers' networks to interact with policy implementing agencies.

- iv. **Implementing initial investments in processing plants:** There should be synergy between the federal government, States and the private sector investors aimed at fast tracking the implementation of the initial investments in processing plants with full feasibility studies carried out to ensure sustainability. Adequate information dissemination among network of farmers and processors should be enhanced through the establishment of cassava marketing and development agency which will develop live databases of cassava fields in the country and ensure adequate networking for proper marketing. This would improve both production and uptake of cassava as the key raw material for the bread and related confectioneries.
- v. **Paying attention to logistics challenges associated with cassava industry:** Intermediate processing units with the purpose of reducing bulk should be included in CBI promotion and networked to higher value plants for quality finishing of cassava products. Research in logistics design and optimization should also be included in promoting sustainable investments in CBI. The problem associated with logistics of the cassava industry is another key area the government must pay serious attention to. Over 60 percent of cassava tuber is water and when transporting raw tubers, a lot of water is actually being transported and that could have been avoided. There is need to assist in the achievement of some level of processing at the farm gate and use the available capacity for hauling the main product which is cassava.
- vi. **Increasing domestic production of cassava for industrial purposes:** Focus of CBI should be re-evaluated and based on increasing domestic production of cassava with industrial use in mind and gradually progress towards export only after local demand is mature. To this end, Parliamentary review of cassava export policy to ensure domestic inflation does not result from scarcity in cassava supply is critical.
- vii. **Promoting less costly investments in cassava:** Feasibility of other value added derivatives of cassava should be pursued to give room for diversification and to kick-start a robust market driven transaction for cassava production. Less costly investments in the cassava sector should be promoted to increase inclusion and thereby stimulate grassroots participation on a sustainable basis.
- viii. **Creating right variety and technology for quality cassava flour:** Concerns were expressed about the fact that the bread produced from cassava could be more expensive giving that it requires a lot of technology to process with special reference to the worry about cyanide content of cassava that possess a serious health risk. For this reason, it is recommended that government has to intensify investment in research for the purpose of getting the best varieties of cassava most suited for bread making or wheat flour substitution; and also identify the best available technology for the processing of high quality cassava flour (HQCF) to take care of the quality concerns.
- ix. **Extending attention to rural/grassroots bakers:** There must be a change in the mechanism of flagging off the CBI; the present strategy of using cooperate bakers is shortchanging the ordinary bakers that make up a greater number of the baking sub-

sector and serves the majority of the population. Therefore, efforts must be made by the FMARD to achieve adequate compliance from the flour millers that serve these major stakeholders. If adequate compliance is achieved from the flour millers, then, it will guarantee that the baking industry will definitely comply with the policy; this is because ordinary bakers use the composite flour in the market.

- x. **Capacity building for bakers:** Adequate capacity must be built for the bakers in view of the fact that baking of bread is a technical process and now baking with cassava flour may require a different mechanism from the usual.
- xi. **Increasing cassava productivity:** All efforts must be in place for encouraging farmers to produce through the provision of micro-credit and several other kinds of assistance. There is need to increase the domestic capacity of cassava production to be able to meet the recent shift in the direction of industrial use of cassava products, apart from the hitherto traditional use of cassava for various food in Nigeria.
- xii. **The need for sustained campaign to avoid policy distortions and reversals:** Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) must intensify campaign for the sustenance of such government policy as the CBI. This is very important given the observed trend of lack of continuity of policies in Nigeria beyond certain administrations and/or the initiator of the policy. CSOs must also campaign for the application of the appropriate strategy for the CBI to achieve its purpose and objectives. Such campaigns efforts could be through the process of educating the citizens and mobilizing them to support and engage in the trajectory of policy regime and debates that would translate into growth and development of the country's economy. The Parliament also has a role to play in this regard towards possible consideration of institutionalization of the policy.
- xiii. **The imperative of periodic reviews and monitoring of the CBI:** A very important observation on the CBI is that proper consultation with the real stakeholders in the cassava industry before the propagation of the policy was lacking. This is critical towards ensuring that various platforms and representations could ventilate ideas and proffer suggestions that would reduce frictions in the implementation of the initiative. To this end therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders consultation should be facilitated by the government at all stages of the CBI policy- right from the point of formulation to implementation. In the case of cassava bread, all critical stakeholders (flour millers, bakers, the consumer public and policy makers) should be carried along.
- xiv. **Resisting the politics of wheat trade:** The government must strongly consider and resist influences emanating from the politics of wheat in the international market for the CBI to be successful. In addition, Nigeria should also start looking beyond comparative advantage to competitiveness where local producers of cassava can begin to compete with producers from Thailand and Brazil. To achieve this, millers can be encouraged to have cluster farms in order to maximize profits.
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CONCLUSION

Participants commended NANTS for conducting the survey, noting that it is probably the first of its kind on the subject matter targeted at compliance with specific government policies. FEPAR was also lauded for supporting the efforts of NANTS at making vital information available to key stakeholders. NANTS Secretariat President further commended the government for their visionary efforts on the CBI and thanked all the participants with appreciation for their valuable contributions.