

Advocacy and Policy Dialogue on Standard Weights and Measures along Rice and Cassava Value Chain in VCDP States of Benue, Niger and Taraba States (August 2018)



Group picture at Benue State with government officials that attended the all stakeholders advocacy meeting

1.0 Background

The Value Chain Development Program (VCDP) recognizes the need to adopt the use of quality norms, grades and standards in the marketing of rice and cassava products because of the great challenges being experienced in this sector which bothers on trust. To a large extent VCDP has promoted the use of standard weights and measures by farmers, small scale processors and marketers in the last three years of the program. The use of this system has been across the participating States with modest achievement. However, a lot is still left to be done to ensure that a greater population of the beneficiaries adopts the use of weight and measures to transact their businesses. In Nigeria, less than 10% of traders and farmers adopt the culture of weights and measures. Some of the things being measured and weighed by traders and farmers include meat, grains (rice, beans, and wheat), tubers and roots (cassava, yam, and potatoes), etc. The common measurement tools in Nigerian markets include; cups, mudu, bottles, weighing scale, etc. The implications of these kinds of measurements are:

- i. The traders/farmers are short-changed
- ii. The final consumers(buyers) are short-changed

Therefore, there is the need for a decisive effort at providing equitable standard of measurement that is nationally acceptable and approved by agencies responsible. There is also the need for traders/farmers to adopt such standards for measurement. Building on the success of these initiatives, the program wishes to expand the outreach and deepen the successes so far recorded across the VCDP States which started with three (3) of the States (Ogun, Anambra and Ebonyi States) and then Benue, Niger and Taraba States.

2.0. Objective of the Program

The program has as its major objectives to build trust for fair and honest business transaction among producers, processors and traders through advocacy and to promote the adoption of the use of standard weights and measures in all their business transactions.

3.0. Participation

The meeting brought together participants from different Ministries, Departments and Agencies including the Commissioners for commerce and industry from the States, State programme coordinator for VCDP project in Benue, Niger and Taraba States, representative of the ministry of Agriculture, representative of the minister of health, representative of the commissioner for women affairs, SON, NAFDAC, AFAN, Consultants and Media, etc.

4.0. Advocacy on the use of Standard Weights and Measures in the Targeted States

The first day started with advocacy visits to the State Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce in the three States.

4.1. Welcome Address from the States

I. Benue State VCDP State Program Coordinator

The State Coordinator VCDP welcomed all participants of the meeting. He appreciated the Commissioner for holding the policy dialogue along rice and cassava value chains. He explained the goal of the IFAD project being implemented in six states with an outlook to increase the income/livelihoods of farmers. He explained the need to implement standard weights and measures in the markets to be used to sell food items as opposed to the norm of the current usage of 'milk cups', 'mudu' and the likes. He encouraged stakeholder discussions amongst the stakeholders present and wished participants fruitful deliberations.

II. Niger State Program Coordinator

IFAD/VCDP is trying to promote marketing especially in the rice and cassava value chains. He stated that the objective of the program was to introduce standard weights and measures and also to try to stop the use of bushels in the State rice mills. VCDP is also trying to ensure fairness with everybody in the use of standard weights and measures. He thanked everybody and wished all a successful deliberation.

III. Taraba State Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator spoke on the relentless efforts of the state to ensure the development of Agriculture. He appreciated the work of the governor and further stressed the rate at which farmers have been cheated for so long therefore making it necessary for the introduction of standard weights in the state in order to create trust amongst value chain operators.

4.2. Opening Remark by the National Program Coordinator

The National Programme coordinator represented by Mr Kennedy Esinulo project in his remark reiterated the goal of the IFAD VCDP project. He spoke on the rationale for weights and measures usage. He mentioned that the world is fast developing in technology therefore it is necessary for farmers to use the technology that is recognized by regulatory world standards. He therefore implored

the State Commissioners to enforce the use of weights and measures amongst farmers to ensure that farmers' produce are being valued for at the right measures. He also stressed the availability of laws in the country that govern the use of standard weights and measures in the state.

4.3 Goodwill Messages

I. Commissioner for Agriculture-Taraba State

In response, the commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Ishaya Kassa, welcomed participants. He spoke on the available laws which ensure standard weights and measures in the country. He also mentioned that the implementation of the use of weights and measures in the markets is not a new initiative however; enforcement on the use of these weights has been a challenge. He reiterated the need to enlighten people especially farmers and traders on the importance of using standard weights and measures. He also mentioned that there will be need for international aid to provide these weights at affordable rates as market traders may not be able to afford these equipment at the competitive market rates.

II. Commissioner for Commerce represented –Taraba State

He welcomed participants to the advocacy. He stated that weights and measures are not new in Nigeria and there are laws backing weights and measures which are domiciled in the ministry. The ministry have tried to domesticate this in Taraba State but still trying to get a standard for measurement in the State.

III. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture-Taraba State, Mr Bajuje Danjuma

Mr Danjuma stated that the critical issue on the use of weights and measures is in enforcement. He believed that weights and measures have been there but the problem is in enforcement. He stated his happiness that VCDP has taken steps in the right direction and hoped that farmers after the workshop will imbibe the act of using weights and measures in their businesses.

IV. Representative of NAFDAC-Benue State

The representative of NAFDAC thanked the consultant who she said has opened their eyes. She said that NAFDAC is involved with packaged foods and that they have standard laboratories where products are inspected and for any product to have NAFDAC number, the Inspector will have to visit the site of production and samples of the product taken to the laboratory. She also stated that NAFDAC needs to step up their routine inspection on standards. NAFDAC also uses the standards set by the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON).

V. Representative of SON-Benue State

The representative of SON stated that the Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) is involved in standardization of products and services. On the issue of standard weights and measures, awareness needs to be created before enforcement. Officers have been trained on how to interact with stakeholders. SON has existing laws on weights and measurements; there is the metrology department who are in charge of weights and measures and they makes sure that scales are calibrated first before using them, also some traders have been able to get these standard weights. SON collaborates with other agencies to let them know that these things exists, therefore, emphasis is on awareness creation.

5.0. Speech by VCDP Consultant, Barr Ken Ukaoha

The consultant in Benue State discussed on the importance of weights and measures and the four laws of weights and measures. He said that there are laws backing the use of standard weights and measures but the problem is in the enforcement and implementation. The advocacy is for us to sensitize the farmers and traders on why they should use scales in their businesses. He presented the different types of weighing scales according to the sizes of the commodities being weighed. He stated that weighing attracts more money and there is a legal relationship between the producer, seller and the buyer (consumer). The ministry of trade has a role to play in weights and measures. They make sure that the laws are implemented. He continued by saying that if Benue State is the food basket of the nation, they should adopt the use of standard weights and measures and knock -out other States who might be competing with them. The Ministry of Trade should call on other relevant agencies especially the Ministry of Agriculture, Women Affairs and even the law enforcement agencies by educating them. The farmers should be educated that these scales are not expensive and are affordable. This will also encourage local fabricators.

The Consultant in Niger State stated that the essence of the advocacy and sensitization on the use of weights and measures is to ensure that the buyer and seller get the value for their money. This is very necessary because farmers, sellers and buyers are directly or indirectly cheating and short-changing themselves. He advised that all stakeholders imbibe the use of measurement in everything they do and also encouraged producers to ensure correct and honest labelling on their products. He mentioned that the importance of weights and measures can never be over-emphasized in that weighing increases patronage, builds consumers' trust and also boosts the farmers' income and standard of living. It also improves the GDP and enhances economic growth. Also weights and measures go with quality; hygiene should be maintained at all stages in the value chain (harvesting, processing, transportation and storage). Caution should also be taken on the use of chemicals during storage and preservation, for instance, the use of glyphosate which causes impotency in men and constant bleeding in women. Proper storage practices must be adhered to; the rooms for storage are sprayed with windows and doors closed for 3 days, thereafter swept out thoroughly and afterwards the windows are opened and produce can then be stored.

In Taraba State, the Consultant said that the nation needs people that understand and have passion for the issues being discussed. He thanked the Commissioner of Agriculture for making things easier for him. He stated that a false measurement is an abomination before God. Because of this issue, the government enacted a law but the problem is in implementation. The law specifies penalty for offender of the Act. In terms of collaboration, he said there should be collaboration between the Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Agriculture. He concluded by saying that quality comes with measures.

6.0 Commitments

1. Mr Kennedy Esinulo guaranteed that the standard weights will be given to farmers on a counter-part funding basis. Therefore, farmers will pay 30% and IFAD/VCDP will cover 70% of the payments. He also committed to giving the farmers the accurate bags for packaging rice and cassava produce.

2. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Benue State assured that the Ministry will invite other relevant Ministries and come up with things that will benefit the farmers.
3. The Director of Livestock who represented the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Benue State also promised that the enlightenment received will be taken beyond this level in the State and they are ready to work. He guaranteed that the Ministry is ready to collaborate with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in the State. He also stated that this should be a nationwide collaboration for relevant agencies involved.

7.0 Workshop and Demonstration

The second days of the advocacy visit gathered farmers along rice and cassava value chains. The focus of the event was to educate farmers on the use of weights and measures as well as the benefits that accrue to the usage of these weights.

7.1. Presentation 1: The Rules and Regulations and Enforcement of the use of Weights and Measures

In this presentation, the Lead Consultant noted that weights and measures are all about getting the value of your money in what is purchased. He stated that there is a triangular relationship between the producer, seller and the buyer; and explained that weights and measures are backed with a range of rules designed to help customers understand how much they are buying and to ensure they receive the exact amount/quantity of goods they are entitled to and also ensuring that such goods are equivalent to the money paid in value terms. He also mentioned that the desire to have accurate and effective service delivery informed the decision of the federal government to create/include issues of weights and measures in one of its Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) known as Weights and Measures Division. The Department is also empowered by 4 laws and regulations, namely;

- i. Weights and Measures **Act CAP W3LFN, 2004** (Formally weights & Measures Act CAP 467LFN 1999);
- ii. Pre-Shipment Inspection of Export Act CAP P25 LFN, 2004;
- iii. Weights and Measures Standardization of Indigenous Measures Regulations, 1992; and
- iv. The Weights and Measures Fees Regulations.

In conclusion, the Presenter opined that if one neglects or fails to implement, the long arm of the law may be unleashed, as ignorant of the law is never an excuse.



**Weights and
Measures presentati**

7.2. Presentation 2: The Use of Weights and Measures

The Presenter started by giving an overview of what standard weights and measures is all about. She said that weights and measures imply buying and selling goods in particular quantity. Measurements are undertaken to ensure fairness, transparency and equity in trading, allow for uniformity in weights and measures, provide protection to the value chain actors, consumers and the public in general, provide accurate measure of what was produced and proposed for sale by producers, processors and markets and also to avoid confusion given the numerous measurement units. The presenter also

showed participants the different types of weighing scales, saying that it is good to use the right scale for the right products or commodities. She concluded by saying that the importance of weights and measures cannot be overemphasized in that weights and measures in any business transaction attracts more sales, builds trust between the seller and the buyer, brings more money in the pockets of the sellers, ensures value of money and also boost the economy in general.



the use of weights
and measures.pdf

7.3. Presentation 3: The Importance of Product Quality

There was also an overview of product quality as a measure of excellence or a state of a product or commodity being free from defects, deficiencies, debris, harmful substances, etc. The presenter went further to explain the importance of product quality and how it can be achieved. Some of the importance of product quality included; value addition to the produce, attraction of more sales, a marketing strategy and boosting of the economy. Achieving and maintaining product quality involves keeping a clean environment in terms of clean water, clean surroundings and general hygiene during processing, packaging, transportation and storage of products. There should also be staff training on the importance of product quality and hygiene.



The importance of
product quality.pdf

In conclusion, the Lead Consultant stated that there are a lot of benefits in using standard weights and measures in that it reduces bargain, too much talking and reduces loss on the side of the buyer, the seller and also the producer.

7.4. Demonstration on Standard Weights and measures

The lead consultant and the National program coordinator showed the participants weighing scales that were available for demonstration. The bags of rice were placed on the weighing scales to show how they can be used.

Different types of weighing scales and bags of rice and cassava flour and chips with different measurements were exhibited in Taraba State. When these bags were weighed on the scale, it was discovered by participants that the 10kg bags of rice displayed were exactly 10kg showing accurate measurements of the bags of rice, however, another bag of rice which stated had 100kg written on it was weighed and it weighed 88.5kg with a difference of 11.5kg. The participants were showed the weighing scales to be used in measuring large quantity of produce. At the end of the exhibition, participants who were majorly traders and farmers saw the need for standard weights and measures. Some of the farmers' and traders' leaders committed to buying scales and adopting the use of standard weights and measures so that nobody in the business triangle will be short-changed.

In Niger State, six bags of 25kg rice were weighed in the scales and the results were as follows; 24.55kg, 24.44kg, 24.90kg, 24.65kg, 25.50kg and 25.65kg respectively. This showed that four bags weighed less

than the supposed 25kg while two bags weighed more than 25kg. In this case, either the buyer is short-changed or the seller.

8.0. Testimonies, Observations, Comments and Concerns

- i. The eyes of the farmers and traders present at the workshop in the states were opened to see what they are losing from.
- ii. The participants in the workshops were enthusiastic on the adoption of the use of standard weights and measures that some of the farmer organizations indicated interest in buying scales for their business.
- iii. The participants in the workshops were enthusiastic on the adoption of the use of standard weights and measures that some of the farmer organizations indicated interest in buying scales for their business.
- iv. Many farmers also endorsed the use of weighing scale and pledged to use same at their farms.
- v. Many farmers/producers signified their intention and preparedness to collaborate with VCDP to sensitize other farmers on the issue of weights and measures.
- vi. A participant in Niger State wanted to know how policies can be strengthened and also ensure that farmers adopt and adapt these policies and innovations? In response he was told that they should ensure that only products that are genuine will move to the markets and a proper documentation of produce moved out of Niger State should be kept. There should also be collaborations with AGRA to certify Niger Rice and also collaborations with FAO to strengthen policies and data.
- vii. Also in Niger State, a participant wanted to find out how other farmers not supported by IFAD can benefit from this advocacy meeting? In response, he was told that only 5 LGAs are covered by IFAD and lessons learned should be passed down to other farmers and Niger state ought to take absolute responsibility and set up committees with FMARD, SON, NAFDAC, NANTS, IFAD so as to sustain the program.
- viii. Another participant in Niger wanted to know what IFAD/VCDP has done in making sure that they put the cap on the head of the people involved and to ensure the enforcement of the laws in Niger state and Ministries involved?
- ix. A participant from Guma L.G.A of Benue State mentioned that most farmers are illiterate and they are always in a hurry to sell their products and most times refuses to measure. How can they be convinced to accept weighing their products before selling?
- x. Another participant from Benue State asked if there is a systematic way to sensitize farmers because farmers enjoy doing what they are doing already.
- xi. A representative of the Director of Agric Services in Benue State mentioned that their department has a section that is responsible for quality control and standardization and price control (Produce Department), so how can farmers determine the prices of commodities being sold? In response, he was told that the purpose of the advocacy was not to control price but to make sure that farmers and traders adopt the use of standard weights and measures.
- xii. Also in Benue, a participant wanted to know how SON will monitor and ensure that traders are using these scales.
- xiii. The representative of NAFDAC in Taraba State suggested that VCDP should give farmers the accurate bags in specific sizes that can contain 100kg of rice and other produce. She encouraged farmers to upgrade their methods of sales in order to attract more buyers to purchase from them

9.0 Conclusion and Recommendations and way forward

In conclusion, the use of standard weights and measures can never be over-emphasized; therefore the farmers and traders in the workshop attested to this and promised that they will try as much as possible to adopt the use of standard weights and measures in their businesses. Some of the recommendations made at the end of the training included;

1. VCDP should collaborate with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Agriculture to train their staff on standard weights and measures
2. VCDP should make provisions for cooperatives to purchase these scales
3. The advocacy should be extended to other states of the federation, and this could be worked out by the VCDP at the national level facilitating strong collaboration/joint efforts with the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI) and NANTS.
4. Beyond the subject of weights and measures, value addition should be promoted among farmers so they are encouraged to package their goods, improve the quality thereof, so as to attract more sales and even get export attraction.

Photos



The Benue State SPC giving a welcome remark



The representative of the NPC addressing Benue participants





Rep of the Perm Sec. Benue Ministry of Commerce & Industry



Director of Livestock making a commitment



Stakeholders at the Benue State Advocacy Dialogue



Consultant making his presentation on the use of weights and measures



Demonstration on the use of weights and measures



Demonstration on the use of weights and measures



Advocacy dialogue on weights and measures in Niger State



Advocacy dialogue on weights and measures in Niger State



Consultant during the demonstration in Niger State

Participants at the Niger State workshop



Weighing scales and products being displayed at the workshop



Advocacy dialogue on weights and measures in Taraba State



Participants at the workshop in Taraba State



MEDA addressing participants at the workshop



The MEDA during the demonstration in Taraba State



Participant expressing his concern during the workshop



Consultants making presentations at the workshop in Taraba State



Weighing scales and products being displayed at the workshop



Demonstration on the use of weights and measures in Taraba State