

National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)

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COMMUNIQUE

HIGH LEVEL NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS ROUNDTABLE ON THE NIGERIA CASSAVA POLICY

The first Cassava Stakeholders meeting under the current administration was organized by the National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) in collaboration with Oxfam in Lagos, Nigeria on the 25th of November 2015.

The stakeholders roundtable was attended by various actors in the cassava value chain such as the cassava farmers, especially the small holder farmers, (including the Cassava Growers Association), processors, master bakers, flour millers, input suppliers, transporters, policy makers and food regulatory agencies, researchers, extension agents, consumers, Civil society organizations working on agriculture, etc.

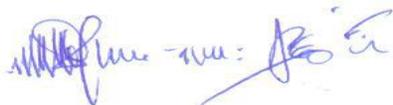
At the end of the consultations, the following set of recommendations and actions was agreed upon:

- i. Participants reaffirmed the increasing importance of Cassava and the benefit or positive realities and impact of a strong and active implementation of cassava policy in Nigeria.
- ii. Participants noted that Cassava supplies about 75% daily calorie intake to over 50 million (29.4%) of Nigeria's population. It plays a major role in the country's food security as 80% of Nigerians in the rural areas eat cassava meal at least once a week and majority eat cassava product, at least once a day and also provides one of the highest return in value terms to effort invested.
- iii. Participants sought to renew commitments of various stakeholders and the need to deploy appropriate strategies and system approaches for effective cassava policy with

- the resultant outcome of poverty reduction, job and wealth creation and the overall good and development of our nation's economy.
- iv. Participants insisted that there is an urgent need to review and to clarify the specific roles of all stakeholders in the implementation of the cassava policy.
 - v. Participants called on the new Minister of Agriculture to focus resources and collaboration to facilitate and develop new uses and marketing options for cassava beyond the national market to increase competitiveness of the cassava sector in the country.
 - vi. Participants resolved that all stakeholders along the cassava value chain such as small holder farmers, famers Association, aggregators, processors, input suppliers, millers, bakeries, transporters, food regulatory agencies, researchers extension agents and consumers with a particular focus on women, young people and more disadvantaged group must be brought on board for effective dynamism on the value chain.
 - vii. Participants called on the Federal Government to release the over N80 billion accrued on the 15 percent levy on the importation of wheat to increase intervention in the cassava sector and boost research to increase wheat substitution.
 - viii. Participants urged the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) to expressly withdraw funds deposited with the Bank of Industry (BOI) whose poor understanding of the national objective of the federal government with regards to the Cassava Bread Initiative appears to have stalled the prompt access and utilization of the fund and unwittingly but obviously continue to aid the over N635 billion per annum spent on wheat importation.
 - ix. Participants regretted that the BOI could hold on to funds belonging to contractors and SME projects up to 2 years after they have fulfilled their obligations owing to a purported amendment on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the FMARD. The careless handling of the supposed trade facilitation has rather resulted in huge losses in hundreds of millions of Naira to cassava farmers who could not find aggregation and processing clusters – as off-takers simply because funding for these purposes were trapped in the BOI, stalling investment in processing equipment and the availability of local expertise.
 - x. Participants regretted that while states are finding it difficult to pay salaries due to short fall in revenue, cassava and other value chains that have capacities to create wealth are not being invested in by the various States and Local Governments. The Roundtable therefore called on the States and LGAs to urgently identify with agriculture and key into approaches that would boost its IGR and improve the livelihoods of farmers and rural communities.

- xi. Participants also urged the new minister to include a caveat for the maximum duration any intervention funds could lie idle within the vaults of mediating banks to avoid the a repeat of the experience with the BOI which has reversed the successes recorded in the policy implementation.
- xii. Participants called on the National Assembly to ensure adequate budgetary provisions for the agricultural sector while making effort to institutionalize every policy targeted at the implementation of the cassava policy reform in order to unlock Nigeria's huge investment potentials in the value chain.
- xiii. Participants called on the new Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Chief Audu Ogbe and the current administration to ensure that given the high economic potential of the cassava value chain, the cassava policy initiated by the immediate past administration must be continued with and strictly implemented and not withdrawn or abandoned (for political considerations). In this regard, the Cassava Bread Initiative among others which have very high potentials for reducing/substituting huge imports must be effectively implemented.
- xiv. Participants also advised the FMARD to ensure continuity in the Growth Enhancement Scheme (GES) which provides direct access to subsidized inputs to the farmers and has potentials to increase employment generation capacity in line with the commitments of the present administration and the ruling party.
- xv. Participants welcomed the frank and positive discussions, agreed on a set of actions to be taken to engage the National Assembly and the Federal Government and also decided to continue to meet regularly to review development in the sector.
- xvi. While appreciating FMARD, NANTS, OXFAM for their collaboration on the project, and essentially the BATNF for her frank inputs, participants urged them to continue providing such support for the expansion of work on the Cassava Policy especially in the areas of providing agronomic trainings to small holder farmers as well as other value chains.
- xvii. Participants resolved that the full report of the roundtable should be sent to the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Assembly and other key organs of government.

For: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN TRADERS (NANTS)



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