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NANTS – TrustAfrica

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COMMUNIQUE AND REPORT

CONSULTATIVE MEETING FOR FARMERS TO DOCUMENT AND VALIDATE CHALLENGES, NEEDS AND PRIORITIES.

Hosted by National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) in collaboration with

TrustAfrica

Abuja, 2 March 2018

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 consultative workshop brought together over forty (40) representatives of farmers organizations and networks from across Nigeria.

4.0. Technical sessions

The workshop benefited from presentations on a study that was conducted by NANTS to identify the various thematic areas of government's commitments in selected agriculture policies. There was also a verse selection of thematic areas that seek to assist the farmers in determining priority areas, express concerns and identify critical needs (KPPIs) they require resource investments to be directed.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

Pursuant to the objectives of the workshop and following the overall presentations, discussions and constructive debates, participants highlighted and advanced the following issues, observations, conclusions and recommendations:

- i. Commended the National Council of State for their vision in approving an additional support of 1 billion US Dollars to the agriculture sector in recognition of the role that the sector has played and is still playing in the nation's economy, and specifically, the fact that Nigeria's economic advancement and recovery from recession is directly linked majorly to the agricultural sector (among a few sectors).
- ii. Further commended the government for recognizing the importance of agriculture in employment creation, as substantiated by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development - Chief Audu Ogbe that agriculture has created over 6 million jobs within the current administration, particularly for the youth and women; its capacity to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.
- iii. Noted that growth in GDP for the agriculture sector was 13% in 2015; 4.69% in 3rd quarter of 2016, 5.3% in 2017 and today's overall sector's GDP contribution is about 24%, making it one of the largest contributors to the economy, and therefore qualifies as a sector that must be given increased and adequate attention.

- iv. Noted that budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector and farmers have over 5 years not exceeded 2 percent even with government's commitment to the Malabo Declaration, while appropriated budget line items and capital projects have not fully benefited small holder farmers. More so, some investments in agriculture are also sometimes opaque and difficult to monitor.
- v. Recommended that for the approved additional support to agriculture to be effective and impactful, government must consider the involvement of small scale farmers in decisions concerning its overall administration. While appreciating the risks and past failures usually associated with politicisation of the implementation of policy instruments in terms of financing, participants recommended that the disbursement of the funds should be need-based and not necessarily on geo-political formula or considerations. Participants therefore advocated that rather than the usual processes that subject such funding to political romance between the federal and state governments, and/or banks (where insider abuse and or huge access hurdles are inherent), the funds should be administered through credible and trusted farmers organizations and be directed at the following thematic priority areas: (i) inputs supply to farmers, (ii) extension services delivery revival, and (iii) small scale processing. Importantly, the capacity of the selected farmers organizations should be strengthened to enable them effectively administer the funds to their members while government maintains constant monitoring on the process. More so, the receiving banks should be selected through clearly set out criteria which includes track record of agriculture-credit administration, development orientation, alignment and relationship with small scale farmers.
- vi. Raised serious concerns and invited government to quickly consider the negative implications of the ongoing herdsmen-farmers conflicts which has decimated farming and productivity in the North Central (popularly known as the food basket of Nigeria), as well as the Boko Haram (insurgency) and the shrinking of lake chad in the North East which have also displaced farmers from their farming communities. Both factors have grave consequences on food security, employment, livelihoods and overall development in Nigeria, especially given that the two affected zones are the major food producing and supply zones in Nigeria.
- vii. Noted with displeasure that Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP 2017 - 2020) highlighted specific agriculture-related goals e.g., that Nigeria would be self-sufficient in tomato paste by 2017; rice by 2018; and wheat by 2020; and that Nigeria would be a net exporter of rice, cashew nuts, groundnuts, cassava and vegetable oil by 2020. However, it is lamentable that 2017 has passed and Nigeria is still a net importer of tomato and from all indications, the other targets appear unattainable. Investments and enabling environment that should have propelled the realization of such targets or the mobilization of the private sector is either poor or completely lacking.
- viii. Challenged government over the continued influx of food imports into the country

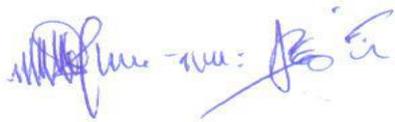
and the need for coordinated efforts among the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD), the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI) and the Federal Ministry of Finance (FMF) towards ensuring the effective management of policies and control in order to protect, encourage domestic investment and galvanize competition in the agriculture sector. This is without prejudice to various commitments by Nigeria at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) and the Common External Tariff (CET) as well as the upcoming Continental Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), but with the realization of the respective Trade Defence Measures accompanying these trade agreements.

- ix. Regretted that previous investments to agriculture including budgetary allocations to the sector as well as initiatives such as the Nigeria Investment Risk Sharing and Lending Scheme (NIRSAL), the Anchor Borrowers Scheme, the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS), among others cannot be said to have been properly directed to agriculture, and therefore have not fully achieved their objectives of creating impact on agriculture and the small scale farmers. Access to these facilities have been impeded by bureaucratic bottlenecks and policy hurdles including huge documentations requirement, favouritism that often seek to politicize such facilities. The need for independent monitoring and evaluation of these programmes and their outcomes has therefore become imperative, and demanded.
- x. Further regretted that some agriculture-based funds from donor agencies and development partners are either unknown by the farmers or misdirected by some government officials to private pockets or thematic areas/initiatives that possess low capacity to impact directly on the small scale farmers. In addition, the farmers are neither given the opportunity to determine the direction of investments nor influence the choice of targets and or priorities, thereby resulting in stunted or static growth and development of agriculture. However, two donor driven projects (the Value Chain Development project (the IFAD-FGN VCDP) and USAID MARKETS II) were commended for being well directed and impactful on the small scale farmers in Nigeria.
- xi. Highlighted the negative impact of policy summersaults on Nigeria's agriculture; e.g. the GESS (which is a welcome initiative) 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. Participants advised that rather than throwing the baby with the bathe water, the identified problems with the GESS administration should be addressed and the scheme sustained.
- xii. Commended the federal government's school feeding programme as having the capacity to impact positively on the farmers in terms of increase in productivity (given that local food is involved), compliment food and nutrition security for school children, etc. However, noting that not all the States are linked to the initiative, the impacts are not well integrated across the country. Farmers whose States are not involved should

- raise strong advocacy voice to their Governments so to attract the benefits from the initiative.
- xiii. Advised that the One-stop-shop initiative as a key component of the nations development strategy (vision 20:2020) should be revived as it provides the farmer a common place to have all agricultural needs (including inputs and extension advisory) on a spot. Private sector should be encouraged to rent such facilities and run them as business with effective monitoring from government and civil society organizations so that adulterated or sub-standard products and services are controlled or eliminated.
 - xiv. Noted the need for more investments on simple farm technologies in order to encourage youth in agriculture, but also to increase productivity. Participants called for tractorization for agriculture mechanization and the need for reducing sophistication and adapting/replicating local technologies by encouraging the National Council for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM) and other fabricators as well as relevant research Institutes to produce technologies into patency for commercial multiplication. Government should mobilize the political will to move such technologies from shelve to be multiplied commercially to improve acquisition.
 - xv. Raised concerns on the impact of Naira (currency) devaluation on farmers; a situation that has resulted in increase in the cost of paying back agriculture related loans, as well as increased the cost of imports, especially given that majority of agricultural inputs by farmers are imported.
 - xvi. Highlighted the need for fast track action on the subject of access to land for farmers, especially with emphasis on land preparation, land clearing and irrigation schemes. Farmers advocacy should therefore be targeted at both the Parliament and the Executive.
 - xvii. Noted that the Agriculture Development Programme (ADP) system appears to be moribund, as the linkages between research institutes, the extension service delivery and the farmers remain very weak.
 - xviii. Expressed the need for farmers to adopt Insurance culture in order to protect their investments in agriculture. This becomes very critical owing to three emerging factors (i) the challenge of climate change, (ii) diseases, and (iii) the farmers-herdsmen crises and the propensity to destroy livelihoods of farmers. To this end, the Nigerian Agriculture Insurance Corporation (NAIC) was called to improve on their approach so as to secure agriculture investments made by poor farmers.
 - xix. 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 (and by extension NANTS and TrustAfrica),

concluding that it gave farmer organizations 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.

For: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN TRADERS (NANTS)



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With support from:

