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NANTS – USAID, Africa Lead

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COMMUNIQUE AND REPORT

HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATION ON THE AGRICULTURE PROMOTION POLICY (APP) IN NIGERIA

**Hosted By National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS) and
Africa Lead with the Support of USAID.
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1. Background and Participation

The Federal Government of Nigeria has recently launched the national economic policy roadmap for the agriculture sector, tagged: “*The Green Alternatives: Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP), 2016-2020.*” The Agriculture Promotion Policy is the successor of the Agricultural Transformational Agenda 2011-2015. The APP document details strategies to revive the Agricultural sector with a view to boosting food production and creating jobs in the country in line with the overall economic policy thrust on diversification.

The APP is designed to bring together all agricultural strategies and plans developed in the recent past with the intention of developing Nigeria’s agricultural commodity value chains to increase productivity while also improving and or sustaining the livelihoods of producers. The strategy sets target and goals for the various agricultural subsectors with objectives of protecting foreign reserves, substituting imports, developing youths in Agriculture, reducing rural unemployment, developing commodity value chains and increasing private sector participation in Nigeria’s agricultural sector.

The transformation of the agricultural sector is now a development imperative for many African countries owing to the fact that the sector has been identified as the 21st century key driver of economic growth. Thus the APP in Nigeria is viewed as the policy framework for the much needed transformation that transcends the Agricultural sector and fundamental to solving the major problem of policy summersaults in Nigeria. Thus it is envisaged that the APP will mainstream the fundamentals of both regional and continental policies like the ECOWAP and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development plan (CAADP).

Thus NANTS in partnership with Africa Lead organized a two-day High Level consultation of selected MDAs and Non State Actors to brainstorm and be sensitized on the understanding and appreciation of the APP contents, principles and objectives. Furthermore, the consultation is intended to create a platform for stakeholders buy-in and participation in the policy implementation.

2. Technical sessions

The technical sessions took critical look at the various issues and policy frameworks at the national, regional and continental levels, as follows:

- i. Paper 1 which was delivered by Innocent Azih of NOAZ International examined the contents, roles and investment architecture that would make the APP work.
- ii. Paper 2, delivered by Dr. Manson Nwafor, an Economist with the ECOWAS/IITA-ReSSAKS dwelt on the APP alignment with NAIP, ECOWAP and CAADP.
- iii. Paper 3 which was delivered by Emeka Ngene explored the Convergences and Gaps between the APP and ATA and recommended ways for effective Implementation.
- iv. Paper 4 by Ken Ukaoha, Esq which expressed the challenges facing the APP implementation.

3. Participation

The consultation had in attendance representatives from ECOWAS, National Assembly Agriculture Committees at both Houses, relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) such as the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD – which sent in a presentation on the APP), Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment (FMITI), Agricultural Development Program (ADP), Ministry of Budget and Planning, etc, Universities of Agriculture, Feed the Future, Nigerian Police Academy, Colleges of Agriculture, relevant private sector organizations like NACCIMA, All Farmers Association of Nigeria (ALFAN), Association of Small Scale Agro Producers in Nigeria (ASSAPIN), Agriculture and Allied Employees Union of Nigeria (AAEUN), Cooperative Societies, including many civil society organizations and NANTS representatives participated.

4. Matters Arising from the Consultation

The stakeholders' consultation provided a platform for the technical review of the Agriculture promotion policy. The matters arising are:

- i. Understanding the contents and direction of the APP
- ii. Making the APP work and its Policy Brief and Investment
- iii. Convergence and Gaps between the APP and the ATA

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

At the end of the consultations, the following conclusions and recommendations were adopted:

- i. **APP is a Commendable Step by Government:** Participants commended the present administration for ensuring continuity in policy approach despite political party affiliation by drawing the APP from the ATA. It is a strong view that such is critical for sustainability, growth and development of the agriculture sector in Nigeria.
- ii. **Popularization of the APP as Next Steps:** Participants resolved that in order to complement the efforts and magnanimity of government, Non State Actors must increase the publicity and popularity of the APP for acceptability. The media was also therefore invited to use her veritable tool to widen the scope of popularization of the APP to all shades of the population. In this regard, NANTS and other stakeholders were called upon to increase the visibility and correctness of the information on the APP by building the capacity of the media on accurate and technical details of the policy document.
- iii. **Alignment of APP with ECOWAP and CAADP:** Participants noted the need to ensure that the APP maintains an effective linkage with the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) and the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) in order to galvanise integrity while also fostering effective outputs and results.
- iv. **M&E in the APP:** Participants noted the importance of monitoring and evaluation framework in policy implementation, and observed a near absence of a pronounced monitoring and evaluation component in the APP. The government was therefore tasked to formulate a comprehensive M&E framework (a joint sector review) that would involve

all stakeholders including the farmers for intermittent assessment of the implementation and performance of APP.

- v. **Agriculture Investments**: Participants further noted that investments in agriculture have not been encouraging especially given the popular government's slogan that agriculture provides the anchor for diversification of the nation's economy. In this regard, participants called for increased investments in agriculture at the federal, state and local government levels as well as private sector and ODA levels. More so, a major chunk of such investments should be targeted at the small scale farmers (who command more than 80% of the farming population), and particularly, the women and youth farmers. For any meaningful and sustainable development to occur using the agricultural sector in Nigeria, the small scale farmers must be the target. Similarly, participants called for Agricultural Budget Monitoring and tracking to ensure that monies and financial allocations are effectively utilized. It is a common knowledge amongst farmers in Nigeria that previous interventions and programs has been abused and abandoned.
- vi. **Autonomy of the Local Governments**: Participants remarked that agriculture is practised in the rural areas which are located in the various Local Governments Areas (LGAs) that ought to have been responsible for ensuring more direct and effective facilitation and administration of inputs for growth and development (being the closest tier of government). Unfortunately, the LGAs in Nigeria appear to have been shackled by the State and the joint accounts thereby making agriculture at the rural communities. It has therefore become imperative for the National Assembly to undertake a constitutional review that advances and guarantees the freedom and autonomy of the Local Governments that they may add value and or impact maximally on agriculture.
- vii. **Timely Release of Budgetary Allocations**: Importantly, against the background that agriculture is seasonal, the budgeting process, budgetary approvals, budgetary releases and utilization of funds for procurement of farm inputs must be timely in recognition of the APP's commitment to increased productivity and growth.
- viii. **Irrigation**: Participants are of the view that the construction of irrigation system will help the farmers to cultivate all year round and increase productivity. The grazing crisis and theft of farm produce should be condemned by all concerned in order to build confidence of the vulnerable rural farmers.
- ix. **Reduction of Transaction Costs**: As a way of increasing productivity and market access of agro commodities as provided for by the APP, participants called for improved trade and transport facilitation infrastructure for the free movement of agricultural product and reduction of transaction costs in doing business within the Agricultural value chains. Government is further advised to address the challenge of continuous waste of farm produce due to lack of improved processing technology.
- x. **Access to Finance**: Participants highlighted the importance of financial inclusion and access to funds by rural dwellers as a catalyst for agricultural development and economic growth as expressed by the APP. In this regard, participants called on the government to

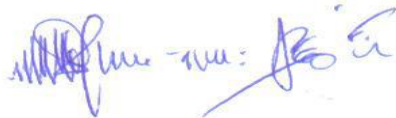
practically make access to earmarked funds less cumbersome and prompt by eliminating bottlenecks from these funds and possibly facilitating security bonds. The anchors Borrowers Scheme (ABS) with single digit interest and guaranteed market introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in some States is a step in the right direction; but must be extended to cover all States given its potential to increasing agricultural productivity. In addition, optimism was expressed on the Warehouse Development and Regulatory Agency Bill initiated by the Senate Committee on Industry to promote Warehouse receipts system for farm produce and farmers to use it as negotiable instrument to gain financial support and bonds.

- xi. **Access to Land:** Participants still consider the issue of Land use Act and Land grabbing as a major challenge to Agricultural development in the country. Commending the government for boldly making a statement in the APP by providing for the review of the Land Use Act and addressing the question of land grabbing, participants however challenged Non State Actors and citizens in general to see this promise as a benchmark to holding government accountable and measuring the impact of the APP.
- xii. **Climate Change Investment and Adaptation:** While commending government for making attributes in the APP to the subject of climate change and its potential impacts on the agricultural sector and the environment in Nigeria, participants however urged the federal government, private sector and development partners to match such pronouncements with the required financial investments. Actors in agriculture should also be made to have unhindered access to the climate change adaptation (CCA) funds. In addition, there is need for proper coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and that of Environment towards ensuring that CCA is given prominence and practical effect on the APP implementation.
- xiii. **GMOs and Chemicals Application:** Participants called on the Federal Government and its Agencies to come up with clear position and policy on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) in order to safeguard the health and well being of Nigerians. Similarly, although organic farming is canvassed, farmers organizations and civil society should embark on trainings and capacity building aimed at helping farmers to adapt to appropriate utilization/usage of chemicals, herbicides and insecticides (if they must) in order to avoid health hazards and other risks that are imminent arising from their wrong usage. The consultation also called on the Insurance sector to awaken to her role providing security, by protecting and indemnifying farmers and their produce from potential risks and hazards.
- xiv. **Extension Services and Research into Use:** Participants called on the various tiers of Government to fund research and development (particularly, research into use or farmer based research) in order to promote innovation in the Agricultural sector. To this effect, Research Institutes, Universities and Colleges of agriculture were urged to take their responsibilities while also assisting in creating entrepreneurship schemes. Participants further commended government's action towards injecting fresh blood into the extension service through the 500bn Naira poverty reduction fund. However,

participants were of the opinion that the ADP system must not be abandoned but rather revived to assist in the sustainability of the APP beyond its lifespan.

- xv. **Banks and Farmers Loan Repayments**: While frowning at the poor attention of the banks and other financial institutions on the agricultural sector development (despite the clear position of the APP), participants however called on Nigerian farmers who have obtained loans and facilities to keep faith by meeting up with the refunds and repayment plan in order to gain confidence and motivate further actions or facilities from the banks.
- xvi. **Stakeholders applauded NANTS and Africa Lead**: Participants expressed appreciation to NANTS for all her efforts at ensuring that Nigeria and her citizens take the rightful policy decisions on trade and agriculture, and Africa Lead and USAID for finding it worthy to partner with Nigeria's agriculture project, in the following specific dimensions:
- a. Providing the platform for consultation on the Agriculture Promotion Policy (APP) as a roadmap for agriculture development in Nigeria (2016 -2020). It was noted that since the adoption and public presentation of the document, only a very negligible number of Nigerians are aware of its existence, contents, coverage, implications, and action plan, and therefore the need for wider publicity.
 - b. Playing the role of farmers advocate on policy framework implementation ensuring that the intent and purposes of (APP) are achieved with the benefits accrued to the Nigerian farmers and investors.
 - c. Convening a broad based stakeholders consultation that integrated the participation of all subsectors represented in agriculture and providing the opportunity to market the APP.

For: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIAN TRADERS (NANTS)



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