

COMMUNIQUE

OF THE

3RD RICE INVESTMENT FORUM

ORGANIZED BY

NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP NIGERIA

1. PREAMBLE

The 2 – day forum was focused on the theme: 2018 Self Sufficiency in Rice Production: Opportunities Challenges, and the Road Ahead – Stimulating Production with the Right Policies, Practices and Technologies.

It was anchored by the Nepad Business Group Nigeria. It was held at the Ladi Kwali Hall, Abuja Sheraton Hotel, from 6-7 December 2016.

Participants were drawn from federal ministries the diplomatic corps, Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs), research institutions, states and local governments, the academia, financial institutions, civil society, international organizations, Non-Government Organizations, community based organizations, the organized private sector, professional bodies, small holder farmers, the media and the general public.

A total of 370 delegates registered for the Forum, while 30 organizations exhibited different varieties of made in Nigeria rice and other locally fabricated rice processing equipment. The Forum featured an opening ceremony and 5 plenary sessions with 22 paper presentations along with interactive question and answer/comments sessions.

2. OPENING CEREMONY

The well attended opening ceremony kick-started with the National Anthem and a Welcome Address presented on behalf of Mrs. Nike Akande – Chairman of the Nepad Business Group Nigeria by Mallam Abu Aliu.

The Chairman stressed that the 3rd edition of the Rice Investment Summit was geared to build on the success of the previous editions. She also highlighted the crucial need for diversification of the economy which rice production could fill.

The Keynote Address, speaking to the theme of the Forum was delivered on behalf of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Chief Audu Ogbeh by Mr. Obinna G. Opara.

The Honorable Minister expressed delight that Nepad Business Group Nigeria had brought key actors together to chart a way forward for rice production which he described as a critically important staple. The Minister spotlighted the Federal Government's Agric Promotion Policy (APP) which set a target for self sufficiency in rice production for 2018. He also reeled out implementation strategies for government's auspicious drive. The challenges to achievement were also mentioned along with a suite of priority actions to surmount the challenges. He also lauded the achievements of the Anchor Borrower's Rice Program. He concluded with words of gratitude for Nepad Business Groups Nigeria's efforts.

The representative of the Hounourable Minister, other dignitaries present and the delegates to the Forum then took out time to visit the exhibitions.

3. PLENARY SESSIONS

a. **The 1st Plenary Session:** consisted of six papers focused on "Rice Production and Productivity in Nigeria". The session was co- chaired by Mr. Emmanuel Ijewere and Mr. Rabe Mani a total of 6 papers were presented.

The key outcomes:

- i. The need for increase in integrated rice mills was stated.
- ii. Research and Development was touted as an enabler of improved yield.
- iii. The key role of seed in the Rice value chain was emphasized.

- iv. Low demand for inputs and improved seedlings due to low awareness amongst farmers was highlighted.
 - v. The impact of poor processing on *Ofada* rice and lack of quality breeder seeds was also pointed out as the reasons for lack of large scale commercialization of *Ofada* rice.
- b. **The 2nd Plenary:** focused on “Right Practices and Technologies and Rice Production”. It featured 4 paper presentations.

The key outcomes:

- i. A direct linkage was drawn between technology and improved rice yield per Hectare.
 - ii. A transparent and effective commodity buy-back scheme was advanced as a good practice to boost rice production.
 - iii. The effect of good post-harvest practices and implements were also advocated.
 - iv. The importance of standards to the value of the Nigerian rice was also stated.
- c. **The 3rd Plenary:** was chaired by Mr. Jamilu Muhammad Danmalam the Special Assistant to the Jigawa State Government on Rice Production, it was themed “Developing the Nigerian Rice Value Chain.” 4 papers were presented.

The key outcomes:

- i. The success of the Anchor Borrowers Program was lauded and its continuity encouraged.
 - ii. Low level of adoption and use of mechanization due mainly to paucity of support for local input production was raised.
 - iii. Effective agric financing as the rallying point of the rejuvenation of the Nigerian economy was stated.
 - iv. The Smallholder farmer as important participants in the value chain worthy of more direct support was stated.
- d. **The 4th Plenary:** on day 2 was titled “Government Policies, Dry Season Farming and Rice Production”.

The key outcomes:

- i. Government is determined to provide policy framework for achievement of 2018 self-sufficiency in rice production.
 - ii. Outright ban on importation of rice was discouraged but rather increased levies and other fiscal measures were encouraged.
 - iii. Warning on putting too much effort on integrated Rice mills at expense of enhanced paddy production was sounded.
 - iv. Continued education of farmers was advocated as the solution to the long term challenges of dry season farming.
- e. **The 5th Plenary:** focused on “Financing the Rice Value Chain by Commercial Banks: Prospects and Challenges”.

The key outcomes:

- i. Eco-technology should not be sacrificed on the alter of bio-technology improvement. Both should go hand-in-hand.
 - ii. Enhanced financial education for farmers to help them access funds.
- f. **Other outcomes emerging from interactive session:**
- i. The issue of land tenure under the Land Use Act and the need for its amendment was consistently raised.
 - ii. The question of insecurity of farmers in light of the constant clashes with herdsmen was raised as well. It was noted that more interaction must be organized between the 2 parties.
 - iii. The role of ADPs as vehicles of disseminating improved farming technologies was also raised.

4. CLOSING

Mr. Dosumu Oluwole the Acting Head, NEPAD Business Group Nigeria Secretariat brought the Forum to a close with a vote of thanks. He expressed his appreciation to all who graced the occasion and used the occasion to restate the resolve of the NEPAD Business Group Nigeria to continue to intervene and partner with other stakeholders in the rice value chain to help bring transform the economy of Africa.