

**COMMUNIQUÉ OF 2-DAY MAIDEN CONFERENCE
ON FEEDING FUTURES AFRICA (FFA2018)
ORGANIZED BY
HEDA (HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA) RESOURCE
CENTRE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OXFAM
HELD AT THE LAGOS CITY HALL, LAGOS ISLAND, LAGOS, NIGERIA
14TH/15TH AUGUST, 2018**

Preamble

A 2-day maiden conference tagged **Feeding Futures Africa (FFA2018)** held on Tuesday, 14th and Wednesday, 15th at the Lagos City Hall, Lagos Island in Lagos. The conference was organized by **HEDA Resource Centre** in partnership with **OXFAM**. Participants at the Conference included Development stakeholders in the agriculture and food production sector, human development agencies, financial institutions, entrepreneurship support groups as well as government's ministries, department and agencies (MDAs).

FFA2018 was conceived as a forum for harnessing the potentials of wide-range of stakeholders cutting across large, medium and small-scale holders in the agriculture and food production sector in Nigeria. According to **HEDA**, "agriculture provides safe spaces for young people to make impact and create wealth".

The key goal of the Conference was to build the capacities of individuals and groups in the agriculture and food production sector as well as to foster opportunities for partnership and support in pursuit of the cardinal objective of sustainable food security regime in response to the grinding challenges of hunger and poverty in Nigeria and the African Continent. The conference therefore sought to achieve the following objectives:

- make engagement in agriculture and food production ventures become more appealing and fulfilling to Nigerian citizens; particularly young farmers and women who desire knowledge about innovations and technologies that could unleash their potentials in the agriculture and food production sector.
- Sensitize young and new stakeholders in agricultural and food production sector on the existing as well as emerging windows of opportunities that could be leveraged upon for more prospective ventures.
- Respond to the dilemma of low capacity utilization amongst the array of young and prospective actors with passion for pursuing careers in agriculture and food production.

Farmers and stakeholders in the food production sectors in Nigeria and across the Continent of Africa are confronted with multifaceted challenges requiring concerted partnership amongst the actors across in the public and private spheres of the society. For instance, women who account for half of the population of farmers in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa are marginalized and denied the much-needed encouragement and institutional support required for optimum engagement in agriculture and food

production. In spite of these challenges however, agriculture and the food production sector offers huge potentials for harnessing the energies and passions of ever-increasing population of unemployed; particularly the youth with potentials for leveraging on the immense opportunities for job creation, empowerment and wealth creation.

Accordingly, FFA2018 could not have been more auspicious considering the frustration attributable to governmental neglect; real or imagined and the prevailing difficulties encountered in accessing support from relevant institutions in the private sector.

Presentations and Deliberations

Goodwill messages by HEDA and OXFAM as well as other partners set the tone for deliberations at the Conference. Presentations were also made by Resource Persons drawn across diverse disciplines and professions in the academics, development institutions, financial institutions, entrepreneurial platforms as well as government MDAs including National Agency for the Control of Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), National Orientation Agency (NOA), National Institute (NiMET). Deliberations at the conference were enhanced through robust engagement with presentations by panelists on wide-range of issues bordering on agriculture, food production and food security at the following sessions:

* *Citizenship and Food: Everybody deserves 3-square meals*

* *Water Don Get Enemy? : Climate change, food security and conflict*

* *Big Wealth in Cottage Sizes: Promoting and facilitating enablers for agro-cottages as economic diversifiers*

* *Show me the money: Walking the talk of finance and insurance in agriculture*

* *Agric Technology: A cardinal Driver of Food Security*

* *Ancestral Flavours and Remedies: Promoting our Heritage through food and agriculture.*

* *Knowledge and Extension at the heart of it all: Empowering the 21st Century Farmers.*

Participants were also engaged in deliberations at different sessions of Master Classes including side-shows that featured as part of the events at the conference. In the desire to improve their capacities and access relevant information that could transform their ventures in the agriculture and food production sector, participants exhaustively engaged the presentations which prompted critical elucidation on a wide range of issues.

Observations

Participants at the conference observed that deliberate attention and intervention on the following highlighted issues are strategic for creating fresh impetus for more productive engagement in agriculture and food production sector:

- Inadequacy of budgetary allocation which limit the growth the agricultural sector in Nigeria.
- Lack of national data and information portal on farmers, farming and food production activities that could be relied upon for resource and intervention purposes.

- Improvement in agricultural extension services to provide farmers with adequate and relevant information at the appropriate time.
- Prioritization of food security by creating enabling environment for farmers through policy intervention.
- Provision of essential resources and inputs such as improved seedlings, pesticides etc to farmers as a form of subvention or at affordable rates.
- Lack of policy direction on small scale (small holder) farming and food production activities towards sustainable food security.
- Inaccessibility of modern farm implements as well as the relevant technologies for easily adaptation to the Nigerian ecological system to optimize agricultural outputs.
- Improved advocacies to draw the attention of government to the challenges facing farmers and militating against agriculture and food production in the country.
- Dearth of financial support for stakeholders in the food production sector that hinders development of local capacities.
- Low level of technological adaptation which impedes marketing and sales of agricultural produce and locally produced food.
- Challenge of technical know-how in harvesting, storage of farm produce and food processing.
- Need for greater awareness amongst citizens towards appreciating that ensuring rights to food becomes reality is the responsibility all citizens.
- Greater attention to issues of climate change that impedes agriculture; hinders production and increases the windows of hunger amongst the populace.
- Greater attention to the growing concern that agricultural production will face progressive decline in outputs in decades to come.
- Greater attention to the 36-year changes in rainfall patterns that has limited the optimization of agricultural outputs and could likely lead to decline in the production of most the staple foods in Nigeria.
- Heighten social insecurity as manifested by herders/farmers clashes in the country portends food insecurity in the future.
- Environment pollution, degradation and destruction of water bodies which constitute huge impediments to food security.
- Rural urban drift which intensified with oil boom has been compounded by negative impacts of climate change leading to progressive decline in food production in indigenous communities.
- Need for sustained enlightenment to change the predominant perception that agriculture is a low status venture.
- Need for youth and women to be creative in exploring limitless opportunities in agricultural value chains; especially in the processing and storage of agricultural produce.
- The need to ensure that food insecurity would not remain a lingering challenge by ensuring that agriculture and food production become social responsibility to the extent that availability and accessibility to food is seen as human rights.

Resolutions

Participants at the conference resolve to demonstrate more commitment to productive engagement in agriculture and food production sector of the economy. Participants at the conference resolve to deploy individual and collaborative efforts in pursuing their visions, goals and mandates in line with the objective of ensuring that food security in Nigeria. In recognition of the fact food insecurity will deepen the crisis of hunger and poverty, the conference further resolves as follows:

- The conference resolves to work in partnership with government and stakeholders at different levels to ensure that availability and access to food in Nigeria become issue of human rights rather than just an item in the hierarchy of human needs.
- The conference agrees to be committed to policy change and advocacy towards ensuring that citizens who are vulnerable to hunger and malnourishment are accorded the needed recognition and attention; and demanding of responsibility from government and the society.
- The conference implores **HEDA** and **OXFAM** as well as other development partners to initiate the process of generating reliable and sustainable *National Data and Information Portal* on farmers, farming and food production activities for ease of intervention and support purposes.
- The conference resolves to be active and vigilant in protecting the environment against pollution, degradation and destruction of water bodies as a way of guaranteeing food security.
- The conference resolves that their future engagement in agriculture and food production would be geared towards providing social security for the communities and society at large in the contexts of cultural and indigenous development and not solely as a matter of business.
- Participants resolves to take maximum advantage of early warning signals such as Seasonal Rainfall Prediction (SRP) by NiMET and Climate sensors as well as to explore the opportunity of Climate Insurance in mitigating the effect of climate change.
- The conference calls on government and the relevant agencies to ensure that early warning on climatic condition and other environmental issues become a regular practice to provide periodic information to farmers and food producers.

Conclusion

Participants at **FFA2018** urge government to address the abysmal low level of funding in the agricultural and food protection sector in Nigeria. Conference canvases special support for women in agriculture and in food production sector to catalyze sustained engagement of families and communities in food security. The conference further acknowledge that citizen must desist from acting as climate change terrorist but demonstrate greater committed to ensuring that the environment guarantees productive engagement. The conference therefore urges participants to be sensitive in mitigating negative impacts on the environment.

Participants agreed to organize themselves into cooperative societies and to embrace specialization which makes access to funding and supports much easier to pursue and brightens the prospects of their ventures. Participants expressed willingness to explore the huge windows of opportunities for wealth creation in food processing and packaging in the agricultural value chains Participants expressed appreciation to the organizers of **FFA2018** for the wonderful opportunities provided by the forum. Participants expressed anticipation that future engagement with FFA would build on the successes of the maiden edition of the conference.

Signed

For FFA2018 Organizers

