

22nd October, 2018

The Honourable Minister,

Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development
No. 1, Capital Drive
FCDA
Area 11, Garki
F.C.T, Abuja.

Dear Sir,



FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI) APPLICATION FOR DETAILS OF THE N15.4 BILLION TO BE SPENT ON PROJECTS OUTSIDE THE REMIT OF THE NATIONAL BUDGET FOR 2018

The above subject matter refers.

The Human and Environmental Development Agenda Resource Centre is a non-governmental organization and non-partisan human rights and development league. It has the mandate to protect and promote universally recognized human rights, accountability and environmental justice in Nigeria and Africa, in accordance with international standards. These objectives are pursued through research and publications, campaigns, human rights education and empowerment projects and programmes.

We hereby make a request under the Freedom of Information for relevant information on the Ministry's project earmarked for the sum of N15,322,424,894.00 Billion contrary to the National Budget, 2018

Our application is on the basis of media reports, particularly that of Sahara Reporters dated the 4th October, 2018, which alleges that the headquarter of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development has proposed to spend N15,322,424,894.00 Billion on projects that do not seem to tally with the scope of its function.

It is observed that the projects also seem to conflict with the duties of other Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs). A breakdown of the projects indicate that the ministry intends to spend N1,716,430,615 or an estimate of N1.7 billion on nine erosion and water channelization projects across the country.

The 2018 Appropriation Act gives the ministry the go-ahead to use N10,771,416,308 or an estimated N10.8 billion on the provision of solar lights in various local government areas and senatorial districts.

The budget, which was hesitantly signed by President Muhammadu Buhari in June, gives the FMARD's HQ permission to use N4,271,008,586 to deliver 500 KVA transformers to the six geopolitical zones at the cost of N701,001,431 or approximately N700 million each.

The headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture is also licensed to provide and install 300KVA transformers to various unspecified locations in Kwara North Senatorial district with N65 million. The ministry, which has a rural development department, is also permitted by the act to rehabilitate public schools with N80 million. Listed among the myriad of rural and access roads the agriculture ministry's headquarters intends to repair, rehabilitate or construct is the upgrade of a pathway and driveway at Alalubosa Layout, GRA, Ilorin South LGA, Kwara State at the cost of N200 million.

While the HQ could smuggle its erosion projects under its Agriculture Land and Climate Change department, these projects clash directly with the functions of the Federal Ministry of Environment - Erosion, Flood and Coastal Zone Management parastatal and the objectives of the Ecological Fund Office. The headquarters budget also has a line item, which budgets N2.5 billion for land and climate management.

Although the Rural Electrification Agency (REA) is empowered by the Electric Power Sector Reform Act of 2005 to coordinate rural electrification programmes in Nigeria on behalf of the Federal Government, the Ministry of Agriculture has the mandate to spend N10.8 billion on 16 solar-powered street lights. Six of these line items propose to spend N1,231,902,718 billion each on the construction and installation of unspecified number of solar powered street lights across the geopolitical zones that make up the country.

Besides the plan to spend N1.2 billion and N700 million on unknown quantities of street lights and transformers across the North-Central, North-East, North-West, South-West, South-East and South-South, the FMARD HQ also proposed to use N400,572,246 each on the following: Erosion control in Amoo-Nchara Road, Etiti-Edda, Afikpo South, Ebonyi State and Methodist Church Court, Akegbe junction in Nkanu-West Local Government Area, Enugu State; erosion control in Egbu and Akokwa in Imo State; construction of solar powered boreholes with reticulation in Kano Grazing Lands Phase I; and construction of solar powered boreholes with reticulation in Kano Grazing Lands Phase II.

"We do not run a programme-based budget in Nigeria," said Samuel Atiku, Head of Research at BudgIt. "Our budget is designed to spend money."

According to him, most of the directors in the 800 MDAs in the country are poorly enumerated, therefore, filling up their spending proposals with contracts becomes a way of making ends meet.

Excluding the seemingly misplaced projects, the proposals made by the headquarters are dotted with several poorly described line items. Some of the projects have no exact location or listed number of facilities and equipment to be provided. This in itself reduces the possibility of independent monitoring.

The HQ, for example, intends to spend N100 million on a project defined as 'construction of solar borehole for Kogi State'. There are also proposals to supply, install and commission unspecified amount of water rigs across the country for N2 billion; construct and repair unstated kilometres of rural feeder roads nationwide for N2.5 billion, among other such projects.

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development Headquarters has a total budget of N106,495,791,505, which is an estimate of N106.5 billion. It has a spending envelope of 98,961,267,654, an approximate of N99 billion and a recurrent expenditure of 7,534,523,851, which is about N7.5 billion.

It is on the above basis that we are making this request, as we believe that records and details of the said report available to your ministry will aid the investigations by civil society, thus this application is brought pursuant to the provisions of Section 2, 3, and 4 of the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

We look forward to your utmost cooperation and the prompt receipt of the requested information and in any event, within seven (7) days of this application as provided under the Freedom of Information Act, 2011.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Olanrewaju Suraju
(Chairman)

