

Nigeria RIU Country Assessment Executive Summary



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Executive Summary

Background

The team provided essential background on the very active agriculture sector in Nigeria. Statistics are unreliable and the most recent census of late 2006, which resulted in an estimate of a total population of just under 130 million, is being questioned by State Governments as an underestimate. What is agreed however is the level of poverty: with some 90 per cent of the population below a poverty line of US\$ 2 per day, this is proving very difficult to reduce. Against this backdrop, the latest report on progress to attain any levels of progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is disappointing, with enduring poverty and corruption still viewed as huge problems. In addition there is a clear increase year on year in the levels of poverty in the northern States of the country. Other statistics are no less gloomy: Nigeria is listed by FAO as amongst the nations that are technically unable to meet their food requirements; HIV/AIDS has serious adverse impacts on food security; and agricultural productivity is falling.

This situation is well understood by the Government of Nigeria (GoN) and the international development partners including the UK, DFID. There is a concentrated development effort now focused on Nigeria and within this the role of agriculture and natural resources is now being given increasing attention. Within the last few years efforts have been concentrated behind the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), and the State level equivalents (SEEDS). Development partners such as DFID have concentrated substantial efforts in assisting both the Federal and State governments in making the pledges embodied in the NEEDS and SEEDS documents real, and backed efforts for reform at all levels of government. As the majority of the Nigerian population are still rural and depend on agriculture as a livelihood, the role of the National Agricultural Services (NARs), which is a Federal responsibility, and the public sector funded extension services, which are the responsibility of the 36 States within Nigeria, are being brought increasingly under the spotlight. Reform of research and extension is now viewed as

pivotal to any efforts to increase the productivity of the agricultural sector and provide a platform for poverty reduction. Therefore any new initiative such as the Research into Use Programme (RIUP), needs to take careful note of the efforts of the GoN to make changes to the agriculture and natural resources sectors, assisted by an array of development projects funded by many donors. This policy context provides an overview of the policy environment within which the Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) sectors are located. The importance of agriculture including forestry and fisheries is difficult to over estimate. Estimates of a contribution of 35% of GDP are likely to undervalue the importance of the sector. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the State equivalent (SEEDS) both recognize this and have set a policy environment to diversify the productive base away from oil. This requires a target of a 6% growth in agriculture. Recently this growth level is being exceeded but only by an increase in the area under cultivation. Yield and productivity have declined.

Process

The Country Assessment Mission (CAM) for Nigeria worked in country from the 29th January to the 22nd February 2007, and during this period endeavoured to identify the potential for a structured Research into Use Programme (RIUP). Throughout the work the Team co-operated with the Monitoring and Impact Lesson Learning group and interviews were often held jointly. In Nigeria the team were given support from the NEPAD office which is gratefully acknowledged. On arrival and departure the team met the DFID Livelihoods Advisor and gained much from his local knowledge. Before leaving Abuja the Team met both DFID and NEPAD and held discussions, based on a Pre-Departure note. A second draft is being prepared when additional Annex material becomes available but their will not be substantial changes.

Opportunities

The overall conclusion of the team was that there were exciting opportunities for an RIU programme in Nigeria and that this was timely given the resurgence of interest in the efficient and profitable use of natural resources in the country and the urgent need for Nigeria to harness research to reverse the trend of declining productivity in agriculture. RIU opportunities were identified at three Levels.

- There are valid entry points at the Federal Level which cannot be ignored. These complement the ongoing work of DFID and other development partners and could result eventually in significant changes to the whole infrastructure of Agricultural Research and Extension in Nigeria. These Opportunities can be described as 'strategic', and without these fundamentals and 'big picture' changes being implemented, the future for RNR research is bleak. There is wide acceptance in Nigeria that the status quo is not an option.
- Secondly, opportunities exist at the State level which supports the changes under way by State Governments to plan and implement the SEEDS agenda. Again we argue that the vital extension efforts in agriculture which are presently mired in the Agriculture Development Projects structures, need urgent reform.
- Finally opportunities exist in a number of local or thematic areas such as aquaculture, rain water harvesting, and cassava processing. While these three are given priority, we have listed a number of other areas which are attracting attention in Nigeria and would be worthy of investigation.

The team were conscious of linking any opportunity to a real and tangible Innovation Platform and listed a typology of the platforms found during the mission. The argument is that if a real platform is pre-existing and can be linked to an Opportunity there is scope for an RIUP entry point.

Recommendations

- As the resources of the RIU Programme will be small in comparison to the scale of the problems in Nigeria, the Programme will at all times seek to form complementary relationships with ongoing Programmes.
- To maximise impact, the RIUP should work at a number of levels. For example, if there are opportunities to influence the important changes which are required at the Federal level, these will be considered.
- As the task of the RIU Programme is to increase the widespread use of research, the activities in Nigeria will essentially take an 'action research approach', in which the programme consciously evolves in the light of its experience, and pro-actively learns lessons of use in other countries.
- Finally, the RIUP should be both proactive in seeking out opportunities at the local level or themes in the areas identified, and at the same time is reactive by encouraging well formulated proposals. These proposals would require evidence of a valid Innovation Platform in terms of the involvement of research agencies, government, and producers, and be supported if a degree of matched funding was present.
- The team were conscious of the corpus of work which is inherited from the previous Renewable Natural Resources Research Programme. They endeavoured to trace linkages but this was found to be difficult. It is suggested that the process is reversed and the Validated Data Base is now used to illuminate the themes which have been identified as potential Opportunities. We would suggest this work is undertaken in March to inform the final Report.

Next Steps

One issue which needs to be resolved early is the potential management structure and institutional home of the RIUP in Nigeria. In addition an outline timetable might be as set out below:

- Discussions with the MIL team on the outcomes of the Case Studies and possible entry points within the selected thematic opportunities.
- Meeting of the Management Advisory Group, DFID Abuja based Adviser, the retained Nigerian Consultant, and the NR International Project Director in Abuja with representative of the Federal Agencies involved. The goal would be to agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal agency which would be the institutional home for the Programme. At this point it may be possible to move forward on the State level planning work by agreeing on one/two States where SEEDS planning work in respect to the ADPs is open to influence. At the same time there should be scope to begin conversations with researchers based in the relevant NARs where there is active work on one or more of the themes identified.
- Work within the UK NR International team to agree a format for the way in which the funding mechanism would operate. This will need to accommodate both sub-contracting work to Nigerian consultants and agencies. Experience is that this requires clear contract templates. There is also a question in regard to how the grant elements of the funding will operate. This need agreement on the levels of matching funding required; the criteria for selection of proposals; and a governance structure to ensure transparency. This mechanism would apply to other Country Programmes: however the principles will need to be cleared by DFID in Abuja.



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