



## **Communiqué of the 11<sup>th</sup> APRNet Policy Seminar held at Haske Luxury hotel, Minna, Niger State on Thursday, May 23, 2019**



*Figure 1. Group Photograph of Participants at the 11<sup>th</sup> APRNet Policy Seminar. Minna*

The APRNet's 11<sup>th</sup> Agricultural Policy Research Seminar was held at Haske Luxury Hotel, Minna, Niger State on Thursday, May 23, 2019. The Policy Seminar which was supported by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI-Nigeria) was attended by 50 participants from the academia, research community, Ministries and Development Agencies (MDAs), private agribusiness firms, NGOs, IFAD, Postgraduate students in Agricultural sciences and related agricultural and food policy fields. Some distinguished guests included - Professor Odojin, Dean, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, who represented the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Technology, Minna; the President, Agricultural Society (ASN) of Nigeria, Dr Ishaq; the Honourable Commissioner for Agriculture, Niger State – represented by the Permanent Secretary, Niger State Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Musa. Others are - the Acting Managing Director, Niger State Agricultural Mechanization and Development Agency, Alhaji Rijau; Niger State Programme Coordinator of the IFAD Value Chain Development Programme, Mallam Kuta and

Professor J.N. Nmadu (President, Nigerian Association of Agricultural Economist and APRNet Member).

The specific aim of the Agricultural Policy Seminar at Minna was among others to dialogue with Niger State agricultural stakeholders on strategies to improve the adaptive capacity of farmers in the areas of climate change with lessons from farmers that participated in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - Value Chain Development Programme (VCDP) for farmers on climate change. APRNet was also in the State to brainstorm on other problems/challenges of food insecurity in Nigeria especially in Niger State as it relates to farmers/herdsmen conflict and even engaging the multi-stakeholders in the State and Nigerian agriculture to discuss issues relating to poverty reduction through agricultural resources by all levels of Government in Nigeria. The event combined both seminar and multi-stakeholders' engagement to address teething issues in Nigerian agriculture and food sector. It was generally a reflective stock-taking, information sharing and learning of best practices as experienced by the actors themselves related to cross cutting issues in agricultural development policy sphere. Just as researchers have responsibility to communicate with end-users, the end-users themselves should be able to tell their own stories too. Against this backdrop, the Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet) convened the 11<sup>th</sup> Seminar series.

The President of APRNet, Dr. Anthony O. Onoja, in his welcome address, noted that the 11<sup>th</sup> APRNet Policy seminar series was in tandem with the APRNet seminar objectives which include: sharing knowledge about existing approaches and practices in linking agricultural research with policymakers, farmers and agricultural practitioners; discussing and learning innovative approaches and practices for more effective research dissemination and research utilization by end-users; enabling the exchange of perspectives and ideas among the producers, scientists and users of agricultural research; and giving opportunity for inter-stakeholders interaction and networking of researchers, policymakers, farmers and agricultural practitioners. He explained what IFPRI and APRNet were doing across the country in engaging farmers, scientists, policy makers and other multi-stakeholders in Nigeria for improved food and agricultural development for several years now. Dr Onoja identified some key challenges facing the Nigerian agricultural sector lately which included the problem of climate change, violent clashes between herdsmen and farmers across the country, all exacerbating poor farm productivity; paucity of finance and poor access to resource inputs, harvest losses along value chains amidst other challenges. He noted that most of these problems were interwoven and would require evidence-based policies that will adopt a multi-stakeholder model as was being done by APRNet-IFPRI. The President rounded off his address by expressing his appreciation to the **new IFPRI-Nigeria Programme Leader - Dr. Balana Bedru** who apologized for not coming for the event due to other pressing office assignment. He thanked all participants, LOC Chair and team as well as the APRNet EXCO members for making the seminar a huge success. Copies of the Nigerian Agricultural Policy Research Journal (NAPReL) of various volumes were shared among different institutions and departments represented at the event.



*Figure 2. APRNet President, Dr. Tony O. Onoja, presenting a welcome address.*



*Figure 3. The Nigerian Agricultural Policy Research Journal (NAPReJ) of various volumes being shared among different institutions and departments represented at the event.*

In his keynote address delivered on behalf of the Honourable Commissioner of Agriculture, Niger State, the Permanent Secretary, Niger State Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Musa exposed the agricultural potentials of the state, including its ability to feed the country if the resources abound are properly harnessed. He affirmed that the timing of the seminar is apt, given that it coincided with the timing of government's focus on diversification. He however expressed dismay on the efficacies of states' policies, while harping on the need to domicile agricultural policies for effectiveness. He posited that the states will find it difficult to achieve targeted development outcomes without deep rooted and operational states' policies.

The PS assured that the draft Niger State Agricultural policy will be shared with APRNet for comments and inputs. Stressing further, he reiterated that agriculture is the major source of livelihood of Niger State and that if made attractive, targeted development outcomes will be achieved. He however noted that the pastoralist-farmer conflicts have been a thorny issue ravaging and dividing the country. He hinted that ranching and grazing reserves are same with slight variation.

He informed the seminar that Niger State is already developing 23 pilot grazing reserves, covering 32,000 hectares. He affirmed that requisite infrastructures such as schools, dams, pasture plots, police stations and veterinary clinics are being provided within these pilot grazing reserves, while the next stage will involve animal upgrading for economic and trait benefits. He expressed satisfaction with the activities of IFAD Value Chain Development Programme within the state and hope that the outcome of the workshop will provide inputs into the state's on-going interventions, including that of the pilot grazing reserve.

Goodwill message came from the Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Technology, Minna represented by Professor Odojin, Dean, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology. In his speech, Professor Odojin affirmed that the seminar series is being organised at a time when the country is facing numerous challenges. He further stated that seminars of this nature offer more benefits than conferences, given that it affords participants the opportunity for extensive discussion of topical issues.

Finally, he tasked the participants and the Network to beam their search light on the appropriate redress mechanism for the recurring pastoralist-farmer conflicts in the country in the context of the ranching and grazing reserve redress alternatives which have generated so much attention in the country.

On his part of goodwill speech, the President, Agricultural Society (ASN) of Nigeria, Dr Ishaq expressed satisfaction with the activities of **APRNet** towards redressing agricultural related policy issues in Nigeria. He noted that the body has a huge role to play in bridging the technological gap through its policy interventions and advised that the network should move towards taking the lead in policy formulation and review within the country. In addition, he informed the audience that the ASN is the apex body of all agricultural related academic associations in Nigeria and revealed that arrangements were already in top gear towards establishing an Institute of Agriculture which will serve all agricultural stakeholders in Nigeria.

Delivering his goodwill message, the Acting Managing Director, Niger State Agricultural Mechanization and Development Agency, Alhaji Rijau affirmed that the agency is a key stakeholder of the agriculture sector in the state, with focus on

numerous areas of agricultural intervention, particularly agricultural extension. He affirmed the readiness of the organisation in partnering with APRNet, towards moving the agriculture sector forward in the state.

Addressing the seminar on behalf of the Niger State Programme Coordinator of the IFAD Value Chain Development Programme, Mallam Kuta affirmed that the programme commenced in 2014 and is expected to terminate by close of 2019. He revealed that the programme initially covered 3 Local Government Areas (Katchia, Wushishi and Bida), but was later extended to 5 LGAs (including Shiroro and Kotangora) to cover the 3 senatorial zones of the state.

He revealed that 3 additional LGAs were being proposed to the existing five, given the impact of the programme. He highlighted the successes recorded by the programme in the state to include capacity building of value chain actors, including farmers, dissemination of production technologies (Faro 44 & 52, fertilizer, agrochemical, weather equipment, etc.), market linkages involving off-takers, including partnership with private sector to redress identified constraints along the rice and cassava value chains, provision of processing and market infrastructure and roads.

He affirmed that rice productivity increased from 1.2-1.5mt/ha at the programme inception to about 5-6mt/ha under rain-fed and 6-7mt/ha with irrigation, while cassava productivity moved from about 12-15mt/ha - 21-25mt/ha currently as a result of the programme.

In summary, the following issues were raised from the seminar paper on “Adaptive Capacity of IFAD-VCDP Farmers to Climate Change in North Central Nigeria” presented by Professor J.N. Nmadu:

1. Effect of climate on agricultural activities and humans in the two states of Benue and Niger is obvious and worrisome, manifesting in high temperature, delayed rainfall, irritation amongst other effects.
2. Beneficiaries of IFAD-VCDP in Benue State focused more on household level adaptation strategies, while those in Niger State concentrated on the farm level adaption strategies.
3. That farmers employed both farm and household level adaptation strategies to ameliorate the impact of climate change on their welfare.

## RESOLUTIONS

Based on the above issues observed, the following resolutions were made:

- Government and NGOs in Nigeria with the facilitation of APRNet and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Federal Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, should enhance the adaptive capacities of farmers through awareness campaigns, capacity building and linkage to weather information.
- Government and donor agencies should assist in making reliable climate and weather information accessible to all farmers. Climate change should be

mainstreamed in all agricultural institutions and organizations by providing reliable weather and climate information and updates through extension services at the local level

- There is also need for integration and collaboration between several government and non-governmental organizations involved in climate change adaptation for the usefulness of the recipient farmer at the local level which institution like APRNet should be empowered to handle through adequate funding.



Figure 4. Some EXCO Members with the Seminar Paper Presenter, Prof. Job Nmadu (Standing second from left).



Dr. Tony O. Onoja (President)

Signed .....

Dr. Anthony O. Onoja

*APRNet President*

Signed.....

Dr. Emeka C. Nze

*Secretary General*