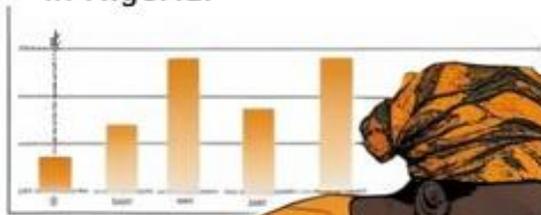


POLICY BRIEF

# Agricultural Research Institutions And Small Holder Farmers In Nigeria: The Gap

Bridging the gap between agroecological research, agricultural value chain innovation and grassroots farm practices in Nigeria.



# POLICY BRIEF ON SMALL SCALE WOMEN FARMERS AND RESEARCH INNOVATIONS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy Brief summarises the identified challenges and recommendations of the Agricultural Research for Women Farmers Project. The project seeks to: (a) ensure that Small Scale Women Farmers (SWOFON) have a voice in the setting of agriculture research agenda; (b) identify and address challenges faced by research institutions in translating their work into practical solutions for women farmers; (c) ensure that there is increased use of agroecological research outcome by SWOFON members (d) ensure that there is increased knowledge, sensitisation and empowerment of SWOFON members on agroecological practices.

The Project is a collaboration between Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), Small Scale Women Farmers Organisation of Nigeria (SWOFON) and the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN).

Three key activities were done by the project. The first was a mapping of ten agriculture research institutes. The second being a focus group discussion with members of the Small-Scale Women Farmers Organisation of Nigeria in three states, vis, Abia, Niger and Oyo States to identify their critical challenges. The third was a visit to and discussions with research institutes in the states. The research institutes visited were the National Roots Crop Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike Umuahia, National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI), Badeggi, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Ibadan and National Horticultural Research Institute (NIHORT), Ibadan.

## 2. BUDGETARY, LEGAL AND POLICY CHALLENGES

The identified challenges are as follows:

- a) Although Nigeria has enacted a National Agriculture Extension Policy in 2023, many states of the Federation do not have state level Agriculture Extension Policy.
- b) Nigeria lacks a legislated Extension Policy which gives a strong legal backing to good extension practices including assured sources of funding. Legislated extension services exist in countries such as Ghana, Botswana, Uganda and South Africa.
- c) Federal and state level extension policies have not been costed. There is no agreed formula for funding extension services between the Federal, State and Local Government Councils.
- d) Although there are private sector extension services/agents, they need to be regulated and certified to improve available services, and compliment the services of a strengthened government extension service.

- e) The National Gender Policy on Agriculture has expired by the effluxion of time and a new policy is due.
- f) Agriculture budgets across the Federation are prepared and implemented on the basis of gender neutrality.
- g) Agriculture funding which determines the funding of research institutes and extension services averages less than five percent of the budget across board at the federal and state levels. Research institutes and extension services are poorly funded.
- h) Agriculture budgets across board have credibility challenges - budget votes are hardly fully released and the available releases do not come on time when they would impact farming activities.
- i) The budget votes for research institutes are suffused with many projects that are outside the mandate of the institutes. These projects are inserted by members of the National Assembly at the point of budget approval.
- j) Many research innovations and findings from research institutes have not been disseminated to farmers or commercialised, and are idling in the shelves of research institutes.
- k) ARCN and the research institutes are hardly represented in agriculture project design and preparation team of projects funded through loans.
- l) The voice of farmers especially small-scale women farmers is not adequately heard in the research agenda of research institutes.
- m) Synergy and collaboration between the Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture is currently not at the optimum level.
- n) The data base of farmers across the Federation was last updated over five years ago and needs updating.
- o) Federal and state subsidised agriculture inputs sometimes do not reach the intended beneficiaries especially small-scale women farmers.
- p) The operations of the Bank of Agriculture are paper work and documentation heavy and as such, not suited to the realities of small-scale women farmers and organizations.
- q) The Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation lacks visibility and its services is hardly used by grassroots farmers.

- r) SWOFON members lack capacity to take advantage of the opportunities available from research institutes, agriculture finance and technology.
- s) Insecurity, especially the farmer herder crisis is preventing active farming of small-scale women farmers

### **3. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY SMALL SCALE WOMEN FARMERS**

- a) Farm Drudgery arising from lack of mechanization in virtually all aspects of the farming value chain, from land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, processing and storage.
- b) Soil testing is hardly practiced before decisions are made on crops to be planted in farms or fertilisers to be used.
- c) Access to quality seeds, seedlings, stems, suckers, etc., is limited as majority of the farmers are unaware of, and do not have access to high yielding, disease and pest resistant or climate change resilient seeds/plants - being the innovations of research institutes.
- d) Agriculture is still rainfed, with no irrigation support despite the existence of many dams across the Federation. The dams have hardly been deployed for farming purposes.
- e) Soil fertility is declining due to poor knowledge of sound agroecological soil fertility management practices. This has negatively impacted on crop yield per hectare.
- f) Bush burning is still practiced in some parts of the Federation of Nigeria, a practice which is hazardous and generally harmful to soil health.
- g) There is great reliance on inorganic and chemical fertilisers and adulterated fertilisers have been found in the market.
- h) The use of agro-chemicals for the management of weeds and pests is on the increase and this poses challenges to soil and human health.
- i) Climate change issues like drought and erosion pose serious threats to sustainable farming at the grassroots level.
- j) Poor storage and preservation leading to post-harvest losses and spoilage in excess of thirty percent of farm produce.

- k) Majority of small-scale women farmers have hardly been captured on federal and state level agriculture databases. This has excluded them from various official projects distributing farm inputs, grants and access to low-interest credit.
- l) Extension service is virtually non-existent at the grassroots level.
- m) Insecurity, especially the farmer herder crisis is preventing active farming of small-scale women farmers.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS ON BUDGETARY, LEGAL AND POLICY CHALLENGES**

##### **4.1 Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture**

- a. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security should collaborate with the National Assembly and other sectoral stakeholders to fast track the enactment of the Nigerian Extension Services Bill into an Act to provide a strong legal backing for good extension practices including assured sources of funding.
- b. States should formulate Agriculture Extension policies modelled after the Federal Agriculture Extension Policy.
- c. Federal and state level extension policies should be costed and become the basis of budgeting for extension services. There should be an agreement between the Federal, State and Local Government Councils on the level of funding of extension services.
- d. Dissemination of good agricultural practices through extension services should inter alia utilise radio, digital and social media. The Nigerian Electronic Extension Platform ([www.neep.gov.ng](http://www.neep.gov.ng)) should be fully completed for the use of all farmers. The National Agriculture e-portal should be continuously updated. The Agriculture Management Information System should be put to more creative use for the benefit of farmers.
- e. Federal and State level authorities should formally introduce private sector extension services/agents, regulate and certify their services so as to improve available services, and compliment services of a strengthened government extension service.
- f. The review of the National Gender Policy on Agriculture should be accelerated.
- g. Agriculture budgets should reflect gender sensitivity and inclusivity and provide resources for the implementation of national and international gender and inclusivity standards applicable in agriculture. The development of gender indicators for agriculture budgeting is recommended.

- h. The data base of farmers across the Federation should be continuously updated to include small scale women farmers. The database should be used in the distribution of federal and state subsidised agriculture inputs.

#### **4.2 National Assembly**

- a. Accelerate the passage of Nigerian Extension Services Bill into law.
- b. Budgetary projects should only be provided in the votes of Ministries, Departments and Agencies with mandates on the projects.
- c. Consider constituency projects in collaboration with research institutes and extension services department to improve agriculture productivity at the grassroots level.
- d. Increase result-oriented oversight activities on the agriculture sector to improve value for money and productivity.
- e. Federal, State and Local Governments should increase funding for agriculture to meet the Maputo Protocol of 10% of the budget or at a minimum to provide for not less than 50% of the Maputo demand. Research institutes and extension services should receive adequate funding.

#### **4.3 Ministries of Budget and Economic Planning; Budget Offices at the Federal and State Levels**

- a. Federal, State and Local Governments should increase funding for agriculture to meet the Maputo Protocol of 10% of the budget or at a minimum to provide for not less than 50% of the Maputo demand. Research institutes and extension services should receive adequate funding.
- b. To improve budget credibility, Federal, State and Local Government revenue forecasts/projections should no longer be overly optimistic but based on credible evidence and history of performance.

Furthermore, Governments should diligently implement the provisions of the Fiscal Responsibility Act and Laws requiring the Accountant General to prepare the Annual Cash Plan while the Budget Office prepares the Budget Disbursement Schedule. Implementing the Annual Cash Plan and Budget Disbursement Schedule will facilitate budget implementation and timely release of funds.

- c. Budgetary projects should only be provided in the votes of Ministries, Departments and Agencies with mandates on the projects.

#### **4.4 Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria and Research Institutes**

- a. Research Institutes in collaboration with extension services should improve the dissemination of research outcomes to farmers. Furthermore, Research Institutes, ARCN in collaboration with the private sector should take steps to commercialise and mass produce the innovations of Research Institutes.
- b. The locations, activities and service available at the 578 Adopted Village/Research Outreach Centres (AROC) should be publicised and disseminated to ensure that grassroots farmers benefit from their services. This should also be done for the Agricultural Technology Transfer Centres (ARTTC) and Seed Multiplication Centres.
- c. ARCN and the Research Institutes should be represented in agriculture project design and preparation team of projects to be funded through loans.
- d. Research Institutes should ensure that research is demand driven and all critical stakeholders including small scale women farmers should be on board in agenda setting.
- e. Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture should ensure synergy and strong collaboration in the design and implementation of programmes and projects at the state level.

#### **4.5 Bank of Agriculture**

- a. The operations of the Bank of Agriculture whilst ensuring loan recovery, should be revitalised to take cognisance of the level of education and sophistication of small-scale women farmers and their organizations.

#### **4.6 Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation**

- a. The Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Corporation should embark on mass sensitisation campaign about the services they render and its advantages for sustainable farming.

#### **4.7 SWOFON**

- a. SWOFON federal, and state level secretariats should take steps to increase capacity building of members to position them to take advantage of the opportunities available from research institutes, agriculture finance and technology.

#### **4.8 Security Agencies and Service Chiefs**

- a. Ensure adequate security for farmers across the Federation of Nigeria.

## 5. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY SMALL SCALE WOMEN FARMERS

- a) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture should collaborate with the National Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation, other research institutes and the private sector to mass produce and popularise the machines and drudgery reducing equipment devised by Research Institutes. Importation of farm mechanisation equipment is not the way forward.
- b) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture should provide massive sensitisation on the existing National Soil Map to guide farming activities across the Federation.
- c) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture should ensure that small scale women farmers are captured in federal and state level agriculture databases.
- d) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture in collaboration with research institutes should ensure access to quality seeds, seedlings, stems, suckers, etc.
- e) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture in collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources should support all season farming through the activation of existing dams across the Federation.
- f) Federal and State Ministries of Agriculture in collaboration with Research Institutes, Organised Private Sector and Civil Society should provide capacity building on the following:
  - Agroecology and soil fertility management practices.
  - The need for the limited deployment and use of agrochemicals for weed and pest control, inorganic and chemical fertilisers, etc while providing access to sound agroecological farm inputs and practices.
  - Good storage and preservation techniques for various crops leading to the reduction of post-harvest losses and spoilage.
  - Strategies to tackle climate change challenges including drought and erosion and ensure sustainable farming.
  - The hazards of bush burning and the urgent need to stop the practice.
- g) The National Fertilizer Quality Control Department of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control should ensure strict regulation of chemical fertilisers and farm inputs to forestall adulteration.

