

BUDGET PRIORITY ACTION FOR SMALL SCALE WOMEN FARMERS

Context

Following COVID-19 and the collapse of oil price, Nigeria needs to strategically spend available resources in the best value for money manner, especially to promote food security and job creation. The 2020 federal budget has a deficit of N5.365 trillion. Nigeria's Agriculture Policy 2016-2020 provides for increased budget investment and political support for gender mainstreaming and affirmative action in agriculture in the period 2018-2020.

Nigeria is a signatory to the Maputo and Malabo Declarations and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme with commitments to dedicate not less than 10% of the budget to agriculture. Nigeria is obliged to take steps, to the maximum of available resources, to guarantee freedom from hunger for citizens and to improve agricultural productivity. Between 2010 and 2020, Nigeria under-invested in agriculture and committed an average of 1.57% of overall budget to agriculture while capital releases averaged 59.72%.

Agriculture is key to Economic Recovery

Agriculture contributes 25.2% of Nigeria's GDP. It was the backbone of Nigeria's economy before the discovery of oil. Improved investments and returns in the agriculture value chain will facilitate the diversification of the economy and improve revenues for government and citizens. Women contributed significantly to the production of food consumed in Nigeria in 2019 which is worth over N11.3trillion. Nigeria's food imports rose by 45.6% between 2016 and 2019. With diminished federal revenue, food importation is not an option. Nigerians demand food sovereignty.

Central Message

Increased public investments are required to lift the binding constraints on women's productivity and to increase access to productive resources including gender friendly machinery, targeted extension services and capacity building in climate smart agriculture, farming inputs including seeds and fertilizer; storage facilities and guaranteed farm product prices through credible off-takers and improved value chains.

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Small Scale Women Farmers – the Silent Contributors

Small scale women farmers contribute significantly to local food production. Women farmers constitute over 60% of the agriculture labour force and provide inputs and functions that are critical to improved livelihoods. Women's production guarantees improved standards of living, especially in the rural areas. Women's efforts have not received sufficient budgetary support, facilitation and acknowledgement by successive governments.

Vague and Inappropriate Budget Provisions

The 2020 federal budget contains a number of vague and inappropriate budget line items with no clear deliverables which needs to be re-allocated to more pressing areas in this time of resource scarcity.

Action Required in the Review of the 2020 Federal Budget: Recommendations

(1) In the review and prioritization of programmes for the 2020 Federal Budget, it is imperative that FGN should not reduce the appropriation to the Ministry of Agriculture. At

1.73% of the budget against the Maputo Declarations'10%; any further reduction will lead to decreased food productivity.

(2) Food importation is not an option at a time of diminishing external reserves and governmental revenue. Sustainable funding of agriculture would lead to increased food production, jobs and poverty reduction.

(3) The National Assembly needs to reprioritize some of the expenditure items in the 2020 vote for agriculture to make them functional and specific to the needs of Nigerians. This is especially needed in agriculture constituency projects. Specifically, budget funded programmes and projects for women and youth must have locations, clear deliverables, must not be vague and should be tied to identifiable stakeholders. All these will facilitate monitoring and evaluation of agriculture spending.

(4) The reprogramming of funds should prioritise:

- Extension services through various platforms including print and electronic media especially radio and television as well as digital media and training of trainers.
- Promotion of climate smart agriculture through the mainstreaming of organic farming, organic fertilizers, resilience building and adaptation.
- Steps to organize SSWF into groups of registered business names and companies to give them formal visibility to participate in formal business activities as well as benefitting from government programmes such as access to cheap credit. This should be done across all the states of the Federation. Capacity

building for SWOFON to access these cheap funds through investment in understanding the agriculture value chain, proposal writing, financial literacy, monitoring and evaluation and reporting on loaned and donor funds.

- Gender friendly machinery and equipment such as hand sprayers, power tillers, ploughs, planters etc., especially low cost and locally fabricated equipment which can be easily maintained by local artisans.
- Seeds, fertilisers, feeds, animal stock, storage facilities, rural road networks, irrigation facilities, etc.
- Promote the concentric circle of local content in provisioning of goods, services and construction considering that procurement options are most of the time crafted into the budget.

(5) Gender blind projects should be discarded in favour of strategic targeting of women in agriculture through affirmative action programmes and special funds/projects targeted at women. The budget should promote a commitment to equality of results for the male and female gender.

(6) Clear mandates supported by funds should be given to the research institutes under the Ministry of Agriculture. The institutes should be mandated to find off-takers and farmers to use the findings of already concluded research. They should liaise and collaborate with SWOFON. Future research should be demand driven.

(7) Establish key collaboration with the Ministries and Departments of Agriculture at the State and Local Government levels to ensure improvement in productivity. This would involve the activation of mechanisms of the National Council on Agriculture.