



**Small Scale Women Farmers
Association of Nigeria**

Issues in the 2021 Federal Agriculture Budget Estimates

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Small Scale Women Farmers need 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; improved seeds/seedlings, fertilisers, pesticides, feeds, animal stock, storage facilities; small scale processing equipment for products preservation and value addition as well as capacity building to minimise post-harvest losses. Others are extension services including meteorological information through various platforms including print and electronic media especially radio and television as well as digital media and training of trainers; capacity building on climate smart agriculture through the mainstreaming of organic farming, organic fertilizers, resilience building and adaptation as well as targeted inclusion through secured access to federal agriculture grants and credit facilities.

1. BACKGROUND

Agriculture is a key growth driver for the Nigerian economy and it contributed 23.92% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the second quarter 2020 GDP Report. It is important for food security, job creation, provision of raw materials for industries and improved rural and urban livelihoods. Increased agriculture output will facilitate the conservation of foreign exchange as Nigeria's food imports will decrease and thereby put less pressure on the value of the Naira.

The share of informal sector agriculture GDP is 91.8% as against 8.2% from the formal sector. This may account for its low contribution to public revenue, especially taxes. Nigeria has over 84m hectares of arable land, out of which only 40% is cultivated. Thus, there is room to deploy more human, fiscal, information, technology and ecological resources to cultivate the 60% uncultivated land. There is also room to take steps to formalize the 91.8% informal sector agriculture to position it for governmental agriculture service delivery – including seeds, fertilisers, equipment, extension services, access to credit, etc. This will also improve its contribution to taxation, job creation and overall economic growth.

2. CONTEXT

Women constitute 49% of Nigeria's population and they carry out about 80% of agricultural production, 60% of agricultural processing activities and 50% of animal husbandry and related activities; yet women have access to less than 20% of agricultural assets". Thus, majority of farmers in Nigeria are women and they are Small Scale Women Farmers (SSWF). Considering that the socially and culturally constructed roles for women and men, boys and girls in agriculture provides unequal opportunities, life chances and value accretion and leads to gender inequity - unfair and unjust distribution of benefits and responsibilities between men and women - tilted against women, it is imperative that budgets are crafted with this recognition and not as gender blind/neutral documentation which fails to recognize existing differences and challenges. Budgets should consider affirmative action in recognition of the above.

The foregoing position is supported by a plethora of national and international standards vis, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2, 5, 9, and 13; Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa. Others are the African Union Gender Policy and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the Maputo Declaration reaffirmed in the Malabo Declaration where African Heads of States and Governments committed to a minimum of 10% yearly budget investment in agriculture; the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999; the Green Alternative, Nigeria's Gender Policy and the National Gender Policy in Agriculture.

The mandate of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) is broad and deep enough to take cognizance of gender inclusivity in its budgeting process. Its mandate of ensuring food security in crop, livestock and fisheries, stimulate agricultural employment and services, promote the production and supply of raw materials to agro industries, provide markets for the products of the industrial sector, generate foreign exchange and aid rural socio-economic development cannot be achieved without providing equal opportunities to Nigerian women, especially the SSWF. By excluding women, the Ministry is currently working with half of its extant capacity.

3. 2021 AGRICULTURE BUDGET ESTIMATES

The proposal for the FMARD at N179.4bn, being 1.37% of the overall budget proposal, is grossly inadequate. This is far below the Maputo and Malabo commitments of FGN. Considering the number of agencies under the Ministry and their mandates, sequestering 37.6% of the overall vote and 54.2% of the capital vote of the Ministry at the headquarters may result in suboptimal performance for the sector. Furthermore, in accordance with the policy, plan budget continuum, applicable national and international standards on agriculture do not seem to resonate in the proposals. There is need to use existing standards as benchmarks for finetuning the budget.

The estimates are filled with big sums of money without specifics and enough details and if no clarity is provided, Nigerians would be in the dark as to what the votes to those line items are meant for. Such lump sum provisions create a background for easy mismanagement of allocated funds. Also, most of the allocations and projects have no specific locations. There is nothing on the state, local government or exact site of the investments to enable a follow through by the public. Furthermore, even though the mandate of the Ministry is wide, projects like road construction and big infrastructure do not seem to be an area of strength and comparative advantage for the Ministry. Such projects are better left with the Ministry of Works or other relevant MDAs. Again, extension service provision is weak and has not been successful in taking research findings to farmers. Over the years, there are too many research institutes getting federal allocation with little or no deliverables.

The total sum targeting women farmers in the FMARD's proposal is N2.411billion, which is just 2.18% of the overall capital vote of the Ministry. This is paltry and needs to be increased considering that women constitute half of the population and have numerical superiority in agricultural production, processing, forestry, aquaculture and animal husbandry. In recognition of the socially and culturally constructed roles for women and men which limits women's access to resource support, budgets must specifically target women and consider affirmative action votes in deserving cases to move women towards equality and equity. The votes in the estimates appear to be an afterthought, not the product of conscious targeted gender responsive estimates which recognize the fundamental obligation to mainstream the concerns of all members of the Nigerian family - women and men into the budgeting process.

NALDA operates from the Presidency, outside of the Ministry of Agriculture and got a N10.1bn vote. The vote suffers from the same deficiencies of the Ministry such as lack of location for projects while some of its proposals have revenue generating possibilities. Other MDAs that made provisions for women farmers include Ministries of Women Affairs, Water Resources, Labour and Employment, Science and Technology, Trade and Investment, Niger Delta and Secretary to the Government of the Federation. The total sum provided by these MDAs for women farmers is N1.113billion.

The Review documented frivolous, inappropriate, unclear and wasteful expenditure proposals in the agriculture votes. Some of the expenditure proposals were of doubtful legal validity. The expenditure proposals include capacity building without details of the type and for unidentified beneficiaries, jargons that make no meaning, supplies without details of class of beneficiaries and locations. The National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization in Ilorin with a mandate that reflects its name is busy proposing to build roads and schools in the South West zone which is ultra vires its mandate. MDAs are requesting for SUVs worth N55m each contrary to the 2021 Budget Call Circular which (under Admissible Capital Projects - 4.5.3) states that except where absolutely necessary to the functioning of the MDA, proposals for vehicles will not be accommodated in the 2021 budget. A total of N8.187bn in frivolous, inappropriate, wasteful expenditure is identified.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) The allocation to Agriculture as a key growth driver of the Nigerian economy should be increased to not less than 50% of the Malabo/Maputo commitment of 10% of overall budget. This means 5% of the overall budget which comes up to N654.121billion.

(2) Rework the budget in accordance with the policy, plan budget continuum to reflect the full implementation of the Nigerian Gender Policy and the National Gender Policy in Agriculture and other applicable national and international standards.

(3) It is important that legislators consider dedicating significant proportions of constituency project allocation to issues thrown up by small holder women farmers and such allocation should reflect the fine letters of the National Gender Policy on Agriculture.

(4) The budget should take cognizance of the need for affirmative action and target not less than 30% of the FMARD's vote to women especially SSWF. This would come up to N196.236billion.

(5) Total savings in the sum of N8.187bn from frivolous, inappropriate, wasteful expenditure identified in the Review and some part of the savings from CSJ's publication on frivolities in the 2021 Appropriation Budget should be channeled to the needs of SSWF.

(6) In accordance with Recommendations 2, 3 and 4, the Budget should provide:

- 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. N5bn deployed to this line item at an average cost N250,000 each will fetch 20,000 units.

- Improved seeds/seedlings, fertilisers, pesticides, feeds, animal stock, storage facilities, rural road networks, irrigation facilities, etc.
- Extension services including meteorological information 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 smallholder women farmers into groups of registered business names, companies and cooperatives 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.
- Small scale processing equipment for products preservation and value addition as well as capacity building to minimise post-harvest losses.
- 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

(7) Proposed activities from agencies should be reconciled with the mandate of the agencies. Activities should be delivered by agencies with the greatest strength and competence in the area of the proposed activities.

(8) Considering the number of agencies under the Ministry and their mandates, programme the bulk of the capital vote of the Ministry to the respective agencies.

(9) To streamline operations, reduce the cost of governance and for effective coordination of agriculture, NALDA should be made to operate as a parastatal of the FMARD or its activities subsumed under existing FMARD structures.

(10) To facilitate monitoring and evaluation:

- All votes should have specifications, enough details and clarity on the activities and deliverables to be paid for at the public expense and all physical projects should have locations.

- All capacity building projects should have details of the nature of capacity building and the class of beneficiaries.

(11) Collaboration between the Federal, State and Local Governments is key for improved extension service provision because farming is a local job done in specific states and localities in far flung places beyond the Federal Capital Territory base of the FMARD.

(12) Research Institutes should be limited to specific assignments within their mandates to justify their continued receipt of public funds. Research topics and issues should be chosen based on the demands of off-takers in farming communities, the private sector and relevant public agencies.