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FOSTERING COMPETITIVENESS OF AGRIBUSINESS IN NIGERIA THROUGH EFFECTIVE LINKAGES WITH AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

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Abstract

Over the years, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), State Governments (SG) and donor partners have implemented a number of agricultural development policies and support programmes. These include: Farm Settlement Scheme, Operation Feed the Nation; Cash Crop Plantation; Agricultural Development Projects; Green Revolution; Bank of Agriculture (BoA); Cottage Agricultural Processing (CAP) Fund of Bank of Industry (BoI); River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA); National Fadama Programme, National Special Programme for Food Security (NSPFS); Nigerian Incentive Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL); Staple Crop Processing Zone; The Green Alternative; Anchor Borrower's Programme; Universities of Agriculture and Agricultural Research Institutions. The National Agricultural Research System (NARS) made up of the Agricultural Research Institutes, higher educational institutions involved in training high level manpower in Agriculture and produce a number of innovations every year to support these agricultural development programmes, but the adoption rate by agribusiness operators has been low. This research was aimed at presenting a critical appraisal of Agricultural Development in Nigeria, agribusiness in Nigeria and the National Agricultural Research System. The platforms for linking research to agribusiness are reviewed. An innovative and responsive framework is proposed for strengthening the linkages and hence improving productivity and competitiveness of agribusiness in Nigeria.

The results of the research show that the NARS of Nigeria include: 20 research institutes, over 38 Colleges of Agriculture; three universities of agriculture, over 50 universities with faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine. The agribusiness sector includes businesses involved in input supplies, production, processing and distribution of agricultural products and information gathering and dissemination. It was found that although platforms exist for linkages between Agricultural Research and Agribusiness, there is no effective flow of information on research results between the two. The challenges facing agribusiness sector include: harsh economic environment; poor access to capital; poor access to technology and

research information. Poor access to technology and information from research sector was attributed to failure of the National Agricultural Extension System (NAES); illiteracy among farmers and agribusiness operators and ignorance of the role of research in agricultural development. The platforms for linkages between agricultural research and agribusiness are identified to include: National Council on Agriculture; Extension units of states Ministries of Agriculture; Extension Department of Federal Ministry of Agriculture; Extension units of Agricultural Development Projects, Adopted Village Concept of Research Institutes; National Agricultural Extension Research and Liaison Services (NAERLS); Research-Extension-Farmer-Input-Linkage System (REFILS); exhibitions, conferences and workshops by relevant stakeholders and social media. In order to improve the competitiveness of agribusiness in Nigeria through effective use of research results, a strategic framework is presented to include: reform of the National Agricultural Extension System (NAES); strengthening of the Adopted Village Concept, Cooperatives System and National Board for Technology Incubation (NBTI); resuscitation of demonstration farms and commodity associations; more support to the National and State Agricultural Shows and more effective use of social media and technology.

KEYWORDS: Agribusiness, agricultural research, value chain, commodities, competitiveness, agricultural development, agricultural policy.

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