

NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP NIGERIA : THE 1ST NBN CASSAVA INVESTMENT FORUM (NCIF) 2013

PAPER 2: Cassava Farming in Nigeria: Challenges, Opportunities and the Realities Delivered by Pastor Segun Adewumi, National President, Nigeria Cassava Growers Association

I happen to be a Pastor, Prophet and General Overseer of a church. That is to say I am used to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Recently it begins to occur to me that Cassava has been included in this very gospel that I am compelled to preach for the liberation of the people of Nigeria. I am further convinced when I realized that the people of Malaysia generate more money from Palm produce which I am told they pick its seed from Nigeria than Nigeria make from her fossil oil. Now that we see that cassava have more prosperous potential than Palm produce and Nigeria is the world centre for Cassava Production. For the very reason that the focus of the gospel is freedom of the people, I am really very comfortable to take the gospel of cassava to Jerusalem, Judah and uttermost part of the World.

My justification is also in the fact that the only thing God did physically was the work of Agricultural Extension Services in that He would come in the evening to inspect the Garden of Eden where Adam and his wife Eve were farmers. Now having justified my call to service in Cassava programme, I will go straight to the gospel of Cassava in Nigeria.

Cassava is that wonderful crop that is capable of providing over twenty food items including Gari, Fufu, Pupuru, Starch, Tapioca Lafun etc and industrial items such as Ethanol, Industrial Starch, Cassava Flour. The three listed Industrial products are also raw materials to other utility products with limitless domestic and export market potentials. Let me quickly pay my tribute to gari. I was raised up by a single parent and that was my mother because my father was late. My entire provision, that is, supplementary food for students for a school term consisted of gari in a bag of salt and kulikuli. But in the manner of the four Hebrews in (Daniel chapter 1) who would not eat the king's special food and wine but stayed with vegetable and found to excel in wisdom knowledge and understanding over others in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, I stayed on Gari and Kulikuli (as if I had a choice). I did Cambridge O level examination in class three and cleared the five papers including English and Maths. I attribute the success to Gari, "Up Cassava".

Gari is an instant food that can be eaten dry, soaked into water or made into morsel food called Eba. Gari can be coloured to make its Eba very attractive and inviting. It has a compelling aroma that can fill the room and create the right

appetite in all situations. Gari will compete with the world renowned foods like bread and rice. If Gari has been discovered in a western country, it probably would have been a number one food in the world. Gari I salute thee

Cassava Farming

Cassava is one of the easiest crops to cultivate. Cassava grow with rain and survive with dews. Once it is established, it will survive whatever length of dry season. The major challenge of cassava farming is the lack of adequate facilities for the ordinary farmer to mechanized cultivation process, especially in the southern part of the country where tractorable farmland are not available and tractors are grossly inadequate.

An average farmer in South Africa has about three tractors in his family, such that the farmer, wife and one of the children can work with three tractors at the same time on the farm. A whole state in the southern part of Nigeria with a population of one million farmers may have just fifty tractors, 30 of which are not in working condition. The implication is that while the south African farmer can reap 50 mt of cassava from an hectare of farmland, his Nigerian counterpart will reap 12mt. Assuming both farmer cultivated at the cost of ₦150,000.00 per hectare. Cost of production of one metric ton for the south African farmer is ₦3000.00 while the cost of Nigerian farmer is ₦12,500.00. As emphasized always by the Honourable Minister for Agriculture Dr. Akinwunmi Adesina subsistence farming that we still practice in Nigeria is a real punishment and indeed a curse. The real worry of the Nigeria Cassava Growers Association is that what is required of appropriate land clearing is beyond the entire budget allocated to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture. We need to clear 250,000 hectares at the cost of ₦120,000.00 per hectare in the north and another 250,000 hectares at ₦200,000.00 per hectare in the rain and thick forest of the south. Cost of clearing include creating blocks of five to ten hectares through demarcation and creating a fire tracing to address the menace of farm and cattle rearer. This is the cost that will provide a solid foundation for Nigeria prosperity through cassava is “**Land clearing**”. N30 billion in the North and N60 billion in the South and that will make 500,000 hectares available for mechanized farming.

Oppurtunities

I was the Chairman Technical Committee of Nigeria Cassava Growers Association around 2003 /2004 when the vision of cassava bread divinely came to President Olusegun Obasanjo. He was so passionate, so sure and confident about it. Now God has graciously placed a goal getter farmer’s Minister to actualize that great vision as follows:

- ✓ Cassava Flour
- ✓ Industrial Starch
- ✓ Ethanol

Nigeria requires 20 million metric tons of cassava roots to provide adequately for the above that are used yearly in Nigeria. Right now, we are able to supply 0.4% Cassava Flour against 40% required, less than 8% of Industrial Starch and less than 4% Ethanol. From the above, over 1 trillion naira that we use to import the above utility items will come to the Nigeria farmers. Besides over two million Nigerian will be directly involved in the cultivation and processing of cassava on the Industrial side. As stated earlier, an Industrial Revolution will be triggered when we have Ethanol, Cassava industrial Starch and Cassava Flour as raw materials. These are the opportunities that are available, if the government of Nigeria can just spare N100 billion for Land Clearing and N100 billion for Tractors. Even when this money is borrowed or loaned, it can be paid back in few years. Please let us move forward.

Realities

Of course the reality is that things have to change. If we fail to plan, we are indeed planning to fail. Nigeria was at par with countries like South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand some decades ago. I worked as a Hospital Administrator in Wusasa, Zaria in the seventies when medical doctors from India, Pakistan and Philippine were begging for employment in Nigeria. That was when we had foreigners in our village secondary schools. The reality now is that we have not only been overtaken but left behind. Oil upon which our economy depends has lost value. Apart from the fact that nearly all Africa Countries and other countries of the world are now oil producing States, alternative to oil for the use of automobile is about the most researched project in the world today. Our salvation is in Agriculture which God has graciously endowed to us.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to appreciate the organizers, our host in this very important and timely discussion. I hope our submission will find its way to the authority for sober consideration. I thank you all and wish you God's blessings.

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