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# FINAL REPORT

**The 1<sup>st</sup> NBGN CASSAVA INVESTMENT FORUM (NCIF)**

**Cassava and Nigeria Economy: Developing the Value Chains for Employment and Socio-Economic Development.**

THURSDAY 07 NOVEMBER, 2013, IBETO HOTEL, GUDU DISTRICT, ABUJA, NIGERIA.

An event organized by the NEPAD Business Group Nigeria.

## Acknowledgements

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABR	AFRICAN BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE
AfDB	AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
AU	AFRICAN UNION
AKSG	AKWA IBOM STATE GOVERNMENT
C: AVA	CASSAVA: ADDING VALUE FOR AFRICA
BATNF	BRITISH AMERICAN TOBACCO NIGERIA FOUNDATION
BOA	BANK OF AGRICULTURE LIMITED
CRSG	CROSS RIVER STATE GOVERNMENT
C; AVA	ADDING VALUE FOR AFRICA
ECOWAS	ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES
FGN	FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA
FIIRO	FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH, OSHODI
FMARD	FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT
FBPLC	FIDELITY BANK PLC
FMNPLC	FLOUR MILLS OF NIGERIA PLC
HQCF	HIGH QUALITY CASSAVA FLOUR
IITA	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TROPICAL AGRICULTURE
NEPAD	NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT
NBGA	NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP AFRICA
NBGWA	NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP WEST AFRICA
NBGN	NEPAD BUSINESS GROUP NIGERIA
NCGA	NIGERIA CASSAVA GROWERS ASSOCIATION
NCAPMA	NATIONAL CASSAVA PROCESSORS AND MARKETERS ASSOCIATION
NAFDAC	NATIONAL AGENCY FOR FOOD DRUG AND ADMINISTRATION CONTROL
SON	STANDARD ORGANIZATION OF NIGERIA
SMEs	SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE FORUM**

- To attract substantial private sector investments to develop and promote the necessary cassava value chains in Nigeria and the west African sub – region.
- To develop a Pan- African Cassava Initiative based on a broad based strategy, which emphasizes better markets, better organization of producers for collective action, and better participation by the private sector.
- To further assist the federal government of Nigeria in its transformation drive aimed at boosting cassava and agricultural production in Nigeria as forms of wealth creation and employment.
- To identify the necessary capacities for the production of High Quality Cassava and cassava products at competitive products;
- Identification of growing markets.
- To bring together all the stakeholders in the cassava sector (producers, traders, processors, researchers, financiers, policy makers and consumers) to strategize and design a roadmap for sustaining the much needed value chains in cassava production.
- To create a platform for exchange of information and contacts between providers and users of business development and financial services required to support production, processing and marketing of cassava and cassava products in Nigeria and in the sub-region.
- To identify pre-conditions required to stimulate Private Sector/Entrepreneurs' interests in setting up cassava production and processing projects in the country and within the sub-region.
- To promote opportunities for collaborating with cassava producers, processors, traders and other stakeholders in other West African countries.

### **3.0 OPENING SESSION**

#### **3.1 Welcome Address from Chief Chris Ezeh, MFR, Chairman NEPAD Business Group Nigeria (NBGN) as delivered by Chief Dr. Nike Akande, OON, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chairman, NBGN**

Chief Ezeh welcomed all the participants to the 1<sup>st</sup> NBGN Cassava Investment Forum which is another in the annals of the Group's efforts to alleviate poverty, create jobs & wealth for socio-economic development growth in accordance with the mandate of NEPAD initiative. According to Chief Ezeh, the Forum aims to attract substantial private sector investments to develop and promote the necessary cassava value chains in Nigeria and West Africa Sub-region. This is in line with the agriculture Transformation Agenda of the present administration for economic growth. He ended his address with a charge to the participants to participate and contribute meaningfully to the discourse to develop the cassava value chains for the benefit of our dear nation.

#### **3.2 Goodwill Message from NEPAD Presidency as delivered by Mr. Braimah Abdul, Assistant Director, Partnerships' Unit.**

The New partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has recognized cassava as a powerful poverty fighter in Africa and has in this connection recommended a Pan-African Cassava Initiative based on a broad based strategy which emphasizes better markets, better organization of producers for collective action, and better participation by the private sector investment. NEPAD Nigeria has supported similar initiatives on cassava in the past and is fully committed to the recent initiative from NBGN to develop the business aspect of the crop for economic benefits.

### **3.3 Goodwill Message from Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, CON, Chairman NEPAD Business Group Africa as delivered by Mr. Dotun Ajayi, Executive Director, African Business Roundtable (ABR).**

Alhaji Tukur's Goodwill message to the Forum essentially dwelt on key issues that needed to be put right in order to boost cassava and its products production in Nigeria. The key issues mentioned included Technology, Access to Finance, Land Ownership, Market Access, Standard & Quality and Amazing Power of Partnerships. Alhaji Tukur assured of his willingness to build necessary partnerships to increase output from cassava yield and market access, and trade facilitation that increase earnings from agricultural exports.

### **3.4 Goodwill Message from Mr. Goodie Ibru, OON, Co-Chairman NEPAD Business Group West Africa as delivered by Mr. Ifeanyi Apai, Senior Manager, Capital Hotel Plc.**

NEPAD Business Group West Africa is an organization established to engage the private sector towards a sustainable development process in the sub-region. The organization promotes enabling business climate and environment in the region and facilitates intra-trade and investment in the region among other things. Mr. Ibru strongly believe that, agriculture and particularly cassava has the potential to change the economic fortune of Nigeria and the sub-region and would therefore urged the participants to come up with a roadmap for cassava sector and agriculture sector as a whole.

### **3.5 Goodwill Message from Dr. Ousmane Dore, Country Director, the African Development Bank Group, Nigeria**

Dr. Dore agreed that Nigeria is the largest cassava producing nation in the world but with no major attendant benefits derived as a result of lack of value addition through processing. In recognition of the importance of cassava, the African Development Bank is supporting the Federal Government of Nigeria on the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA). In this regard, the bank recently approved a loan and a grant in the sum of 152 million USD. The bank considers the ATA to be vital both for Nigeria and Africa as a whole, given the initiatives paradigm shift towards agribusiness, value chains, wealth and job creation, food security and focus on women and youths. Under the bank's support to ATA, value chain development for three strategic crops is planned: cassava, rice and sorghum. The bank also intends to finance a second phase of the support to ATA which shall focus sharply on the construction of the required infrastructures in line with the master plan being expected to be rolled out by the FMARD to meet the criteria for large private sector investments in Agbada Staple Crop processing Zone for cassava development. Dr. Dore equally in his goodwill message assured of his bank commitment to pursuance of active partnership with other development partners, particularly with regards to value chain development of the strategic crops particularly cassava.



## **4.0 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND PRESENTATIONS**

### **4.1 Morning Session– Thursday, 07 November 2013**

*Theme: Cassava and the Nigeria Economy*

**Chairman of session: Mrs. Ifeyinwa Emelife, Research Analyst to the DG, Infrastructure Concessionary Regulatory Commission (ICRC)**

The goal of the session was to map out the importance of cassava and the development of the cassava value chains as viable sources of employment generation for the country's teeming youth population and women, the extent of which improved cassava seedlings are available and to enlighten farmers on the new improved varieties and as well to showcase the latest discoveries in seedling development, land management and high yield rate, which arise from their planting and production techniques, and the central and the key determinants of broader land management, soil conservation and development challenges, opportunities and realities in the six geo-political zones of Nigeria.

The session as well discussed the challenges farmers face on a day to day basis and the importance and leadership role of multinational companies in the area of corporate social responsibility within the farming communities where they conduct their business operations.

*Presentation 1: "The Roles of Improved varieties of Cassava in the development of Cassava Value Chains by Dr. Nteranya Sangiga DG ,IITA, represented by Mr. Francis Adunoye, Abuja Farm Manager*

This presentation focused on definitions, and classification of cassava varieties, and also examined issues relating to their cultivation.

He highlighted a number of morphological characterizations of leave colours, level of branching, and branching habits of cassava stems, shape, stem multiplication and distribution, growth habits in Nigeria.

A range of cassava varieties such as HR 41044, TMS 30555, TMS 50395, as well as other varieties were classified as the most recently officially released varieties across the country. Key characteristics of some released cassava varieties to include high and stable root yield, high root dry matter (Starch)content, drought tolerance, high root Pro-vitamin A content, early maturity, low cyanogenic potential of roots, disease resistance (cassava mosaic, anthracnose, bacterial blight).

The paper also examined the developmental features of the improved yield in comparison with the local varieties of cassava yield as witnessed in some states of the federation that have witnessed tremendous growth of these varieties.

The presentation linked the value chain to the wider context of the policy and institutional environment and the interaction with two key areas of productivity challenges and market challenges coupled with the cross cutting issues of Research and Development I Collection, Processing, Distribution, Wholesaling and Retailing.

It further explained why it is important that the management of the value chain should be line with a range of activities linking government with farmers and small and medium scale enterprises and the society at large.

In concluding, Dr. Adunoye raised the critical questions of whether Nigeria should develop the capacity that leads to lower cost of production and linkage to market.

In response, some participants felt that the way to go would be to invest, as this would have a multiplier effect if investment went to the right sectors or projects. In Nigeria, for instance, human capital development and agriculture were mentioned as examples of sectors to invest in as they could bring maximum and widespread benefits. Other noteworthy points were made on the value chain model and approach to the context of development; the problem of distribution; the most appropriate policy environment for effective cassava production; the nexus between development and growth.

### **Presentation 2: Cassava Farming in Nigeria Challenges, Opportunities and Realities by Pastor Segun Adewumi, National President, Nigeria Cassava Growers Association.**

The presentation captured the characteristics of cassava through its historical importance as a food crop and cash crop and up to its modern day benefits and the relevance of value addition to Nigeria economy.

He identified some of the challenges facing cassava farmers in Nigeria to include:

- Lack of adequate facilities in terms of farm equipments and machineries.
- Lack of access to finance in order to secure loans for farmers at low interest rates payable within a substantial period of time.
- Inadequate land for cassava cultivation.
-

In his final submission, he called on the federal government to create the enabling environment for farmers and the Nigerian citizenry to become fully engaged in the cassava value added chains and harness the potentials to the benefit of the nation.

**Presentation 3: Developing the Cassava Value Chains in the Nigeria Rural Communities – British American Tobacco Nigeria Foundation – (BATNF)  
Ms. Abimbola Okoya, General Manager, BATN Foundation**

The third paper explored the contributions of the private sector with respect to the development of the value chain in agriculture with particular reference to cassava and other selected crops as well as their impacts on the livelihood of Nigerians living in the rural communities.

She further explained the example of the British American Tobacco Nigeria Foundation (BATNF) which was established as an independent charity by British American Tobacco Nigeria in November 2002.

The establishment of the Foundation was as a result of the Memorandum of Understanding between BATN and the Federal Government as means of delivering the company's contributions to Nigeria's socio-economic development.

She added that so far they have implemented over 100 projects across the country and work closely with communities and development groups to implement social projects that could improve lives on a long term sustainable basis.

Since its establishment in November 2002, the BATN Foundation has been at the forefront of promoting agricultural development and showcasing how this can be used as a tool for poverty reduction. It is a belief that a social investment in agriculture is a step in the right direction and the positive results and achievements can be copied and replicated by governments, development organizations and the organized private sector operators to achieve a broader and wider result.

She explained that when BATN Foundation was established, the management had the vision to improve the quality of lives in the rural areas. The focus has changed as the approach is borne out the foundation's concern for the lack of adequate socio-economic development in rural Nigerian communities.

While poverty certainly exists in urban areas, Nigerians living in rural communities face greater limitations and reduced access to factors that improve the standard of living.

She said that after over 10 years of existence, the foundation have repositioned its activities to suit the changing social and economic environment. Examining the issue of sustainability, mainly around the maintenance and sustainability of community projects, as it is usual in development programme is critical in this regard. Partnering with the appropriate stakeholder to ensure that the time, money, effort and enthusiasm that goes into the projects does not waste after only a short period of time is also very important.

The vicious cycles of poverty mentioned before mean that lifelong handicaps and troubles that are passed on from one generation to another. Poverty is a major cause of social tensions and threatens to divide a nation because of the issue of inequalities, in particular income inequality. This happens when wealth in a country is poorly distributed among its citizens.

In light of this, there is a need for us to understand the impact of poverty in Nigeria. Around half of the Nigerian population live in rural areas, most of them in poverty. Nigeria is currently categorised under low human development and ranked 156 out of 187 countries on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index.

Ms. Abimbola further stressed that, a range of factors are considered when implementing projects, feedback from stakeholder dialogue sessions and consultation; proposals and requests from NGOs and community based organisation. She further said identifying critical needs of host communities was paramount in achieving success.

She alluded to the fact that at the BATN Foundation, their goal is to work with private, public and civic sector organisations to break the cycle of poverty that has held down generations of rural Nigerians and threatens to compromise the future of millions more.

### **Looking at some of the causes of poverty:**

**The stage of Economic and Social Development:** Even when a country's export earnings might be abundant, situation of economic underdeveloped might pose a management constraint on absorptive capacity or use of funds for development project which are either not available, or properly used.

**Low Productivity:** In this case, the consuming unit (individuals of households) is unable to earn enough income which will enable them to maintain adequate living standards. This would result from the low utilization or low acquisition of human skills due to low education, poor health or physical incapacity and inadequate access to productive assets. This leads to unemployment and underemployment.

**Political Instability:** The failure to successfully actualize political transition programmes; result in social and economic unrest domestically and internationally

**Corruption:** Corruption here refers to the ‘rush to share the national cake’, in which public funds are collected and spend inefficiently, for no particular purpose except to reward recipients.

Government should not be left alone to fight the menace of poverty. The private and public sector should collaborate to implement grass root programmes and initiatives that would achieve a broader result.

Individual and non-governmental organizations and community-based organization as well as international donor agencies (such as USAID, EEC, UNDP, UNID, BAND) have put up a number of initiatives to cope positively and effectively with poverty situation in the rural areas of Nigeria.

Private Institutions should focus on human poverty dimension through projects in food security, education, health and income generation has been sharper and proven to be more sustainable.

A review of successful community based programmes indicate that factors such as ownership participation, discipline, cooperation and sustainability are important ingredients of effective poverty reduction measures

The realization of the huge potential and the promise that agriculture holds as a veritable platform for socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Nigeria prompted the decision of the promoters of BATN Foundation to make Agriculture a major focal area of intervention of its Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives in Nigeria.

She said it was their belief that the neglect and the perceived deliberate underdevelopment of the sector portends a great danger for the future of the

country most especially with the realization that the population of the country is expected to reach the 200 million mark in the next 25 years and with about 60% of these expected to be within the 20 – 40 years age bracket.

With this realization and understanding, a new development agenda which will make agriculture the fulcrum of a national development plan therefore becomes imperative. This also involves new thinking, new partnerships and perhaps a national re-orientation aimed at projecting and promoting agriculture.

### ***Plenary***

A lively discussion ensued on what creative role(s) CSOs and CBOs might play in designing a framework for the effective management of agricultural production in Nigeria.

Unfortunately time did not permit much in-depth interrogation of the following issues that came to the fore by way of recommendations:

The urgent imperative of enhancing the capacity of the various actors, especially those from communities, involved in the process of establishing a sound regime for boosting agricultural production and management, and ensuring that they are involved right from the start.

The need to intensify efforts to support regular and broad-based advocacy and interventions that fit neatly into the needs of rural communities was recognized.

Scale-up the knowledge base and capacity of community groups and small holding farmers to serve as effective interlocutors between host communities and trans-national companies exploiting natural resources to forge partnerships to benefit in boosting food production.

## **5.0 Afternoon session – 07 November 2013**

**Theme: Sustaining the cassava value chains**

**Co-Chairmen: Dr. Nino Ozara, Director Production, Honeywell Flour Mills Plc, Mr. Ahmadu Waziri, Executive Director, Bank Of Agriculture Ltd.**

This session addressed the key contributing components of cassava production in Nigeria. It further explained the product derivatives and the revenue diversibilities in addition to various food components, which increases the nutritional value.

It also explains the challenges associated with pricing and the cost and availability of plant machineries at low cost to farmers.

***Presentation 4: Composite Wheat – Cassava Flour and the Production of Bread and Confectioneries: The Challenges, Opportunities and Realities by Mr. Paul Gbededo, GMD/CEO, Flour Mills of Nigeria Plc represented by Mr. Yemi Ogunyemi, Quality Assurance Manager.***

The presentation dwelt mainly on the importance of cassava wheat flour and the derivatives from this wonder crop.

The paper further identified the two key basic methods (dry and wet) used in the processing of cassava and further identified the challenges which include:

- Adherence to quality for the dry method is difficult, lack of test (presence of harmful micro-organism in the flour)
- Consumer complaint due to poor quality.
- Difficulty of suppliers to meet the demands of the flour millers.
- Shortage of quality cassava flour as a result of difficulties in getting the right quantity and the right root shapes
- Long distance to buy and source for quality cassava flour.
- Price variation from state to state(it is cheaper to get cassava flour from the northern part as averse to the south)

He also highlighted some opportunities within the cassava added value chains to include:

- Starch, glucose syrup, cassava flour and ethanol among many others as by products that are derived from cassava.
- Pellets for food in fish farming.
- Cassava has the potential to replace 70% of barley in beer production.

***Presentation 5: sustenance in the production of High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF): Pricing Issues by Professor L. Sanni, Country Manager, Cassava: Adding Value for Africa(C: AVA) represented by Mr. Bernard Siwoku, Business Development Manager***

The presentation explained the definitions and identified the quality of cassava flour; it further defined High Quality Cassava Flour as:

- HQCF is unfermented, smooth, odourless, white or creamy cassava flour produced within 24 hours from wholesome freshly harvested and rapidly processed cassava roots.
- The process for HQCF production involves peeling, washing, grating, pressing (dewatering), Drying, Milling and Packaging.
- All process must be completed within 24 hours.
- The Quality Parameters are stated in the Book of Standard by Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON)



## Common inclusion levels of HQCF in different cereal-based products

Categories of End-users of HQCF	Product/End-Use	Inclusion Levels
Bread Bakers	Bread including French loaves	20 – 30%**
Food Industries	Biscuits Wafers Noodles Spaghetti	10 – 50% 10% 10% up to 50%* 25%*
Home Caterers	Cakes Chin-chin Meat/ Fish Pie Buns & Fish Rolls Puff-puff	100% 25 – 100% 10 – 100% 10 – 12.5% 10 – 25%
Restaurants	Stiff Porridge (Cassava – Maize – Semo/Ugali)	18%

## Market Potential for HQCF

Market	Market Size (T/Year)	Replacement	Size of HQCF Opportunity (T/year)	Target Price Point (% Wheat Flour)
Milling	22 million	5%	110,000	90%
Biscuit	500,000	10%	50,000	75%
Packaging	3,000 – 6,000	100%	3,000 – 6,000	
Soap	600		???	
Rural Caterers	Yet to be			

The key limiting factors for HQCF

1. High prices offered by garri & fufu processors for cassava root.
2. Most Cassava processing factories have been shut down for months/years.
3. Ability of SMEs to meet buyers' quality requirements consistently.
4. Market acceptability & Capacity to deliver.
5. Lack of working capital by SME owners.
6. Inaccessibility to reliable sources of finance.

Cost of Production and Delivery

Cost of Production	Margin Allowed (20%)	Cost of Transport	Total Cost
N90,000	18,000	10,000	118,000
N100,000	20,000	10,000	140,000
N120,000	24,000	10,000	154,000
N130,000	26,000	10,000	166,000
N140,000	28,000	10,000	178,000

Yield/ Ha	Price of Root @ N8,000/ T	Price of Root @ N9,000/ T	Price of Root @ N10,000/ T	Price of Root @ N12,000/ T
15T	120,000	135,000	150,000	180,000
18T	144,000	162,000	180,000	216,000
20T	160,000	180,000	200,000	240,000
22T	176,000	198,000	220,000	264,000
25T	200,000	225,000	250,000	300,000
30T	240,000	270,000	300,000	360,000
35T	280,000	315,000	350,000	420,000

Cost Item	HQCF	
Cassava Roots (N10,000/T)	40,000	
HQCF Wet Cake (N18,000/T)	-	
Peeling	3,000	
Bags	1,200	
Fuel for Drying (Black oil)	12,000	
Generator	3,800	
Electricity	1,000	
Transport to Market	2,700	
Grating	2,000	
Pressing (Dewatering)	1,000	
Fixed Cost	4,078	
Contingencies (3% of Fixed + Var. Cost)	2,123	
<b>Total Cost of Production</b>	<b>72,901</b>	<b>0</b>

***Presentation 5: Machineries for the development of the Cassava Flour Chains: The Journey so far by Dr. Gloria Nwakaego Elemo, DG FIIRO represented by Mr. Dele Oyeku, Technical Assistant to DG.***

The paper discussed the historical background with respect to the efforts of FIIRO in the development of necessary machineries and equipment for cassava processing. It also gave insight that Nigeria is currently the largest producer of cassava in the world with an annual production output of about 54.0 Million tons in 2011. Despite this, Nigeria is yet to fully embrace industrial utilization of cassava as obtained in Thailand, Brazil and Columbia who produce far less than Nigeria. He further explained that FIIRO was in partnership with research institutions, millers, master bakers and the private sector in carrying out its mandate of developing machineries for industrialization of Nigeria.

Successive governments have realised the importance of the cassava value chain and that the trend has continued by the present administration. In the same vein, FIIRO has been a pioneer in cassava machineries and products in the country and FIIRO has equally initiated the development and transfer of technology strategy to aid large scale production of machineries for farmers. FIIRO was at the moment involved in collaboration with other research institutions and stakeholders as this strategy formed the basis of the institution's core mandate. Furthermore, since 1986, FIIRO has aggressively trained more than 700,000 entrepreneurs across the country in various areas of technological advancement for plant machineries and equipments. FIIRO had made huge impacts in this regard as breakthroughs have been made in the inventive technological area of agro allied industries with over 250 inventions so far.

In conclusion, he highlighted the need for all stakeholders involved in the cassava value chains to ensure quality as a top priority. In this respect, FIIRO has just launched a new scheme known as 'Quality Improvement Project'.

## Plenary

Questions, comments and other reactions from participants in response to the presentations by FIIRO included:

- In most cases, the most pertinent questions asked, dwelt on the inability of farmers to acquire the technology.
- The high cost of the farm machineries and equipment.
- The lack or rather absence of information as to the current breakthroughs made by FIIRO.
- Deficiencies of machineries from FIIRO and other local fabricators in terms of finishing and aesthetics account for their uncompetitive in the world market.

In his response, Mr. Dele Oyeku, informed the participants that FIIRO was in constant touch with the processors of various agricultural associations in Nigeria, on the latest breakthrough on technologies for improving agricultural production in Nigeria.

He however agreed that there was need for more synergy in the dissemination on information on technological breakthrough to the various stakeholders. FIIRO has recognised the importance of this hence, the new DG of FIIRO, Dr. Gloria Elemo organises press conferences regularly to inform Nigerian farmers and other stakeholders on new technological inventions.

To further the activities of FIIRO, the Co-chair of the afternoon session, Alhaji Waziri, who represented the MD of the Bank of Agriculture, stated that the bank was in collaboration with FIIRO in providing the avenue to improve technology transfer and capacity building for farmers. He stated further that, the Bank of Agriculture had made funds of over 300million naira available to the Nigeria Cassava Growers Association for disbursement to farmers. The bank has equally set aside another 1.2 billion naira for farmers and a Nigerian farmer could access funds of up to 250,000 naira without collateral from the bank.

## **VOTE OF THANKS**

In her vote of thanks, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chairman of NEPAD Business Group Nigeria, Chief (Mrs.) Eniola Fadayomi MFR, appreciated the efforts of the invited guests for sacrificing part of their time to grace this occasion and contribute to the development of cassava as an economic crop for the growth of our nation.

She further thanked the participants and other stakeholders for their insight contributions, comments and questions on salient issues affecting cassava production and its value added chains and the overall effect of agricultural production in Nigeria.

She later urged participants not to relent in sustaining the ideals and major issues that were addressed at the forum. She also stressed the importance of adequate follow ups and more importantly convening of another forum soon to address the issue of conducive environment for increased sustainability in cassava and food production in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

In her closing remarks, Chief (Mrs) Nike Akande, OON thanked the invited guests and participants for their patience and lively interaction during the forum. She also called for a special inclusion of women and youths in all key areas of the cassava value added chains, as these groups form the bedrock for economic growth and workforce in the agricultural sector of the Nigeria economy.

She ended on a high note that from the responses of the lively audience and well articulated presentations, that the forum had indeed achieved its aim. Finally, she wished the participants safe journey to their respective destinations.