

**COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF THE NIGERIA
RICE INVESTMENT FORUM: CREATING THE ENABLING
ENVIRONMENT FOR INCREASED RICE PRODUCTION IN
NIGERIA AND WEST AFRICA HELD AT THE TRANSCORP
HILTON, ABUJA,
NIGERIA ON 24TH – 25TH NOVEMBER, 2008**

The Nigeria Rice Investment Forum organized by NEPAD Business Group Nigeria (NBGN) and The Nigeria Economic Summit Group in collaboration with NEPAD Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, ECOWAS Commission, Bank of Industry, Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria and NEPAD Business Group – West Africa, was held at Transcorp Hilton, Abuja, Nigeria, on Monday, 24th to Tuesday, 25th November, 2008.

2. The forum was organized to discuss issues constraining the private sector's involvement in production, processing and marketing of rice; financial policies and practices affecting rice production and processing; and how the public sector should respond through policy frameworks and sub-regional collaboration.

3. The Forum was kicked off with a Welcome Address by the Chairman, NEPAD Business Group - Nigeria, Mr. Goodie Ibru, OON. The Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Abba Sayaddi Ruma, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Prof. Dapo Abraham Afolabi, delivered the Opening Remarks. The Keynote Address was delivered by the Vice President, Dr.

Goodluck Jonathan, GCON, who was represented by the Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, who also doubles as the Supervisory Minister for Solid Minerals, Ademola Sariki. The Special Adviser to the President on NEPAD, Amb. Tunji Olagunju, delivered a Goodwill Message as well as the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives represented by Barr. Benga Makanjuola, while the Executive Director of the NEPAD Business Group – Cote d’Ivoire, Mr. Amangoua Gerard, gave the Vote of Thanks.

4. The Chief Servant of Niger State, Dr. Mu’azu Babangida Aliyu, chaired the first plenary session. The Deputy Governor of Kaduna State as well as Honourable Commissioners responsible for Agriculture and Natural Resources as well as Commerce from Benue, Ondo, Delta, Abia, Bauchi, Ekiti, Oyo, Yobe, Niger, Kano, Bayelsa, Kogi and Sokoto states and the Director of Agric and Fisheries NDDC attended the dialogue. Other participants include stakeholders in agriculture from the states, NEPAD State Coordinators, Federal Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Private Sector, Financial Institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations, including Rice Farmers Association of Nigeria (RIFAN), Development Partners, Academia and Agricultural Research Institutes.

5. Some of the Technical papers discussed at the Dialogue were as follows:

- *Overview of Rice in West Africa – Dr. Olupomi Ajayi, Nigeria Coordinator, WARDA*

- *Comprehensive analysis of the Rice Sector in Nigeria and West Africa (case scenarios from Nigeria, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire) – Dr. Ochigbo, Director, NCRI, Moussa Diarra, NEPAD Business Group-Mali and Amangoua Gerard, Executive Director of the NEPAD Business Group – Cote d'Ivoire;*
- *Highlights of Investment opportunities in SMEs for rice production, processing and marketing in Nigeria – Chairman, Agricultural & Food Security Policy Commission (NESG); and*
- *The role of the government in creating the enabling and regulatory framework for rice production and processing (a case scenario from Thailand and India).*

The main thrust of the discussions was a renewed focus on policy implementation towards creating an enabling environment for increased Rice Production, by emphasizing the development of strategies that will directly impact on and empower Nigerian farmers.

6. At the end of the forum, participants recommended the following:
 - i. That government should adequately support the issue land clearing for cropping especially rice;
 - ii. That the N10bn rice funds for processing be given directly to farmers;
 - iii. That government should translate dialogues into action;
 - iv. That there should be legislation and policies to protect the rice industry;

- v. That government should subsidise agric in line with what developed countries (USA, EU, etc) are doing;
- vi. That both the government and the farmers must invest in land and seeds development;
- vii. That government should assist in developing land and allocating them to real farmers;
- viii. That government should provide irrigation structures;
- ix. That there is need to strengthen the SMEs, community associations and assist them with marketing and processing;
- x. That there should be continuity on the production, processing and marketing of rice unlike the politicization of casava;
- xi. That money or subsidies should be given directly to farmers;
- xii. That government should stop or discourage importation of rice;
- xiii. That the Government should make deliberate effort to make policies that will involve the youth in agriculture to take over from the present aging farmers;
- xiv. That Government should make agriculture attractive by giving inputs and money to real farmers;
- xv. That the government should go back to agriculture, mechanise it and prepare the land for agriculture;
- xvi. That Government should make more effort in developing agriculture through irrigation for proper land use;
- xvii. That Government should embark on sensitization of farmers to solve some of the problems encountered by farmers;
- xviii. That Government should provide more tractors and Rice processing machines for farmers;

- xix. That Government should increase the budgetary allocation for agriculture;
- xx. That Government should encourage farming to create wealth and retain wealth in the country;
- xxi. That the states and Federal Government should work together to provide the enabling environment to bring in investors to the rice sector;
- xxii. That there should be capacity building programs for farmers;
- xxiii. That there is need for improved varieties;
- xxiv. that inputs should be given to farmers as credit;
- xxv. that there is need to exploit the PPP model in rice production and processing;
- xxvi. that the private sector should take over the management of farm subsidy with oversight from the government;
- xxvii. That there is need to locally fabricate farm processing equipment for easy accessibility of farmers;
- xxviii. That there should be Association for Rice Processors of Nigeria;
- xxix. That there should also be Association for Rice Marketers of Nigeria;
- xxx. That there should be accountability and openness in terms of support and funding for agriculture; and
- xxxi. That Nigeria can only move forward if we consider value addition and wealth creation.

7. Participants commended the organizers of the forum and called for government support to stakeholders, including the youth, women and local farmers.

Issued at Abuja on Monday, 24th November, 2008