

# OFAB Nigeria Impact Stories.

## 1.0 Women farmers demand answers on why biotech seeds are not available to them.

OFAB Nigeria in 2013 co-hosted a special session with the Sheda Science and Technology Complex (SHETSCO) to build the capacity of local women farmers on the potentials of Agricultural biotechnology to increase yield amidst climate change challenges. The lectures were delivered in Hausa (the major Nigerian language spoken by the women) by the OFAB Nigeria Coordinator and the Guest Speaker Professor Andrew Nok of the Biochemistry Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, making it easier for the farmers to comprehend. The women were pleased to learn about climate resilient biotech crops, which they said could help solve their food security challenges and restore their sources of livelihood. They queried their Local Government Chairman present on why biotech seeds were not available to them. They further pleaded with all parties to do their best to ensure biotech seeds are made available to them. The Local government official promised to raise the matter with the Governor and the OFAB coordinator promised to continue to strengthen its partnership with all parties to ensure biotech seeds are available to farmers in Nigeria.



**Top Right: The Representative of the Chairman, Kwali Local Government Area Council, FCT, addressing the Women Farmers at the Training Session in SHESTCO, Sheda.**

## 1.1 State Governors pledge Support for Biotech.

Support for biotechnology by leading National Agricultural research Institutes is vital to the uptake of biotech industry in any country. This is because most farmers and the media trust local scientists from National research institutions as credible sources of agricultural information. Hence, when the deputy DG of the National Cereals research Institute (NACRI) informed NABDA that some of his scientists were not conversant with modern biotechnology, OFAB was tasked to organize a sensitization workshop at the institute. Thus, on December 19, 2013, OFAB Nigeria and NCRI, organized a one-day forum at the institution, based in Badeggi- Niger State, to educate and inform the scientists and farmers about modern biotechnology. This was imperative because NCRI was just about to embark on trials of the NEWEST rice, a transgenic project coordinated by AATF.



At the end of the forum, the Commissioner for Science and Technology, Dr. Mustapha Lemu who represented the Governor, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu at the meeting expressed support for biotech and pledged to donate land and other resources needed to start confined field trials of rice, cowpea and cotton in the state. Similarly, the Kogi State Governor, Captain Idris Wada who was represented by Architect Yomi Awoniyi also pledged its support for the National Biotechnology Development Agency through its resource centre in the State to promote Agricultural Biotechnology. This is in line with other State governments (Oyo state, Edo state, Gombe State, Imo, and Katsina States) who are partnering with OFAB to promote Agric-biotech. State Representatives of farmer unions (including women farmers) at the Sessions expressed keen interest to partner with NABDA to ensure they have immediate access to biotech.

## 1.2 Transformation of the Agricultural Value Chain through Biotechnology.

The Agricultural value chain in Nigeria has declined since the 1960's due to the discovery of crude oil. This has led to the Nation going from food proficiency to spending about \$4billion (USD) annually on food importation. A key objective of the Government is to reinstate the Agricultural sector to ensure Nigeria restores its exportation capability before the oil boom era. This led to the co-hosting of an OFAB session with the National Institute For Oil Palm Research to address the declining production of oil palm in Nigeria through biotechnology. At the event, the then DG/CEO, NABDA, Prof. B.O. Solomon, made a presentation on how biotechnology could transform the value chain of oil palm through increased yield with specific reference to Malaysia. The Head of the Oil Palm Association Farmers of Edo State, Chief S.I. Eghaghe acknowledged a decline in the output of the existing varieties of oil palm resulting in loss of income and jobs and were happy to hear that biotechnology could help address the problem. While the Representative of the State Governor, the Commissioner of Agriculture, Hon. Abdul Oroh S. was also ecstatic by the potential of biotechnology and pledged to support the research activities of NIFOR to high yielding varieties of oil palm are made available to the farmers. The Coordinator of OFAB in a concluding remark pledged to ensure a road map is drawn to ensure all parties contribute to the project.



Hon. Comm.. for Agric. Edo State, Abdul Oron making a presentation



Former DG NABDA, Prof B.O. Solomon making a presentation



Mrs. Rose Gidado, OFAB Nigeria Coordinator



Varieties of coconut plant from NIFOR on display at the event



### 1.3 OFAB Nigeria goes to Schools.

A key advocacy strategy of OFAB Nigeria is to catch proponents of the technology young. It's the reason OFAB took its advocacy platform to a secondary school in Nigeria. The special session was hosted at a Federal Government Girls College in Abuja, which had about a thousand (1000) students in its senior secondary classes. Being able to educate 1000 students on the imperatives of biotechnology and the potential career prospects transcends to educating thousands more as they would lead the advocacy and share their knowledge with family and friends. At the session, the then DG/CEO, NABDA, Professor Bamidele O. Solomon gave a presentation on the fundamentals of biotechnology, its applications and importance, career prospects, as well as the hindrances in achieving its full potential in Nigeria. At the end of the presentation, the teachers requested for biotechnology to be included in the school curriculum. Professor Solomon promised to ensure he works with the principal and educational board to introduce biotechnology to the Curriculum. At the end of the session, the Students celebrated the then DG/CEO and requested for his autograph.

They acknowledged such forum had never been hosted in the school and were keen to join in the advocacy of biotechnology. The OFAB Nigeria coordinator (Mrs. Rose Gidado) urged the students<sup>i</sup> to utilize the social

networking sites (Facebook, Twitter and Blog pages) in their advocacy campaign.



**From Top Left -Bottom Right: The Officials of OFAB Nigeria Chapter in interactive Session with FGGC Bwari Students**

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