

**BRIEF ON MINISTRY OF
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL
RESOURCES**

Presented To

The Nigeria Governor's Forum(NGF)

By

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BRIEF ON MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES, ASABA, DELTA STATE.

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources is entrusted with the responsibility of improving on the volume of food production in the state through its activities which include the rendering of extension services and direct assistance to farmers in areas of provision of improved, high yielding, disease resistant, planting materials, other farm inputs and land preparation, livestock and fisheries inputs, veterinary and produce inspection services, agricultural mechanization and loans in cash and kind.

2. ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS.

The assigned responsibilities and functions of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources as spelt out in circular letter No.SGD.86/T/76 OF 27th March 2001 are as follows:-

- (i) Development of Agricultural policies
- (ii) Rendering Agricultural Services in the following areas;
 - (a) Tree Crop Development
 - (b) Farm Settlement/Communal Farms
 - (c) School leavers farm
 - (d) Food production
 - (e) Farm management and
 - (f) Livestock services.
- (iii) Loans to farmers and fishermen
- (iv) Agricultural Research and Planning
- (v) Veterinary Services including animal health and meat inspection
- (vi) Fisheries
- (vii) Produce Inspection.

- (viii) Relations with other State Governments and Federal Government and External Agencies on all matters regarding agricultural development
- (ix) Distribution of fertilizers
- (x) Zoological gardens
- (xi) Farmers and fishermen co-operatives
- (xii) Relations with River Basin Authorities
- (xiii) College of Agriculture.

3. VISION OF THE MINISTRY

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources shall encourage all Deltans to engage in farming activities to increase agricultural productivity in the state and provide enough food for the populace with surplus for sale and export and thereby enhancing the standard of living of the people of Delta State, create employment, generate wealth, reduce rural-urban migration and youth restiveness.

4. MISSION STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY

Government in collaboration with other stakeholders in agriculture shall enhance the standard of living of the people of Delta State through direct assistance to all categories of farmers to increase their agricultural productivity and thereby their income.

5. DELTA STATE AGRICULTURAL POLICY

The Delta State Agricultural Policy is focused on achieving agricultural growth and development, warranting agriculture to play a greater role in the economic growth and development of the State especially the rural areas.

The broad policy objectives are:-

- (i) Attainment of self-sufficiency in basic food commodities, and increased production of agricultural raw materials for the industry using improved technology.
- (ii) Generating employment, improving income and thereby improving the quality of life of the rural dwellers.
- (iii) Optimum utilization of agricultural land, water and human resources which are in abundance in the state.
- (iv) Protection of agricultural land and water resources from degradation.

The specific objectives of the policy are:

- (i) Attainment of food security in basic food commodities.
- (ii) Increase in production of agricultural raw materials for industry and processing of export crops using improved production and processing technologies.
- (iii) Creating the conducive macro-economic environment to stimulate greater private sector investment in agricultural and rural development.
- (iv) Promoting increased application of modern to agricultural production.
- (v) Generating gainful employment opportunities.
- (vi) Improving the quality of life of the rural dwellers.
- (vii) Improved protection of agricultural land and water resources from degradation.
- (viii) Revitalizing agricultural extension services.
- (ix) Improving availability and accessibility to farm inputs for farmers.

- (x) Fostering effective state governmental/local government collaboration in the implementation of agricultural programmes.
- (xi) Optimum utilization of agricultural land, water and human resources.
- (xii) Encouraging greater participation of the teeming youths in agricultural activities.
- (xiii) Reduction of pastoralists/farmers conflict.
- (xiv) Middle level Agricultural Manpower development.
- (xv) Revamping the production of traditional cash crops in the state, (oil palm and rubber) and encouraging the production of other tree crops for which the state has potentials (cocoa and coffee).
- (xvi) Intensification and encouragement of rearing of micro-livestock e.g. grass cutter (cane rat), Snails and rabbit and honey-bee (Apiculture).
- (xvii) Promoting livestock farming and aquaculture.

6. STRUCTURE AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE MINISTRY

The Ministry has nine departments made up of the three mandatory departments and six operational departments. Of the six, the Special Projects Departments was created in year 2000 through an internal arrangement. There are field offices in all the Local Government Areas under the supervision of the operational departments. The Ministry has three farm settlements located at Mbiri, Ika-North East, Utagba-Unor-Ndokwa West and Okunigho-Ethiope West L.G.A. There are also five communal farm located at Ogwashi-Uku/Ewulu (Aniocha South LGA), Irri/Aviara/Emede (Isoko South LGA), Deghele (Sapele LGA), Tamigbe (Burutu LGA) and Abigborodo (Warri North LGA). Four new ones are

being established at Ute-Ogbeje (Ika North East LGA), Kokori (Ethiope East LGA), Owhe-Ologbo (Isoko North LGA) and Bomadi (Bomadi LGA).

A fish farm settlement is also being established at Owhe-Ologbo (Isoko North).

The Ministry also has a Research Station at Obior, Aniocha North L.G.A. under the department of Planning, Research and Statistics. The nine (9) departments are as listed below:-

(a) **Mandatory Departments**

- (i) Administration
- (ii) Planning, Research & Statistics
- (iii) Finance and Accounts

(b) **Operational Departments**

- (i) Agricultural Services
- (ii) Produce Inspection Services
- (iii) Livestock
- (iv) Veterinary Services
- (v) Fisheries
- (vi) Special Projects.

The Ministry has seven parastatals and one government owned company namely, the Oil Palm Company. The parastatals are as follows:-

- (i) Delta State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP)
- (ii) Delta State Agricultural Procurement Agency (DAPA)
- (iii) Task Force on Communal Farming (TFCF)
- (iv) Tree crop Unit (TCU)
- (v) Tractor Hire Agency
- (vi) Community Based Natural Resources Management Programme (CBNBMP)

(vii) FADAMA III

7. **PAST MAJOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN THE STATE**

Prior to the 70's, agriculture occupied a prime position in the economy of the state. However, with the advent of the oil boom, the focus of the state shifted from agriculture to oil exploration. This situation led to rural-urban migration of able-bodied youths, youth restiveness and increase in crime rate. Farming was left for the aged men and women. Consequent upon this, the contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) drastically declined.

In order to avert a state of food crises, the State Government developed new programmes and revitalized already existing but ailing ones. Some of these included:- Youth Empowerment Through Agriculture(YETA), Peasant Farmers Support Programme, Farm Settlement Scheme; Communal Farming Programme, Agricultural Development Programme (ADP); Tree and Food Crop Development Programmes; Loan Schemes; Sales of Agro-chemicals and Fertilizers; Fisheries and Livestock Programmes, Agricultural Mechanization Programmes; Rapid/Increasing Food Production Programme, Live and Own A Farm (LOAF) Programme etc.

8. **CURRENT STATUS OF AGRICULTURE IN DELTA STATE**

- Currently, farm sizes are predominantly small and uneconomic and this translates to low farm income.
- Investments are generally low, leading to low yield, low income and subsequent poverty.
- Over 70% of the population of the state live in the rural areas, are farmers and live below the poverty line of N150 per day.

- Farmers and potential farmers lack access to land and capital.
- Generally, agriculture is characterized by low productivity due to inadequate extension, appropriate technology and near absence of mechanization.
- The present fragmented and scattered small farm holdings are an impediment to an efficient delivery of such services as the provision of water for irrigation, erosion control, roads, input distribution, extension services and mechanization.
- Post harvest losses due to inadequate preservation and storage infrastructure translate to low annual returns from farming.
- There is a dearth of agro-processing machinery and equipment for value addition.
- Our rural areas lack such basic infrastructures as electricity, roads, potable water, health facilities, markets which make the rural areas unattractive for people to stay and farm.
- The unattractiveness of our rural areas vis-à-vis farming leads to the migration of able-bodied young farmers to urban areas leaving behind an ageing farming population. This is a threat to food self-sufficiency and security.
- Crop production in the state at present is largely rain-fed and therefore subject to the vagaries of the weather. There is virtually no cropping during the long dry season.
- Agricultural planning in the state at present is done from a poor data base as a result of inadequate provision for agro-statistics gathering, processing storage/retrieval.
- With a total land area of 17,698 square kilometers made up of 1,770 sq km of fresh water swamps, 5,830 sq km of mangrove swamps and

10,088 sq km of rain forests, the State has vast potentials for the production of crops, fish and livestock for food and industry. In spite of all these potentials the well over 11,000 sq km of cultivable land, less than 20% is cultivated and largely by small holders cultivating less than 2 hectares per farm family.

9. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR.

Government effort has been directed towards the expansion of production and improvement of productivity, through various crops, livestock and fisheries programmes. Some of the major achievements include:-

(A). Peasant Farmers Support and Youth Empowerment Programme Through Agriculture

The Delta State Committee on Youth Empowerment Through Agriculture and Farmers' Support Programme was inaugurated by His Excellency, the Governor of Delta State on the 4th of August, 2008. The main thrust of the Committee was to empower farmers across the State for rapid food production and encourage youths to embrace agriculture as a means of livelihood so as to replace the ageing farming population. This programme is an offshoot of the Delta Road Map on Agriculture which was produced by a consultant, Farm Infrastructure Foundation(FIF).A total sum of N1.2billion has been released for the implementation of the programme (N600 million for the Peasant Farmers Support and N600 million for the Youth Empowerment Through Agriculture Programme). The following achievements have been recorded since the inception of the programme :-

(a) **Peasant Farmers Support Programme**

A total of 3,925 participants have benefited from this programme as follows:

(i) **Poultry Component**

A total of 100,000 Day Old Chicks (60,000 broilers and 40,000 pullets) were raised to 4 weeks old for broilers and 18 weeks old (Point of Lay) for pullets and distributed to a total of 500 participants across the state to boost poultry meat and egg production in the state. The broilers were sold during the yuletide.

(ii) **Piggery Component**

A total of 4000 pig growers were raised and distributed to 200 pig farmers across the state for pork meat and weaners production.

(iii) **Fisheries Component**

One thousand fish farmers were assisted with N100,000 each to purchase fish feeds to boost fish production in the state.

(iv) **Crops Component**

The programme is assisting crops farmers to increase crop production in the state through the provision of improved, high yielding varieties of planting materials, agrochemicals, fertilizers and cash for land preparation, weeding, harvesting etc. A total of 2225 participants across the state were assisted as follows:-

(i) Yam- 400 participants to cultivate a total of 40 hectares (ha) of yam farms.

(ii) Cassava-1250 to cultivate a total of 1250 hectares (ha) of cassava farms.

(iii) Rice- 71 participants to cultivate a total of 75 hectares (ha) of rice farms.

The programme is assisting crops farmers to increase crop production in the state through the provision of improved, high yielding varieties of planting materials, agrochemicals, fertilizers and cash for land preparation, weeding, harvesting etc. A total of 2225 participants across the state were assisted as follows:-

(iv) Vegetables-500 participants to cultivate a total of 500 hectares (ha) of vegetables farms which included tomatoes, spinach and fluted pumpkin.

(b) Youth Empowerment through Agriculture

A total of 450 youths at the ratio of 18 per LGA (ages between 18-40 years), were selected and trained at Integrated Agricultural Development Centre, Songhai-Delta, Amukpe on Agriculture, Business Management and Computer Appreciation for a period of one month. The training specifically was on Fisheries, Crop and Livestock production. At the end of the training, the participants in Fisheries and Livestock production will be established in both non- clusters and clusters respectively in their various LGAs. The crop farmers will cultivate crops on their own land. It is expected that the Fisheries and Livestock farmers after one or two years would have earned enough money to enable them establish their own farms. Construction of infrastructure for participants under the cluster groups is currently on-going.

(c) Repayment of Loan

The beneficiaries of both the Peasant Farmers Support and Youth Empowerment will repay 50% of the total assistance given them both in cash and kind at first harvest. To ensure full repayment of loan, Microfinance Banks have been commissioned to disburse the funds to the farmers and also to recover the funds accordingly.

(B) Crop Production

In the crops sub-sector, the focus of the State Government is to increase productivity and production. Improved planting materials and broodstock that are high yielding and disease resistant, chemicals, fertilizers were procured or produced and distributed to farmers at subsidized prices. The impact of this has been increased yields and better income to farmers.

(a) **Nursery Development**

- **Oil Palm Development**

The state established oil palm nurseries at Ejeme-Uno, Abraka and Mosogar which produced 1,990,000 oil palm seedlings and these were sold to farmers at subsidized rate to establish 13,267 hectares (ha) of oil palm plantations across the State.

- **Rubber and Cocoa Nursery**

Forty thousand (40,000) budded rubber stumps to plant 888ha of plantation and nine hundred and fifty thousand (950,000) cocoa seedlings to plant 887ha of cocoa plantation were raised and distributed to farmers.

(b) **Tree Crop Development**

Oil Palm Plantation

A total of 3,375 hectares of oil palm plantations were established for over 500 farmers and farmers co-operatives across the State including farmers in three (3) farm settlements.

(c) **Arable Crops and Seed Multiplication**

Farmers were assisted to engage in the cultivation of over 1000 ha of cassava, maize, tomatoes, plantain, pineapple, cowpea and rice, while 12ha of high yielding disease resistant cassava varieties were established for multiplication of cuttings A Rapid Plantain Sucker Multiplication Centre was established at Obior Research Station. The most current effort is the establishment of 100ha cassava farm at Abraka. The concept is to encourage the establishment of large scale, contiguous farms on the plots donated by various individuals or communities in order to exploit the advantages of tractorization/mechanization in land-preparation as well as other modern crop husbandry practices such as chemical weed control, fertilizer application and irrigation.

(C) Livestock

The cardinal objective of the state's livestock development programme is to increase the quality and quantity of animal protein intake in the state. Over 323,650 broiler and pullet chicks were raised to four and six weeks of age respectively and distributed to livestock farmers at subsidized rates. Also, 3,000 pig-weaners and various goat kids, cane rat and snails were raised and distributed to farmers either to increase their production or to start new farms. Poultry and piggery houses were also constructed or renovated at Ibusa, Ogwashi-uku and Agbarho and poultry, canerat, and snail cages were procured and sold to farmers. In addition Kikachukwu farm, Ogwashi-uku was assisted to establish a parent stock poultry farm and to reactivate its moribund hatchery in year 2005. The farm is currently producing day old chicks for sale to farmers.

(D) Fisheries

Delta State is blessed with numerous water bodies, which include rivers, streams, fresh and brackish water swamps and shallow coastal waters which have great potentials for fisheries development.

In order to tap these potentials, the State Government has empowered fisher folks through the provision of fishing gears at subsidized rates, rehabilitation of fish ponds and supply of fish fingerlings, water pumps and fish feeds also at subsidized rates. Over 3 million fish fingerlings were raised and sold at subsidized rate. Recently, the state has taken the initiative to establish the world acclaimed high-tech water recirculatory fish culture system which has the advantage of high stocking density and so, limited space requirement, short culture duration and high yields and profits. Also Agip Oil Company constructed and donated to the state a five (5) million per

annum capacity fingerling production centre. Olona Ranch Fish Feed Mill was reactivated through government assistance and is currently producing fish feeds for sale to farmers.

(E) Veterinary Services

Five new Veterinary clinics have been built, fenced and provided with water at Effurun, Ozoro, Koko, Ughelli and Bomadi while the seven existing ones were renovated. Two modern abattoirs have been built at Ugbolokposo and Ogwashi-uku which have capacity for 250 cattle, 300 goats and 100pigs while eight (8) new ones are under construction at Asaba, Abraka, Ughelli, Kwale, Orerokpe, Boji-Boji-Owa, Oghara and Bomadi.

A Veterinary Investigation and Diagnostic Centre (VIDC) is under construction at Agbarho. When completed, it will serve as a referral centre for the diagnosis of animal diseases for the South-South geopolitical area— a service currently being provided by Nigerian Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI), Vom, Plateau State. The following campaign/general disease treatments were also carried out:-

- Control and containment of African Swine Fever (ASF).
- Control and containment of Avian Influenza (AI) and attraction of compensation to affected farmers by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources.
- Anti-Rabis campaign.
- Successful closure of slaughter slabs at PTI Junction, Effurun and movement of the butchers to the modern abattoir at Ugbolokposo with the collaboration of the Uvwie Local Government Council.

(F) Farm Settlements

The farm settlements are rural development model villages upon which are super-imposed improved agricultural production. This administration

inherited two farm settlements located at Mbiri and Utagba-Uno. A third settlement was established at Okunigho in year 2000. A fish farm settlement was also established at Owhe-Ologbo in year 2007. Government has put in a lot of efforts to resuscitate the old farm settlements through the renovation of the offices, warehouses, halls and residential quarters. Water and road infrastructures were also rehabilitated. Over 600 hectares of oil palm plantations have been planted/replanted in the three farm settlements.

(G) Communal Farming

The objective of the communal farming programme is to assist the youths in communities to establish farms as a business venture so as to provide gainful employment to the teeming rural youths in the state, curb youth restiveness, reduce rural urban migration, alleviate poverty and improve on the living standard of the communities. The programme aims at creating career farmers from these youths. At the inception of this administration, the state had only three communal farms in operation. These are the farms at Ogwashi –Uku, Deghele and Irri/Emede. Presently, the State has 9 communal farms located at Ogwashi –Uku, Deghele, Irri/Emede, Tamigbe ,Abigborodo, Kokori, Bomadi, Owheologbo and Ute-Ogbeje.

There are presently, 100 farm participants at Ogwashi-Uku, 110 at Deghele, 90 at Tamigbe, 85 at Abigborodo and 95 at Irri-Emede. It is envisaged that 100 farm participants will be enlisted for Ute-Ogbeje, 70 for Kokori, 30 for Owhe-Ologbo and 21 for Bomadi. The strategy is to assist these career farmers with access to land, infrastructural development, technical services and soft loans. Two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) fingerlings will be reared at Bomadi, Owheologbo and Kokori farms where water recirculatory and flow through fish farms have been established.

(H) Agro Processing

The main objective of this programme is to promote the processing and preservation of agricultural produce thereby adding value to the products. This administration established 9 cassava processing centres capable of converting raw cassava into starch, flour, pellets and chips. These are located at Abraka, Abavo, Owa-Alero, Obomkpa, Aviara, Ogor-Ughelli, Owheologbo, Otefe-Oghara and Kwale. In recent times, three more advanced and sophisticated cassava and starch flour mills are being established at Oghara, Ubulu-Okiti and Ogbe-Ijoh.

(I) Agricultural Mechanization Services

Under the agricultural mechanization programme of the State Government, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources encourages the mechanization of agriculture as a means of increasing farmers production and reducing drudgery. In this regard, the Ministry provides tractor hire services at subsidized rates to make farm machinery available and affordable to farmers to mechanize their farm operations. Between 1999 and date, the Ministry procured 60 tractors with complementary implements, rehabilitated 13 tractors and constructed farm machinery equipment buildings in the tractor hire centres to enhance service delivery. For a better and more effective service delivery, the Tractor Hire Unit of the Ministry was upgraded to an Agency- Delta State Tractor Hire Agency. Three new Tractor Hire Centres were established at Oleh, Oghara and Patani bringing the total number to seven. The other centres are Ibusa, Asaba, Agbor and Agbarho. A total of 3566 hectares of farm land was tractorised for farmers during the period. The State Government has approved the complete refurbishment of 49 tractors. Work on these is on-going.

(J) Agro Services Centres

The programme aims at providing under one roof various agricultural services such as sale of fertilizers, agro-chemicals, improved planting materials and broodstock, extension services and tractor hire services. Government embarked upon the renovation of the agro-service centres at Owanta, Oleh and Koko. Two new centres are currently being developed at Abraka and Issele-Uku.

(K) Nigerian Agricultural Insurance Scheme

Under this scheme, the state government encourages farmers in the state to insure their farms against risks such as flood, fire, disease etc through payment of insurance premium subsidy and enlightenment campaigns. A total of 2,609 farmers were assisted to pay their premium since 1999.

(L) Agricultural Produce Inspection Services

The produce inspection services help to ensure that produce from the state and coming into the state meet international standards for export and conform with produce inspection laws and regulations. Six Produce Control Posts were constructed at Asaba, Alifekede, Ugbenu, Abraka, Issele-Azagba and Patani, while purchase of motor cycles, uniforms, produce equipment and chemicals were undertaken.

(M) Agricultural Extension Services

Extension delivery is a very essential service to the agricultural development of the state and is being handled by the State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). The cardinal objective is to inform, teach and educate farmers on improved agricultural practices. Government has in place a specialized institution - the Delta Agricultural Development Programme (ADP), which has about 250 frontline extension corners of the state with

improved agricultural technologies. The State Government also supports the collaborative efforts of the ADP with the Federal Government and other international agencies in the implementation of various agricultural programmes, such as Root and Tuber Programme (RTEP), National Programme on Food Security (NPFS), FADAMA and Cassava Mosaic control. There was also direct contact with farmers through:-

- Farm visits

- (v) Discussions with farmers in the farm
- (vi) Identification of farmers' field problems
- (vii) Identification of farmers' capacities
- (viii) Advising farmers on productive improvement such as:-
 - i. Mechanization
 - ii. Loan processing
 - iii. Preservation of farm produce.

(N) Procurement and Sale of Agro-chemicals

DAPA was established to provide excellent, price competitive and high quality agricultural inputs supply services to farmers in the state. During the period under review, 10 zonal offices were established as sales outlets in the state. A total of 18,504.65 metric tonnes of NPK fertilizer, 650 MT of Urea, 15MT of MOP, 40,235MT of planting seeds (maize and cowpea), 1,131kg/10,850 litres of agrochemicals etc. Other farm inputs and vehicles were procured and construction of warehouses, stores and offices was undertaken.

(O) Agricultural Credit

Under the loans to small scale farmers/fishermen scheme, the Ministry provides agricultural credit in order to boost farming activities in the state. Loans have been extended to farmers/fishermen scheme. A total of 88 co-

operative societies and a medium-scale pineapple farmer have benefited from this scheme.

**(P) Third National FADAMA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT-
FADAMA III**

The FADAMA III project is a Federal Government intervention strategy designed to address the interrelated problems of low productivity, poverty, food insecurity, low income levels using the World Bank Credit Facilities. The project development objective is to sustainably increase income of rural farmers and other economic interest groups through the provision of rural infrastructural facilities, capacity building of the rural dwellers and conflict resolution also attract equal emphasis. So far, eighty (80) unemployed graduates (40 males and 40 females) have been employed to work as Community Facilitators in the twenty chosen Local Government Areas of the project. Two hundred (200) rural communities have been selected in accordance with World Bank standards to benefit from the programme.

**(Q) IFAD/FGN/NDDC Community-Based Natural Resource
Management Programme (CBNRMP)**

The Community Based Natural Resources Management Programme (CBNRMP) is an International Fund for Agricultural Development's (IFAD) supported programme aimed at alleviating rural poverty especially amongst women and youths in the nine Niger Delta States. So far 27 communities which are beneficiaries of the programme have been assisted to establish some agroprocessing centres, other income generating activities, schools, town halls etc.

(R) Mobilization of Rural Women for Sustainable Agriculture (MORWSA) Programme

The Mobilization of Rural Women for Sustainable Agriculture (MORWSA) programme was created to mobilize, sensitize and train our rural women farmers in modern practices of farming and to empower them through the provision of agricultural inputs and infrastructure. A number of women groups have benefited from various empowerment programmes which included Cassava Processing Mills (6 groups); Hand – pushed tractors (6 groups); Palm Oil Processing Mills (2 groups); Poultry Production (6 groups) and Snailery Production (1 group).

10. SECTORAL CHALLENGES

- i. Inadequate funding and late release of funds have been the bane of agricultural development in the State. This has greatly hampered the implementation of projects and programmes of the Ministry over the years. It has become customary for the actual amount released out of the approval annual capital budgetary provision to range between 40% - 45%. This trend is not encouraging and is inimical to any meaningful agricultural development in the State
- ii. Lack of mobility for zonal heads and local government area agricultural officers in the 25 local government areas
- iii. Activities of militant youths popularly called area boys who demand for financial gratification from staff conveying agricultural inputs for project implementation
- iv. Lack of extension services which was virtually dead in Delta State due to low funding of ADP
- v. Non availability or accessibility of agricultural inputs by rural farmers

- vi. Agricultural inputs market such as DAPA should be located in sensitive towns where farmers will have easy access to
- vii. Lack of land due to our Land Tenure System
- viii. The peculiar nature of our mangrove swamp especially at the Delta South makes it difficult to harness the agricultural potentials in that area.
- ix. Insensitivity of rural farmers to government assisted projects which leads to lack of maintenance and sustainability in some area outright vandalization
- x. Political influence on the location of agricultural projects to areas that do not have the relevant ecology to support such projects
- xi. Poor data base for policy formulation, monitoring and impact assessment
- xii. Inadequate delivery of appropriate technologies to reduce drudgery in agricultural production and processing.
- xiii. Lack of Office Accommodation

At the headquarters, it is common to find two or more officers sharing the same offices with messengers, cleaners and typist. In the outstations, the situation is worse. In some local government areas zonal offices are completely absent. The Area agricultural officers in many cases have resorted to renting office accommodation on their own. In the light of the above situation, permanent office accommodation should be built for the Ministry both at the State capital and local government headquarters. Partially to solve this situation, a new headquarters which will be called Agric Village has been designed and the Bill of Quantity prepared.

- xvi. Lack of Office Furniture and Equipment
Many of the Local Government Area offices are without tables, chairs, carpets/rugs, typewriters, stationeries, electric fans, toilet facilities and water. At the headquarters also there is a dearth of tables and chairs leaving some officers with no office equipment and facilities of any sort.
- xvii. Rehabilitation of Existing Office Buildings
Many of the existing Local Government Areas with archaic designs inherited from the colonial period are dilapidated and need to be renovated or entirely rebuilt.
- xviii. Lack of Security Men in the Outstation Offices
The Ministry lacks security Men in almost all its field offices in the 25 Local Government Areas of the State thus giving room to frequent vandilization and theft of office equipment, machines, vehicles etc from the Veterinary Clinics, Modern Abattoirs and Area offices across the State.

11. FUTURE PLANS OF THE MINISTRY (MANR)

- i. To increase the number of participants in the Youth Empowerment through Agriculture Programme (YETA) by 100% in order to reduce youth restiveness in Niger Delta.
- ii. To explore Public/Private Partnership (PPP) for large scale farming and provision of agricultural support services in the State.
- iii. To approach communities to volunteer contiguous tracks of land which will be opened up by government for crops, livestock and fisheries development.

- iv. To encourage private sector investments in the areas of support services such as provision of farm inputs, agro-processing and marketing. Encouragement can be through advocacy, access to land and rural infrastructure.
- v. Provision of fish hatchery and feed mill at Oghara fish farm
- vi. Expansion of cassava cutting multiplication project
- vii. Expansion of rapid plantain multiplication project
- viii. Renovation and reactivation of Aviara fish farm.
- ix. Renovation and reactivation of the fish hatchery at Agbor for fingerlings production and hydro-biological research and investigation
- x. Reactivation of Veterinary Investigation and Diagnostic Centre at Agbarho
- xi. Recruitment of Veterinary Doctors that will man various offices within the State
- xii. Equipping of completed Veterinary Clinic with drugs, vaccines, syringe, refrigerators etc
- xiii. Completion of on going nine(9) modern abattoirs across the State
- xiv. Renovation of four (4) veterinary control posts
- xv. To actively involve rural farmers in all agricultural development programme in the State by providing credit facilities
- xvi. To increase the number of Tree Crops production in the State by 50% in the year 2010 (oil palm, rubber seedlings and cocoa seedlings).

- xvii. Distribution of fishing materials and inputs to fish farmers at 50% subsidy.
- xviii. Renovation and equipping of offices both at Headquarters and Zonal offices.
- xix. To ensure that the 25 Local Government Areas are involved in the phase III of the Fadama development project
- xx. To reactivate the four (4) Agricultural Centres in the State located at Oleh, Koko, Abraka and Owanta
- xxi. Purchase of additional new tractors to upgrade the number of existing tractors in the Tractor Hire Agency (THA)
- xxii. Training of both staff and farmers on new technologies on agricultural production
- xxiii. Establishment of additional two (2) Agricultural Research Centres to be located at Delta Central and South Senatorial Districts
- xxiv. Establishment of a full fledged college of Agriculture as a Research and training arm of the Ministry
- xxv. Continuous conduct of various agricultural statistical survey in the State

12. CONCLUSION

For the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources to impact positively in the lives of farmers in the State through direct assistance in input delivery and services, adequate funds have to be made available and timely too by government to the Ministry since agriculture is time bound.

Rapid multiplication of plantain and banana: Nursery techniques

Plantains and several banana varieties are mainly propagated through vegetative means. The slow rate of sucker multiplication is one of the major constraints to plantain production. The usual process of sucker removal and transplanting has been observed to be inadequate and encourage infection and spread of nematode and weevils.

To counteract these, rapid production of clean materials has become imperative. There are various methods of rapid sucker multiplication each of which has their advantages and limitations depending on the sucker type, field available and targets of sucker volume needed. The choice of which to use will however be on the operators. One of the methods will be discussed here since the other ones have been clearly explained in another training manual.

TYPES OF SUCKERS

- a) **Peeper** is a young sucker bearing scale leaves
- b) **Sword** sucker has narrow leaves
- c) **Maiden** sucker has large foliage leaves.
- d) **Water** sucker has broad leaves with narrow rhizome base.

THE TECHNIQUE OF PLANTS ISSUED FROM STEM BITS (PIF)

This technique involves the exploitation of the buds present on the stem of a banana or plantain plant, either they are visible or not. As a matter of fact, several existing buds are lost in the field, such that for an average of 50 buds potential observed on a

stem at the flowering stage, only some few can develop and most of the time only about 2 or 3 can be removed per cycle as new planting material.

The technique is based on the fact that some meristematic areas (active growing area) identified on the stem can be activated in an artificially created medium different from field condition.

STEPS IN PREPARATION

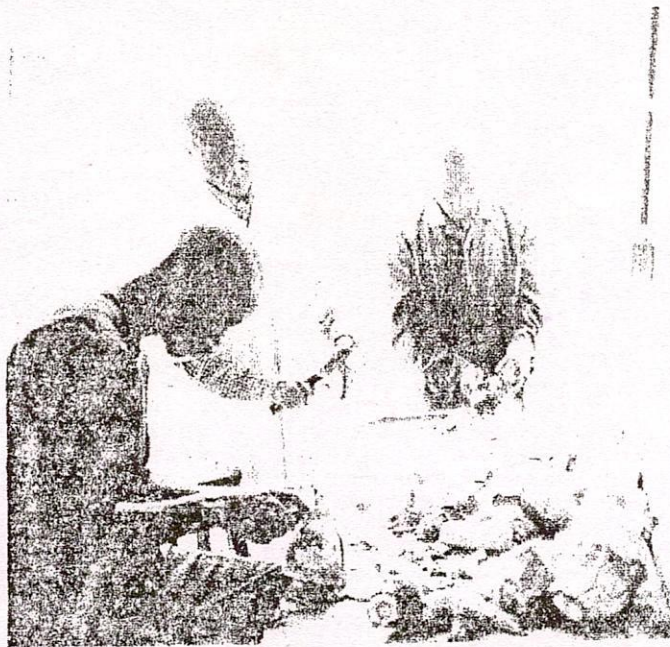
This involves conditioning of an ex-plant obtained from a sucker (stem bit), then stressing of the stem apical meristem, activation and growing in an appropriate medium in particular conditions of temperature and humidity.

- 1- Obtain sword sucker from an actively growing plant. (sword sucker best because apical dominance would not have been initiated)

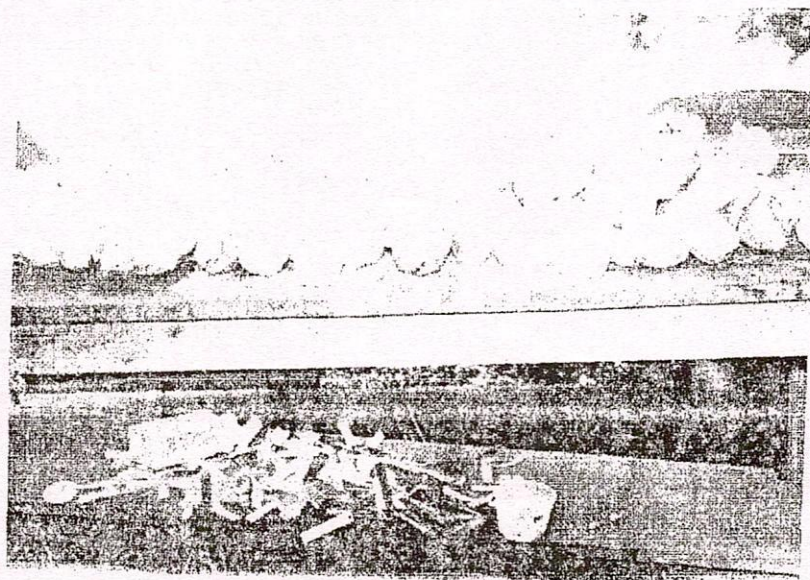


- 2- Wash off soil and peel off the roots

- 3- Locate the level of sucker attachment to the soil and then peel the suckers from top downward.
- 4- Locate the 'V' junction of leave sheath keeping your knives at 2mm above the point of the visible bud.



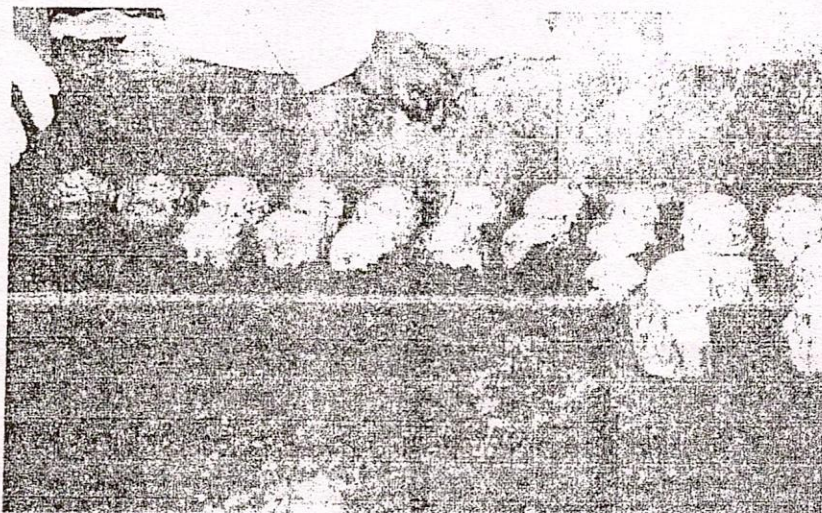
- 5- Repeat step4, until 4-5 leave sheath depending on variety has been removed
- 6- Reduce the pseudostem to 1-2cm.



- 7- Keep under shade for 48 hours before step 6 is repeated
- 8- After 48 hours reduce the pseudostem to 2mm to last leaf. While doing this you are renewing your cut and watch out for the centre point.
- 9- Cut through the centre point after 2mm of pseudostem left on the ex-plant. Cut through until the knife is fully immersed make it in the other direction to make a cross.



- 10- You have shock the ex-plant. Keep 1-2 hours under shade before you plant in the moist fine sawdust medium, and cover it up to 2-3cm with sawdust

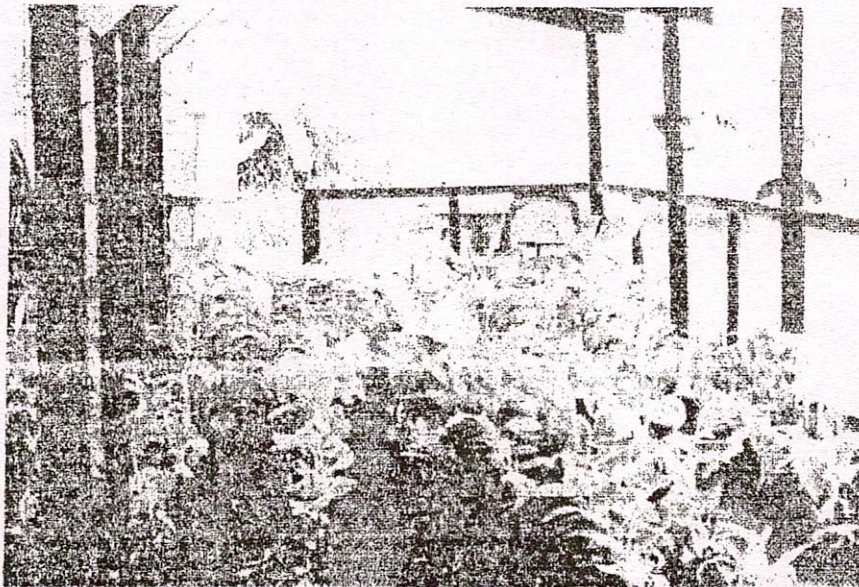


11-2-3 weeks the buds start shooting out.



12- Water daily, and remove as soon as plantlets have 1 or 2 roots. Then transfer to weaning or shade house. Care should be taken while removing, cut with some corn pieces to allow plantlets food reserve. The explants should then be returned after plantlets removal. Harvesting will continue till explants deteriorate (2-3 months after introduction into the humidity chamber.

13- Keep in a shade house with light and 50% sunrays reduction to wean or harden them up for 4-5 weeks before planting on the field.



14- Plant in rich sterilised topsoil mixture of ratio 7:2:1 of topsoil, poultry manure and palm fibre or coffee husk.

Note

Sword suckers are the best, the macro-propagation facility must have humidity chamber with regulated temperature and humidity and the prototype can be seen at

Onne station of IITA, the ADPs of Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Edo ~~and~~ Ogun states *and*
Delta State Agricultural Research Station
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