Revitalizing agriculture by improving crop value chains in Nigeria

Government to focus on training youth and women

The Government of Nigeria is focussing on developing commodity value chains across staple crops like sorghum, rice and cassava to ensure sustainable growth in rural income. A major focus of the Agricultural Transformation Agenda Support Program Phase 1 (ATASP-1) launched recently will be on training 200,000 rural youth (40% of them are estimated to be females). ICRISAT will partner in this initiative with a focus on improving the sorghum value chain.

The ATASP-1 was launched with a US$ 174 million funding from the African Development Bank Group.

Dr Akinwumi Adesina, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Nigeria and ICRISAT Goodwill Ambassador, attended the launch.

The objectives of ATASP-1 are:

- Contribute an additional 20,000 tons of key commodity food crops per annum to domestic food supply
- Generate about 120,000 jobs
- Train 200,000 youth
- Create wealth along rice, cassava and sorghum value chains.
Revitalizing agriculture...from page 1

ATASP-1 is a partnership between Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Nigeria and three CGIAR centers including ICRISAT, AfricaRice and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). AfricaRice will work on rice while IITA will work on cassava value chains.

A major focus will be on equipping rural youth, who presently lack employment opportunities, by providing them with training and support in agriculture and related businesses. Three youth training centers will be established that will build expertise across the value chain from input suppliers to marketers and processors.

ICRISAT-Nigeria scientists have been key partners of the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA) since 2012 with their work on sorghum and groundnut value chains. ICRISAT will receive US$ 5 million to improve competitiveness of sorghum.

The ATA launched in 2011 aims at increasing national food production, supporting import substitution (such as cassava flour replacing wheat imports) and market-driven agricultural development using innovative approaches to reach out to the poorest farmers. For instance, 5 million smallholder farmers benefited from subsidized seeds and fertilizer using mobile phone-operated vouchers to fill the yield gap. This strategy showed results: The agricultural sector reportedly grew by 7% a year between 2003 and 2007, and at a slightly lower rate in recent years.

ATASP-1 was launched on 6 March in Abuja, Nigeria.

For more on sorghum see http://exploreit.icrisat.org/page/sorghum/882
For more on Nigeria see http://exploreit.icrisat.org/page/nigeria/703

Call for stronger partnership between ICAR and CGIAR institutions

Dr David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT, in his lecture ‘Role of CGIAR in Indian National Agricultural Research System’, emphasized the need for stronger coordination and complementarity between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and CGIAR institutions. He suggested an action plan for strategic partnerships to accelerate the development and delivery of farmer-preferred technologies in dryland areas.

He highlighted that the CGIAR system is committed to reduce poverty and hunger, improve human health and nutrition, and enhance ecosystem resilience through high-end science research.

The lecture was jointly organized by ICAR-Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA) and the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS)-Hyderabad chapter on 13 March.

Dr A Padmaraju, Vice-Chancellor, Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University, Hyderabad, Directors of ICAR Institutes, Fellows of NAAS, and scientists from CRIDA, National Remote Sensing Agency, ICRISAT and representatives from NGOs participated in the event.
New initiatives to boost export of seeds and sorghum products from Telangana, India

To help smallholder farmers get good returns from agriculture and also help them access quality seeds the government of the Indian state of Telangana will set up a Seed Export Accelerator and a Sorghum Export Development Platform.

Strategies to boost the export of sorghum, sorghum products and seeds from India were deliberated at the two-day consultative meeting on ‘Enhancing exports of sorghum and seeds from India’ organized by the ICRISAT Agri-Business Incubation Program.

Speaking on the occasion the Minister for Agriculture, Cooperation and Horticulture, Telangana State, Mr Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said, “The Government of Telangana is committed to encouraging the setting up of a Seed Export Accelerator and Sorghum Export Development Platform. This initiative will help farmers have greater access to quality seeds and will also improve their financial condition.”

Dr David Bergvinson, Director General, ICRISAT said, “We want to create economic opportunities and increase the nutritional status of the farmers of Telangana. It is not just about achieving better nutrition but also improving the returns and profits for farmers.”

The panel discussions centered around export opportunities for sorghum food products, commodity trading, sorghum-based feed industry, sorghum consumer and industrial products technology, challenges and opportunities in the export market, and market development of new seeds, among other issues.

Mr RK Boyal, Director, Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) stressed on the “need to work on strategies that contribute to increasing the export of value-added sorghum products so that smallholder farmers may derive good returns.”

The Seed Export Accelerator will work with farmer producer organizations, multinational corporations, and small and medium enterprises to provide key services such as access to new hybrids/varieties of seeds, market and policy information, export market linkages, financial assistance and quality control. It will strengthen the Seed Export Promotion Zones and establish testing and certification facilities in conformity with international standards.

The consultative meeting was organized by ICRISAT and APEDA on 17-18 March at ICRISAT-India. It was attended by over 100 participants from the public and private sectors, exporters, R&D organizations, government officials and representatives from the seed industry (Pioneer, Bioseed, Ganga Kaveri Seeds) and food processing industry (Karachi Bakery, MTR Foods, and Frumer Marketing).

Mr Jayesh Ranjan
Commissioner, Industries, Telangana State

It is important that we link sorghum for industrial use, create linkages between markets and farmers. The Telangana Government’s new industrial policy will include the setting up of food processing parks in the State to boost the food processing scenario.

Seed Export Accelerator partners
- ICRISAT
- International Rice Research Institute (IRRI)
- International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT)
- Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR)

Sorghum Export Development Platform partners
- APEDA
- Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR),
- International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

Both initiatives are supported by government of Telangana.
Training on management of pests and diseases affecting chickpea

A series of capacity building programs were held as part of the newly-sanctioned four-year project ‘Promotion of improved chickpea varieties in rice-based cropping system of smallholder farmers in the Indian state of Odisha’.

The objective of the project, which started in October 2014, is to introduce drought-resistant chickpea lines in the rice-fallow cropping system where irrigation is not possible. The emphasis is on seed production and delivery systems.

Four training programs to educate farmers on cultural management against pests and diseases affecting chickpea were held during 10-13 March. About 205 participants, comprising 186 smallholder seed growers (24 women), district agriculture technicians and NGO staff attended the training.

For the 2014-2015 cropping season, a total of 245 ha were devoted to seed production of various seed class of chickpea. The project covers 8,000 ha in three districts namely Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Sundergarh.

Mr Brigi Rafini, Prime Minister of Niger visited the ICRISAT stall at the second Agricultural, Hydraulic and Livestock Fair (Salon de l’Agriculture, de l’Hydraulique et de l’Elevage – SAHEL 2015) held in Niamey, Niger. He interacted with Dr Ba Niango Malick, Country Representative, ICRISAT-Niger.

Improved cultivars and high-yielding groundnut and millet varieties at the ICRISAT stall drew visitors’ attention. The ICRISAT stall displayed seeds, plants, publications and posters that showcased various activities.

The event was organized from 3-8 March by the National Network of Agricultural Chambers (RECA) in collaboration with the Ministries of Agriculture, Hydraulic and Livestock and the 3N Initiative (Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens).

Reader’s comment

I am very happy to know about the global consortium meet to map out strategies to revitalize agricultural education, which is a necessity. ICTs and modern knowledge exchange methodology to train the next generation of agricultural researchers, extension officers and farmers is the need of the hour.

One Agriculture-One Science coalition has high expectations to deliver. I am fortunate to take part in the meeting. Dr Dileepkumar and his team deserve appreciation.

P Gurumurthy, Coordinator, District Agricultural Advisory and Transfer of Technology Centre, Vizianagaram.