

## AGRA Impact Series

# AGRA's Initiative Improves Coordination of Budgeting in Nigeria's Agriculture Ministries

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**For many decades, State Council on Agriculture (SCA) meetings proved important in defining the direction of the agricultural industry in Nigeria's Kaduna and Niger states. However, the meetings, which bring together the government and other players, failed to take place for 24 and 14 years, in Kaduna and Niger, respectively.**

That was until 2019, when the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) stepped in to facilitate a revival of the assembly, by convening government leaders, private sector players, civil society organizations, farmer groups and members of academia to discuss critical matters affecting the sector.

The AGRA-supported SCA meetings were designed as two consultative conferences – one in each state – with the objective of building an alignment between governments and other industry players. More than 200 delegates attended the sessions in their respective states. Among the agenda was the harmonization of plans and programmes in line with principles of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

“The open governance approach recognized the input of all stakeholders in the plan to

transform agriculture from sustenance into thriving businesses for the benefit of smallholder farmers,” said Hajia Halima Lawal, Kaduna State's Commissioner of Agriculture.

During the gatherings, it was discovered that the agriculture ministries in the two states suffered insufficient planning and coordination. Gaps were reported in government planning, execution, and performance of agriculture programs. Other challenges included inadequate mutual accountability in the agriculture sector, weak documentation protocols, tools, and methodology.

Notably, the delegates established an urgent need for a policy-driven budgeting framework. Priority was given to the development of policies influencing the distribution of ministerial financial resources. This came after the realization that the budget allocated to agriculture by the two administrations was often superficial and unguided by strategic plans due to inadequate policy direction.

Consequently, three guiding documents were developed after several consultations and review processes with Stakeholders – the Kaduna State Agricultural Policy, Niger State Agricultural policy, and the Niger State Agricultural Investment Plan.

All these now guide the planning of agricultural investments by the respective governments while defining the roles of all staff members in the budget process - an inclusive and participatory bottom-up approach.

"I never knew that the budget process is all-encompassing – that all staff's inputs are required. I only got to see what activities my department and ministry were embarking on only after the budget had been approved," said Khalid Yusuf, the Deputy Director of Irrigation Services in Niger State.

With better budgeting plans, the agriculture ministries in Kaduna and Niger have regained the confidence of their respective governments leading to a 2 percent increase in the total budget allocation to agriculture.

That is besides over \$5 million that was mobilized by the two governments as a result of the improved coordination among agricultural stakeholders through the SCA. The additional funding is expected to boost the efficient delivery of services to farming communities in Kaduna and Niger.

"For the first time in a long time, the government has listened to farmers and captured their issues in the budget," said Yusuf Goje, from the Coalition of Association for Leadership Peace,

Empowerment and Development.

Yet, AGRA's contribution did not stop at policy and advocacy. The agency also supported the growth of ICT skills amongst ministry staff capacity by training 171 staff. Additionally, the ministries' monitoring and evaluation systems were strengthened and left to run under 123 trained staff.

"The Capacity Strengthening Project exposed serious lapses we had in the ministry, especially in the area of collaboration and partnership with other institutions. The ministry had been operating as a silo thereby achieving very minimal impact," said Ashafa Abubakar (deceased), the former Director of Agricultural Services in Kaduna's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

Other investments included the improvement of public communication and knowledge management through new websites and e-Libraries.

On the whole, the renewed relationship between governments and other agricultural stakeholders in the two states is now envisaged to advance the absorption of new farming technology and practices among smallholder farmers leading to increased incomes.

