

AGRA Impact Series



Key Milestones in Agriculture at Kaduna, Niger — Thanks to AGRA's Interventions

December 2020

Nigeria - Kaduna

Over the last 15 years, there has not been a meeting between the heads of agriculture in the Local Government Area and the hierarchy of state ministry of agriculture, including private sector, farmer organizations and other civil society. Thanks to the AGRA- funded capacity strengthening project for the ministry of agriculture created a platform for Kaduna State agricultural sector coordination and resuscitated the State Council of Agriculture meeting, with over 200 stakeholders in attendance. The attendants were drawn from the public, private, academia and CSOs.

The outcome of the State Council of Agriculture meeting is key to building alignment between the National and Subnational governments, through harmonizing plans, priorities and programmes in line with CAADP principles. The nexus between the subnational and local government has advanced absorption of new technology and practice among farmers especially smallholders leading to increased income.

AGRA is helping to solve issues which hinder increased income and improved food security

for smallholder farmers through institutional strengthening and enhanced program delivery

The challenges in the Ministry includes weak planning, poor coordination, execution, and performance of government agriculture programs. Other challenges are inadequate mutual accountability in the agriculture sector, weak documentation protocols, tools, and methodology.

Journey to Success

Success was achieved through monthly sector coordination meetings to strengthen sub-national level coordination of Agriculture sector. On the average 10 public, private and CSOs attend the meetings. Intervention delivery is now harmonised.

Additionally, there is improved Systems functioning through Capacity building to support on planning and budget implementation. A total of three trainings were held with budget call and validation meetings held.

In place are Technical Assistants (TAs) on planning, engaged to support the ministry's staff on budgeting and planning through hands on the job.

The ministry owns and supports the development of an operational plan for the state's Agricultural Policy.

After numerous years, an Annual State Council meeting on Agriculture was held in Kaduna State. This meeting connects the state and Local Government in Agriculture planning and development.

AGRA also supported a consultant to guide coordination. Development of M&E (data collection and analysis) tools has provided a platform for internal assessment and evaluation. Trainings on M&E techniques, have helped the Ministry to pay attention to the impact and programme delivery. Additionally, AGRA provided maintenance and update of data banks/e-libraries for the state.

Lessons learned and quotes

It was a process with several lessons. First, participatory and inclusive Policy development drives the public and private sector investment. Kaduna State government requested AGRA to

support state Agricultural Policy.

"For the first time in history, the government has listened to farmers and captured their issues in the budget. Through the sector coordination meetings, we are invited to make comments and contribute to budget formulation" says Yusuf Goje, a CSO working on agriculture

Additionally, coordination meetings have helped to resolve the dichotomy between the National and Sub-national alignment.

"Kaduna State open governance approach recognizes the input of all stakeholders to shift agriculture to business for smallholder farmers benefit," Hon. Hajia Halima Lawal, Commissioner of Agriculture.



Nigeria - Niger

Like in the case of Kaduna, Niger, there has not been any form of coordination meeting between the Departments of agriculture in the Local Government Areas and the hierarchy of State ministry of agriculture, in the last 15 years. The AGRA funded capacity strengthening project for the Ministry of Agriculture created a platform for Niger State agricultural sector coordination and resuscitated the State Council of Agriculture

Meeting. Over 200 stakeholders were physically in attendance from the public, private, academia and CSOs. The State Council of Agriculture meeting for Niger State was last held in 1996.

The Ministry has committed to creating a budget line for the State council of agriculture meeting following the support of AGRA to hold the 2020 edition. The State Council of Agriculture Meeting will be used to build alignment between the National and Subnational governments and

create an opportunity for showcasing the States potentials in the sector.

Solving the Problems of Weak Coordination

AGRA project in the Niger State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development aims to solve the problems of weak coordination, poor documentation, poor planning, and budgeting skills, and weak M&E systems. The Ministry also lacks the skills, infrastructure, and equipment for proper M&E systems (data collection, storage, and data analysis). Concerning planning and budgeting, the Niger State Ministry of Agriculture did not have any policy documents that guide the planning of activities in the agricultural sector for the State.

Interestingly, Niger State has one of the largest arable landmass for farming and is endowed with numerous natural resources which can support farming and non-farming activities. Agriculture is this state's main economic activity. AGRA's support to the Niger Ministry of Agriculture hopes to transform the State's agricultural landscape to ensure the Niger State achieves her potentials of improved food production and food security.

Development Agricultural Policy and Investment Plans

Over the years, budgetary allocations to the State's agricultural sector had been superficial and unguided by strategic plans due to lack of a concise and clear policy direction. It is against this backdrop that the development of the Agricultural Policy and Investment Plans for the sector was given prominence. The process of policy development was all-inclusive and instigated a process of coordination among agricultural stakeholders in the State.

Other challenges include; low budgetary allocation by the state government to carry out significant activities, poor access to ICT tools and infrastructure. Many departmental directors for example, did not have computers. Technical capacity among members of staff was low while there lacked a website.

Addressing these Challenges

Multi-stakeholder agriculture core delivery team and coordination meetings have been organized, technical assistance has also been hired, to support development of the policy documents.

Reviews and validation workshops have been organized and training conducted for M&E staff.

Additionally, there has been technical support provided to desk officer coordination as well as planning and budget officer. Database has been created and training conducted for M&E staff on data analysis.

As a result of these interventions a Policy document was developed and validated.

Database established and survey outcomes documented. Additionally, planning and budget is inclusive and participatory with a bottom - up approach. Stakeholders were part of the 2020 budget formulation.

The State agriculture Sector Implementation Plan (SIP) was reviewed and adopted for 2020 -2023, while the Niger State Agricultural Development Agency (KADA) now perform oversight on the projects of partners in the agriculture space in the state.

The Project Comes with Key Lessons

One lesson is that participatory and inclusive Policy development drives the public and private sector investment.

“For the 1st time, the government is listening to farmers and capturing their issues in the budget. Through the sector coordination meetings, we are invited to make comments and contribute to budget formulation, says Yusuf Goje, CSO working on agriculture

The Coordination meeting has helped to resolve the dichotomy between the National and Sub-national governments through alignment

“Niger State's open governance approach recognizes the input of all stakeholders to shift agriculture to business for smallholder farmer's benefit, says Hon. Hajja Halima Lawal, the Agriculture Commissioner.

AGRA Catalyzing Agricultural Transformation

Real positive changes are being witnessed in both Kaduna and Niger States of Nigeria. In less than two years AGRA's investment has resulted in key successes as follows:

- **Improved coordination among agricultural stakeholders in the States:** Over \$5 million mobilized by the Ministries of Agriculture in Both States due to improved coordination (N100 Million mobilized because of improved coordination to support livestock and dairy; N400 million also mobilized to increase fertilizer delivery to smallholder farmers). Established and institutionalized the Agriculture Core Delivery Team (ACDT) and Forty (40) State and non-State actors conduct of quarterly ATDT meetings. Additionally Agriculture sector State Council meetings have been convened and institutionalized with government now allocating funds for hosting the State Council meeting in the 2021 proposed budget.
- **Improved efficiency of delivery of services by staff of the ministry.** There is improved capacity of Ministry staff on budgeting and planning (171 staff trained) and the Project Management Team (PMT) meeting chaired by the Permanent Secretary holds fortnightly to review activities and plan for future activities
- **Improved budgetary allocation to agricultural sector:** Contribute constructively to the State budget process (Budgetary allocation to agricultural sector now 10% up from 8%)
- **Policy direction for the Agricultural sector in the state.** Through AGRA support, key Agricultural Policy documents developed and approved (Kaduna State Agricultural Policy, Niger State Agricultural policy, Niger State Agricultural Investment Plan.
- **Improved communication and knowledge management** (Websites and e-Libraries were developed for data storage and sharing www.nigeragric.gov and www.agric.kdsg.gov.ng.

- **Strengthened monitoring and evaluation system of the State Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:** As a result of AGRA support, there are now regular meetings by the various departments and the Ministry has formalized data collection on key areas. AGRA provided support to the development of key M&E tools; trained 123 staff on M&E; food security and COVID 19 impact surveys were also conducted to guide better planning by both states.

Other Testimonies from beneficiaries

"With the advent of the AGRA Capacity Strengthening Project, myself and the staff under my department are now better enlightened in Planning and Budgeting. The training will go a long way in turning around the fortunes of the department and the ministry as a whole" - Dr Samuel Dogo (Former Director Veterinary and Livestock Services Department).

"Permit me to confess that I never knew that budget process is all encompassing, meaning to say, all staff's inputs are required in the preparation process. Growing up in the service, I only get to see what activities my department and ministry will be embarking only if the budget has been approved." – Khalid Yusuf (Deputy Director, Irrigation Services).

"I now fully understand that mutual respect in the workplace does not only promotes efficiency and productivity in the work environment, but also builds trust amongst the staff, I appreciate Synergos and AGRA for the leadership training, I promised to take the message to other staff who are not part of the training." – Dr Pakachi Zakariya (Veterinary Services Department).

"The Capacity Strengthening Project had exposed serious lapses we have in the ministry and happy it has taken the necessary steps to address them especially in the area of collaboration and partnership with other institutions in the state. The ministry had been operating as a silo thereby achieving very minimal impact." - Late Ashafa Abubakar (Former Director Agric Services).