



## South – South Cooperation in Agriculture Is Empowering Nigerian Farmers

By

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South-South Cooperation (SSC), refers to a mechanism for mutual the sharing and exchange of key development solutions—knowledge, experiences and good practices, policies, technology know-how, and resources—between and among countries in the global south. For over 30 years, it has enabled developing countries to work more closely together, sharing knowledge and expertise, and jump-start and benefit from innovations, lessons and good practices, tried and tested elsewhere in the south to achieve accelerated development impact. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched the SSC initiative in 1996, primarily supporting the implementation of the Special Programme for Food Security in several developing countries. Since then, the SSC has been a very important part of FAO's Technical Assistance in the design, formulation and implementation of food security programmes in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean. The organisation has been facilitating the sharing of a variety of development solutions, and has been particularly successful with the modality of fielding of medium to long-term SSC experts and technicians. These experts train the national experts, especially frontline extension staff and farmers, to introduce new and improved agricultural technologies along the value chain to help small-scale farmers, improve productivity and profitability of their agricultural enterprises hence farm incomes and household food security.

In September 2013, FAO in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Agriculture of China organized a High Level Forum on SSC in Africa in Abuja. The forum attended by Ministers of Agriculture and Heads of delegation from 12 African countries, and the People's Republic of China, Brazil, Vietnam and other development partners made a Declaration noting "...the

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increased interest and demand by African and other developing countries for the multilateral SSC facilitated by FAO, as an effective means of *promoting and boosting* agricultural productivity

and food security.," The HLF was chaired by the Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Akinwummi Adesina.

### ***Nigeria's South-South Cooperation Programme:***

The SSC programme between the governments of the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Nigeria which started in 2003, has to date provided a total of 578 Experts and Technicians in five (5) successive batches for a maximum period of two years each. The programme, which is funded by the government of Nigeria and in-kind support by China has been fully integrated into and supports Nigeria's Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA), contributing effectively to the national agenda of increasing agricultural productivity levels, food security, generating incomes and creating agricultural and off-farm employment for young people. These experts living in the rural communities, have been sharing their knowledge and experiences, and have helped introduce, demonstrate and adapt more than 200 Chinese-developed scalable technologies and innovations.

**Rice production:** When in 2012, Kogi state was hit by the floods impeding family's ability to provide for itself, as part of the government's flood recovery programme, rice seeds were distributed to farmers for use in the receding waters. The Chinese experts through SSC helped to design the land preparation and irrigation programme, and the ADP provided training to some 5,000 young people on how to plant rice, control pests and diseases, and apply fertilisers.

### **Integrated Fish Farming and Cage Fish**

**Aquaculture:** Fisheries interventions include aquaculture, integrated aquaculture, fish processing and preservation technologies and commercial fish hatchery. Modern fish farming and aquaculture, especially cage fish culture and integrated rice-fish systems, are creating income opportunities and improving livelihoods in Nigeria through knowledge exchange, and skills and capacity development by SSC experts from China. One of the most successful technologies has been fish cage culture. Dalha Lawal is an itinerant farmer who established a 25-member fish-farming cooperative

in Katsina State after receiving training from the Chinese. With the profits he made from fish farming, Dalha Lawal has built a new house, acquired more land, performed the Hajj and bought four motorcycles for commercial use. SSC is scale neutral—capable of benefitting both small-, medium- and large-scale farming. The Osin Farms (Osun State, Nigeria) a large-scale commercial farm has adopted cage fish culture technology in 2009. With SSC experts working with six workers, 18 cages of 2 x 2 metre each were established and produce about one ton of tilapia fish each, in a six month cycle. In addition, the farm employs 65 workers mostly youth.



**Modern Bee Keeping:** Bee keeping in Nigeria is not new, however the SSC has assisted the local gov't in the introduction of several simple and cheap Chinese bee-keeping and fish farming technologies to over 500 farmers in the local government in particular and Katsina state in general. The Chinese demonstrated and trained the farmers on technologies relating to wild bees harvesting, Chinese beehives construction, production and processing of honey. With the support of Sabuwa Local Government Authorities fish farming and bee keeping/honey production are now very popular income generating activities among farmers and unemployed youth in the area. Yahaya Sani (31), from Sabuwa, Katsina State, began traditional honey production at 17 years old. He was then trained in modern beekeeping and was mentored in a four-year SSC knowledge exchange programme by a Chinese expert. He learned how to set up an apiary and now has 48 beekeeping boxes, and is able to sell six cartons of honey every two to three months.



**Poultry Agribusiness:** The support focused on strengthening smallholder poultry business enterprises in market oriented farm business management as well as enhancement of poultry husbandry methods. According to Hadiza Muhammad who managed the Kubwe Integrated Farm, quail poultry, "We bought 500 baby quails locally, and before long we started producing 250 eggs a day." Gradually, she has built up a flock of 25,000 birds, with the training she received from an SSC expert. By the end of 2013, Kubwe Integrated Farm had 6,000 quails, producing 3,000 eggs a day. "The Chinese taught us everything we needed to know about how to take care of the birds," said Hadiza Muhammad.



**A Glimpse of the future:** The SSC initiative by China-Nigeria-FAO is an excellent model that needs to be up-scaled and be shared with other countries in Africa. Africa needs to increase its food production dramatically, and in a way that is sustainable, affordable and scalable. Evidence-based, home-grown southern solutions that build on the local knowledge and best practices—and are truly accessible and affordable—are important options for ensuring agricultural transformation that banishes hunger, combats poverty and creates wealth while securing natural resources for the future generation. Many of the beneficiaries of the SSC programme described above are young people. Nigeria's youth are today's workforce and tomorrow's future and notably, so finding new and innovative ways of creating jobs is obviously one of Nigeria's most urgent priorities. When a large young population is educated and provided with appropriate technical skills, and entrepreneurial and decent work opportunities, the youth bulge can translate to explosive economic development. SSC can help to accelerate the process of achieving results.