

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION SUCCESSFULLY LINKS NIGERIA, CHINA AND FAO



WORKING FOR agricultural sector of Nigeria

WORKING TO provide technical support

WORKING WITH Government of China

WORKING THANKS TO Nigeria, AfDB, BADEA, IDB



In March 2012, a Chinese livestock technician arrived at a poultry farm in northeastern Nigeria to provide support under an FAO-Nigeria-China, South-South Cooperation project. The three-hectare farm had 430 layer hens with an egg production rate of only 25 percent. In addition, those eggs lacked vitamin B1. The technician immediately proposed changing the hens' feed to one rich in vitamin B1, inoculating the chicks and improving hygiene practices. The result: a 60 percent increase in egg production, lower mortality rate and increased growth rate of the poultry.

At the same time, Chinese technicians visiting Nigeria's rice-producing areas found farmers using inefficient and outdated techniques that were not only labour intensive and time consuming, but also produced a poor quality of rice. Again, with the technicians' introduction of practical agronomic solutions in areas such as seed and site selection, and by introducing improved processing practices, such as adding moisture to reduce breakage during processing, the farmers have more than tripled rice yield per hectare.

From increasing the vitamin content of eggs to improving water management in rice fields, from building floating fish cages to introducing beekeeping – the impact of a major FAO initiative for food security can be seen throughout Nigeria. A group of Chinese experts and technicians are working in the country through a South-South Cooperation (SSC) arrangement launched by FAO. The two-phase effort, mainly funded by the Government of Nigeria itself, supports Nigeria's National Programme for Food Security. The first phase, which spanned 2003-2007, saw some 500 Chinese technicians complete 3 736 field visits, conduct more than 500 demonstrations and carry out more than 200 microprojects. This led not only to improved yields and livelihoods, but also to replication by farmers' organizations that had been supported by the initiative. Due to the success of the first phase, the project's reputation grew, allowing the second phase to be more demand driven. It now responds to individual states' requests for specific types of support. A total 190 experts and technicians are committed to helping Nigeria's agricultural sector improve productivity and strengthen capacities, not only of the farmers but also of processors, farm managers and extension staff. The second phase will end in 2015.



The impact of a major FAO South-South Cooperation Programme can be seen throughout Nigeria thanks to a cadre of Chinese experts and technicians.

CHINESE TECHNICIANS MAKE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

These are just some examples of literally hundreds of activities undertaken across Nigeria by Chinese experts and technicians who are in the country to support the agricultural sector, under the auspices of a two-phase, FAO South-South Cooperation initiative. Now in its second phase, the technicians do not just fly in, offer advice and leave. They actually commit to stay in Nigeria for two to three years to initiate and evaluate technical improvements for farmers, agroproducers and marketers. Several of those who participated in the first phase came back during the second one.

The first phase of the programme reached nationwide, providing support in forestry, aquaculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and crop intensification. It introduced activities ranging from greenhouse production and fruit-tree propagation to drip irrigation for water management and fish-cage technology for the production of catfish. In fact, thanks to support the technicians offered on a private farm with a lake that had been idle for years, the farm now has 50 fish cages, 8 floating bridges and the capacity to produce 10 000 fish.

And it doesn't stop there. The farm has established a hatchery using local materials. It now produces its own fingerlings that it sells to neighbouring farmers, who have adopted the same technology and have even established a cooperative to work together.

REGIONAL CENTRES INCREASE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Thanks to the success of the first phase of the programme, the second phase, 2009-2015, has had increased demand for support. This can be met with a reduced number of Chinese technicians, because the project has established Regional Multi-Service Extension Centres (REMSECs). The REMSECs, a strategy for reaching more beneficiaries with fewer staff, enable the technicians to provide demonstrations to farmers from across the region at the same time, and to work on building capacity and transferring the specific technologies to farmers in that particular region. So, for example, the REMSEC in the

southwest zone focuses on cage-fish production, bamboo production and processing, and orchard establishment and management, while the north-central REMSEC has introduced simple, affordable farm tools as well as training in how to fabricate and use them. This has included fabrication of a manual tube well-drilling machine, that communities in the region use to drill boreholes for water supply.

Throughout its existence, the programme has continuously evaluated its successes. FAO also organized for a Nigerian delegation to visit China and observe the types of support the Chinese could offer, especially in aquaculture and rice production. These visits, plus the evaluations, provided the kind of information needed to make knowledge-based, mid-course adjustments. As a result, the programme has been able to have maximum impact by identifying exactly what the rural communities need and finding the most efficient ways to meet those needs.

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