

Being a Speech titled

**“EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES IN AGRICULTURE
IN LAGOS STATE”**

Presented by

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BACKGROUND

By land area, Lagos State is the smallest state in Nigeria with 356,861 hectares of land of which 75,755 hectares is wetland and 169,613 hectares is designated for agriculture. Of the portion originally earmarked for agriculture, only 30% is currently cultivated. For decades, Lagos has been the epicentre of Nigeria's economic and social development and continues to be, with a current population of 20 million residents, which according to projections will hit the 30 million mark by 2025. As one of the fastest-growing cities in the world, Lagos is faced with the multiple challenges of providing food, housing, healthcare, jobs and public infrastructure to its residents. Of these challenges or opportunities, depending on your disposition, food security is inarguably the most topical and has subsequently been prioritized for immediate action by this administration giving the growing population of Lagos.

The present government of Lagos, under the dynamic leadership of Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) is fully committed to promote Lagos as a centre of excellence and destination of choice for investors and entrepreneurs in line with the emerging status of Lagos as a megacity. Expectedly, efforts in this regard have yielded substantial dividend in the amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that has flowed into Lagos over the years. In Lagos we recognise that FDI will always seek the most enabling business climate and has therefore invested decisively and encouraged investments in public infrastructure such as seaports and docks, airports (existing and proposed), Lekki Free Trade Zone, healthcare, transportation (roads and rail) and power stations. The government through the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives ("the Ministry") is taking this commitment to business a big step further by seeking to increase investment in agriculture to improve domestic agricultural productivity and output whilst at the same time make food affordable for its residents. In other words the primary goal of addressing the food security

challenges of the State is to raise agricultural productivity and increase its economic contribution to the State with emphasis on job and wealth creation. It is hoped that by doing this, food sufficiency will improve and Lagos will produce at least 25% of its total consumption within 4 years instead of the current 10%. Therefore to ensure that this important goal is achieved, the Ministry has developed a road map policy document called the Strategic Programme for Accelerated Agricultural Growth (SPAAG), which relates all the key agric sub-sectors with the singular objective of improving agricultural output and productivity.

In order to sustain the momentum of progress, there is the need to expand the scope for private sector participation in all our projects and across the entire agriculture value chain – pre-production; production; harvesting; processing & packaging; storage; distribution and supporting technology to mention but a few. This position resonates with the on-going agricultural transformation action plan across the federation which aims to project agriculture from the new-normal entrepreneurial paradigm (increased economic contribution to GDP and wealth creation which are also cardinal end-points of SPAAG) as against the subsistence farming paradigm that was often synonymous with drudgery and low productivity.

PRIMARY GOALS OF SPAAG

We aim to achieve our strategic food security goals by resolving and possibly eliminating entrenched inefficiencies within the sector. Specifically SPAAG will (a) Address knowledge gaps and manpower issues by training our farmers in the latest farming techniques and encourage young people to consider agriculture as a career through programmes such as AGRIC-YES; (b) Encourage and grow private sector participation and investments in agriculture

and (c) Enhance access to quality inputs seedlings and mechanisation as a way of increasing agricultural yields.

OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN AGRICULTURE

Like much of Nigeria, agriculture suffered a painful neglect in Lagos but over the last few years, several initiatives have been conceived to address the dysfunctional reality leading to a concentration of efforts to areas where Lagos has comparative and competitive advantage. As a result of these focused efforts, we have successfully launched the following programmes:

- a) **Fish Farming and Aquaculture:** We are optimising the use of our natural endowments to develop industrial fisheries, artisanal fisheries and aquaculture facilities across Lagos to address the shortfall of about 200,000 tonnes of fish which led Nigeria as a whole to import US\$700 Million fish and fish products in 2009 alone. The most remarkable success is the Ikorodu Fish Farm Estate sited on a 34 hectare parcel of land in Odogunyan, Ikorodu which produces 10,000 tonnes of fish every year and is fully subscribed. In an attempt to encourage our fisher folks through semi-mechanization, the Ministry has commenced a comprehensive training programme on outboard engines for fisher folks within our fishing communities as a means of building up their capacity and productivity.
- b) **Pig Farming:** Nigeria is one of the largest consumers of pork in Sub Saharan Africa. The Lagos State Government has two pig farm estates – the Oke-Aro Pig Farm Estate and the Gberigbe Pig Farm Estate across 80 hectares of land and the overriding goal is for 1,200 pig farmers to nurture a total pig population of over 88,000.
- c) **Agriculture-based Youth Empowerment Scheme (AGRIC-YES):** The need to engage our youths as potential agents of change for themselves and their communities gave birth to AGRIC-YES. The scheme was

intended as a social protection programme designed to empower our youths and train them in modern agricultural techniques in vegetable farming; poultry; livestock farming; aquaculture and basic book-keeping. The curriculum was structured in three phases beginning with basic agriculture modules before the second phase where interns are exposed to international best practice and modern agricultural management techniques in commercial farms. During the final phase, successful trainees are settled in farm estates with take-off grants from the Lagos Microfinance Institution (LASMI). To consolidate on the success of AGRIC-YES, we are launching periodic agric-based Executive Training Programmes for professionals and matured candidates who have the resources to embark on agric projects in poultry farming, aquaculture and vegetable farming.

- d) **Eko Farmers' Mart:** Eko Farmers' Mart was conceived to stock and sell fresh farm produce as a way of linking up agricultural production to the markets to ensure that farmers receive a fair reward and encouragement to increase production. The marts will sell fresh farm produce from locations across the State at the most affordable prices under a franchise arrangement. We launched the first mart in the Alausa Secretariat in October 2011 and other locations will be opening shortly in Surulere and Ajah. Subsequent marts will be franchised to experienced and competent private parties.
- e) **Imota Rice Mill:** The Ministry has invested in a 20,000 metric ton rice processing and milling plant in Imota. The primary goal of the project is to reduce our dependence on imported rice and also create jobs and wealth for our people. At optimal capacity, the mill will provide permanent jobs for about 100 individuals while an additional 70,000 jobs will be created within the value chain in harvesting, planting and weeding

of at least 3,500 hectares rice fields required to provide rice paddy for the mill.

- f) **Rice for Jobs:** The programme was launched in 2008 to create jobs for unemployed youths; strengthen local capacity for rice production, achieve a production target of 1,600 tons of paddy per annum and facilitate access to rice processing equipment. The programme has positively impacted 180 farmers within the last three years, who produce about 180 tons of rice, which is still far off from the consumption target of 540,000 tonnes per annum for Lagos alone. Rice-for-Job is located on about 200 hectares of land located in Itoikin, Epe and Ikoga in Badagry and also has a modern rice processing and milling centre.

OUR FUTURE PROGRAMMES IN AGRICULTURE

These accomplishments need to be sustained to achieve the tasking goals we have set for Lagos. Therefore the Ministry's efforts in the years ahead will be specifically focused on increasing investment and agricultural productivity directly through public infrastructure spending and attracting private investment (directly or indirectly through partnerships, Concessions, PPPs and other forms of BOT arrangements):

- a) **High Quality Cassava Flour Factory:** The Ministry will be setting up a 1,000 metric ton high quality cassava processing factory, also in Imota. When fully operational, the cassava factory will directly and indirectly engage over 500 people. This venture is in line with the Federal Government's plan to reduce our nation's dependence on imported wheat.
- b) **Oshogbo Farm Development:** The Ministry has been granted relevant approvals to invest in the development of 84 hectares of farmland in Oshogbo, Osun State which will be solely dedicated to the production of citrus fruits, mangoes, pineapples and oil palm. An agreement is being reached with the Institute of Agricultural Research and Training, Moore

Plantation, Ibadan that will consult and manage the project on completion, under terms that will be agreed.

- c) **Fish Farming and Aquaculture:** The proposed Ketu-Ereyun Fish Farm Estate will be located on a 60-hectare land located on the Itoikin-Epe Road. This was conceptualised in response to the success of the Ikorodu Fish Farm Estate and in the same manner, has been subdivided into 482 plots for allocation to interested and qualified members of the public. Like the Ikorodu Fish Farm, the Ketu-Ereyun Fish Farm also has capacity for 10,000 tonnes but with additional supporting facilities like hatcheries, processing and marketing centres.
- d) **Pig Farming:** The Gberigbe Pig Farm Estate was conceived to complement the Oke-Aro Pig Farm Estate as a 40-hectare project. There are presently 35 pig farmers and just over 3,000 pigs within the estate. Additional investments will be required over the next four years to establish more pig pens; provide an abattoir; drainage, roads; waste management and electricity. There are also plans to replace the old stock of pigs through the setting up of an international pig breeding centre.
- e) **Vegetable Farming:** Before the present administration, tomato was cultivated usually in small farms around Ikorodu and Badagry. This tomato variety was prone to bacterial wilt and turned out extremely low yield, barely up to one per cent of the total requirement of Lagosians. To improve yield, a research was launched into tomato varieties that are resistant to bacterial wilt and the Ministry distributed the certified seeds to farmers. In order to strategically resolve apparent distortions in the tomato value chain, the State government is adopting the Vegetable Farming Estate initiatives, similar in concept and scope with the fish and pig farming programmes. To this end, about 80 hectares of land have been designated as vegetable farms in three different locations – Igboodu (50 hectares), Iyaafin (20 hectares) and Araga (5 hectares) – where

vegetable farms will be set up to international standards with pre-production, production and post-production facilities.

- f) **Market Information Systems (MIS):** As part of coordinated efforts to protect the interests of smallholders who are usually price takers; the Market Information System will be launched as an integral part of the CBN's cashless economy initiative. MIS is essentially an interactive database featuring searchable commodities and agricultural produce. The database will hold real time data accessible to mobile phone users who will also be able to purchase agric produce and make payments through their mobile phones. This will be implemented with the active participation of capable, committed and competent private investors.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nigeria is presently fully integrated with the rest of the world – thanks to advancements in technology – with the implication that anything affecting the world's most developed nations immediately impacts the domestic scene. Recent socio-political events in Europe, North America, the Middle East and North Africa clearly have also confirmed the theory that within any society, tensions will emerge the moment there is perception that resources have not been equitably or fairly distributed.

In discharging our duty, we remain conscious of the fact that the existence of a fundamental disequilibrium in the world's food supply value chain portends grave danger for the economic development of all nations of the world, without any exceptions. We also recognise that the on-going re-arrangement of our national financial and economic landscape originating from turbulence within the global financial markets is quite capable of threatening social cohesion across Nigeria in general and Lagos in particular. Consequently we are committed and determined to employ agriculture to address and resolve these

potential threats substantially. We are constantly reminded of this as we implement and review key programmes of SPAAG.

SPAAG was born following an extensive review of the State's agric infrastructure from farm to fork. What had to be done was obvious – the sector was in dire need of a total overhaul and we had two choices – either shy away from the task of transformation or attend to the needs of millions of Lagosians. We chose the latter and did not kid ourselves into thinking it will be a stroll in the park. It is the need of these millions that has kept us and our vision ticking; and we will certainly not rest until the most fundamental of these needs are met. We strongly believe SPAAG will ultimately improve the lot of our farmers and also provide decent meals for every single Lagosian but we do not believe government must do it alone. Let us count on YOU, YOU and YOU to join hands with us in making our goals for agriculture a fact of reality in Lagos.

Eko o ni baje o!

Thank you for listening.