

13TH ESAN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP (EEEW) COMMUNIQUE

Theme: Modernizing agribusiness in esanland for economic empowerment

PREAMBLE:

This event which commenced on Friday, October 13th 2017 and was concluded on Saturday, 14th October 2017 principally with focus on how to modernize the business of agriculture in Esanland for the economic empowerment of all Esan people. Upon the arrival of guests and their registration, the event chaired by Prof. Julius Okojie (ably represented by Prof. (Mrs.) Inegbebo, kicked off. Other participants and discussants the occasion include the following persons amongst others:

1. Prof. C. O. Omoifo – Crop Cultivation in relation to land variants in Esan
2. Mr. Frans Ojeilu (representing Mr. Mike Osime) –Accessing funds for Agribusiness
3. Mr. Abulimen (representing Mr. Charles Osezua) - Accessing funds for Agribusiness

At the proceeding of Saturday, 14th October 2017, the Edo State Governor, His Excellency Godwin Obaseki ably graced the occasion alongside the Honourable Commissioner for Agriculture, Honourable Monday Osaigbovo, amongst others.

After the conclusion of introductions, Prof. Omoifo presented his topic with emphasis on the importance of farmers to understand and appreciate the topography and soil type variance in Esanland and its effect of the eventual yield, which ultimately translates to the prosperity of the farmers. On the otherhand, Messrs. Ojeilu and Abulimen extensively discussed the various channels by which agricbusiness can be financed and how best to access same.

Areas such as the need for market survey, the need to be organized into corporate bodies to enable farmers access loans through various institutions and government special intervention schemes such as the Anchor Borrowers Scheme was communicated to the audience. At the conclusion of discussions, the farmers highlighted their challenges as:

1. Inadequate farm preparation;
2. Lack of attention to livestock agriculture;
3. Systemic corruption at various levels;
4. Security/Menace of herdsmen; and
5. Lack of extension workers to provide the needed support at their farms.

In response to these issues, the President of AEP agreed to take up both the federal and state governments on how best to tackle the issues raised as well as extract the necessary commitments from the various governments.

At the proceedings of Saturday, 14th October 2017, the above issues were properly articulated by discussants and attendees and thereafter presented to the Governor as well as the Commissioner for Agriculture in Edo State and the representative of the Minister of Agriculture, Mr Omoragbon Wellington present. Mr Wellington in his very short but concise speech, promised to ensure the federal government's support in the area of capacity building and supply of processing machines at a subsidized rate.

In the Governor's speech, he laid serious emphasis on the following:

- a. Agribusiness was one of the things he planned to use to create the 200,000 jobs he promised during the campaigns;
- b. The State government is presently offering incentives to make access to land and farm inputs easily available to farmers;
- c. The government has revamped the fertilizer plant in Auchi to meet the needs of local farmers;
- d. Boosting the training of local farmers by revamping the College of Agriculture in the state to bridge the existing gaps; and
- e. Attempts at reopening the Gelegele Sea Port in the state to help boost the export of farm produce.

At the end of the ceremony, the following resolutions were reached:

1. That the state government and the federal government shall work assiduously to put measures in place ensure people in Esanland get maximum value from their farming activities;
2. Actively encourage farmers to take up options of mechanized farming to maximize yield especially the youths using available resources;
3. Assist the farmers access various financial options available to them, especially the Federal Government initiative of the Anchor Borrowers' Scheme;
4. Encourage the creation of cluster farms and processing unit that will eventually lead to the creation of an effective agribusiness hub in Esanland and Edo State in general;

5. Security concerns, though already being addressed should be further looked into and adequate steps be taken to mitigate and eventually eradicate the menace of the activities of the Fulani herdsmen;
6. That the State Government should take steps to restore the Onojie of Uromi back to his stool and allow for total reconciliation of all aggrieved parties in Edo State in a bid to move the state forward.

The event closed at about 4pm with lunch served.

Stanley Negbenebor
Recorder