



FUTA NEWS

Experts Chart New Course for Agriculture at Humboldt Kolleg Conference

Professor Lawrence Etim, Director, Centre for Research and Development Studies, University of Uyo has attributed the myriads of problems in the agricultural sector and peculiar issues in agricultural faculties in Nigerian Universities to poor policy environments in the nation. Delivering the keynote address at the opening ceremony of the 2014 Humboldt Kolleg International Conference at the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), with the theme “Use of rendered products and value added agro-wastes in animal nutrition: a panacea for sustainable protein production in Sub-Saharan Africa”, Professor Etim noted with concern the incessant change in agricultural policies and programmes which he described as unnecessary.

Etim who traced agricultural policies and programmes in Nigeria from pre-independence to date while speaking on the topic “the ever changing landscape of Nigerian agricultural policies and programmes, problem of agricultural faculties in Nigerian Universities,” explained that “agricultural policies had never been in short supply in Nigeria and the country may well be surfeited by them.” He noted that “some policies had been so ephemeral that their life spans never exceeded the tenure of the administration that launched them.”

He highlighted poor funding, decline in students’ enrolment in agricultural faculties due to unattractive programmes and activities and the lack of job vacancies in the sector as major challenges facing the agricultural sector in Nigeria presently. He therefore enjoined government to engage more young people in the sector by making agricultural programmes more attractive, enacting only policies peculiar to this part of the world and creating more jobs in the sector. He also urged citizens to be truthful and dependable in the disbursement of allocated funds to achieve set targets.

Speaking while declaring the conference open, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adebisi Daramola said the sector was critical to the economic development of the country. He enjoined all stakeholders to devise new measures that would give agriculture a new lease of life in the country. The Vice-Chancellor who was represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic, Professor Adedayo Fasakin, expressed delight at the conference's focus, stating that the area of discourse could be largely explored to improve not only the quality of life but also regional economic development.

He expressed gratitude to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), a German-based non-profit, non-governmental research promoting organization, which aims to support excellence and create an expanding global network of cultural and scientific attainments, for supporting the conference as well as human capital development in FUTA and other institutions in the country. He noted that well above 1000 research fellowships had been awarded to Africans and about 200 of them were won by Nigerians, including Scholars and Scientists from FUTA.

Earlier, the convener, Professor Lawrence Nwanna of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture Technology, explained that in Sub-Saharan Africa the supply of animal protein still falls far below demand as a result of low income and high cost of meat precipitated by scarce and high cost of animal feeds which he attributed to the effect of importation on feed-stuffs for the production of animal feed. This, according to him, translates to high cost of produced animal protein. He added that climatic change had a negative effect on local production meant for the augmentation of imported feed-stuffs. In his words "local production of these feed-stuffs to augment the imported ones is dwindling because of the impact of climatic change with unprecedented heavy rains destruction of arable lands, farm settlements and crops by flood. Consequently, the use of conventional animal and plant feed-stuffs in animal nutrition may no longer be sustainable; sequel to rising prices of the limited available feed-stuffs that are also used in human nutrition." He therefore elucidated the urgent need for alternative feed-stuffs that cannot compromise the growth and nutritional qualities of the produced animal protein as the reason for the focus of this year's conference.

Appreciating the activities of scientists and fellows of the Humboldt Kolleg in FUTA, Dr. Daniela Kneissl, the Humboldt Director for Africa and Asia said "it is an honour to be in the midst of excellent scientists in FUTA. We are happy to support and look forward to partnering with the University". She thanked the University Management for receiving the delegates and expressed optimism that the conference would contribute to knowledge and possible solution

to the problems of sustainable protein production among other agricultural challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa.