



FUTA News

POST HARVEST LOSSES HAMPERING TRANSFORMATION OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR--FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR AT FUTA LECTURE

Governments at all levels have been called upon to provide farmers with modern storage facilities with access to technologies needed to improve productivity and mitigate post-harvest losses. This call was made by Professor George N. Mbata of the Department of Biology, Fort Valley State University, Fort Valley, United States of America at a Lecture held at the CCE Hilltop Auditorium of the Federal University of Technology, Akure under the auspices of the Centre for Research and Development (CERAD). Mbata, who is also a Fulbright Food Security Specialist, spoke on the theme Agricultural Transformation Agenda for Nigeria: Role of Food Storage Technologies. He said Nigeria has the potential to feed its large population because of high agricultural products but unfortunately, most of the products waste annually because of lack of good storage facilities. He said "A wide range of commodities cultivated in Nigeria used principally for food for humans, animal feed and industry raw materials waste away. These commodities which are subject to activities like transportation, storage, processing and marketing have high potential for income generation. But unfortunately they waste away through infestation by insects and mites. To therefore mitigate post-harvest losses, infusion of technology is needed at every level of post-harvest activity.

Speaking further, Mbata said small holder farmers who are in high percentage in Nigeria have remained unproductive because they do not have access to modern technology. Also, they lack the information and facilities needed to hold their commodities for a longer period to allow prices to appreciate before selling them. He therefore urged governments to organize subsistence farmers into cooperatives and provide them with seed money, trained personnel and access to technologies needed to improve productivity and mitigate post-harvest losses.

Professor Mbata called on the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute [NSPRI] to increase and implement post research in the country. This will adequately update farmers with modern ways of farming. "NSPRI has the capacity for sound research and has a number of innovations that could potentially help grain producers and merchants, but it has very limited or no collaboration with industry or Universities. There is need for the Federal Government to Liberalize the funding of post-harvest research by extending funding to Universities, Industries and Private Agencies;" Mbata stated. Mbata also lamented poor coordination of extension services in agriculture in Nigeria which he blamed on lack of adequate information on emerging technologies. He thus said for the Federal Government Agricultural Transformational Agenda to have further impact, especially on the local farmer "Information Emerging Technologies, Pest Problems and Integrated Pest Management [IPM] tools should be made available to farmers and other end users promptly."

In his address, the Chairman of the occasion, Professor Adebisi Daramola, the Vice Chancellor,

represented by his Deputy in charge of Development Professor Tolulope Akinbogun emphasized the importance of Food Storage to guarantee food security. Daramola praised the effort of the Federal Government's Agricultural Transformational Agenda [ATA] under the leadership of the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Dr. Akinwumi Adesina as a good way to banish hunger and reduce poverty in the land. He said "The aim of the Agricultural Transformational Agenda is to achieve a hunger-free Nigeria through an agricultural sector that drives income growth, accelerates achievement of food and nutritional security, generate employment and transforms Nigeria into a leading player in global markets to grow wealth for millions of farmers. This is achievable if we have good food storage facilities. I am optimistic that this lecture will broaden our horizon in food storage technologies and further open our eyes to our role as a University of Technology and a stakeholder in the Agricultural Sector".

In his welcome address, Director, Centre for Research and Development, (CERAD), Professor Thomas Ofuya assured that the benefits of the lecture would be extended to all stakeholders to guarantee food security and reduce poverty in the land.