



FUTA NEWS

SUSTAINABILITY: PANACEA TO FOOD SECURITY – AKINNIFESI

Sustainable agriculture can meet the need of the present and safeguard those of the future generations. This was the submission of Professor Festus Akinnifesi, Deputy Coordinator, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, Strategic Objective #2 at the 2015 Annual Lecture of the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, (SAAT) Federal University of Technology, Akure, recently held at the main auditorium of the institution.

He titled his lecture “A Game Changing Paradigm: From Mirage-Chasing to Attaining Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture by 2030”. Akinnifesi said sustainable development has no alternative, it is the only solution to feed the world and secure the planet.”Describing Agriculture as huge global engine he said each day agriculture produces 23.7 million tons of food, 400,000 tons of fish, 9.5 million m³ tones of timber and fuel food, 7.4 trillion litres of water for irrigation and 300,000 tons of fertilizer bringing the total value of agriculture to an estimated 7 billion US dollars daily.

Against this backdrop of production, the don noted that although there is surplus food production globally enough to feed 10-12 billion people, 800 million people still go hungry and that over the next 35 years, the world is heading towards an increasing confluence of challenges, which if unabated will compromise our long term capacity to produce food, even our very survival.

According to him “In this era of burgeoning food demand and depleting natural resources, worsened by climatic changes, meeting the food security demand is impossible unless we change the entire food and agriculture systems” Speaking further on the challenges of Agriculture he decried the negative effect of food loss and waste. Professor Akinnifesi said one third of food produced for human consumption globally is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain from agricultural production to consumption. This he said is an indication of dysfunctional food systems. He also stated that much of the available land is not suitable for agriculture as 33% of land is moderately to highly degraded and the challenges of climatic change further poses a threat to the sustainability of agriculture.

Summing his lecture up, the guest lecturer said building a common vision for sustainable food and Agriculture was imperative and thereby urged the government to put in place instruments and policies that improve the efficiency of the entire agriculture and food systems. He called for sustainable agriculture production intensification practices that boost yield and build resilience (adaption).

Speaking further he said small holder farmers and family farmers must be empowered with technology and efficient input delivery systems that build resilience of farmers ----youth and the marginalized people. He said hunger eradication is achievable but a new game plan was needed through integrated agriculture and the application of climate smart Agriculture which is a new and evolving concept from old farming practices. This he said will increase productivity and achievement of national food security and development goals.

Earlier in his address, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Adebisi Daramola said it was necessary for the academic to play a significant role in the 21st century, so it is important to be open to new ideas and leverage human materials resources in various sectors of the economy. He said the onus was on

them to proffer practical solutions to noticeable challenges around, especially in the areas of Agriculture. He said the theme of the lecture is not only apt, but also timely because Nigeria requires a paradigm shift to ensure self-sufficiency in food production. The Vice-Chancellor said the choice of the lecturer was most appropriate considering his wealth of experience, expertise and international exposure in Agriculture and food security.

In his welcome address the Dean, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, (SAAT), Professor Shadrach Akindele said it was a rare privilege and honour to have a reputable scholar of Professor Akinnifesi's standing to deliver the lecture. He said one of the major goals of the school is to make significant contribution towards attaining food security in Nigeria.