

# The Federal Republic of Nigeria

## Positions for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization

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### I. Using Technology to Advance Agricultural Practices and to Combat Hunger

The Federal Republic of Nigeria vigorously asserts that biotechnology will drive the 21<sup>st</sup> century's global food, health, industrial, and environmental sectors.<sup>1</sup> In Nigeria, 9 percent of individuals are undernourished and nearly 70 percent of individuals are impoverished, often caused by food insecurity within rural areas. As Nigeria's agriculture sector is very large, these rural areas depend on subsistence farming practices for food supplies. Due to issues such as climate change and pest infestation, often food supplies are destroyed after harvest. Without adequate food security measures, agrarian nations may starve. Therefore, Nigeria strongly supports the use of biotechnology as a means to address and combat the dangers of food insecurity.

Nigeria has established the National Biotechnology Policy to develop new biotechnologies that are practical and affordable, develop techniques for funding research and development for biotechnologies, and to foster an environment in which cooperation between local, regional, national, and international organizations thrive. To ensure that it is effectively implemented, Nigeria created the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NBDA). In addition to efforts being made on a national level, Nigeria is working with other West African nations in an initiative known as the West African Biotechnology Network (WABNET). Although this program is still in developmental stages, its purpose is to allow regional collaboration to address common development needs with regard to biotechnology research and development. One of the most important issues regarding biotechnology is safety. Every caution must be taken to address the potential risks associated with biotechnologies. As such, Nigeria created the National Biosafety Bill in 2006 that seeks to address concerns of safety in biotechnology development. Nigeria seeks to further development of biotechnology such that its benefits can be widely utilized to not only address food security but also other future security and safety issues.

Many lesser and least developed nations have little access to biotechnology resources due to the high cost of technology and its infrastructure. While the creation of biotechnology database by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) is certainly a move in the right direction, more action must be taken. Nigeria encourages the creation of an International Biotechnology Agency (IBA), under the auspices of the FAO, to serve as a resource for developing and developed nations for the latest advancements in biotechnology. The IBA would allow greater access to technologies by developing nations through information and technology sharing.

### II. Examining the Impacts of Climate Change on Food Security

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is acutely aware of the impact of climate change. In Nigeria, many food crops are dependent on abundant rainfall. According to the Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST), climate change can drastically affect food production due to "uncertainties in the onset of the farming season, changes in rainfall characteristics which lead to an unusual sequence of crop planting and replanting." This may result in food shortages due to harvest failure.<sup>2</sup> Nigeria has been considerably affected by climate change. In many regions, there has been a steady decline in rainfall, leading to the desertification of once arable land. Not only does the threat of desertification threaten the international population, the potential for a rise in sea level could also displace coastal dwellers. This could, in turn, lead to population migration with urban areas, resulting in food shortages and human insecurity. Nigeria fully recognizes the importance of addressing climate change as a means to protect the international community. Focusing on climate change is the first step to focusing on the future of the global community.

In response to the dangers of climate change, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has taken a number of steps to curtail the effects of climate change on both national and international levels. Nigeria has become party to a number of initiatives aimed at minimizing the effects of climate change including the Kyoto Protocol and the United Nations

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<sup>1</sup> National Biotechnology Development Agency.  
<http://www.nabda.gov.ng/introduction.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Building Nigeria's Response To Climate Change.  
<http://www.nigeriaclimatechange.org/page4.php>

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Nigeria ratified the UNFCCC in August of 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol in December of 2004. Nationally, Nigeria is working with NEST on several ongoing projects designed to help Nigerians deal with the effects of climate change. NEST's projects involve initiatives such as aiding the federal government in addressing the effects of climate change and educating Nigerians about climate change. In 2007, Nigeria established the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) with a vision to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment for all Nigerians. The purpose of this agency is to ensure that all international, federal, state, and local guidelines regarding environmental issues are adhered to. Additionally, Nigeria recently implemented a new initiative known as the Aba Clean Energy Carbon Project using Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Nigeria applauds the global community's support of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. However, further action must be taken. Those that have ratified the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol must make a more sustained effort to abide by climate change guidelines. In addition to international efforts, nations must take initiative in the fight against climate change. Nigeria encourages all Member States to work with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to develop strategies to help educate citizens on the effects of climate change. NESREA developed strategies for Nigeria to implement on a short term basis that would be effective on a global scale including review and evaluation of environmental regulations and standards, institutional strengthening and capacity building, data base development, and most importantly environmental education and awareness<sup>3</sup>. Properly executed, these types of agencies are an effective tool in combating the effects of climate change. Nigeria calls on all Member States to work multilaterally to create regional cooperative agencies that would do similar work to that of NESREA. These agencies could then work collectively on identifying areas around the world that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change within the framework of the Kyoto Protocols and UNFCCC. Furthermore, these agencies would serve as information sharing venue to increase the availability of information regarding climate change.

### **III. Alleviating Rural Poverty through the Use of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers**

The current economic situation in the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a challenging one. While poverty affects all Member States, rural populations are the most impoverished. Rural areas have often been neglected in the investment and improvement of healthcare, education, and basic infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> Rural populations in Nigeria, like much of the developing world, tend to be heavily invested into agricultural trades and subsistence farming. One significant problem is that impoverished rural farmers often do not have access to technologies such as irrigation systems or pesticides. Without these technologies, the farmers depend almost entirely on sufficient rainfall and no pest infestation in their crops but often have to survive on inadequate crops and supplies. These problems in turn lead to malnourishment and continued poverty. While poverty and the lack of agricultural advancement in rural areas is very challenging, it is not an unmanageable problem. There has been steady improvement throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century and work is continually being done to ensure that those improvements continue.

Since its successful return to democracy in 1999, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has taken great strides to reform its economy and infrastructure. As a result, Nigeria's economy has gone from little or negative growth throughout the 1990s to an annual economic growth average of 4.8 percent through 2004. In order to produce national economic growth, Nigeria introduced the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in May of 2004. NEEDS has introduced a reform based medium- term plan for economic recovery, growth, and development.<sup>5</sup> Nigeria's primary goal is poverty reduction through education, private industry and small business growth, and governmental poverty reform measures. To ensure the successful implementation of the NEEDS program, the African Development Bank (ADB) has also implemented the Bank Group Strategy which also promotes education and the improvement of access to education. Furthermore, the Bank Group Strategy also promotes better access to healthcare. Emphasis on the social and economic troubles of a population is the key to poverty reduction. Such international collaboration, as modeled with NEEDS and the African Development Bank, is key in addressing the dangers of poverty.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the importance of empowerment in poverty reduction. Through capital growth, agricultural sectors may lift out of poverty to produce beyond subsistence standards. Nigeria calls for the collaboration of all Member States with NGOs, development agencies, and investors to provide microcredit to

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<sup>3</sup> National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency. *Strategy Plan*  
[http://www.nesrea.org/our\\_strategy.php](http://www.nesrea.org/our_strategy.php)

<sup>4</sup> Rural Poverty Portal  
<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/english/regions/africa/nga/index.htm>

<sup>5</sup> International Monetary Fund. *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper: Progress Report*  
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2007/cr07270.pdf>

farmers in rural areas to foster positive economic advancement. It is only through multilateral measures that poverty alleviation can be fully achieved as a means to sustainable development.