

Remarks by Eric Crawford on “MSU and International Agricultural Research”

Workshop on:

“Guiding Sustainable Intensification in Sub Saharan Africa (GISAIA); Nigeria Launch”

Yar’Adua Center, Abuja, June 17, 2013

Honorable Minister of Power, representative of the Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, distinguished representatives of the University of Ibadan and other universities, distinguished representatives of other government agencies, donors and NGOs, the International Food Policy Research Center, fellow workshop participants, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words about Michigan State University, its previous linkages with Nigeria, its current major programs focused on agricultural research and development in Africa, and our interest in exploring potential future collaboration. I believe I can do this in less than the time allotted to me.

Professor Adelaja has spoken about MSU’s partnership with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in establishing and building the University of Nigeria at Nsukka during the late 1950s and early 1960s. This was a major priority for MSU, and thirty professors from MSU—including several from my department—were resident at Nsukka during that period. When MSU’s President John DiBiaggio visited Nigeria in July 1992 to attend a special convocation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, he spoke extensively of the profound impact that this partnership had on MSU. He said, and I quote:

[We] offer you our thanks and appreciation for the contribution you have made to the quality of international studies at Michigan State. You may not have realized that out of the experience of the MSU faculty in the 1960s here on this campus, we have made the study of Africa and service to Africa our largest commitment among all the world's areas. That commitment is almost unique in our country, and it derives from the warm welcome and fellow humanity that our faculty experienced here on this campus.

President DiBiaggio noted that MSU's Africa-oriented faculty rose to 130 in number, including six professors from Nigeria.

Efforts were made to restore this partnership with the University of Nigeria during the 1990s and again in the mid-2000s. Collaborative activities involving a wide range of MSU departments were established with the University of Ibadan and other universities, and with the Ministry of Education. However, these activities remained small-scale, for reasons of limited funding and faculty resources (most MSU professors with experience in Nigeria had retired).

Things have now changed for the better, particularly in the area of agricultural research and development. Funding to support activities in Nigeria has become much more abundant, new faculty members have been hired at MSU, and MSU has major new programs in place:

With respect to funding, the U.S. and European countries have made major commitments to fund programs designed to improve agricultural productivity and food security. You are probably familiar with President Obama's \$3.5 billion Feed the Future initiative. Also noteworthy is the entry of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a major donor in Africa.

With respect to new faculty hiring, in our department alone we have been fortunate to gain several faculty members with interest and expertise in Nigeria, including Prof. Soji Adelaja, Prof. Saweda Liverpool-Tasie, and Prof. Andrew Dillon, all of whom are participating in this workshop.

With respect to major MSU programs, let me cite the following:

1. First, the Food Security Group, located within the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics but involving researchers from other departments. This group of twenty-some faculty members coordinates a range of projects, including:
 - a. The BMGF-funded GISAIA project, whose research component in Nigeria is being launched today.

- b. A major new \$25 million USAID-funded project entitled “Feed the Future Innovation Lab on Food Security Policy,” on which IFPRI is a core partner along with University of Pretoria.
 - c. The FSP project is effectively a follow-on to our 30-year Food Security project, focused on applied research, capacity-building and policy outreach, largely in Africa.
2. Second, a new \$25 million USAID-funded Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Grain Legumes, managed by MSU’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources as a follow-on to previous Collaborative Research Support Programs on beans, cowpeas, and other legumes.
3. Third, a new \$25 million USAID-funded project to set up a Global Center for Food Systems Innovation at MSU, under the USAID Higher Education Solutions Network. This involves multiple colleges, primarily the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Education.

Many other areas of MSU emphasis and expertise are relevant to, and could contribute to, addressing Nigeria’s agricultural development and food security objectives. To cite a few:

1. First, the Plant Breeding, Genetics, and Biotechnology program, which involves over 100 MSU researchers in the plant, soil, and microbial sciences.
2. Second, programs within the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition and the School of Packaging with research and training expertise that support the needs of rapidly changing food systems in Africa, including issues of food safety. FSHN has particular expertise in research on mycotoxins and their impacts on human health and how to address them, including problems of aflatoxin in crops such as maize and groundnuts.
3. Third, related programs in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources focus on sustainable agriculture and the links between agriculture and nutrition.
4. Fourth, research on climate change trends and adaptation strategies, involving the Center for Global Change and Earth Observations and the Climate Land Interaction

Project which has developed high-resolution region-level models that integrate climate, crop, land and water use, and which we are now beginning to link with farm household models.

5. Fifth, the Environmental Science and Policy program, which involves researchers across multiple colleges.
6. Lastly, a major new initiative is being launched to strengthen research on global water use. This will greatly increase the number of faculty members with expertise in this area, and strengthen its multidisciplinary focus.

Given these areas of research emphasis and expertise, I believe that MSU would have something valuable to contribute as a partner with Nigerian institutions in addressing your goals of agricultural development and food security. Moreover, I believe I can say on behalf of MSU that we would have a strong interest in doing so, partly as an extension of our past collaborations, and partly in recognition of Nigeria's importance within both the African and global context. We would be pleased to have the opportunity to explore potential future collaboration.

Thank you very much.