

Newsletter Highlights

NEWSLETTER



HortiNigeria Youth Challenge

Building Partnerships and Improving Market Systems

A Solution: Vegetable Sourcing Mission

Understanding and Embracing a Food System Approach

Change Story: Sharing Knowledge, Improving Practices and Changing Lives

Climate Smart Action Awareness Campaign

HORTINIGERIA YOUTH CHALLENGE

In August, HortiNigeria conducted a youth challenge to commemorate International Youth Day. The challenge was aimed at increasing awareness of the HortiNigeria program and promoting climate-smart inputs among entrepreneurial youth. Through Facebook and Instagram, participants shared videos of their farm fields and spoke about the innovative technologies they employ. Six winners (two women and four men) received inputs worth over \$1,015 to help mitigate climate change from HortiNigeria and Solokad Multiventures Ltd., a HortiNigeria Business Champion.

According to the CEO of Solokad Multiventures, Elder Solomon Sunday Adenitan, "I believe that youth have the power to unlock the potential in Nigeria's agriculture. I see the great and transformative work they are doing, and with the right support, they will harness the potential in the sector."

Through the collaborative effort, winners received transplanters, potting soils, nursery trays, harvesting crates, coco peat, a soil tester, a motorized sprayer, and a battery-powered/manual sprayer. According to one of the winners, Opeyemi Ajibola, "Winning the challenge has increased my confidence and motivated me to become better and more committed to my vision as a farmer. It has made me popular, giving me a voice within the farming space and increasing my social capital. Now I am more confident to chase after my dreams of doing farming as a business."

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPROVING MARKET SYSTEMS

One of HortiNigeria's key strategies is utilizing a collaborative approach to address demand and supply gaps within the horticulture sector. In September, HortiNigeria brokered a partnership with Tomato Jos, a tomato processing plant in Kaduna, Nigeria. The partnership is piloting a value chain outgrower financing model, both outside and within Tomato Jos farming facilities, to improve:

1. A total of 500 smallholder farmers' supply to a transformative market outside the Tomato Jos facility. Each farmer will work with three other farmers on his or her plot, thus benefiting a total of 2,000 farmers.
2. Engagement of 2,500 youths and women in vegetable production by building their capacities through trainings on tomato seedling production and drip irrigation systems (Furrow and Netafim). Farmers are set to achieve a minimum yield of 25 metric tons per hectare as compared to the national average of less than 10 metric tons per hectare. Tomato Jos will offtake the harvested tomato using plastic crates to protect the produce from damage. The company will also ensure reconciliation of data and repayment to the bank and farmers using an app. The tomatoes purchased from the farmers will be processed into paste packaged in sachets, and HortiNigeria will further facilitate market linkages for sales of the tomato products.

Additionally, the program is working with First City Monument Bank (FCMB) to disburse ₦16 million naira at a 9% interest rate to both smallholder farmers and input dealers. "This model is a win-win situation for all the actors, as it provides benefits to all the players in the supply chain," said Mohammed Salasi Idris, HortiNigeria program director. He explained that buyers are guaranteed a supply of crops, producers are guaranteed markets and inputs, dealers are confident in receiving payments for inputs sold, and financial institutions like FCMB are ensured of repayments for the credit disbursed.

A SOLUTION: VEGETABLE SOURCING MISSION

HortiNigeria, in collaboration with Netherlands-African Business Council (NABC), organized a two-day Vegetable Sourcing Mission to facilitate business-to-business (B2B) linkages in Kaduna and Kano states. This matchmaking event is aligned with the expected harvest of the program's focus crops of tomato, onion, okra, cucumber, and pepper.

The event attracted over 579 participants, of whom 118 were women and more than 100 were youth). Eighteen opportunities were identified, and three linkages were successfully brokered. The Vegetable Sourcing Mission consisted of a field visit (to the farmers' farms), a market linkage workshop, and B2B matchmaking sessions.

On the first day, 20 stakeholders, comprising marketers, processors, agro-dealers, and aggregators, visited different tomato and okra fields. This allowed them to get to know the farmers and get an idea of how the vegetables are grown, inspect the quality, and estimate the expected harvest. The second day consisted of a market linkage workshop and B2B matchmaking sessions. Marketers introduced themselves, explained what they could offtake, and where and when they do business. Though proximity of the actors was a criterion for facilitating linkages, farmers still had the power to choose which marketers to negotiate with. Phone contacts were exchanged to allow further negotiations to broker the deals.





UNDERSTANDING AND EMBRACING FOOD SYSTEM APPROACH

With the rise in food insecurity and nutritional challenges across the globe, it is important to tackle new problems with new solutions. Though the food systems approach is not new within the agricultural space, it is increasingly being discussed among stakeholders to address issues such as rapid urbanization and climate change. Therefore, stakeholders need to both understand the food systems approach and learn how to apply it in these changing times.

What is a food system?

A food system comprises a wide range of actors and activities within an ecosystem, from production to consumption. It is a way of thinking and implementation that considers how subsystems within the agricultural sector relate to and impact program outcomes. The pillars of the framework foster economic, social, and environmental gains.

Recently, HortiNigeria participated in a three-day learning workshop hosted by HortInvest, a Dutch-funded project implemented in Rwanda. The workshop aimed to introduce programs and projects to the food system framework and equip them to apply a food system lens in project implementation. Participants, including representatives of HortiNigeria and 11 other Dutch-funded programs from nine countries, now have a better understanding of the food systems approach and can ascertain their positions and priorities within the framework. During the learning workshop, HortiNigeria's program team identified its objectives within the three pivotal pillars of food systems and mapped out activities to catalyze the use of the food systems lens. One activity agreed upon was the sensitization and training of smallholder farmers on nutrition-themed topics. The figure shows the objectives of HortiNigeria within the pillars of food systems.



CHANGE STORY: SHARING KNOWLEDGE, IMPROVING PRACTICES, AND CHANGING LIVES!

Saudatu Yakubu is a 29-year-old smallholder farmer in Kubau, Kaduna State. Though Saudatu has been farming for over 10 years, she always had low yields from her rice farm (about 2 metric tons) due to the traditional farming practices she applied. According to Saudatu, access to land and other inputs was not a challenge, as her husband supported her with these. However, the gap in knowledge required to harness the potential of these resources limited her from optimizing her yields.

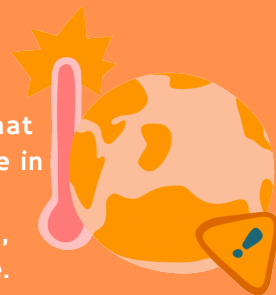
In 2022, Saudatu ventured into cabbage farming, following HortiNigeria's sensitization campaign in her community. After this, she received support from her husband to rent the farmland needed to cultivate the vegetable. Her application of the knowledge she had gained on good agricultural practices, as well as simple but pragmatic climate-smart actions introduced to her through the program, made her farm attractive to other farmers, particularly women farmers within her community.

According to Saudatu, "I am proud of myself for being the first female cabbage farmer in my community, and more importantly, I am happy about the knowledge I have acquired. I can see the impact on the crops on my farm. Now my daughter is looking forward to starting her cabbage farm in the dry season."



CLIMATE SMART ACTION AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

In celebrating Youth Climate Action Day, HortiNigeria conducted a weeklong Climate Smart Action campaign among stakeholders both in person and online. Nigeria according to the United Nations is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change impact and this is evident in the flash floods, landslides and gully erosion that has displaced over 1.3million persons. Despite the negative impact of climate change in Nigeria, particularly on the economic sector, particularly the agricultural sector that employs over 70% of the nation's population, there are limited actions at individual, community, and national levels that can help mitigate the effects of climate change.



The goal of the campaign was to increase the awareness of strategies incorporated into agricultural practices through stakeholders' work efforts. Participants in the campaign pledged to promote climate-smart action strategies, and in cases where strategies had already been integrated, they shared these with others. Many participants in the campaign were not conscious of their use of climate-smart action strategies but had been implementing them intuitively. The awareness campaign helped stakeholders become aware of the role they play in mitigating climate change.

