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Sasakawa Africa Association Nigeria



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Editorial Team

Executive Publisher
Dr. Godwin Atser
Country Director, SAA Nigeria

Editor-in-Chief
Moses Nongoatse

Associate Editors
Patrick Akpu,
Aveseh Asough

From the Country Director

Dear Partners and Friends,

The past few months have reminded us that while the challenges facing Nigeria's food systems are significant, so too is our collective capacity to innovate, collaborate, and create lasting change. From climate pressures and rising production costs to limited access to finance and mechanization, smallholder farmers continue to navigate an increasingly complex landscape. Yet, across the country, we are witnessing remarkable examples of resilience and transformation.

This edition of the SAA Nigeria Country newsletter captures stories that speak to these progressive developments.

As SAA marks 40 years of service across Africa and 34 years of impact in Nigeria, we reflect not only on how far we have come, but also on the opportunities ahead. This quarter, we celebrated partnerships that are opening new pathways to mechanization, connected farmers to affordable finance, advanced climate-smart and regenerative practices, expanded digital extension initiatives, and strengthened the capacities of the women, men, and young people who feed our nation. Behind every milestone in these pages is a farmer embracing innovation, a partner investing in shared goals, and a dedicated team working tirelessly to turn possibilities into impact.

I invite you to explore this edition and discover the people, partnerships, and practical solutions driving agricultural transformation across Nigeria. Together, we are proving that when farmers are equipped with the right knowledge, technologies, and opportunities, they can build more resilient livelihoods and help secure our shared food future.

Thank you for your continued partnership and confidence in our mission.



Dr. Godwin Atser
Country Director, Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria

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“This quarter, we celebrated partnerships that are opening new pathways to mechanization, connected farmers to affordable finance, advanced climate-smart and regenerative practices, expanded digital extension initiatives, and strengthened the capacities of the women, men, and young people who feed our nation.”

SPECIAL FEATURE

Spotlight on SAA @ 40 as SAA Nigeria holds 2026 Annual Stakeholders Workshop in Abuja



SAA Nigeria staff, partners and distinguished guests commemorate the organization's 40 years of transforming African agriculture with a symbolic anniversary cake-cutting ceremony.



SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr Godwin Atser, reaffirms the organization's commitment to scaling proven agricultural solutions that deliver lasting impact for smallholder farmers.

This edition of the SAA Nigeria Country Office Newsletter spotlights a landmark moment in our journey, the 40th anniversary of the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), commemorated during the 2026 Annual Stakeholders Workshop in Abuja.

Bringing together key stakeholders from government, development partners, and the private sector, the event created space not just for reflection, but for connection. It marked four decades of SAA's work across

Africa and 34 years of strengthening agricultural extension systems and improving smallholder farmer livelihoods in Nigeria.

Setting the tone in his welcome address, Country Director Dr. Godwin Atser described the milestone as both a celebration and a call to action, noting that

“while we reflect on how far we have come, our focus remains on how to scale what works and reach even more farmers with impact.”

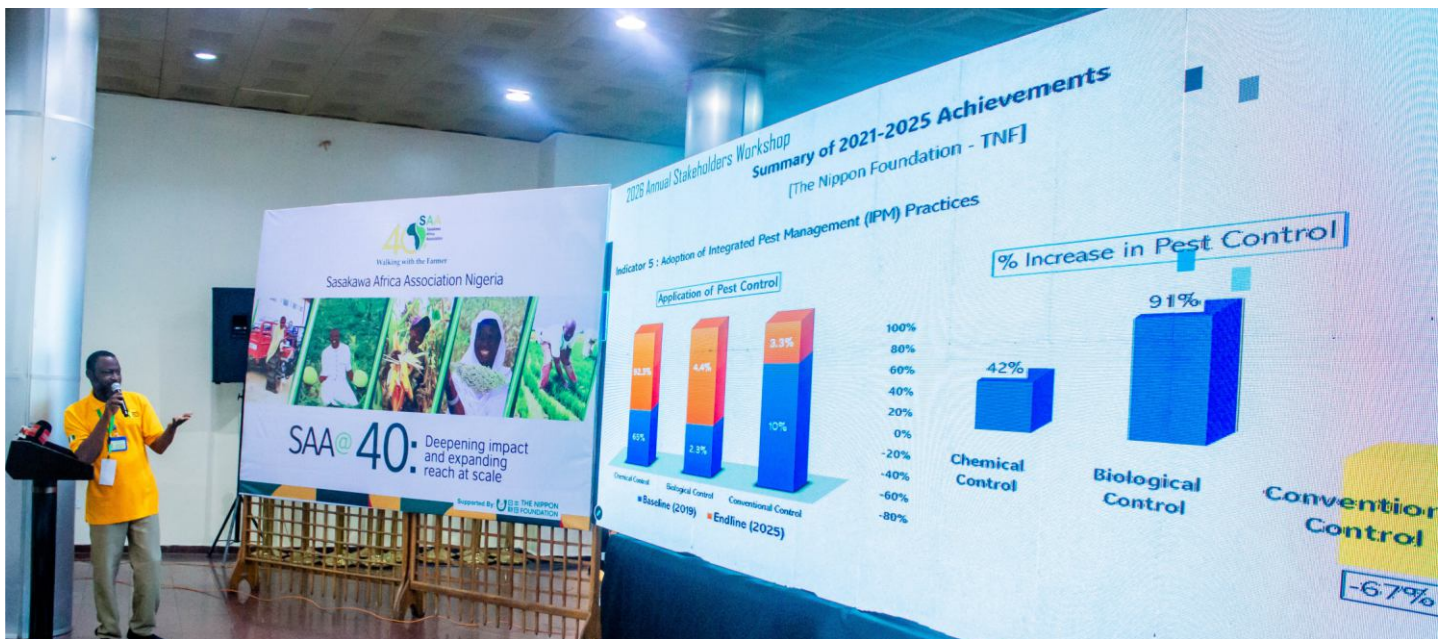
The workshop also provided an opportunity to review progress under the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, share lessons, and reinforce partnerships that continue to drive results. From keynote addresses to goodwill messages and exhibitions, each

segment of the event reflected a shared commitment to advancing Nigeria's agricultural transformation.

In the stories that follow, we capture the defining moments, voices, and insights from the

event, highlighting the people, partnerships, and priorities shaping SAA @ 40: Deepening Impact and Expanding Reach at Scale.

40 YEARS ON: WHY SAA'S JOURNEY MATTERS MORE THAN EVER



Dr Habib Zangina Diso highlights key achievements and lessons from SAA Nigeria's 2021–2025 intervention strategy, showcasing measurable progress across programme areas.

Four decades after the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) began transforming agriculture across Africa, its work in Nigeria continues to answer one enduring question: how do we ensure that smallholder farmers not only produce more, but thrive in an increasingly complex agricultural landscape?

That question shaped conversations throughout SAA Nigeria's 2026 Annual

Stakeholders' Workshop, where the organization launched its 40th anniversary celebrations under the theme *"Deepening Impact and Expanding Reach at Scale."*

While the occasion offered an opportunity to reflect on a remarkable legacy, the strongest message was that the future demands even greater ambition.

For more than 34 years in Nigeria, SAA has worked alongside governments, research

institutions, development partners and farming communities to promote improved crop varieties, strengthen extension services, expand mechanization, improve post-harvest management and connect farmers to better markets. The anniversary therefore became less a celebration of longevity than a reaffirmation of purpose.

SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Godwin Atser challenged partners to look beyond achievements and focus on the work still ahead.

With Nigeria's growing food demand and changing climate placing increasing pressure on farmers, he emphasized the need to scale proven technologies through stronger extension and advisory systems so that innovation reaches the people who need it most.

That vision resonated across the room.

Government representatives, development partners and private sector leaders all acknowledged that no single institution could transform agriculture alone. Lasting progress will depend on partnerships that combine knowledge, investment and innovation.

As SAA enters its fifth decade, the organization is building on

decades of experience while embracing new priorities such as digital extension, climate-smart agriculture and decarbonization.

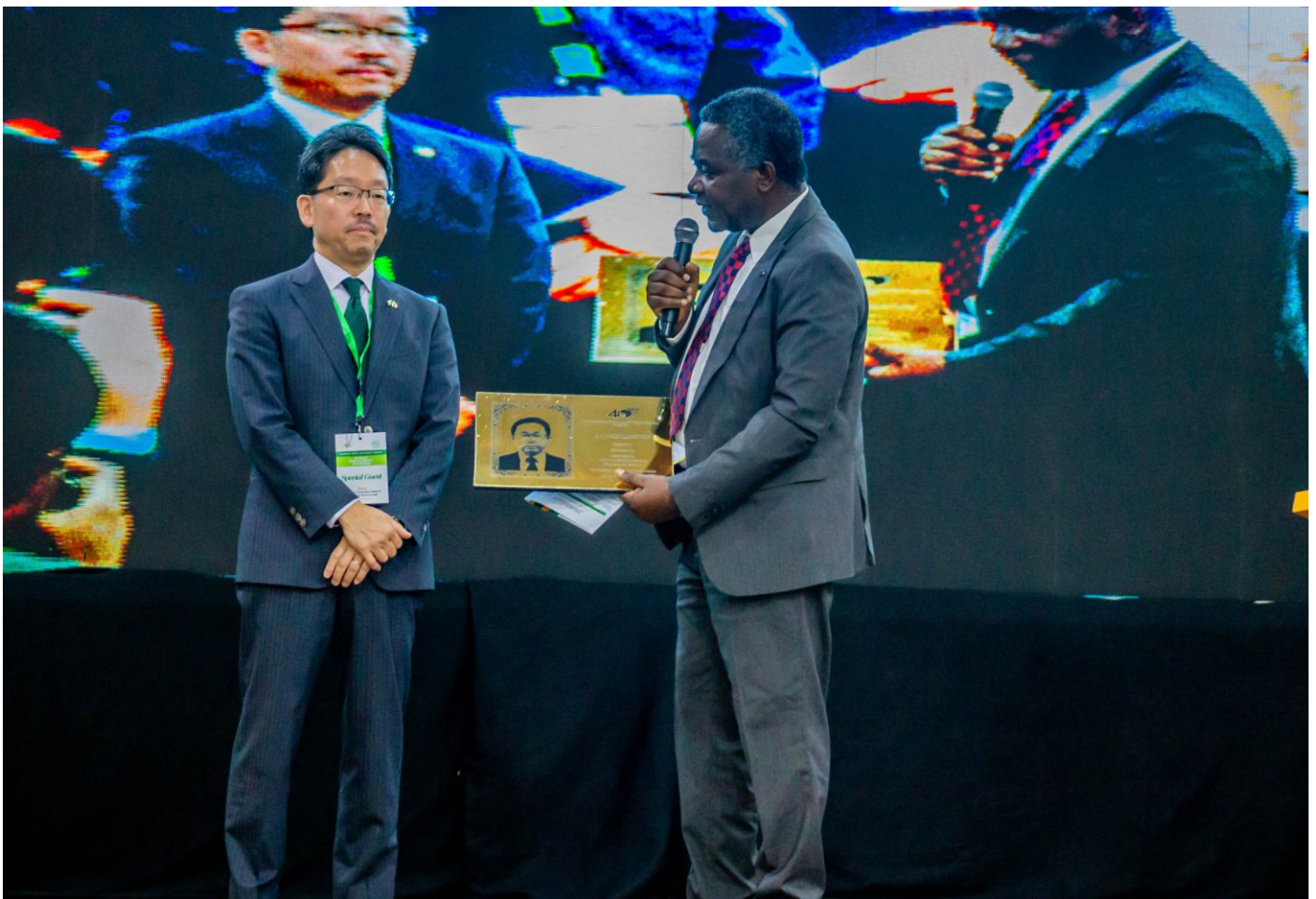
The anniversary therefore marks not the culmination of a journey, but the beginning of a new chapter, one defined by deeper collaboration, smarter solutions and a renewed commitment to helping Nigeria's smallholder farmers build resilient and prosperous livelihoods.

Japan, Nigeria forge path to agricultural transformation

Some partnerships endure because they are built on shared values rather than short-term projects. The long-

standing collaboration between Japan and Nigeria in agricultural development is one such example, and it remains a

cornerstone of SAA's work to improve the lives of smallholder farmers.



Japan's Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Suzuki Hideo, receives SAA Nigeria's Award of Recognition from Country Director, Dr Godwin Atser, in appreciation of Japan's enduring support for agricultural development.

Throughout the Annual Stakeholders' Workshop, this enduring partnership emerged not simply as a diplomatic relationship but as a practical model for delivering meaningful agricultural transformation.

Representatives from the Government of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Nigerian institutions and development organizations reinforced a shared commitment to strengthening food systems through innovation, technology and capacity development.

Japan's Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Suzuki Hideo, highlighted the central role agriculture plays in Nigeria's economy and underscored the importance of increasing productivity through mechanization, reducing post-harvest losses and strengthening market linkages. His message reflected a common understanding that raising production alone is no longer enough; farmers must also be equipped to add value, reduce waste and compete in modern markets.

That vision came alive beyond the conference hall. An exhibition of Japanese agricultural technologies gave participants an opportunity to interact with practical equipment and innovations designed to improve efficiency and productivity. The displays sparked lively discussions on how appropriate mechanization and improved technologies can help address labour shortages, minimize losses and increase farmers' incomes.



Japan's Ambassador to Nigeria, H.E. Suzuki Hideo, highlighted the central role agriculture plays in Nigeria's economy.

JICA Chief Representative Ishigame Keiji further emphasized that sustainable agricultural transformation depends on strengthening the entire value chain, from quality seed systems and production to finance, processing and market access. Building these interconnected systems, he noted, is essential for creating resilient rural economies.

For SAA, these partnerships continue to demonstrate what is possible when governments, development agencies, research institutions and the private sector work towards a common goal.

They provide a powerful reminder that meaningful agricultural transformation is rarely achieved in isolation; it grows through trust, shared investment and a collective determination to create lasting opportunities for farming communities.



JICA Chief Rep. Ishigame Keiji said sustainable agricultural transformation depends on strengthening the value chain

SAA AND NIGERIA'S AGRICULTURE: CHARTING THE NEXT CHAPTER

Agricultural transformation is often measured by the number of farmers reached or technologies introduced. Yet the conversations at SAA Nigeria's Annual Stakeholders' Workshop pointed to a more important measure of success: whether those innovations become lasting solutions that farmers continue to adopt and benefit from.

As Nigeria confronts rising food demand, climate variability and persistent post-harvest losses, stakeholders agreed that scaling agricultural innovation requires more than distributing improved technologies. It calls for stronger extension systems, better financing, responsive policies and partnerships capable of connecting farmers with profitable markets.

SAA President Mr. Shuichi Suzuki captured this shift in perspective when he observed that success is determined not by how many people are reached, but by how well they are served. The statement reflected an organization increasingly focused on quality, sustainability and measurable impact.

Building on lessons from the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, SAA is positioning itself to expand proven interventions while embracing new opportunities in climate resilience, digital



Dr Abdulhamid Gambo, Deputy Country Director SAA Nigeria speaking at the event



Idi Maiha, Hon. Minister of Livestock Development commended SAA for its commitment to agricultural development in the country.

advisory services and low-carbon agricultural practices. These priorities recognize that farmers today need integrated solutions that respond to evolving environmental and economic realities.

The workshop also unveiled anniversary initiatives designed to sustain dialogue throughout the year, including a quarterly webinar series that will continue bringing together policymakers, researchers, development practitioners and farmers to exchange knowledge and share practical experiences.



Hon. Minister of Livestock Development, Idi Maiha, receives SAA Nigeria's Award of Recognition from Country Director, Dr Godwin Atser, in acknowledgement of his contributions to Nigeria's livestock sector.

Underlying these discussions was a common understanding that innovation achieves its greatest value only when it is adopted, adapted and sustained within farming communities. This means strengthening local institutions, investing in extension services and ensuring that farmers remain active partners in shaping agricultural solutions.

As SAA looks ahead, its direction is clear: build on what works, strengthen collaboration across the agricultural ecosystem and continue delivering practical innovations that improve productivity, resilience and livelihoods for Nigeria's smallholder farmers.

RECOGNIZING THE MEN BEHIND THE WHEELS



Laughter, music and celebration as SAA Nigeria's management joins the organization's drivers in honoring their dedication and invaluable service.

The success of agricultural development is often measured in hectares cultivated, technologies adopted or farmers reached. Yet behind

every statistic is a network of dedicated people whose daily commitment turns ambitious plans into meaningful results.

During SAA Nigeria's 40th anniversary celebration, one of the most memorable moments came not during a keynote address or technical

presentation, but in a simple act of appreciation.

Led by the technical coordinator for capacity building, SAA Nigeria took time to recognize members of its transport unit, drivers whose work quietly

supports field operations across the country.

While they are rarely seen at the Centre of project reports or public events, their role is indispensable. They connect extension teams with remote

communities, ensure equipment and training materials reach their destinations safely, and help keep programmes running efficiently in some of Nigeria's most challenging operating environments.



SAA Nigeria's management and support staff celebrate teamwork and shared purpose during a special recognition session for the organization's drivers.

As each driver stepped forward to receive recognition from the organization's leadership, the applause that filled the room reflected more than courtesy.

It acknowledged a truth that often goes unnoticed: meaningful development depends on the contributions of people at every level.

The recognition echoed SAA's broader philosophy of partnership and inclusion. Technical expertise, innovative technologies and strategic

collaborations remain essential, but they achieve little without the dedication of individuals who bring those ideas to life every day.

Country Director Dr. Godwin Atser and Deputy Country Director Dr. Gambo Abdulhamid joined colleagues in celebrating the team's commitment, reinforcing the message that every contribution matters in delivering impact for farming communities.

As SAA embarks on its fifth

decade in Africa, this moment served as a fitting reminder that institutional achievements are ultimately built by people. From extension professionals and technical specialists to administrative staff, drivers and partners, each plays a vital role in advancing SAA's mission of transforming agriculture and improving livelihoods.

After forty years, that collective spirit remains one of the organization's greatest strengths, and one of its most valuable assets for the future.

PHOTOS FROM THE 2026 ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS' WORKSHOP





REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

SAA Kicks Off Activities in Oyo, Driving Agribusiness Growth, Better Nutrition and Climate Resilience



Dr Moshood Sulaiman engaged with Abokede community members in Iseyin Local Government Area, during the community entry and sensitization visit as part of the 2026 Training of Trainers (ToT) exercise in Oyo State.

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria with support from The Nippon Foundation has launched its agricultural intervention project in Oyo State with a week-long pre-season Training of Trainers (ToT) and community sensitization campaign aimed at boosting smallholder productivity, strengthening food security, and promoting climate-resilient agriculture ahead of the 2026 cropping season.

Held from June 1 to 7, 2026, the programme brought together

technical staff from SAA's Regenerative Agriculture, Market-Oriented Agriculture, Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture, Strategic Communications, and Monitoring and Evaluation units to train seven Extension Agents and a State Coordinator who will support implementation across the state.

The training marks SAA's formal commencement of smallholder farmer support activities in Oyo State and a significant step in the organization's expansion into South-West Nigeria.

“This strategic initiative is designed to address the urgent need for food security and climate-resilient farming practices across South-West Nigeria,” said Dr Godwin Atser, Country Director of SAA Nigeria. “By adopting a step-down training model, we are equipping extension personnel with the skills needed to transfer improved agricultural practices to thousands of smallholder farmers across our target communities.”

Participants received practical training on improved production

practices for maize, soybean, and cassava, as well as Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM), Integrated Pest Management (IPM), market-oriented agriculture, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, digital data collection, and monitoring tools. The

programme also promoted the cultivation and consumption of biofortified crops such as Quality Protein Maize (QPM), zinc millet, improved soybean varieties, and Provitamin A crops to support improved household nutrition. The programme concluded with community sensitization

activities across intervention communities in Oyo East, Atiba, Afijio, Oyo West, and Iseyin Local Government Areas, where farmers and community leaders were introduced to the project's objectives and planned activities.



L-R Group photo of Extension Agents and SAA technical teams after the Training of Trainers exercise in Oyo, Oyo state Nigeria. Maryam Kikelomo Aliyu conducts Regenerative Agriculture training for EAs.



Maryam Kikelomo Aliyu conducting Regenerative Agriculture training for EAs in Oyo, Oyo State.

Speaking at the close of the exercise, Dr Moshood Suleiman, Program Officer for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture and leader of the SAA technical team, said the initiative had laid a strong foundation for the 2026 farming season.

“The enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated by farmers and community leaders show the demand for practical agricultural solutions,” he said.

“Our next phase will focus on establishing 32 demonstration plots across eight communities in five Local Government Areas.

These plots will serve as farmer learning platforms where improved agronomic, climate-

smart, and nutrition-sensitive practices will be demonstrated.

Through this initiative, we expect to directly reach an initial 800 smallholder farmers.”

SAA has commenced the distribution of farm inputs for the establishment of the demonstration plots, which will support hands-on learning, extension delivery, and the adoption of sustainable agricultural technologies throughout the cropping season.

MARKET ORIENTED AGRICULTURE (MOA)

Partnerships driving change: SAA supports Benue women farmers with Kubota power tiller to advance inclusive mechanization



Program Officer, Jonathan Taknan Yassah, presents a Kubota Power Tiller and handover documents to Devine Open Doors MPCs Ltd, strengthening mechanization for smallholder farmers in Gboko, Benue State.

For many smallholder farmers in Nigeria, particularly women, farming remains physically demanding and costly. Heavy dependence on manual labour often leads to delayed field operations, higher production costs and lower returns, challenges compounded by climate variability and limited access to affordable mechanization.

To help close this gap, the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria, has presented a

Kubota Power Tiller to the Divine Open Doors Women Multipurpose Cooperative Society (MPCS) in Benue State on May 21, 2026.

The equipment was originally donated to SAA by Japanese agricultural equipment manufacturer Kubota Corporation during the 2026 SAA Annual Stakeholders' Workshop, underscoring the value of partnerships in advancing inclusive agricultural transformation.

The package included a power tiller, cage wheel attachment, single-bottom plough, disc plough and rake attachment. Presented in Mbayion, Gboko Local Government Area, the equipment is expected to reduce drudgery, lower production costs and improve access to mechanization services for women farmers and neighboring communities.

The intervention builds on SAA's ongoing efforts to expand appropriate mechanization across its six intervention states:

Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Nasarawa and Benue, where women and other vulnerable groups often struggle to access productive technologies.

Presenting the equipment on behalf of Country Director Dr. Godwin Atser, Programme Officer for Market-Oriented Agriculture Mr. Jonathan Yassah noted that the support demonstrates how collaboration between development partners, the private sector and farming communities can deliver practical solutions to long-standing agricultural challenges.

The beneficiary cooperative had previously received SAA mentorship in agribusiness management, financial literacy, group dynamics, and machine



Members of Divine Open Doors MPCs Ltd celebrate the arrival of their new Kubota Power Tiller, a boost to productivity and timely farm operations.

operation and maintenance, ensuring the equipment is backed by the skills required for sustainable use.

For the women of Divine Open Doors MPCs, the Kubota power

tiller represents more than a machine, it is an investment in productivity, resilience and the growing role of women in driving Nigeria's agricultural transformation.

SAA opens affordable credit pathways for 200 Smallholders Farmers, 1,500 secure better input deals



Representatives of Novus Microfinance Bank explain available loan products and requirements to SAA-supported farmer organizations in Abinsi, Guma LGA, Benue State.

For many smallholder farmers in Nigeria, the journey from planting to profit is often stalled by one critical obstacle: limited access to affordable finance. High interest rates, stringent lending conditions, weak bargaining power, and fragmented input markets leave farmers unable to invest in quality seeds, fertilizers, and essential production services needed to improve productivity and incomes.

Through its Market-Oriented Agriculture (MOA) pillar, Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria is helping change this reality by strengthening Farmer Organizations (FOs) to operate as viable business entities capable of negotiating better deals, accessing financial services, and engaging more competitively in agricultural markets.

The impact of this approach is already becoming evident. In Benue State, 200 farmers from eight farmer groups are processing loans through Novus Microfinance Bank at a concessional interest rate of just 3.5 percent, opening access to formal finance that was previously beyond the reach of many smallholders.

The bank has also committed to prioritizing SAA-supported farmer groups in its 2026 lending portfolio, signaling growing confidence in the credibility and collective strength of organized farmers. At the same time, farmers are

reducing the cost of production through collective action.

Representing more than 1,500 producers in Benue during the annual SAA farmer leaders and input dealer meeting, farmer leaders successfully negotiated up to a 10 percent discount on bulk input purchases, while agro-dealers agreed to deliver farm inputs directly to farming communities, lowering transportation costs and ensuring timely access to critical production inputs.

"When farmers organize and approach financial institutions collectively, they become more visible, credible, and bankable. Our role is to create the linkages and trust that enable these relationships to thrive," said Jonathan Taknan Yassah, SAA's Programme Officer for Market-Oriented Agriculture.

Across Benue, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, and Nasarawa States, SAA convened 115 value chain actors, including farmer leaders, financial institutions, input suppliers, and service providers to broker relationships that translate into practical business opportunities for smallholder farmers. These engagements resulted in 15 formal agreements covering input supply, financing arrangements, service delivery, pricing, and payment terms, laying the groundwork for stronger and more transparent market systems.

For Mrs. Patricia Goja, Managing Director of Novus Microfinance Bank, the initiative demonstrates

the transformative potential of organized farmer groups.

"This is more than access to credit. It is about empowering farmers with the confidence, knowledge, and networks needed to negotiate better deals and participate competitively in agricultural markets," she said.

By connecting farmers to affordable finance, trusted service providers, and reliable input markets, SAA is addressing one of the most persistent barriers to agricultural transformation. The approach not only reduces the cost of doing business for smallholder farmers but also strengthens their ability to invest, increase productivity, and improve household incomes.

As SAA continues to promote farming as a business, these partnerships are helping smallholder farmers move from being price takers at the margins of the economy to becoming empowered agricultural entrepreneurs driving Nigeria's food systems transformation.



"Access to finance should not be the missing link between hard-working farmers and improved productivity. Strong farmer organizations can change that reality."

NUTRITION SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE (NSA)

How SAA–Kubota partnership is expanding pathways for technology transfer and inclusive mechanization



SAA technical staff, engineers and machinery operators pose after intensive training on the operation and maintenance of Kubota agricultural equipment in Lagos.

Mechanization remains one of the missing links in Nigeria's drive towards higher agricultural productivity. For many smallholder farmers, limited access to appropriate technologies translates into labour bottlenecks, high production costs, post-harvest losses, and reduced profitability.

To strengthen its capacity to support farmers with practical mechanization solutions, Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria participated in a specialized mechanization training facilitated by Kubota at the Lagos State Agricultural Training Institute (LSATI), Epe, Lagos State. Representing SAA were Programme Officers for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture, Engr. Sadiq Hamman and Engr.

Dr. Moshood Suleiman, alongside MoFA Senior Programme Officer, Engr. Ade Sugh.

The engagement builds on the growing partnership between SAA and Kubota, which began at SAA's 2026 Annual Stakeholders' Workshop in Abuja. During the event, Kubota showcased a range of appropriate-scale and advanced mechanization technologies tailored to the realities of African agriculture and donated a combine harvester to SAA.

In a demonstration of SAA's commitment to inclusive agricultural transformation, the combine harvester was subsequently transferred to Divine Open Doors Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited, an

all-women farmer group in Benue State. The intervention is helping women farmers reduce harvesting drudgery, minimize losses, and improve the efficiency of their farming operations.

The LSATI training provided SAA staff with hands-on exposure to equipment operation, preventive maintenance, safety procedures, and practical applications of mechanization technologies suitable for smallholder production systems.

Beyond technical skills, the initiative highlighted emerging opportunities for technology transfer, mechanization entrepreneurship, and the development of sustainable service-delivery models.



Practical field demonstrations equipped SAA staff with hands-on skills in the safe operation, maintenance and efficient use of Kubota power tillers.

According to the programme concept, the partnership seeks to strengthen awareness and adoption of appropriate mechanized technologies, reduce dependence on manual farming methods, promote youth participation, and establish practical learning pathways that can accelerate agricultural modernization.

"Mechanization is not simply about machines. It is about improving efficiency, reducing drudgery, and ensuring that women and young people can participate more productively and profitably in agriculture," said Engr. Dr Moshood Sulaiman.

For SAA, the value of this collaboration extends beyond institutional learning.



SAA hands over Kubota power tiller to Devine Open Doors MPCs Ltd in Gboko, Benue State.

By strengthening partnerships with private-sector innovators such as Kubota, the organization is expanding opportunities for smallholder farmers to access practical technologies capable of improving productivity and building more resilient livelihoods.

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"Mechanization is not simply about machines. It is about improving efficiency, reducing drudgery, and ensuring that women and young people can participate more productively and profitably in agriculture."
— Engr. Dr Moshood Sulaiman,
SAA Nigeria

CAPACITY BUILDING

SAA Nigeria Strengthens Extension Networks Across Kano, Nasarawa, and Benue



Practical training session on Family Business Garden (FBG) at the College of Agricultural Science and Technology Lafia, Nasarawa State.

In Nasarawa, 35 participants from the Nasarawa Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) and the College of Agriculture, Science and Technology, Lafia, focused on the Family Business Garden (FBG) concept, irrigation, post-harvest management, and soil regeneration through biochar.

The programme inspired both extension agents and students to promote household food production and youth engagement in agriculture.

In Benue, 31 extension agents were equipped with leadership, supervision, delegation, and community engagement skills to improve extension service delivery.

Institutional leaders commended SAA for fostering collaboration between universities and extension services, describing the initiative as a model for building a more resilient, innovative, and community-driven agricultural extension system in Nigeria.

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria has trained 91 agricultural extension workers and university students across Kano, Nasarawa, and Benue states under a capacity-building initiative funded by The Nippon Foundation (TNF).

The programme strengthened participants' knowledge of Integrated Soil Fertility Management, practical extension approaches, leadership, and stakeholder collaboration while promoting stronger links between academia and field practice. SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Godwin Atser, described the initiative as part of SAA's long-standing commitment to building the capacity of extension workers, farmers, and

agricultural stakeholders.

He noted that, over the past 34 years, SAA has supported extension education up to PhD level and partnered with more than 18 State Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) to strengthen Nigeria's public extension system.

According to SAA Technical Coordinator for Capacity Building, Dr. Anjola Fadairo, the training was tailored to address the unique agricultural priorities of each state.

In Kano, 46 participants from the Kano State Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (KNARDA), SAFE Alumni, and Bayero University received practical training on contract farming, Farmer Field Schools, Farmer Learning Platforms, field layout, and biochar application.



Participants during the Capacity Building training for staff and students at the Bayero University Kano

SAA Advocates Stronger Private Extension Systems at AESON 2026 Conference



Group photo of participants at the 31st Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON), held from April 13–17 at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State.

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) has reaffirmed the importance of strengthening private and community-based agricultural extension systems as a pathway to improving technology adoption and agricultural productivity among Nigeria's smallholder farmers. The call was made at the 31st Annual Conference of the

Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON), held from April 13–17 at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State.

Co-hosted by SAA, the conference convened extension professionals, researchers, policymakers and development partners under the theme,

"Strengthening Agricultural Extension Innovation Systems for Greater Development Impact." Delivering SAA's goodwill message, the technical coordinator, capacity building, Dr Anjola Fadairo stressed that an effective extension system must embrace a pluralistic approach that integrates public institutions with community-based facilitators, agro-dealers and private-sector actors.

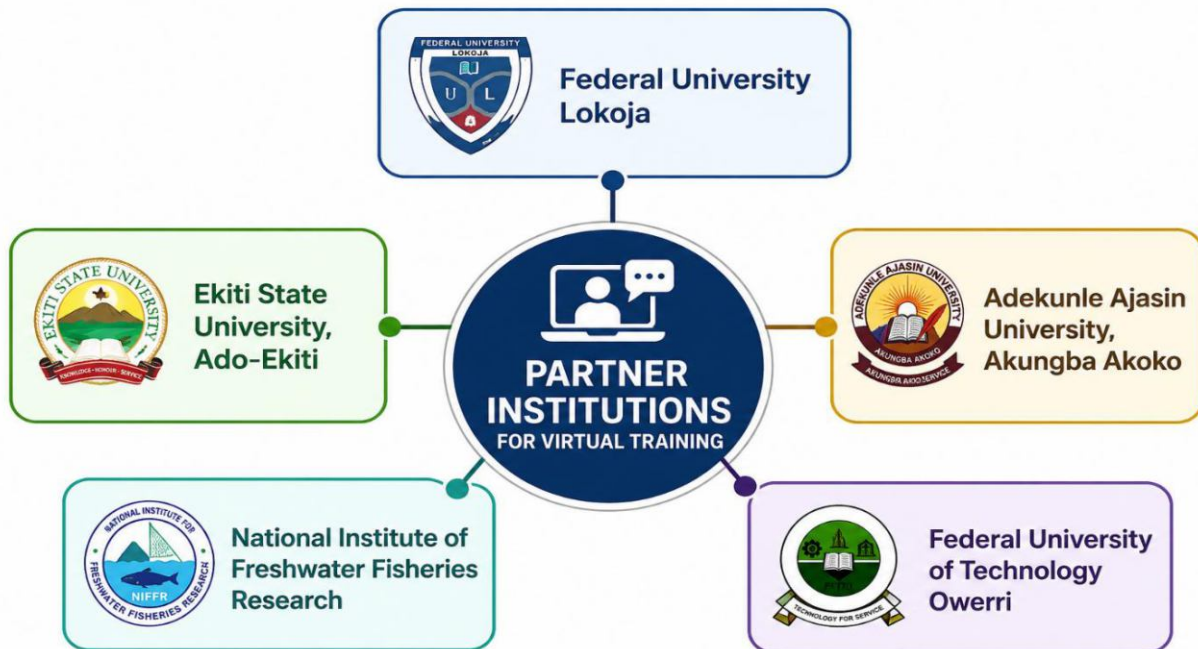
She noted that continuous capacity development for extension professionals and sustained investment in extension and research remain essential for delivering quality advisory services and accelerating agricultural transformation.

SAA also shared practical experiences from its Farmer Learning Platform (FLP),

demonstrating how participatory, learning-by-doing approaches have improved farmers' adoption of climate-smart technologies and good agronomic practices. A second technical presentation showcased crop-based agroforestry as a sustainable knowledge system for strengthening smallholder resilience, drawing lessons from the GIZ-funded SiFTAS project.

The conference reinforced the need for stronger collaboration among research institutions, universities, government agencies, development partners and private-sector actors to build a more inclusive, resilient and responsive agricultural extension system. It also strengthened SAA's position as a leading partner in advancing extension innovation and rural development in Nigeria.

SAA Advocates Stronger Private Extension Systems at AESON 2026 Conference



Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) is expanding the use of digital learning platforms to strengthen the capacity of agricultural extension workers and youth agripreneurs, demonstrating how technology can improve access to quality advisory services across Nigeria.

Under its Capacity Building Programme, SAA launched a pilot virtual training initiative in February 2026 in partnership

with five institutions across Ondo, Ekiti, Kogi, Niger and Imo States. The programme was designed to promote e-extension approaches while equipping extension personnel with practical knowledge and digital skills needed to support smallholder farmers more effectively.

Implemented through the Agricultural Business School II model, each three-week training

programme combines live virtual sessions, interactive discussions and digital learning resources delivered through Zoom, WhatsApp and SAA's Farmer Learning Hub.

Topics include digital extension tools, climate resilience, effective communication, group dynamics, adult learning principles, leadership, pest and disease management, soil health and livelihood diversification.

Introductory training has been successfully completed in Kogi State through the Federal University Lokoja, Ekiti State through Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, and Niger State through the National Institute of Freshwater Fisheries Research, reaching extension workers and agripreneurs with practical

knowledge for improving service delivery.

The initiative complements SAA's broader efforts to modernize agricultural extension by integrating digital technologies with participatory learning approaches. Early feedback from participants indicates strong

engagement and demonstrates the potential of virtual learning to complement conventional extension services, expand knowledge sharing and build a more responsive extension system capable of supporting resilient and productive farming communities.

SUCCESS STORIES

Regenerative Agriculture doubles farmer's yield and transforms livelihood in Gombe



Mela Alhaji, a 43-year-old farmer from Popandi Taal community in Gombe State

For years, Mela Alhaji, a 43-year-old farmer from Popandi Taal community in Gombe State, struggled with low maize yields despite cultivating larger fields and investing heavily in fertilizer obtained through high-interest loans. Like many farmers in his community, he relied on

traditional farming practices that delivered diminishing returns.

His fortunes changed when the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), with support from The Nippon Foundation, introduced regenerative agriculture practices through farmer

training, demonstration plots, and hands-on learning. Mela learned improved agronomic techniques, including row planting, fertilizer micro-dosing, composting, biochar production, and better seedbed management.

The impact was immediate. On a 0.5-hectare demonstration plot, Mela harvested 20 bags (2 metric tons) of maize, double the yield he previously obtained from a one-hectare field using conventional methods.

Encouraged by the results, he adopted the practices across his farm, increasing production from about 30 bags (3 metric tons) to 55 bags (5.5 metric tons) on 1.5 hectares while reducing fertilizer use by more than half.

The higher productivity significantly improved his household income. Mela purchased a vehicle, acquired a work bull, installed solar lighting

for his home and neighbors, invested in music equipment to expand his part-time disc jockey business, and began renovating his family home.

"I now farm with peace of mind," Mela says. "I spend less money, harvest more, and can plan for my family's future with ease."

Today, Mela's success demonstrates how SAA's farmer-centered, regenerative agriculture approach is improving soil health, increasing productivity, reducing production costs, and building resilient livelihoods for smallholder farmers across Nigeria.



Mela tending to his work bulls



Mela shows off his newly built house and solar light achieved through adoption of improved farming practices

Man builds dream home after 14-year struggle, thanks “power of RA on one hectare”



Once limited by low productivity, beneficiary farmer Fatai Yusuf now proudly owns a modern home built from increased farm income achieved through SAA's Good Agronomic Practices (GAPs).

For 14 years, Fatai Yusuf Danladi, a 40-year-old farmer from Gombe State, dreamed of building a permanent home for his family. Despite cultivating up to three hectares of maize, millet, and

sorghum each season, poor agronomic practices, rising production costs, and low yields left him with little income and unable to improve his family's living conditions.

His breakthrough came after participating in farmer training organized by the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), with support from The Nippon Foundation.

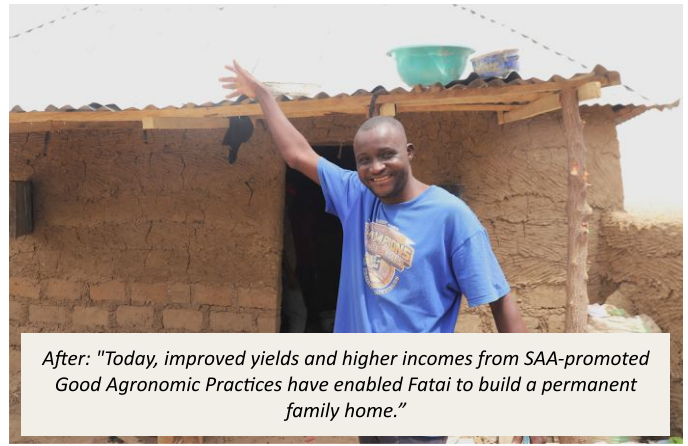
Through demonstration plots and hands-on learning, Fatai adopted improved crop management practices, crop rotation, efficient fertilizer application, and Good Agronomic Practices.

He also learned that higher productivity, not larger farm size, is the key to profitability.

Following the training, Fatai reduced his cultivated land from three hectares to one hectare and achieved remarkable results.



Before: "For years, Fatai Yusuf's family lived in this modest mud house while relying on low-yield farming."



After: "Today, improved yields and higher incomes from SAA-promoted Good Agronomic Practices have enabled Fatai to build a permanent family home."

His maize harvest increased from fewer than 20 bags (2 metric tons) to 49 bags (4.9 metric tons) on a single hectare, significantly boosting his income.

With additional earnings, Fatai purchased a motorcycle that reduces transport costs, supports farm operations, and provides extra income through commercial transport services. Most importantly, he invested

nearly ₦1 million in building his family's first permanent home after 14 years of marriage. "My dignity has been restored," Fatai says. "Today my children sleep peacefully, and I know they are safe."

The improved income also enabled him to register two of his children for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WAEC). Beyond his household, his farmer group has

collectively supported community development through savings, educational assistance, and contributions toward a community borehole. Fatai's story highlights how SAA's farmer-centered approach is improving productivity, strengthening livelihoods, and creating lasting benefits for rural communities.

From Waste to Wealth: How Yila Usman Doubled Production on Less Land Gombe State, Nigeria

For years, Yila Usman, a 43-year-old farmer and livestock keeper with six children, believed success in farming depended on cultivating more land. Each season, he farmed as many as four hectares of maize, sorghum, and groundnuts, purchased large quantities of fertilizer, and spent heavily on labour.

Yet despite the effort, he rarely harvested more than 30 bags (3 metric tons) of grain. "I worked hard every season, but the results never matched the investment," he recalls.



Yila Usman, a 43-year-old farmer shows off stored produce in his store

The turning point came when the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), through funding from The Nippon Foundation, introduced him to regenerative agriculture, market-oriented agriculture, and improved crop production technologies.

For the first time, Yila cultivated soybeans and learned how to integrate crop and livestock production through composting. Rather than selling livestock manure as he had done previously, he began converting it into compost and applying it to his fields.

He now even purchases manure from neighboring households to improve compost production. Combined with improved maize and soybean varieties, mulching, and precision fertilizer application, the impact was remarkable.

Although Yila reduced his cultivated area from four hectares to two hectares, his harvest increased from 30 bags (3 metric tons) to over 70 bags (7 metric tons).

Labour costs fell by more than 50 percent, from approximately ₦40,000 to ₦20,000, while

fertilizer requirements and associated costs were dramatically reduced.

The increased profitability enabled him to invest approximately ₦700,000 (US\$507) in fencing his home, protecting livestock assets worth more than ₦2 million (US\$1,450).

He also purchased a motorcycle valued at ₦360,000 (US\$260), supported his children's education, and fulfilled his religious obligation of giving Zakat to vulnerable members of the community.



Yila tending to his work bulls



Yila also fenced his house to provide security for his property

In addition, Yila leases unused farmland to other farmers at approximately ₦50,000 per hectare, creating another source of income.

"The improved seed varieties and farming practices changed my understanding of agriculture," he says. "I learned

that knowledge is more important than land size." Today, Yila's farm demonstrates the principles of sustainable intensification promoted by SAA, producing more food from less land while reducing costs, improving soil health, and strengthening household resilience.

His experience embodies SAA's vision of farmer-led agricultural transformation built on regenerative practices, inclusive markets, and sustainable livelihoods.

EXTRA CORE PROJECTS (ECPS)

For more than three decades, The Nippon Foundation (TNF) has been the principal funder of SAA's work in Nigeria. This enduring partnership has enabled SAA Nigeria to sustainably implement its core programmes, providing technical support, capacity building, and innovative agricultural solutions to thousands of smallholder farmers across the country.

As agriculture in Africa continues to evolve, so too do the challenges facing farmers and the responsibilities of agricultural extension services.

Recognising the need to respond to these changing realities and expand its impact, SAA Nigeria has increasingly collaborated with development partners, donor agencies, governments, and other organisations to implement complementary projects that extend its reach beyond its core programmes.

These partner-funded initiatives, known within SAA as Extra-Core Projects, complement the Foundation-funded Core Projects while enabling the organisation to serve more farmers and reach additional states and communities.

Listed below are the ongoing or recently ended Extra-Core Projects that are delivering measurable improvements across Nigeria.

Project name	Funder	Project locations
Increased Food & Nutrition And Income Security of Smallholder Farmers (IFNIS Jigawa)	Jigawa State Government	Jigawa state
Evidence-Based Regenerative Agriculture To Address Climate Change In Africa Project	Japanese government, through the Japan Policy and Human Resources Development Grant (PHRDG)	Nasarawa state Benin Republic
Kano State Agropastoral Development Project (KSADP) – [2021 – 2025]	Islamic Development Bank (IsdB) through the Kano State Government	Kano state
Nigeria Public -Private Partnership AI-Enabled Digital Advisory Planning Project (NPPP-AI-DAP)	Africa Fo rum for Agricultural Extension Services (AFAAS)	Gombe, Kaduna, Oyo
Strengthening Institutional Frameworks For Transformative Agriculture In Nigeria (SIFTAS)	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)funded by	Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Ogun, Oyo
Enhancing The Productivity And Competitiveness of Smallholder Farmers In The Maize -Soybean Farming System In Nigeria	AGRA	Niger, Kaduna
Technology Establishment for Regional -adapted Regenerative Agriculture.in Africa (TERRAAfrica)	Japanese International Research Centre for Agricultural Science (JIRCAS)	Oyo, Osun, Benue, Nasarawa, Kano, Jigawa
Program for Seed System Innovation for Vegetatively Propagated Crops in Africa (PROSSIVA)	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)	Ogun, Oyo

The stories in the next few pages highlight the impact of these Extra-Core Project interventions during the second quarter of 2026.

Increased Food & Nutrition and Income Security of Smallholder Farmers (IFNIS Jigawa)

Seeing is Believing: Wheat Demonstration Inspires Climate-Smart Farming in Jigawa



The host farmer of the Gilima Wheat Farmers MPCs Ltd. Alhaji Yaro Gilima, told guests that SAA technologies have strengthened farmers' confidence

Sometimes, the most convincing extension message is one farmers can see for themselves.

That was the story from Gilima Community in Taura Local Government Area of Jigawa State, where a wheat demonstration established by

the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria under the Increased Food & Nutrition and Income Security of Smallholder Farmers (IFNIS) SAA/Jigawa State Partnership Project became a powerful learning platform for hundreds of farmers.

Instead of listening to presentations on improved technologies, participants compared healthy, uniform wheat stands on the demonstration plot with neighboring fields managed using conventional practices, and the difference was unmistakable.



SAA Wheat demonstration plots serve as farmer learning platforms for promoting experiential learning in target communities



Dignitaries at the event applauded SAA's support in strengthening the Jigawa State Extension system.

The demonstration showcased how improved seed, drilling as a planting method, and precision fertilizer application could produce stronger crop establishment, better field uniformity, and greater resilience to changing weather conditions.

For many farmers, the results transformed improved agronomic practices from theory

into proven solutions they could confidently adopt.

Host farmer and Chairman of the Gilima Wheat Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Society, Alhaji Yaro Gilima, said the experience strengthened farmers' confidence in the technologies promoted by SAA.

Seeing the improved wheat variety thrive under local

conditions, he noted, convinced many farmers that better yields were achievable through improved practices rather than expanding cultivated land.

The learning resonated with fellow farmer Hajia Bilkisu, who observed that simple adjustments in planting methods and fertilizer application could significantly improve productivity and income.

Government officials also reaffirmed the value of the initiative. Chairman of Taura Local Government Area, Alhaji Shuaibu Hambali, described SAA as a trusted partner that has consistently strengthened agricultural extension services and farmer capacity in Jigawa State.

Beyond boosting production, the partnership is expanding support for farmers through post-harvest handling and value addition facilities across project communities.

Backed by the renewed five-year agreement between SAA and the Jigawa State Government, the initiative continues to demonstrate that practical, field-based learning remains one of the most effective pathways to building resilient farming systems and improving food security.

SAA Empowers Smallholder Farmers, Transforms Groundnut Oil Production in Jigawa Communities

For years, processing groundnuts meant leaving the community.

For Umma K. Adamu and members of the Hammayayi Groundnut Processors

Association in Dutse, Jigawa State, producing quality groundnut oil was often overshadowed by the time, cost and uncertainty of travelling long distances to access processing facilities. Transport expenses,

delays and limited access to equipment reduced profits and left many women with little to show for months of hard work.

That story is now changing.



Members of the Hammamiya groundnut processing group take delivery of processing machines in their community, Jigawa State.

Through the Increased Food & Nutrition and Income Security of Smallholder Farmers (IFNIS) SAA/Jigawa State Partnership Project, the association received a modern groundnut oil extraction machine, bringing value addition closer to the women who produce the crop.

The intervention is part of SAA's broader effort to ensure that increased agricultural production translates into higher incomes, improved

nutrition and more resilient rural livelihoods.

For more than three decades, SAA has helped smallholder farmers improve productivity through climate-smart agriculture, improved seed varieties and Good Agronomic Practices. Recognizing that production is only part of the equation, the partnership is now strengthening post-harvest management and value addition by providing farmer groups with processing equipment, including

groundnut oil extractors, rice mills, cassava processing machines, threshers and solar irrigation pumps. The support goes beyond equipment.

Beneficiary groups received training in machine operation, business management and maintenance, while communities demonstrated ownership by providing secure shelters for the facilities.

For Umma, the benefits are already clear. "We used to process groundnuts under difficult conditions and sometimes travelled far to access processing facilities," she says. "Now we can process faster, improve the quality of our products and earn more to support our families."

The machine is also creating new opportunities for women in the community by reducing processing costs, increasing product quality and opening the door to business expansion.

By helping farmers capture more value from what they produce, SAA is demonstrating that resilient agriculture is about more than growing more food, it's about ensuring farming families earn more from every harvest.



Members of Ungwar Gawo Farmers MPCs Ltd receive a multipurpose thresher under the IFNIS Project, expanding access to efficient post-harvest technologies in Jigawa State.



IFNIS Jigawa Project Lead, Albert Taru, and Program Officer, Engr. Sadiq Hamman, hand over a complete rice milling package to beneficiaries in Chuwasu Community, Taura LGA.

SAA builds inclusive Agribusiness skills to sustain rural enterprises in Jigawa



Machine operators and maintenance technicians receive practical training to ensure the sustainable operation of community-owned rice processing equipment.

Across Jigawa State, SAA's investment in inclusive skills development and modern agro-processing technologies is creating resilient rural enterprises where women, youth and persons with disabilities are not just beneficiaries, but skilled entrepreneurs, technicians and custodians of community-owned assets that strengthen food and nutrition security.

Under the Increased Food, Nutrition and Income Security of Smallholder Farmers (IFNIS) – SAA/Jigawa Partnership Project, SAA is equipping women, youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs) with practical agribusiness and technical skills to operate, maintain and sustain community-owned processing enterprises.

The capacity-building programme trains young people as machine operators and mechanics while strengthening the technical competence of women's processing groups managing rice mills, groundnut

oil extraction units and cassava processing centres across intervention communities. Participants receive hands-on instruction in equipment operation, preventive maintenance, troubleshooting and basic repairs, creating a pool of community-based technicians capable of keeping the facilities running efficiently.

In Hammamiya Community, members of a women's groundnut processing group successfully completed practical training on a locally fabricated stainless-steel oil extraction machine.

During the demonstration, the machine processed about 7.5 kilograms of groundnuts in just 20 minutes, giving participants the confidence to operate and maintain the equipment while expanding their agribusiness opportunities.

"Empowering communities with technical skills is just as important as providing the equipment itself because sustainability begins with local ownership," said Albert Taru Mathias, IFNIS Jigawa Project Lead.

Programme Officer for Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture, Engr. Sadiq Hamman, added: "Every trained operator and mechanic strengthens the resilience of the entire value chain by ensuring these investments continue to serve farming communities for years to come."

For youth participant Ibrahim Usman, the training represents more than technical knowledge. "This skill gives me livelihood today and the confidence to support my community long into the future."

The intervention demonstrates that lasting agricultural transformation depends not only on better technologies, but on empowering women, youth and persons with disabilities with the skills to keep those technologies productive, profitable and firmly rooted within their communities.



Newly trained machine operators and mechanics celebrate the successful completion of IFNIS-supported technical training in Jigawa State.



A trained operator conducts the first test run of the newly installed rice processing and polishing machine following the completion of hands-on training.

Evidence-Based Regenerative Agriculture to Address Climate Change in Africa Project

SAA Nigeria Supports TAAT-Led Training on Regenerative Agriculture and Post-Harvest Management in Rice Production



Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria is supporting the implementation of a four-day capacity-building training on Regenerative Agriculture and Post-Harvest Management in Rice Production.

Across Benue and Nasarawa States, a new cadre of agricultural change agents is returning to their communities with practical knowledge that is helping farmers produce more rice while protecting the natural resources on which agriculture depends. Their skills were sharpened through a four-day capacity-building programme on Regenerative Agriculture and Post-Harvest Management in

Rice Production, supported by the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria.

Implemented by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) under the Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT) initiative and the Evidence-Based Regenerative Agriculture to Address Climate Change in Africa Project, the training brought together 116

extension agents and lead farmers for an intensive blend of classroom learning and practical field demonstrations.

Participants explored regenerative farming practices that restore soil health, improve water-use efficiency and reduce climate-related production risks. They also gained hands-on experience in biochar production, post-harvest handling and value addition, technologies that help farmers

reduce losses and capture greater value from every harvest.

The activity builds on an earlier training on regenerative maize production, reinforcing a growing movement towards climate-smart farming systems that respond to the realities of changing weather patterns while strengthening food security.

“Building the capacity of extension agents and lead farmers creates a multiplier effect that accelerates the adoption of sustainable technologies across farming communities,” Dr Dogara Danbaba observed during the programme.

For many participants, the

experience reshaped how they view farming. "I now understand that simple regenerative practices and better post-harvest management can significantly improve yields, reduce losses and protect the environment," Zainab Abdullahi, a rice farmer from Lafia LGA, Nasarawa state.

SAA's support underscores its commitment to partnerships that strengthen agricultural extension systems and promote evidence-based innovations. Working alongside AfricaRice, IITA/TAAT Excellence in Agronomy, the TAAT Clearing House and the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), SAA continues to help equip frontline extension workers with the knowledge needed to guide smallholder farmers towards more productive, resilient and sustainable rice production systems.



Practical demonstration sessions on biochar and value addition activities during the training in Lafia, Nasarawa State.

KANO STATE AGROPASTORAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (KSADP)

SAA hands over sets of mechanization equipment to Kano State Government



SAA Nigeria and Kano State Government officials mark the successful completion of the KSADP (2021–2025) with the formal handover of over 2,225 mechanization assets to sustain agricultural transformation across the state.

On Wednesday, June 3, 2026, the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria Country Office officially handed over a substantial inventory of agricultural machinery and equipment to the Kano State Government at the Kadawa Mechanization Centre. The event marked a major milestone under the Kano State Agro-Pastoral Development Project (KSADP, 2021–2025), which was funded by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF). The project was designed to accelerate agricultural growth,

reduce farming drudgery, and enhance food security across the state.

The inventory comprises a range of high-impact agricultural assets, including 80 Tractors (including 80 ploughs, 80 ridgers, 80 harrows, and trailers), 35 Combine Harvesters, 3 Low-Bed Trucks, 3 Forklifts, 24 Walk-behind Transplanters, 50 Rice Transplanters, 17 Combined Seed Drills, 7 Combined Seed Drills with Sprayers, 23 Motorized Two-Row Planters, 95 Manual Planters, 106 Power Tillers (including Kubota models), 250 Mini Power Tillers, 20 Big

Multi-Crop Threshers, 200 Self-Driven Multi-Crop Threshers, 1,950 Solar-Powered Irrigation Pumps, 6,000 Seedling Trays, 145 Rechargeable and Boom Sprayers, 137 Five-in-One Combined Rice Mills, 48 Mini Five-in-One Rice Processing Machines, 600 Mini Rice Mills, 107 Groundnut Oil Extraction Machines, 3 Tyre Inflating Machines, and 3 Fire Extinguishers (50kg)., and three mechanization centres constructed by SAA under a special repurposed agreement.

Speaking at the event, the representative of the Kano State Governor and Commissioner for

Agriculture and Natural Resources, Dr. Danjuma Mahmoud, commended SAA for the successful implementation of the project.

He praised the organization for its professionalism, diligence, and credibility throughout the project cycle, noting that SAA demonstrated excellence at every stage of implementation. Dr. Mahmoud expressed

satisfaction with the quality of the equipment delivered and acknowledged SAA's willingness to assume additional responsibilities during the implementation phase.

In his remarks, the SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Godwin Atser, commended the Kano State Government for its longstanding partnership with the organization and expressed

SAA's readiness to continue collaborating with the state on future agricultural development initiatives.

He reaffirmed SAA's commitment to supporting agricultural transformation in Kano State, noting that the technologies provided under the project will help reduce production costs, minimize post-harvest losses, and promote the growth of sustainable agribusinesses.



Some of the mechanization equipment handed over to the Kano state government by SAA



Dr Godwin Atser, SAA Nigeria Country Director speaking at the event

NIGERIA PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AI-ENABLED DIGITAL ADVISORY PLANNING PROJECT (NPPP-AI-DAP)

Gombe Signs MoU on AI-Enabled Digital Advisory Planning to Bridge Agricultural Extension Gap

Gombe State has taken a major step towards modernizing agricultural extension with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the Nigeria Public-Private Partnership AI-Enabled Digital Advisory Planning (NPPP-AI-DAP) Project, an initiative designed to expand smallholder farmers' access to timely, personalized agricultural

advisory services through artificial intelligence.

As the second state to join the initiative, Gombe is helping address Nigeria's growing extension challenge, where one public extension agent often serves as many as 25,000 farmers, far above the FAO's recommended ratio of one agent to 1,000 farmers.

Funded by the Gates Foundation and convened by the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), the project is implemented by a consortium comprising Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), Africa Practice, Sahel Consulting, and Extension Africa. Within the consortium, SAA leads state-level engagement, facilitating partnerships with state



Seated (R-L): Prof. Sani Miko; Dr. Abdulhamid Gambo, Deputy Country Director, SAA Nigeria; Builder Ahmed Sa'eed Guli, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperatives; and Yahaya Tajudeen, CEO, Extension Africa, during the official MoU signing ceremony for the Nigeria Public-Private Partnership AI-Enabled Digital Advisory Planning (NPPP-AI-DAP) Project in Gombe State.

governments and coordinating the signing of MoUs in Kaduna, Gombe and Oyo States.

The AI-enabled platform will complement conventional extension services by delivering affordable, location-specific recommendations tailored to farmers across different agroecological zones, literacy levels, genders and age groups, while strengthening evidence-based decision-making through improved data systems.

Representing SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Godwin Atser, Deputy Country Director Dr. Abdulhamid Gambo described the initiative as a practical response to Nigeria's overstretched extension system. "By combining artificial intelligence with traditional



Dr Abdulhamid Gambo, Deputy Country Director, SAA Nigeria addressing dignitaries and guests during the MoU signing ceremony in Gombe State.

extension approaches, we can significantly expand access to timely and relevant advisory services for millions of underserved farmers," he said.

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Cooperatives, Builder Ahmed Sa'eed Guli, said

the partnership positions Gombe State to harness digital innovation to improve productivity, strengthen livelihoods and advance food security, reinforcing the role of strategic collaboration in building a more responsive and inclusive agricultural extension system.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE AGRICULTURE IN NIGERIA (SIFTAS)

SAA trains policymakers, lecturers, extension personnel, others on Carbon Credits and Agroforestry Opportunities in Nigeria



Group photographs of participants at the workshop in Ibadan, Oyo State.

As Nigeria advances its national carbon market, the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) is helping farmers and agricultural institutions prepare to benefit from emerging climate finance opportunities through agroforestry.

Under the Strengthening Institutional Frameworks for Transformative Agricultural Systems in Nigeria (SIFTAS) project, funded by GIZ through the Sustainable Agricultural Systems and Policies (AgSys) programme, SAA organized a series of state-level workshops on "Carbon Credits, Carbon Markets and Opportunities in Agroforestry Systems." The



Group photographs of participants at the workshop in Keffi, Nasarawa State

sessions brought together policymakers, lecturers, researchers, extension personnel, farmer organizations, development partners and private-sector actors to explore how agroforestry can support

climate action while creating new income opportunities for smallholder farmers.

Speaking during the workshop in Keffi, Nasarawa State, SIFTAS Project Manager Dr. Bidemi

Ajibola said the initiative was designed to prepare stakeholders to participate in Nigeria's emerging carbon economy by promoting agroforestry systems for cassava, potato and rice. "As Nigeria develops its carbon market, it is important that our farmers, researchers and policymakers understand how climate-smart agriculture can generate both environmental and economic benefits," he said.

Technical sessions highlighted how integrating trees into farming systems improves soil health, enhances carbon sequestration, boosts productivity and creates opportunities to earn carbon credits.

Participants also contributed technical inputs towards strengthening agroforestry training manuals and curricula under development



A breakout session in Jos.



Commissioner for Agriculture in Nasarawa State, Hon. Umar Tanko Tunga, addressing participants in Keffi



Group photographs of participants at the workshop in Jos, Plateau State.

ENHANCING THE PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN THE MAIZE-SOYBEAN FARMING SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

Stakeholders seek practical financing frameworks for maize and soybean value chains at SAA’s roundtable in Kaduna



Group photo of participants at the AGRA roundtable on agricultural value chain financing in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Access to finance remains one of the biggest barriers to improving productivity for smallholder farmers in Nigeria's maize and soybean value chains. While policies promoting financial inclusion exist, farmers say many have yet to translate into meaningful support.

That message emerged strongly during a multi-stakeholder roundtable convened by the

Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) under the AGRA-funded Enhancing the Productivity and Competitiveness of Smallholder Farmers in the Maize-Soybean Farming System in Nigeria project.

The dialogue brought together commercial banks, microfinance institutions, government agencies, farmer organizations, aggregators, agro-processors, input suppliers and development

partners to identify practical financing solutions for value chain actors in Kaduna and Niger States.

During breakout discussions, farmers highlighted the disconnect between policy and practice, noting that cumbersome lending procedures, lengthy documentation requirements and ineffective intermediaries continue to limit access to credit. AGRA Niger State Coordinator, Dr. Hassana Garba, observed that

lengthy banking processes often discourage farmers before they can secure financing. She called for simpler, more accessible financial products that respond to the realities of agricultural production.

Participants recommended streamlined loan requirements, stronger engagement between financial institutions and organized farmer groups, greater transparency in financing arrangements and

loan products aligned with farming seasons.

Representing SAA Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Godwin Atser, Deputy Country Director Dr. Abdulhamid Gambo reaffirmed SAA's commitment to expanding inclusive financing that supports resilient and market-oriented agrifood systems.

The initiative, according to Project Coordinator Mr. Emem

Essien, targets 100,000 smallholder farmers across Kaduna and Niger States while seeking to leverage US\$6 million in agricultural credit and attract US\$2 million in new investments. The roundtable reinforced a simple but critical message: meaningful agricultural transformation depends on financing systems that are accessible, responsive and built around the needs of the farmers they are intended to serve.

SAA Strengthens Extension Capacity to Advance Climate-Smart Maize–Soybean Production

The Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA), under the AGRA-funded project, Enhancing the Productivity and Competitiveness of Smallholder Farmers in the Maize–Soybean Farming System in Nigeria, has trained extension agents and Community Based Advisors (CBAs) from Kaduna and Niger States to accelerate markets and enterprise development for youth, women and people with disabilities (PWDs) in the

adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices.

Held simultaneously in Zaria, Kaduna State, and Minna, Niger State, from June 24–26, 2026, the training equipped participants with practical knowledge to recognize, integrate and sustain agribusiness enterprise and innovation opportunities emerging from the adoption of climate-smart agricultural

practices in maize and soybean farming systems. They are expected to cascade the knowledge to farming communities, targeting women, youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Participants explored the causes and impacts of climate change on agriculture, principles of CSA, climate-resilient production technologies, enterprise development, market



Group photo of participants in Zaria, Kaduna State



Cross section of participants during the training session in Minna



Cross section of participants during the training session in Zaria



Group photo of participants in Minna, Niger State

opportunities, gender and social inclusion, and action planning for field implementation. The training also highlighted emerging enterprise opportunities in compost production, mechanization services, irrigation, agro-advisory services, climate information services, input retailing and post-harvest

management, demonstrating how climate-smart practices can improve productivity while creating sustainable livelihoods.

The capacity-building exercise forms part of SAA's broader efforts to strengthen frontline agricultural advisory services that connect farmers with improved technologies, climate

information and market opportunities. By enhancing the competencies of extension personnel, the project is laying the foundation for wider adoption of climate-smart innovations that improve resilience, increase productivity and strengthen the competitiveness of Nigeria's maize-soybean value chains.



Cross section of participants during the training session in Minna

EVENTS

How SAA Nigeria’s Country Director’s birthday lit up NSPRI’s Post-Harvest Conference after Minister’s declaration

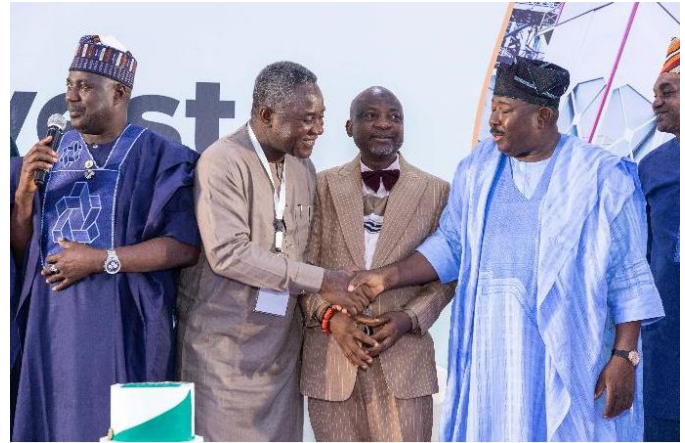


L-R: Prof. Michael Abberton, Director of the IITA West Africa Hub and Head of the Genetic Resources Centre (GRC); Major General Sinyinah Nicodemus, Executive Director of Nigerian Army Farms and Ranches Limited (NAFARL); Hon. Salman Idris, House of Representatives member from Kogi State; Minister of State for Agriculture, Senator Aliyu Abdullahi; Dr Godwin Atser, Country Director, SAA Nigeria; Prof. Lateef Sanni, NSPRI Executive Director; Senator Sarafadeen Alli, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions; two leaders of agricultural development agencies and Dr Joseph Onyeka, Director of the Biotechnology and Product Development Department at NRCRI, at the short reception to celebrating Dr Atser on his birthday at the 2026 Post Harvest connect in Abuja, April 22, 2026

The opening of Post-Harvest Connect 2026 in Abuja took an unexpected and memorable turn when what began as the official unveiling of the conference cake became a surprise birthday celebration for Dr. Godwin Atser, Country Director of the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria.

Moments after formally declaring the conference open, the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Aliyu Abdullahi, joined delegates in celebrating Dr. Atser after Prof. Lateef Sanni, Executive Director of the Nigerian Stored Products Research Institute (NSPRI) and Chief Convener of the conference, announced that the

day coincided with his birthday. The cake, originally prepared by the National Root Crops Research Institute (NRCRI) to showcase cassava flour innovation, quickly became the centerpiece of a warm celebration that momentarily replaced policy discussions with laughter and applause.



Adding humor to the occasion, the Minister invited participants to guess Dr. Atser's age before remarking that he appeared to be "ageing in reverse," attributing his youthful energy to his enduring passion for supporting farmers, improving productivity and strengthening livelihoods. He then led dignitaries to cut the cake and a lively reverse spelling of "Godwin", drawing smiles from the packed conference hall.

The celebration brought together leading figures in Nigeria's agricultural sector, including Senator Sarafadeen Alli, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agricultural Colleges and Institutions; Prof. Michael Abberton of IITA; Major General Sinyinah Nicodemus of the Nigerian Army Farms and Ranches Limited (NAFARL); Dr. Joseph Onyeka of NRCRI, and other partners.

The brief but heartfelt moment reflected the strong partnerships that continue to drive agricultural transformation in Nigeria.

As the conference resumed, discussions on post-harvest management, food security and innovation continued with renewed camaraderie, an enduring reminder that while science advances agriculture, collaboration and shared purpose sustain its progress.

CONFERENCES, MEETINGS AND PARTNERSHIPS

SAA Showcases Farmer-Centered Innovations to Propcom+ and British High Commission Delegation in Kano



Some members SAA technical teams received the Propcom+ and the British High Commission/Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

Strong partnerships continue to drive the search for practical solutions that improve the productivity and resilience of Nigeria's smallholder farmers. This was evident when the Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) Nigeria hosted representatives of Propcom+ and the British High Commission/Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for a knowledge-sharing visit and field tour in Kano State. The engagement showcased SAA's integrated approach to agricultural transformation, highlighting innovations that are helping farmers overcome production and post-harvest challenges while improving livelihoods.

Welcoming the delegation, SAA Nigeria's Deputy Country Director, Dr. Abdulhamid Gambo, represented by Dr. Habib Diso, Technical Coordinator, Monitoring and Evaluation, emphasized the importance of collaboration in scaling sustainable agricultural solutions. "Sustainable agricultural transformation requires partnerships that combine local knowledge, practical innovation and a shared commitment to improving the lives of smallholder farmers," he said.

Discussions focused on opportunities for collaboration in mechanization, seed systems, agricultural finance, private extension services and market-oriented agriculture.



Meeting with SAA team in Kano office

A highlight of the visit was a tour of SAA-supported interventions in Kadawa, where the delegation observed the Agricultural Mechanization Centre and aerated onion storage facilities.

The visitors saw firsthand how affordable mechanization services and improved post-harvest technologies are reducing drudgery, minimizing losses, preserving produce quality and increasing farmers' incomes.

Speaking on behalf of Propcom+, Ahmad Nuhu said the visit provided valuable insights into proven approaches that could be scaled through future

partnerships. Paul Heale of the British High Commission/FCDO described the technologies as practical, farmer-centred innovations with significant potential to strengthen livelihoods and food systems.

The visit reinforced the value of strategic collaboration in expanding access to proven agricultural innovations and affirmed SAA's commitment to working with governments and development partners to build resilient, inclusive and market-oriented agrifood systems across

MEET SAA NEW COLLEAGUES

Otene Nathaniel Ugbede,

Technical Coordinator, Regenerative Agriculture

Otene joins SAA with over a decade of experience in agricultural extension, climate-smart agriculture, rural development, agribusiness, and donor-funded development programming. He holds a Master of Technology (M.Tech.) in Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology from the Federal University of Technology, Minna, and has completed coursework toward a PhD in Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

He also possesses professional

qualifications in project management and leadership, further strengthening his capacity to lead complex agricultural development initiatives.

Before joining SAA, Otene served as Agriculture Specialist with PYXERA Global, where he led the implementation of climate-smart and sustainable agriculture interventions that benefited more than 15,000 smallholder farmers across Katsina and Kaduna States. His work included strengthening extension systems, building the capacity of field teams and



farmers, promoting sustainable intensification practices, and leveraging digital extension tools to improve farmer outreach and adoption of improved agricultural technologies.



Emem Okon Essien,

Project Coordinator, Enhancing the Productivity and Competitiveness of Smallholder Farmers in the Maize-Soybean Farming Systems in Nigeria.

Farming Systems in Nigeria Project.

Emem is a seasoned operations and programme management specialist with a proven track record of scaling high-impact initiatives. His work has supported expansion efforts across more than 15 states, reaching over 500,000 smallholder farmers with improved access to markets, finance, and climate-smart agricultural practices.

He brings extensive experience in designing and implementing sustainable value chain

solutions, working closely with government institutions, development finance partners, and the private sector. His expertise spans capacity building, stakeholder engagement, data-driven decision-making, and project coordination.

In his new role, Emem will support the implementation of key agricultural initiatives focused on strengthening value chains, improving productivity, and promoting the adoption of innovative farming practices among smallholder farmers.

With nearly a decade of experience in financial inclusion and agricultural development across Nigeria, Emem Okon Essien joins SAA Nigeria as Project Coordinator for the AGRA-funded Enhancing the Productivity and Competitiveness of Smallholder Farmers in the Maize-Soybean

ACROSS THE TNF STATES IN PICTURES



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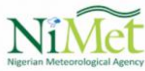


SAA@40

Celebrating Partnerships



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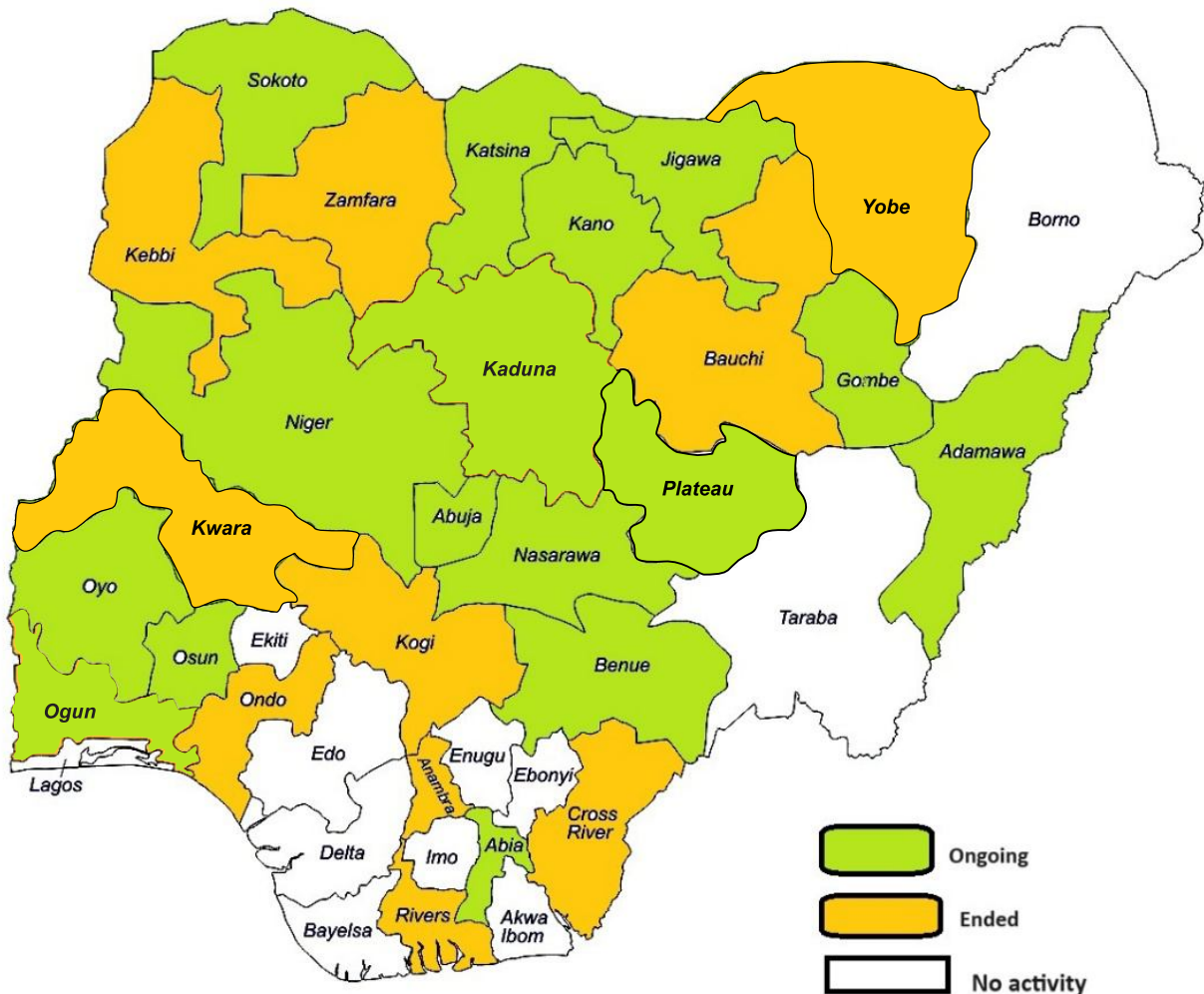
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Where we

work

SAA has presence in twenty five states of Nigeria and Abuja. Abuja host one of the country offices. These states have benefited from SAA interventions in the past thirty four years. Fifteen states have active projects while eleven states have had their projects closed.



This newsletter is produced by Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA-Nigeria)
Abuja office: No. 19, Ogbomosho Street, Garki Area 8, Abuja, Nigeria
Kano office: No. 8, Kura Road, off Magajin Rumfa Road, Nasarawa GRA, P.O Box 5190, Kano, Nigeria



For more information; Contact:
Moses Nongoatse (Communication Officer)
Email: mnongoatse@saa.safe.org

