

COMMUNIQUE

The North-East Zonal Sugar Forum was held at ADIP Hotels Jimeta, Yola, Adamawa State on Tuesday 4th November, 2008. The Forum, whose theme was “**The Sugar Sector – A Tool for the Achievement of the 7-Point Agenda**” was chaired by Alhaji Ahmed Song, one of Nigeria’s foremost Sugar Consultants, while the Adamawa State Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Alhaji Tijjani Maksha was the Special Guest of Honour. The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Yohanna Kinka, the Honourable Commissioner for Commerce and Industry, Taraba State, who was represented by the General Manager, Lau Sugar Company, Mr. Joshua Ripiye.

Papers that dealt with different aspects of the main theme were also delivered by eminent resource persons including Dr. Umar Alka the CEO of Zigau Sugar Company and Mr. M. C. Gupta, Managing Director Savanna Sugar Company Ltd (SSCL).

Participants at the forum were drawn from both the public and private sectors including representatives of Federal and State Ministries of Commerce and Industry, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sugar Companies, Agricultural Development Projects (ADP), Representatives of the Mini Sugar Plants owners and Sugarcane farmers etc.

At the end of the presentations, participants had lively discussions and the following resolutions were reached:

1. If the Sugar Sector is to become a veritable tool for the achievement of the 7-Point Agenda, especially in areas where it has comparative advantage, there is a need for clear policy initiatives that would lower the cost of production and assist Sugar Millers recoup their investment at the earliest possible time.
2. In this regard, Government should provide infrastructures such as electricity, roads, irrigation etc.
3. There is also the need for a clear policy on electricity pricing that will make it profitable for sugar producers to produce surplus electricity for sale to the grid.
4. There is also need for clear policy on the establishment and operation of sugar refineries which though contribute something along the value chain, but divest the sugar industry of all its inherent benefits such as employment and electricity generation, rural development etc.
5. Consequently, there is need for a strengthening the mandate of the NSDC to guide the development of the sector and ensure that the nation, as well as investors derive the maximum benefits available.

6. Participants encourage the NSDC to explore the possibility of engaging the Northern Governors Forum to invest in the Sugar Sector because of the enormous socio-economic benefits.
7. Participants also note the need for Council to intensify its sensitization programme to get its message across to all stakeholders including policy makers, investors, farmers and consumers etc.
8. The Forum commends the NSDC on its drive to import new sugarcane varieties to replace the current ageing ones.

NATIONAL SUGAR DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, ABUJA

Tuesday 4TH NOVEMBER, 2008