

New pilot initiative in Kaduna will boost inclusive growth in African food industry

United Nations SDG Fund, FG, Kaduna Government, chefs Roca Brothers and Sahara Group launch a joint platform to create jobs, promote gender equality and reduce food waste

Jere, Kaduna (Nigeria), 14 July 2016. As Nigeria embraces a challenging economic diversification process, the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals Fund](#) (SDG-F) is working in Kaduna to pilot an innovative approach aimed at revamping the food sector to creating new jobs for young people, increase farmers' revenues, improve productivity, enhance nutrition and reduce food loss through more sustainable production practices.

UN Goodwill Ambassadors, brothers Joan, Josep and Jordi Roca of restaurant *El Celler can Roca*, ranked among the best chefs of the world, UN Agencies, the Sahara Group and Nigerian government authorities will partner on the Food Africa project. Launched in Jere, the initiative is set to revolutionize the food industry in Kaduna and beyond. For the project kick-off Josep Roca met with young women and men that will be the driving force of this programme. A Center of Excellence, specialized on agriculture and agro-processing training, will contribute to expand it to other regions in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa through regional exchange of best practices.

Food for SDGs

Nigeria has been an avid proponent and early adopter of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which were approved at the United Nations in September. Under the leadership of Princess Victoria Orelope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, plans and policies are now underway to achieve these goals by 2030.

In Africa, agriculture remains a vital source of employment and income generation. In Nigeria the sector contributes to an estimated 70% of employment in Nigeria, but only 22% of GDP, thus indicating a significant potential for productivity gains. Despite a strong reliance on farming and agriculture, malnutrition is often prevalent in many regions and invariably an estimated 50-70% of harvests can be lost due to the lack of appropriate storage facilities and limited market information.

On top of that, climate change, could result in falls in output of up to 30%, according to the World Bank estimates. The recent state of emergency declared in Kaduna over tomato shortages and soaring prices caused by the moth *tuta absoluta* exemplifies climate and environmental pressures to agricultural production to come.

Revolutionizing the food industry

In order to tackle these pressing challenges, the SDG Fund, a mechanism established by the UN to advance the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is engaging governments, UN Agencies, civil society and the private sector on issues critical to enhancing food security and nutrition.

The pilot Food Africa project in Kaduna will provide a backward and forward integration approach for food supply chain management. The program will introduce more sustainable practices in the value chain, reduce crop waste and improve smallholder farmers' profitability. Recognizing the link between the gaps in skills and structural unemployment in the region, the project will promote income generating opportunities and technical support to promote trade of local goods and services.

The program will feature an agro processing facility and serve as a Center of Excellence to increase farmers' receipts and reduce food loss. The center will provide training in the food industry on issues linked to food safety, business planning and product diversification. Designed as a hybrid public-private facility, the program will eventually be sustained and managed by the communities' local farmers.

Unique collaboration

UN Goodwill Ambassadors Master Chefs Roca Brothers will contribute their valuable knowledge in sustainable conservation, food preparation and distribution techniques. The Rocas will provide skills training for young women and men as well as providing technical oversight and sharing best practices. The renowned chefs will play a key role in showcasing how local food production can be cultivated for new markets and consumers. "It is an honor for us to be part of this vibrant, promising and collective project and contribute with our cooking, our imagination and our passion to advance the sustainable development goals", Josep Roca affirmed while in Jere. He added "we are doing this on behalf of all chefs, not only ourselves".

Several specialized UN Agencies will provide expertise on food production (FAO), labour and employment (ILO) and international trade (ITC). An early warning Geographical Information System (GIS) will also be available to connect farmers with agricultural extension services and provide real time market data.

Sahara Group, a leading African energy conglomerate and member of the SDG Fund Private Sector Advisory Group and major co-financer of the project will bring its business perspective to the program to ensure the viability of the facility's operations. "We are excited to showcase this new project which will go a long way to shine the spotlight on the links between agricultural training, food security and improving nutritional livelihoods in our communities" said Tonye Cole, Executive Director and co-founder of the Sahara Group.

Kaduna State Government will provide the land for the constructed facility as well as farmland and personnel. The state government will collaborate with other state-level stakeholders to improve local infrastructure including rural roads to allow greater access to the facility and farmland.

It is expected that 5,000 women and men of Kaduna will be directly impacted with new job prospects, increased income and additional skills to compete in the thriving food industry. In addition, an estimated 500,000 residents will indirectly benefit from the *Food Africa Project* which is designed to be scaled-up in the region and eventually replicated in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Photo and video materials of the visit available at: [Kick off pictures](#)

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