

Reducing food loss through sustainable production practices in Africa

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 “revolutionise” 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, specialising in 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 a 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.

Revolutionising 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.

Recognising 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 centre 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 and master chefs, the 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 honour 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."

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