

Vice-Chancellor Tasks Workshop Participants on Cassava Supply Challenge

Stakeholders in the agricultural industry and participants at the first Cassava Virus and Clean Seed Awareness Training Workshop taking place at Covenant University, have been urged to find a solution to the problem of supply not meeting the demand for cassava in Nigeria.

The Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, Professor AAA. Atayero, represented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shalom Chinedu, set this task on Tuesday, July 4, 2017, at the opening ceremony of the workshop organised by the West African Virus Epidemiology (WAVE) for root and tuber crops project, Covenant University hub.



Participants at the Workshop

The workshop, said the Vice-Chancellor, was critical and could not have come at a better time, especially in a season where many Africans are ravaged by hunger. According to him, in Sub-Saharan Africa, where hunger is prevalent, one out of every three children is malnourished as many Africans live below poverty level.

“Cassava is one of the most dependable crops for the African people. Nigeria is reputed to be the biggest producer of cassava, that’s why it’s important that we guard this crop because if anything happens to it, it will spell doom,” said Professor Atayero, adding that efforts must also be made to arrest the soaring cost of cassava.

Identifying diseases as another problem of cassava, the Vice-Chancellor, who acknowledged that the activities of WAVE are very important, said that the essence of the workshop was to bring together researchers and the growers as well as the end users of cassava. “I believe that at the end of the workshop, we’ll find a solution to the problem of supply not meeting the demand for cassava,” he enthused as he declared the workshop open.

Making his presentation at the event, the Keynote Speaker, Pastor Segun Adewumi, who is the President, Nigeria Cassava Growers Association (NCGA), described Covenant University as one of the most prestigious universities in the world. He said that cassava as a wonderful crop that produces over 20 local food types and an industrial produce for ethanol and industrial starch among others, can trigger a massive industrial revolution in Nigeria.

Cassava, he said, is the only product for which the entire world concedes the leadership of its production to Nigeria and one of its by-products, industrial starch, has the potential to generate N15 trillion additional income for the country and full employment for five million people.

Pastor Adewumi appealed to the Chancellor and Chairman Board of Regents, Covenant University, Dr. David. O. Oyedepo, to ignite cassava revolution in Nigeria by making a big investment in its cultivation in line with his reputation for turning things around for the better.

Earlier in her welcome remarks, the Team Leader, West African Virus Epidemiology (WAVE), Covenant University hub, Dr. Angela Eni, appreciated participants for turning up for the programme. The workshop, she stated, was crucial given the place of cassava in Africa as over 800 million Africans depend on cassava for food.

Dr. Eni, who said that everybody was pushing beyond the limits into cassava research, however noted that cassava growing has constraints, with the virus being one of them. A policy paper, she added, must emerge out of the workshop.

Other distinguished guests at the event were the Head, Department of Biological Sciences, Covenant University, Professor Adesola Ajayi; Leader, Biotechnology Research Cluster of the University, Professor Louis Egware; Deputy Director, Media and Corporate Affairs, Mr. Emmanuel Igbani; Executive Committee members of the NCGA; Programme Managers of Agricultural Programmes; and participants from 12 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

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