



FUTA NEWS

FUTA DON RAISES ALARM AS POPULATION GROWTH OUTSTRIPS FOOD PRODUCTION

The steady shortfall in agricultural production to national development, disparity between population growth of 3.2% and increase in food production of 2.5% and the declining farming population portend a looming disaster for the country. Professor Simeon Dada Alfred sounded this warning while delivering the 97th Inaugural Lecture of the Federal University of Technology, Akure with the topic: Attitudinal and Behavioural Change Nexus in Agricultural Extension Communications: The Personality Conflict. He said that the decline in the percentage contribution of agriculture to national development will spell doom for human survival, food security and sustainability and economic progress.

Professor Alfred pointed out that a great percentage of food produced in the country comes from the rural areas; however, the drudgery in agriculture as dictated by the use of crude implements coupled with subsistence level of production has led to poor involvement of youth in agricultural production. He said if Nigeria must break away from food insecurity and systemic poverty, adoption of improved technologies and other attitudinal and social changes are important thus appropriate technologies for increased agricultural production must be accorded higher priority by governments at all levels in order to mitigate food insecurity and impoverishment of the farming population.

The Don said studies have shown that a large percentage of farmers fall within the old age bracket of 45 years and above, which implies that before the end of the first quarter of the 2159, a greater percentage of these farmers may be no more. He added that due to youth urban migration, those who should take over

from the aging farmers prefer urban jobs no matter how menial. He however recommended that in addition to solving the problems of rural development and infrastructure, the attitudes, perceptions and cultural beliefs of the rural people should be orientated through enlightenment programmes as an average rural Nigerian has been referred to as tradition-bound, that is not readily willing to change what he has held on to over a long time or period. According to him, if the same rural Nigeria must make a positive impact on his level of production, he must accept the more scientific practice of farming having a change of attitude. Professor Alfred stated that the interest of youth in Agriculture will only be revitalised through the adoption of modern and improved scientific farming practices such as improved varieties of crops and breeds of livestock, uses of chemicals and control of weeds, pests and diseases which will be disseminated through the function of extension services. He said effective and adequate funding for research extension by the government and non-government agencies at all levels must be ensured. He also canvassed for linkages of researches with extension service since no matter how seemingly beneficial a technology is, if not adopted and continued to be used by the end users, such technology is as useless as if it had never been developed.

Alfred proposed that extension education must be used to help farmers gain managerial skills to operate in a commercial economy by providing training and guidance to them in decision making. According to him, in such an economic situation, prices of products and factors of production will guide the farmers in their decisions on farm operations, rather than the physical quantities of production or utility of products which will in turn have a positive impact on food production for the populace and attract a new generation of farmers who will take over from the aging ones.

In his remarks, Chairman of the occasion, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joseph Fuwape described the lecturer as an astute academic who has served the University in different capacities and contributed immensely to research and academic development in his field of specialization.