

LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, KABBA.

Sponsor: Senator Dino Melaye (*Kogi West*).

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate of this very important Bill for the establishment of Federal University of Agriculture, Kabba.

The Bill was read for the First Time in this Hallowed Chamber on the 7th December, 2016.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, this Bill is a bold step towards, not only addressing the educational needs of the populace but it will also serve as training ground for the development of agriculturists in the country.

Agriculture with its allied sectors is unquestionably the largest livelihood provider more also in the rural areas and can contribute significantly to the GDP. Demand for agricultural product is rising rapidly with increase in population and per capita income and growing demand from industrial sector. The Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture, Kabba when upgraded to a university status will provide the holistic development of agricultural education, knowledge skills and the telescopic vision on future that will help them contribute to accelerated agricultural growth rate, enhance farmers income and generate employment in the sector. The Institution which has been a Diploma Awarding Institution will now offer a four year B.Sc. (Agriculture) programme. This will give the students a platform to enable the country to achieve self-sufficiency in food, reduce poverty and bring economic transformation in millions of rural families.

The objectives for which the University is established among others are:

(a) to encourage the advancement of learning and to hold out to all persons without distinction of race, creed, sex or political conviction;

(b) to develop and offer academic and professional programmes leading to the award of certificates, first degrees, post-graduate research, diploma and higher degrees with emphasis on planning, developmental and adaptive skills in Education, technology, applied science, agriculture, commerce, arts, social science, humanities, management and allied professional disciplines;

(c) to produce socially mature agriculturists with capabilities not to only understand agricultural need of Nigeria as a nation, but also to exploit existing agro infrastructure and improve on it to develop new ones.

(d) to act as agents and catalysts for effective agricultural system, through post graduate training , research and innovation, for effective economic utilization and conservation of the country's human resources.

(e) to collaborate with other national and international institutions involved in training, research and development of agriculture with a view to promoting governance, leadership and management skills among agriculturists.

(g) to identify agricultural needs of the society with a view to finding solutions to them within the context of overall national development.

(h) to undertake any other activities that is appropriate for a University of agriculture of the highest standard.

Mr. President, my Distinguished Colleagues, the establishment of this University will subsume the Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture, Kabba which was first established by the Saduana of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the then Premier of the Northern Nigeria who was a detribalized and selfless Nigeria and in the spirit of unity promoted the idea of establishment of the college of Agriculture far from Zaria.

One noticeable feature in the development of universities in Nigeria is the emergence of specialized universities. Most of these focus on science and technology; while only three (Makurdi, Abeokuta and Umudike) focus on agriculture hence the need to upgrade the Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture, Kabba to a university to increase the tally to four and as a matter of fact, this will help the back to land policy of the federal government to ensure the diversification of our national economy. Agriculture is key and the drivers of these to me are products from the universities of Agriculture, I therefore advocate for the establishment of more universities of Agriculture across the country.

Mr. President, my highly respected Colleagues, the Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture, Kabba is a well-established Institution with state of the art infrastructure even better than what is obtainable in several universities in the

country. The college when upgraded will have the needed infrastructure required for the take-off of the new university.

Mr. President, Distinguished colleagues, I wish to state that there is no financial implication to this Bill, all the operational structures are already in place as the University is taken over from the existing Ahmadu Bello College of Agriculture.

I therefore urge you all to support this Bill to keep alive the dream of one of our country's founding father, an exemplary and visionary leader, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Suduana himself.

Thank you.