

**LEAD DEBATE ON THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF A BILL FOR AN ACT TO AMEND  
THE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NIGERIA AND FOR RELATED  
MATTERS 2020 (SB. 118)**

***SPONSORED BY SENATOR (DR.) ABDULLAHI ADAMU (CON)***

Mr. President, Distinguished Senators, permit me to lead the debate on this very important Bill for an Act to amend the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria Act and for related matters 2020 (SB. 118).

This Bill was read for the first time in this hallowed Chamber on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2019.

**BACKGROUND**

The Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria (ARCN) act was enacted in 1999 but effective take-off of the Council was in 2006 with the statutory mandate of coordinating, supervising and regulating agricultural research, training and extension in the fifteen (15) National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) and the eleven (11) Federal Colleges of Agriculture (FCAs) under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Technology-driven increases in agricultural productivity are critically needed to get Nigeria's agriculture on the path of sustained growth. It is noteworthy that such growth is linked to lower food prices, which hold down urban wages and stimulate industrialization and structural transformation. While some new technology can be imported from outside the country and adapted to local conditions, the distinctive features of many of Nigeria's production systems means that much new technology will have to be generated locally. For this to happen, ARCN will also have to be reformed. The existing structure and organization of the National Agricultural Research System (NARs) is not sufficiently effective in responding to the government's demand for cost-effective management, generation of appropriate technologies, agricultural growth and the improved livelihoods of the rural poor.

The key sections which the Bill seeks to amend are –

1. **Section 2 of the Act** – Governing Board
2. **Section 4** – Remuneration and Allowances
3. **Section 5** – Functions of the Council
4. **Section 6** – Appointment of the Executive Secretary and other Staff
5. **Section 7** – Application of the Pensions Reform Act, 2004
6. **Section 8** - Establishment of the National Agricultural Research and Extension Fund
7. **Section 8** – Insertion of new Part VI
8. **Section 19** - This amendment seeks to pool all staff of research institutes under the control and management of ARCN for effectiveness and Repeal the National Agricultural Research Institutes Act 1964 and Research Institute (Establishment, etc.) Order 1975 and Order 1 of 1980.
9. **Section 20** – Insertion of new section 20.
9. **First Schedule** – Committees of the Board

The Bill Seeks to establish a Agricultural Science and Technical Research Committee, and the Agricultural Sciences Recruitment Board (ASRB) to be saddled with the responsibility of recruitment of Scientists for the entire system.

10. **Second Schedule** – Governing Boards of Research Institutes
11. **Insertion of New Third Schedule**

This Bill further seeks to allow the Council to give policy directions to the College; properly enshrine the establishment of the Colleges in the ARCN Act; and list the Federal Colleges in a new Third Schedule to the Act thereby making the Colleges backed by enabling law.

**12. Insertion of New Fourth Schedule** to provide comprehensive guide for National Agricultural Research Programmes and Project Management to align practically to strategic agricultural sector development goals and objectives.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR THE AMENDMENTS

Agriculture constitutes one of the important sectors of Nigeria's economy. This is because Nigeria has highly diversified agro-ecological regions, which make the production of a wide range of agricultural products possible. The agricultural sector currently employs a significant portion of the labor force, and contributes about 21 percent to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Ironically, in spite of this agricultural resource and technical endowment as well as several interventions by successive administrations, Nigerian agricultural sector has been operating far below its potential because the research institutes or centers are not well coordinated and strengthened.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, this Bill seeks to eliminate –

- i. The multiplicity of Governing Board as Individual Governing Boards for research institutes and Federal Colleges of Agriculture have often led to high cost of governance, and over-bloating of the system, often with inappropriately qualified staff;
- ii. Unwarranted administrative and bureaucratic interference;
- iii. Absence of proper alignment of the role of Colleges within the training-extension/research-extension nexus context for middle level manpower development for the agriculture sector;
- iv. Lack of alignment of the system of operation of University-Based Research Institute with other NARIs;
- v. The seeming brain drain from the Research Institutes (RIs) including the Federal Colleges of Agriculture to the Universities due to better conditions of service in the latter;
- vi. The erroneous de-classification of ARCN Secretariat from being a research organization by Office of the Head of Civil Service of the Federation; and
- vii. Insufficient & inconsistent funding of research programmes in NARIs and core middle-level manpower activities of FCAs due to perceived non-performance of the research system.

Furthermore the bill will ensure that the Nigerian National Agricultural Research System is provided functional and effective leadership by the reformed ARCN. This will guarantee the following:

- i. Well coordinated national agricultural research programmes and projects that are aligned to overall national development goals and policy especially the diversification of the Nigerian economy through agriculture;
- ii. Making ARCN the national entry point for the activities of the International Agricultural Research Centers and related agencies;
- iii. Provide a Research Management Framework that will maximize national human resources pool especially in the Universities of Agriculture and Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicines;
- iv. Providing ARCN the legal backing to promote agricultural research results commercialization through spin-off companies and enterprises;
- v. Provide appropriate mechanism for training and retraining of research scientists and especially breeders;
- vi. Provide for the establishment of a national gene bank to mitigate the impact of climate change on agriculture; and
- vii. Provide leadership for agricultural development across the agro-ecologies of the country.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, it is instructive to note that most countries that make a significant landmark in agricultural development have a well-coordinated and structured Research Council. For instance, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA), Chinese Academy of Agricultural Science (CAAS), Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Science (CATAS), the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and the Indonesian agency for Agricultural Research and Development (AARD) are examples of Managing Councils in their respective countries. They are saddled with the responsibility for coordinating, funding and managing research programmes and enjoy autonomy in planning and executing research so as to best utilize the available resources.

Agriculture is driven by technologies and technologies are in turn generated by research. Agriculturally advanced countries are only so advanced because of a workable and well-funded agricultural research system.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

In line with our Standing Order 77(3), this Bill does not have any financial implication on the government as the structures for the operations are already in place.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the amendment of this Act has come at the right time when the Country is focusing on the diversification of the economy. No doubts, the agricultural sector will be a major field player in this regard. It is therefore apt to strengthen the mandate and powers of the Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria so that they can coordinate, manage and articulate the needed research into agricultural production that can guarantee food security in the country and in the long run enhance export opportunities.

Once again I thank you Mr. President and Distinguished Colleagues for your attention and urge you to support this very important Bill for the second reading to ensure its accelerated passage.