The African Development Bank (AfDB) says Nigeria and six other African countries are to benefit from the Sorghum and Millet Compact of Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation (TAAT).

The bank said that the programme was part of its plan to ensure food security in the Sahel region in a document titled: “Food Security in the Sahel” made available to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Tuesday in Abuja.

The AFDB said the bank would be set to launch the programme in Mali on Thursday under TAAT which it initiated as part of its Feed Africa Initiative.

The bank named other countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Sudan and Chad being beneficiaries of the planned support programme. It said that it aspired to significantly increase agricultural productivity via the deployment of proven and high-performance technologies to millions of African farmers.

The sorghum and millet compact targets about 40 to 50 per cent of African farmers with technologies relevant to boosting agricultural productivity and self-sufficiency by 2025,” it said. AfDB said that the main objective of the programme was to improve agricultural activities across Africa by raising productivity, mitigating risks, promoting diversification and processing in 18 agricultural value chains within eight Priority Intervention Areas (PIA) including sorghum and millet.

It explained that the acceleration programme had become imperative because agricultural sector accounted for between 50 to 70 per cent of employment in African countries but produced only 25 per cent of Africa’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The yields of sorghum and millet, the main dominant food crops are low. This is due to insufficient access to improved varieties, fertilisers, other agricultural inputs, inappropriate farming practices, declining soil fertility, lack of marketing and extreme weather events.

In spite of the research, efforts that have led to the development of technologies to overcome these constraints, productivity remains low because they are not scaled up even though efforts have been made in this direction,’’ it said. The bank noted that with sustainable intensification, improved profitability of sorghum and millet as well as scaling up of proven technologies, the compact was expected to contribute to food and nutrition security in a region.

“Where low agricultural productivity and lack of value added were among the main causes of malnutrition, unemployment and poverty,’’ it said. It said that the programme would be implemented by International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in collaboration with National Research and Extension Systems. It said that experts and stakeholders from key areas including research, extension, seed production, farmers and development partners were deliberating on the implementation in Bamako, Mali. (NAN).  Click here