Brokering a landmark public-private partnership to transform Nigeria’s agricultural sector

A new public-private partnership in Nigeria promises opportunity and innovation in climate solution technology. Reaping the fruits of an innovative arrangement between a CGIAR institute and a private organization, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) now stands as a full member of Nigeria’s agCelerant Technical Committee. This inauguration was performed August 29, 2019 by Alhaji Mohammed Sabo Nanono, Honorable Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in the presence of Alhaji Mustapha Baba Shehuri, Minister of State, Effiong B. Essien, Senior Special Advisor to the President of Nigeria, the Islamic Development Bank, the African Union Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) and representatives from 12 major Nigerian public departments and private organizations involved in agricultural development and finance.

Developed by Manobi Africa PLC with technical support from ICRISAT, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture, and Food Security (CCAFS) and the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program, agCelerant is an advanced value chain orchestration and business development ecosystem connecting smallholders with credit, insurance, input and output markets. The program provides all value chain stakeholders with (i) agricultural investment risk mapping, to reduce lenders cash-out and increase availability of credit to smallholders, (ii) more robust, affordable insurance contracts to reduce persistent climate risk in intensifying crop-livestock systems and (iii) improved management of crop nutrient deficiencies to increase fertilizer use efficiency and agricultural productivity.

A new partner

agCelerant offers breakthrough capabilities inside the last mile, leveraged by the Internet-of-Things (IoT), Earth Observation, Artificial Intelligence and powered by youth franchisees who can proximally and economically monitor and advise every single smallholder field under contract. What makes this approach different from classical digital approaches is that, with its foundational concept of phygital agriculture, it goes beyond the usually tech-driven, top-down and piecemeal solutions to smallholder productivity issues by addressing multiple informational and transactional bottlenecks at once to de-risk complex production systems. agCelerant does this through a holistic understanding of agricultural value creation, and how technology can catalyze it through inclusive business models in which smallholder farmers and larger-scale investors are simultaneously accompanied and protected as they empower themselves to respond to growing and changing customer needs.

In 2018, ICRISAT and Manobi Africa led the early implementation of agCelerant in Nigeria, applying it to the digitalization of nearly 5,000ha of smallholder sorghum fields in Bauchi, Kano and Niger states. Unprecedented amounts of socio-economic, agronomic and yield data thus collected provided the foundation for showcasing agCelerant in Nigeria and successfully convincing federal authorities at the highest level into planning its implementation with 15 million smallholder farmers. With Effiong B. Essien, Sr. Special Advisor to the President of Nigeria stating that agCelerant “ticks all the boxes for the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (FMARD) and for what the President of Nigeria is talking about in the context of the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)”, FMARD and Manobi Africa now look forward to its effective application to secure the recovery of 1 million smallholder loans within 1 year from implementation.

Moving forward

As the lead agricultural research institution standing on the national agCelerant committee, ICRISAT’s role will be to advise in the development of new technical solutions inside the ecosystem Read more....