

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT HERBFEST: HELD OCTOBER 8-10 2013 AT THE
RAW MATERIALS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ABUJA**

HerbFest 2013, which took place from 8th to 10th October 2013 in Abuja was organized by the Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme (BDCP), in collaboration with Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) and the International Center for Ethnomedicine and Drug Development (InterCEDD). The theme of the event was "**Development of Novel Natural Products as Dietary Supplements, Phytomedicines and Nutraceuticals**". The event comprised Plenary and Scientific Sessions, Exhibition and Training Workshop.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Prof. Olusegun Adewoye the immediate past Director General/Chief Executive, National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure (NASENI); while the special Guest of Honour Prof C. O. Onyebuchi Chukwu, the Honourable Minister of Health, was ably represented by Prof K. S. Gamaniel, the Director General/Chief Executive of National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD). Mrs. Rabi Jimeta mni, the Permanent Secretary Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, who declared the event open was represented by Dr. M. T. Gwaza.

Other dignitaries at the event included T.F. Okujagu the Director General/Chief Executive, Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency who gave the welcome address; Prof. Maurice Iwu, Chairman Bioresources Development Group (BDG) who delivered the keynote address titled "Food as Medicines"; Prof. Elijah Sokomba, Former National Coordinator Bioresources Development and Conservation Programme,; Founder/Director African Association of Medicinal Plants Standards, Mr. Denzil Philips; Director General/Chief Executive National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) represented by Mrs. Hauwa Keri; Director General/Chief Executive National Center for Technology Management (NACETEM) Dr. W. Siyanbola; Hajiya Zainab Sherif, Managing Director Nigerian Medicinal Plants Development Company; Dr. U. S. Inyang, former Director General/Chief Executive NIPRD ; Chief Ikedi Ohakim, former Executive Governor of Imo State; Chief Chkwuemeka Ezeife, former Executive Governor of Anambra State; Senator Ben Obi, Senior Special Adviser to Mr. President on Political Matters; High Chief Raymond Dokpesi, Chairman Daar

Communication Plc; Mazi Sam Oluabunwa, former Chairman Nigerian Economic Summit Group; Ambassador Emmanuel Imoh, Director General Nigeria Intelligence Agency; His Royal Highness Prof. T. O. Omon Oleabiele JP, President National Association of Nigerian Traditional Medicine Practitioners (NANTMP), Dr. Chris Okunji, Mr. Ulrich Feiter and two representative from the House of Representative of National Assembly. The rest participants were representatives of Government Agencies, Small and Medium Scale Entrepreneurs, Traditional Medical Practitioners (TMPs), Research Institutes, Academia, NGOs and the Media. Goodwill messages were given by representatives of Honourable Commissioner for Health Plateau State Dr. Fom Dakwak, InterCEDD, RMRDC, NACETEM, NAFDAC, NANTMP, NOTAP, FIIRO.

The Plenary and Scientific sessions focused on "Herbal Dietary Supplement BioBusiness, Medicinal Aromatic and Pesticidal Plants Research and Development, Regulations and Standards, Clinical Evaluations of Herbal Medicines and Product Profiles. These sessions were chaired by distinguished experts and stakeholder on Herbal medicines and Natural Product Research. The third day of the event was devoted to training on Natural Products development, building sustainable bioBusiness, certification, organic farming, commercialization, standardization, quality assurance and understanding investment opportunities.

The event attracted about 250 participants, with over 30 natural product exhibitors and 50 training participants. The HerbFest 2013 was not a typical Expo rather the event created a unique platform for young scientists to present research papers, participants to gain new knowledge about natural products that are useful as dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals. The event also emphasized the need for Nigerians to eat foods that will promote healthy living.

After extensive deliberation and issues raised during the events, the participants **noted that:**

- i) There is need for aggressive awareness, sensitization and re-orientation on the importance of promoting indigenous medicinal/natural products in Nigeria
- ii) There is the need to improve and strengthen existing collaboration among Government, Private Sector and research (Research institutes and Universities);
- iii) Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) facilities for producing Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals needs to be improved;
- iv) There is the need to strengthen linkages between R & D and indigenous knowledge IN THE Herbal Medicine/Natural Product sub sector
- v) Nigeria has rich biodiversity which has comparative and competitive advantages that needs to sustainably harnessed
- vi) NNMDA has conducted surveys, identified and documented Nigerian medicinal plants in the six (6) geo-political zones of the country.
- vii) There are many small, scattered and weak BioBusinesses in the country resulting in low products output.
- viii) Many Stakeholders have carried out various activities/programmes to popularize and institutionalize the use of Herbal Medicine in the country's health care System; however these efforts are hindered by non implementation of The National Traditional Medicine Policy and the passage of the Nigerian Traditional Medicine bill before the National Assembly
- ix) Most equipment and other accessories employed in the production of Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals are imported; thus adding to the cost of production
- x) BDCP has been among the foremost non-for-profit organizations, championing herbal medicine and BioBusiness issues in the country;
- xi) Nigeria is poised to compete with the rest of the world in the production of standardized and evidence-based Herbal products
- xii) The National capacity for the commercialization of Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals is low

- xiii) Some pharmaceutical outfits such as Neimeth International Pharmaceuticals Plc have viable research units and have collaborated with academia to develop useful nutraceuticals which have attracted royalties
- xiv) Sustainable cultivation of medicinal plants is key for the growth and development of a viable herbal Medicine/natural product industry in the country.
- xv) Pharmacovigilance is not yet fully employed in monitoring the effects of Herbal medicine

The following **Recommendations** were made;

- i) The media, NGOs, Not-for-profit organizations, relevant Government Agencies needs to engage in aggressive awareness, sensitization and re-orientation on the importance of promoting indigenous medicinal/natural products in Nigeria
- ii) A strong linkage and collaboration should be established among Public and Private Research Institutes, Academia and Government in the development of Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals; to this end the private- sector led National Committee on Bioresources Research and Development (NCBRD) and African Scientific Cooperation on Phytomedicines and Aromatic Plants (ASCOPAP) should be revived.
- iii) Nigerian Entrepreneurs involved in the production of Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals should be adequately trained particularly in packaging and branding in order to raise standard and make their products globally competitive.
- iv) More NGOs, Not-for-profit organizations, relevant Government Agencies and the media should be involved in promoting the use of Natural products, dietary supplements, phytomedicines and nutraceuticals that will lead to more awareness and acceptability of these products.
- v) The National Traditional Medicine Policy and National Policy on Science Technology and Innovation (ST&I), should be effectively implemented in order to promote extensive rational use of herbal medicine/products in the National Health Care System.

- vi) The relevant Regulatory Agencies in collaboration with stakeholders should develop our own uniform Standard of Reference in line with international standards for the production of herbal/natural products which is important for Quality Assurance
- vii) Government should facilitate interest-free loans and waivers on import duty on equipment, and other necessary materials used in the production of herbal products, in order to reduce cost of production
- viii) There should be a grant mechanism for large scale medicinal plant cultivation in all the geo-political and eco-zones of the country.
- ix) Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) should be employed in production of Herbal medicines/Products
- x) In line with Agricultural transformation Agenda (ATA), there is need to promote commercial cultivation of medicinal plants which will lead to job and wealth creation
- xi) Government should encourage the cultivation of at least ten (10) basic medicinal plants which are highly demanded using Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) to ensure availability and sustainability of raw materials as well as the integrity and efficacy products.
- xii) Pharmacovigilance should be well established for herbal medicines in order to monitor and evaluate the adverse effects on users.
- xiii) There is need to setup processing and storage centres in the six (6) geo-political zones for medicinal plants to make available raw materials for Herbal Industry.
- xiv) To encourage capacity and durability of production of Herbal products, there is need to import processing equipment with tax waiver as short term while encouraging indigenous fabrication for sustainability.
- xv) There is a need for capacity building and mentoring of the younger generation of scientists in order to ensure continuity.