

SMEDAN, Energy Commission seal pact on food preservation in Nigeria.

Story by Emeka Anuforo

The small and medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission (NAEC) on Tuesday, concluded an agreement on farm produce storage, to further boost output from the nation's agricultural sector.

The development was said to have been prompted by the revelation that over 50 percent of agricultural products in Nigeria are lost due to poor preservation facilities. To check this, the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission (NAEC) has called on the private sector to take advantage of the Gamma Irradiation Facility at the Nuclear Technology Centre to preserve their produce.



The Gamma Irradiation Facility (GIF) located at the Nuclear Technological Centre (NTC), Sheda, is a multipurpose industrial plant with a comprehensive research and development facility built by government for the preservation of food and agricultural products, sterilization of medical devices, pharmaceutical, cosmetic products and packages, improvement of mechanical, electrical and thermal properties of plastics.

It is also applicable in the wood and furniture industry, as well as, quality control and quarantine of export products. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both agencies strives to draw the attention of businessmen, state governments and farmers to the availability of the Gamma Irradiation Facility at the Nuclear Technology Centre, Abuja.

The facility has the capacity to prolong the freshness of agricultural produce. Officials of both agencies told newsmen that the centre if applied to good use, could delay the ripening of fruits like mangoes, tomatoes and pawpaw for up to two weeks while foodstuffs such as beans, yams, potatoes and spices can be stored for up to a year.

Government is said to be looking to putting up more of the facility in all the zones in the country. Speaking at the agreement signing, the Director General of the Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission (NAEC) Dr. Erepano Osaisai noted that globalization and consumer demand for a secure and safe food supply had placed new challenges on international trade.

He stressed that MoU was the culmination of several meetings between the staff of both agencies in trying to produce a working synergy that will produce a meaningful result in achieving the common goals of the agencies. He further urged the SMEDAN to fully utilize its resources in the sensitization and mobilization of small and medium Enterprise (SMEs) and business support Organization in order to realize the objective of this partnership. Also speaking, the Director General of SMEDAN, Alhaji Mohammed Nadada Umar, remarked that the MoU was essential to the development of the nation and was geared towards fulfilling Mr. President's 7-point agenda. He also reiterated SMEDAN's resolve to put to maximum use of the facility.

"We will market your activities to state governments, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to come and benefit from your services," Umar promised, adding that his agency would take the message to Birnin Kebbi, Nnewi and Lagos, among others," he said. NAEC and SMEDAN are expected to immediately embark on sensitization tour around the country on the need to use the nuclear facility for large food preservation.