

Building On The Gains Of G20 Summit To Develop Nigeria's Multi-billion Dollar Livestock Industry

By Butrous Pembri

With a massive swathe of arable land measuring about 930 sq km, the chunk of it being Sahel Savanah in the north and tropical rain forest in the south, Nigeria's geography makes it ideal for agricultural practices particularly food cultivation and livestock production. And coupled with the array of solid material resources, rich oil and gas reserves, Nigeria therefore has no business to be poor nor underdeveloped by any standard.

Given the "Renewed Hope Agenda" of the current government of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Nigerians are adopting cautious optimism that beyond sloganeering the government would change the fortunes and social condition of the critical mass of the population. And this should not be a rocket science but through deep and critical thinking development that are people-focused and people-driven. It is widely believed that the new Ministry of Livestock Development was birthed to harness Nigeria's huge potential in animal husbandry, which is not only a pro-poor preoccupation, but equally a business venture that could be transformed with actionable agric-business models. Nigeria with an estimated burgeoning population of over 200 million people needs to modernize its livestock production to be able to feed itself nutritional animal proteins for a healthy, strong and productive populace as well as providing huge market for its meat, dairy as well as hides and skin products for export, towards its balance of trade potential. Through huge investments in the sub-sector and providing enabling environment, Nigeria should be an ideal destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the livestock food chain.

It is against this background that President Ahmed Bola Tinubu appointed Mukhtar Idi Maiha, a technocrat with extensive knowledge and hand-on experience spanning over two decades as the pioneer minister of the newly established Ministry of Livestock Development. Expectantly Idi Mukhtar is mandated to lay not only a solid foundation but to equally foster confidence and trust from all stakeholders, big or small, in the industry. His leadership and his personal capacity to turn things by providing authentic leadership that is very necessary towards actualizing the renewed hope agenda in the sub-sector would surely transform the future of livestock farming.

Justifiably, with a great deal of purpose and understanding of his herculean task, the minister has since assured the Nigerians of "the lowest hanging fruit" in animal husbandry, which are, the availability of health, hygienic meal & dairy products, as well as increasingly building the local capacity & providing enabling the environment to transform a hitherto subsistence pre-occupation to a full-fledged and viable agric business.

By and large, the minister is expected to grow livestock practices into a viable and well-structured value chain, with all the intended consequences by creating massive jobs poverty alleviation and employment opportunities across the board. It is also envisioned that the minister should push for value-addition in the whole gamut of the livestock practices from the farm to make product cycle towards boosting local consumption and for export too. All these might look like lofty and ambitious targets but not unsurmountable, given the strong political will of the Tinubu administration to diversify the country's mono-product economy that is heavily dependent petrol dollar.

Specifically, the Ministry of Livestock Development, must put in place a mechanism for periodic peer reviews. This is to under study global best practices within the livestock domain with a view to leverage on new ideas, creating and evolving information as well as technologies that are indispensable to the optimal performance of the new and promising ministry, going forward. For example, a random sampling is strategic to understudy countries within a comparative advantage in livestock management and production within West Africa, East Africa, North and South African countries. To achieve global competitiveness, the ministry should also painstakingly, undertake, aggregate and synthesize best practices in livestock production across Europe, US, Canada, Latin, Scandinavian countries. This is essentially to give Nigeria's livestock a competitive edge and with a view to making the country a choice destination for huge investments and viable franchises across the continent.

The good news is that the minister's pedigree as a human resource technocrat with hands-on experience in livestock management and production with deep sense of best practices in agric business is well positioned to make a huge difference in the livestock chain, i.e., from production storage, processing, promotion and distribution, (Farms to markets).

Fortunately for the Minister, his task and mandate have been fully defined and spelt out by the professor Attahiru Jega-led presidential committee on livestock development, that had just summited its report on the potential and frame-work for optimizing livestock production in Nigeria.

Moreover, Idi Mukhtar has already demonstrated his commitment and zeal to leverage the much-needed best practices during his recent trip to Brazil, as part of the African Union delegation led by President Tinubu to the G20-summit hosted in Sao-Polo, the Brazilian Capital, a couple weeks ago.

At the sidelines of the G20 forum, Idi Mukhtar had along with the Secretary of the Presidential Committee on Livestock Development, Prof. Mohammed Kuta had engaged frontline players in the livestock domain with extensive franchises and markets, particularly in the US, Canada, Europe and Latin American countries with a view to exploring the unlimited possibilities of livestock industry at the global level. There and then, some American and Brazilian conglomerates, who are livestock industry global giants, with a huge potential of generating annual sales of over US\$100 billion in revenue are reported to have expressed keen interest in developing Nigeria's fledgling livestock industry to a competitive level. This was no doubt a cheering news and a big take-away from the 2024, G20 summit. According to reports the Minister of Livestock Development, Idi Mukhtar Maiha, who led the delegation visited farms and saw what his dreams could translate to for Nigeria. Specifically, it was reported that he had extensive tours of advanced facilities in São Paulo and selected JBS S.A. for its global expertise.



Mukhtar Maiha,
Minister Of Livestock Development

Maiha described JBS as the second-largest meat processor worldwide, capable of handling 33,000 cattle and over eight million birds daily while employing advanced zero-waste practices. Wesley Batista, founder and President of JBS, expressed optimism about the collaboration. He described Nigeria as a potential hub for protein supply across Africa and committed to advancing the partnership. "We are excited to work with Nigeria to develop its livestock industry. We see great opportunities for our business in Nigeria and across Africa," Batista said, adding that the company plans to visit Nigeria soon. The good news however is that less than a month after the Brazil visit, the company's team is already in Nigeria.

Following a \$2.5 Billion Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Brazilian firm for investment in the livestock sector, a team from the Brazilian protein company were in Niger state for a fact-finding mission of some livestock facilities in Minna, the State capital few days ago. Niger State Governor Mohammed Umaru Bago, who received them, said the livestock development project between the Federal Government of Nigeria and a Brazilian firm would open more doors of development. The Governor was upbeat about the development while hosting the Brazilian protein company's team on a fact-finding mission to some livestock facilities in the State.

Addressing the team led by the Executive Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC), Hajiya Aisha Rimi, he said, the State government is indeed excited with the project as the effects of its value chain are huge. He pointed out that it cuts across crop production and animal husbandry, among other things, adding that "it is heartwarming, having the world's largest protein company, with a huge turnover, visit the State for investment." This is a major win for the Livestock Development Ministry as well as Niger State government. It is believed that the success of the Niger experience will spur other states into action in other to harness the potentials of the Livestock industry and enhance its contributions to the nation's economy apart from diffusing the tension generated through farmer-herders' clashes.