Agribusiness moves Borno youths out of unemployment

Many Borno youths benefitted from a robust agricultural entrepreneurial scheme after being dislodged and losing their farms to insurgency.

Ibrahim Musa Gignyu, Kano

With the security challenges that rendered thousands of communities homeless and also created some insecurity situations in the North-East by rendering thousands jobless, it is a known fact that youths are the greatest assets of every society. Indeed, the greatest investment for development should be that which targets the youths.

It was based on these, that the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in collaboration with the Nigeria Agribusiness Project in Borno State that came up with a programme to effectively engage youths from the state in agricultural value chain to create opportunities and sustainable income from farming value addition and agribusiness with an established chain of integrated, profitable, sustainable and mutually supportive agricultural enterprises, which will be wholly owned by young agribusinesses, who are focused towards gainful self-employment.

Exposing the project in Kano, Borno State, project coordinator, Dr. Ndidi Kani, stated that the project was aimed at re-orienting the youths towards embracing agriculture and agribusiness as an income generating activity. He added that the project was also aimed at training participants on best practices in agricultural value chain, particularly grain legume intensification, by reaching out to more than 40,000 farming families and increase biological nitrogen fixation and productivity of grain legumes in Borno State, coupled with contributing to enhanced soil fertility, improved household nutrition and increased income for smallholder farmers.

Dr. Kani revealed that the main target was to provide job opportunities for at least 2,000 Borno youths in agro-based enterprises. According to him, out of the eleven African countries participating in the project, only Borno State has the youth empowerment programme, for obvious reasons, and particularly because of the direct visitation to the BMGE Foundation in the United States by the state governor, Abubakar Shettima, to request assistance for the intervention.

He noted that there was urgent need to reconstruct the agriculture and food security infrastructure of Borno State, alongside a pragmatic youth engagement and empowerment scheme that cannot be flogged at this time.

However, the coordinator recounted the project’s success story, saying that 127 youths have been trained and empowered. He said this took place in ten value chains, ranging from input supply, direct crop production, processing, product marketing, poultry, animal fattening to fish farming, which the agribusinesses have independently chosen, out of the 10 identified business opportunities in the grain legume value chain. According to him, all of these businesses have the potential to further create direct and indirect job opportunities for other youths and women of Borno State origin.

It was also gathered that a total of 47 youths representing batch 3, 4 and 5 are being officially presented with a starter pack totaling to N3.4 million. Each of the agribusinesses was given N50,000 disbursed in three installments and the spray service providers were given N100,000 each in two installments. Furthermore, all the Agribusinesses have been provided with a branded business location signposts and a Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) certificate, registration of the business in their chosen value chain.