

Nigeria Agriculture Policy Activity

July 2021

NAPA Highlights #1

HOW DOES INVESTING IN ONE SCHOLAR PAY BACK MULTIFOLD? ONE PROJECT SCHOLAR TRAINS OVER 800 STUDENTS IN ONE MONTH.

28TH JULY 2021

A one day training focusing on soil testing was held at Joshua Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi, (JOSTUM), Nigeria (formerly University of Agriculture Makurdi) on Wednesday the 28th of July 2021. It was organized by Michigan State University



(MSU) under the USAID Feed the Future Nigerian Agricultural Policy Activity (NAPA), a successor of the Nigerian Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP). Dr. Mrs. Agada, an alumina of the NAPP scholars program delivered the training. Her students, who had participated in an earlier soil sample collection activity on the soil productivity index (SPI) rating project delivered by NAPP, served as training assistants. That SPI rating project covered seven (7) Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Benue State in fulfillment of NAPP's motto "Train one to Train others".



DR. AGADA (TRAINER) AND DR. OKOH (SIWES COORDINATOR)

The opening remarks were given by the coordinator of the Students' Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), Dr. John Okoh who represented the Dean, College of Agronomy Prof. Terkimbi Vange. The coordinator was assisted by Mr. Samuel Atanu, the Farm Manager.

The training meeting, entirely a practical session, took place at the University's Teaching and Research Farm. It availed the students the opportunity to acquire a number of basic skills, from identifying equipment for testing various soil parameters (Physical, Chemical and Biological) to understanding how to collect field samples using sampling techniques including Random or Grid sampling. Demonstrations to show the difference between the different sampling techniques were provided.

The sequencing of the soil- testing process was the next target. This sequencing started with pre-field preparations such as identifying the population size based on research goals, the depths to which soil samples would be collected, assemblage of equipment needed (markers, nylons, shovel, hand trowel, tapes, auger, probe), vehicle to transport the samples and identifying proper dress for self-protection on the field. Next, participants explored the need to observe trees, soil color, earthworm cast, and topography of their environment. They learnt how to look out for slope and slope directions as both impact the way samples are collected. The session ended with exercises on proper labelling and identification of samples for the laboratory.

Pits were dug to various depths of (0 - 30cm), (30 – 60 cm), (60 – 90cm) to show how sampling was carried out at such depths. Soil physical parameters like bulk density procedure was featured with explanations of other derived soil parameters that could be obtained following calculations. These derived parameters were soil moisture and total porosity. It was explained that in order to determine most chemical properties, analysis had to be done in the laboratory or the researcher had to use sensor machines.

The meeting started at 11am running through to 3pm. Over 800 students from three of the eight colleges of the university attended. The three colleges and their constituent departments are listed below. The majority of participants were 400 level students on SIWES although undergraduates from the 300 and 500 levels also took part. A few technical staff and graduate students also participated.

1. Agronomy, with four (4) departments. Soil Science, Crop production, Crop protection, Plant breeding and seed science.

2. Animal Science with three departments. Animal Production, Animal Breeding & Physiology and Animal Nutrition.
3. Agricultural Economics, with two departments. Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Extension, Communication and Management.

The training event ended with refreshments and vote of thanks from excited students and technical staff of the university teaching and research farm. They prayed that NAPP would continue to provide such trainings and pledged to put what had been learnt to judicious use in their future work.

As the lead trainer, I felt greatly fulfilled knowing that we are raising well-grounded agronomists and agriculturists that will be leaders in agriculture tomorrow. To NAPP, NAPA and MSU we say thank you.



SHOWING STUDENTS SOIL AUGER AND ITS USE/ DIFFERENCE FROM THE PROBE



STUDENTS GROUPED ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENTS WAITING FOR THEIR PRACTICAL SESSION WITH THE TRAINER

By Dr. (Mrs.) Blessing Agada

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