

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

November 2019

Scholar Program 64

HIGHLIGHTS OF MY VISIT TO MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

October 23 to November 22, 2019, I was privileged to participate (alongside 2 other professors from Nigeria) in a working visit to Michigan State University (MSU) under the Feed the Future Nigerian Agricultural Policy Project Scholar program (NAPP).

I had learned about MSU from my mentor Prof J. O. Olukosi who is an MSU alumnus. He was very proud of and recommended MSU for all intending higher education studies in the department of Agriculture, Food and Resource Economics (AFRE). So, I came to MSU with lots of expectations as my PhD student (Onyeje Obekpa) had also hinted about the continuing good reputation of the AFRE Department. I arrived in Detroit on October 24, 2019 and was picked up warmly by Dr. Oyinkan Tasie alongside Nigerian Professors, J. O. Alimba and A.A. Coker, to a comfortable apartment in Lansing.



Myself and My PhD Student Mrs Hephzibah Onyeje Obekpa upon my Arrival

The following day, we had our first feel of the university. Michigan State University has a rich history. As a public institution, MSU was founded in 1855 as the first land-grant institution in the USA and became a model for similar schools. It was interesting to note that MSU founded the University of Nigeria Nsuka in 1960.

I stepped into the famous Justin S Morill Hall of Agriculture, home to AFRE on the 25th October 2019 and was received by Steve Longabaugh, Dr. Oyinkan Tasie and Prof. Saweda Liverpool-Tasie. We were given orientation and allocated office space with full internet access. In the days ahead, I had the rare privilege to meet outstanding scholars and distinguished faculty members.

I was introduced to the library facilities and was happy to have first hand access to very important literature from a library system that comprises nine branch locations including the Main Library. As of 2015-16, the MSU Libraries ranked 26th among U.S. and Canadian research libraries by number of volumes (7,261,157 volumes) and 11th among U.S. and Canadian research libraries by number of titles held (7,800,120 titles). The strength of any university depends on its library facilities. The Africana Collection is one of the largest of its kind in the USA with a collection of over 200,000 items. Other significant collections include Agriculture, Food and Resource Economics, with over 10,000 collections and a link to the prestigious Library of Congress. I searched and downloaded many materials from high impact journals including the American Association of Agricultural Economics (AJAE). I spent a lot of time going through the library resources and downloading materials related to my research.

While at MSU, I participated in the seminar series for both faculty and students. I networked with reputable academics and faculty members. One important seminar that I participated in was the 'Economic Growth with Poverty Reduction: Innovation, Equity and Rates of Change' by Rob Horsch. I had the rare opportunity to present my work on "Farmers-Herders conflict in Benue State Nigeria: Implications for Food Security". I was very pleased at the amount of interest and contributions. One of AFRE's faculty members, Professor Soji Adelaja, had served as advisor to the president of Nigeria. He also served as the National Security Advisor on the North East Economic summit and had vast experience working in the field of conflict. Going forward, Prof Adelaja extended a research collaboration opportunity to my university under the feed the future innovation lab for Market, Risk and Resilience (MRR) project.

The visit to Kellogg Biological Station (KBS) was very educative. At KBS, we observed modern techniques used in animal husbandry. In a bad weather situation (snow and freezing temperatures), we observed that dairy cattle were being properly managed. This was a practical lesson for me to take home as I face the challenges of transhumance conflict in Benue State.

A visit to Detroit, focused on Urban Agriculture and was equally very educative. With population growth in the urban areas in Nigeria, there is a growing importance of urban agriculture in meeting the food and nutrition needs of the urban poor in the cities. Through the careful planning of cities and land use, urban agriculture can contribute to reducing food and nutrition insecurity.

I also had a good time networking at the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) and the African Studies Center.

Coming to MSU was a great professional experience. I look forward to coming back.

By Prof. Godwin A Abu
Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Agriculture Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria

This work is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Feed the Future initiative through the Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project, Associate Cooperative Agreement Number AJD-620-LA-15-00001. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.