



**NIGERIA AGRICULTURAL QUARANTINE SERVICE
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL
MEDIA, COMMUNICATIONS AND STRATEGIES UNIT**

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**Restoring Export Control at Ports of Entry Critical to Economic Diversification –
NAQS DG**

Abuja, February 18, 2021

Nigeria must restore conventional export control measures at all ports of entry to optimize its comparative advantage in agricultural commodities and diversify the economy, the Director General, Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Service (NAQS), Dr. Vincent Isegbe has said.

Dr. Isegbe made this known today in Abuja at the inauguration of the members of the Standing Committee on Agro Zero Initiative.

While speaking on the status of NAQS efforts towards lifting the EU's suspension of the import of Nigerian dried beans, NAQS DG said that Nigeria was the largest producer of dried cowpea in the world, accounting for almost half of the global production. He noted, however, that Nigeria was not among the top 10 leading exporters of dried cowpea in the world. He pointed out that this sad paradox was essentially due to the absence of proper gatekeeping to ensure that commodities passed for export meet pesticide residue standards and other phytosanitary requirements.

He explained that lack of export quality guarantees and the resultant off-and on pattern of the export traffic of Nigerian dried beans was costing the country \$362.5 in foreign revenue annually.

Speaking on the weak link in the bean value chain, Dr. Isegbe said that the ban was occasioned by an export control gap which allowed the shipping of dried beans with pesticide residues higher than the permissible threshold. He mentioned that the results of the extensive

fieldwork and laboratory analyses done by NAQS showed that the challenge of high pesticide residue in Nigerian beans was not nested in the farm. He reported that the bean samples collected from the farms had low pesticide residues –beneath the maximum residue level (MRL) of Nigeria’s trading partners –while bean samples collected from the warehouses had high pesticide residues, above the MRL. According to him, this wide differential indicates that high pesticide use is traceable to the bulk buyers, aggregators, and exporters. In an attempt to protect their stock against weevils and other storage pests, these set of actors usually lace their beans with pesticides liberally; thereby, raising the pesticide residues in the commodity above the MRL and unwittingly rendering them ineligible for export.

He remarked that NAQS was carrying out an intensive public awareness on the dangers of indiscriminate use of pesticides. He said that the agency’s message on integrated pest management, the proper use of pesticides, and good agricultural practices (GAP) is breaking through to farmers, oftakers, warehouse owners, and exporters in the beans producing belt and across the country. He expressed hope that a shift away from synthetic pesticides to biopesticides and organic agriculture among agricultural value chain players will bring the country closer to the point when Nigeria can dominate the global cowpea market and other markets where the nation can assert its comparative advantage.

Dr. Isegbe thanked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Alhaji Muhammad Sambo Nanono, for his commitment to repositioning NAQS to carry out its export control functions at the airports and the seaports. He also lauded the minister for reviving the Standing Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee on Agro Zero Reject Initiative. He said that, with all the relevant stakeholders working concertedly toward the zero reject target, it won’t be long before all the causal issues of export reject are tackled.

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