

UNIDO's \$4.6m palm oil program for Ondo, Akwa Ibom

The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, UNIDO is to establish \$4.6 million oil palm pilot centres in Ondo and Akwa Ibom States to boost palm oil production in the country.

The Ondo State centre would be in Okitipupa, Akwa Ibom State is having one of the two centres allocated to Nigeria with another two in Cameroun. The National Coordinator of the intervention programme Dr Umoru Omoti who disclosed this while briefing the Ondo State governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko during a visit to him in Akure, said the programme is valued at 4.6 million U.S Dollars.

He noted that the project was being jointly funded by UNIDO, Common Fund for Commodities, and the Nigerian and Camerounian governments to improve the income generating potentials of oil palm in the two sub-regions. Omoti explained that the Okitipupa pilot centre, which was a brain child of a team of experts assembled by UNIDO, will have a fully automated and integrated palm oil mill to produce quality palm oil as well as palm kernel oil and meal plants.

He lamented the Nigeria's lost glory in the oil palm industry due to the past neglect of the agricultural sector which turned the leading palm oil producing and exporting nation into a net importer of palm produce. Omoti expressed confidence that the project will contribute greatly to poverty reduction, jobs creation and enhance oil palm value chain to ultimately improve the economies of the targeted countries.

The UNIDO Oil Palm National Project Co-ordinator listed the gains of the project to include improving the technological and skills inputs in palm oil processing, sustainable development and supply of the raw materials as well as improving market access and competitiveness for the farm produce. Responding, Mimiko who was represented by his Chief of Staff, Dr Kola Ademujimi, assured UNIDO that the state government was ready to collaborate with the organisation to ensure the success of the intervention programme since oil palm revolution has started in the state.

He mentioned the over one million palm seedlings from Malaysia which are already at the Agricultural City, Ore in Odigbo Local Government area as part of the long term project for massive oil palm production for improved local and foreign earnings to the state.

According to him, while the state government will not compromise production quality, it will also commence exploring means of getting maximum use of products from the oil palm revolutionary agenda through processing of palm products.