



**WELCOME ADDRESS**

**BY**

**DR DALHATU SARKI TAFIDA, OFR  
HIGH COMMISSIONER OF NIGERIA  
TO THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**ON THE OCCASION OF INTRODUCTION OF *PEPA* YAM FROM  
NASARAWA STATE INTO UNITED KINGDOM,**

**NIGERIA HOUSE, LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 11, 2009**

## Protocol

**It is with profound pleasure that I welcome you to this event. The launching today of Pepa Yam from Nasarawa State of Nigeria goes beyond mere symbolism of a single event. It is, for me, a practical and significant step in the quest for increased exportation of Nigerian non-oil products to the United Kingdom, which will ultimately enhance Nigeria-UK trade relations, a corner stone of my mission in the United Kingdom.**

**We have continued, for too long, to lament the unhealthy reliance of the Nigerian economy on oil and gas exports, with its attendant vagaries. As efforts at finding alternative and renewable sources of energy are being intensified globally, it has become imperative for Nigeria to seek a better future of security and prosperity without oil and gas; a future anchored on sustainable domestic food security, export of non-oil products, manufacturing, value-addition and a knowledge-based economy, among other drivers of a modern economy.**

**Today's event must therefore be seen as a ground breaking process that should open the door for other Nigerian agricultural products not just into the UK, but also the European Union. Exporting Nigerian yam to the UK will not only improve the income of farmers, it will also create jobs, increase foreign exchange earnings, and improve the overall trade balance between Nigeria and the UK.**

**One of the major challenges of exporting agricultural products to**

**the EU has been the relatively low level of domestic capacity, poor storage facilities, high tariff and non-tariff barriers, some of which are associated with proper packaging, labelling and standardisation. There are also the challenges of sanitary and phyto-sanitary regulations of the EU. Today's event is, therefore, the outcome of years of rigorous planning, foresight and strong commitment on the part of the Government of Nasarawa State, to overcome these challenges, to promote the vision of an export-led growth and the development of Nigerian economy, on the basis of abundant natural, non-oil resources of our country.**

**May I therefore commend and congratulate the Government and people of Nasarawa State, under the able and visionary leadership of His Excellency, Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma, on this truly remarkable feat. His predecessor in office, His Excellency, Dr Abdullahi Adamu, who is now the President of the Association of Nigerian Farmers, must also be lauded for his foresight in planting the seeds of today's event four years ago.**

**I urge all State Governments in Nigeria to emulate this historic initiative, by exploring the export of other non-oil products from Nigeria, many of which are yet to penetrate foreign markets. In pursuit of Government's export drives, it is not difficult for anyone to imagine what the outcome would be, if every State Government in Nigeria were to pick one non-oil product of heavy concentration for export.**

**As we celebrate today's achievement, I am confident that before**

long, it should be possible to add greater value to yam and other agricultural produce from Nigeria, by processing them into other consumables, including pharmaceutical or industrial products.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this juncture, I need not remind various State Governments in Nigeria that the local markets for agricultural products in the UK and elsewhere are very discerning. We are coming into a market that is already awash with a variety of yam from different parts of the world. It is therefore essential that we maintain very high standards of our products as a sure means of capturing a special niche for our yam in the highly-competitive market of the UK and beyond.

There is also the need to ensure uninterrupted supplies of our yam, especially to buyers who may seek long-term commitments. This should be possible through the adoption of irrigation agriculture, to ensure an all-year-round production of the crop. As a means of encouraging greater production, not just for local consumption but also for export, Government should also introduce appropriate incentives to farmers in the States, including access to credits and other farm inputs.

The beauty of yam is that it can be prepared into various forms and eaten at different times of the day, depending on the convenience and choice of the consumer. I therefore invite you, Distinguished

**Ladies and Gentlemen, to savour the delicious taste of Pepa yam from Nasarawa State, which have been prepared in various forms, to wet your appetite on this momentous occasion.**

**I thank you for your time and for listening.**