



Former President of the African Development Bank Group, Dr Akinwumi Adesina (left), with the Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, and Nigeria's Minister of Agriculture and Food Security. PHOTO CREDIT: AFDB

Nigeria agri-parks could churn out the next million-dollar enterprises

By Patrick Githinji

The African Development Bank's Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZ) in Nigeria stand out as one of the most transformative agri-business initiatives ever designed for Africa. Here's why they are poised to reinvigorate the sector and potentially generate Africa's next wave of million-dollar enterprises over the next decade.

With a population exceeding 220 million and a rapidly expanding youth cohort, Nigeria faces both an urgent need for jobs and an enormous market opportunity. SAPZs directly address this by industrialising agriculture at scale and localising value addition. Eight pioneer states and the Federal Capital Territory are currently hosting SAPZs, each leveraging local strengths. Kaduna, for example, will focus on maize, soybeans, ginger, and tomatoes, while Cross River will specialise in cocoa, cassava, and rice. This targeted approach harnesses Nigeria's agricultural diversity as a foundation for scaled-up, competitive industries.

SAPZs are more than simply agri-parks. They are holistic ecosystems: integrating farmers' cooperatives (many led by women), aggregation centres, processing hubs, infrastructure, and crucially, access to technology and finance. The proximity of these zones to research universities like Ahmadu Bello University and University of Calabar ensures a pipeline of innovation and skilled youth talent—essential for scaling agribusinesses into million-dollar ventures.

Nigeria's youth unemployment and underemployment rates remain among Africa's highest. SAPZs are expected to create over 400,000 direct jobs and 1.6 million indirect jobs during construction and operation, with the first phase touching about 50 million Nigerians. They will empower rural youth and women entrepreneurs, offering new platforms for agritech, logistics, and business development—precisely what Africa needs to both feed itself and spur inclusive growth.

Nigeria currently spends billions importing food—money that SAPZs can help keep within the continent by ramping up local production and

processing. These zones are designed to reduce post-harvest losses, boost productivity over 60 percent, and drive competitive exports. By connecting African producers to local, regional, and global markets, SAPZs can help spawn homegrown brands that rival global competitors within a decade.

SAPZs are not just a Nigerian experiment; they are being rolled out in over 10 African countries, but Nigeria's scale, market, and diversity make it the continental test case. Success here will inspire replication, adaptation, and scaling across Africa, with the potential to transform idle rural landscapes into corridors of prosperity and climate-smart enterprise.

SAPZs represent a bold bet that Africa's green revolution can start at home—with Nigerian farmers, women's cooperatives, youth entrepreneurs, and a marketplace that is as lucrative as it is hungry for homegrown success. If implemented effectively, SAPZs will not only feed Africa but will create a generation of million-dollar agri-enterprises, making Nigeria the beating heart of a new era for African agriculture.