



AGRI-MEDIA WORKSHOP

Strengthening Media's Role in
Advancing Food Security in Nigeria

September 17th, 2025

INTRODUCTION

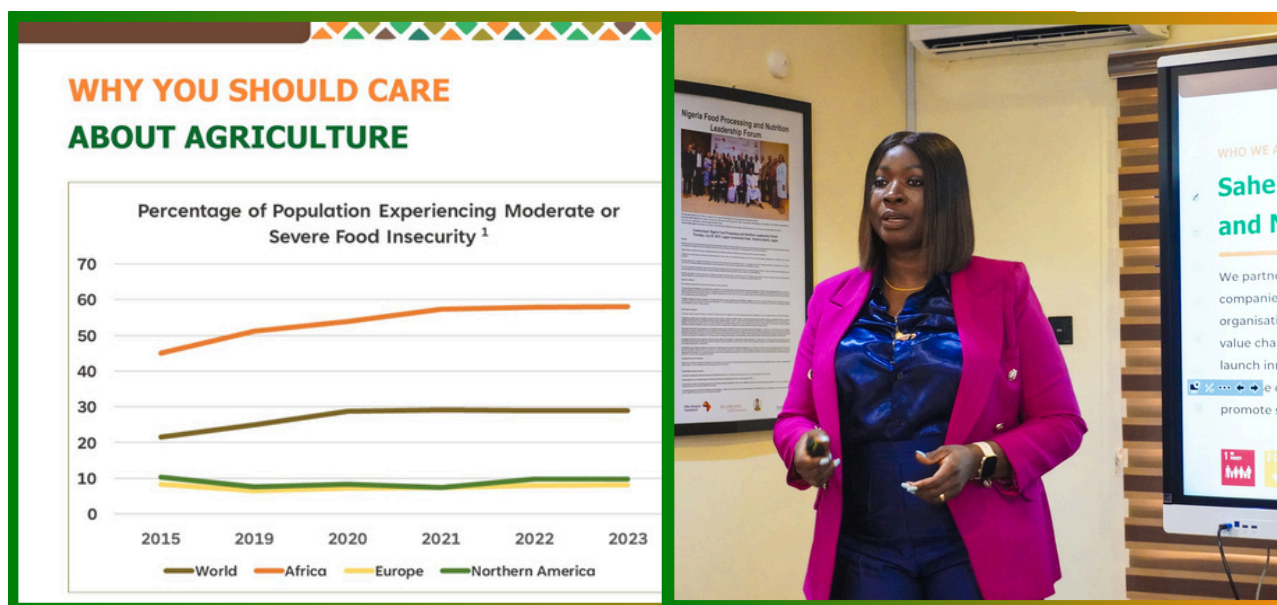
In a nation facing urgent food security challenges, how can the media's voice move from reporting problems to driving solutions, mobilising investment, and accelerating agricultural innovation?

This question set the tone for the media workshop, which brought together facilitators, journalists, and stakeholders to explore how Nigeria's media can play a transformative role in shaping agricultural narratives, influencing policy, and building public awareness on food security.

The discussions highlighted both the gaps and the opportunities in agricultural reporting, underscoring the urgent need for more consistent, data-driven, and human-centred coverage.



SETTING THE FRAME



Our Manager, **Grace Omini** challenged participants to rethink how agriculture is covered in Nigeria's media.

"Too often, agriculture only makes headlines when there is hardship. But agriculture is also a story of innovation, opportunity, and solutions. The media must help the nation see this side of the story."

She highlighted the limited public knowledge of Nigeria's agricultural realities, noting that this gap constrains development. She called on the media to spotlight what is working: farmers adopting new technologies, thriving agribusinesses, and policies that bring real change.

While outlining our work in agriculture and nutrition, spanning policy engagement, multi-sectoral collaboration, public-private partnerships, and agribusiness development, she left participants with a pressing question:

"Will we continue to let others define Nigeria's agricultural story, or will we use our own platforms to show that this sector is worth investing in, worth innovating for, and worth believing in?"

After posing this challenge, she reminded participants that the way agriculture is portrayed has real consequences. If the media only shows poverty and struggle, the sector will never look appealing to young people or to investors. But when stories of innovation, resilience, and thriving agribusinesses are amplified, agriculture becomes a sector of opportunity.

Grace stressed that with Nigeria's population projected to rise sharply by 2050, shifting perceptions and promoting innovation today is not just important; it is the deciding factor in whether the nation can feed itself tomorrow.

AGRICULTURE AS AN “ORPHAN SECTOR”



With over 45 years in radio and television broadcasting, **Dr. Muhammad Kudu Abubakar**, a facilitator of one of the sessions, described agriculture as an “*orphan sector*” that has not received the attention it deserves. Despite vast arable land, poverty remains pervasive in many regions, particularly in the North, where nine out of ten residents live below the poverty line.

Dr. Abubakar charged journalists to rethink their role in this context. Reporting on agriculture, he argued, must go beyond surface-level headlines and fragmented efforts. Instead, the media should set agendas, influence policy, and hold leaders accountable. By raising public awareness and giving food security the same level of visibility as politics or security, the media can drive systemic change.

“Food security is not just about feeding people today; it is about ensuring the survival and stability of generations to come. If the media does not prioritise this story, we risk losing the future we claim to be building.”

He underscored the need for agricultural media hubs - specialised groups of expert reporters who consistently focus on food security. Such collectives, he explained, would ensure agriculture receives the attention it deserves and amplify solutions that work.

AGRICULTURE AS AN “ORPHAN SECTOR”



“The media cannot rest when food security issues remain unaddressed. Our role is to establish legacies beyond headlines, to use investigative reporting to uncover root causes and tell human stories that inspire action.”

Key Points Included:

- **Reframe Reporting Priorities** – Elevate agriculture and food security to the same prominence as politics and security in newsrooms. Treat them not as “side stories,” but as national survival issues that demand daily attention.
- **Investigate Deeper** – Go beyond poor harvest headlines. Ask why: counterfeit seeds? weak extension systems? storage failures? insecurity? Expose root causes and hold decision-makers accountable, while pointing audiences toward workable solutions.
- **Build Agriculture Media Hubs** – Form specialised group of trained journalists who consistently track agriculture and food security. By speaking collectively and with expertise, these hubs can influence policymakers and demand action that fragmented efforts cannot.
- **Shift the Narrative** – Replace images of suffering with stories of thriving agribusinesses, resilient farmers, and youth-led innovations. Show Nigerians that agriculture is not just survival, but a sector of opportunity, investment, and legacy.

TURNING NUMBERS INTO STORIES

A seasoned specialist in Communications, Public Policy, and Democratic Governance, **Dr. Arthur-Martins Aginam** focused on how data-driven journalism can strengthen agricultural reporting. He stressed that data without context has no value. It only becomes useful when processed, organised, interpreted, and structured.

He explained the different types of data such as quantitative, qualitative, and multidimensional, and the need to distinguish between primary and secondary sources. Beyond definitions, he urged journalists to see data as a practical tool for investigation and accountability.

“Numbers alone don’t move people; stories do. Journalists must connect statistics to real lives, the farmer in Benue, the mother in Kano, the consumer in Lagos.”

Dr. Aginam noted that audiences are turning away from news that only highlights problems. To keep people engaged, reporters must go further: make data relatable, use visuals that aid understanding, and tell stories that point to both challenges and solutions.

“If the media only projects crises, people will switch off. Data journalism should not just expose problems but also highlight pathways for change.”



TURNING NUMBERS INTO STORIES

He reinforced the need for journalists to look at food systems in full, from production to waste, and show how issues like flooding along the Benue River affect agriculture, the economy, and daily life. He closed by reminding participants that good reporting is human-centred. Journalists must know their audience, simplify the numbers, and always ask, “*what is the purpose of this story?*”

Key Points Included:

- **Turn Data into Human Stories** – Journalists must connect numbers to real people and situations, showing how statistics affect farmers, households, and consumers. Humanising data makes complex issues easier to understand and harder to ignore.
- **Balance Problem-reporting with Solutions** – Avoid news that only highlights crises. Use data not just to expose gaps, but also to highlight success stories, policy options, and innovations that inspire hope and drive change.
- **Cover Food Systems Holistically** – From production to processing, distribution, consumption, and waste, every stage is connected. Journalists should show how shocks like flooding or insecurity disrupt the food system and ripple through the wider economy and society.



INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

During the interactive session, participants explored media strategies for sustained coverage of food security.

Group 1 discussed the “**media roles and strategies for sustained coverage on food security**” and proposed that:

- More public awareness campaigns on food security should be organised. Helping the public understand what it means to have safe and nutritious food regardless of the season.
 - Provide regular training, mentorship, and funding opportunities that enable journalists to conduct in-depth, ethical, and high-impact reporting on food security challenges and solutions.
 - Develop centralised digital repositories and partnerships with research institutions, NGOs, and government agencies to supply journalists with timely, verified, and interpretable data to support accurate and insightful reporting.
 - Foster collaborations between media houses, NGOs, government agencies, and community groups to amplify coverage, share resources, and coordinate reporting on food security issues for greater impact.
- Ensure reporting reflects the perspectives, needs, and experiences of local communities, giving voice to farmers, households, and grassroots organisations, and making stories relevant and actionable at the local level.
 - Uphold journalistic standards by accurately representing complex food security issues, avoiding misleading simplifications, and maintaining credibility while making content understandable for diverse audiences.



INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

Meanwhile, **Group 2** deliberated on the "need for dedicated hub - how to operate them, possible challenges, and organisations that can facilitate and proffer solutions" and concluded that:

- Establish fully functional hubs, both physical and online, that provide journalists with direct access to research reports, verified news materials, data sets, and practical reporting tools, ensuring resources are easy to find, navigate, and use.
- Create a structured funding mechanism to support rigorous field investigations, data collection, and analytical research, enabling journalists to produce in-depth, evidence-based stories on food security.
- Develop a centralised library of high-quality images, videos, and multimedia content, with clear access and usage protocols for media practitioners to enhance storytelling and visual reporting.
- Formalise agreements with media houses to guarantee that hub-generated stories are broadcast or published widely, ensuring that investigative work reaches target audiences and drives impact.





KEY TAKEAWAYS

The workshop concluded with a shared understanding that:

01

Use the media as a driver of agricultural transformation

Journalists should go beyond awareness-raising to set agendas, influence policies, and demand accountability from leaders and institutions.

02

Treat food security as a systemic and urgent priority

Reporting must reflect its multidimensional nature, linking agriculture to health, environment, security, and economic growth rather than treating it in fragments.

03

Invest in stronger journalism capacity and collaboration

Dedicated training, funding, and media hubs can empower reporters to cover agriculture more consistently and amplify impact through partnerships.

04


Turn data into compelling stories

By humanising statistics and linking them to farmers, households, and consumers, journalists can shift public perception and move audiences from awareness to action.

05

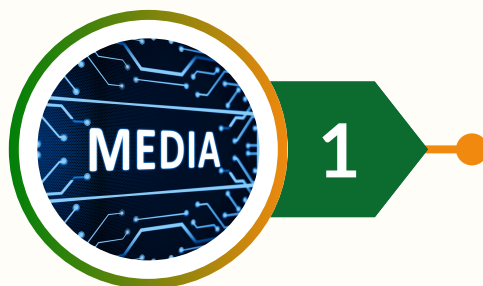
Report solutions, not just problems

Stories that spotlight innovation, resilience, and success keep audiences engaged and motivated, while also showing pathways for change.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the team interactions and facilitator insights, the following actions were recommended:



Establish Agricultural Media Hubs

Form specialised journalist groups focused on food security and agriculture, fostering collaboration across media houses for a stronger, unified voice.

Invest in Capacity Building

Provide regular training, fellowships, and grants on investigative journalism, data use, and storytelling to strengthen reporting quality and depth.



Strengthen Access to Resources

Create shared databases, digital platforms, and resource banks, while partnering with institutions like FAO and universities to bridge data gaps.



Promote Solution-Driven, Human-Centred Storytelling

Encourage stories that highlight both challenges and solutions, using data to tell human-interest stories that show how systemic issues affect families, farmers, and communities.



Foster Partnerships and Media Commitment

Build cross-sector partnerships with policymakers, private sector, and NGOs, while securing commitments from media houses to prioritise agriculture and food security in editorial agendas.



PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK



Oje Cecilia Abeyi
DAILY TRUST

The training was excellent and very educative. I was also very impressed with the hospitality.

Usman Katun Umar
WADR

The workshop was well-planned and implemented. I will suggest that more journalists should be invited, and the training should be extended to two days for more impactful sessions.

Zainab Adewale
PREMIUM TIMES

The workshop was insightful, though some parts were familiar information, I had a great time unlearning and relearning. I also enjoyed the interactive sessions.

CONTACT US



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