

GREEN REVOLUTION CALLING! ANYONE?

Mr. Green is in trouble. He has a passion, a vision to give hunger and poverty technical knockouts while also triggering off an economic boom. But is anyone willing to give him a chance? That is Mr. Green's trouble.

Ponder over this: nearly 200 million Africans are undernourished due to paucity of food supplies. How come? Aren't we blessed with an abundance of agricultural resources? I wonder. But wait for this: a vast stretch of African savannah land that spreads across 25 countries has the potential to turn several African countries into global players in bulk commodity production according to a study published by the Food and Agricultural Organization.

Mr. Green takes his trip to Nigeria on a mission to sell the dream.

Mr. Green: Hello, Nigeria. I hear you are the giant around here. There's work for you, in the farm.

Nigeria: Oh come off it, Green. Why should I go tilling that wretched earth when there are billions to be made in the oil and gas industry.

Mr. Green: Sure? Now hear this: oil and gas brings 99 per cent of exports and nearly 85 per cent of government revenues to Nigeria. But the industry creates employment for only 4 percent of the population. Besides, oil is exhaustible. It will finish some day. Then, you'll spend the rest of your life trying to repair the damage done by petroleum exploitation. Do you still want to put all your eggs in one leaking basket, or would you rather cash in on the green revolution?

Nigeria: Tell it to my children, then.

Mr. Green goes over to the youths and addresses them using the hoe as his microphone.

Mr. Green: Thank you very much, youths, for this opportunity to let you in on the agricultural revolution. Friends, the time has come for us to take our destinies in our hands. We have a duty to avert disaster: of hunger and poverty amidst plenty. The land is green, oh yes! it is blessed by the gracious creator with human and natural resources. The British Council says Nigeria's greatest asset that will enable it attain huge breakthroughs is the youths. So, my young people, will you do this for you? Will you return to the land, nurture and cultivate it for prosperity in posterity? You will, won't you? Take the initiative and save poor old Mama and Papa who toil and sweat to feed you all. The poor rural folk can't provide all the food to sustain all of us and earn enough resources to sustain the economy. Take the bull by the horns and make money out of it...

Emeka: Er, wait a minute. Did you say I can be rich by working on the land?

Mr. Green: Of course. Opportunities abound in the agricultural sector for great wealth. You can be a producer, producing root crops and legumes and cereals and vegetables, and tree crops and fruits and vegetables for industrial and home use. Government and aid agencies are willing to grant you help in acquiring fixed and circulating capital for the purpose. You can become an exporter of farm produce and an employer of labour. At the end of the day, you'll go smiling, even laughing to the bank. You did it before, in the sixties when oil wasn't such an intruder. You can do it again.

Treasures are deposited right where you stand. You could make megabucks keeping livestock and fisheries; growing a wide range of wood resources or engaging in commodity marketing and transportation. That reminds me, do you know that cassava is well suited for ethanol production? In case you're unaware, ethanol is very useful in the food and pharmaceutical industries. Fuel could be made from it too. The Federal Government has even introduced the Biofuel Production Programme to establish a strong ethanol industry. The FG offers incentives such as withholding tax on interests, waiver on import and customs duties as well as long term preferential loans to those who feed this industry with the needed raw materials.

If you can't handle it alone, why not form co-operative societies where you and your fellows can come together to pool resources, ideas and talents together for large and medium-scale agricultural production. The benefits are enormous. Does anyone care?

Bimbo: Are you done? Me, carry hoe de go work for farm. That one no possible, now. Farming is for bush people. I want to own an international business conglomerate.

Mr. Green: What line of business will you be engaged in, and do you have an idea how you will start up the business?

Bimbo: I don't know. For all I care, Bimbo is becoming a big time entrepreneur, period!

Amina: You be correct babe, abeg! For me, in this era of women liberation and affirmation, I want to become a politician. Who says I can't be governor of my state. Come on, the men have cheated us enough in this game. Moreover, the seat of power is where the action

is. That's where I can make cool money in no time. So cut that crap about farming.

Mr. Green: But politics is not a profession. You could make money as an agriculturist and still play politics.

Amina: No way!

Chike: Before you become governor, you need a godfather, but don't go searching. I'm here. I will be a high profile contractor. And with one fat cheque from Aso Rock, I could bankroll your election, provided you won't swap loyalty after winning.

Bassey: As in, you know, I wanna be an international rap star, men. Like 50 Cents, understand? Farming is too dirty, too low for a guy like me.

Osaro: Mr. Green my man! As you see me so, na the next movie star be dis o. Right now I'm billed for an audition on a reality TV show. Don't worry, when babes start running after me as Ramsey Noah and moviemakers begin falling over each other to hire me like Jim Iyke, then you can count on me for some dollars in that your green thing. I wish you luck.

Mr. Green picks up his hoe in slow motion. And like a little boy made shy for saying something stupid, he disappears to the backyard.

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