Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria
Number: Thirty-First Annual Conference
Theme: Strengthening the Agricultural Extension Innovation Systems for Greater Development Impacts
Date: 12th to 15th April 2026
Venue: Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria
ISSN: 1595 – 1421.
Website: https://info@ajol.org,
Email: agricultural.extension.nigeria@gmail.com; editorinchief@aesonnigeria.org

President's Address at the Opening Ceremony of the 31st Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria, April 13, 2026, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jae.v31i1.1S

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Protocol and Salutations
Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with immense pleasure and a profound sense of privilege that I extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to each and every one of you to the opening ceremony of the 2026 Annual Conference of the Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON), held here today at this esteemed citadel of knowledge, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike.

Allow me to acknowledge the presence of our distinguished guests, and those who are not here, whose commitment to agricultural development is truly commendable:

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu (GCFR)
The Executive Governor of Abia State: His Excellency Dr Alex Chioma Otti
The Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Distinguished Senator Abubakar Kyari (CON), whose leadership continues to steer our nation's agricultural trajectory.
The Honourable Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Distinguished Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullah (CON), whose dedication inspires us all.
The Honourable Minister of Livestock Development Idi, MUKHTAR MAIHA
The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.
The Director, Federal Department of Agricultural Extension, whose visionary guidance advances our services.
The Vice-Chancellor Prof Urusola Ngozi Okenwa, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, for graciously hosting this landmark event.
The Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Principal Officers, and Deans of Faculties (in particular the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture Michael Okpara University, Umudike..
The Hon. Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Abia State.
Executive Director of National Root, Crop Research Institute Prof Chiedozie Egesi

The Executive Directors of SASAKAWA, ARCN, NAERLS,
The Keynote Presenter, Prof Batolomew Nnaji
The Lead Presenter, Prof. Yemi Akinbamijor
Members of the AESON Executive, whose tireless efforts propel our mission.
The dedicated Local Organizing Committee for the 2026 AESON Conference.
All AESON members, invited guests, gentlemen of the press, and everyone present.

The Enduring Legacy of AESON
For over three decades, since its inception in the early 1990s, AESON has maintained its annual conference as a vital platform for extension practitioners, academics, farmers, and policymakers. These gatherings foster innovative ideas and strategies that transform agricultural extension and drive Nigeria's agricultural sector forward. Our conferences have generated insights that yield lasting development impacts.

AESON's Commitment to Excellence and Innovation
AESON remains dedicated to advancing agricultural extension through textbooks, journals, training for field workers, international collaborations, and a quarterly webinar. Our journal enjoys global recognition, and we embrace hybrid (physical and virtual) participation for inclusivity. The National Agricultural Extension Policy, now fully implemented post-Federal Executive Council approval, underpins our collective resolve. AESON actively supports digital tools such as the E-Agricultural Extension repository to enhance knowledge dissemination.

Gratitude and Collaboration
We extend deep gratitude to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, under the Honourable Minister's leadership, and the Federal Department of Agricultural Extension and SASAKAWA-Africa for their steadfast support. We seek your continued partnership amid evolving challenges like climate resilience and digital innovation.

The Conference Theme and National Development
Building on last year's focus on "Agricultural Extension Policies, Practices, and Sustainable Food Systems," this year's theme, "Strengthening Agricultural Extension Innovation Systems for Greater Development Impacts," urges us to utilise technology, data-driven strategies, and collaborations to promote food security and rural prosperity. We need to align with the National Agricultural Growth Scheme (NAGS) under President Tinubu's government, incorporating climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive innovations to enhance effects. AESON commits to fully supporting the growth of digital platforms and innovation hubs.

Honouring Contributions and Looking Ahead
This conference will honour individuals whose exceptional contributions to AESON will be recognised through fellowship awards. I say congratulations! We want to begin recognising our undergraduate students, the AESON TEENs. They are the ones who will carry the mantle from the older generation.

I thank the Almighty God for this gathering and commend the Local Organising Committee for their meticulous efforts.

May God bless us all for fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.