

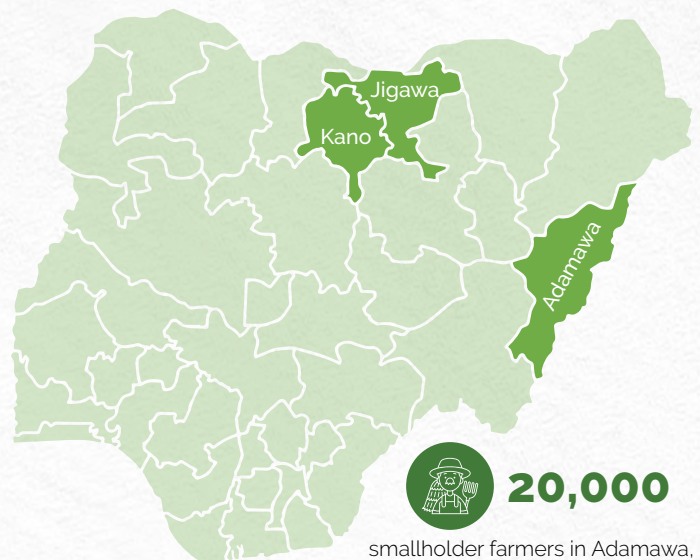
Success Story

UK Government Investment in Irri-Go Model Boosts Rice Production in Northern Nigeria

In Nigeria, where rice is mainly produced by small-scale farmers under rain-fed conditions with relatively low productivity, a groundbreaking initiative called 'Irrigation-As-A-Service' (Irri-Go) is revolutionising the agricultural landscape, providing smallholder rice farmers with solar irrigation solutions, driving down production costs, boosting rice production, and reducing methane emissions.

Thanks to the UK Government's strategic investment through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s agricultural market systems programme, Propcom+, a Nigerian social enterprise, Community Energy Social Enterprise Limited (CESEL) launched the Irri-Go model with 43 clustered farmers in three rice farming clusters in Jigawa State, northwest Nigeria in December 2023.

Propcom+ partnered with CESEL to successfully pilot the rent-to-own Irri-Go model under the Sustainable Rice Intensification (SRI) pilot, which aimed to introduce sustainable rice farming practices to over 20,000 smallholder farmers in Adamawa, Kano and Jigawa States. For a one-hectare rice field, SRI requires only half the volume of seeds, 40 – 75% less water, reduces carbon by 22-64%, and yields between 40-65% compared to traditional rice farming.



smallholder farmers in Adamawa, Kano and Jigawa States targeted for the pilot

Compared to the traditional flooding of rice farms, intermittent irrigation or alternate wet and dry irrigation for SRI requires irrigation infrastructure, which is mostly non-existent or pricy for many smallholders. The Irri-Go model offers an eco-friendly solution by establishing solar-powered irrigation systems with farmer clusters with plans for the farmers to own the infrastructure after five years as they make payments after each harvest. This not

only boosts productivity but also significantly reduces carbon emissions, contributing to a healthier environment.

One significant advantage is that the cluster-solar irrigation service allows multiple farmers to benefit from a single irrigation setup, making it more cost-effective than individual irrigation solutions. This shared approach reduces the overall irrigation cost for each farmer and enhances resource utilisation. By the end of the harvest and sales during the pilot circle, farmers in all the clusters had made their first scheduled repayments per hectare, thus proving the viability of the model.

Implementing this model has provided CESEL with proof

of concept, enabling the innovative social enterprise to attract new partners and funding opportunities. The company has unlocked additional investment from Propcom+ through the Capital Grant Expenditure Limit (CDEL) facility, which seeks to increase the land under cultivation from the initial 15 to 250 hectares.

Recently, they signed an MoU with the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), which will enable it to deploy cluster solar irrigation on up to 200,000 hectares of land. This collaboration has the potential to benefit over 500,000 smallholder farmers in Nigeria over a period of four years under the yet-to-be-launched World Bank-funded Nigeria Distributed Access through Renewable Energy Scale-up (DARES) project.

Scaling this project to 250 hectares underscores the fact that we have consolidated our expertise and experience in the solar irrigation space, offering a delivery model that only CESEL has pioneered in Nigeria with support from Propcom+. We are very optimistic about the potential that this partnership brings to not just our company but the bright future it holds for smallholder farmers across Nigeria

*CESEL's Chief Executive Officer, Patrick Tolani
Reflecting on the partnership with Propcom+*

Solar-powered irrigation systems, like those provided by CESEL, have shown great potential for improving farmer productivity, increasing incomes and helping farmers build climate resilience while reducing methane emissions. Propcom+ remains committed to supporting CESEL in expanding the Irri-Go model to more farming clusters across the country.

Propcom+ is an eight-year (2023 – 2030) rural and agricultural market development programme

supporting climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture and forestry that benefits people, climate, and nature. The programme, funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), aims to support 3.79 million vulnerable people, 50% of whom will be women, to adopt and scale sustainable agricultural practices that increase productivity and incomes, improve climate resilience while reducing emissions and protecting natural ecosystems

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