

Source Business am le 07 avril 2022

## **NACOTAN pushes reform in Nigeria's ailing cotton with special intervention**

**BY ONOME AMUGE**

The size of the global cotton industry is estimated at \$38.45 billion and it is expected to reach \$46.56 billion by 2027, according to the global cotton market data.

A report by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) showed that Nigeria was once at the forefront of the industry in Africa, with over 250 textile manufacturing firms operating above 50 percent capacity with the use of home-grown cotton, before numerous challenges plunged the country into a net-importer of the commodity.

Disturbed by the decline of the once-boisterous cotton industry, the National Cotton Association of Nigeria (NACOTAN) has called on the federal government to implement and promote special intervention programmes targeting reform of the industry, adding that the prevailing global economic development calls for a wider and more sustained approach to dealing with the challenges in the industry.

Anibe Achimugu, president of the association, presented the association's demand during a visit to Adeniyi Adebayo, the minister of industry, trade and investment, during which he noted that a revival of the sector would not only boost youth employment, but also help to address worrying cases of restiveness, banditry, drug abuse and emigration issues among the youths. This, he explained, will enable the industry to contribute its quota to the economic development of the country.

Achimugu, who described the cotton industry as the second largest employer of labour in Nigeria, also sought the minister's support for the payment of Nigeria's assessment to the International Cotton Advisory Committee for the periods of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, which he said amounts to \$58,500.

Addressing the association, the minister concurred that the cotton industry has the capacity to transform Nigeria's rural economy and revive the textile and garment industries by creating over two million jobs.

He added that the sector has the potential to improve internal revenue across the three tiers of government, reduce \$4 billion import bill incurred annually on textile and apparel, earn foreign exchange and make Nigeria a global player in textile and apparel.

Recounting the dominant role cotton once played in Nigeria's economy, the minister said:

“In the 1970s and early 1980s, Nigeria was home to Africa's largest textile industry, with over 180 textile mills which employed close to over 450,000 people and contributed over 25 percent of the workforce in the manufacturing sector.

“Today, most of those factories have all stopped operations, textile factories are operating at below 20 percent capacity with a workforce of less than 20,000 people.”

On the way forward, he stated that the government is determined to change the narrative and rewrite the history of Nigeria’s struggling cotton, textile and garment (CTG) sector, with a view to creating jobs for the teeming unemployed youths.

Highlighting some of the development programmes initiated by the present administration to boost the cotton industry, the minister recalled that the government flagged off the wet season cotton input distribution to 150,000 farmers in Katsina under the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP).

He disclosed that the farmers are cultivating over 180,000 hectares of cotton that will feed the country’s ginneries, adding that production is also ongoing across many states with more to come onboard in the next planting seasons.