



NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE PROTEIN SUMMIT REPORT - 2026

**BUILDING NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE
PROTEIN FUTURE:** Ecosystem Alignment
for Next-Gen Food Innovation



February 26th - 27th



RMRDC Headquarters, Abuja, F.C.T.

**BUILDING NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE
PROTEIN FUTURE: ECOSYSTEM ALIGNMENT
FOR NEXT-GEN FOOD INNOVATION**

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Acknowledgement

The University of Nigeria Alternative Protein Project and the University of Ibadan Alternative Protein Project wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all individuals and institutions whose support and participation made the First National Summit on Alternative Proteins in Nigeria a success.

We are especially grateful to the Good Food Institute for its generous support and partnership in advancing the vision of a sustainable, secure, and innovation-driven protein future for Nigeria. Their commitment to research, policy engagement, and ecosystem development continues to play a critical role in enabling emerging markets to explore alternative protein pathways.

We also acknowledge the valuable contributions of Food 4 Thought Innovations and their collaboration and strategic insights in shaping discussions around institutional approaches to building alternative protein economies in Nigeria.

We extend our appreciation to representatives from government ministries, agencies and parastatals, particularly those from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; the Federal Ministry of Finance; the Raw Materials Research and Development Council; and the Nigerian Council for Food Science and Technology, whose leadership and participation were instrumental in grounding the summit in national priorities.

We also extend our heartfelt appreciation to our friends from SCL, Pan African Alliance of Small and Medium Industries, My Vegan Africa and Effective Animal Advocacy Nigeria.

Special thanks go to the vice chancellors of Modibbo Adama University, Yola, and the vice chancellor of Adamawa State University, who took time out of their busy schedules to join us for this event. We are equally grateful to the academic institutions, the researchers, and student leaders who contributed their expertise and commitment to advancing knowledge, innovation, and collaboration in this field.

Finally, we thank all participants and stakeholders whose engagement, insights, and willingness to collaborate have laid the foundation for a coordinated national approach to alternative proteins in Nigeria.

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Executive Summary

Nigeria's food system is at a critical turning point. Rising population growth, increasing food costs, and pressure on agricultural systems are widening the country's protein gap. The First National Summit on Alternative Proteins in Nigeria convened over 30 stakeholders from government, academia, and industry to explore pathways for food security, economic development, and climate resilience. Discussions focused on policy alignment, research capacity, market development, and consumer engagement.

The opening keynote by Professor Ibrahim Umar (vice chancellor, Modibbo Adama University, Yola) placed emphasis on alternative proteins as a matter of national nutrition resilience. Alex Mayers encouraged stakeholders to have a cultural basis for activities geared towards protein transition in Nigeria. Other keynotes by Professor Augustine Clement (vice chancellor, Adamawa State University), Navin Durbhakula (CEO, Food 4 Thought Innovations), and Mrs Nkechi Veronica Eze (NiCFoST) further emphasised key points around institutions being the launchpads for research and innovation, public procurement and workforce development. Summit evaluations show that institutional knowledge increased, including willingness to explore pathways for developing the alternative protein ecosystem in Nigeria.

Key outcomes include the following:

- Establishment of a National Alternative Protein Working Group
- Commitment to establish an Alternative Protein Desk Office within RMRDC
- Strengthened multi-stakeholder collaboration

The outcomes of this summit indicate that Nigeria is slowly moving from the point of institutional awareness to coordinated action amongst stakeholders.

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ABUJA, FCT

FEBRUARY, 26TH - 27TH, 2026



Introduction

The global food system is at a critical juncture. There is a need to meet the projected 70% increase in the demand for proteins amidst the realities of dwindling resources and climate extremities. This has materialised as a huge challenge in Nigeria, where the income of millions of citizens can hardly cover the costs of a healthy diet, including a protein-rich one. To find a long-term solution to these challenges, there is a need to build a resilient, self-sufficient and innovative food system for people, the planet and animals.

On the 26th and 27th of February, 2026, the First National Alternative Protein Summit convened in Abuja under the theme **"Building Nigeria's Sustainable Protein Future: Ecosystem Alignment for Next-Gen Food Innovation"**. This groundbreaking event brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including government ministries, agencies, research bodies, academia and the private sector for the purpose of building pathways for Nigeria's alternative protein sector.

Alternative proteins, a technology which widely encompasses plant-based, fermentation-derived and cultivated meat, represent a strategic opportunity to improve our national food security. Alternative proteins can capitalise on Nigeria's rich crop biodiversity, which includes sorghum, cowpeas and other indigenous legumes, and through innovation, create jobs, expand farmers' income and reduce zoonotic disease and the burden of land use.

Stakeholder surveys conducted prior to the summit revealed that while awareness of alternative proteins exists within government spaces, engagement is still early-stage. The majority of the stakeholders across government institutions identified food security, affordability, and climate resilience as key drivers for exploring alternative

protein solutions. However, regulatory clarity, consumer perception/preference and investment readiness were gaps identified by the stakeholders.

This report encapsulates the expert opinion, strategic insights and collective commitments shared at the summit. The reports envision a food system in Nigeria that not only becomes self-sufficient in protein production but also becomes a launchpad for protein transition in sub-Saharan Africa. Stakeholders at the summit all acknowledged their role as engines that will facilitate the transition from the conventional food systems we have today to one that is nutritious, affordable and resilient through the alignment of public policy, academic research and private investment. This underscores the importance of this summit as not only a convening platform but also a strategic intervention to align stakeholders, deepen technical knowledge of alternative proteins and catalyse efforts across all sectors.



This report serves as a comprehensive synthesis of the strategic dialogues, technical presentations, and institutional commitments shared during the **First National**

Summit on Alternative Proteins in Nigeria, held in Abuja on February 26th and 27th, 2026.



APP Regional Mentor, Professor Kalep Filli giving the welcome speech

Alternative Protein as Food for the Future: The Nigerian Context

The summit opened with leading presentations from the leadership and influential figures of Nigeria's academic institutions. In his welcome address, Professor Kalep Filli (Regional Mentor, UNN/UI APP teams) gave a speech on the importance of food systems transformation; the essence of ecosystem builders, particularly those in attendance; and how building alternative protein ecosystems is not for Nigeria alone but for the wider sub-Saharan Africa. Also, in his double role as the representative for **Professor Ibrahim Umar, the vice-chancellor of Modibbo Adama University**, Professor Filli gave a keynote that very well encapsulates the theme of the summit (Building Nigeria's Sustainable Protein Future: Ecosystem Alignment for Next-Gen Food Innovation). Professor Umar stressed how a mix of having the largest population in Africa, one of the most youthful populations globally, and a high birth rate accompanied by a low protein consumption makes our dependence on our usual methods of producing proteins a recipe for disaster, making protein transition a duty for all national stakeholders. Supporting arguments came from Professor Filli, who emphasised that "this shift is necessary" to find solutions to health challenges linked to traditional animal protein consumption and the development of a Nigerian bioeconomy with roots in Nigeria's bioresource potential. Professor Filli emphasised the need for developing Nigeria's "bio-resource vibrancy" by innovating with crops like African yam bean, bambara nut, and sorghum.

The vice chancellor of Adamawa State University, Professor Augustine Clement, delivered a compelling address which he titled *"Alternative Proteins as Foods for the Future"*. He underscored the need for Nigeria to make steps towards ensuring its protein stability by aligning itself with trending topics in science, technology and innovation happening around the world today, particularly those that are relevant to the food and agricultural sector. Professor Clement further stressed the necessity of

alternative proteins in “stabilising supply chains in an era of climate instability”. Supply chain resilience matters a lot for a country like Nigeria, which has a large population with a huge protein deficit. To ensure we meet this growing without depleting Nigeria’s land and water resources, Professor Clement asserts that a shift in our mindset by moving away from traditional defaults towards bioresource exploration is key.



Vice Chancellor Adamawa State University, Professor Augustine Clement, delivering his keynote address

The Alternative Path to Caloric Inefficiencies and the Crisis of Affordability

Concerns regarding caloric waste and protein conversion are key points in alternative protein advocacy alongside the difficulty in affording a healthy diet. At the national alternative protein summit, this charge was led by Alex Mayers (managing director, GFI Europe), who detailed how the inefficiency of industrial animal agriculture is very well expressed through caloric conversions. Alex used a Jollof rice analogy to describe how poultry production requires 9 calories of input to produce just 1 calorie of human food, while cattle require a staggering 100:1 ratio. In contrast, plant-based proteins, fermentation-derived proteins and cultivated meat are a more resource-efficient option for meeting Nigeria's protein demands. Alex considered how animal-sourced foods account for 35% of food expenditure in an average Nigerian household yet only provide 13% of total protein and caloric intake. This was expressed in how the cost of a healthy meal in Nigeria far exceeds the daily income of a significant portion of the population, and with meat demand projected to rise to 50% by the year 2050, the status quo has become unfeasible.

On health, Alex further highlighted how alternative proteins can mitigate the risks of zoonotic diseases and pandemics, including chronic health difficulties like cardiovascular diseases, all the while freeing more land for higher-value agricultural use. Alex concluded with a clear line: "Soybeans and African locust beans don't catch influenza."

Institutional Anchors and Market Development

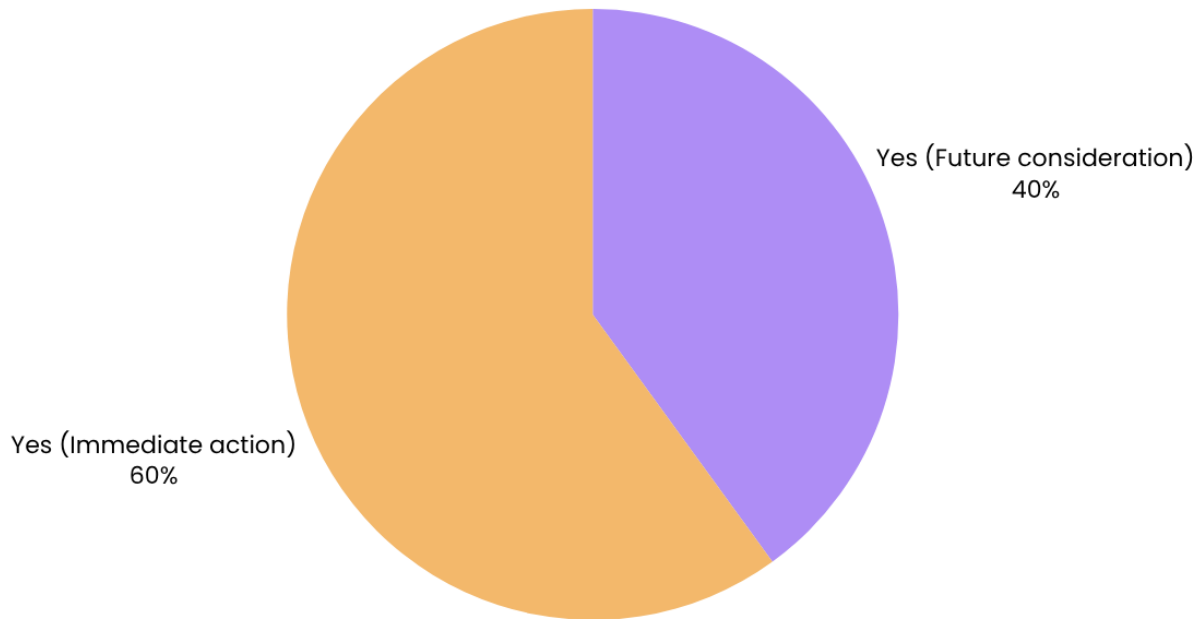
Navin Durbhakula (Food 4 Thought Innovations) presented on viable pathways for building an alternative protein economy by introducing what he called the "Public Institution Strategy" and argued that the path to a sustainable protein economy in Nigeria lies in public procurement. Navin opined that innovation in the alternative protein sector should not be left to "chance" or exclusively to private startups. Through the leveraging of Nigeria's public institutions, initiatives like school feeding programmes, the military, and public hospitals, the government can create the "market certainty" required to de-risk private investment in the alternative protein sector. Navin believes that government can use public procurement to create predictable demand, which allows local processors to leverage that to plan demand and allows banks to extend credit facilities to stakeholders across the value chain. A case study in Brazil showed how government action helped to attract a \$62 million cultivated meat facility from JBS, one of the largest meat production facilities in the world.

"When institutions commit to sourcing food, they create predictable demand that allows local processors to plan production and banks to extend credit." -- --Navin Durbhakula

Navin cited Food 4 Thought Innovation's Brazil model, where coordination between the Ministry of Labour and universities is projected to create **7.1 million jobs** by 2030. In Nigeria, this strategy would allow local manufacturers to scale production while ensuring that the most vulnerable populations have access to affordable, nutrient-dense protein.

During the Q&A, an important question was raised on the MOU that was signed between the Nigerian government and JBS for \$2.5 billion for the purpose of establishing meat processing plants in Nigeria and why similar investments made in

Brazil were not considered in Nigeria. In his response, Navin clarified that such high-tech investments require a "strong innovation ecosystem" supported by the government and research institutions to position Nigeria as a regional leader rather than just a market for traditional meat.



The majority of the summit participants believe immediate action should be taken for alternative proteins

This institutional approach responds directly to stakeholder expectations for structured market development pathways, particularly in areas of public procurement and investment facilitation.

An Important Milestone

On day 1 of the summit, the participants across the board paid a courtesy visit to the director-general and chief executive officer of the Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), Professor Nnanyelugo Martin Ike-Muonso, who recommended the critical importance of the summit and the alignment of alternative protein innovation with the objectives of the Raw Materials Research and Development Council. He proposed the planning of a separate workshop for RMRDC staff and gave a nod to the creation of a **desk office for alternative proteins** at the RMRDC headquarters.



Group photo with the Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of RMRDC, Professor Nnanyelugo Martin Ike-Muonso

Policy, Safety, and Professional Standards

A keynote presentation on policy and safety by Mrs Nkechi Veronica Eze (Registrar, NiCFoST) emphasised that for the alternative protein sector to thrive in Nigeria, a robust regulatory environment is mandatory. Mrs Nkechi believes that "trusted food safety systems" are the bedrock of innovation, but this cannot be complete without involving licensed professionals. Mrs Nkechi, food systems transformation has been historically constrained by the limited involvement of licensed food professionals in policymaking; therefore, she advocated for the mandatory involvement of licensed food science professionals in policy formulation to ensure that novel proteins meet rigorous national standards. Finally, the NiCFoST registrar delivered a firm call to action by insisting that the summit must not be a "usual discussion" that ends without impact.

According to Mrs Nkechi, NiCFoST's roadmap for developing the alternative protein sector in Nigeria includes the following:

1. **Mandatory Licensing:** Ensuring only qualified professionals lead food innovation.
2. **Regulatory Harmony:** Aligning NAFDAC, NABDA, and the Ministry of Agriculture to create a "Novel Foods Framework".
3. **National Standards:** Establishing clear labelling to prevent consumer confusion and ensure that alternative proteins meet the same or higher safety benchmarks as traditional meat.

♦ Panel Insights: Policy & Regulation for Future Foods

Following the keynote presentation from the registrar of NiCFoST, we had our first panel discussion on policy and regulatory readiness, bringing together representatives from the Good Food Institute, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and the Nigerian Council of Food Science and Technology to discuss and explore pathways required to safely integrate alternative proteins into Nigeria's food system.

Representing the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Mrs Afusatu Babalola grounded her contributions in the ministry's core mandate of ensuring access to affordable and nutritious food. Mrs Babalola emphasised the need to position novel foods like alternative proteins within existing national agricultural priorities through the promotion of climate-smart crops like legumes, particularly soybeans and cowpeas. Furthermore, she believes that successful integration means aligning innovation in novel foods with policies that support local farmers and strengthen domestic agricultural value chains.

Farmer-friendly policies, though important, do not fully bring clarity to the regulatory perspectives and steps needed to build alternative protein ecosystems in Nigeria. Mrs Ngozi Oledinma of NiCFoST provided a critical view of the novel food designation of alternative proteins and the need for specialised oversight in the alternative protein sector.

“The development and processing of these foods must be overseen by licensed food science and technology professionals.”

She further proposed that policy alignment should not be the only basis for innovation but should also take professional accountability into cognisance. Professionalising

innovation in alternative proteins does not only maintain standards but also builds consumer trust in novel foods.

Finally, Alex Mayers from the Good Food Institute Europe provided an international perspective of how regulatory systems in Europe approach novel food approval through science-based and transparent processes. He further expanded on this thought by proposing that poorly designed systems could create regulatory bottlenecks. In his words, he stressed that “early alignment between innovators and regulators represents the global “gold standard” for enabling safe and efficient market entry.”

Panellists believe that Nigeria has a strategic opportunity to design more efficient regulatory pathways by learning from the complexities of other countries that have made progress in this sector.

Interactions during the panel session had a consensus that plant-based proteins and traditional fermentation represent the most practical starting point due to raw material availability, existing agricultural systems, lower barriers and technological adoption

The panel concluded with several important recommendations:

- Development of a coordinated regulatory pathway involving agencies such as NAFDAC and NiCFoST
- Integration of cultural and religious considerations, particularly halal and broader consumer acceptance factors in labelling and standards
- Emphasising that Nigeria’s alternative protein strategy must reflect its unique cultural, agricultural, and economic context

◆ Bridging Academia and the Student Movement

The second panel moved the focus from policy frameworks to the question of bridging academia and industry. Academic leaders like Professors K. O. Falade and Joseph Abu reflected on how academia plays an important role in developing the alternative protein ecosystem in Nigeria but highlighted the challenges that abound beyond investment in academic research. Professor Falade emphasised how "research has too often been driven by promotion rather than production" and that achieving a pipeline for alternative protein innovation means a shift towards research that has the potential to be translated into real-world solutions. Professor Joseph Abu stressed that research must begin with understanding what the market needs, and Anastasia from SCL further expanded on this idea from an industry perspective, particularly on how market needs will sustainably support industry. She also proposed the creation of a science-industry mixer to ensure Nigerian scientists are engaging with industry, and investors highlighted how. A critical dimension of the discussion was introduced by Emmanuel Kwaya. He emphasised that access to high-quality raw materials and scientific expertise, without the industrial infrastructure such as extruders and bioreactors, limits the ability to scale production.

From the above discussion during the panel session, the expert panel identified key actions to take to address the challenges that may impede the growth of the alternative protein ecosystem in Nigeria.

- Pursue funding with the Tertiary Education Trust Fund
- The creation of a national alternative protein centre of excellence in Nigerian universities
- The alternative protein desk office expected to be created within the RMRDC should focus on equipment manufacturing and engineering innovation.

David Omale (President, University Alt Protein Project) gave a brief talk on the Good Food Institute's global student movement called the Alt Protein Project. David emphasised how GFI's Alt Protein Project demonstrates the power of student-led innovation in transforming universities into "engines of research". The Alt Protein Project works across five objectives: research, education, innovation, community building, and awareness.

David Omale further emphasised how food is "science, culture, and art", calling for multidisciplinary involvement from social sciences and management. By connecting with the global alt protein project hubs in other parts of the world, like the Stanford and Cambridge Alt Protein Projects, Nigerian students are part of the global movement already building the "next generation of food scientists" reimagining the future of protein production.



Panel on Bridging Academia and Industry

Regenerative Agriculture and Capacity Building

Anastasia Lekwat (SCL Nigeria) provided a ground-level view of how alternative protein technologies can intersect with traditional farming through Project Julia. Over three years, this SCL-guided project has reached 91,379 smallholder farmers across 360 communities, creating over 404,181 jobs. Through training smallholder farmers and encouraging financial inclusion, alternative proteins can integrate farmers and make them a central part of decisions geared towards the protein transition. SCL's model proves that alternative protein development is not a replacement for farming but a revitalisation of it, utilising organic practices and mutual trust groups to improve soil health and financial inclusion.



Panel on investment and entrepreneurship in alternative proteins

♦ **Panel Insights: Entrepreneurship and Consumer Acceptance**

The final panel at the event was on investment and entrepreneurship in the alternative protein sector, and we had critical contributions from panellists on consumer acceptance of alternative proteins. The panellists include Ilunamien Aisedion from My Vegan Africa, Engineer Emmanuel Kwaya from the Pan African Alliance of Small and Medium Enterprises and Anastasia Lekwat from SCL. A critical barrier identified by **Ilunamien Eric Aisedion** and **Emmanuel Kwaya** is consumer perception. Ilunamien believes that unfavourable "vegan" perceptions by Nigerian consumers mean that alternative proteins require reframing as to how they are marketed. Engineer Kwaya noted that for entrepreneurs, success depends on three concepts, which include the following:

- **Pricing** Nigerians can afford.
- **Production systems** that can scale in the local operating environment.
- **Local taste profiles** that resonate with the Nigerian palate.

The summit participants also made contributions to this panel and generally agreed that alternative proteins must be framed as "complementary", not "competitors" to traditional meat. Also, feedback from the stakeholders highlighted how consumer perception and trust need to be well thought out before significant investment in alternative proteins is considered. Adoption depends on achieving price parity and maintaining cultural familiarity. Emmanuel Kwaya noted that for entrepreneurs, the "winners will be those who achieve pricing Nigerians can afford and taste profiles that resonate locally".

Participant Takeaways

The national summit on alternative proteins not only facilitated dialogue but also enabled a measurable shift in stakeholder understanding, perception, and readiness to engage with alternative proteins in Nigeria. Data from the pre- and post-summit evaluation data indicate a clear transition from moderate awareness to action-orientated engagement across participating institutions.

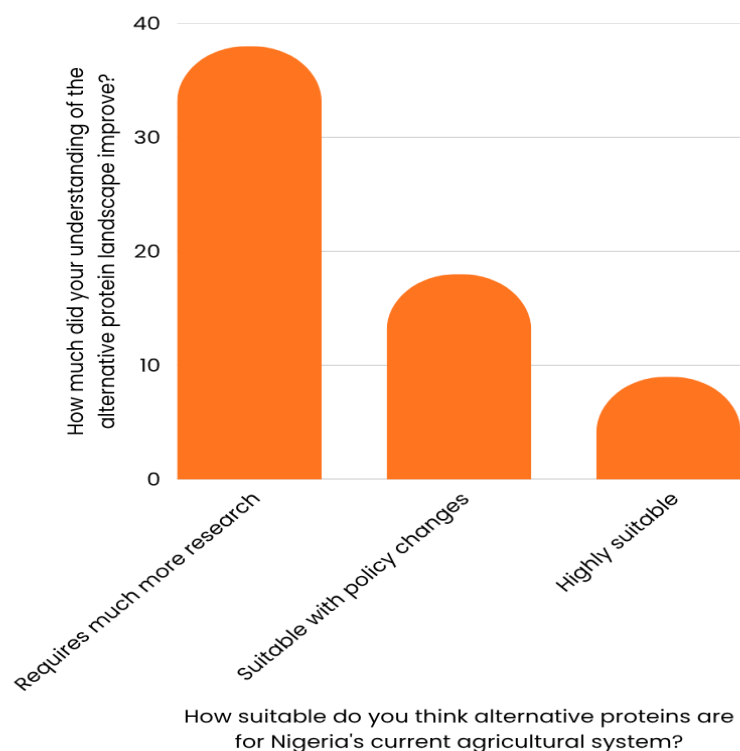
Prior to the summit, most stakeholders rated their understanding of alternative proteins at intermediate levels. Following the summit, there was a marked improvement, with the majority indicating high levels of understanding. This reflects the effectiveness of stakeholder events such as this summit in bridging knowledge gaps across policy, research, and industry in the alternative protein sector.

In addition to the increased awareness, participants demonstrated a strong willingness to translate knowledge into action. All respondents indicated interest in advancing alternative protein initiatives within their organisations, with a significant proportion expressing readiness for immediate engagement through policy development, research collaboration, and ecosystem-building efforts. An important contribution from Mrs Uwem Ekomabasi from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security outlined the opportunities in exploring innovation in widely popular crops like cowpea, particularly in the production of protein concentrates and isolates.

Despite this progress, stakeholders emphasised that the pathway to implementation requires the following:

- Clear regulatory frameworks
- Increased investment in research and development
- Development of stronger consumer awareness and acceptance strategies

As mentioned earlier, a recurring insight across participants was the need to position alternative proteins not as a disruption to existing food systems but as a complementary solution that enhances affordability, nutrition, and resilience. An important criticism made by Mr Obasi from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security on the safety and scientific integrity of alternative proteins, particularly cultivated meat, sheds light on the necessity of building trust with the Nigerian public in every step taken towards promoting alternative proteins. in Nigeria. The summit was an opportunity to infer that Nigeria's alternative protein ecosystem is at a critical juncture characterised not by lack of awareness but by the need for coordination, structure, and institutional leadership.



The majority of the participants believe that more research is needed to determine its suitability for Nigeria's food system

The Road Ahead

The summit concluded with a call to action from Alex Mayers. Alex encouraged participants at the summit to take what has been learnt, own it and cultivate it. Alex believed that "our culture is our brand", and while GFI provides the tools, the execution must be uniquely Nigerian. The summit concluded with commitments made towards the operationalisation of the earlier announced desk office by the CEO of RMRDC, Professor Nnanyelugo Martin Ike-Muonso. Further commitments made by the attendees include the formalisation of a National Working Group and a commitment to "ownership" of the narrative.

As Alex Mayers remarked, "This is a global solution to a global challenge, using tools that Nigeria has."

The National Alternative Protein Summit has galvanised stakeholders in government, academia and the private sector for the purpose of aligning the ecosystem together to build sustainable food systems. By aligning policy, academia, and industry, Nigeria is positioned to move from potential to impact, ensuring a secure and sustainable protein future for all its citizens.



Summit Organising Team

Professor Kalep Filli (Modibbo Adama University, Yola)

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David Omale (University of Nigeria)

Boluwatife Oluwasakin (University of Ibadan)