



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/feed-future-commercial-sorghum-project-nigeria-win-win-smallholder-farmers-and-private>

# Feed the Future Commercial Sorghum Project in Nigeria is Win-Win for Smallholder Farmers and Private Companies

A Feed the Future project in Nigeria has enabled more than 42,000 smallholder farmers to increase their sorghum yields by 128 percent by helping them to improve production practices and better meet the requirements of buyers. Meanwhile, a major malting facility in the southeast region is now operating at full capacity thanks to increased availability of high-quality sorghum.

In countries around the world, Feed the Future is increasing food security by improving agricultural value chains, targeting assistance in ways that strengthen the connection between private companies and the smallholder farmers who supply them with raw materials. This private sector-led project in Nigeria aimed to do just that, helping farmers grow commercial sorghum that would fit the demands of a specialized local market.

Starting with the buyer, Feed the Future identified a number of small malting plants that feed into the larger malted beverage and confectionary value chain in Nigeria, working with processors to understand their requirements for raw materials.

Based on this information, Feed the Future worked backward to the production level, establishing the number of farmers that would be needed to produce the quantity of sorghum required by buyers. These farmers were then introduced to a set of best production practices that would boost the quantity and quality of their yields. Additionally, they received assistance to access fertilizer and credit.

From 2005 to 2011, this partnership reached approximately 42,000 sorghum farmers cultivating more than 50,000 hectares. One such farmer, Alhaji Auwalu Balarabe, used to farm sorghum only for household consumption and animal feed, his output barely covering his expenses. Since participating in this commercial sorghum project, Alhaji applied improved techniques to his production and was appointed regional production coordinator for two local states, enabling him to influence production for more than 5,000 farmers.

He also constructed a warehouse on his farm to facilitate sorghum purchases from the community and malting plants. Later, Alhaji even embarked on a new commercial venture of his own, Maina Seeds, to provide high-quality seeds for the local market. He now cultivates more than 135 hectares that produce not only sorghum, but also rice and wheat seeds.

Alhaji and other participants in the Feed the Future project are out-growers for Aba Malting Plant, a subsidiary of Nigerian Breweries, which is majority-owned by Heineken. Aba Malting Plant is one of the world's largest sorghum malting facilities, with a capacity of 30,000 metric tons per annum. As local farmers have produced greater quantities of high-quality sorghum over the years, the plant has increased its processing and is now operating at maximum capacity, generating greater economic activity and employment in the region.

The commercial sorghum project has been so successful that it is expanding into new areas, working with more farmers to grow high-quality varieties of sorghum. This has kept the price of sorghum fairly stable for the past three years, which in turn helps farmers and processors to better forecast their returns and operating costs.

*This Feed the Future project also worked with a Nigerian seed company, Da-All Green Seeds, and supported sorghum varietal development and testing with the [International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics](#) and the [Institute for Agricultural Research and Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria](#). Learn more about [Feed the Future partnerships with the private sector and with the university and research community](#).*