

RRIN TABLOID

LATEX

Vol. 2, Issue 10 Oct., 2023



One-on-one with Dr. L.N. Dongo, Director/CEO, RRIN.

Our interaction with the Management Staff of RRIN goes back to our Director/CEO to get some feelers from her as she clocks one year at the helm of affairs in RRIN on the 26th of September, 2023. Below are excerpts of our interaction with her

Q. Ma, looking back on your first year as Executive Director, what accomplishments or milestones do you consider most significant for this Institute? Any limitations?

A. Looking back, I must give all the glory to God for His grace given to me to oversee the Institute this one year and what He has done through this administration. On assumption of duty on the 26th day of September, 2022, it dawned on me that I was in a structure-less organization for several reasons. The IMC was improperly constituted, Staff welfare was nothing to write home about, there were cases of improper placement of Staff by way of putting square pegs in round holes which led to low Staff morale and highly polarized work environment. The issue of no water both in the offices and Staff quarters, no functional laboratories, no materials to work with etc. There was no efficient internal control system. Today, some of these issues have been handled while some are still in the process of getting properly sorted due to insufficient funds. We now can boast of a functional organizational structure, an efficient Audit Unit, water is available – both in the offices and the Staff quarters, laboratories are been fixed etc. Of all these achievements, the issue of fostering a collaborative work environment is very crucial to this Institute. This was achieved through various team bonding activities and placing Staff appropriately. The climax was the acceptability of institutional projects where Research scientists are put into teams to execute a particular project cutting across different disciplines. This obviously will improve on our diversity, bring about equity and inclusiveness.



Dr. L.N. Dongo

Q. How have you worked to align the Institute's vision and strategic goals during your first year in office?

A. The vision of the Institute 'To be a leading Research center, a world class Research organization' tallies with my vision, and this vision cannot be achieved in isolation but by networking with other institutions or international bodies. RRIN is collaborating with some local and international agencies to create impact and also make our Research activities more visible. To chart our Research focus, during the last in-house review meeting, we were able to come up with some institutional projects; reducing the gestation period of Rubber and Gum Arabic, carbon sequestration (CO₂^e) in Rubber plantations. In one of my visits to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, I made mention to the Permanent Secretary that one of the fall-out from our in-house review meeting was the reduction of the gestation period of Rubber and Gum Arabic. He surprisingly asked when was Rubber Research established? How come we are still on the issues of reduction in gestation period of our mandate crops? He further urged us to pursue this course.

Also, climate change is another area of focus globally. As an Institute we need to look at carbon sequestration because it's another way of mitigating the effects of climate change, our Institute should be part of the organizations requesting for carbon credits but this can only be achieved when we have meaningful Research tailored in that direction.

In the area of Rubber seed, we also need to Research on ways to preserve the seeds during the period of abundance for future use.

Q. Can you share insights into any changes or improvements you've implemented to enhance the Institute's Research and innovation ecosystem?

A. One major improvement is the development of a functional website in the Institute and the provision of internet facility which we have now extended to the library. There is also the proper placement of Staff by mass redeployment; for instance some Senior Administrative Officers were practically made redundant by putting them in the Research Departments, which is more like frustrating such persons, but now that is no longer the case as we have consciously put round pegs in round

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holes and square pegs in square holes. Currently, we have a training policy clearly drawn from the Conditions of Service and Public Service Rules to give opportunities to both Research and non-Research Staff to enhance their capabilities. Another improvement which is very important is the issue of fostering peace and harmony with the Institutes' host Communities. The issue of land grabbing is gradually being curbed through the intensification of our security architecture and most importantly the establishment of a forum where RRIN Staff interface with the host Communities.



Dr. L.N. Dongo and the some of the Editorial Team during the interview

Q. In what ways have you engaged with the Institute's programs, departments, Research officers, and Staff to understand their needs and aspirations

A. Effective communication is very pivotal in impacting on any situation. This has been done through regular interactions with Staff. Triannual meetings are held with the general Staff, monthly IMC meetings including meetings with Program Leaders any time the need arises. All these have helped me to understand the needs of my Staff. Ideas are shared, constructive criticisms are welcomed in order to move the Institute forward. Just recently, last week thereabout, I called a meeting of Research Officers to help clear some grey areas bordering on channels of communication among other things. This was necessary for us all to be on the same page. I will be having our 3rd triannual town hall meeting with the general Staff, where we meet and share ideas. I also operate an open-door policy and this has helped in the course of this administration.

Q. Could you discuss any new partnerships or collaborations that have been established under your leadership within the past year?

A. Many Partnerships have been established within my one year in office. We haven't started but we have their consent that they will partner with us. The following are some organizations that have given their consent:

Raw Materials Research Development Council (RMRDC) in the following areas;

- Reducing the gestation period of Rubber;
- Enhancing the Institute's capacity in rubber technology through latex concentrates;
- Resuscitation of rubber seed oil processing mill and putty pilot plant for the commercial production of putty filler usable in automobile, mechanical and civil construction sectors.

National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in the area of Enhancing Sustainable Growth: Utilizing Collaborative Approach to Optimize Rubber Agroforestry Systems (RAFS) for Youth Empowerment and Economic Expansion

Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) Group in the area of Advancing Rubber Tree Cultivation in Nigeria: Development of Dry Concentrated Inorganic Fertilizer for Enhanced Growth. They are based in Abuja with their headquarters in Morocco

Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) in the area of Natural Rubber (NR) quality management: Testing, certification, drafting and review of standards on NR.

DEROSE PLANTS AND PRESCO PLC in the area of Collaboration with Deroose Plants on Tissue Culture of Rubber Trees

RRIN has established Research collaboration with the Global Initiative of Sustainable Agriculture and Environment (GISAE and FAO) in partnership with FAO to start a pilot scale information sharing and training program on agricultural sustainability, soil health and crop improvement in Africa. RRIN Benin will be the first Institution to be trained in Africa.

Q. How have you leveraged technology and digital advancements to streamline operations and support the Institute's Research endeavors?

A. The Institutes' website has been overhauled which you will all agree with me is much better than how I met it. As we all know, the importance of the website cannot be over emphasized, when it comes to our Research activities. It helps promote our visibility. When I came on board, the internet connection within the Institute was very poor, we now have an efficient internet facility. What is left is for the Scientists to utilize these facilities maximally as there is still a low patronage on our website. There is the need to boost our online presence.

Q. What steps have you taken to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the Research Institute during your first year?

A. These three things are very important in any workplace because they create an environment where everyone feels respected and valued regardless of their differences. This in turn leads to increased productivity and high morale. DEI also brings about creativity and innovation. This was realized from the very beginning and that was what informed our decision to introduce the "Own Your Institute". When I came on board about a year ago, there was so much tension on ground and one day I told Dr. Esekade that we need to organize something that will bring all the Staff together to foster unity. Naturally, there is a tendency to say it won't work but I am someone who does not take a 'No' for an answer especially knowing the impact accruable from such an activity. The maiden edition of "Own Your Institute" came and the impact was far-reaching. Secondly, the triannual Staff meeting gives everyone an opportunity to speak their minds, irrespective of their cadre as one big family. The end of year get-together fete is another opportunity where everybody feast together to reduce tension of work, we have also opened a suggestion box for everyone to drop messages which could be anonymous, just like a feed-back mechanism for us to know what we have done and how to improve on them. We have also changed the training policy to enable everybody benefit equally, some people were rejected in the past while some were given the opportunity to go for training, we had to harmonise our training and sabbatical leave

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policies so that it will benefit all, both the Research and non-Research Scientists alike. We have also set up the mentor-mentee system which we believe will promote diversity in the system and I hope it has been communicated down the line.

Q. Looking ahead, what are your strategic priorities and goals for the Research Institute in the coming years, building upon the foundation of your first year in office?

A. My priority in the coming years will be to enhance the capabilities of every Staff in the Institute, because without that, no matter what you put on the table, it will not yield results. This will be done through trainings and re-trainings, attendance to workshops and conferences. I will build on the network of collaborations to promote Research activities and create more visibility for the Institute. Establishing cutting edge technologies and seeking opportunities for infrastructural development.



Dr. L.N. Dongo with the Editorial Team after the interview

In the closing remarks, Mr. E. Obasuyi appreciated Dr. L.N. Dongo for the time spent and commended her for her initiative to set up the TABLOID.

Dr. L.N. Dongo clocks one at the helm of affairs in RRIN

September 26, 2023 marks one year since Dr. L.N. Dongo assumed office as the Director/CEO of RRIN. Below are some of her achievements:

New Research initiatives;

- Development of *Hevea brasiliensis* Rubber with early maturing and high yielding qualities
- Development of Gum Arabic with early maturing and high yielding qualities
- Carbon sequestration in Rubber-based Systems: A promising approach towards climate change mitigation
- Development of Renewable Coagulant for Natural Rubber Smallholders
- Production and Technical Properties of Cassava Effluent Coagulated Ribbed Smoked Sheet (RSS)
- Rubber seed processing, modification, storage and utilization

Collaborations;

In pursuance to the ED's vision, in line with the Institute's set goals and objectives, the ED has fostered some collaborations and partnerships with some under listed agencies that have shown interest in partnering with the Institute to strengthen Research activities;

- Raw Materials Research Development Council (RMRDC) in the following

areas; reducing the gestation period of Rubber;

- Enhancing the Institute capacity in rubber technology through latex concentrates;

- Resuscitation of rubber seed oil processing mill and putty pilot plant for the commercial production of putty filler usable in automobile, mechanical and civil construction sectors.

- National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in the area of Enhancing Sustainable Growth: Utilizing Collaborative Approach to Optimize Rubber Agroforestry Systems (RAFS) for Youth Empowerment and Economic Expansion

- Office Cherifien des Phosphates (OCP) Group in the area of Advancing Rubber Tree Cultivation in Nigeria: Development of Dry Concentrated Inorganic Fertilizer for Enhanced Growth

- Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) in the area of Natural Rubber (NR) quality management: Testing, certification, drafting and review of standards on NR.

- DEROSE PLANTS AND PRESCO PLC in the area of Collaboration with Deroose Plants on Tissue Culture of Rubber Trees

Cutting-edge technologies;

- Facile technology for farm-gate processing of Ribbed Smoked Sheet (RSS) using Lohashilpi sheeting machines

- Technology involving replacement of imported chemical coagulants with renewable materials in farm-gate production of RSS.

Reshaping Rubber Research Institute Culture

Triannual Staff meeting

Proper channeling of Reports and communications

Ensuring Square pegs in square holes

Research and Development:

Three members of Staff including the Director/CEO attended the International Rubber Research and Development Board Conference held in Malaysia in the period under review.

One year out of the outstanding three years subscription fees (\$5,000/year) was paid.

Provision of an efficient internet facility for the Institute

Rebranding of the Institute website for enhanced visibility and networking

Fostering partnership/collaborations with other agencies/institutions for enhanced productivity

Capacity building for seven (7) Research Scientists on Proposal writing.

Establishment of a functional organizational structure in line with the guidelines for the management of Research Institutes and Federal Colleges by ARCN.

Restoration of Monthly Seminar presentation by Scientists.

Execution of 2023 Research In-House Review Exercise.

Production of 400,000 Certified Gum Arabic Seedlings

Maintenance of 50 Ha Experimental Gum arabic seedlings Plantation.

Maintenance of 152 Ha Rubber plantations in the headquarters

Distribution of 79,000 Rubber planting materials to farmers.

Introduction of RRIN monthly Newsletter known as 'RRIN Tabloid Latext' upon assumption of office

Establishment of 4 Ha rubber plantation with intercrop.

Opening of 50 Ha of matured plantation of which 38.8 Ha have been kitted for tapping.

Establishment of a gum arabic demonstration farm at Sabon-garin, Guba, Bosari Local Government Area, Yobe State.

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Capacity Building for smallholder farmers', youth and women on Good Agricultural Practice in Rubber and Gum arabic production.

Provision of laboratory reagents and refurbishing of some laboratory equipment to ensure members of Staff are busy.

Upgrade of Gum Arabic Seedlings Production Facilities in the Nursery.

Introduced adequate internal control system on all assets and liabilities of the Institute

Auditing of both Research and non-Research Staff which exposed a lot of absconders.

Infrastructural Development including rehabilitation of facilities.

Purchase of 1 No. double cabin Innoson utility vehicle

Refurbishment of Toyota Hiace bus which was abandoned for over two (2) years

Refurbishment of the Institute tractor which was abandoned for over five (5) years.

Restoration of water for the New Senior Staff Quarters that had been without water for over a year within six weeks of assuming office

Construction of a new Institute main gate to replace the former one that was utterly dilapidated.

Extension of Solar Power beyond the Admin Block to a second block housing some offices, the Stores and the Audit Unit.

Asphalting of 1.2 km estate roads within the Institute (an intervention from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security).

Construction of 0.2km RRIN Main Access Road (Ongoing)

Construction of 1No. Departmental building up to the first-floor concrete slab level to provide office spaces for Research and non-Research Staff (Ongoing)

Two (2) units of Transformers were rehabilitated in the main station; one in the office area and the other situated in new Staff quarters to boost power supply.

Purchase and installation of fifteen (15) Desktop Computers, LaserJet printers and UPS.

Provision of office furniture.

Re-roofing of one of the laboratory blocks

Rehabilitation of RRIN Main Water Works Station.

Rehabilitation of electrical network in Akwete Sub Station which was abandoned for over 5 years.

Repairs of several non-functional air conditioners in several offices, Conference centre, Library and the Board room.

Face lifting of the Executive Director's office, Board room and RRIN Exhibition room.

Rehabilitation of the Executive Director's residence which was left abandoned for over 12 years.

Installation of 45,000 Litres Capacity Solar Powered Water Borehole at RRIN Gashua:

Staff Welfare

Introduction of end of year get together where hard work was rewarded thereby spurring others to be more dutiful

Creation of conducive environment for work which has in no small measure fostered love and unity amongst Staff

Provision of working materials and protective apparels such as gumboots, raincoats, etc for Staff members working in the field

Creating a synergy with the security agencies in the country for the protection of lives and properties including farm produce of our members which was under threat hitherto

Bringing leadership closer to the people by constant engagement with the generality of Staff on regular basis

Regular cleaning up of the Institute to create healthy environment for the workforce.

Appreciation/Commendation of 38 members of Staff for their excellent service to the Institute.

Introduction of the quarterly "Own your Institute" programme, an initiative aimed at promoting camaraderie among Staff.

Capacity building for an accountant on International Public Sector Accounting Standard (IPSAS) Training (ACCURAL) Basis of Accounting.

Capacity building for one (1) procurement officer on the 'use of NOCOPO Portal for the Preparation of Procurement Plans and Procurement Records

Capacity building for two (2) procurement officers on advanced certificate course in Procurement Management.

Resuscitation of the police out post which was abandoned for over three years.

Strengthened the security architecture of the Institute to save lives and properties

Social services and Courtesy visits

Employment of 100 Casual Staff in the interim with a view of decasualisation as soon as the request for waiver is granted.

Payment of over two years outstanding Casual Wages from all the substations and headquarters

Courtesy visit to the Oba of Benin to seek for his support in ensuring peaceful co-existence between the Institute and host communities.

Courtesy visits to the Inigies of host Communities with the objective of achieving peaceful co-existence between the Institute and host communities.

Courtesy visit to the Edo State Governor with the objective of forging a good relationship.

Courtesy visit to the acting Governor of Ondo State to solicit support for the Institute especially for the Experimental station at Igbotako in Ondo State.



Congratulations to our amiable "mama rubber 2" Dr. L.N. Dongo.
The Editorial Team wishes you more of God's grace

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Dr. Dongo meets with Research Officers

Director/CEO, Dr. L.N. Dongo on Thursday the 14th of September, had a round table discussion with the Research Scientists in the Institute's Conference Hall. She started the discussion by apologizing to the Research Staff for not having the meeting before now, even though she had met with the Research Staff when the Union formally welcomed her on her assumption of duty. She enjoined all Staff present to be free, open and frank with their comments. She then went on to make some critical observations concerning the Research Staff. There were contributions from both the Management Staff and the Research Officers present. The meeting ended with a promise from the Researchers to be more open to each other and to work together as a team for the progress of both the Institute and its members of Staff.



Cross section of Research Officers during the discussion

Deroose Team interacts with RRIN via Zoom

The Deroose is a global company with branches in Europe, North America and Asia. They are a Biotech driven platform for propagation and production of crops for small-scale growers and plantations. Both the Deroose and Presco Organisations are part of the Siat Group.

The Deroose team Zoom meeting with RRIN took place on Thursday September 14th, 2023. The following participants were in attendance:

Deroose Team: Filp Vandenbussche; Maurice van Winden; Lucas Vanhaelewyn and Reinout Impens (Research and Development Manager, Siat Group).

RRIN Team: Dr. Lelia Dongo (Director/CEO); Dr. Kenneth Omokhafa; Dr. Fred Akpobome and Mr. Emmanuel Imoren.

Dr. Omokhafa opened the discussion by sharing his meeting with Mr. Reinout at Presco and the productive discussions that took place. He also highlighted RRIN's effort in producing and distributing planting materials. The Deroose team expressed their interest in RRIN's materials and their willingness to exchange their planting materials with RRIN for trials.

Furthermore, the Deroose team mentioned their involvement in raising tissue cultures of rubber materials and inquired about the status of RRIN's tissue culture work. Dr. Omokhafa explained that RRIN has a tissue culture laboratory but faces challenges due to the lack of necessary consumables and a reliable 16-hour power supply, which hampers in-vitro plant culture.

The Deroose team sought clarification on whether the exchange would involve tissue-cultured plants, to which Dr. Omokhafa explained that, due to the mentioned issues, only budded plants would be available for exchange.

Dr. Dongo also inquired about the potential impact of tissue culture on the maturity time of rubber plants, to which the Deroose team responded that rubber plants raised from tissue cultures also matured in the same 6–7 years.

Dr. Omokhafa emphasised the importance of signing the necessary MOUs, and RRIN expressed their interest in additional collaborations, including fellowships and the utilization of their (Presco - Siat group) tissue culture laboratory in Nigeria. Mr. Reinout asserted that they were prepared to begin collaboration immediately, as their tissue culture laboratory in Presco was equipped and operational, though has not been in use.

The Deroose team suggested a field visit, which was enthusiastically accepted by both parties. Lucas from the Deroose group asked about RRIN's perspective on the Nigerian government's support for tree crops in the future. Dr. Omokhafa responded by highlighting Nigeria's increasing commitment to agriculture and tree crops.



Participants, during the Zoom meeting

Dr. L.N. Dongo holds the final tri-annual town hall meeting for the year 2023 with members of Staff

The last tri-annual town hall meeting for the year 2023 between Dr. L.N. Dongo and the members of Staff of the Institute took place on Thursday 21st September, 2023 at the RRIN Conference hall.

Mr. V. Ilumah, the Director, Administration welcomed all Staff present to the meeting and gave the highlights of the last meeting which was held on the 14th of June, 2023.

Dr. L.N. Dongo in her address, welcomed all to the meeting, giving God the glory for everything. Two short video clips were screened for the Staff. One depicted teamwork and she re-emphasized the effectiveness of teamwork, opining that much progress cannot be made and that we also cannot be a leading Research Institute without it, as we need each other for the work to move forward. The second clip depicted the negative effect of revenge and she advised Staff against holding grudges.

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and wanting to revenge any perceived wrong to them as it usually ends in losses either way. She also intimated Staff of the forthcoming 50th anniversary celebration of the Institute, which will hold between the 11th and 17th of December, 2023. She said there will be an anniversary uniform which will have pictures showing rubber and gum Arabic and will be given free to members of Staff. She reminded the Staff of the Core values of the Institute: T – Teamwork; R – Reliability; A – Accountability; P – Professionalism; I – Integrity; C – Commitment; E – Excellence (**TRAPICE**).

With regards to the "Own Your Institute", she explained that it was an avenue for all Staff to mingle and work together, irrespective of status or rank in the office and appealed to all to see it as such.



Dr. L.N. Dongo addressing Staff during the Town Hall meeting

In their response, one of the Staff appreciated Dr. L.N. Dongo for water and road provided for the Staff Quarters, but also appealed for management intervention in fixing the roofs and septic tanks of most of the houses in the Institute. Another Staff appealed for more attention to be paid to the Akwete Sub-Station for more infrastructures to enhance Research activities there, while another appealed for assistance for the RRIN Secondary School from Management.

To these appeals, Dr. L.N. Dongo replied that when finances improve, something can be done, but that for now, Staff should please try to maintain their residence, while the Institute helps the school to maintain its surroundings.



Cross section of members of Staff during the Town Hall meeting

Dr. L.N. Dongo then called on those that submitted entries for the 50th anniversary song to present their songs to Staff. There were seven entries from the following: Mrs. P. Ifahi, Mrs. F. Oseghale (2 nos), Mrs. J. Edokpayi, Mr. P. Eze, Mr. R. Diai and Mrs. P. Egbadon. At the end of the presentations, the entry from Mrs. P. Egbadon was picked as the anniversary song while those by Mr. R. Diai and Mrs. P. Ifahi will be considered for RRIN anthem.

At the end of the town hall meeting, the Director/CEO met briefly with the Research Officers to inform them of a suggestion that all our technologies could be put together in a book which could be launched on that major day of celebration. The suggestion was well received and the Programme Leaders were asked to do the collation on the Programme basis, while the Management should come up with a format on how it will be done.

Gum Arabic: A Potential Game-Changer for Nigeria's Economy

By Dr N. M Fakuta.

Nigeria often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," boasts of a diverse range of natural resources and a rapidly growing economy. While oil has traditionally dominated the Nigerian economic landscape, diversification into agriculture has become a pressing necessity. One resource that holds immense promise for Nigeria's economic future is gum arabic. This natural exudate from the acacia tree is gaining recognition not only for its ecological benefits but also for its potential to transform Nigeria's economic fortunes.

Gum arabic, also known as Acacia gum, is a natural exudate harvested from various species of Acacia trees, particularly *Senegalia senegal* and *Acacia seyal*. It is a water-soluble gum with a wide range of applications across industries such as food, beverage, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and textiles. Nigeria, located in the Sudan-Sahel region, is one of the primary producers of gum arabic globally.

Why Gum Arabic Matters

1. **Economic Diversification:** The over-dependence on oil revenues has been a significant challenge for Nigeria's economy. With the volatility of oil prices, diversifying income sources is crucial for the country's economic stability. Gum arabic presents a golden opportunity to achieve this diversification.
2. **Natural and Non-Toxic:** Gum arabic is prized for being a natural, plant-based substance that is generally recognized as safe (GRAS) by regulatory agencies. It is preferred over synthetic additives in many applications due to its safety and non-toxic properties.
3. **Sustainable Agriculture:** The cultivation of Acacia trees for gum arabic production promotes sustainable farming practices. These trees are well-suited to Nigeria's arid and semi-arid regions, providing environmental benefits such as soil improvement and carbon sequestration.
4. **Employment Generation:** Gum arabic production and processing can create job opportunities, especially in rural areas where economic opportunities are limited. This can help alleviate poverty and reduce rural-to-urban migration.
5. **Export Potential:** Nigeria can tap into the growing global demand for natural and organic products. Gum arabic's various applications make it a valuable commodity on the international market.

Challenges and Opportunities

Despite its potential, gum arabic faces challenges that need to be

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addressed for it to become a pillar of Nigeria's economy:

1. Lack of Infrastructure: Adequate infrastructure for harvesting, processing, and transportation of gum arabic is currently lacking in many producing regions. Investment in infrastructure is essential to unlock the full potential of this resource.
2. Quality Control: Ensuring consistent quality is crucial for international markets. Nigeria needs to establish quality control measures and certification systems to meet global standards.
3. Research and Development: Investing in Research and development can lead to innovations in gum arabic processing and product development, expanding its applications and market reach.

Conclusion

The future of Nigeria's economy lies in diversification and sustainable development. Gum arabic, with its versatility and eco-friendly qualities, has the potential to drive economic growth, create jobs, and improve livelihoods, especially in rural areas. To harness this potential, Nigeria must invest in infrastructure, quality control, and Research while promoting sustainable farming practices. As the world seeks natural and sustainable alternatives, Gum arabic stands as a symbol of Nigeria's capacity to adapt, innovate, and thrive in the global marketplace. By recognizing and nurturing this resource, Nigeria can shape a brighter, more diversified economic future.

Dr N. M. Fakuta is a Chief Research Officer at the RRIN Gasua SubStation

RRIN holds September edition of general prayer meeting

The members of Staff of the Institute on Monday 4th of September, 2023 gathered in the Institutes' Conference Hall for the usual monthly prayer meeting. The prayer session started at 9am, with opening prayers by Mr. R. Dai and Mrs. P. Ifahi continued with praise and worship session. The prayer session led by Dr. R. Okundia, had prayers for God's blessings on all members of Staff, the Institute, Management of the Institute, for the Nation and thanked God for all He has done for the Institute and Staff; for the fear of God in the hearts of Staff; for our nation Nigeria to succeed. Finally, he thanked God for answered prayers.

The session was brought to a close by the sharing of the Grace which was led by Mr. W. Imariagbe



Cross section of some members of Staff during the prayer session

PENSION MATTERS

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A RETIREMENT SAVINGS ACCOUNT HOLDER LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE NATIONAL PENSION COMMISSION

The National Pension Commission otherwise referred to as 'the Commission' is a legal entity that can sue and be sued. In the event that an Individual, Corporate Organisation or Fund Provider intends to Institute legal proceedings against PenCom, Section 95 of Pension Reform Acts 2014 stipulates the procedures to be observed. The Act states that no Suit shall be commenced against the Commission before the expiration of a period of 30 days after written notice of intention to commence the suit shall have been served upon the Commission by the intending plaintiff or agent; and the notice shall clearly and explicitly state the following -

- a. The cause of action;
- b. The particulars of the claim;
- c. The name and place of abode of the intending plaintiff; and
- d. The relief which he claims.

The notice referred to above and any summons, notice or other document required or authorised to be served upon the Commission under the provisions of the Act or any other law may be served by delivering the same to the Director-General or the Secretary, or any Principal officer of the Commission (PenCom) or by sending it by registered post addressed to the Director-General or Secretary at the Headquarters of the Commission.

Emmanuel A. Aiwekhoe

Principal Admin Officer (Pensions)

Health Corner

FAMILY PLANNING

Defined as a medical practice for women (and men) of child bearing age aimed at preventing pregnancy till the desired time.

Desired time varies from family to family and depends on factors like economic situation, size of family targeted and age of couples etc.

Some of the family methods are;

1. Hormonal implants e.g Jadelle.
2. Intrauterine device.
3. Lactational Amenorrhoea method.
4. Male condoms.
5. Female condoms.
6. Pill.
7. Mimi pill (Progestin only).
8. Standard days method (cycle beads).
9. Tubal Ligation (bilateral).
10. Monthly injection.
11. Emergency Contraception.
12. Vasectomy.

Dr. D. Ayegba is the Medical Doctor in the RRIN Clinic

Know your Public Service Rules (PSR)

EMOLUMENTS AND INCREMENT

SECTION 1 - EMOLUMENTS

Financial Regulations contain guidance on the payment of *Emoluments*.

Payment of emoluments and wages.

On first appointment, emolument shall, as a general rule be paid as from the date of assumption of duty.

On transfer from another Government to the Federal Public Service a Staff shall be eligible for the emolument attached to his/her new office with effect from the day he/she assumes duty. Except in a case of a promotion from a non-pensionable to a pensionable office, the following rules shall apply where an officer is promoted in the ordinary course within Federal Public Service to an office carrying emolument on an incremental scale:

(i) If the officer is promoted to a Grade Level that does not overlap his/her old Grade Level, he/she will be placed at the minimum point of his/her new Salary Grade Level.

(ii) If his/her emolument in the former post is higher than the minimum point of the new Salary Grade Level, he/she will be placed on the next point, higher than his/her former emolument after taking into consideration the increment he/she would have earned if he/she had not been promoted.

SECTION 2 - INCREMENT RULES

Increment is a predetermined amount added to the annual emolument of an officer every calendar year.

An officer on an incremental Grade Level shall normally be granted an increment unless he/she is on interdiction/suspension or has a disciplinary action pending against him/her or on account of poor performance. The incremental date of an officer appointed or promoted to a post in the Federal Public Service shall be 1st January of the year following at least six months of service or promotion. The grant of an increment may be deferred or withheld in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 4. In deciding which penalty to impose or recommend, a Permanent Secretary/Head of Extra-Ministerial Office will take into account the gravity of the shortcoming and the quality of the officer's previous service, bearing in mind that to withhold an increment is a more serious penalty than to defer it.

An officer's increment is deferred when the decision as to whether or not it shall be granted is postponed for an increment specific period. The period must be fixed at the time the increment is deferred and must not be less than three months nor more than six months. If less than six months in the first instance, it may, if necessary, be increased to six months by additional specific deferment. If a deferred increment is eventually granted it does not become effective until the day following the expiration of the specific period of deferment. However, the recipient retains his/her original incremental date for subsequent increments. If a deferred increment is not granted at or before the expiration of six months from the date it was originally due it must be withheld. For example, if an officer who is due to proceed from N147,968 to N152,950 per annum on 1-1-2005 had his increment deferred for three months his salary shall remain at N147,968 until 31/3/2005 when his/her Permanent Secretary/Head of Extra-Ministerial Office must decide whether or not to grant the deferred increment. If he/she grants it, the officer draws monthly emolument at N152,950 for the period 1-4-2005 to 31-12-2005 (i.e. the remaining nine months) and retains his/her original incremental date of 1st January for consideration of his next increment to N157,932.

An officer's increment is withheld when it is decided not to grant it and that he/she shall cease to be eligible thereof until his/her next incremental date. The withholding of an increment thus results in the emolument of the officer in question remaining for the rest of his incremental service one increment

behind what it would have been had the increment not been withheld (unless the Federal Civil Service Commission exercises the authority described in Rule 040208). Example: An officer due to proceed from N147.968 to N152.950 per annum on 1/1/2005 had his/her increment withheld. His/her emolument should remain at N147, 968 throughout the period 1/1/2005 to 31/12/2005 and he/she cannot proceed to N 152,950 until 1/1/2006, his/her next incremental date.

An increment deferred or withheld cannot be restored with retrospective effect in consequence of improved service during a later increment-earning period.

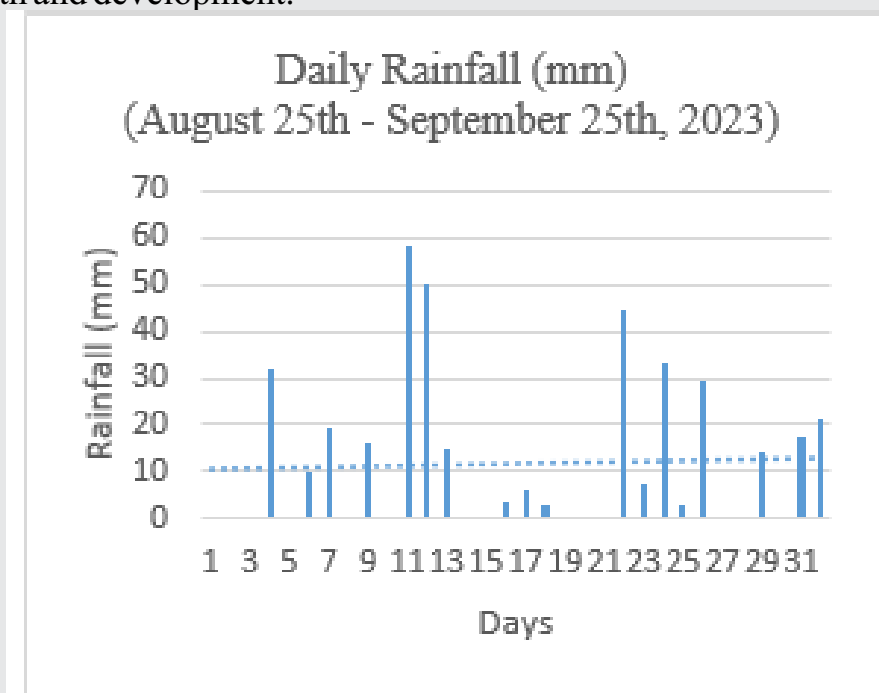
When an officer's increment has been withheld under Rule 040206, the Federal Civil Service Commission, may at any subsequent incremental date, grant one or more special increments having the effect of raising the salary of the officer to or towards the level it would have reached if the previous withholding had not occurred.

Agro climatology Bulletin No.8, (August 25 – September 25, 2023)

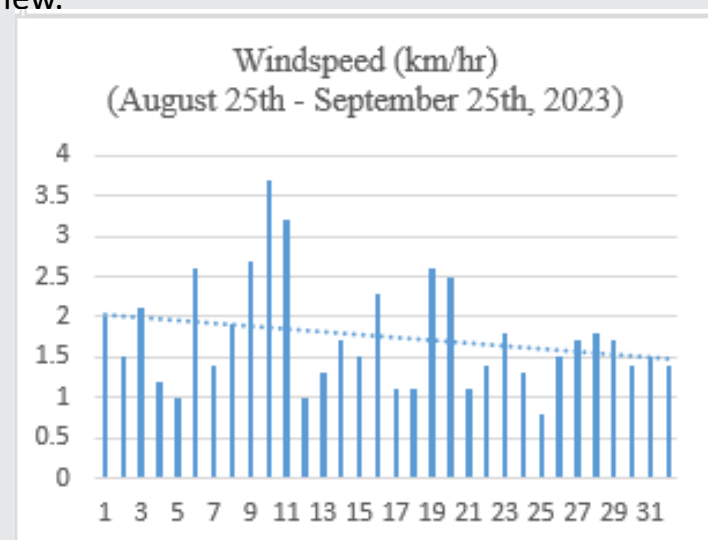
Summary

Rainfall Trend

There were various degrees of rainfall between 25th of August and 25th of September in Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria main station and her environ. The highest amount of rainfall of 52.8mm was recorded on the 11th of September. There were 18 raining days during the period under review with a total of 383.8mm which was very supportive for crop growth and development.



The rainfall was accompanied by average velocity wind speed of 1.74km/hr and an average Relative Humidity of 96.97% for the period under review.



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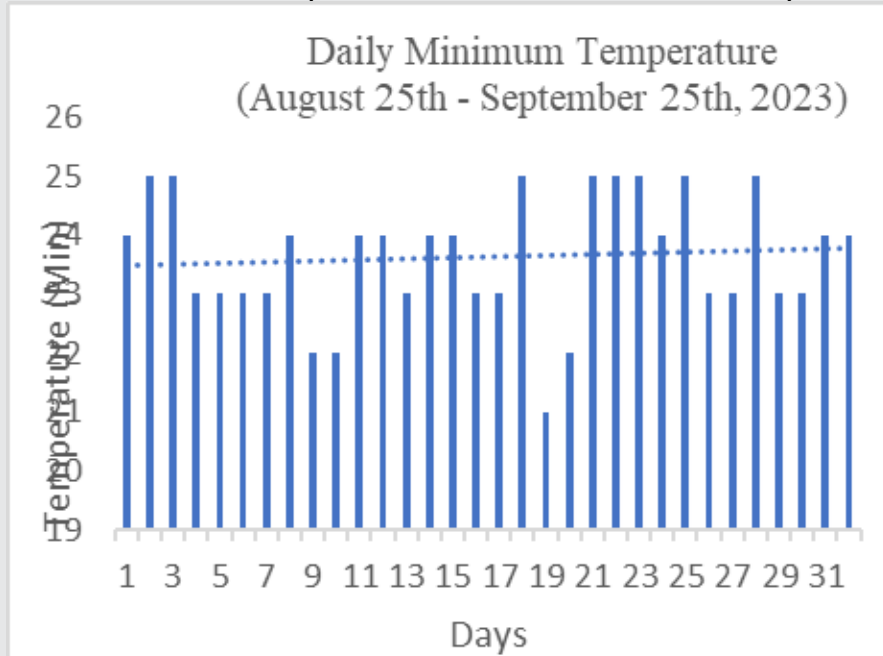
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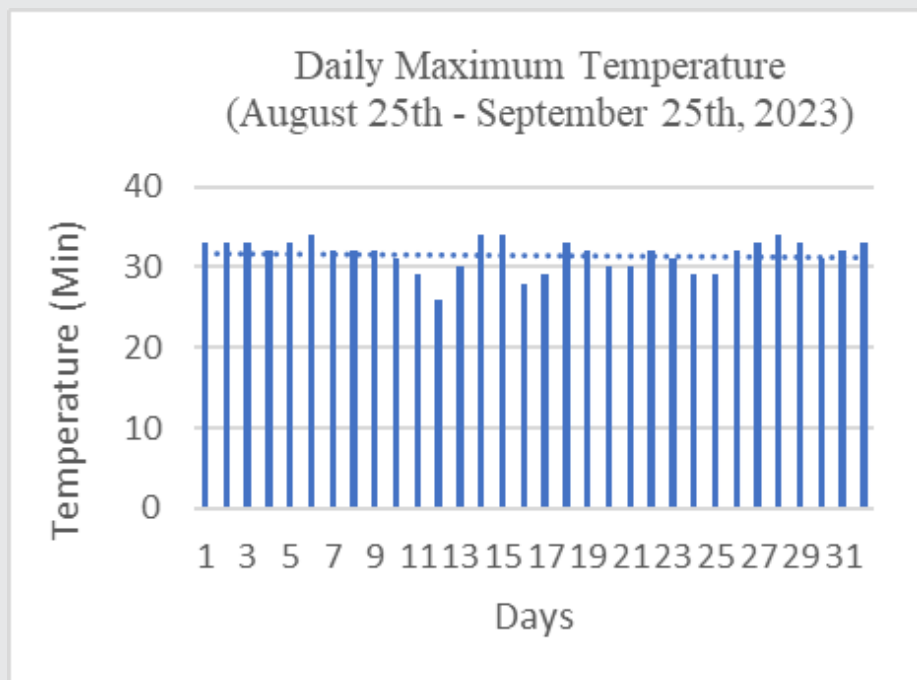
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Temperature Trend

The trend of maximum temperature indicated a normal temperature.



The minimum temperature ranges from 21°C to 25°C while the maximum temperature ranges from 26°C to 34°C during the period.



The actual mean maximum temperature distribution of 31.5°C favoured crop development and growth.

	MINIMUM TEMPERATURE (°C)	MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE (°C)	RELATIVE HUMIDITY (%)
Mean	23.6	31.5	97
Maximum	25	34	98.4
Minimum	21	26	90.7
Sum	756	1009	3102.9

Agricultural Outlook

The weather for the period under review favoured the planting and development of already planted crops such as maize, leafy vegetables, cassava e.t.c. in the Institute and her environs. Harvest of maize, fruits, leafy vegetables and cassava (of previous year cropping) are still ongoing in the Institute and her neighbouring communities.

For comments and suggestions, send feedback to:

**Head, Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Department,
Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria, P.M.B. 1049 Benin City.**

Dr. Dongo meets with a Seminarian from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans)

Dr.L.N. Dongo on Thursday the 14th of September, 2023, received a Seminarian, Mr. Akolo E. Alozie from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans) in her office. Mr. Alozie in his verbal communication thanked Dr. Dongo for receiving him in her office. He said their Congregation, located in Enugu State, is one of the Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. It was founded in 1703 by Claude Francois Poullart des Places and revived in 1848 by merging with the Society of the Holy Heart of Mary founded by Francois Libermann. The Congregation Apostulates include: Mission to the poor and abandoned society and also goes on mission to where the church finds it difficult to get works. They also train Seminarians for ordination into the Catholic Priesthood. Presently, the Order has students from within and outside Nigeria (over 62 countries in the world). The school also produces a yearly magazine "Beyond Frontiers" which is disseminated worldwide, to all the home countries of their students and their affiliate The Spiritan University, Duquesne, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, United States of America.

The essence of the visit according to him, was to intimate the Director/CEO of their intent to interview her for their upcoming 2024 edition on her take on Research Institutes and the way forward in Nigeria, using RRIN as a case study, because most Research Institutes in Nigeria, with the exception of a few are not known in the country. He also requested that the Institute take an advert page in the magazine to showcase the Institute and the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration Dr. L.N. Dongo in her reply, welcomed the seminarian to the Institute, congratulated him on his journey so far in the Seminary. She welcomed the idea of the interview, considering the outreach of the magazine as it keys into her mantra of making RRIN visible. She also gave a positive response for the advert placement of the Institute and its activities in the magazine.



Dr. O.A. Emuedo, Mr. Akolo Alozie and Dr. L.N. Dongo after the visit

The Seminarian, Mr. Akolo E. Alozie, thanked Dr. Dongo for her response, promising to return with a formal letter from the Editorial body of the school, requesting for the interview.

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Staff of the Month

Mr Samson Igbinobaro of the Nursery Unit is our Staff of the month. He joined the service of the Institute in March, 1992 on a temporary basis as a Clerical Officer on USS 3/1. In August of the same year, his appointment was regularized and eventually confirmed in August, 1994. In 1999, he was re-designated to the Agricultural Field Overseer Cadre as a Senior Agric Field Overseer. In 2008, he obtained his OND in Agricultural Technology from the College of Agriculture, Iguoriakhi and was converted to the Agricultural Superintendent Cadre in 2009. He was deployed from the Agronomy Department to the Production Department (Nursery Unit) in 2012. He is presently a Principal Agricultural Superintendent I.



Mr. Samson Igbinobaro

He is a supervisor in the RRIN Nursery who played a pivotal role in the planting materials production for the year 2023, with the production of over 90,000 budded stumps; establishment of the 2023 rootstock nursery; motivates his subordinate Staff; rarely absent from work; punctual; reliable; highly skilled in the job.

He is very efficient, dedicated, effective, dutiful and diligent in all his official duties.

Announcement

Applications for the equal funding opportunities to attend the Workshop on Genomics, 2024 are now open. For details on eligibility and application, please visit: evonics.org/bursaries/

Testimonials

..... Since your presence in RRIN through your arrival as the Director/Chief Executive Officer, there has never been a dull moment. You rode on like a warrior on a Trojan horse on a mission. You have inspired directions that will further RRIN in both National and Global space. You have exemplified embodiment of dedication to duty, results oriented driven passion, compassionate, and a good listener. In fact, within this one year of your touch I can make bold to say you are the long-awaited destiny helper of RRIN. CONGRATULATIONS!!! MA AS YOU MARK ONE YEAR IN OFFICE. THE GOOD LORD KEEP YOU STRONG AND FOCUSED ALWAYS.

***Dr. Joe Ogbemor, Assistant Director - Research /
Chairman ASURI - RRIN branch***

I write on behalf of the entire membership of NASU, RRIN Branch which cuts across all the Non-Academic Staff cadre of the Institute as it stands today. Dr. L.N Dongo has overtime since her assumption of office as Director/CEO, RRIN demonstrated capacity and readiness to move RRIN to its Eldorado. We have no doubts that her choice as the substantive Director/CEO of RRIN was a square peg in square hole, very dutiful and diligent. As RRIN marks golden jubilee, it is our wish to extol the good legacies of the Director/CEO since her assumption of office about one year ago as follows:

1. Restoration of water in the Staff New Quarters that was without water for over one year and six months due to faulty bore hole pump.

2. Construction of Institute new main gate to the entrance to replace the old dilapidated one.
3. Extension of Solar Power system to other blocks of the Institute housing the Internal Audit Unit, Stores and some offices.
4. Introduction of end of year get together where hard work was rewarded thereby spurring others to be more dutiful.
5. Creation of conducive environment for work which has in no small measure fostered love and unity amongst staff.
6. Provision of efficient internet supply for staff.
7. Extension of the asphaltting of the RRIN main access road.
8. Provision of working materials and protective devices such as rainboots, raincoats, etc for our members working in the field
9. Developing and asphaltting of our intra roads which happened for the first time since inception of the institute.
10. Creating a synergy with the security agencies in the country for the protection of lives and properties including farm produce of our members which was under threat hitherto.
11. Bringing leadership closer to the people by constant engagement with the generality of staff on regular basis.
12. Regular cleaning up of the institute to create healthy environment for the workforce.

In addition, I wish to add that the relative industrial harmony and conducive environment devoid of any form of unrest was not procured but earned by the sterling quality leadership prowess of our dear Director/CEO, Dr. L.N Dongo who we can proudly refer to as 'THE MAN CALLED MAMA RUBBER'

Comrade Bennett I. Nwojini Branch Chairman NASU-RRIN

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FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND HARMONIOUS RELATION WITH HOST COMMUNITIES

Upon assumption of duty as the Director/CEO RRIN, immediate attention was paid to fostering peace and harmonious relationship between the Institute and its host communities as well as notable traditional institutions; namely His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo, Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II, Oba of Benin Kingdom; HRH. Ilerunuwa Akenzua, the Enogie of Oghobaghasse Dukedom; HRH. Ogbemudia Imadonmwinyi, the Enogie of Obagie N'Evbuosa Dukedom; the Edionwere, Elders and people of Uhie, Obaretin, Iyanomo, Evbuiokpen, Obayantor and Obagie N'Evbuosa community, respectively. This initiative brings to bear a systematic cessation of about a decade of unspeakable animosity and hostilities of respective communities to the Institute; which snowballed into series of unlawful encroachments and litigations against RRIN. Currently, RRIN-Host Communities Forum has been instituted to facilitate community inclusion in the developmental process of RRIN; and is now being replicated in other operational locations of the Institute.

Owen Egharevba (Ph.D) Assistant Director, RRIN/Chairman Oghobaghasse Dukedom Development Committee

Dear Dr. (Mrs.) Lelia Nkechinyere L Dongo,

I am thrilled to extend my heartfelt congratulations on your 1st year as the Director/CEO of RRIN. This milestone is a true testament to your exceptional leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Over the past year, you have exemplified grace, intelligence, and a remarkable ability to bring people together towards a common goal. Under your visionary guidance, RRIN has experienced unprecedented growth and success. Your vision for innovative research and collaboration has ignited a renewed passion within the organization and has positioned RRIN as a pioneering force in the field.

Your dedication to fostering a conducive work environment that embraces diversity, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all is truly commendable. You have championed initiatives that empower individuals, promote professional growth, and nurture a culture of creativity and innovation.

Your strategic approach and forward-thinking mindset have revolutionized the way RRIN operates, enabling it to overcome challenges and achieve remarkable milestones despite the current global climate and financial situation in the country. Through your dynamic leadership, you have inspired the team to think outside the box, pursue ambitious goals, and continuously push boundaries.

Your exceptional leadership style, characterized by empathy, integrity, and transparency, has earned you the respect and admiration of all those who have had the pleasure of working alongside you. Your open-door policy, approachability, and willingness to listen have created a sense of trust, allowing for effective communication and collaboration at all levels.

On this momentous occasion of your 1st anniversary as Director/CEO, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for your relentless dedication, tireless efforts, and invaluable contributions to RRIN. Your leadership has undoubtedly set a new standard of excellence for the organization, and I do not doubt that even greater achievements lie ahead under your guidance.

Once again, congratulations on this well-deserved milestone. May the upcoming years be filled with continued success, remarkable accomplishments, and unwavering determination. RRIN is truly fortunate to have you at the helm of affairs, and I am honored to be a part of your journey

towards shaping the future of research and innovation.

I wish you all the very best in your future endeavors.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Ogbemor Nicholas

Director/Programme Leader, Gum Arabic Improvement & Biotechnology

Picture Gallery



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