SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY MALAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, PhD, CON, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE AT THE LAUNCH OF SONGHAI TRAINEES, BATCH 'A' SCHEDULED TO HOLD ON THURSDAY, 18th SEPTEMBER, 2025.

Protocol:

Today, we gather to celebrate a turning point in the history of Katsina State, a day when we move beyond promises and take bold action to secure the future of our people. This is not just another programme; it is a revolution in the way we farm, the way we create wealth, and the way we fight poverty.

For decades, agriculture has been the backbone of our State. Katsina State lies in the heart of the Sahel Savannah, blessed with fertile soil and hardworking people. We are known for millet, sorghum, maize, soybeans, cowpeas and rice production. Through irrigation, we grow tomatoes, peppers, onions, sugarcane and vegetables. Yet despite this potential, our farmers have long faced challenges among which are low productivity, outdated tools, and limited access to markets.

The Songhai Initiative Center in Dutsinma began as a vision under Governor Ibrahim Shehu Shema's administration, when young men were sent for training at the Songhai Farm in Porto Novo. Sadly, their sacrifices went unrecognized, no opportunities were created for them, and the center itself was left to decay.

But today, under my leadership, that story has changed. The center has been revived, expanded, and repositioned as a beacon of hope for our youth and a cornerstone of agricultural transformation in Katsina State.

This morning, we celebrate a new chapter: 102 graduates proudly walking out of this centre not as job seekers, but as men and women equipped with skills, empowered with capital, and ready to create jobs, drive food security, and build wealth for themselves and their communities.

My administration came in with a promise to lift our people from poverty through agriculture, skills, and enterprise. Today, we are delivering.

Our graduates from the Songhai Initiative Center; they are pioneers of change under the current administration. They represent a new generation of young men and women equipped with knowledge, skills, and resources to transform agriculture into a profitable enterprise.

Over the past six months, these 102 young people have undergone intensive training at the Makera Songhai Comprehensive Training Centre in Dutsinma. They have mastered practical skills in poultry, fish farming, soil science, crop management, market garden, livestock husbandry, and biogas production.

This programme is anchored on four pillars of transformation:

i) Hands-on mastery of integrated techniques that maximize yield while reducing waste.

ii) Environmental stewardship through recycling and bio-integrated systems.

iii) Market empowerment—because harvests without buyers only bring frustration.

iv)Value-chain navigation—understanding the journey from seed to enterprise.

Today, each graduate is entrusted with ₦300,000 capital to launch their agribusiness. This is more than financial support, it is a vote of confidence, a foundation for enterprise, and a direct investment in the future of Katsina State.

This capital is a seed. If you plant it with wisdom, nurture it with discipline, and grow it with innovation, it will multiply feeding families, creating jobs, and inspiring communities.

The Songhai Initiative is part of a broader Agricultural Transformation Policy under my administration. Let me remind you of some bold steps we have taken:

- In 2023, we launched the dry-season farming initiative, distributing improved seeds, fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides free of charge to farmers.
- In 2024, we trained and deployed 722 extension workers across all 361 wards, equipping them with motorcycles and sprayers to bring knowledge closer to farmers.

- We disbursed over ₦470 million to support vulnerable families affected by banditry and COVID-19.
- We distributed 20,000 metric tons of fertilizer during the 2024 and 2025 wet seasons at subsidized rates, alongside improved seeds and chemicals at 50% discounts.
- We provided 4,000 power tillers and 4,000 solar-powered irrigation pumps to boost dry-season farming.
- We acquired 400 tractors, 1,000 planters, and 10 combined harvesters, commissioned by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in 2025, to strengthen mechanization.
- We revitalized cotton production by introducing improved seeds and strengthening the value chain.
- We launched the goat multiplication programme, giving four goats each to 3,610 women and 50 goats for 361 medium-scale producers.
- We began the development of Ruga settlements with schools, health centers, veterinary clinics, pastures, and housing for herders.

- Over 19,000 farmers have directly benefited from the distribution of Agricultural inputs and assets.

Our vision is clear: to move Katsina State from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture creating jobs, boosting food security, and positioning our state as a leader in agricultural production and agribusiness.

To our graduates: You are the pioneers of this new era. Do your part, and government will support you with infrastructure, policies, and opportunities that enable growth.

Nourish your soil, and it will nourish you.

Optimize your systems, and your profits will rise.

Understand your markets, and quality will follow.

In conclusion, you have not just completed training, you are now ambassadors of a new Katsina: a Katsina where agriculture is not about survival, but about prosperity, innovation, and global competitiveness.

Together, we are moving our youths from the street to the farm, from unemployment to enterprise, from dependency to dignity.

Congratulations to our Songhai Graduates. Congratulations to the people of Katsina. Now, let us get to work and together, build the future.

Thank you.