



Building Resiliency for Upcoming Challenges:

The Need to Restore Confidence in SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Policy Brief

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Introduction

The agricultural sector has performed well in recent past with growth averaging 5.5 % over the past five years. However, the overall growth rate of the sector in 2011 was 0.8% compared to 5.3% in 2010. Its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined from 29.8% in 2010 to 25.6% in 2011. Additionally, Ghana's rank on the Global Hunger Index in 2008 was 34 (out of 88 countries) and its hunger score dropped 40%, from alarming to serious, since the 1990 Index. A broader indicator, the 2010 Human Development Index, ranked Ghana 130 out of 169 countries, indicating that although there has been a leap in reducing hunger and poverty, Ghana still has some way to go.

Given the importance of agriculture as the dominant occupation for both males (45.0%) and females (37.8%) in the Ghanaian economy, it is not surprising that the leaders, confronted with rising food import bills as well as the 2008 high food prices, began to explore the potential for increasing agricultural productivity in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Maputo Declaration on agricultural investments. CAADP is the African Union's initiative to boost agricultural-led growth and development. As part of this initiative, the African Heads of State signed the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security, in which they agreed to invest at least 10% of their national budget in agriculture with the aim to reach an annual agricultural growth rate of 6% and

Millennium Development Goal 1 – halving hunger and poverty by 2015.

The report; “Building Resiliency for Upcoming Challenges: The Need to Restore Confidence in Smallholder Farmers” tracks government's investment in the agriculture sector. Building on SEND-GHANA's 2009 report titled “Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Optimal Results: The Ultimate Policy Choice for Ghana”, this report includes the major addition of coverage of nutrition and the need for the government to pay more attention to nutrition security in Ghana. It further points out contextual issues emerging in the implementation of various programmes and provides critical recommendations to address them.

Key Findings

Quality of Investment

- A commendable point to note is that, in recent past, the government has shown consistency by hitting a minimum of 10% of national budget; thus surpassing the Maputo commitment threshold in 2010 (10.5%) and 2011 (11.7%) in so far as investment in the agricultural sector is concerned. However, increased budget allocations and disbursements do not necessarily imply increased on-the-ground-benefits since additional resources have gone into recurrent expenditure instead of investment. In spite of the fact that more resources were devoted to the sector, growth has been rather abysmal implying that the right investment decisions are not being made.

- There is a disconnect between how most District Assemblies sampled are defining the focus of their budgets and national agenda of modernising agriculture. Few District Assemblies recognised agriculture as the predominant economic activity in their jurisdictions; thus responding to this reality by devoting greater percentage of their resources to supporting the growth of the sector. A prime example is Lawra District Assembly that spent 64% of its total budget on agricultural related activities and initiatives in contrast to East Gonja District, which spent an abysmal 14% of its total expenditure.

Gender Disparities in Investments Beneficiaries and Access to Support Services

- There is no gender parity of beneficiaries in government agricultural programmes; especially given that majority of small holder farmers are women. The reliance on self-selection for the identification of programme and project beneficiaries has not been conducive for increasing women's participation in government initiatives. With regards to the Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP), although the implementation of the intervention is at its nascent stage, as admitted by the majority of respondents from the 11 districts sampled, men (ranging from 65-95% depending on the district in question) are largely the beneficiaries. In Lawra for instance, women participants constitutes 11% of beneficiaries.



- With respect to the Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP), the study confirmed disproportionate gender representation of its beneficiaries with males comprising 65-85% in all participating communities. Furthermore, in the Northern region, majority of the beneficiaries were men, with some districts (eg. Bolga, West Gonja, Saboba) recording over

80% male beneficiaries. Whilst the programme is making strides in terms of increased participation in agricultural activities there appears to be lack of specific mechanisms that adequately target youth to participate; in addition to what age group constitutes the 'youth' definition utilized by the programme.

- Similar to the two programmes mentioned previously, majority of beneficiaries in the Root & Tuber Improvement & Marketing Programme (RTIMP) were men, dominating with up to 80% of all beneficiaries involved. In West Gonja, communities were selected based on their potential to produce root and tuber crops. The district selected 846 beneficiaries; consisting of 76% men participants and 24% women. Out of these numbers, 28% graduated from the programme, with 20% of graduates being women.

Unequal Access to Support Services

- There is inequity in agricultural resource distribution; unequal access to tractor services, irrigation, and fertilizers among others. Although, the programmes are increasing access to support services to beneficiaries, the number of programmes and respective beneficiaries are less than non-programme or project beneficiaries and, as such the impact on poverty, productivity and food security is expected to be minimal. Furthermore, it raises the issue of value for money, which is critical in so far as the mode of agricultural investment is concerned. Although majority of small-holders are benefitting from the fertilizer subsidies and the investment is worthwhile, concerns over prices should be kept in mind for future planning.

Nutrition

- The study found that in the past year, about 64% of respondents had suffered food deficiency, and went at least one month or more without enough food at home. Out of the farmers who were unable to meet their food needs for the year, 23% did not have enough for 1-2 months, 17% lacked enough food for approximately 3 months, 12% for 4-6 months and 5% could not provide enough food for their families at least 8-12 months of the year. Only 36% felt that they had enough food at home to last them the entire year. Due to the sensitive nature of the question, about 7% refrained from providing answers.

Coordination and Collaboration

- Weak coordination and collaboration resulted in an over emphasis on agricultural production and very little focus on nutritional education. Nutrition is usually seen as a health concern, therefore belonging to the health ministry rather than food and agriculture. Almost a third of respondents (71%) had not received any nutritional education or training. Again, small-holder farmers and their families lack access to training that can save lives and also increase their productivity and address developmental issues. Interestingly, only 29% received nutrition training and out of that MOFA provided training for only 37% of the respondents. Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), provided about 39% of the training, World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) provided about 11%, 8% was by Community Health workers and 5% by the Ministry of Health.

On the basis of the findings the following recommendations are made for policy consideration:

Sustaining Increased Investment but Paying Attention to Quality Investments

- Government should concentrate on developing mechanisms for better allocation of funds. Improved allocation of expenditures in the agricultural sector such as achieving the 10% target is not enough if not allocated effectively in a way that meets the differing needs of farmers in varying districts. A clear mechanism for government's consideration is the need to reach out to more women beneficiaries; reducing seed and tractor service costs; creating awareness of district assembly tractor services; training on fertilizer usage, nutrition, tractor utilization and provision of more tractors at District Assemblies to accommodate differing demands in each of the districts.

Gender Disparities in Investments Beneficiaries and Access to Support Services

- More has to be done to have gender parity of beneficiaries in government agricultural programmes, especially given that a majority of the smallholder farmers are women. Perhaps one area to look at is the need to constitute project committees in beneficiary communities whose mandate will be to select the beneficiaries from their communities and specifically



target women. A national guideline for the selection of programme/project beneficiaries should also be developed by MOFA and the project committee sensitized on same.

- The reliance on self-selection for the identification of programme and project beneficiaries has not been conducive for optimum women participation in government initiatives. The government should abandon self-selection as targeting means. Other targeting means should be explored such as community vulnerability assessments and working with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to target the most vulnerable groups.

Accessibility to Support Services

- There is the need for government to take a second look at the mode of investment, which at the moment is narrow, and broaden their scope to target a greater number of smallholder farmers. This should obviously be accompanied by awareness creation on existing services, especially those delivered by District Assemblies in order to increase farmers' accessibility to such services;

- The study found that majority of small-holder farmers are benefitting from the fertilizer subsidies and the investment is worthwhile. However, price concerns should be kept in mind when planning any future adjustments to the fertilizer subsidy programme. Proper training on correct fertilizer use is necessary to ensure higher yield and future soil viability, which is pertinent for future harvests.

Improved Capacity Building through Training on Agricultural Inputs

- To continue some of the positive trends in the government agricultural program, it is imperative that Agricultural Extension Agents (AEAs) and farmers have a proper understanding of the initiative, and some necessary sensitizations on environmental concerns such as bush burning, erosion and soil management, tree planting, and the important utilization of land preparatory machines.
- The government needs to adopt pro-poor policies that ensure small-holder farmers get better training to implement new and innovative technologies and techniques that will increase productivity and add value for local, regional, national and export markets. Therefore, they need better functioning markets with incentives to invest in improving production, with less risk, as new investment is being implemented in agro insurance.

Coordination and Collaboration

- There is the urgent need for government to ensure effective coordination among relevant Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs). The issue around the relegation of nutrition education and training to the backyard is very worrisome. The Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Council should take this up to ensure that the subject matter is mainstreamed into the work of the two ministries and, that there is a committee in place to ensure full implementation of the soon-to-be launched National Nutrition Policy;
- Greater and improved coordination implies the need for government to ensure that investment in the

sector, whether through the programme or project approach, is accompanied by a commensurate investment in the provision of extension services in a way that leaves no subsector and/or services behind.

- Building the capacity of AEAs and ESOs is necessary so as to improve support to smallholder farmers to maximize their agricultural efforts. Furthermore, the need to build multi-stakeholder relationships is crucial as it will further develop an open platform for communication and sharing of knowledge and best farming practices.

Conclusion

Small-holder farmers can significantly contribute to economic growth, as well as reduce poverty and ensure food security in Ghana. However, as our research has shown through beneficiary analysis, small-holder farmers need more secured access to irrigation, better access to improved seeds, tractor services and fertilizer to increase productivity as well as meet the demands of a changing urban and rural population. The study has observed some improvements when it comes to the utilization of fertilizer and traction. Project beneficiaries enjoyed more access in almost all the indicators with significant gaps in access to extension services, utilization of improved seeds and tractor services. There are greater challenges in addressing gender disparities as investments in the sector are not reaching women farmers regarding the provision of support services. Accessibility to support services is problematic as there is unequal access to irrigation, tractor services, and fertilizers. Many farmers are not even aware of the existence of certain support services such as tractor, fertilizers and Agricultural extension services despite improvements since 2009.

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