

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

(PART I)



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The Attitude of the Ghanaian

The Ghanaian Problem

Ghanaians have been sitting, watching and taking no concrete national action while the rains came, washing most of the fertile top soil with it into the sea. Now all that good water has turned into salty water which cannot be easily retrieved. There are shortages of everything in the country - cooking oil, cereal grains, fish, meat, vegetables, sugar, soap, other locally grown crops, etc. etc. Our children are dying of protein-caloric-malnutrition, anemia, infection and starvation. The population is hungry, the low income groups cannot afford protein foods because of their high prices. Adult malnutrition is now evident in the population and classical malnutritional problems such as rickets, scurvy, pellagra, are now seen in our hospitals and clinics. Infection is rampant and greater part of the population has turned lethargic with no desire or willingness to work. All these can be attributed to the signs of under-nutrition caused by our food situation.

Our transport situation is very bad and gradually grinding to a halt. The roads are bad and full of pot-holes. The implementing machinery is collapsing or has completely collapsed. There are no effective data collection, processing and effective dissemination to enable informative policy making. Our factories are grinding gradually to a halt or are now getting close to doing so. The equipment in the research institutions are broken down and the staff cannot move about because of lack of movable vehicles. They have no desire to do anything because they are plagued with worries about food and how to make ends meet. The school children are not properly fed because the food is hard to come by. They cannot be taught because there are no educational facilities and implements. Our farmers are growing old and cannot cope any longer with the tedium of rural agriculture and the youth are drifting to the towns and cities to live under deplorable conditions while they search for jobs. The outlook is dismal indeed.

Attitude

What are we doing as a nation about such a deplorable situation? Each person is solving his or her own problem the best way he or she knows how and the best he or she can, without anyone really worrying or bothering about the nation as a whole. The only national thing we are seen doing and actively pursuing is talking. We discuss our problems on high academic planes, on our national radios, televisions and in news papers, giving excellent suggestions and theoretical approaches to our problems, after thoroughly analyzing the situation in perfect English. We then go out to our individual ways to sit on our hinds while we mourn, grumble and complain about our deplorable national situation without any action.

Fellow Ghanaians, for how long do we intend to build a nation with words, words and more words without taking any concrete actions? Discussions without accompanying actions are luxuries which a hungry country cannot afford, and Ghana is certainly no exception to this rule.

Ghana must Act

The nation must get up and act, facing the stark realities of our situation, realizing that if we are not able to feed 10 million people now with food surpluses to spare, we certainly would not be able to survive in the immediate future when our population increases as it is doing now.

A national emergency action plan must be declared now and maintained and sustained during the immediate 6 to 12 months. This plan must be a priority short-term agricultural plan aimed at the crash increased production of food items which would be specified in a short term plan. All other activities not included in the national short-term plan must be relegated to a subordinate position and funds made available only for their active maintenance with no investments made in them.

National Emergency Short-Term Plan

All domestically grown crops not included in the plan are to be maintained at their present production level but emphasis must be laid on increased production of the specified food items below:

Domestic Crops

- Cereals - maize, rice and sorghum
- Tubers - yam
- Grain Legumes - groundnuts, agushie, cowpea and winged bean
- Oil - the oil palm
- Animals - chicken/eggs, goats/sheep, fish
- Fruits - oranges, pineapples.
- Vegetables - onions, tomatoes, pepper.

Commercial Crops

Cocoa, cotton.

Justification for Food Items Selected

Cereals, Oilseeds and Grain Legumes

From a nutritional point of view it is more beneficial to harvest 10kg of cereals, oilseeds and grain legumes from a given piece of land than to harvest 10kg of root crops and tubers. Whereas the legumes, oilseeds and cereals provide about 9kg of nutrients out of the 10kg and only about 1kg of water, the root crops provide less than 4kg of nutrients and over 6kg of water. Besides any excesses or surpluses of cereals produced can be effectively combined with cakes from the oil milling processes of the oil bearing crops - groundnuts, agushie and winged beans as a basis for the production of poultry and other animal feed.

The Winged Bean

Research done in our laboratories and those of the University of Ghana's experimental stations have shown that the winged bean has all the properties of soybean except the bitter taste and can be effectively grown in the tropics. Weaning food for infants and toddlers have also been formulated from the winged bean. The Crops Research Institute's station at Bunso has multiplied seeds which are being stored at the Food Research Institute for planting. With the provision of needed services and equipment for processing seeds can be released to farmers for production under the supervision of the University of Ghana's experimental station at Kade where a lot of work has been done on the agronomy and large scale production of the winged bean.

The Palm

Intensive production of the palm not only becomes the source of palm and palm kernel oils but also provides residual cake for animal feed preparation. Judicious and systematic tapping of the sap while the trees are still standing could be utilized as a source of alcohol production through natural yeast fermentation. Such alcohol could be distilled on commercial basis at our sugar factories and the yeast harvested and processed as a good source of B complex in addition to other brewers solids to supplement cake and cereal for the production of animal feed. Other parts of the palm are also useful for basket, rope and pulp for cardboard.

Poultry and Small Ruminants

If fodder production and animal feed production can be increased as indicated above, with the increased production of the crops selected, emphasis laid on the production of chicken would yield results between 4 to 6 months, the time taken for chicken to reach the table, and within 18 months for sheep and goats, the time taken for them to be ready for slaughter.

Fish

Increased production of fish would not only be a quick source of animal source of protein but would also provide another needed component for animal feed production.

Oranges and Pineapples

These fruits are needed as good sources of vitamin C for the public. Increased production of these would also provide needed raw materials for our fruit canning and bottling factories.

Onions, Tomatoes and Pepper

These vegetables are regular components and ingredients of the Ghanaian diet and must, therefore, be provided in large quantities.

With national emphasis on increased domestic production of these food items, not only would we break the starvation cycle but the population would be properly nourished to provide the needed manpower for our economic development and about 100 million cedis of foreign exchange used for the importation of food would be

greatly minimized and the money released for more productive utilization.

Commercial Crops

In order to be in a position to continue earning foreign exchange, our cocoa must be rehabilitated and other uses found for the numerous by-products such as pods, pulp and nibs. In addition to cocoa, emphasis must be laid on the commercial production of cotton which would not only feed our textile factories with needed cotton but could also be another foreign exchange earner. The cotton seeds could then be used as a source of oil and the residual cake as a protein source which could also be a component of animal feed.

Plan of Action

Agricultural Inputs

In order for this short-term emergency plan to be implemented within the 6 - 12 months, the Soil Research Institute must be requested to provide soil maps indicating the most suitable areas of the country where planting of the selected items would give the best yields. The Crops Research Institute, Seed Multiplication Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Grains Development Board, and any other relevant agencies, institutes or units must be given the facilities to make it possible for them to provide planting material, i.e. seeds and seedlings and other needed inputs in addition to any improved cultivation practices to enable farmers or others wishing to join in the farming activities in the areas selected to be effected.

Mechanization

The Mechanization and Transport section of the Ministry of Agriculture in consultation with other institutions and agencies such as the Ghanaian-German Agricultural Development Project (G-GADP), the Ghana Government/Canadian Government Project, the Christian Service Committee (CSC), the Agricultural Engineering Departments in Ghana's Universities, the Technology Consultancy Centre, the Agricultural Engineering Limited, Agbeskoo Engineering Limited, and any other relevant firms, agencies and institutions must be given the mandate for the production and dissemination of appropriately selected intermediate technologies that can be easily

adopted and adapted at the small-scale farm level.

In order to make effective use of the youth, crash training programmes for effective usage of the selected implements must be given to them and loans or hire-purchase facilities made available to them to enable them provide paid service to farmers in the selected areas. Wayside workshops and Blacksmiths must be involved in this exercise in order to provide maintenance and repair work for the technologies selected and disseminated.

Food Storage, Processing and Preservation

In order to benefit from the increased production of the selected crops, there must be proper storage and preservation methods. The Food Research Institute in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Manufacturers' Association, the Small-Scale Enterprises Commission, the Crops Research Institute and the Atomic Energy Commission, National Council for Women and Development, and any other relevant agencies and institutions must be given the facilities to make it possible for them to introduce improved drying and storage facilities and also improved processing and preservation methods in the selected areas among the relevant sectors.

Distribution and Marketing

The Food Distribution and Marketing Corporations in collaboration with the market women, the Local Councils, the transport handling group, and any other relevant institutions, should be made responsible for effective distribution and marketing of the selected crops on the emergency crash programme.

Animal Feed Production/Animal Production

For effective production of feed and selected poultry and small animals, the Animal Research Institute in collaboration with the Veterinary Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture plus the Animal Husbandary section of the Ministry of Agriculture with all the animal feed production factories and the oil mills and any other relevant institutions, firms and agencies must be given the chance and relevant facilities to make it possible for them to implement this aspect of the plan.

Fish Production

Effective implementation of increased fish production must be the responsibility of the Institute of Aquatic Biology, Fisheries Research Institute, Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, fish processing firms, local canoe fishermen, fish traders, traditional fish processors, and any other relevant institutions or firms connected with fish. The relevant inputs must be provided to make it possible for them to implement their part of the plan.

Accommodation

In order to make these selected areas habitable, the Building and Road Research Institute, Town Planning, brick and tile factories, cement factories, the Ministry of Works and Housing, the State Housing Corporation, the AESC, the Highway Authority, the Forest Products Research Institute, and any other relevant institutions, agencies or units should be given the facilities and inputs to make it possible for them to provide low cost houses, minor roads and feeder roads to and from the selected areas to make it possible for the produced crops to be effectively moved to the marketing centres.

Provision of Water and other Amenities in the Selected Areas

Corp., The Water and Sewerage, the Water Resources Research Unit, Local Councils, Social Welfare, Department of Rural Development, Irrigation Authority and any other relevant institutions, agencies and units must be requested to take the necessary actions with all inputs provided to make it possible for water to be provided in the selected priority programme areas.

Transport

To make it possible for people to move effectively in the selected areas, some form of appropriate rural transport must be provided or other public means of transport provided not only for transporting people but also for carting harvested crops from the farms for marketing and distribution. The Government transport, the Mechanization and Transport section of the Ministry of Agriculture, the multinational motor firms, assembling plants, spare parts dealers, workshops and any other relevant transport institutions or agencies must be requested to implement relevant proposals made by them for the solution of the problem.

It is obvious that for effective implementation of the emergency priority programme, we must put all our relevant resources together in groups as indicated and utilize them effectively, providing needed amenities such as health posts, electricity and any other amenities that would be needed for the effective implementation of the project.

Specified Duties

Duties and requirements expected of the various groupings must be clearly defined and the co-ordinator of the group activities also clearly specified. The group co-ordinators would then hand in their specified plan of action plus requirements and estimates. The co-ordinators must then meet with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Bank of Ghana plus any other relevant agencies to reconcile the needs, avoiding duplications and unnecessary wastage and to see how best the National Resources can be effectively utilized in the implementation of the priority programme.

There must be periodic meetings of this co-ordinating group to review the progress of the programme with respect to the group activities and to evaluate actions being taken and results being obtained to enable change of course if need be. It is only through such a concerted and systematic effort and action that we can utilize our scarce resources for effective implementation of a plan that would enable us to feed ourselves and stimulate economic growth. The actions being taken now and those which have been taken in the past without any effective grouping of relevant institutes and agencies with similar goals have only resulted in the dissipation of our limited resources into minute capillaries which end up in a dissipated mist or an illusionary cloud yielding absolutely no benefits to the nation. I do hope the nation would look at this realistically.