

**STATEMENTS BY HON. KWAME ASAFU-ADJEL, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR
THE NSUTA-KWAMANG-BEPOSO CONSTITUENCY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
35TH FARMERS' DAY CELEBRATION TO BE HELD ON FRIDAY, 6TH DECEMBER,
2019 AT HO, VOLTA REGION**

INTRODUCTION

RIGHT HONORABLE SPEAKER,

NATIONAL FARMERS' DAY IS CELEBRATED ON THE FIRST FRIDAY OF DECEMBER EACH YEAR IN RECOGNITION OF THE ENORMOUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF FARMERS AND FISHERS IN THE COUNTRY. THE DAY IS DESIGNATED TO PAY RESPECT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FARMING, AND FISHING IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROWTH OF GHANA.

THIS YEAR'S EVENT WOULD BE HELD UNDER THE THEME "ENHANCING SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE TOWARDS AGRI-BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT".

MR. SPEAKER, AVAILABLE INFORMATION INDICATES ABOUT 60% OF THE GHANAIAN POPULATION LIVE AND EARN THEIR LIVELIHOOD THROUGH AGRICULTURE IN THE RURAL AREAS. UNFORTUNATELY, VALUE ADDED IN AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTES ONLY 20% TO THE TOTAL GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT. HENCE, THE WIDESPREAD RURAL POVERTY, IT CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO LOW AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY

AGRI-BUSINESS INCLUDES ALL THE PROCESSES THAT TAKE RAW ANIMAL, CROPS, VEGETABLES OR MARINE MATERIALS WHICH TRANSFORM THEM INTO EDIBLE PRODUCTS THROUGH THE APPLICATION OF LABOR MACHINERY,

ENERGY AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE. THUS AGRI-BUSINESS OR FOOD PROCESSING USES CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL AND MECHANICAL PROCESSING TO CONVERT RELATIVELY BULKY, PERISHABLE, AND TYPICALLY UNPALATABLE AGRICULTURAL MATERIALS INTO SHELF-STABLE, CONVENIENT AND PALATABLE FOODS AND BEVERAGES.

MR. SPEAKER, THROUGH THE USE OF FACTORY SYSTEMS AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, AGRI-BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC VALUE BY TRANSFORMING PRODUCTS GROWN ON FARMS, RAISED ON RANCHES, OR FISHED FROM THE SEA, WHEAT BECOMES BREAD, CATTLE BECOME BEEF AND MAIZE BECOMES KENKEY OR CORN STARCH.

MR SPEAKER, SMALL SCALE FARMERS (LESS THAN 50 ACRES) PRODUCE OVER 80% OF THE TOTAL AGRICULTURE INPUT, THEY HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT.

AGAIN, LAND TENURE POLICY IS ALSO A MAJOR CONSIRAINT CONFRONTING SMALL HOLDERS. PRODUCTION, STORAGE, PROCESSING, MARKETING, AND CONSUMPTION. ON THE PRODUCTION, THE MAIN ISSUES RELATE TO THE PRODUCTIVITY OF FACTOR INPUTS, THESE INCLUDE LOW AND DECLINING SOIL FERTILITY, AN AGEING FARMER POPULATION, AND LOW APPLICATION OF MECHANIZATION (INCLUDING IRRIGATION). SMALL FARMERS HAVE ISSUE WITH LOW QUALITY PRODUCE DUE TO POOR POST-HARVEST HANDLING AND STORAGE INFRASTRUCTURE, HIGH TRANSPORTATION AND TRANSACTIONS COST AND MINIMAL VALUE ADDITION.

MR. SPEAKER, I AM VERY HAPPY TO SAY SINCE 2017 ON ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE, GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED COHERENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TAILORED TOWARDS ENHANCING SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURE TOWARDS AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

AMONG SOME OF THE KEY POLICY INITIATIVES BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT ARE MOFA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT SMALL SCALE FARMERS WITH FERTILIZER SUBSIDY, IMPROVD SEEDS AND EXTENSION SERVICES TO INCREASE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY AND THEIR YIELDS.

MR. SPEAKER, SECURING US\$600 MILLION FROM AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTINUATION OF THE PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMMES AND OTHER INITIATIVES WHICH BEGAN IN 2017-2018 WHICH HOPES TO HELP THE SMALL-SCALE FARMER TRANSFORM INTO AGRO-BUSINESS.

MR. SPEAKER, OVER 2 MILLION SMALL SCALE FARM HOLDERS SCATTERED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY THUS MAKING SUPPORT EXPENSIVE AND INEFFECTIVE AND AGRICULTURAL RAW MATERIALS TOO COSTLY TO AGRO-PROCESSORS. PROPOSED SOLUTION IN MY VIEW IS VIGOROUS PROMOTION OF FARMER-BASED ORGANIZATIONS. IT MUST BE OBVIOUS TO ALL THAT NEITHER MOFA NOR GHANA HAS ALL THE CAPACITY TO EFFECTIVELY PROVIDE THE NEEDED TECHNOLOGICAL AND EXTENSION SUPPORT SERVICES TO OVER 2 MILLION INDIVIDUAL SMALL-SCALE FARMERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY.

FOR EXAMPLE, IT HAS BEEN SHOWN THAT COTTON FARMERS IN THE THREE (3) NORTHERN REGIONS WHO BELONG TO GROUPS (AVERAGING ABOUT 300 PER GROUP) ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE BECAUSE IT IS EASIER TO EXTEND CREDIT AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES TO THEM, AND THEY ALSO SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF EACH GROUP OF 300 HOUSEHOLDS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE THREE (3) NORTHERN REGIONS, CAN BE ASSISTED TO ACQUIRE 160 LOCALLY MANUFACTURED PLOUGHS FROM THE TAMALE IMPLEMENT FACTORY. WE EXPECT THE FOLLOWING POSITIVE THINGS TO HAPPEN TO THE FARMERS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

THE TAMALE IMPLEMENT FACTORY WILL BE ABLE TO EMPLOY MORE POLYTECHNIC YOUTH (EMPLOYMENT GENERATION), AND THUS HELP IMPROVE THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

THE GROUPS CAN DOUBLE ITS ACREAGE AND PRODUCTION AT A MINIMUM COST SINCE

1. THEY WILL NOT NEED TO PAY FOR EXPENSIVE TRACTOR SERVICES WHOSE TIMELY AVAILABILITY CANNOT BE GUARANTEED
2. THEY MAY EAT BETTER AND HAVE MORE SURPLUSES TO SELL TO IMPROVE THEIR LIVES.
3. BY USING PLOUGHS INSTEAD OF TRACTORS, THE FRAGILE SOIL STRUCTURE WILL BE BETTER PRESERVED FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY.

4. THE DROPPINGS OF THE BULLS WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL ORGANIC MATTER FOR THE SOIL THUS REDUCING THE NEED FOR EXPENSIVE INORGANIC FERTILIZERS.
5. THE DEMAND FOR BULLS WILL INCREASE LEADING TO INCREASED PRODUCTIONS AND HIGHER INCOMES.
6. THE BANKS WILL BE MORE WILLING TO LEND THE GROUPS THAN INDIVIDUAL FARMERS.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IN CONCLUSION, IT IS INSTRUCTIVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT STICK TO THE POLICY INITIATIVES IN THE 2020 BUDGET STATEMENTS AND ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR, SUCH AS PROCUREMENT OF ORGANIC AND INORGANIC FERTILIZERS AT A SUBSIDY, IMPROVED SEEDLINGS, ACCESS TO CREDITS AND INSURANCE SCHEMES, PROVISION OF PESTICIDES, RESOURCED WITH WAREHOUSES, AND GIVEN A READILY AVAILABLE MARKET. WE THEREBY BELIEVE SMALL-SCALE FARMERS WOULD GRADUATE OR TRANSFORM THEIR LEVELS OF OPERATION INTO AGRO-PROCESSING.

I WOULD ENCOURAGE THE MINISTER AS ESTABLISHED IN PARAGRAPH 391 PAGE 78 OF THE BUDGET STATEMENT AND ECONOMIC POLICY OF GOVERNMENT 2018 FINANCIAL YEAR, MR SPEAKER, TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCE POST-HARVEST LOSSES, THE MINISTRY WILL ESTABLISH 50 FARMER SERVICE CENTRES (FSC) FOR TIMELY AND ENHANCED ACCESS TO MECHANIZATION SERVICES. THE CENTRES WILL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

FARM MACHINERY, INPUT SUPPLY, FARMER TRAINING, MACHINE MANUFACTURING AND REPAIR AND STORAGE SERVICES.

AGAIN, I MUST COMMEND THE MINISTRY AND THE PRESIDENT IN COMING OUT WITH THE POLICY TO IMPROVE LIVELIHOOD OF FARMERS AND MEAT PRODUCTION, 70 LIVESTOCK FARMERS WERE SUPPORTED WITH 350 SUPERIOR BREEDS OF SMALL RUMINANT IN THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL REGIONS.