



## President in Tema Motorway Junction road

• President Akufo-Addo (3rd from right) being assisted by Francis Asenso-Boakye (right), Minister of Roads and Highways, Daniel Titus Glover (2nd from left), Greater Accra Regional Minister, and Nii (Dr) Odaifio Welentsi III, Nungua Mantse, to inaugurate the road in Accra. Picture: SAMUEL TEI ADANO

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## Drought:

# Govt outlines GH¢8bn agric support

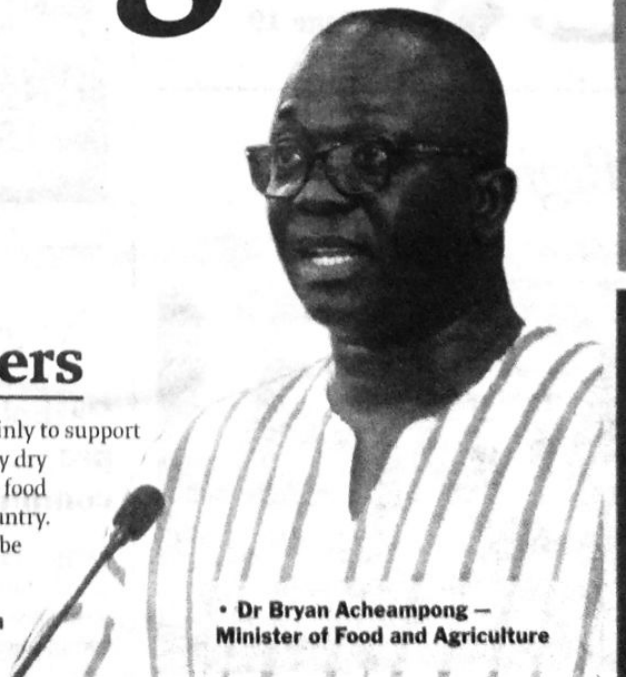
- Provides GH¢1,000 per hectare incentive to farmers

By Emmanuel Bonney

**T**HE government has outlined an estimated GH¢8 billion (\$500 million) plan on various

interventions, mainly to support farmers affected by dry weather to ensure food security in the country. The funds will be sourced from a

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• Dr Bryan Acheampong — Minister of Food and Agriculture

# News

## Govt outlines GH¢8bn agric support

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combination of the Contingency Fund, budget realignment and development partners.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), Dr Bryan Acheampong, at a press briefing in Accra yesterday, said estimates suggested that farmers in the affected areas had lost investments of approximately GH¢3.5 billion, risking a potential revenue loss of GH¢10.4 billion.

The minister said preliminary reports indicated that about 928,523 farmers' 1.86 million hectares of crops were at risk and that those farmers would lose an estimated investment of GH¢7.4 billion, if there was total crop failure.

Farmers totalling 435,872, cultivating an estimated area of 871,745 hectares, were those that had been directly affected by the dry spell, he said.

Dr Acheampong said maize, rice, groundnut, soybean, sorghum, millet and yam were the most widely affected crops across the Northern, Upper East, North East, Savannah, Upper West, Bono, Bono East and Oti regions.

### Areas

"With the level of damage experienced and the estimates coming in, the ministry believes it will have to write off over 90 per cent of total expected production, which will occasion an investment loss of GH¢7.4 billion for farmers and a revenue loss of GH¢22 billion for all the affected areas," Dr Acheampong said.

He showed some footages of destroyed farms before outlining the interventions the government had put

in place to salvage the situation.

He said the GH¢22.2 billion estimated revenue loss represented 10 per cent of agriculture's contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of GH¢220 billion.

Supporting him to address the issues were the Minister of Finance, Dr Mohammed Amin, who explained how the funding would be sourced, and the Defence Minister, Dominic Nitiwul, who also outlined steps to mitigate the effect of food shortage on the country.

### Food shortage

The drought conditions, Dr Acheampong said, had far-reaching implications for food security and livelihoods.

The affected regions contributed about 62 per cent of the country's grain supply annually, he said.

However, the minister added, from September to December, which coincided with the minor season of the southern sector, those regions contributed about 85 per cent of the country's national grain requirement from their harvest.

"Given the projected crop failure, we are forecasting a significant shortfall in grain availability. Without any interventions, this could lead to nationwide food shortage and its resultant implications," he stated.

### Interventions

In response to this phenomenon, he said the government was taking immediate actions to address the

situation and that in the medium to long term, the sector would develop resilience to the climatic conditions as it rolled out more irrigation and water management schemes.

From now to January next year had been approved by the government for implementation by the ministry to avert a food security crisis, Dr Acheampong said.

But the first, he said, was a temporary ban on grains exports.

"With immediate effect, government is placing a ban on export of grains, including maize, rice and soya bean until the situation normalises. This measure is essential to ensure the availability of these critical crops on the domestic market," he declared.

Dr Acheampong said there would also be a mopping up of stock from farmers and that "any farmer with stock and interested in selling should contact the District Department of Agriculture, District Aggregators or the Directorate of Crops

of MoFA".

In addition, the government would procure grains and poultry feed.

"Government will also bring in up to 300,000 tonnes of maize and 150,000 tonnes of rice to provide food support to vulnerable farmers who have lost their crop and also for the market".

"Additionally, we shall bring in a total volume of 26,000 tonnes of poultry feed to directly support the poultry industry," Dr Acheampong added.

Other interventions, he said, would be targeted directly at farmers to bring them relief and that included cash transfers.

"Government has decided to provide financial support of amounting to GH¢1,000 per hectare to the most vulnerable among these farmers as partial cover for their investment losses," he said, adding that "Government will provide to affected vulnerable farmers to enable them meet the minimum nutritional requirement".

### Failure

The Minister of Food and Agriculture said for farmers whose crops had failed due to the lack of rain, the government would be launching a replanting support programme and that it would include the provision of fast-maturing seeds that could still be planted within the remaining window of the season.

"Farmers who need to replant will also be provided with grant fertilisers to ensure that they can still achieve a reasonable yield. This will help mitigate the financial burden on farmers who are facing additional costs due to the

dry spell," he explained.

Agricultural extension officers would be dispatched to train farmers on soil moisture conservation techniques such as mulching and conservation tillage to help retain soil moisture and give crops the best chance to survive.

"To avert a future reoccurrence, the Ministry, through the Food System Resilience Project (FSRP), is working with Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet) to provide agrometeorological forecasts and advisories for agriculture. MoFA has acquired 20 Automatic Weather Stations (AWSs) for GMet, which will be installed at key locations nationwide," Dr Acheampong added.

### Funding

The Minister of Finance said the government had been able to earmark up to GH¢5 billion out of the GH¢8 billion "that we want to use and use it quickly to respond to this crisis".

They include \$160 million, about GH¢2.5 billion, largely coming from the Contingency Fund, Dr Adam indicated.

"So, we intend to trigger the processes for accessing the Contingency Fund. We are also doing what we call budgetary re-alignments to reallocate some funds that were originally made for other purposes towards capitalistic crisis, and so together, GH¢2.5 billion has been mobilised from the budget side," he added.

### Engagement

Dr Adam said the government had also engaged with its development partners recently, and within a short period had been able to secure \$155 million, which was nearly GH¢2.5 billion.

He said the part coming from the development partners would be used for measures such as cash transfers to the affected farmers and also to support import supplies.

"While we are seeking to use funds from the budget to bring in more food, more grains, rice, maize, etc., poultry feed for the market and also to provide food relief to farmers, I should mention also that even though we can have visibility on about \$315 million, the balance of about \$185 million, we believe we can mobilise them as well," Dr Adam stated.

Making an input on how to enforce the ban, Mr Nitiwul said no truck loaded with grains would be allowed to leave the country.

He said members of the security agencies would be deployed to all the unapproved routes.

"But security is as good as the citizens themselves, so take advantage, if you see something, say something," he said.

• Dr Bryan Acheampong (left), Minister of Food and Agriculture, briefing the Press. Picture: ERNEST KODZI

