

Enhancing agric productivity:

World Bank backs Ghana's commercial farming with \$1 bn

FROM RAYMOND APPIAH-AMPONSAH, ASUTSUARE

EFFORTS to promote large-scale and commercial agriculture in Ghana are set to receive a major boost as the World Bank prepares to inject \$1 billion into the sector.

The support, under the Large-Scale Agriculture Programme (LAP), is aimed at promoting commercial farming and enhancing the country's agricultural productivity.

The World Bank Country Director for Ghana, Robert Taliencio, disclosed this last Friday during a tour of companies operating under the Kpong Irrigation Scheme, alongside the Finance Minister, Dr Cassiel Ato Forson.

Discussions on funding for the LAP, estimated at \$1 billion, are ongoing.

Some of the sites visited included Golden Exotics Limited at Kasunya near Asutsuare in the Shai-Osudoku

District of the Greater Accra Region.

Mr Taliencio said the programme would be rolled out immediately once funding arrangements were finalised. He noted that the project would focus on irrigation development, economic crops, rural infrastructure, export growth, and reforms to improve the investment climate and attract private capital.

"This is urgent. We are talking about around a billion dollars to help Ghana move quickly on this agenda," he mentioned.

He added that the World Bank was keen to deepen its partnership with Ghana to unlock the country's agricultural potential.

"Ghana has enormous potential to feed itself, export more, and create jobs. We are ready to do much more with the government and the private sector," Mr Taliencio emphasised.

The Finance Minister, Dr Forson, reaffirmed the government's commitment to private-sector-led agricultural development, highlighting the poten-

tial \$1 billion investment to expand farming, irrigation, and agribusiness in Ghana.

He said the government, in collaboration with the World Bank, was developing an agriculture compact to scale up oil palm plantations, rehabilitate cocoa farms, expand production of rice, maize and soya, and develop a domestic poultry industry.

Dr Forson noted that the government alone could not generate the level of employment required and emphasised that commercial farming and agribusiness are central to addressing unemployment and driving economic growth.

"Our responsibility as a government is to create the enabling environment for the private sector to invest. Commercial farming holds the key to addressing unemployment," he highlighted.

Ghana, he underlined, possessed abundant land, water resources, and favourable climatic conditions, but said these assets were often underutilised.

According to Dr Forson, irrigation

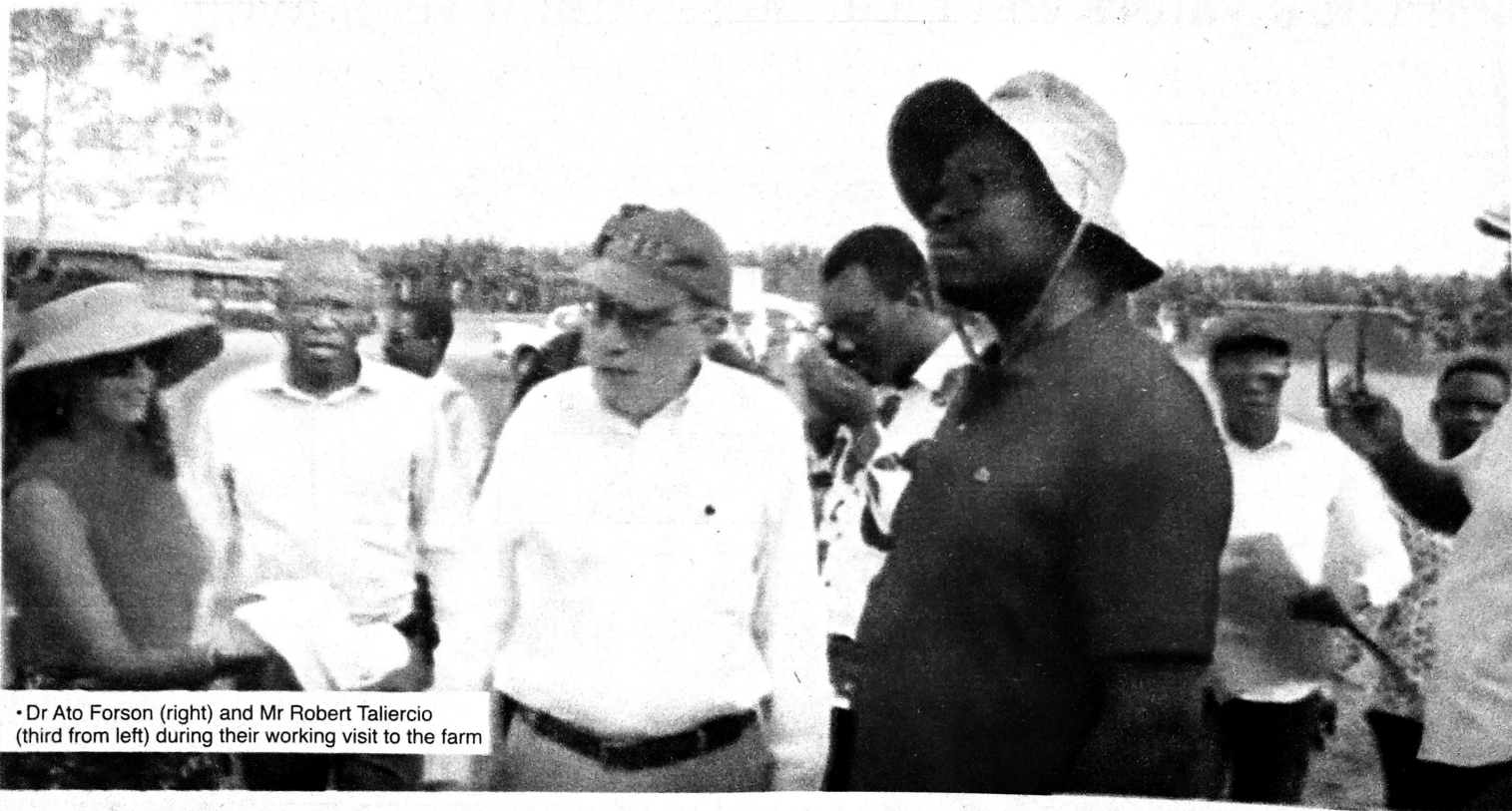
schemes such as Kpong demonstrate how agriculture can be transformed into a viable and sustainable business.

The Finance Minister also disclosed that government was considering a second phase of the Kpong Irrigation Project, which would extend reliable water supply to more farms and agribusinesses.

He said the broader initiative is aimed at achieving self-sufficiency in key staples, particularly rice, and reducing reliance on food imports.

As part of support measures to farmers, Dr Forson added that the government would prioritise purchasing locally produced food for the school feeding programme and strengthen the Buffer Stock Company to buy and store surplus produce.

Golden Exotics Limited, one of the world's largest banana farms and the biggest single-site producer of organic bananas globally, employs about 4,000 workers. The company exports 85 per cent of its output to Europe, with the remainder supplying markets across Africa, particularly the Sahel.



• Dr Ato Forson (right) and Mr Robert Taliencio (third from left) during their working visit to the farm