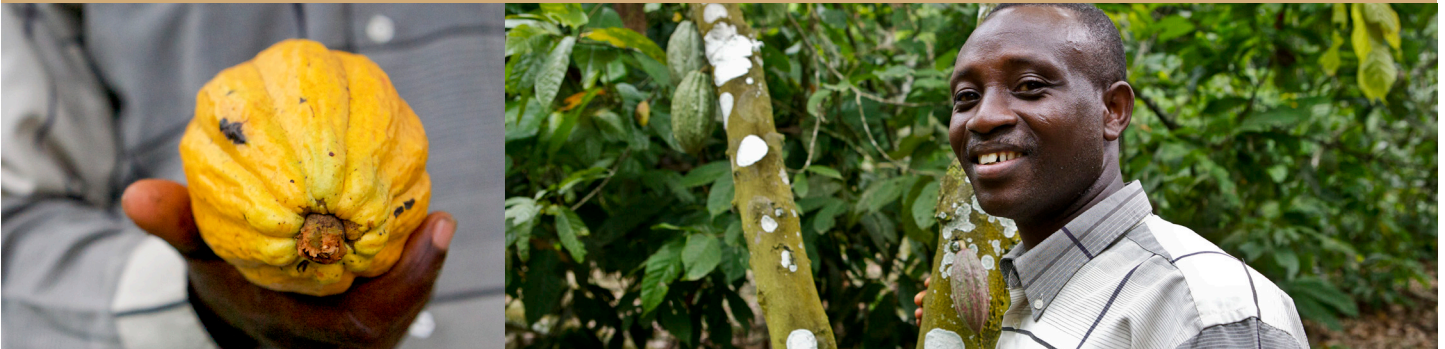


GHANA

PROFILES of PROGRESS



Peter Owoahene Acheampong is a successful cocoa farmer with more than 16 acres of cultivated land. Cocoa is one of Ghana's main export crops. As Ghana manages to feed all its people, Ghanaian farmers will be able to grow more cash crops (Kunsu, Ghana, 2010).

In the mid-1980s, hunger stalked Ghana.

Peter Owoahene Acheampong was a young man harboring dreams of becoming a doctor. But his country had another calling for him.

Faced with dwindling harvests, a devastating drought, and rising levels of poverty, the government appealed to its youth to stay on the farms, rebuild the nation's agricultural system, and feed their nation.

"There was no food," Acheampong remembers. "The government called on the youth, especially the youth, to go to the farms. I heard that call and followed my grandmother. She taught me how to farm."

Today, Acheampong's family farm in Ghana's fertile Ashanti region has a thriving cocoa business, allowing him to expand and grow more food. He has an orange grove. He tends an okra patch beside the cocoa drying station. His ambition now is to send his three daughters to college so they can become doctors or lawyers or engineers.

"From the beginning, I've thought of farming as a business," says 47-year-old Acheampong, who's proud to have been named best farmer in his district in 2003. "I accepted farming with good faith. And I've succeeded, by God's grace."

Acheampong's success over the past 25 years reflects the significant progress Ghana has made in reducing poverty and hunger through agricultural development:

"The government called on the youth, especially the youth, to go to the farms. I heard that call."

—Peter Owoahene Acheampong, smallholder farmer in Ghana's Ashanti region

- Ghana's agricultural sector has grown by an average of about 5 percent per year during the past 25 years, making it one of the world's top performers in agricultural growth, according to the Overseas Development Institute.
- Ghana cut hunger levels by 75 percent between 1990 and 2004.
- Reforms in the country's most important cash crop, cocoa, along with rising yields in staple crops such as cassavas, yams, and sweet potatoes, helped increase incomes in the rural areas, reducing the percentage of the population living in poverty from 52 percent in 1991-92 to 28.5 percent in 2005-06.

The impact of these achievements has been felt across Ghana and West Africa. Increased food production has made food more affordable for Ghana's citizens, spurring economic development in other areas. Once struggling to overcome hunger, Ghana now has ambitions to become a breadbasket for West Africa.

The secret to Ghana's success is actually no secret at all. Taking a lesson from history, Ghana knew that supporting



Cassava farming still feeds most Ghanaians. As farmers are better able to cultivate staples, they can also turn to cash crops for additional income (Kumasi, Ghana, 2010).

Ghana: A West African nation of 23 million people.

Economy: Agriculture accounts for 55 percent of employment and nearly 40 percent of GDP: Increases in agricultural production have helped drive reductions in poverty and malnutrition.

Successes in Agriculture:

- There was a five-fold increase in cassava production from the early 1980s to the mid-2000s. New varieties allowed yields to double, with no or limited additional inputs.
- Increased market opportunities for smallholder farmers have encouraged increased production, especially for cassava.

- The value of horticultural crops increased by an average of 13 percent a year from 2000 to 2007. Tomato production, for example, increased more than six-fold between 1985 and 1997.

- Cocoa production, which was decimated in the years following independence, has rebounded, helping to drive poverty reductions and increased exports. Small and medium-sized farmers have greatly benefited. This cocoa boom has also stimulated growth in other parts of the rural economy.



its farmers so they can grow more food and get it to market offered them—and the nation as a whole—the surest path out of hunger and poverty.

Following the near collapse of cocoa production in the early 1980s, Ghana instituted new fiscal policies and reforms that revived the country’s most important cash crop. The government poured resources into efforts to help its farmers be more productive. It provided technical advice, it assured that seedlings and fertilizer got to the farmers, it provided spraying to ward off insects and disease, and it found markets.

Working with international donors, Ghana focused on improving production of cassava and other staple crops. With new seed strains developed by scientists and distributed to farmers, along with better planting techniques, Ghana’s cassava production soared from 3.3 million metric tons grown on 446,000 hectares in 1989 to 9.7 million tons on 800,000 hectares in 2009. Roots and tuber production now accounts for more than 40 percent of Ghana’s agricultural gross domestic product.

“We didn’t know if anything would ever grow again, but we were starving,” says Akosua Tipa, tapping her stomach. An elderly woman

from the Ashanti region, she stands outside her church, recalling the recovery from the hard times of the mid-1980s. “Cassava and yams saved us.”

Despite these gains, much of the country’s—and Africa’s—potential still lies fallow.

Only about half of Ghana’s land suitable for agricultural use is under cultivation. Irrigation is rare. Yields of many crops lag far behind yields in other parts of the world due to an under-use of current technology, such as hybrid seeds and fertilizer, and weak extension services. The agricultural ministry notes that average maize yields are only a quarter of their potential. Maize breeders at the national Crops Research Institute say that only a tiny amount of the maize grown in the country is from higher-yielding hybrid seed that has long been common elsewhere in the world.

Even with present yields, a frequent complaint of farmers is that markets for some crops haven’t been sufficiently developed to absorb their production. Surplus crops drive down prices, which limits farmers’ profits and discourages them from maintaining high yields.

The recent boom in cassava production has led some farmers

Ghana is on track to become the first country in Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of **halving poverty and hunger** from 1990 levels.



With hybrid crops, Ghana has the potential to feed all its people and supply crops regionally (Kunsu, Ghana, 2010).

to recently cut back. “I saw people were planting cassava, and I thought there would be a big market,” says Abradu Obenehene, who began cultivating cassava in 2004. He had been growing six acres of cassava but now is switching to other crops like plantain and maize. “We should have people who come and buy the cassava and store it and process it. If I can get buyers, I would prefer planting cassava.” Hearing such concerns, the government is now pursuing a new initiative to connect farmers growing cassava to markets.

Child malnutrition in Ghana has almost halved since the end of the 1980s, and the fraction of underweight infants fell from **30 percent** in 1988 to **17 percent** in 2008.

productivity that swept through Asia and Latin America beginning in the 1960s, saving hundreds of millions of lives. Absent that aid, the Green Revolution never took hold in Africa.

Norman Borlaug, an American crop breeder whose new wheat strains ignited the Green Revolution, tried to plant the seeds of revolution in

Africa. In 1986, he traveled to Ghana, bearing seeds of a new variety of maize high in protein.

The elderly, white-haired visitor stopped in the village of Fufuo and distributed bags of fertilizer to revitalize the soil and bottles of weed killer to help the farmers till more land. Villagers bought these curious items with small, low-interest loans and then followed Borlaug’s instructions to plant in straight rows and apply the fertilizer and sprays in regular, judicious doses.

Every year, yields improved. Then, in 1989, the farmers of Fufuo harvested a miracle. Yields tripled. “The crops were so big, and there were cobs on each stalk,” remembers Emmanuel Boateng. The farmers had enough maize to feed their families and sell on the market.

Having shown farmers the possibilities, Borlaug moved on to other villages and other African countries. But in Fufuo, and most everywhere else Borlaug went in Africa, the gains were short-lived. Today, Fufuo is still struggling to return to the heights of the Borlaug years. They are still using the same basic seed varieties. Their efforts to communally grow seed for sale have expanded, but they are still searching for markets. They still haven’t adopted

“Whether in developed or developing countries, agriculture needs support. Period.”

—Samuel Kojo Dapaah, chief technical advisor to Ghana’s minister of food and agriculture

Ghana continues to pour resources into agricultural development to help the nation’s smallholder farmers. While some of the help comes from international donors, Ghana now commits nearly 10 percent of its budget to improving agriculture, putting it among the top investors in the sector in Africa.

“Whether in developed or undeveloped countries, agriculture needs support. Period,” insists Samuel Kojo Dapaah, the chief technical advisor to Ghana’s minister of food and agriculture.

National and international support was vital to the success of the Green Revolution, the period of agricultural growth and



Left: At the Crop Research Institute in Kumasi, several hybrid varieties of maize and other staples are being tested and grown (Kumasi, Ghana, 2010). Center: A woman carries hybrid maize to the market (Kunsu, Ghana, 2010). Right: At a community meeting in Foase, researchers introduce hybrid maize to farmers and discuss which varieties they would like to grow. The hybrids provide more nutritional value and produce higher yields (Foase, Ghana, 2010).

the higher-yielding, more nutritious hybrid maize strains developed by Ghana's own scientists.

Manfred Ewool, a maize breeder, says a good promotional campaign is needed to get farmers to try the hybrids. He tells the farmers of Fufuo that a seed company will provide them with small sample packets of seeds that they can grow on trial plots.

"When you plant, you make sure the other farmers see what you are doing.

"They will see the improved results," Ewool explains. "And the next growing season, they will be coming to you asking to buy that seed."

Ewool is part of the Alliance for a Green Revolution's Program for Africa's Seed Systems, or PASS, which works with farmers to develop the best varieties for them. Before traveling to Fufuo, he stopped at the town of Foase, where a farmer demonstration was beginning. New varieties of maize were laid out on a table covered with a white cloth. Music boomed from large speakers. Colorful banners hung from shops. A crowd gathered. Farmers gave testimonials about the best field practices.

Ghana commits nearly **10 percent** of its budget to improving agriculture, putting it among the top investors in the sector in Africa. Spending on agricultural research and development more than doubled between 2002 and 2008.

Grace Frimpong, a 48-year-old farmer and mother of three children, sang the praises of the improved varieties. She was part of the trait selection process, which focused on shorter stalks (so they don't fall over as easily as standard varieties), earlier maturity (ready for harvest before the weather turns dry), and yellower kernels (higher in carotene than the traditional white maize) that were just as tasty. "I saw the potential at the

research station, so when it was introduced, I was eager to use it," she says. She planted 10 acres and doubled her yields. The improved seed costs a bit more than standard local seed, but it also commands a higher price in the market.

Last year, Frimpong was named woman farmer of the year in her district. So when she speaks, her neighboring farmers listen.

"All the farmers should introduce these new seeds," says one farmer, inspecting the new varieties. "It will improve our lives."

Manfred Ewool, the seed breeder, smiles. Ghana's progress against hunger and poverty continues.

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