INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH BUSINESS ADVOCACY

Volume 1

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A strong private sector is widely recognized as key to national development and growth thereby contributing to poverty reduction. The private sector operates in an environment where a wide range of factors impact on their ‘cost of doing business’.

Such factors include employment legislation, environmental legislation, consumer protection, health and safety rules, taxation, duties and tariffs.

We at BUSAC Fund have recognized that reducing the burden on businesses would allow them to enjoy greater rates of growth, enhance the competitiveness of exporters, reduce the vulnerability of economic shocks in the country and create jobs. Business growth in turn creates a positive cycle for government with the private sector investing and growing, and thereby contributing by paying more taxes, which government can use to improve infrastructure, and provide social services.

Though Government continues to ensure that the political and economic environment is conducive for businesses to thrive, some aspects in the business regulatory framework constitute costs for businesses whilst other conditions offer opportunities for businesses to be profitable.

The key challenge lies in the private sector attempting to influence the development and implementation of regulatory instruments
that will lead to improvement in the business environment for its operators.

WHY WE SUPPORT BUSINESS ADVOCACY
Our support for business advocacy seeks to promote dialogue and responsiveness between relevant public sector and the private sector officials in an attempt to influence the development and implementation of a given policy to improve the business environment. A more effective dialogue would lead to a better environment for doing business, increasing tax revenues, greater participation of the private sector in the governance processes and more transparent regulatory functions.

It is in that context that the BUSAC Fund enhances the capacity of the private sector to carry out business advocacy and engage in a public-private sector dialogue to improve their business environment.

HOW WE DO ADVOCACY
Business advocacy promoted by the BUSAC Fund is executed using the five (5) step approach to advocacy. This includes (1) identifying the issues; (2) carrying out advocacy research to understand the problem; (3) developing an advocacy policy position/proposals; (4) influencing policy makers and (5) following-up in the implementation of agreed policy changes.

Identifying the Issue:
We train and support the Private Sector Organisations (PSOs) to define the problems and identify the real issues and prioritise them. This may require the organization to seek the views of their members on their needs and challenges, identifying key issues by following the media and understanding the positions of the various stakeholders including relevant District Assemblies, Ministries, and other relevant institutions.

Understanding the Issue:
This involves researching and analysing the defined problems. It requires a systematic gathering of views, identifying the rationale behind the public policy and the implications these policies may
have on businesses and other stakeholders. Research should lead to drawing a number of conclusions and a road map of possible solutions to the issue, taking into consideration the decision making processes, current opinions and attitudes of policy makers towards the identified issues.

**Develop Proposals and Responses:**
This involves offering solutions to the problems defined which requires drawing the evidence based information derived from research, the consideration of policy options and building up the argumentation for the preferred option and solution.

**Influencing Policy makers:**
This is done by reaching the relevant government officials / duty bearers and building relationships with them based on constructive dialogue and mutual respect, and presenting the evidence based information and compelling arguments that call for the change in a given policy and /or regulation or the introduction of new adequate regulation.

**Follow-up:** It is just not enough to secure agreements with duty bearers to change a given policy. Once an agreement is reached, the PSO will need to be monitoring the progress closely to ensure that it is adopted and implemented in a way that both parties had anticipated and agreed upon. The PSOs would then evaluate the degree to which the changes have been implemented by the public authorities dealing with the issues and assess the impact of such change on their members.

**CONCLUSION**
This is how we have worked and continue to work with over 724 Private Sector Organisations to improve the business environment across the ten regions of Ghana.

In this publication, we are glad to share few stories on how things have changed for members of the various associations we have supported over the past few years. We hope readers will find these stories interesting and if possible pick few lessons on how business associations are using business advocacy to improve livelihoods.

Thank you.
HELPING PINEAPPLE FARMERS TO ACCESS THE EU MARKET

The increased access and subsequent cultivation of the smooth cayenne pineapple variety is helping many farmers within the Nsawam Municipality of the Eastern Region to improve their livelihoods.

A member of the association, Mr. Thomas Adjei, explains the difference between the MD2 and the smooth cayenne varieties.
Members of SamSam-Odumase Co-Operative Pineapple Growers and Marketing Society Limited (SCPGMS) are happy that they now have access to planting materials that will allow them to sell to the European Market. The farmers who are now cultivating the smooth cayenne pineapple which had long been a dominant variety in Europe, said they are making more money from their products.

The farmers attributed the change in livelihood to the advocacy action embarked on by the SamSam-Odumase Co-Operative Pineapple Growers and Marketing Society Limited.

“By getting access to more suckers of the smooth cayenne pineapples, we can produce enough top quality pineapples to compete favourably on the world market. By focusing on smooth cayenne which has better juice than MD2, and by leveraging big companies in the country, we could achieve a lot. I thank the BUSAC Fund for their timely intervention” said Daniel Obadia, a member of SCPGMS.

In the past, farmers found it difficult to access the suckers of the smooth cayenne to plant. This was because the District Agric office was not implementing the Sucker Multiplication Scheme where the Society members were given MD2 suckers for planting, making it possible for them to give the suckers to other farmers in the catchment area in the subsequent season. Hence suckers for the smooth cayenne was virtually unavailable.

However, after the business advocacy action which was sponsored by the BUSAC Fund, the situation has improved with a number of the farmers having access to the suckers.

Also, as a result of the business advocacy the total number of members of the SCPGMS has doubled to 120 from the initial 60. This has also improved the association’s finances as members pay dues on a monthly basis.

During the course of the advocacy action, the association met with the municipal agric extension officers as well as the Municipal Agric Director, Rev. Michael Dadebo. These officials were instrumental in the provision of the smooth cayenne suckers to the farmers.

By 2005, the shift in EU consumer demand for the MD2 variety of pineapple had led most Ghanaian smallholder pineapple farmers to abandon their farms. Europe is the main destination of fresh
pineapple exports from Ghana, where Smooth Cayenne had long been the dominant variety. However, the newly developed MD2 offered good taste and appearance but also long shelf life at room temperature and was therefore preferred for export.

Smallholders had contributed 50 percent of fresh pineapple production and export volume from Ghana prior to the varietal shift. Good specimens of fruit were exported, and local processing firms used the “export rejects” as raw material for their products. But virtually all Ghanaian smallholders were unable to adapt to the production of MD2.

Now, however, with exporting firms shipping big volumes by air, demand for Smooth Cayenne has greatly increased. But since local smallholders abandoned their farms, some of them have not been able to respond to this revived market due to a lack of healthy pineapple field suckers.

Cultivating the juicy and delectable pineapple is the new found love of farmers across the small town of SamSam Odumasi. The vitamin-rich pineapple, which is also a fine appetizer, has a rich market and is considered highly profitable.

Besides, the soil and climatic conditions, with temperature hovering between 20 and 35 degree Celsius, are quite congenial for growing the pineapple in this farming community.

“The pineapple cultivation is a long and endurable process. It takes nearly 12 to 15 months to mature. So if one does not get quality suckers to plant he/she loses all his investment. This is why we are very thankful to BUSAC Fund for the support in helping us acquire quality suckers,” observed Thomas Adjei, a farmer and chairman of the SCPGMS.

It is expected that production figures of pineapples for 2014 would be increased to 100,000 tonnes per annum from the current 30,000 tonnes.

Despite the success chalked by the SPGMS, some members believe they have the capacity to grow more suckers yet they are not given the number of suckers they need to plant.
Indeed, these are profitable days for rice farmers at Gomoa Okyereko as farmers earn more money to support their livelihoods.

The leadership of the Gomoa Okyereko Irrigation Cooperative Rice Farming & Marketing Society Ltd (GOICRFMS) pointed
out that the rehabilitation of the Okyereko irrigation facility is helping them to earn more money to support their families.

Mrs. Faustina Andoh, the women’s leader of the association stated in an interview: “Our children are being enrolled in the universities and are favorably competing with children from rich backgrounds because we are now able to farm and provide for the basic needs in school. Above all we are able to provide three square meals for our husbands and children because there is always enough rice to cook for all and just like the saying goes we grow what we eat and sell the excess to the world.”

Members of the association also pointed out that the rehabilitation of the Okyereko irrigation facility and the subsequent increase in local rice production has reaffirmed their long-standing belief that rice cultivation is a lucrative venture.

Nana Ababio, a member of the association also stated: “A lot of people assume cocoa farmers in Ghana today are the only successful farmers but rice growers in okyereko believe this assertion is wrong; rice is our cocoa and it has made most of us very successful. Through rice cultivation, most of us have been able to put up our own houses and we are happy with our families.”

Members of GOICRFMS further noted that their improved rice cultivation and income levels have also considerably reduced rural-urban migration among the youth in the area.

“We have seen a drastic change in the number of natives who hitherto will travel to the city to seek greener pastures. The difficulty we faced in the cultivation of rice at okyereko is now a thing of the past,” Mrs. Faustina Andoh remarked.

Mrs. Andoh, explained that this was not the situation a few years back. In June 2010, the dyke constructed to prevent flooding on the plots of the Okyereko irrigation scheme was broken by floods from the Ayensu River causing serious damage to the 125 acre rice irrigation scheme at Okyereko in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region.

As a result, the farmers were unable to meet production costs, let alone pay back loans secured from banks, a situation which adversely affected their livelihoods and well-being, driving most of them through the poverty margins. The farmers could not achieve all year round cropping and some of the youths who were
being encouraged to engage in local rice production were finding life unbearable and abandoned the enterprise.

The repair works on the dyke was a huge project that the farmers could not fund by themselves, hence requiring the support of the government to minimize or stop the flooding of the rice farms to ensure that farmers have all year round cropping to boost local rice production.

Faced with this situation, the farmers applied to BUSAC Fund for a grant to advocate to the appropriate government agencies for the repair works to be carried out. With support from DANIDA, USAID and the EU, the BUSAC Fund provided an advocacy grant to GOICRFMS, which enabled them to persuade the relevant duty bearers to repair the broken dykes on the irrigation facility. With this support, an implementation plan was drawn to ensure a successful achievement of the objectives.

Nana Entsiful Ababio, Chairman of the association said the association embarked on a number of carefully planned activities including advocacy training to enhance the capacity of the farmers to engage the target government agencies. Almost all the farmers at Okyereko have undergone training to enable them engage in effective advocacy to generate the desired support from duty bearers without being violent.

In order to advocate with empirical evidence, a baseline research was also conducted on the scope and possibility of attaining the desired government funding and attracting the interest of stakeholders on the project.

After effectively engaging all the stakeholders which included the Ministries and agencies responsible for the repair project, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), through the Ghana Irrigation Development Agency, eventually constructed the broken dyke. MOFA has also ensured that Agricultural Extension Officers now assist rice farmers at Okyereko on a regular basis.

Through the advocacy action, the executives and members of the association also received training in financial management, leadership skills, group dynamics and fund raising for business associations which aided them to secure a policy document for the repair of the broken irrigation facility to avoid the continued destruction of their crops.
MORE HONEY FROM NEW BEE KEEPING SKILLS

Bee Keepers in Jaman South of the Brong Ahafo Region are beginning to enjoy the results of their business advocacy actions as they testify about increased incomes stemming from increased volume of quality honey.
Members of the Jaman South Bee Keepers Association (JASBA) have expressed satisfaction that the various advocacy actions embarked upon by the association had presented many opportunities for them to acquire new skills and ideas that have brought significant improvement to their businesses.

They emphasized that the advocacy skills training for example has helped them to benefit from numerous extension services and farmers schemes that enabled them to learn creative and innovative ways of marketing their products. This, according to the Bee Keepers, had led to an increase in the quality and quantity of honey produced by JASBA members. Some of the farmers who are very happy for making more money from their products are also proud to be able to sell their products on the international markets.

“I have received ample training on how to improve upon my business. Today, I can even market my honey online and my income has increased significantly”, Mr. Cosmos Boadu, JASBA Secretary disclosed in an interview.

Mr. Boadu who was full of praise for the BUSAC Fund also explained that “since I now sell more honey and earn more income, I am able to comfortably pay my wards’ school fees and some of them have successfully gained admission into tertiary institutions,” Mr. Boadu remarked.

On his part, Mr. Raymond Nketia, the Chairman of the association, observed that “there has been a massive improvement in the volume and quality of the honey and wax produced in the area due to innovative apicultural practices our members learnt from the District Agricultural Extension Officers.”

Mr. Nketia further pointed out that “the association, together with other bee keepers in the Berekum Municipality were able to supply honey and wax to Bee King Limited in Canada on contract with a loan from Root Capital in America, since there had been improvement both in volume and quality of the honey and wax produced through the assistance of the extension service officers assigned to us by MOFA.”

Comparing the current production figures with that of the previous seasons, Mr. Twumasi Ankrah, the Vice Chairman of the association revealed that, “previously, our honey production volume was low because our knowledge and skills of honey production and bees wax extraction remained very traditional
and limited. For instance in 2010, the total output of 10 bee keepers put together was just about 1000 gallons. But last year, the total output for ten bee keepers in our association rose to over 3,000 gallons.”

Tracing their current achievements to the Business Advocacy actions, members of JASBA, indicated that their advocacy action has opened doors for them to benefit from numerous training schemes from Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and the Agriculture extension officers. Some of these training schemes offered them the opportunity to learn innovative ways of marketing their products.

The situation was not like this a few years prior to the advocacy action embarked upon by the Association of bee keepers in the Jaman South and North Districts.

The two districts had 14 Agricultural extension officers, none of whom was assigned to the bee keepers to assist them in their bee-keeping activities. With the absence of any form of technical assistance, bee keepers in the district were left on their own to do what they thought was right for the apicultural industry. As a result, technical know-how on quality honey production was very low within the district, and farmers were not able to take advantage of the favourable bee keeping environment in the district to improve upon the quality and volume of honey and wax production. Patronage of honey produced by JASBA members was also very low as a result of poor handling, packaging and marketing techniques.

The leadership of JASBA therefore sought the assistance of the BUSAC Fund to enable them advocate to the duty bearers, particularly MOFA, for technical assistance on how to improve upon honey and wax production in the district. With the support of its development partners, DANIDA, USAID and the EU, the BUSAC Fund provided an advocacy grant which enabled JASBA to have fruitful engagements with various relevant duty bearers such as officials from MOFA, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ghana Standards Board. The various dialogue sessions with these relevant institutions eventually resulted in the allocation of three Agricultural Extension Officers to assist bee keepers in the Jaman South District. The tremendous technical assistance from these extension officers played a key role in turning around the fortunes of JASBA members.
The economic situation for poultry farmers in Asutsuare, a farming community in the Eastern Region is gradually improving as Veterinary Officers support farmers with new skills.

POULTRY FARMERS MAKE MORE MONEY THROUGH BUSINESS ADVOCACY
Poultry farmers especially members of the Asutsuare Women Development Society are expanding their poultry and livestock farms due to technical support from Veterinary Officers. This according to the women has led to increased income from their farms as they no longer loose their birds to strange diseases.

In an interview with the chairman of the society, Rosemary Guamah, she explained that after the business advocacy action, the Ghana Veterinary Service dispatched a Veterinary Officer to the district and later on dispatched another.

“The absence of Veterinary Officers was our major challenge since all our birds and livestock were dying of strange diseases and we did not know what to do, ” she explained.

“Thanks to the advocacy action, the veterinary officers are now living among us making them easily accessible and we hardly record any death with regards to our birds nor the lifestocks,” Ms. Guamah noted.

“We appreciate the BUSAC Fund for all that they have done for us. Has it not been for the BUSAC Fund many of these women would have migrated to the cities as hawkers or potters. Others may have even died out of shock due to the loss of their investments,” Ms. Guamah observed.
The total membership of the society which stood at about 20 has now risen to 60 after the advocacy action. This is because many of the poultry and livestock farmers want to associate themselves with a winning team. Also many of the women who hitherto were not farmers have begun investing in the agricultural industry.

Selina Atikpo, a livestock farmer, said the presence of the veterinary officials has helped her to improve the health of her animals which has eventually improved on her living standards as she used the profits from her sales to pay the school fees of her three children.

“Non members of the society even call me for tips on vaccination of their animals. Had it not been for the education from the veterinary officials and the advocacy action sponsored by the BUSAC Fund, I couldn’t have helped them,” she added.

“I have seen a great change in my life and that of my family, with the increased production in my farm, I am able to feed my family without any stress. I used to buy eggs to support our protein needs but now I get it from my farm,” Christiana Gamedoagbao a poultry farmer.

All these have been made possible because of the business advocacy action embarked on by the Asutsuare Women Development Society to influence public officials for poultry sector reforms that support their poultry and livestock business leading to improved access to services and infrastructure.

As women in small scale poultry and livestock business, they lacked advocacy capacity and were unable to influence public officials in the Dangbe West District Assembly for any kind of reform. The poor environment for poultry production negatively affected their business. As a result they lost incomes.

During the course of the advocacy action which lasted for about six months, the society met with public officials within the Shai Osudoku District Assembly including the District Chief Director- Emmanuel Lartey, the District Agricultural Director-Peace Pomewu, who contributed immensely to the provision of Veterinary Officers to the community. They also went on several radio stations within and outside the community to sensitize their stakeholders on the need to mobilise support for the community’s poultry sector.
The timely construction of the feeder roads and that of the main Nkwanta road in the northern part of the Volta Region has brought great relief and transformation to the inhabitants of Nkwanta and its environs.

COMMERCIAL LIFE RETURNS AFTER CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS
Farmers are now able to transport their produce freely from their farms to the market place, while travel time has greatly reduced for commuters.

In the recent past, there was low market patronage of products due to bad road networks, especially the main trunk road that leads to the market centre. Also the entire road network becomes muddy during the rainy season because it was untarred.

“After the rains, it takes so long before the roads become a bit motorable, making the transporters charge exhorbitant prices for transporting our produce. Also, after the rainy seasons, buyers of our produce refuse to come due to the bad nature of our roads. This was affecting our income,” noted Samuel Amese, Chairman of the Northern Volta Gari Processors Association (NOVOGAP) at Nkwanta.

However, after six months of business advocacy sponsored by the BUSAC Fund and its development partners, DANIDA, USAID and the EU, majority of the roads, especially those leading directly to the farms have been upgraded to feeder road status, while the main Nkwanta road is currently being tarred, at the time of this report.

“Through our advocacy action, we went on radio, met with the then Volta Regional Minster, Ford Kamel, both the district and regional civil engineers and other stakeholders including the DCE, Joseph Nicab, to ensure that our roads were brought up to acceptable standards,” Mr. Amese remarked.

“The construction of the feeder roads has enabled the small trucks to go in and out of the farms freely, this was virtually impossible prior to the advocacy action embarked on by the association,” noted Robert Ofori, a member of the association.

“We started seeing changes somewhere in 2013 and I am happy to be part of the association that brought the change to our town. Now our farms and markets are more accessible to vehicles and customers, making it possible for us to increase our sales and income,” Mr. Amese stated in an interview.

Some of the constructed feeder roads include Bontibor junction to Bontibor township (6.5km), Odumasi to Kofi Akura (8.3km), Abrewunko to Nyambong (2.65km), B Zongo to Alokpatsa (16.3km).

Theresa Danso, a member of the association observed that “The
roads to our catchment areas have become motorable, making it easy for transporters and buyers to come and buy our produce, thus enabling us to generate enough income to pay our farmers from whom we purchase our raw materials. Our hardships and level of poverty have greatly reduced”.

“We didn’t know what to do until BUSAC Fund came to our rescue. This is why we are so grateful to the BUSAC Fund,” Mr. Robert Ofori, a member of NOVOGAP stated.

The association which used to have a membership of less than 1,000 now has a total of 1,750 members after the successful business advocacy action it embarked upon.

“This has resulted in the overall improvement of the association’s finances,” Mr. Amese hinted.

The next on the agenda of the association is to ensure that all members regularize their finances through the banking system. “This came to us during the business advocacy training, for which we have to thank the BUSAC Fund,” Mr. Amesi revealed.
Cash crop farmers are optimistic that the re-introduction of the Akuafo Cheque system will not only help them to avoid manipulation by Licensed Buying Companies but will also ensure guaranteed payment for their commodities.

It appears the Ghana Cocoa, Coffee and Sheanut Farmers Association (GCCSA) is winning the advocacy battle of bringing back the Akuafo Cheque system which was abolished few years ago.

The farmers who are very excited about the successful piloting of the Akuafo system in parts of Eastern, Western, Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions, said the system is expected to bring enormous benefits to all cocoa farmers in Ghana since it will help address issues of irregular payments and armed robbery attack on farmers during payment due to large cash transaction.

GCCSA Administrative Officer, Mr. Omar Bukari disclosed, that “fortunately, everything is at the final stage now. COCOBOD has already begun experimenting the system, and at the moment, the response had been great and the farmers
in the pilot areas are excited about the Akufo Cheque system.” The GCCSFA is the umbrella body of cocoa, coffee and sheanut farmers in the country with the headquarters of the association located in Accra, the Ghanaian capital. It also has offices at the regional, district and society levels across the country.

The association had a national membership of about two million, but in a re-registration exercise currently underway, the membership hovers around 1.8 million, with many more farmers awaiting registration.

After the scrapping of the Akufo Cheque System, cocoa, coffee and sheanut farmers have been troubled in many ways, with cheating by LBCs being a major concern. Some of the LBCs allegedly grant loans to the farmers, or in some instances, coerce the farmers to take loans, which then becomes an albatross around the necks of the farmers.

In view of their indebtedness to the LBCs, the farmers are compelled to sell their products to the licensed buying companies, who sometimes use adjusted weighing scales, thereby affecting the income of the farmers significantly.

Mr Bukari said the GCCSFA had undertaken a nationwide exercise to seek the views of the farmers and it emerged that the scrapping of the Akufo Cheque system was a major concern. He said those concerns informed the decision of the association to apply to the BUSAC Fund for an advocacy programme for the re-introduction of the Akufo Cheque System.
Access to the services of agricultural extension officers is helping plantain farmers in the Jaman South District of the Brong Ahafo Region to increase their production.
There is no doubt that the advocacy support from the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund has brought enthusiasm in the cultivation of plantain in the Jaman South District of the Brong Ahafo region.

Members of the Jaman South Cooperative Plantain Growers Society (JASCOPGROS) have expressed satisfaction that the various advocacy engagements with the Jaman South District Agricultural Extension Directorate is helping them to increase their output and incomes.

The engagements according to the members of the association have led to increased access to the expert services from experienced Agricultural Extension Officers who had taught them innovative techniques for increasing their yield per acre. The Treasurer of the Association, Mr. Cosmos Boadu, testified that he now harvests double the yield from the same parcel of land cultivated due to the good agronomic practices and best planning techniques learnt through their advocacy action supported by the BUSAC Fund.

“The Agricultural Extension officers introduced us to the line and peg system of plantain cultivation, as well as modern varieties of high yielding plantain crops. As a result of applying these ideas, my output and income from last season’s harvest has increased by over one hundred percent,” Mr. Boadu stated in an interview.
Members of the association are also delighted that they no longer suffer from the huge post harvest losses that often erode significant portions of their income after every harvest. The association members’ interaction with the Ministry of Trade and Industry had enabled the Ministry to introduce the farmers to agro processing mechanisms which are helping the farmers to process excess produce to address the challenges of post harvest losses.

“With the aid of agro-processing mechanisms, today we can process plantain into dry powder for sale. This has actually eliminated huge losses and brought us a great deal of money,” Mr. Kwabena Attah, Chairman of the association, remarked.

The removal of these bottlenecks in the cultivation of plantain has helped improved the living standards of numerous plantain farmers within the Jaman South District. One such plantain farmer, Mary Sarpong expressed her delight about the impact of her booming plantain cultivation business on her livelihood.

“After applying the new planting techniques, my harvest has almost quadrupled and my income has increased significantly. My children have now been enrolled in school, with the eldest preparing to apply for admission into a tertiary institution,” she remarked.

Although the Jaman South district contributes immensely to the national food basket in Ghana, the farmers in the district lacked the requisite skills and technical know-how to boost plantain production and address issues of post harvest loses. Farmers in the district were therefore cultivating plantain using the old traditional way which often resulted in low productivity and low incomes for the farmers.

In order to reverse this trend, the leadership of JASCOPGROS sought the assistance of the BUSAC Fund to enable them advocate to the relevant duty bearers to support plantain farmers to improve upon plantain production in the district. With the support of its development partners, DANIDA, USAID and the EU, the BUSAC Fund provided JASCOPGROS with an advocacy grant that enabled the association to conduct research into the problem and undergo training on how to effectively advocate. Armed with the requisite advocacy skills and empirical data from the research, members of the association were able to successfully dialogue with relevant duty bearers for support on how to improve upon plantain cultivation and processing.
NEVER AGAIN! JOMORO COCOA FARMERS VOW NOT TO BE CHEATED

Members of the Jomoro Cocoa Farmers Association in the Western region have vowed never to be cheated again by cocoa buying companies through the falsification of the weighing scale. The farmers are now fully aware of the decoy being employed by these cocoa buyers and have put their concern before the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) which is the government institution...
for regulating and marketing of cocoa in Ghana.

The Association recently undertook an advocacy action with the support of the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund to build the capacity of members to help stop the falsification of weighing scales for weighing cocoa beans in the country. Through the advocacy action, members have built their awareness and capacity and have also been able to put their grievances before COCOBOD.

Estimation by the Association gives about GHC 7.5 million annual losses to the farmers and this poses a threat to the cocoa sector which is a major contributor to the national economy. However the farmers are now taking measures to deal with the causes.

They also lose about a quarter of their income to Cocoa Buying Companies (CBCs) as a result of the use of the adjusted weighing scale and this problem is expected to end because duty bearers are now aware of it and are instituting measures to halt it.

The farmers are now in expectant mood to start getting real value for their produce because the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has assured that the falsification of weighing scales by cocoa buyers which has hindered getting real value over the years would be stopped.

As part of the advocacy action, a survey was conducted to establish the real impact of the use of weighing scales on the incomes of cocoa farmers in seven cocoa growing districts. The survey revealed that cocoa farmers lose half of their annual income as a result of the falsification of the weighing scale and this concern has been put before COCOBOD of which a promise had been made to address it.

Nana Paul Kodjo, President of the Jomoro Cocoa Farmers Association, in an interview indicated that they are aware of the menace and the laws governing the sector but the laws were not being implemented.

“The law is there but it is not being enforced in checking the problems,” he said.

“The advocacy action has really enlightened the members and we are expecting the institutions to work properly for us to get value for money,” he emphasized, adding that in view of the challenges facing the association, the timely intervention of BUSAC Fund
was commendable. According to Mr. Kodjo, a bag of cocoa is supposed to weigh 64kgs hence anything short of that should be checked to bring it to the normal measure.

“The advocacy action has really enlightened the members and we are expecting the institutions to work properly to us to get value for money,” he emphasized adding that in view of the challenges facing the association the timely intervention of BUSAC Fund was commendable.

“Without BUSAC Fund, this would not have been possible because advocacy action involves movement and money,” Mr. Kodjo stated.

Peter Oppong Memison, a member of the Jomoro Cocoa Farmers Association also in an interview stated that their concerns raised during the advocacy action had not been met yet and they are waiting for the authorities to deal with it as soon as possible.

“Now we have been able to put our concerns to COCOBOD and we are expecting COCOBOD to do the right thing so that we will receive real value for our produce,” he said.

The Association is located in Nyamebekyere near Elubo in the Western region with 30% of its members being female.
The recognition and involvement of Binduri Water Users Association (BWUA) in the fixing of levies has been identified as a major breakthrough for local vegetable farmers in Binduri near Bawku in the Upper East Region of Ghana.

On 21st November, 2013, the leadership of BWUA, was invited by the Binduri District Assembly for the first time to participate...
in the fixing of levies for the 2014 fiscal year, thanks to their advocacy action, supported by the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund.

Members of the association who expressed their happiness and satisfaction with the emerging results (collaboration) from business advocacy also added that the engagement with District Assembly to fix levies will facilitate the growth and development of their businesses.

The Association membership numbering about 2500 are elated because the assembly and other major stakeholders in governance and agricultural sector have now recognized their Association as important partners in development.

In separate interviews, some of the members were of the opinion that they will make more profit from their produce this harmattan season because the middlemen cannot cheat them under the guise of paying high levies again.

The secretary of BWUA, Mr. Zakari Arango, acknowledged that the advocacy skills learnt from the BUSAC Fund had enabled members of BWUA to secure the support of duty bearers.

“The skills we learnt during the advocacy training had enabled me to solicit for support to acquire 10 bags of fertilizer from the government fertilizer subsidy program during the last farming season. This really boosted my crop yield and income last season. We were in the dark but now we have found the light and this will help us to increase production, increase incomes,
“improve livelihoods and reduce poverty”, Mr. Arango remarked.

The association’s encounter and dialogue with the assembly has also motivated them to recognize the need to regularly pay levies to help the assembly to embark on developmental projects like building of market structures.

Sharing the impact the advocacy process has had on her business, Madam Latifi Amina Tijani, 44-year old mother of three explained that the financial training helped her to document the cash flow of her business, thus helping her to secure a soft credit to expand her onion farm by an extra acreage in the next season.

“It is my intention to increase the yield to pay my loan from the bank, take care of one of my children who has qualified for the university and again expand my farm. With the cheating of the middlemen issue finally over, my income will increase in the coming season”, she said.

Before the group’s advocacy action, the Bawku Municipal Assembly did not involve Vegetable (particularly onion & watermelon) producers in the fixing of exit tax, hence the levies / taxes fixed by the assembly affects the marketing and profit levels
of onion and watermelon producers in the Bawku Municipal Assembly. The high exit tax worsens the plight of external buyers who are already battling with long distance and bad road conditions.

The group had an advocacy grant to the tune of GHS 39,996.60 from the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund, a project funded by USAID and European Union, with DANIDA as the lead development partner.

BUSAC Fund assistance for the group falls in line with its project objective to strengthen the advocacy capacity of private sector organisations (PSOs) to enable them undertake advocacy activities aimed at improving the Ghanaian business environment.

Mr. Louis Amoli explained that the group members were equipped with enhanced advocacy skills and tools to engage duty bearers effectively, held a number of radio discussion programmes and also dialogued with the Coordinating Director of the assembly. What is even more encouraging is that members are now paying their taxes to the District Assembly and the Assembly Officials are optimistic of getting more revenue from the association members.

According to Mr. David Mar-ire Tuobenyere, Binduri District Coordinating Director, the district has been included in the Rural Enterprises Projects and plans were advance to further build the capacity of the BWUA to increase production, generate more income and reduce poverty.

Mr. David Mar-ire Tuobenyere, Binduri District Regional Coordinating Director, confirmed in an interview that the assembly thought it wise to allow the group to participate in the meeting to fix the levy to enable them pay.

“We realized that payment of levies will be easy if they had a say. It is our hope that revenue of the assembly will increase this year”, he said.

Again to complement the work of the association the assembly members at the last sitting voted that considerable attention must be given to building the deplorable roads to facilitate the movement of agricultural produce and goods to markets.

“It is the assembly’s priority to support groups such as BWUA and others to engage in sustainable business, create wealth in other to reduce poverty in our localities,” Mr. Tuobenyere remarked.
Madam Talata Akulebis, fifty-one year-old mother of four who hails from Benaba community no more walks long distances to the market to sell her parboiled rice, processed shea and groundnut oil again, as she is now chauffeured on a motor bike bought by her daughter-in-law, who has just completed a nurses training programme. She has been able to support her daughter in-law and her daughter to complete their community nursing program with the proceeds of her thriving business.

“I managed to look after my daughters with my share of the profits I made from the Benaba Farmers Women Association (BEFWA) business and that of my additional petty trading. I gained lots of skills during the BUSAC Fund business advocacy training and it has empowered me to engage in all kind of businesses,” she disclosed.

The women observed that it pays to educate children especially the girl child, as Madam Akparibo Agbago, President of the Association put it: “We have seen that children who were educated by their parents are now building houses and buying beautiful clothing for them”.

*Project Manager of BEWFA, Ms Victoria Asaaro, sitting on the electric poles donated by the Bawku West District Assembly after the group’s dialogue.*
As part of the advocacy activities, the group received different kinds of support including advocacy skills and financial management skills training which has enabled them to fraternize with others to share ideas on their trade.

The two women are part of the group numbering 100 in the Bawku West District of the Upper East Region, who have been engaging in shea nut and groundnut oil extraction as well as rice farming as their means of livelihood.

Benaba Women Farmers Association are not able to put into use Oil extraction Machines and Equipment provided for the group by African Development Foundation in 1995, due to lack of electricity to power the machines. BEWFA members are therefore not able to increase production and profit levels as envisaged by the donors and BEWFA.

The Business Sector Advocacy Challenge (BUSAC) Fund supported the group to strengthen their advocacy capacity. Although the group’s facility is yet to be connected to electricity, the Project Manager of BEWFA, Ms Victoria Asaaro, thinks the first leg of the advocacy has been successful due to the prompt response by the district assembly to give 11 electric poles to assist the group.

“It is now left with cables which will be used to connect the lights. We have discussed the cost and benefits of the project with the Member of Parliament of the area, Mr. Cletus Avoka, who agreed to speak to one electrician to add it to government electricity project in the area but he is refusing to answer our calls”, she remarked.

The groups’ next line of action is to pay a courtesy call to the new District Chief Executive to present their challenge and solicit for support to complete what his predecessor had begun.

The women now know what, where, who and how to get any assistance at any point in time because they have been equipped with such skills during the various training programmes.

In an interview with some of the women during a visit, they said “We know how to talk to politicians very well now”.

According to Anaaba Adam Imoro, ex-District Chief Executive (DCE), the project was dear to his heart due to its benefit to the women and the people living around the facility.
“I promised to complete the project once the government won the last election and he gave me the nod as DCE but I was not given the position again,” he said.

Mr. Richard Ananga, an accredited Service Provider of the BUSAC Fund, explained that groundnut oil and shea butter production remains the major source of income for the BEWFA members and that ninety seven of the group members are currently using the manual procession method, while 3 per cent are able to combine both mechanical and manual processing methods.

The benefits received by the group would require that they stay together to fully explore their opportunities. However, the absence of electricity at the center and their inability to make use of its machines defeats their aim of increasing production to enhance their income levels.
DANIDA

Development cooperation between Denmark and Ghana began in 1957, and Ghana is today one of Danida’s major partner countries.

The main activities in Denmark’s current development cooperation with Ghana is general budget support for the implementation of Ghana’s Shared Growth & Development Agenda (GSGDA) and four large programmes aligned to the:


2. Health Sector Support Programme V (2012-2016) - DKK. 400 million provided as health sector budget support and support the private health sector and HIV/AIDS.

3. Local Service Delivery and Governance Programme (2009-2013) - DKK. 600 million to support the District Development Facility, water supply & sanitation and the rural feeder roads and Ghana Audit Service.


5. Support to Private Sector Development II (2010-2014). DKK. 400 million to improve framework condition for the private sector, establish a Skills Development Fund, support selected agricultural value chains and provide rural finance.

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The United States has a long history of extending a helping hand to people overseas struggling to make a better life. It is a history that both reflects the American people’s compassion and support of human dignity as well as advances U.S foreign policy interests. Agricultural growth has been the major driver of poverty reduction, especially in southern Ghana. The sector is the largest source of employment for Ghanaians and is dominated by small farmers.

Ghana is a focus country for Feed The Future (FTF), and the initiative is contributing to the government’s commitment to food security and building on a common purpose shared among civil society, the private sector and development partners. Public-private partnerships are an important opportunity to strengthen food security and accelerate economic growth in Ghana and the West African region as a whole.

Feed the Future in Ghana focuses on major rice, maize and soya value chains with particular emphasis on the north, where nutritional indicators, especially among children, are the worst. The approach integrates nutrition and gender issues throughout and emphasizes improving the resilience of vulnerable households in target communities. The program also seeks to improve the sustainable management of marine fisheries to enhance the food security and livelihood of coastal fishing communities.

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THE EUROPEAN UNION

The country Strategy Paper for Ghana (2008-2013) presents the strategic framework for EU cooperation with Ghana under the 10th EDF. Assistance concentrates on transport connectivity and regional integration as well as governance through support to decentralization, civil society and non-executive bodies. Other non-focal sectors include migration and protection of the environment and natural resources.

The EU is committed to increasing the use of budget support in Ghana through cooperation with other donors and in this context, the commission will pay special attention to performance in social sectors related to the MDGs. It will also focus on public finance management, regional integration, private sector development and trade facilitation, including support for the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

EU interventions in Ghana also take account of crosscutting issues, in particular gender equality, environmental sustainability, democracy and good governance, decent work principles, civil society and non-state actors. The EU will provide €2 million of project financing for migration, security and catalyzing Diaspora resources management, including support for FLEGT, The EU Action Plan for forest Law Enforcement Governance and trade. The multi-annual indicative programme for Ghana under the 10th EDF amounts to €454 million to address all these priorities.

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PROMOTING PRIVATE-PUBLIC POLICY DIALOGUE IN GHANA

For being steadfast and visible in our efforts at supporting the growth of a vibrant Ghanaian private sector, the BUSAC Fund has won the 2013 SME Agency Award at the maiden edition of the Small and Medium Enterprise Ghana Awards (SMEGA).

We share this noble achievement with our Development Partners, Grantees, short term consultants, staff and the Ghanaian Private Sector - Ayekoo 1

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