

# The road to Hong Kong

**Report of A 9-day tour of rural Ghana, to collate views of farmers and small-scale producers for input into government's position for the W.T.O. Trade Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong - December 2005.**



**Compiled**

**Seth Gideon Awuku**

**For**

**The Civil Society Coalition For Trade Justice  
And the Protection Of Livelihoods**

**Cover picture: A procession of farmers of Nyariga (on donkey carts) to Launch the 'Road to Hong Kong' campaign**

# REPORT OF THE ROAD TO HONG KONG CAMPAIGN

---

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In December 2005, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Hon Allan Kyereimanteng, will lead Ghana's delegation to the sixth Trade Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which comes off in Hong Kong. This round of trade negotiations is significant, as decisions that will emerge at the end of deliberations will affect people of Ghana, especially individuals and organisations in small and medium scale production, who constitute about 60% of the country's population.

Against this background, civil society organizations in Ghana, including NGOs working on the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), and trade issues, rallied together for a landmark Roadshow from the 26<sup>th</sup> September to the 4<sup>th</sup> October, to mobilize the input of farmers and other stakeholder groups into Ghana's position for the Hong Kong meeting.

The show, dubbed: THE ROAD TO HONG KONG, was spearheaded by the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFA), the Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC), the Market Access Promotion Network (MAPRONET), SEND Foundation, Abibiman Foundation, Third World Network – Africa, General Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU), the Trades Union Congress (TUC) with the support of Oxfam (GB).

It was organised in pursuant of the declaration adopted at an August 16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> African Trade Network Meeting in Accra, calling on African governments to ensure that their national positions and mandates for the Hong Kong meeting are elaborated through national debates and discussions.

The campaign was also aimed at fostering the participation of peoples' organisations, national parliaments, and civil society organisations within the framework of firming up their demands on their governments to protect and promote the interest of their people at all times at world trade negotiations.

The 8-day cross-country tour, started in Nyariga in the Upper-East Region, where the campaign was officially launched, to Savelugu in the Northern Region, then to Tuobodom in the Brong Ahafo Region. It continued to Okyereko, a rice farming community in the Central Region, then to Asutsuare in the Eastern Region, where demands in respect of rice were collated. The caravan finally arrived in Tema for interaction with workers of Ghana's premier industrial hub, from whence the party went on procession to the Holy Gardens, at Circle, in Accra for a round up of the tour.

This report attempts an account of the tour, capturing the concerns of stakeholder groups and individuals at the various stops of the journey.

---

## 2.0 THE NYARIGA LAUNCH

Setting off from Accra on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September, the Road to Hong Kong party



*Nyariga Women Farmers performing at the Launch*

arrived in Nyariga on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September, where the official launching ceremony was performed. On arrival at Bolgatanga, the capital of the Upper-East Region, the party paid a courtesy call on the Regional Minister and his deputy before proceeding to the durbar ground in Nyariga.

### 2.1 Brief Profile of Nyariga

Nyariga is a small farming community, about 5 miles from Bolgatanga in the Upper-East Region. It has a population of about 6000

people. The people are predominantly farmers, engaged in food crop and animal farming. Crops cultivated by farmers include maize, groundnut rice, sweet potato, millet, beans, sorghum and bambara peas.

Farmers of Nyariga depend mainly on rainfall to sustain their farming activities during the normal farming season, and rely on the Via Irrigation Dam for dry season farming. Besides farming, the people of Nyariga, especially the women, undertake income-generating activities such as basket weaving and petty trading. The community is mostly made up of the Frafra tribe. It boasts of 3 primary and 2 junior secondary schools. To give true meaning to girl child education, one of the JSS admits only girls.

## 2.2 **The Durbar**

The "Tindana" - literally the "Land Lord" of the community, Ayiri Zoya, set the tone for the ceremony with a short prayer. In an address to welcome the party to Nyariga, he lamented the plight of the people, noting particularly that, in spite of the desire of his people to produce more, they are confronted with the problem of lack of market for their produce. This, he said, had worsened the living conditions of the people and made them poorer. He called for God's blessing for the organisers of the initiative describing it as a "noble one." He ended with a call on Government to support farmers in their endeavours, especially through the provision of inputs.

Mr. Anyorematia Seidu, President of the Via Irrigation Cooperative, who is also a rice farmer, chaired the function. The durbar attracted an audience of about 2,500 people.

## 2.3 **Opinions and concerns**

The opinions and concerns of peasant farmers in Nyariga in particular, and in Ghana as a whole, were captured in two different statements made by two persons from the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG).

### 2.3.1. **John Akaribo - National Organising Secretary (PFAG)**

Making the first statement, Mr. John Akaribo, the National Organising Secretary of the PFAG called on trade ministers of poor countries

such as Ghana to be firm and fair in their negotiations and not to sacrifice the interest of their people. He attributed the collapse of the local agricultural industry to the imports of foreign products such as rice and poultry, adding that this had worsened the lot of the small to medium scale producer.

He called for trade justice rather than quota allocations, which defy the norms of equity and fairness. Mr. Akaribo, who is also the Assemblyman for the Nyariga Community and a rice farmer, called on the powerful nations, the World Bank and IMF to give a hearing to the concerns of ministers of the developing world, as a demonstration of their commitment to reducing global poverty by 2015.

### 2.3.2. **Second Statement**

Making the second statement, the President of the PFAG, Mr. Mohammed Adam Nashiru, said the only way Government could help reduce the poverty levels of the people is to address the real problems of farming, which to him were lack of affordable inputs such as fertilizer, seeds, machinery and lack of access to good market for produce. He noted with regret, the results of trade injustice on the people of Ghana, particularly the closure of the Bolgatanga Rice Mill, the Pwalugu Tomato Factory, and the difficulties facing the Pusunamony Cotton Ginnery, among others.

He was optimistic that if farmers and other civil society groups teamed up with governments, they could influence decisions at such trade conferences in favour of poor peasant farmers.

A Nyariga women's group illustrated the effect of subsidy withdrawal and poor market access on the living conditions of the peasant farmer, who depend on farming as the only source of livelihood.

## 2.4 **Open Forum**

Ordinary people of Nyariga, most of whom constitute the membership of the PFAG, and who are most affected by the decisions of trade negotiations, were given the opportunity "to tell their own stories" and share their views and experiences. These views are captured verbatim in the following sections:



**1<sup>st</sup> Contributor – Female rice and vegetable farmer**

"Previously, we did not see the need to send our children to school as important. Now we have realised the merits of education. However, we don't have the money to sustain the education of our children. After we have toiled to produce, we are confronted with the problem of poor patronage of our produce even in our own market, because of the dumping of cheaper imports on the market. We want fair opportunities to compete with imported produce."



*Women Rice farmers striving to make a living*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Contributor – Female rice farmer**

"There is no market for our rice because the rice we produce faces stiff competition with imported rice. We call on Government to assist us by devoting more resources to agriculture, our only source of livelihood. If we are given the support, we can produce rice that can equally compete with imported rice."

**3<sup>rd</sup> Contributor – Female Rice Farmer**

"We have been encouraging our girls to go to school because we now know that there is merit in education. If we are supported in the processing of our rice after harvest, it will meet the demands of the market.' We call on Government to come to our aid, because we cannot realise our dreams of educating our girls without support for our farming activities - our only source of livelihood."

**4<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Chief Farmer of Nyariga Community**

"We are aware Government cannot raise the money to revive all collapsed industries like the Meat Marketing Board and tomato processing Factories. All we want from Government is to assist us to acquire simple processing machines so that on a small-scale we can process our produce, thereby promoting value addition, which in turn will help cut back on losses especially during glut periods."

**5<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Male Crop Farmer**

"Besides farming, basket weaving remains a major income generating activity, especially for our women. Regrettably, there is no market for our baskets. Middlemen from Bolgatanga and other big towns continue to rip us off, denying us the opportunity to reap the benefit of our toil. We need help."

**6<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Male Rice Farmer**

"We rely on the Veia Irrigation Dam for our farming activity, especially during the dry season. Unfortunately, the Dam has not seen any major rehabilitation in decades. It is so silted. We appeal to Government to consider desilting the Dam to provide more water for our farming."

**7<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Chief of Nyariga**

"The major problem militating against farming in this community, our only source of livelihood is that of lack of market for our produce especially our rice and baskets. Additionally, there is the problem of lack of agricultural inputs like fertilizer. The abandoned fertilizer depot you see before you, used to provide affordable fertilizer to farmers. It now lies waste. Government should help by reviving such facilities."

**8<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Chief of Veia, Naba Thomas Azubire II**

"In this world education is the key to development. I am glad to say my people have realized and come to accept the need to send their children to school. However, they cannot sustain this activity if they remain poor. It is in this light, that I appeal to Government to support the work of farmers in this

community, most of whom are peasant farmers.

Farmers are not able to increase their acreage during the dry season because of the drop in the level of the Veia Irrigation Dam. Government should consider desilting the Dam so that more water will be available for farming."

## 2. 5 **The launching ceremony**

Ms. Stella Abagre, the Coordinator of the Single Mothers Association, a Bolgatanga-based rice farming co-operative, officially launched the "Road to Hong Kong". Launching the campaign, Ms. Abagre underscored the fact that decisions taken at conferences such as the sixth Ministerial Meeting have far-reaching impact on the fortunes of farmers, especially those engaged in peasant farming.

She said, most women in the Nyariga community grow a lot of tomatoes, but are faced with the problem of not being able to

sell their produce. This, she attributed to lack of support especially in facilitating access to markets and the withdrawal of input subsidy. She underlined the importance of giving some protection for locally produced commodities against the influx of imported ones, often produced at subsidized cost.

She urged Ghana's trade delegation to carry the farmers' message to the Hong Kong meeting and to ensure that the decisions that would be arrived at worked in the best interest of the people. Ms. Abagre commended the organisers of the initiative for making it possible for them to input into Government's position.

On behalf of farmers and the people of Ghana, who are most affected by decisions of world trade negotiations, Ms. Abagre officially launched the campaign. The launching was followed by a symbolic demonstration of the start of the journey to Hong Kong, with participants being carried in about 50 carts pulled by donkeys, along the main feeder road that links the village to Bolgatanga.

# 3.0 SAVELUGU



*The turn of the chiefs and farmers of Savelugu to usher the campaign team onwards to Hong Kong*

The convoy arrived at Savelugu in the Northern Region on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> September. The party paid courtesy calls on the District Chief Executive and the Chief of Savelugu, who was represented by the Regent, before proceeding to the durbar ground.

## 3.1 **Brief Profile of Savelugu**

Savelugu is a small town, 25 km north of Tamale. It is the District Capital of the Savelugu-Nanton District, with a population of about 7,000. Majority of the people are engaged in farming with about 90% of them being peasant farmers.

The predominant crop grown is cotton, which thrives well in the area given its robust and drought-resistant nature. Other popular crops cultivated by the people are maize, millet, soybean and rice.

The people of Savelugu are predominantly Dagombas.

## 3.2 **Durbar**

Islamic prayer was offered to set the tone for the durbar. This was followed by the introduction of the Chairman for the occasion, Mr. I. Zacharia, an Assemblyman of the Diare Electoral Area of Savelugu.

After the Chairman's acceptance speech, the President of PFAG, Mr. Mohammed Adam Nashuru read a keynote address on behalf of the peasant farmers of the Savelugu community.

The durbar attracted about 800 people from Savelugu and its environs.

### 3.3 **The President of PFAG**

Mr. Nashiru, in his address, repeated the call for support for agricultural production in Ghana, adding that the Association was not asking for a total ban of imports of agricultural produce, but the protection of livelihoods, and the enhancement of domestic capacity to compete.

He urged the President of Ghana, His Excellency, Mr. J.A. Kufuor to expedite action on the President's Special Initiatives on Guinea fowl and sheanut, as these two products have the potential to alleviate poverty in the three northern regions.

He recounted circumstances leading to the collapse of key industries in Ghana, and expressed optimism that with unity of purpose, peace and perseverance, the people of Northern Ghana could join forces to fight poverty - the number one enemy of the Region.

### 3.4 **Open Forum**



The audience, most of whom were farmers, were invited to share their views and experiences to be captured as part of their concerns to the Government Delegation to Hong Kong. These contributions are captured here below:

**1<sup>st</sup> Contributor** – Male sheanut farmer from Savelugu.

"The major problem facing us has to do with the high cost of fertilizer. In the past, we could afford to fertilize our soil. Now it is almost impossible. Our soils have lost their fertility as a result and this has affected our yields. This has also aggravated the poverty situation of the people in this community. We call on Government to revisit the issue of subsidies on agricultural inputs. Sheanut is a crop that has great potential in this area. Unfortunately, not much support is given to the crop. We urge Government to give the same support to the crop, as is the case with cocoa."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Contributor** – Prominent male farmer from Savelugu

"The governments seem to be aware of our problems but it appears it has not done much to address our plight. This forum is very laudable and it is the only way to make the views of ordinary people like us known to the powers that be.

A bag of ammonia fertilizer which used to sell at ₵50,000.00 six years ago is now ₵150,000.00. This has put the fertilizer out of reach of most farmers. We appeal to Government to make agricultural inputs accessible and affordable to farmers."

**3<sup>rd</sup> Contributor** – Prominent male farmer from Savelugu

"Our farming activities are limited by two main factors: Lack of credit facilities and lack of agricultural inputs. It is my prayer that the Hong Kong delegation includes members of our Association (Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana), especially our President, who I believe, can articulate our concerns effectively. Government has in recent past helped with the provision of tractors; however, these tractors were not durable. They were not suitable for our conditions and could not work for longer periods of time.

It is my wish that the concerns we are expressing now will definitely get to Hong Kong."

**4<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Mr. Mummuni Alhassan, Field Operations Manager, Ghana Cotton Company

"I am glad to be part of the "Road to Hong Kong" mobilization efforts, because I am a representative of farmers. If there is any crop that can alleviate poverty in the three northern regions, it is cotton. Regrettably, this is one crop that has been hardly hit by unfair trade rules. While cotton farmers in, for instance, America enjoy subsidy on their agricultural inputs, the same cannot be said of the Ghanaian cotton farmer, whose situation is further compounded by the increasing rise in production cost and falling prices on the world market. Paradoxically, in the U.S., the cost of production is rather on the decline.

I appeal to the Government delegation to the Hong Kong meeting to negotiate in the best interest of the Ghanaian farmer. The developed and powerful nations must be fair to the weaker and poorer nations; especially in the kind of decisions they push forward at such trade negotiations.

In the past, a lot of emphasis had been placed on aid to poorer nations. Aid is just a stop-gap measure and will not provide solutions to our problems in the long-term. It is my belief that trade must not be by might, that is, how powerful a nation is. It must be dictated by fairness and a level playing field.

I commend the organisers of this forum for their noble initiative."

**6<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Female sheanut farmer

"We the women of this community are also farmers. It is sad that last year we could not farm because we did not have money. We appeal to government for loans. Government should also give support to the shea butter business, which has great potential in this area. If the same support given to the cultivation of cocoa were given to the shea butter business, our lives would be transformed. Majority of women in this area are into shea butter processing. However, the price for this commodity is unattractive and unrewarding. We need guaranteed price for our shea butter."

**7<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male cotton farmer from Savelugu

"In Africa, majority of the people are into agriculture. The sad thing is that farmers are not recognized and given the needed support.

There is virtually no credit facility for farmers. The loans some of us receive are not substantial enough to make any meaningful impact on our vocation. I wonder how a loan of ₵200,000.00 can turn around our businesses. We call on Government to look into the issue of credit facilities to farmers.

We want Ghana's delegation to the Hong Kong meeting to consider the issue of imports of foreign agricultural products seriously. If nothing at all, we will be glad if such imports are at least minimised. We also call for more extension services."

**8<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male cotton farmer from Nyoglo

"I appeal to Government to give us more education on bullock traction, since most of us who are peasant farmers cannot afford tractor services. An observation I have made is that often, incentives and facilities meant for farmers do not get to them. I suggest that Government monitors the distribution of such facilities to ensure that the right people enjoy them.

I also want Government to take a second look at the interest rates attached to loans that farmers receive. I think the interest rates are a bit on a higher side."

**9<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Prominent cotton farmer from Savelugu

"I have two special appeals – one to the Ghana Cotton Company and the other to Government. I want to kindly ask the Cotton Company to consider ploughing part of the land for the cultivation of maize and other crops any time the Company ploughs land for cotton cultivation for their farmers. If support is not given for the cultivation of other crops, there is the tendency for cotton farmers to divert some of the inputs offered by the Cotton Company for the cultivation of other crops that would sustain their livelihoods.

Secondly, we want Government to take a second look at the Shangai tractors recently distributed to farmers. Apart from their high price, these Shangai tractors are not durable at all. They cannot plough for longer hours as the case is with other makes of tractors. It might be better to go for second-hand



Ferguson tractors, which in my opinion are more efficient than these Shangai tractors.”

**10<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male farmer from Savelugu

“The poverty levels of farmers in this community will take a further dip if support is denied us. Majority of us are peasant farmers, and the support for us in our farming activity is critical. We need support in the form of inputs subsidy and affordable loans.”

**11<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male farmer from Diare

“My message is simple. I want Government to commit more resources to agricultural research so that more crop varieties, which are drought-resistant, would be developed. Government should also consider rehabilitating the various irrigation facilities in the north to promote dry season farming.”

**12<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male farmer

“It is rather unfortunate most of the contributions at this durbar have come from the older folks. We the youth, should also realize farming as an activity that can change our fortunes for the better. However, this can

happen only if farming is made more attractive to the youth. I believe it is the offer of support in the form of subsidy on inputs, competitive prices for farm produce, and offer of credit facilities that will attract more of us the youth into farming.”

**13<sup>th</sup> Contributor – Traditional Head of Savelugu**

“I share the views of all the contributors. Ever since I was enskinned as chief of this traditional area, I have been in cotton cultivation. The sad aspect is that, I have stopped cultivating cotton and now cultivating maize and yam.

Until the price offered for our cotton becomes competitive, I can assure you that many more cotton farmers will abandon the cultivation of the crop.

This contribution brought the open forum to an end.

The President of the PFAG, Mr. M. A. Nashiru cut the sod to officially mark the departure of the Road to Hong Kong convoy from Savelugu to its next stop.

## 4.0 TUOBODOM



*A gathering of farmers at the durbar at Tuobodom*

The “Road to Hong Kong” party arrived in Tuobodom on Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> September, to a brass band welcome. In a brass band procession, the party headed for the residence of the Adonten divisional chief of the Techiman Traditional Area, to pay traditional homage, in line with the customs of the people.

Welcoming the party, the Adontenhene of the Techiman Traditional Area, Nana Aboagye

Appiah Dumgya II, called on Government to assist in the processing of tomato, which is a major crop of the area. He said farmers in the area were confronted with the problem of post harvest losses and unattractive prices paid for their tomatoes especially in periods of glut. He therefore called on Government to facilitate increased access to markets and a guaranteed price for the tomatoes produced in the area.

### 4.1 **Profile of Tuobodom**

Tuobodom is a town, 5 km north of Techiman, with a population of about 15,000. It is part of the Techiman Municipal Assembly and the second biggest town in the Municipality after Techiman, the capital of the Municipality. Tuobodom has a fertile soil, which is suitable for tomato cultivation. This fact makes the town one of the leading producers of tomato in the country.

Other major crops cultivated in the area are yam, maize, cassava, plantain, onions and



pepper. Farming in the area is rain fed with no irrigation facility. About 70% of the people are engaged in peasant farming.

Besides farming, other income generating activities undertaken by the people are petty trading and gari processing. The town boasts of about 15 junior secondary schools and one senior secondary School.

#### 4.2 **Durbar**

The durbar started at about 9.10 after a short prayer. It was chaired by Nana Aboagye Dumgya II, the Adontehene of the Techiman Traditional Area. Setting the tone for the forum, a member of the organising committee, Steve Manteaw of ISODEC, gave a brief overview of the "Road to Hong Kong" project.

He outlined experiences and views gathered at the two earlier stops of the journey - Nyariga and Savelugu. He underscored the importance of the project, saying the outcome of the Hong Kong meeting will determine the conduct of trade, and will certainly have consequences for the livelihoods of peasant farmers, and the future of most domestic industries in the country.

##### 4.2.1 **Statement by the President of PFAG**

Speaking on behalf of peasant farmers in the country, the President of the PFAG, M. A. Nashuru, described the forum as "historic" adding that such a forum was the first of its kind in the area. He said the organizers decided to make a stop at Tuobodom among many towns in the Brong Ahafo Region not by chance, but because of its hardworking farmers, who in spite of the limitations, continue to contribute immensely to the food basket of the country.

He underscored the need for farmers to unite and collaborate in their efforts to ensure that their problems are effectively dealt with. He commended farmers for keeping faith with the people of Ghana and committing themselves to the course of feeding the country in spite of the limited support and low recognition given to them.

Adam Nashuru noted that the government might not know all the problems of farmers and explained that this fact informed the decision to go on this expedition to collate the

problems at firsthand for submission to the government delegation to the Hong Kong meeting.

##### 4.2.2 **Statement by the Representative of MOFA**

A representative of the Techiman District of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Mr. K. Ayobi, commended farmers of Tuobodom for being hardworking and dedicated to their work. He said tomato production has now become synonymous with the people of Tuobodom.

He cautioned farmers against the application of the wrong chemical on their tomatoes. He promised that the District Office of MOFA had designed a programme to educate farmers on the right application of agrochemicals for tomato cultivation. Mr. Ayobi urged the PFAG to educate their members to show some commitment in the servicing of loans offered to them.

He said it was only when such loans were paid back that many more farmers could benefit from the facility.

He announced that an Agric Extension Officer had been posted to the town to offer extension services to farmers. The officer was officially introduced to the farmers at the durbar.

##### 4.2.3 **Open Forum**

Contributions from farmers and other stakeholders during the open forum are captured as follows:

**1<sup>st</sup> Contributor** – Former Regional Chief Farmer

"It is heartening that in spite of the numerous problems we face as farmers, we have not given up on our vocation. I believe there is hope for the farmer. However without securing markets for the farmer, and in the absence of agro-processing and storage facilities, farmers will continue to operate at a loss, and for that fact, shall default in loan repayments. I appeal to Government to help us in the improvement of storage facilities for our tomatoes. This will cut back on post harvest losses and put money in the pocket of

the tomato farmers so that they can pay back their loans.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> Contributor** – Kweku Asibo, tomato farmer

“I am grateful to the organisers of this forum. My only problem has to do with the late release of loans to farmers. If the loans don’t come on time, they affect our farming activities. We are not able to plan our activities effectively. Again, I want government to consider increasing the amount given to us as loans. I suggest that the loan is increased from 500,000 cedis to 3 or 5 million cedis, so that the impact on our production is meaningful.”

**3<sup>rd</sup> Contributor** – Female gari processor

“A lot of us women in this community are also in the gari processing business. We need help in the form of loans so that we can expand our businesses.”

**4<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Mr. Danso, cashew farmer

“I cultivate several crops but I want to talk about cashew. I have been cultivating cashew for the past 5 years and observed that not much support is given to cashew farmers. Most often, agents manipulate the weighing scale and succeed in cheating us. Again, it will be necessary for Government to consider working out a guaranteed price for cashew, as is the case with cocoa.”

**5<sup>th</sup> Contributor**– Male farmer

“If my memory serves me right, this is the first time Tuobodom has hosted such a forum. In spite of the importance of Tuobodom as far as production of food is concerned, it is often not given the desired recognition. I thank the organisers for recognizing the efforts of Tuobodom.”

**6<sup>th</sup> Contributor**– David Oppong, tomato farmer

“I thank the organisers for the opportunity given for us to share our problems. My concern is with the high cost of fertilizer. Government should consider subsidising the price of fertilizer so that they are affordable to all.”

**7<sup>th</sup> Contributor**- Male cashew farmer

“We thank the organisers of this forum for the opportunity for us to share our views and make an input into the Hong Kong meeting.

I request Government to consider seriously the plight of cashew farmers. Agents who buy our products manipulate their weighing scales thereby ripping us off. We also need more extension service in the cultivation of cashew. We need more information on the cultivation of the crop.”

**8<sup>th</sup> Contributor** - Kwasi Adjei, farmer

“I am the secretary of the Cashew Farmers Association in this area. We have started a project to mobilize more cashew farmers in Tuobodom. We believe more support and assistance will come to us if we are organised. We need support for our cashew business. The support can be in the form of credit facility and subsidy on agric inputs.”

**9<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Agnes Buahema, tomato farmer from Tuobodom

“Our farming activity is on the decline because of lack of support. Our livelihood here is dependent on the tomato business. Government should consider setting up a fertilizer depot to make fertilizer more accessible to us at affordable rates. We also need good storage facilities for our tomatoes, especially in periods of glut so that we cut back on post harvest losses.”

**10<sup>th</sup> Contributor**- Female tomato farmer

“There are so many responsibilities on us, the women of this area. Some women bear the burden of paying the school fees of their children. This is why we think a lot of support should go to women, majority of whom are engaged in farming and gari processing.”

**11<sup>th</sup> Contributor** - Male gari processor

“I speak on behalf of all gari processors in this area. Our major problem is lack of raw material. It is sad to note that we depend on Cote d’Ivoire for cassava to produce gari. We need to be supported to be able to produce more cassava so that our business can be sustained.”

**12<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Male tomato farmer

"It is true that at times we are not able to service the loans we take for our businesses. This is so, because we don't get the loans on time. Besides, the interests on the loans are too high. We ask Government to do something about it. Tuobodom is one of the leading areas in tomato production in the country. Unfortunately, most of the tomatoes we produce go waste because of poor storage facilities. We appeal to Government to set up a tomato-processing factory here to address the problem."

**13<sup>th</sup> Contributor** – Woman farmer

"I stand here on behalf of the women of Tuobodom to appeal to Government to increase the loans given to us. The 500,000.00 loan is not substantial and not able to make a meaningful impact on our businesses."

**14<sup>th</sup> Contributor** - Male tomato farmer

"Our roads are in very bad state. As result most of our produce are at times locked up in our farms. I appeal to the Department of Feeder Roads to do something about our roads. If our harvests gets locked up in our farms, it is going to be difficult for us to be able to sell and pay back our loans."

**15<sup>th</sup> Contributor** - Male cocoa farmer

"I thank Government for initiating the policy to spray our cocoa farms. However, I want the Government to consider the timing. More often the spraying is not done in good time so that before spraying starts, the pods are already bad. I will suggest that Government provides the machine and chemicals to us so that we can do the spraying on our own. Last season, I lost most of my cocoa as a result of the wrong timing."

**4.2.4 Chairman's Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, the Chairman for the occasion, Nana Aboagye Appiah Duymga II, called for better access to markets so that farmers could reap better returns on their investments to pay back their loans. He said there was the need also to explore the external market for some of their produce if the domestic market was unattractive.

The farmers went on a symbolic 'march to Hong Kong' to draw the curtains on the Tuobodom stop.

---

## 5.0 OKYEREKO



*A farmers durbar at Okyereko*

The party arrived at Okyereko in the morning of Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> October.

**5.1 Brief Profile of Okyereko**

Okyereko is a farming community in the Gomaa District of the Central Region of Ghana. It is about 3 km to Winneba, and has an area of about 4 km square under rice cultivation. Its population is about 2,500. Other crops cultivated by the community are maize, vegetables and cassava. The town relies on irrigation facilities from the Ayensu River for its rice farming.

With respect to educational facilities, the town has one primary school and a junior secondary school. It has one community health post, which serves 12 other communities around Okyereko.

## 5.2 **The Okyereko Durbar**

The Okyereko durbar started at about 12 noon, after a short prayer. The Chairman for the occasion was the Chief of Okyereko, Nana Ntsiful Ababio XI who is also the Chairman of the Rice Farmers Association of Okyereko. In an address to welcome the party to Okyereko, the Chairman expressed joy at the choice of Okyereko as one of the stops of the road show.

He commended farmers in the country for their tireless efforts at feeding the country, adding that without their efforts the country would have gone hungry. He particularly praised farmers of Okyereko, whom he described as "hardworking" saying it was in recognition of their dedication to farming that today Okyereko had been chosen among many farming communities to offer the platform for inputs into government's position for the Hong Kong meeting.

### 5.2.1 **Statement from the PFAG**

Presenting a statement on behalf of the PFAG, its President Mr. M. A. Nashuru, called on farmers in the country to unite their efforts so that their problems could be effectively addressed. He said the concerns that would be expressed at the forum would inform Ghana's position at the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial meeting of the WTO in Hong Kong.

Mr. Nashuru expressed regret at the importation of foreign products into the country to compete with locally produced ones. He identified the problem of lack of access to markets as one of the challenges facing the Ghanaian producer.

He noted that policies of the big powerful nations were making it difficult for poor developing countries to compete and make progress. He, therefore, called on farmers to join hands with the PFAG to speak with one big voice so that the concerns of farmers could go far and wide. Mr. Nashuru said it was the aim of the PFAG to mobilize at least 8 million farmers. He therefore urged farmers of Okyereko, which is one of the 12 irrigated rice fields in the country, to team up and work with the Association.

### 5.2.2 **Open Forum**

The following were the concerns of farmers of Okyereko:

**1<sup>st</sup> Contributor** -Mr. R.R. Aggrey, rice farmer from Okyereko

"This forum, in my opinion, is very important. Farmers are not able to reap the full benefit from their toil. We work hard but yet get little in return. We need support, especially in the form of credit facilities to make the business a bit more attractive and lucrative."

**2<sup>nd</sup> Contributor**- Faustina Annor, rice farmer from Okyereko

"We thank the organisers of this forum. Majority of women in this community are engaged in rice farming. Our request is that we should be supported with inputs in the form of machines and equipments such as tractors, threshers and other processing machines so that the drudgery nature of the work can be reduced and our work made easier. We also need fertilizer at affordable cost."

**3<sup>rd</sup> Contributor**- Kofi Asare, farmer from Gomaa Potin

"Farming is our only natural resource. We don't have gold, diamond and other natural resources as other parts of the country have. This is why Government should give serious attention to our farming activities. We have serious problems. My request is that, we need guaranteed prices for our produce so that we are not ripped off. I hope this forum will produce fruitful results."

**4<sup>th</sup> Contributor**-Daniel Adu, vegetable farmer

"The most challenging problem, in my opinion, is that of capital to invest in farming. I will be grateful if more loans can be given for us to expand our businesses. We should be assisted to increase the returns on our investments. This, I believe, can be achieved when we have guaranteed prices for the things we produce so that middlemen do not cheat us."

**5<sup>th</sup> Contributor**- Daniel Duah, from Gomaa Potin



"Our problem has to do with market access. Government must facilitate access to markets for our produce. It is my hope that Government will do something about our concerns. This is not the first time we have had such a gathering to talk about our problems. I hope this time Government will consider our concerns."

**6<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Emmanuel Amoako, rice farmer

"I commend the organisers for this forum. I appeal to farmers in this community to join the PFAG. The aim of the Association is to mobilize more farmers. I believe it is when we unite that we can get the strength to fight against poverty.

Now if you go to the bank for loan, the interest is not attractive. Besides, we lose a lot of money through the payment of fees and levies on the loans we take. We cannot afford the cost of tractors. Our cost of production is too high. Elsewhere, farmers get subsidies on their inputs. The worse part is that after working hard to produce, cheaper produce from abroad is dumped to compete with what is locally produced. These are the limitations we want Government to factor in its position to the meeting."

**7<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Kwaku Agyare, rice and vegetable farmer from Gomaa Potin

We use a lot of manpower in our farming operations. There is the need to mechanise some of the operations to remove the drudgery associated with some of them. Government must facilitate access to farm machines.

**8<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Uncle Charles, rice farmer from Okyereko

My concern has to do with the lack of support for our work. We don't get the loans on time. This affects the planning of our activities. We lose money in the process, because money meant for farming, because of late release, is misapplied. If the loans are given on time we can plan effectively and get the needed returns. Government should also establish a point where farmers could go to access tractor services. I believe if we make farming attractive more of the youth would be encouraged to take it as a vocation.

**9<sup>th</sup> Contributor** –Ex WOI Turkson, rice farmer

When I was in the army, I did not appreciate the difficulties farmers go through. However, when I retired from the army and got into farming I have come to terms with the problems farmers go through. Farmers are being ripped off. The profit that should go to them never gets to them. Some are not even able to service their loans. Government must put in policies that will support farmers.

**10<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Yaw Abban, rice farmer

This forum, to me, is very relevant and will go a long way to inform Government policy on agric. The powerful nations should help the poorer nations. They should either stop subsidizing their farmers, or allow our government to also support us. We should also be helped to improve the quality of our produce so that they can equally compete with imported products.

**11<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Alice Enyah, vegetable farmer from Gomaa Potin

Previously I was cultivating maize. Now I have stopped because it is no more lucrative. I am now into vegetable cultivation for export. Most often our produce for export is refused on grounds of its quality. We need to be assisted in improving the quality of our produce so that it can meet the export market. There is too much drudgery associated with farming. Most of us have problems with our waists. We need machines to mechanise our farming activities.

**12<sup>th</sup> Contributor-** Alex Akor, from Gomaa Potin

The high cost of agric inputs has made farming unattractive. Most of us are migrating into the big cities for non-existent jobs. That is why we want Government to come out with policies that will attract us into farming.

**13<sup>th</sup> Presentation** – Afua Esoam, from Gomaa Assin Mampong

We are a group of women in tomato cultivation. It is our wish that Government

helps us with irrigation facilities, so that we can increase our production all year round.

### **Chairman's Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, the Chairman called on peasant farmers to unite and forge a common

front so that their concerns would attract the desired attention. He was of the view that farmers in the country have the potential to produce to feed the country, adding that rice produced in his area compared favourably to imported rice in terms of taste and cooking qualities.

## **6.0 ASUTSUARE**



The party arrived in Asutsuare on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. On arrival, the members took the opportunity to tour some of the rice fields to observe at firsthand the cultivation of rice.

### **6.1 Brief Profile of Asutsuare**

Asutsuare is a town in the Dangme West District of the Greater Accra Region. It has a land size of about 10km square, with a population of about 7,000. The main occupation of the area is farming. About 90% of the population is engaged in this activity.

Asutsuare used to be a leading town in the production of sugar cane in the 1970s; it had a factory for the production of sugar. The sugar factory collapsed in 1987. A pilot study conducted afterwards showed that the area was suitable for rice cultivation. As a result the interest of the people shifted to the cultivation of rice. The Kpong Irrigation Project was consequently set up to work out irrigation schemes for the area for that purpose. This got majority of farmers into rice cultivation. Rice is cropped in the area two times in a year, with about 20,000 hectares under cultivation each season.

The town has one senior secondary school, two junior secondary schools, and two primary schools. It has a community clinic to see to the health needs of the people.

### **6.2 The Asutsuare Durbar**

The durbar began with a prayer followed by the introduction of the Chairman, who was represented by the Queen Mother of Asutsuare. In her opening remarks, she called on Government to explore ways to improve the conditions of farmers in the country so that the fight against poverty would be meaningful.

The National Coordinator of the PFAG, Mr. Ken Abotsi, gave an overview of the "Road to Hong Kong" Project. He stressed the fact that the campaign was aimed at providing a platform for farmers to talk about their problems, so as to ensure that these problems were factored into Government's position at the meeting. He noted that farmers were the most marginalized in Ghana, although they were very relevant to the survival and development of the country.

He traced the route of the convoy, adding that it was the turn of Asutsuare to speak for itself. Ken Abotsi thanked the members of the Local Organising Committee for the support offered the campaign.

The substantive chairman of the durbar Nene Ablor IV, Chief of Asutsuare, arrived just before the open forum, to take the chair.

### **6.3 Open Forum**

The audience were given the opportunity to share their views and concerns, which were captured as follows:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Contributor-** Mr. Nanor, rice farmer

"The cost of fertilizer for our farming is a bit on the higher side. I want Government to consider the introduction of subsidy on fertilizers so that they can be affordable."

**2nd Contributor** – Mr. Albert Frimpong, rice farmer

"Whenever we buy imported products, it means we are creating jobs for people abroad at the expense of our people. I want the Minister of Trade to negotiate in a way that limits the levels of import, so that we don't destroy our industries and rural livelihoods."

**3rd Contributor-** Emmanuel Akuffo, rice farmer

"I want Government to facilitate the export of some of the crops we produce. We also need guaranteed prices for our produce to prevent middlemen from cheating us. We invest a lot of money and time in producing but get little at the end."

**4th Contributor** - Stephen Agbo

"Government should help us to acquire combine harvesters so that we can reduce losses during harvest. We lose about 30% of rice through the manual harvesting. We should also be assisted to improve upon the processing of rice so that the rice we produce would be of a competitive quality."

**5th Contributor** - Stephen Anymlé, rice and cassava farmer

"I am a rice and cassava farmer. My problem has to do with the offer of tractor services. Most of the time we don't get the tractor service on time. This affects our operations. I will suggest that Government helps us to get our own tractors so that we can plough on time and reap the benefit."

**6th Contributor** - Elvis Ocansey, rice farmer

"We don't get attractive prices for our produce. We want Government to make arrangement to buy our produce so that we can have guaranteed prices."

**7th Contributor** – Female rice farmer

"There is too much drudgery associated with land preparation. We need land preparation machines to make land preparation much easier and less laborious."

**8th Contributor** - Female rice farmer

"We spend too much time going after loans so that by the time the loan materializes the planting time is over. Loans should be given on time so that we can work and pay back. We are not hardcore defaulters, as we have been perceived to be. It is the wrong time in the release of loans that affects our ability to pay back."

**9th Contributor-** Alice Amago

"I am a tomato farmer. My problem is that in periods of glut, tomato prices fall drastically, making us lose a lot. I want Government to facilitate the establishment of a tomato-processing factory that will buy our produce. Tomato is highly perishable and the only solution is to build a cannery in the Dangme West District."

**10th Contributor** - Anthony Lartey, vegetable farmer from Ningo

I stand here on behalf of the Ningo Farmers Association. I am a vegetable farmer. The rainfall pattern has for some time now not been good. We need a dam to supply water to our fields so that we can crop all year round. Again, we don't have good market for our produce. Government should facilitate access to markets."

**11th Contributor** - Rose Kyna, rice farmer

"My colleagues have already said a lot, but I think the issue is that of fair trade and justice, so that we can all compete on fair and equitable terms."

**12th Contributor-** Emmanuel, Poultry farmer

"I used to be a member of staff of MOFA. I resigned and took up poultry farming. My problem is that my farm produces but cannot sell. I have sent some 15 workers home as a result. Government should consider protecting the poultry industry from the influx of imported poultry products, which have relatively lower cost of production due to the subsidies they enjoy."

### **13<sup>th</sup> Contributor** - Phulip Ayitey, rice farmer

"Ghana has potential not only in cocoa production but also rice production. Government should therefore concentrate its attention on local rice cultivation. Cocoa is a cash crop, but rice feeds the nation."

Goodwill messages were received from the President of the Osudoku Agriculture Cooperative Society, President of the PFAG and the Project Manager of the Kpong Irrigation Project.

### **Chairman's Closing Remarks**

In his closing remarks, Nene Ablor IV called for unity among farmers, adding that it was only when farmers were united that they could forge ahead and make progress. He stressed the need to support peasant farmers so that they could also graduate to become commercial farmers. He called for the reintroduction of input subsidies and more liberal terms in the granting of loans.

## **7.0 TEMA**



The convoy arrived in Tema on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October, for a workers' durbar. The durbar was essentially designed to solicit the views of workers on the impact of WTO rules on their living conditions.

Offei Nkansah of the Ghana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), Abraham Koomson of the Textile and Garments Workers Union, Mohammed Adam Nashuru of the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana, Steve Manteaw of ISODEC and Kofi Asamoah of the Trades Union Congress addressed the durbar, attended by about 250 workers.

All the speakers underscored the impact of decisions taken at trade negotiations on the people of Ghana and stressed the need for civil society organisations, NGOs, trade unions and other stakeholder organisations to devise ways of influencing decisions taken at such negotiations.

They deplored the unhealthy trade competitions, which according to them, had led to the collapse of industries in the country and the loss of jobs, especially in the textile and poultry industries.

The speakers underlined the relevance of the "Road to Hong Kong" Project and explained that it would offer the opportunity for Government to know what the working people of Ghana were saying. This, to them, would contribute towards building and consolidating a national position, supportive of the national interest.

The speakers were of the view that the time had come for the people of Ghana to rise and scream so their voices could be heard by the developed and powerful nations who dictate the conduct of such negotiations

### **7.1 OPEN FORUM**

During the open forum, most workers called on Ghanaians to patronise made-in-Ghana goods so that they would support and sustain local production, and secure jobs. To address the problem of unfair competition, a cross-section of participants suggested the imposition of high levies on imported products to help the growth of the local industries. Participants asked Government to lead the way in revamping the agricultural sector. They identified four areas, which needed Government's protection. These were employment, livelihoods, poverty reduction, and food security.

In apparent reference to OPEC, participants called on agricultural countries, especially those in the developing world to organise themselves to form powerful groups so that they can influence decisions.

Wilson Agana of the Tema District Council of Labour chaired the workers' durbar.



---

## 8.0 THE ROUND-UP

---



The Workers' durbar was immediately followed by a procession from Tema to the Holy

Gardens, Circle, Accra, for a rally to round-up the expedition, and bring down the curtain on the "Road to Hong Kong."

Representatives of ISODEC, PFAG, TUC, and the National Union of Ghana Students addressed the rally, which drew a crowd of about 700. The speakers gave an overview of the Project and shared insights and experiences with the audience, including the media.