

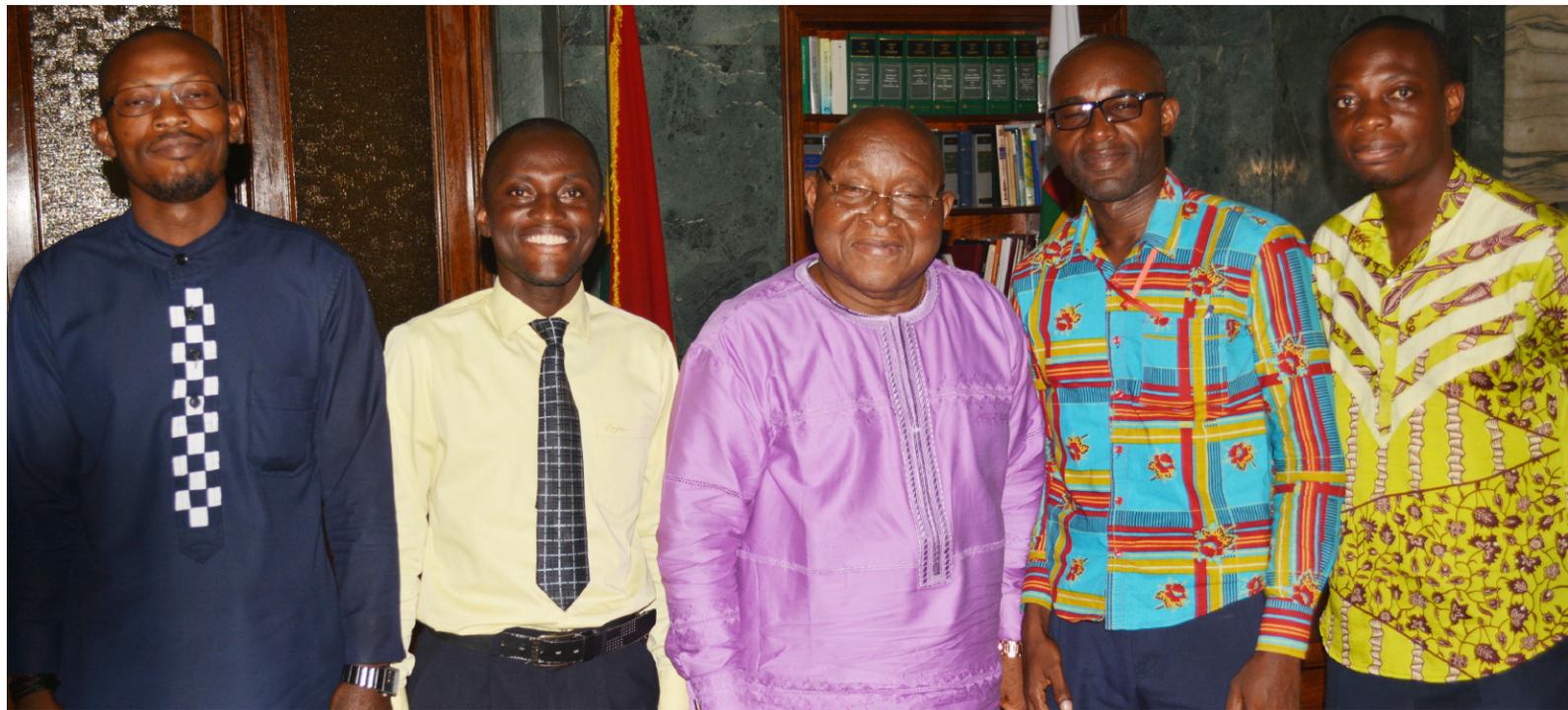
## Parliamentary Prayer

**A**lmighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to look with favour upon this Parliament of the Republic of Ghana. Grant that it may perform its high duty as in Thy sight. Give Divine guidance to the President of the Republic; endow Members of Parliament and Ministers of State with discernment and vision, integrity and courage that through the labours of government this land and people may be well and truly served, and Thy good purposes for the common human life be realised in our midst.

**O** God, grant us a vision of our country, fair as it might be, a country of righteousness, where none shall wrong his neighbour; a country of plenty, where evil and poverty shall be done away with; a country of brotherhood, where all success shall be founded on service, and honour shall be given to the deserving; a country of peace, where government shall rest on the will of the people and the love for the common good.

**B**less the efforts of those who struggle to make this vision a living reality. Inspire and strengthen our people that they may give time, thought and sacrifice to speed the day of the coming beauty of Ghana and Africa.

AMEN



The Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Prof Aaron Mike Oquaye in a group photograph with the Editorial Team of The Parliamentary Newspaper

# IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL STARTS NOW

**- Speaker of Parliament Affirms**

Please turn to page 3

## The Ghanaian Cashew Story

● **Very Simple and Very Positive**

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**US Embassy** Page 4

**pledges support for passage of RTI Bill and others in Ghana**





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## Editorial

### The Private Member's Bill is a welcome news

**A** news of the readiness of the Seventh Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana to start the implementation of the Private Member's Bill is a very welcomed one.

Private Member's Bill is a Bill that emanate directly from Parliament instead of the Executive.

For decades, Parliament, through the narrow interpretation of Article 108 of the 1992 constitution have limited itself from introducing their own bills which is intended to bring socioeconomic development to their constituents.

Till the recent bold pronouncement by the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon Prof Mike Aaron Oquaye, Article 108 of the 1992 Constitution, which implies that any bill with financial implications that involves a levy on the consolidated fund should emanate from the president or his representative, prevented parliamentarians from introducing their own bills.

It is equally refreshing to note that the current President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, a prominent former legislator, is very amendable to expanding the parameters of the Private Member's Bill.

The Parliamentary News welcomes this development in our parliamentary governance practice and assures its full support to the Speaker of Parliament in the implementation of this very important agenda.

We strongly associate ourselves with the Speaker when he says that the Private Member's Bill, "Will make parliament work and not solely depend on the Executives."

#### The Crew

**Managing Editor:** Gilbert Boyefio (0243915206)

**Editor:** Clement Akoloh (0244993616)

**Online Editor:** Gilbert Ankrah (0243211345)

#### Reporters

Priscilla Anum>Noi (0541671128)

Faith Felila Musah (0546919881)

#### Design & Layout

Frank Akorsah (0249880114)

#### Business Operation Manager

Daniel Gbedzeker Williams (0501521123)

#### Advertising & Marketing

Wendy Opokuwaa Asamoah (0501521121)

Jonathan Cashbonney (0242168604)

# Implementation of Private Member's Bill Starts Now

By Clement Akoloh

**T**he Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye, has affirmed the commitment of the Seventh Parliament of the Republic of Ghana to commence the implementation of the Private Member's Bill which has stalled for several years due to misinterpretations of the law. Private Member's Bills are Bills that emanate directly from Parliament instead of the Executive.

The affirmation has set the tone for the implementation of the Private Member's Bill which has never been exploited by any Member of Parliament throughout the life of previous Parliaments since the inception of the Fourth Republic some 24 years ago. Going forward, the Speaker himself is likely to lead the way with the introduction of a proposed Affirmative Action Law which will hopefully set the pace for a new era.

According to the Speaker, the limitations that Parliament placed on itself for not activating the Private Member's Bill all this while was a self-imposed one which was borne out of an ignorant misapplication of a borrowed law from the Westminster Parliament. A law which has outlived its usefulness long ago, while the British has long revised their books to reflect new trends to fit the exigencies of the time.

Speaker Mike Oquaye, who made these observations in an exclusive interview with the Parliamentary Newspaper at the sidelines of a courtesy call paid on him by the Editorial Team of the newspaper at his office in Parliament, indicated that the operationalization of the law for the implementation of the Private Member's Bill did not require any constitutional interpretations and therefore the 7th Parliament is ready to implement it.

He observed that the law did not need to change but rather it is the people's interpretation of the law that needs to change. "We don't need to change the law, we need to change our myopic appreciation and narrow interpretation of the law."

Article 108 of the 1992 constitution implies that any bill with financial implications that involves a levy on the consolidated fund should emanate from the president or his representative.

uted to the then Ranking Member on Constitutional, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee and now the First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, a ruling by the Late Speaker of the Third Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, Rt. Hon. Peter Ala Adjetey, further tied the hands of Parliament for many years since he held the view that, "to the extent that even the paper on which the bill will be printed; to the extent that it will be a charge on the consolidated fund, it will be unconstitutional."

No speaker has so far ruled against the former Speaker and therefore the status quo has remained till date where Members of Parliament have not had the opportunity to introduce bills that may speak to the needs of the people they represent in the House of Legislature.

However, the current Speaker has indicated his determination and commitment to ensuring that the trend is reversed to enable Members file Private Member's Motions provided they satisfy all the required processes; therefore the need to enhance the capacity of Members of Parliament to take advantage of the Private Member's Bill to improve the laws of the country.

Speaker Mike Oquaye, opined that, for the fact that the law indicates that care should be taken not to impose a cost on the consolidated fund, the assumption should not be that every bill introduced will be cast in that nature. He indicated for example that, "if a Private Member's Bill proposes measures to rake in more revenue for the state or proposes ways to reduce maternal mortality rate or ways to enhance the lifespan of Ghanaians, would that be a charge on the consolidated fund?"

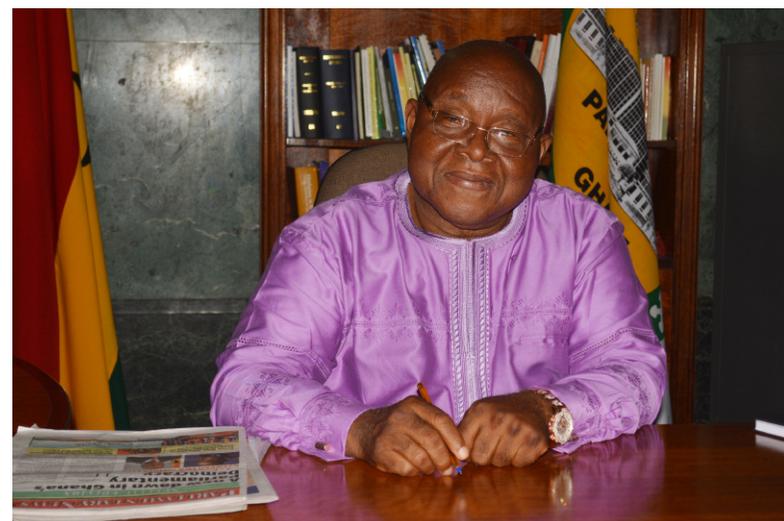
Although Private Member's Bills are Bills that emanate directly

from Parliament instead of the Executive, he observed that "the current President of the Republic Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, is really amenable to broadening the parameters of Parliament by allowing Private Member's Bill."

He questioned why Parliament could not keep itself busy in the absence of any business from the Executive arm of government. "Why don't we busy ourselves? So, it is now a challenge for us to think outside the box. And once we do that we would not be so dependent on the Executive. Secondly, it will make Ghanaians respect Parliament the more because they would say we are thinking about the nation; Parliament would be seen to be working.

When Parliament meets Ghana has met. We must get that clarity in our mind that When Parliament meets it must think of Ghana from Archeology to Zoology; A to Z and when we are seen so busy doing just that, then our country men and women would see that they are really being represented."

Responding to arguments that an activation of a Private Member's Bill will open the flood gates for all kinds of lobbyist to push all kinds of agendas through Members of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Speaker Mike Oquaye indicated that there was nothing wrong with genuine lobbying which has the potential to enhance the life, wealth and the general living conditions of its citizens. According to him, "There is nothing wrong with groups lobbying and it is one of the defects in our political system. People are not standing for anything and that is why sometimes many good things don't happen. There must be people who are interested in children's rights and they would stand for the rights of children at any cost."



Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon. Prof Aaron Mike Oquaye

According to a publication attrib-

## General News

# US Embassy pledges support for passage of RTI Bill and others in Ghana

By Gily Sparks

The United States government has promised to support Ghana's Parliament in its quest to address pertinent governance issues such as the passage of the Right to Information bill and the implementation of the Private Members bill.

The US Ambassador to Ghana, Robert Porter Jackson, made this known on Friday when he paid a courtesy call on the sixth speaker of the seventh Parliament of Ghana, Rt. Hon. Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye in Accra.

According to Robert P. Jackson, the US government will continue its good working relationship with the current leadership of Parliament to address issues concerning the passage of the RTI bill, the introduction of private members bill as well as ensure that the Public Accounts Committee operates in a way to protect public investment and funds.

"Each year, the US provides 250 million US dollars' worth of assistance to Ghana specifically in energy, health, education, governance, and agriculture and we are working very well on security issues – terrorism and keeping peace around the world. So, we see our partnership (with Ghana) as strong and we are hopeful that it could be expanded," he said.

"I think that parliament has every right to ask how the investments from donors, including the United States, are having an impact. So, I hope that we can work together," he added.

Ambassador Jackson who happened to be the first international diplomat to visit the seventh Parliament of Ghana, stressed the need to revive training programs between the two countries since according to him "democracy improves with constant learning."

"I believe we can all learn from one another, the United States has a long history with democracy but ours is not perfect, and, so, I hope that as we interact and exchange

ideas, we can both learn from one another," he said.

Speaker of Parliament, Prof. Mike Oquaye in a remark, expressed concerns over the nonexistence of institutional memory in Ghana's parliament.

He promised to hold further discussions with the Ambassador on ways and means parliament can be empowered as an institution in order to share ideas and learn from best known practices.

Majority Leader, Osei Kyei- Mensah- Bonsu on his part, observed that Ghana's Parliament has a lot to learn from the Committee system of the US Parliament in the area of scrutiny and in particular it's oversight responsibilities.

"The US is a flagship of the presidential system of governance and we have a lot to learn from the governance architecture of the United States. Even though the US federal system has a bicameral legislature, like all the states, Ghana a small unitary country, has a unicameral legislature and yet the antecedents are very significant. There-



US Ambassador to Ghana, Robert Porter Jackson (2nd Left) with Speaker of Parliament Rt. Hon. Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye flanked by The Majority and Minority Leaders

fore it behoves on us to learn from the US," he said.

"If committees in Parliament are properly oriented, well positioned and resourced, issues of corrupt practices would be curtailed," he added.

He stressed the need to develop the capacity of Members of Parliament and their staff and to help the Parliament of Ghana to be proactive in the prevention of corruption.

The Minority leader, Haruna Idrisu in his remark, reiterated Ghana's commitment to deepening the tenets

of good governance.

He appealed to the US government to expand its support beyond the public accounts committee to help safe guard the public funds and to allow for deeper transparency and openness in the utilization of government resources.

He urged the government to respect the fundamental human rights of every citizen.

"Government must show utmost sensitivity that the rights of other persons are not undermined," he said.

## Sekyere Afram Plains MP accuses media of misrepresentation of electoral results

By Clement Akoloh

The Member of Parliament for Sekyere Afram Plains constituency in the Ashanti region, Alex Adomako-Mensah, has expressed concerns about what he thinks is an attempt by a section of the media to suppress the will of the people by misrepresenting the figures of the just gone by elections results in favor of their cronies.

According to him, some media publications have rather projected his opponent Joseph Owusu of the New Patriotic Party as the winner of the Parliamentary elections instead of him the incumbent National Democratic Congress MP who won the seat with a difference of over 2000 votes.

He indicated to the Parliamentary News in an exclusive interview that all efforts to get the attention

of the media organizations that initially published the story to do a retraction and correction has so far fallen on deaf ears. A situation which has given rise to the suspicion that some strings are being pulled by his opponent to perpetrate fraud on the people by continually projecting the misrepresented results to support a purported court case by his main opponent Joseph Owusu who wants to challenge the results of the elections in that constituency.

He said the misrepresented publications first started with Peacefm online, a subsidiary of the Despite Group of Companies where they had reduced his votes from 5600 to 1600 and had projected his opponent Joseph Owusu as the winner of the elections. He claimed that the next Publications were by the Daily Guide, Graphic and Times newspapers.

However, when he confronted the Times Newspaper for the misrep-

resented facts in their publication, they indicated to him that they sourced their information from Peacefm online when it became difficult for them to have access to the certified results from the Electoral Commission's website. He said he has since then severally complained to the authorities of Peace Fm to effect the changes but has not been successful.

The Second term MP has observed that as far as he was concerned, there was nothing untoward that



Alex Adomako-Mensah, MP for Sekyere Afram Plains

happened throughout the conduct of the elections in his constituency leading up to the final declaration of results. However, he indicated that his main opponent, Joseph Owusu merely complained about the declaration of the results in his absence when all the necessary documents had already been witnessed and signed to by his agents.

He narrated the scene during the final declaration of results as follows: "Nothing happened there. I was declared the winner. The only thing that he (Joseph Owusu) raised was that when they were declaring the results he wasn't around. This was after his people had signed and the Presidential declaration had been made followed by mine. Then he came from outside and said why, they should have waited for him before we declare the results.

"I told him that a declaration doesn't matter who you are, so far as the results are right there is a need to declare it. And then I

left. Latter I heard that he said he was going to take it to court and that was all. That day the Electoral Commission said they had sent the message to Kumasi only for it to be shown online that I lost the elections even though this thing had not been to Accra. Which means that he linked up with Peacefm online and they programmed this thing.

"They didn't credit me with the right figures. I was credited with 1600 votes instead of 5600 votes while he was credited with 3,594 votes. Since they reduced mine by 4,000 it makes him the winner. So I went to Peace Fm and for one week they didn't do anything about it.

"But then, when I came to parliament to come and register, everybody was looking at me as if I have stolen something but I went straight to check my name and it was there. It was when I started filling the forms before they started asking me if I was successful."

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# Special Report

## The Ghanaian Cashew Story

Sammy Obeng (sobeng@parliamentafrica.com)

Storytelling is an important part of our Ghanaian culture. It helps to break down complex issues into simple units for the understanding of all. It is for this reason I am resorting to using the storytelling approach to present to you, our cherished reader, what you need to know about the cashew subsector in Ghana.

So I guess it would not be out of place to start with the hilarious line that has for many years preceded storytelling: Once upon a time...

Growing up, my friends and I use to make creative roasting devices out of milk tins and copper wire to roast what is known in the local Twi language as 'latia'. The rather interesting smell that came from our roasting devices when we stock them with hot red charcoal from our mothers' coal pots, coupled with the energy that we exert in swinging our devices are still fresh on my mind many years on.

Today, this same old fruit has developed into a global business venture, raking in millions of dollars to countries and companies across the globe.

To have a better understanding of what has brought about this boom, I met with one of the finest global brains on cashew, Rita Weidinger, to give her account of the cashew story.

Rita is the Accra-based Executive Director of Competitive Cashew Initiative (ComCashew), which was until May this year known as the Africa Cashew Initiative (ACI) - an award winning project of the German Development Cooperation.

I met this mellow woman, who is very passionate about cashew with lots of personal dreams for the growth of cashew in Ghana; not by a fire side, which is usually the setting for a typical Ghanaian storytelling moment, but by the poolside of a beautiful restaurant in Accra, as she came out of a meeting to reiterate why she describes the Ghanaian cashew story as "very simple and very positive."

### Background

Cashew consumption is growing worldwide, with a global demand increasing at about 6 to 16 per cent per annum. Currently, Africa produces about 45% of the world's entire cashew, with a country like Cote D'ivoire alone, multiplying its yield by more than ten folds. Yet over 90% of cashew is consumed outside Africa, specifically in North America, India and Europe. Previously, 3% of raw cashew was processed in Africa, but now about 10%, as the volume has increased at the same time.

It was initially stronger focused to

Brazil, India and Vietnam as the main producing countries. On our continent, it started in East Africa with Tanzania, and the southern African country of Mozambique has also been a leader in the venture.

West African countries started taking this seriously about 20 years ago, some a little bit earlier, with most countries using it for soil conservation, since the cashew plant, by its nature,

time, the economic value of cashew had not been looked at by those of us here in West Africa, and this was also because there were just a handful of trading companies, who mainly dominated the Asian market.

This situation is similar to what happened years ago with cashew in places like Sampa in the Brong Ahafo Region, Ghana's main cashew producing region. The trade systems then were ab-

realised that it could be one of the tree crops that can be developed and promoted to diversify the economy. Based on this, the then Agriculture Ministry commissioned a study into the subsector, and it was recommended that the crop can be produced in Ghana and can bring a lot of economic benefits to the country in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation, among many others. This made Ghana one of the first countries to set up a large project on cashew known as the Cashew Development Project (CDP).

So again, I set out to meet Mr Seth Akoto, the Director of Crop Services at the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), who is regarded as one of the foremost people in the country with unparalleled commitment to the development of cashew as a viable commodity, and one who knows all about the CDP. Seated on his office chair behind a large desk, Mr Akoto,

cashew a tree crop of relevance in farming communities in Ghana, as farmers had access to credit on the back of this project. In fact, the many farmers in the Brong Ahafo Region I met to contribute to this story, were uniformed in their chorus which said "all that cashew is today, is as a result of the eight year CDP." Mr Akoto was also quick to add that "in fact, all what we have been able to achieve on the ground, I will say we can attribute it to the major things we did when we were implementing the CDP"

So CDP sought to increase cashew production and village level processing; as it concentrated on a value chain approach which included research, production, processing and promotion. It was piloted in ten districts, which later became 18 when some of the districts were split. These districts were situated in the Brong Ahafo, Volta, Upper West, Northern and Greater Accra Regions.

"Land area was expanded to cover 36,000 hectares from the baseline study of 18,000 hectares. We ended up doubling the area under cultivation. In those days, yield per tree per year was about 2kg. By the time we closed the project, we had reached around 5 to 6kg per tree per year" Mr Akoto hyped the achievements of the CDP.

### Dynamics of the Cashew Crop

Research has shown that in places where cocoa growth has stagnated in Ghana, cashew can be a good alternative. As Rita puts it, "I always have to say cashew does not make as much money as cocoa. If you can plant cocoa, plant cocoa. Only where cocoa does not grow, cashew is a good alternative. Whatever becomes suitable for cashew is no more suitable for cocoa. But it's not competing with the high value crops."

Ghana, like many other West African countries, has suitable land and now has knowledge about cashew, thereby creating an enabling environment for the potential growth of the subsector.

Although Ghana is very advanced among her sub-regional neighbours in developing improved planting materials, there are still not enough nursery capacities and multiplication avenues.

One of the vital features of the CDP was its collaborations with the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), which did some good work in research and made recommendations in the areas of planting material development and multiplication; good agronomic practices; pest and disease identification and control; and ways of developing improved clones, which resulted in the setting up of scion banks in Wenchi and Bole.



A cashew farm in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana

helps to cover the soil nicely. So countries like Benin and Cote D'ivoire had what can be termed as cashew forests, to help against soil erosion and deforestation.

Rita recalled her observations from 1997 when she first came to West Africa: "In the case of cashew, the fruit is outside the nut. So children ate the fruit, throw the nuts away. That's how it started, and that's what I observed. People said at the time that only 'crazy Indians' bought the nuts."

But today, we see that those who were then perceived as 'crazy Indian' were perhaps, smart merchants, who then bought the nuts at no price and exported them for great gains. At the

solutely informal and in the hands of a few, with traders describing it as the "wild-wild west cashew market."

This has changed with the interest of some pioneers, which included the local people and some development partners who set up some hand-cracking units to create income. These were the first ideas of making it a commodity chain, although people recount drinking what was known as cashew juice in places like Sunyani, the capital city of the Brong Ahafo Region, even before the year 2000.

In Ghana, although cashew is believed to have started in the 60s, those who planted them abandoned the trees, until the 90s when the country, as part of its Economic Recovery Program,

who is touted by Rita as "visionary in driving cashew" and "a very committed and extremely well informed and experienced cashew expert," wore a nice blue shirt with tie, representing what I will describe as the definition of an educated farmer.

### Cashew Development Project

Mr Akoto explained to me that MOFA wrote a proposal to the African Development Bank (AfDB) based on the recommendations from the Ministry's earlier studies, and AfDB decided to fund the CDP. This was operationalised in the year 2002 and travelled until 2008 for its original six year period, after which there was a two year extension until 2010.

This project represents what made



The Competitive Cashew initiative - ComCashew (formerly African Cashew Initiative - ACI) presents a new and innovative model of broad-based multi-stakeholder partnership in development cooperation. ComCashew is a private-public partnership project under the implementation the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with funding for its third phase from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

ComCashew's main objective is to increase the competitiveness of African cashew smallholders, processors and other actors in the value chain to achieve a lasting reduction of poverty in the project countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mozambique.

Beyond increasing farmers' direct income, improving cashew-processing capacity in Africa, developing sustainable supply chain linkages and supporting a better organisation and coordination

of the cashew sector are integrated into the project. ComCashew strengthens initiatives in the cashew sector and responds to questions regarding investment and processing.

ComCashew shares the valuable experience and knowledge it has accumulated in the production and processing of cashew nuts and its by-products with industry, notably processors and potential investors in the cashew-processing sector in Africa. ComCashew aims at ensuring that by 2018, each of the 500,000 cashew farmers it trains will earn an average additional annual family income of at least \$600.

The African Caribbean Pacific Secretariat requesting to join our efforts and upscale the scope towards more African but also Caribbean countries.

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# Special Report

# Business for profit, not business for loss

**Gilbert Boyefio**

All the players in the cashew value chain in Ghana have expressed the need for pragmatic measures to be put in place to ensure that the cashew business in the country becomes profitable to them, rather than a loss.

It is widely accepted that the cashew sector has the potential to overtake the cocoa industry as the number one crop earner. Currently, the country's Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) production is estimated around 68,000 metric tonnes (MT); with plans to increase production to 200,000MT in ten years. These projections, players are very optimistic about and believe are feasible and achievable given the right enabling environment.

In Ghana, cashew production started in the 60s, but along the line those that started it abandoned it until in the 90s when the Government of Ghana started the economic recovery program and realized that cashew can be developed and promoted to diversify the economy.

According to Mr. Seth Akoto, Director of Crop Services, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), a study into the whole cashew subsector indicated that the crop can be produced in Ghana and will bring a lot of economic benefits to Ghana in terms of foreign exchange earnings and job creation.

Another research by ComCashew, formerly African Cashew Initiative (ACI), together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has corroborated the potential and viability of cashew in Ghana. That study focused on how the suitability of land in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire will look like in 30 years from now, assuming progressive climate change. The results indicate that all the country will be suitable for cashew in 30 years.

Currently, about half of the country is suitable for cashew. BrongAhafo, parts of Ashanti, Volta Region, Central Region, the whole of the Northern Region, parts of Upper East and Upper West, parts of Central and parts of the Greater Accra regions can be used for cashew cultivation.

However, despite this huge potential of the cashew industry, there are a lot of serious undercurrent issues that threaten to setback all the gains made



Factory women inspecting cashew kernel

in the sector.

The cashew sector in Ghana is mainly private sector led and has no proper structures to follow. It is currently the higher bidders market. This situation eventually creates a lot of challenges for some of the stakeholders in the value chain.

Until the recent standoff between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and some Members of Parliament (MPs) from cashew-growing constituencies, little was known of the industry by many Ghanaians and the media.

**Standoff**

On March 9, 2016, the Hon. Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr. Ekwow Spio-Gbrah, whose Ministry has oversight responsibilities for trade regulations and controls under Section 13 of the Import and Export Law of 1995 (Act 503) as amended in 2000, issued the following Administrative Directive on the purchase and export of RCN:

"Henceforth, all traders and processors are to note that they are allowed to purchase Raw Cashew Nuts during the main harvesting season from January to June but export of Raw Cashew Nuts is permitted only after 31st May onwards. Any raw cashew nuts that are brought to ports or borders of Ghana for export between 31st March and 31st May, 2016 shall be confiscated to

the State. The public is hereby obliged to take note and comply with this directive."

The Ministry noted among other things that, as much as 95% of Ghana's total production of cashew nuts, estimated at 68,000MT, is exported in its raw form to other countries for processing. A situation that is making local processors unable to obtain adequate supplies of raw materials for processing, due to intensive competition with purchases from traders at the farm gate.

This circumstance is stifling the Ministry's objective of promoting value addition under the National Export Development Programme (NEDP) 2016-2020, which seeks to increase earnings from the Non-Traditional Export (NTE) sector.

The survival of the industry which is processing cashew in Ghana is on the brink of collapse and will only survive on the availability of adequate supply of raw cashew nuts for processing.

However, MPs from cashew-growing constituencies, led by the MP for Banda, Hon. Ahmed Ibrahim, strongly opposed the Ministry's administrative directives, and called on Parliament to call the Minister to order.

Hon. Ahmed had argued that the directive is just to allow processors take advantage to enjoy monopoly of the

sector. He further alleged that the cashew sector suffered a major price reduction from GHS4.5 per kilo to GHS2.5 per kilo within one week of the issue of the directives.

In order to ensure that the development of the cashew industry is accomplished through a comprehensive and inclusive process, the Ministry temporarily withdrew the directives.

**Where are we now?**

The Trade Ministry's mandate is to provide the enabling environment for doing business in Ghana, adding value to the raw materials in Ghana and also wooing investors into the country to invest. Therefore its main concern in this is to ensure that there is enough RCN for everyone; especially the processors, who are investing heavily in the country.

Laying a proper foundation or structure is very critical to attracting investment from investors and donor bodies to improve the sector.

Currently there is no structure or regulation of the sector.

The introduction of the export window was mainly to protect and provide an equal playing field for the processors to have access to the RCN.

Many of the challenges being faced by

the cashew sector are from people who are only looking at the short term gains. This situation has led to the collapsed of all the indigenous processing companies in the sector because they cannot compete.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry acknowledges that when a business is doing value addition, it is adding up cost, and therefore it becomes very difficult to buy its raw materials at the same price as someone who is just exporting.

Currently, the country is not producing huge volumes and therefore farmers want to get the best profit for their produce by selling to the highest bidder.

One major setback that the export window decision encountered was misinformation on the impact of the directives on cashew production.

According to one of the major local cashew processing companies in Ghana, MIM Cashew, "farmers were wrongly informed about the export window. It is not true that if you imposed an export window, production will go down. Benin's production increased with the export window in place.

All the successful cashew growing countries have policies that regulate the industry. Mozambique is currently processing over half of its production. They are also practicing the export window. During the export window, no one is allowed to export RCN. This allows the local processing companies to buy what they need. If you cannot export then you are going to have a lot of challenges with warehousing and other issues, which will bring you extra cost and therefore would be compelled to sell".

For Rita Weidinger, Executive Director, Competitive Cashew Initiative, the need for regulation is more profound to check tax evasion.

"There's no doubt [for] any country to put works of regulation in place and cashew slipped through all the holes. It also slipped through the holes because we had a lot of import without tax paid from Cote D'Ivoire, and those doing the trade often are not even registered as trading companies because they only stayed for a very short period. Cashew trading is only two to three months in a year, so it's an ideal place for the so-called spot traders.

## Special Report

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# The Ghanaian Cashew Story

Continued from Page 5

There were trips to Brazil and Tanzania to get the best planting material there, while they also selected elite mother trees here in Ghana to develop high yielding trees. With the help of the ACI, a scion garden has been set up in Nkwanta to serve the Eastern Corridor of the country.

The commodity has the following stages making up its value chain; production, processing, trading, consumption, and then an area I will call sector organization.

## Production

A study conducted by ACI together with the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation on how the suitability of land in Ghana and Cote D'ivoire for cashew production will look like in 30 years from now, assuming progressive climate change, indicated that the entire country will be suitable for cashew in 30 years. For now, about half of Ghana is suitable for cashew production.

Yet the production of cashew in Ghana has lagged behind as compared to other African countries. This is evident

and it would reduce the climate effect in this area.”

It is estimated that there are over 100,000 cashew farmers in Ghana at the moment, with over 60,000 of them trained by ACI's project. Farmers have also been reached through outreaches on local radio stations to ensure that they learn best farming practices and get encouraged to cultivate more cashew to improve the country's production capacity. These trainings have also been extended to Master Trainers within MOFA who send the message to more farmers.

Perhaps, one major downside with farmers of cashew, as it is with farmers of other commodities in Ghana, is their inability to realise the essence of grouping themselves into farmer organisations. Farmers are currently being urged to see the added benefit in grouping themselves. Now the producers are getting more interested in organizing themselves, because they have realized certain limitations if they are not, as they need to speak to government, to processors, and negotiate to see minimum prices and trade regulations. This, Rita believes, will happen within the next 2 to 3

a town in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, has an installed capacity of over 30,000MT. They, together with MIM Cashew, employ several thousands of Ghanaians in their respective factories.

Although managerial capacity, direct business linkages and access to finance have been major determinants of the survival of these cashew processing companies over the years, access to adequate volumes of RCN for processing plays a major role in their sustainability.

It costs a lot of money to set up a processing factory. Rita estimates that, “for a 1,000 tonnes [capacity factory], you calculate about USD500,000. But the investment is one element. The other part is the need for capital for a full year. So you have the same amount, you might have upfront investment of about USD200-300,000 and then you need USD300,000 to buy your RCN, and the running cost of annual salaries before you even can make your first container selling. But your warehouse has the RCN for the whole year, and you only buy during 3 to 4 months, meaning for 8 months, you have your money blocked. This is where the high interest cost comes in.”

Of course, there has been the challenge also of human resource capacities and expertise for processing factories. This is also largely because Ghana, unlike other cashew producing countries, has a history of very limited industrial development, hence fewer mechanics and fewer managers who are experienced in running a factory. “The efficiency of the labourers are at the beginning, probably 10, then 20, then 30 percent of that of an Asian employee because they have grown up with cashew. There is not much experience in Ghana on the food processing, on industrial or semi industrial skills. We don't have much. There is the food handling which has food safety aspects which have to be learnt. Ghana we don't have such a deep history.

We don't have employees who know that they have to wash their hands, they have to put something on their hair, and that they have to be tested for TBs and that it's not the CIA screening” this are experiences as recounted by Rita.

Cashew processors here in Ghana have over the years taken huge load of training costs, as there is huge labour turnover depending on where the factory is situated. Some have to transport workers with buses, which

comes with accompanying need for canteen, nursery schools for the children of these workers among others. Trading

Trading is an area that applies to more agriculture commodities now and cashew is no exception. In the past, farmers sat on their products and needed to look for markets. There was no marketing position for farmers and they were at the mercy of traders and of the market. There was no traceability, no talk about bad quality, no cooperation and the systems were very loose.

With higher prices now, there are shifts in the market power. Farmers are now in a good market position and RCN has high prices. Traders go to the last village to get the volumes of RCN they need.

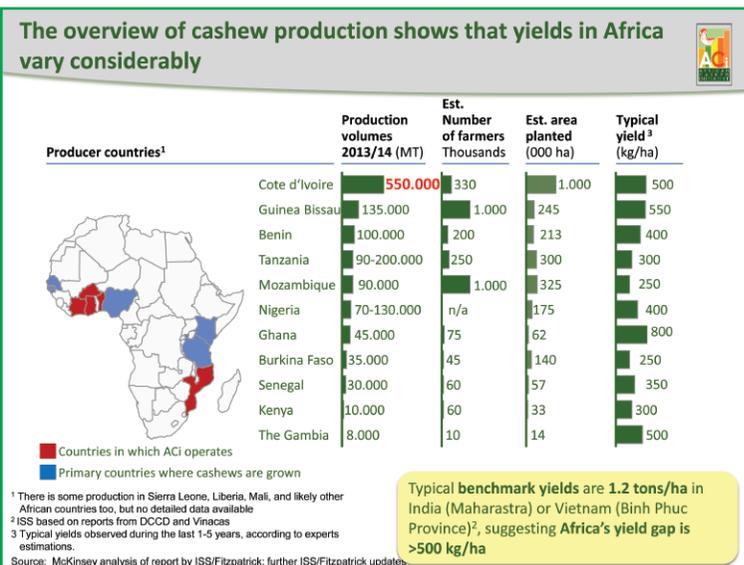
Like any other group of private busi-

ness registered in the country as trading companies because they only stay for a very short period. Because cashew trading is only two to three months in a year, it has become an ideal place for these so-called spot traders.

They move from one country to the next and are not necessarily registered trading companies.

Active players in the cashew subsector have noted that this area should be the first regulatory point and an absolute must to check the product flow and ensure that those who have it in hand and trade it, pay the necessary tax to avoid the nation from losing money.

In fact, ComCashew has proposed a system to ensure a shorter and fairer value chain as depicted in the image below. For then, a fairer value chain means more money to those who do



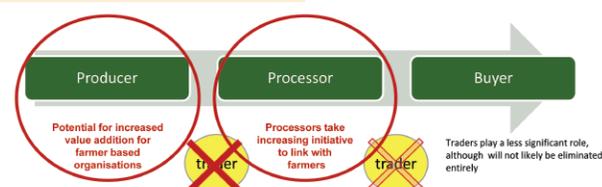
## Success Factor 1: Changing power relations in agricultural value chains provide high potential for a more inclusive business model

### Market Power Future

- Good marketing position for farmers
- Traceability
- Good quality
- Cooperation/ joint initiatives

### Market Power Past

- Bad marketing position for farmers
- No traceability
- No incentives for improvement
- Bad quality
- No cooperation/suspicion



ness people, these exporters or traders are always driven by money. Yet as my story has discovered, although other actors in the cashew value chain are also driven by money, the case of traders is a rather interesting one.

For example, in the case of producers or farmers, their drive for money is also coupled with their need for long term job security issues. They want stable relationships. Their area also creates employment and there are other financial gains to the country. Processors on the other hand, beyond their profit motives, have created employment, pay tax and contribute to the country through their value addition.

Various players in the cashew value chain allege evasion of taxes on the part of many traders, who can best be described as spot traders, with claims of bribery also against them. These groups of traders are often not

the real job.

Rita explains “here, this relationship is very close between buyers and processors, there are no more traders. Let's eliminate it. And that work is also part of what we have achieved as a project because we work on transparency.”

## Consumption

As storytelling usually resort to keeping patrons in suspense and holding the juiciest information till the end, so have I decided to keep till now the information about all the great things that come out of this commodity called cashew.

Ghana's cashew story currently revolves around the nut only. But cashew has a kernel part and an apple part. Ghana has not explored the apple part of the cashew fruit yet. A few people use it for animal fodder, while very few explore its use for juice.

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# Special Report

## Business for profit, not business for loss

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They move from one country to the next and are not necessarily registered trading companies. This for me will be the first regulatory point and an absolute must to check the product flow from where to where it goes and those who have it in hand and trade it, they have to pay some taxes. There's no escape on that. But for cashew, all these [years] was a grey market. Now it has come to the limelight with more interests, people have realized there is money in," she pointed out.

She however warned of the tendency of overestimating the benefits of the sector, which might lead the country to over tax it or over regulate it as is the case in Tanzania.

### Way forward

Checks from the Trade Ministry indicate that there are ongoing broader consultations with all the stakeholders in the value chain to come out with a policy that addresses the current challenges facing the sector. The Ministry wants to lead the way and let the private sector take control of the cashew subsector.

In order to bring some order into the cashew industry in the medium to long term, the Ministry is proposing, in consultation with all stakeholders, particularly the Cashew Industry Association of Ghana (CIAG), to put in place the following measures: Support for the National Buffer Stock Company (NAFCO) to enable them purchase the RCN and establish a "Just-in-Time" inventory to ensure that the indigenous processors have an all-year-round supply of RCN; Initiate discussions concerning establishment of a credit scheme for cashew farmers; Assist indigenous processors to purchase the RCN; Examine the merits of the setting up of the Ghana Cashew Management Board to license, supervise and monitor all activities in the cashew value chain; and Work with stakeholders to propose and implement a 10-year cashew development plan for Ghana. This would seek to ensure the development and expansion of the cashew industry and also increase the country's production to at least 200,000MT by the year 2025.

### Players' response to MOTI's medium to long term plan

All the players in the cashew value chain that the Parliamentary News interviewed agreed on the need for government to bring some sanity

into the sector by introducing some regulations.

They nevertheless unanimously rejected the setting up of a board to regulate the sector, opting for a regulatory body.

"It is important for government to regulate the sector but not be a player in the sector. This is the situation all over the world.

In modern commerce, governments only act as a regulatory body rather than get involved in the commerce. If a State gets involved in commerce, you will find out that it does not work out well. This is a situation all over the world and not only in Ghana. State-run businesses do not make much profit because the loss is to the state and nobody cares. But in a private sector business, profit is the only focus.

It is therefore important to make sure that the body that would be introduced by government is a regulatory one and it will not get itself involved in the commerce.

A regulatory body makes things more stabilized. They check best practices and quality of the produce that goes to promote the sector," noted Joseph Yeung, Managing Director, MIM Cashew and Agricultural Products Limited.

For members of the Cooperative Cashew Farmers Association in the BrongAhafo Region, a board will only add cost to their subsector. The Association is made up of farmers from two municipalities and four districts that produces cashew in the Region.

They were very skeptical about the COCOBOD type of structure for the cashew subsector and unanimously reject it. COCOBOD has to buy all the cocoa in Ghana themselves and then sell it. They borrow the money to buy the cocoa. And because the interest rate is high, it affects how much they sell it.

According to the farmers, "It is the poor farmer that eventually has to pay for the running cost of the board, their traveling allowances, cars and offices."

An official of the Ministry of Trade and Industry however pointed out that the suggestion for the creation of a board was mooted by stakeholders in one of the numerous meetings that the Ministry had with them. He nonetheless maintained that since the cashew subsector is led by the private sector, if



**There are ongoing broader consultations with all the stakeholders in the value chain to come out with a policy that addresses the current challenges facing the sector. The Ministry wants to lead the way and let the private sector take control of the cashew subsector**



stakeholders have given a second thought to their suggestion for the creation of a board and now wants a regulator, the Ministry will have no qualms with it, adding that, "At the end of the day, we want to arrive at what can help them and the role the Ministry can play in achieving that."

Cote D'ivoire, which has a more centralized French-based governance system, set up a cashew and cotton board, which was initially a regulatory office, but has become a board structure which is fully financed by the sector, and also through taxes from RCN. Lately, there have been some agitations in the media in Cote D'ivoire about the Board's actions.

Both farmers and processors also welcomed the proposal for the establishment of a credit scheme for cashew farmers, and assisting indigenous processors to purchase the RCN.

Mr. Yeung however observed that though the proposal sounds all good, what is missing in it is where govern-

ment is going to get the money to fund it.

"We are not talking about one or two million dollars here; we are talking about twenty to thirty million dollars. Where is the money going to come from? Is it also going to come at the current interest rate? If so, then nobody can afford it. In the cashew business there is not much profit. The margins are very small," he pointed out.

He therefore proposed the institution of an export levy on RCN to fund the proposal. "It is very possible and easy to levy the export of RCN." To him, this should be a fixed amount, and the proceeds from the levy can be shared in three ways: to provide credit facilities at very low interest rates to farmers, provide low interest loans to processors, and provide revenue to the state.

### Minimum price



A cashew factory machine bagging RCN

At a stakeholders meeting in September last year, it was suggested that the country look at international prices of RCN and come out with the price at which RCN can be bought in Ghana. This move has received wide acceptance among all the stakeholders that the Parliamentary News interviewed for this article.

### Cashew Development Project

During the interview with the Cashew Cooperative Farmers Association, it came to light that between 2002 and 2010, a Cashew Development Project (RDP) was initiated by the government with support from the African Development Bank. They attributed the success stories of the cashew sector today to that project.

The farmers complained that after the completion of the phase one of the project, nothing again has been heard about the continuation of the project. They alleged that there was available funds at the African Development Bank (AfDB) to embark on the second phase of the project but government is unwilling to access it.

However, checks by the *Parliamentary News* indicate that the claim of available funds for the second phase of the project is false.

Explaining, Mr. Akoto said "at the end of the project, there were some gaps so as part of an exit strategy, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture thought it wise to talk to the AfDB to see whether they can fund a second phase. The bank requested for a concept paper which the Ministry did, but apparently at the time, the Ghana portfolio within the AfDB had changed. The bank was now focus-

ing on infrastructure and little bit on agriculture. This eventually affected a second phase of the project ever coming to light."

### Cooperatives and Collaboration

Now the farmers are getting more interested to get organised because they have realized certain limitations if they are not, as they need to speak to government and processors as a united front. They proposed that other farmers in cashew producing regions also form cooperatives.

Another group that has started organizing their front is the processors who have formed the Cashew Industry As-

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# Business for profit, not business for loss

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sociation of Ghana (CIAG).

As part of the collaborative effort, Mr. Yeung, a member of the CIAG disclosed that from next season, MIM Cashew is hoping to work together with the other small local processing companies to revitalize their processing capabilities and access to the international market. He explained that it is very difficult for the small processors to get access to the international market, noting that, "They have to comply with several standards before they can export their finished products, yet these companies cannot afford to comply.

So what we intend to do is to work together. They do part of the work but the final stage of it is done by us. So we get a uniform standard. This concept is very popular in Far East.

In Far East, there are big organisations but they do not do all the work. They spread it among the small groups and then they do the finishing."

MIM Cashew currently commands much respect on the market due to the premium the company puts on quality.

## Struggle of a processor

According to Mr. Yeung, MIM Cashew's investment in Ghana is yet to be successful because the company has not been making profit as of today due to the volumes it is currently receiving. He said the strong attachment of their investors to Ghana, coupled with the country's political stability informed their decision to set up in Ghana.

"We believe that we can make it work. We believe that our increased volumes will make it work. Even if we cannot secure enough raw materials within Ghana, we can source it from neighbouring countries. But before, we were

containers a month. That is the more reason why Ghana needs to expand.

In the cashew growing areas, there are not enough jobs around so the presence of a processing plant is refreshing news.

The company employs averagely 850 workers. The minimum daily wage is GHS11.00 and workers are paid according to the targets they are given for the day. The more you work, the more you are paid. Factory hands receive between GHS350-400.

In an effort to address its RCN challenges, MIM Cashew is currently undertaking its own cashew production on a 750 acreland that also houses its processing factory.

Bank funding, West African Research Fund, and developed a program with them for 5 countries to exchange on research aspect so that each country can work on one aspect more and then exchange with the others. For instance, Cote D'ivoire has done a pest and disease mapping. You can click on their website and you can see where they have found which cashew disease."

Mr. Akoto also indicated the need to set up more nurseries and multiplication centers. Though MOFA already has two nurseries at Wench and Bole with a total capacity of 200,000, it is not enough.

MOFA intends to within five years, produce five million planting materials to plant 50,000 hectares. "With the planting materials that has been given to us



Factory machine bagging jute sacks

getting some from Ivory Coast but now they have closed the border. We are getting some from Burkina Faso but they have also introduced policy now.

Ghana used to produce around 10 to 15 thousandtonnes of RCN. This has increased to around 50 to 65 thousandtonnes. So even with the border closing, processors in the country should be able to get enough to buy locally and making a 100percent benefit to the country."

From year2010, MIM Cashew was exporting an average of nine containers of processed cashew in a year. This has however increased to an average of 5

## Recommendation

Rita Weidinger said the bases of improving productivity are research. She observed that Mozambique and Tanzania, as well as India, Vietnam or Brazil have all invested in research. "For me, that is the bases of improving productivity. Research in improved planting material is one, but then, other aspects are accompanying; for instance, pest and disease. Now we are increasing the scale of cashew, we need to have pest and disease forecast systems. We need to have good mechanism to respond in case this happens, and that cannot happen on a country level alone. Therefore we linked up with World

from research, one hectare can at least give us about 800,000 kilogram per. So that alone will bring on board about 40,000 metric tonnes to be added to the existing area under cultivation. If you put it together, conservatively you can say that we should be able to produce at least 120,000MT to about 200,000MT within the next five to seven years."

The next thing is to support extension by giving the seedlings to the farmers to plant.

Stakeholders interviewed emphasized that without government intervention, the cashew industry will not flourish as



**So that alone will bring on board about 40,000 metric tonnes to be added to the existing area under cultivation. If you put it together, conservatively you can say that we should be able to produce at least 120,000MT to about 200,000MT within the next five to seven years."**



anticipated.

For the farmers, government should embark on broader consultations before decisions affecting the industry are taken. They maintained that if more support is given to the sector, they can produce more to ensure that there will be enough for everyone; both for export and the local processors.

**MOFA intends to within five years, produce five million planting materials to plant 50,000 hectares. "With the planting materials that has been given to us from research, one hectare can at least give us about 800,000 kilogram per.**



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# Special Report

## The Ghanaian Cashew Story

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About 97% of cashew apple are thrown away. It has a highly perishable nature and hence makes it difficult to store. Transporting it abroad may result in huge losses due to the time of transit. There are currently no serious processing going on with the apple here in Ghana, although countries like Brazil have succeeded in using about 40-60% of the cashew apple. It can be used for juice, sold in supermarkets as packaged apples, or even sold on the streets. Because they are very high on essential minerals, they can be used for health product for the skin, and even for brain development in

make very beautiful carvings. Rita recounts her love for one such carving in Yamoussoukro, "the big church, they have huge carvings made of charcoal. Very very beautiful. So we could also design our own furniture line. Surely we haven't worked on all," she smiled.

Perhaps these many parts of the cashew crop which have not been explored yet, points to why Ghana's young industry is currently faced with difficulties. Using only one part of the product does not make us competitive.

### Sector Organisation



children.

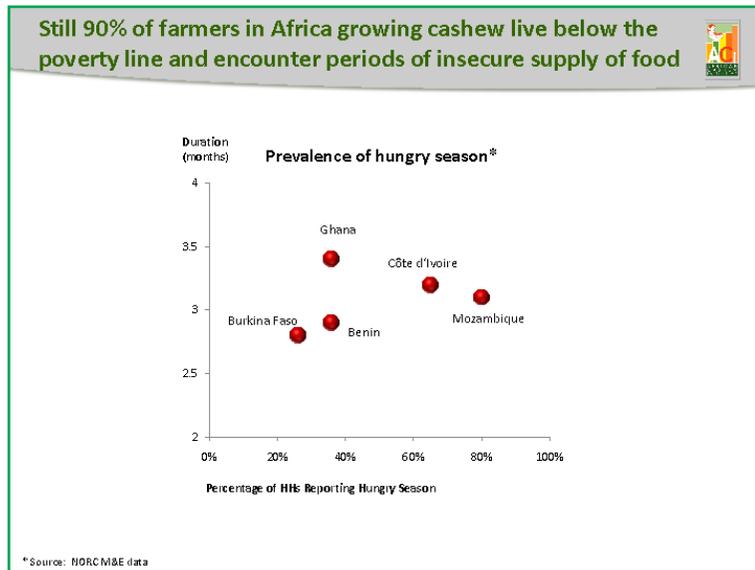
The kernel has the shell which contains the nut and a liquid substance known as the cashew nut shell liquid (CNSL). These shells can be used as charcoal and the CNSL for industrial purpose such as brake fluid and paints, including explosives. These parts have not been explored in Ghana, yet disposing them improperly can have negative consequences on the environment.

Beyond the main fruit, cashew leaves are very good compost materials. And lest I forget, wood from cashew trees

This area of the chain talks about regulation, types of information systems, organisation of data, checks on exports, quality assurance, developing quality planting materials, and how the sector actors have to be set up, among many other themes.

It goes without saying, that this is the weakest link in the cashew subsector of Ghana now.

I have recounted earlier the need for farmer organisation, which will not just be at district or regional levels, but will be national in character. Proces-



sors have also now set up their association, and there is also the Ghana Cashew Industry Association, which experts say must grow to become more representative.

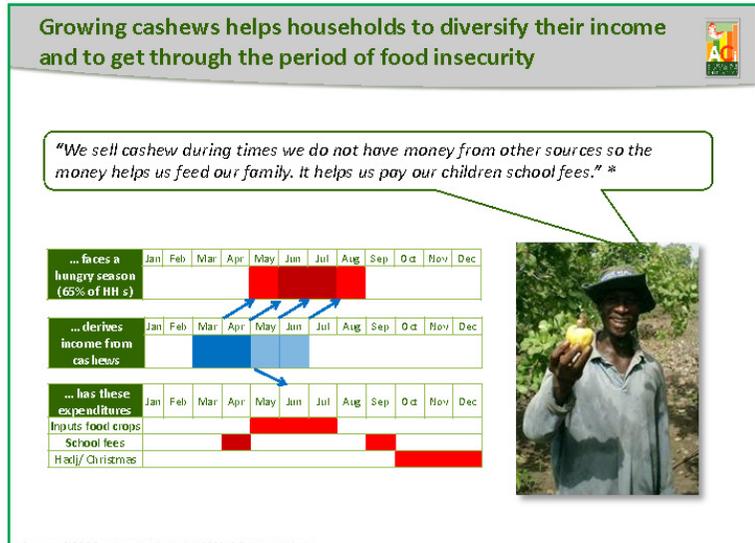
The earlier these groups see the need to talk with one voice, the better they can mitigate their issues, negotiate

surely look at to make this cashew story a truly beautiful one. Perhaps, the recent standoff between some Members of Parliament and the Ministry of Trade and Industry, which has brought some national attention to this commodity, should propel further actions including allocating money specifically to the growth of this sub-



with other stakeholders and network. MOFA currently has a cashew desk, but this under resourced unit is unable to do much movement and coordination due to their financial challenges. This is an area government needs to

sector. There is simply too much reliance on private business people and donors in this cashew subsector. Again, Rita had a thought to share on



this: "Honestly if I were the Finance Minister, I'll put a little bit of budget there, the rest, private sector led. For me, the cashew story would look like; huge opportunity, private sector driven development, market there, processing there, production basics there, knowledge [on] how to upscale and how to support that there, [with] the government giving a little bit of push, but don't strangulate it."

Do the basics. Take the taxes from these spot traders. When they export, take your taxes. Reinvest it in research. Do your media outreach for promoting it in the North."

### Conclusion

I am sure the nostalgic feeling that characterises the end of a great storytelling time; when the moonlight is fading out and the beautiful illuminations caused by fireflies and vanishing, will be greeting you now after sitting through with me and my other actors in this cashew storytelling journey. But my face and heart are lit by the beauty of the prospects of the Ghanaian cashew subsector.

Cashew is a very positive story and not a complicated one.

**The country currently has an installed processing capacity of between 42,000 to 45,000MT, yet its production is hovering around 65,000MT, causing an unpleasant struggle between local cashew processing companies and exporters of RCN for the limited commodity**

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General News

# MP urges players in extractive sector to initiate safety bill

**Gilbert Boyefio**

The Member of Parliament for Takoradi, Hon Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah, has urged players in the extractive industry in Ghana to rally together to sponsor a bill that would address the safety needs of the extractive industry.

He noted that the absence of an omnibus law on safety to regulate the sector is a big disincentive to players of the industry and their investments.

This introduces significant challenges in a country without an existing safety culture, an underdeveloped HSE regulatory framework, limited HSE training opportunities and without an established system for certifying the competency of either HSE professionals or the general technical labour force. Local content and HSE standards are inexorably linked.

"Laws are very important and I believe that it is high time we enact a safety law especially for the extractive industry. I know that there is the Factory Act that has some level of safety in there. But it is better if we get a complete safety law or combinations of laws that can be put together or a framework of laws that the industry can apply,"

he said.

Currently there is no specific law on safety that safeguards the extractive industry. Most players in the industry want to see regulations being published to create a level of certainty across board and its absence has created a vacuum or grey area encouraging some players to do what they want.

In an interview with *the Parliamentary News* at the second Ghana Extractive Industry Safety Conference (GEISCon) 2016, under the theme "Developing a Sustainable Culture to Safeguard Lives and Properties", Hon Okyere Darko-Mensah pointed out that for the fact that many of the big companies have acquired rich experiences from operating at other places and for the interest of their profit they take safety serious, the safety culture in the extractive industry would have been worse off, as is evidence in the other sectors of the country.

He said stakeholders need to find a way to integrate these experiences of the international oil companies horizontally and vertically across all the industries in the country in the absence of a proper law.

**What is parliament doing about this?**

Hon Okyere Darko-Mensah indicated that one of the difficulties that Ghana's parliament has is that it is always lurking behind in the

law making process.

According to him, all the laws that are passed in Ghana are initiated by the Executive. But in other jurisdictions parliaments are strong enough to enact their own laws, or private member bills.

"In Africa, and Ghana, we have laws that debar MPs from initiating a private member bill. These laws were enacted in the colonial era, but dictatorship and the African's attitude to centralized power has kept these laws still in our books. If we are able to take these laws out of our books, our safety issues and other laws that needs to be enacted would have been done long time ago.

It is very important that we create that space in our Constitution so that all these grey areas MPs on their own can push those changes through," he bemoaned.

Article 108 of the 1992 constitution says that any bill with financial implications that involves a levy on the consolidated fund should emanate from the president or his representative. This effectively limits MPs from initiating laws on their own.

**What can be done in the interim?**

For Hon Okyere Darko-Mensah, first and foremost, industry players need to appreciate the fact that fall-out from safety issues affects them

first before it affects government. "If they are not careful they might lose their investments and license. So in the interim industry should come together and start working on something that would represent their interest and also secure the industry.

Now that the Chamber of Commerce has taken this up, they can get other industry groups to come on board to put together a framework that would guide all the industry players," he pointed out.

He noted that in all these enforcement is also key, hence the need for the coercive powers of the state. He challenged the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations to champion this cause.

Hon Okyere Darko-Mensah speculated that manufacturing is moving from Asia to Africa because wages in Asia are going up and it is becoming more expensive for people to manufacture from there; and therefore the need for Ghana to start preparing itself for such opportunities; and safety should feature prominently in that preparation.

Conformity to Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Systems through the implementation of OHS management systems by local businesses in Ghana has been identified as one key barrier to entry to the extractive industries supply chain. The Sekon-



MP for Takoradi, Hon. Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah,

di-Takoradi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (STCCI), in its quest to ensure that local businesses build the required capacities in this very important aspect of their businesses organised the second safety conference.

With the rapid development of high-risk extractive industry in Western Region, it is vital for all businesses especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to understand health, safety and environment (HSE) and quality issues in relation to these sectors and to ensure that they are able to deliver to these industries without harming people or the environment.

For Ghanaian companies wanting to work with the major multinational operating companies in the extractive sector, implementation of HSE management systems is a prerequisite for doing business.

## Solar 4 girls: Impacting the life of the girl child student

**Papa Zion**

Solar 4 girls is a project to provide solar lamps for young girls in rural areas who do not have access to electricity and an enabling environment to study in the evening.

This project is being championed by Philomena Afi Antonio, a model, TV Presenter, Producer and Project Manager.

This enterprising and versatile young woman also runs Solar People, under which auspices the solar for girls project runs. Solar People is a company that market and install solar products.

According to Ms Afi Antonio, "We put a little money on the cost of our products so that we can un-

dertake and sustain the solar 4 girls' project. If someone needs estimation in his or her home or office as to how much it will cost them to fix a solar panel, we charge something small which also goes back to the project".

Solar 4 girls is to support the girl child in education, although the lamps are given out to both sexes.

In an exclusive interview with the Parliamentary News, Ms Afi Antonio disclosed that the solar 4 girls project is a way of giving back to society.

"I have been thinking of what I could do. Then I heard this news item about a village whose BECE result was so appalling. It dawned on me at that time that these students study under difficult circumstances and yet are expected to write the same exams as their colleagues in much endowed circumstances. I felt it was not

fair and therefore decided to do something about it, hence this project".

Afi Antonio and her team are giving out free solar lamps for students in off grid areas to enable them study in the evening. The team identified a school in a village called Hobor around Amasaman.



Afi Antonio with some of the beneficiaries

She said the headmistress was very excited about the initiative when we approached her, noting that, "Together with the students we were able to identify the students who need the lamps. We donated a box of the lamps to the school".

According to her, they went back another time to see how these

lamps were impacting the lives of these students and also be sure that they are using the solar lamps appropriately.

She said the team had to spend the night at the village to see things for themselves.

"One challenge we noticed was that some of the parents were using the lamps for their own purposes instead of their children studying with it. Another challenge we observed is that some of the children are handicap in the English language. We have therefore decided to take it upon us to provide some free tuition in addition to the lamps.

We are therefore appealing for supports to procure more lamps for the other kids who did not benefit from the last time. We also hope to expand this donation to other deprived communities in Ghana," she disclosed.

# Photo Report: Parliament Opens its doors to the General Public



Members of the Women Ministry of the Church of Pentecost in a group photograph with Hon Esther Dapaah and Hon Gifty Kusi



Leklebi Senior High School, Dugah Near Glokwati, Volta Region



Batsonaa T.M.A 'A' School



The Prep Centre, Labone, Greater Accra



Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) School



Oduman Asuaba Basic, Ga South Cobom



Mamfe Apostolic School Complex, Mamfe- Akuapim, Eastern Region

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KMM Afrik (Gh) Ltd  
✉ P. O. Box 64, La - Accra, Ghana  
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