



**PEASANT FARMERS
ASSOCIATION OF GHANA**

POLICY BRIEF

**FACTORS HINDERING GOOD
& ACCOUNTABLE SMALL
SCALE AGRICULTURAL
GOVERNANCE**

INTRODUCTION

Governance is a responsive relationship between the state, civil society and the private sector and the citizenship such that human welfare, rights and socio-economic growth occur in an environment of equity, freedom and justice. The pursuit of this responsive relationship is a long process which, for some societies, is a constant struggle. For others, these noble pursuits are constructed by careful interventions to build the capacities and competencies of the weakest of the three entities in the governance process- civil society. The other two entities – the state, and the private sector, are well-endowed with resources acquired through government; and those motivated by private profit and capital accumulation. Often times, interventions aimed at propping up the competencies of civil society to enable them participate in the governance processes are neither structured, nor sustained and are under resources. This notwithstanding, evidence abound regarding groups of civil society actors actively and incrementally involving themselves in the governance process and thus claiming their rights across a wider spectrum of sectors.

In the agriculture sector, for instance, small Scale farmers are increasingly becoming aware of the need to participate in agriculture governance. In this regard the budget process has become the fulcrum around which the farmers have been pushing for policy leveraging opportunities at the district level. Unfortunately, however, local leaders continue to downplay the importance of smallholder farmers' involvement in the budget and general governance processes. Rather lip services are paid to their demands and they are substituted with multi-nationals and commercial farmers whose contribution to the sector is less than 10%. Yet the obvious situation is small scale and Commercial farmers have different needs and varied challenges, hence the recognition accorded the latter does not translate into an automatic reflection of the sentiments and aspiration of the former. Any attempt to resolve the observed pattern must accentuate the need to examine the structures and systems of engagement used by policy makers and duty bearers, especially at the local level, in so far as agricultural policy governance is concerned.

BACKGROUND

Food crop farmers, especially, small scale farmers in Ghana and indeed Africa experience poverty because they lack access to affordable inputs (such as seed and fertilizer), irrigation, market access, extension and financial services. In Ghana, this category of farmers hardly access fertilizer in spite of the introduction of subsidy by government. In addition, smallholder farmers' production capacities are increasingly threatened by declining and fragmentation of landholdings, declining soil fertility, and changes in climate conditions. The myriad of problems enumerated above are being tackled from various, yet loosely coordinated, front. One of such key state institutions charge with the mandate of applying public resources to address the challenges facing small scale farmers are the District Assemblies.

District Assemblies are responsible for the regulation of development at the local level. Development of resources such as, land, water and infrastructure, are important for the business of small-scale farming. It is important to note that majority of small scale farmers do not have adequate access to these services provided by their respective Assemblies. The extent to which farmers benefit from the services provided by their respective District Assemblies is the function of their involvement in the governance process at that level. Many capacity building interventions targeted at these farmers have focused getting their views, needs and aspirations reflected in the budget and the decision making process.

Consequently, farmers have taken keen interest in local governance with the impetus coming from decentralized system being implemented. However, their interests in agricultural governance is hampered by their inability to contribute to making evidence-based decisions in so far as agricultural governance is concerned. In effect, small scale farmers are not able to hold duty bearers and policy makers to account on how resources are utilized for projects, programmes and other interventions that are supposed to benefit them.

In an attempt to stimulate farmers and the local populations to demand accountability on the rights of small scale farmers to be part of the governance process; and to push for improved services delivery and access to local resources, a project was carried out in seven districts in the Volta Region and Brong Ahafo Regions of Ghana, with the aim of

addressing factors that hinder smallholder farmers in agricultural governance processes.

OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY BRIEF

This policy brief discusses factors contributing to ineffective and weak agricultural governance at the local and national levels. The brief sheds light the ingredient required for the attainment of good and accountable small scale agriculture at the district or Local level.

FACTORS HINDERING GOOD AND ACCOUNTABLE SMALL SCALE AGRICULTURAL GOVERNANCE

1. Inadequate farmers participation in policy design and formulation

Small scale agriculture contributes about 60 per cent of total agricultural output. Given their contributions, one would have expected that greater opportunities are given to smallholder farmers to influence design of agricultural policy. In reality, however, majority of farmers' do not know about agricultural policies in their districts much more to contribute to their formulation. Participation in formulation of policies will lead to ownership, responsibility and drivers of the policies.

The fact that farmers are not involved in policy formulation implies that, there will be several policies which do not address their needs adequately.

2. Farmers Inability to monitor policies

In order for duty bearers to be accountable, there is the need for key stakeholders such as smallholder farmers to demand accountability in the implementation of agricultural policies. The level at which farmers participate in policy formulation and the general governance processes will go a long way to influence the extent to which they will be capacitated to monitor the implementation of such policies. However, a situation lack of participation in policy design means less capacity and involvement in monitoring the implementation of such policies. Hence smallholder are not able to ensure that policy implementation benefit them. Structurally, a number of constraints make it even more difficult for farmers to undertake any meaningful monitoring.

Inadequate access to information

Rural farmers are not able to access information directly from the local level. The is accentuated by the fact that there are few agricultural extension agents who are usually the farmers first point of contact and through whom all information flow to the farmers. Thus farmers lack information not only on agricultural technology and practices but also on government interventions and programmes meant to support them.

Making input into the local level budget

Small holder farmers do not make input into the local level agricultural budget. This is simply because no space is provided for farmers to do so. In the current situation where resource transfer from central government to the district assemblies has been very infrequent and unpredictable, there is always the tendency to shift resources and attention from key priority areas such as smallholder agricultural development. The situation has dire consequences on food security and the ability to use agriculture as the model for poverty reduction.

3. Accountability of Members of Parliaments to Small Holder Farmers

This project involves building on a campaign started before Ghana's 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections that sought to change the dynamics of electoral relationships by ensuring farmers make specific policy demands of candidates seeking their votes– and holding them accountable if the election goes their way. The project is taking forward the pledges made by presidential and parliamentary candidates in the 2012 elections to ensure that the new government and parliament translate their commitments into action through key processes such as national budgets, parliamentary debates and community driven participation forums.

FOSTERING ACCOUNTABLE AGRICULTURAL GOVERNANCE AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

With decentralization agricultural policies should be evidence-based and demand driven. The strategy should be about enhancing and harnessing the experiences of smallholder farmers to ensure that project implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the local level is putting the needs and aspiration of the targeted beneficiaries at the centre of the policy discourse. The onus for ensuring good and accountable agricultural governance is the function of the extent to which both farmers and duty bearers playing their roles in the governance process. However, much of the responsibility rest on the shoulders of duty bearers to ensure that policies are well implemented and that farmers are involved at all stages.

Recommendations

Duty Bearers can help reverse the situation by ensuring that;

1. Farmers are educated on governance and the budget process at local level
2. Farmers are invited to make input into the district composite budget
3. Promote open dialogue between farmers and duty bearers
4. Create awareness on agricultural programmes/projects ongoing in the District
5. Duty bearers and farmers enter into agreement on how to deal with challenges in policy implementation in the District (Memorandum of Understanding)
6. “MEET YOUR MP”: Members of Parliament must make it a point to hold a Farmers' Forum at least once in a year to discuss small scale agricultural issues in their constituency

FARMERS

1. Organise farmers into FBOs/Co-operatives in the District under one Secondary FBO with proactive leaders
2. Equip Leaders with Advocacy and Lobbying skills
3. Leaders seek wide consultation and provide feedback to members
4. Involve members in monitoring projects in districts and or communities using score cards (explore training on and how to use these tools)
5. Demand or initiate dialogues between farmers and duty bearers and the MP

ABOUT THE PEASANT FARMERS ASSOCIATION OF GHANA

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) is a member based non-profit organisation of small holder rural farmers across Ghana. Launched in 2005, PFAG has more than 2000 Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) as its members. PFAG has over the period of its existence reached out to over 30,000 individual farmers in more than 54 districts covering the ten regions of Ghana. The PFAG provides the platform through which small holder and peasant farmers could influence both national and international policies.

PFAG has the vision of guaranteeing dignified lives for peasant farmers. This it does through working with others in the facilitation and development of beneficial programmes favorable for increasing agriculture production, processing and marketing. PFAG also works towards building and strengthening both individual and organizational capacities of its members. The objectives of PFAG include the following: Poverty reduction through increased productivity and income; Creation of enabling environment for growth; Provision of technical, business and entrepreneurial skills to its members; and Establishment of platform for members to discuss issues that affect their lives.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the highest decision making body. This is followed by Board of seven members, all farmers, two of whom are women. For ease of implementation, the country is partitioned into three zones, viz, the Northern, Middle and Southern Zones with Regional Coordinators who are also members of the governing Board. There are also district focal persons and community organizers with the National Secretariat located in Accra.

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