



15th August 2024

PRESS CONFERENCE

PFJ 2.0 Implementation gaffe and poor weather conditions have the potential to derail our food security efforts

Good morning, friends of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Board and Management of the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana, I warmly welcome you all to our premise and also thank you for making time to attend this important engagement. Over the past few years, the issue of agriculture, particularly the availability and affordability of food has dominated our landscape and there are genuine concerns and hope that this situation is improved to ensure that all Ghanaians are able to afford nutritious food at affordable prices. However, food availability and affordability are the output of a systemic and deliberate approach by leaders who lay solid foundation for agricultural development. Unfortunately, in Ghana, our leaders pretend to address the challenges while the citizens sit aloof and watch them unconcerned.

We, the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana are therefore alarmed and concerned with the current development happening within this planting season, which if not properly addressed by government, will deepen the current food crises being experienced in Ghana. The PFAG is particularly worried with the loud silence of the Ministry regarding these developments, which has led many farmers to throw their hands in despair. We, the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana members in the various regions are hereby addressing the good people of Ghana to understand the frustrations of our members and to inform Ghanaians to brace themselves for tough times and high food prices if government does not intervene to resolve these issues. The major issues which have necessitated the organization of this engagement are as follows;

1. The current development under the Planting for Food and Jobs II and
2. The dry-spells currently being experienced

THE PFJ 2.0

The announcement and subsequent launch of the PFJ 2.0 brought some form of relief and hope for farmers across the country, as we anticipated a comprehensive input and service support across the value chain. Indeed, during the launch of the program, the Minister stated emphatically, that “dier wu hia ni assase” to wit “all what you needed was land”. This meant that the Ministry was going to facilitate the provision of land preparation services, mechanization, extension, harvesting and marketing services in addition to all input support including seeds, fertilizers, agrochemicals. Unfortunately, we are already in the middle of the planting season and none of these support services was comprehensively provided to farmers. In fact, the Bryan Acheampong PFJ 2.0 is no different from the Owusu Afriyie Akoto PFJ 1.0 since they are all about supply of fertilizer and seeds.

To even make matters worse for the PFJ 2.0, are several emerging issues that contradicts the original intent of the program, for which we now believe is more politically motivated than a genuine intervention to provide relief for farmers. The abysmal registration process, characterized by several challenges made it difficult and demotivating for farmers to register. There is lack of adequate extension officers to collect farmers’ data, inadequate logistics (tablets and motor bikes) to facilitate movement and the bad timing of the process. As at July 2024, our independent assessment, which is also corroborated by figures from the various District Departments of Agriculture, shows that less than 15% of the estimated farmer population have registered under the program, which is very underwhelming. To make matters worse, is the abandonment of the private sector led concept of the programme, lack of focus of the programme and the treatment of the agricultural sector programmes and activities as if it is a personal business, which is frustrating and making many stakeholders in the value chain losing hope in the agricultural sector activities.

In addition to this challenge is the current input distribution formula under the grant component of the PFJ 2.0, which has become extremely politicized and serving as an avenue for some unscrupulous public officials and politicians to demand payments from farmers before benefitting.

Ladies and gentlemen, the implementation strategy of the PFJ 2.0 was very clear on the role of the aggregator, who was to facilitate the provision and distribution of inputs and services to farmers. No part of the strategy spoke about grants and the involvement of politically exposed persons in the selection of beneficiary farmers and distribution of fertilizer and seeds. However, what we are currently experiencing, across the country is the blatant involvement of NPP parliamentary candidates and DCEs, who have been given quotas of fertilizers and seeds to distribute. The farmers are asking. What is the role of the DCEs and Parliamentary Candidates in input distribution? Are they replacing the work of aggregators and the district department of agriculture and which criteria are they using to distribute the fertilizers? Would the beneficiaries pay back, if they will, who are they paying to? If they are not paying back, why must it be the role of politicians to be involved in inputs distribution?

Ladies and gentlemen, according to the Ministry, the grant component of the programme was designed to support vulnerable farmers by providing the beneficiary farmers with three 50 kg bags of NPK fertilizer, a 50 kg bag of urea fertilizer, and a 10 kg bag of maize seeds free of charge. These grants are aimed at helping vulnerable farmers, including female-headed households, elderly farmers, farmers with disabilities, and smallholder farmers with limited access to inputs. Additionally, the first 200,000 farmers fully registered on the Ghana Agricultural Agribusiness Platform (GhAAP) will receive these grants.”. While the PFAG support any form of grant for farmers to cushion them, these process must be transparent and devoid of bias and discrimination. How do you select farmers who registered early to benefit, when you have not created the right atmosphere and condition to have a fair registration process for all farmers? This is unacceptable. Also, our checks indicate that most vulnerable farmers as defined by the ministry have been left out while rich and politically connected farmers, are rather benefitting. This development is very worrying and causing a lot of agitation among farmers.

Additionally, the distribution process has also not commenced in several districts in many parts of the country as several aggregators have refused to take part in the program. How can you distribute seeds for farmers to plant when crops have already been planted and needing fertilizer? In some other districts, the bags of fertilizers supplied are far less than the number of farmers who

have registered under the program? What are these farmers expected to do at this crucial time of the planting season, considering the high cost of inputs? What is the plan for such farmers to benefit and what steps are the Ministry taking to get aggregators enrolled onto the program?

The current roll-out of the PFJ 2.0 is raising a lot of questions regarding transparency and accountability. More so, it is plagued with a lot of political interference, rent-seeking, lack of focus, disregard for farmers' interest and confusion, which does not auger well for the farmers. Farmers have become more disillusioned with the program, as they are not reaping its full benefits.

We also call for the complete cessation of the involvement of politicians in the process and allow the district department of agriculture, the aggregators and other value chain actors to play their roles. "Stop playing politics with our food".

We therefore urgently call on Parliament to summon the Minister of Food and Agriculture to address these concerns.

Extended dry spells

Another major issue currently faced by farmers all over the country, especially in the Northern and middle belt is the lack of rainfall, which has caused many crops to wilt. For centuries, the Ghanaian farmer have relied on the rains to nourish our crops, cultivate various types of crops and to sustain food security of this country. However, this year, the rains have failed and put us in the state, quite close to the 1983 drought and its devastation effects is obvious. The extended dry spells have left thousands of acres parched up, crops stunted and are at the brink of crop failure in several farming communities in the Bono East, Upper West, Upper East, Northern, North-East and parts of Volta and Oti Regions. This situation is causing a major headache for several farmers, who are frustrated and helpless. In some instances, planting has delayed as the farmers are still anticipating the rains, with investments in land preparation gone down the drain.

The situation is quite painful considering the hefty amount of money that was spent on the One Village One Dam policy and the Pwalugu Multi-Purpose Dam. These dams would have served as an alternate source of water for our farmers in these hard times, but they remain pits and holes, while we suffer. While we hope for improvement in precipitation conditions, we wish to remind government of the emergence of climate change of which many countries are putting measures

in place to mitigate the impact. Burkina Faso is a typical example and Ghana cannot afford to always depend on the mercy of nature to determine its food production.

We call upon the government to take immediate and decisive action to address this crisis. Specifically, we urge:

1. **Provision of Emergency Relief:** Immediate water supplies, including pumping machines for farmers close to water bodies must be made available to affected farmers to avert food crises.
2. **Improved Irrigation Systems:** The development and implementation of affordable and sustainable irrigation systems are essential to mitigate the impact of irregular rainfall and ensure that our crops receive the water they need. The efforts to develop Pwalugu Multi-purpose dam and other dams in other areas should be an urgent medium term development plan of government.
3. **Climate Change Mitigation Efforts:** We must all work together to combat climate change, which is contributing to the increasingly unpredictable weather patterns we are experiencing. This includes increasing efforts to stop “galamsey”, deforestation and adopting policies and practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect our environment.
4. **Financial Support for Farmers:** Many of PFAG members and other farmers have lost their entire livelihoods due to this extended period. We need financial support, in the form of grants or low-interest credit, to help us recover and rebuild.

Conclusion

The multi-burden of poor implementation of the PFJ 2.0, high input costs and low rainfall has the potential to derail farmers’ efforts and deepen the food crises currently experienced. The government, must as a matter of urgency, address the challenges with the PFJ 2.0 implementation for farmers and also deploy an emergency irrigation support scheme to provide water to recover what is left of the crops. Additional support to affected farmers to recover and rebuild is non-negotiable.

Farmers are suffering and if farmers are suffering, Ghanaians will also suffer. Help the Ghanaian farmer and save the Ghanaian economy.

Long live farmers in Ghana. Thank you

Contact persons

Executive Director: Bismark Owusu Nortey: 0243487643

National President (Western/Central Regional Focal Person): Wepia Addo Adugwala: 0242265313

Upper East Focal Person: Isaac Pabia: 0244485322

Upper West Focal Person: Amadu Salifu: 0552486623

Middle Belt Focal Persons: Regina Daberin: 0247816344 and Ben Sarfo: 0245947882

Hajia Fati: Women representative: 0555617908

Hafshetu Latifu (Northern Regional Focal person: 0242832832

Richard Deku: Greater Accra Focal person: 0246589627

Raymond Duncan: Volta/Oti Focal person: 0244080382