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Ghana, Factor 17: Good Governance

### **Ghana: Smuggling and Governing Present Challenges for Farmers**

Ghana is a small West African country dependent on international financial aid and its mainstay economy of gold and cocoa. Ghana has lived peacefully for several years and everyone is happy. Ghana's economy, however, is not as prosperous. Ghana is, for the most part, not well-suited for farming. Most of Ghana's food comes from other countries and they have minimal exports which makes it very difficult to balance out the economy. Rice is a major food staple in Ghana, but is also one of the most difficult crops to grow. Aside from the environmental factors affecting the amount of farming Ghana can do, the government's heavy restrictions on farming put even more stress on rural farm families.

A typical Ghanaian family is rather large, many consisting of two families living together as a "nuclear family". These nuclear families are joined together through marriage of two individuals. The two married individuals' families often live together and support each other. Every family member in these "nuclear families" is responsible for raising the children to be respectful, responsible, and self-supporting. The mother in the family bears some special responsibilities based on the family, but it is not solely her. The nuclear family's main job is to save the marriage that united them. This helps keep a very low divorce rate and allows most kids to grow up in a happy, loving family.

These Ghanaian families also have very different diets based on where they live in Ghana. Many of the poorer household diets include healthier foods that are rich in proteins, vitamins, essential oils and minerals, and carbohydrates. They live off the land and take whatever they can get to eat including fruits and vegetables, snails, crickets, beans, and nuts. However, many of the urban residents don't get as much chlorophyll which is present in leafy greens. These are more limited to the northern and eastern regions of Ghana (Nutrition and Consumer Protection, Ghana).

Many people, however, still need supplementary food items such as rice. The Ghanaian government has put a very high price on rice that equals approximately 150-200+ Ghana cedi (Ghanaian currency) per 100 kg. This is far too expensive for many Ghanaians to afford. Many Ghanaians then need to purchase significantly cheaper rice that has been smuggled in from nearby countries such as Togo or Benin.

Ghanaian citizens require access to education to learn the new ways for cultivating the land to maximize food production. Ghanaian education is easily accessible and fairly inexpensive, making it available to many Ghanaian residents. Ghanaian education is, in some cases, less expensive than buying 100 kg of rice. However, this education is often second-rate and they are not taught the modern-day farming practices they need to save what little useful land they still have.

A typical Ghanaian farm is rather small, only a few hectares. They typically farm cocoa, not rice, and share their harvests among themselves and their neighbors. If they do have any rice leftover, they have to compete with high-quality Asian and other local rice in the markets. It also makes it difficult for farmers because Ghana spends so much money on imported rice. Ghana also uses a lot of its farmland to farm cocoa. Ghanaian citizens, however, can't live off of cocoa, they can live off of rice. There is also a lot of unused land that could be used to help reduce the amount of money the government needs to spend on importing rice. Farmers are limited by laws the government has put in place making it difficult to break even, much less make any kind of profit. Many small-scale farmers across the northern portions of Ghana are finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the growing economy due to their lack of access to technology that is being used in the ever-present shift from subsistence farming to modern farming. Some

of their major constraints are due to a lack of places to process and store their harvests, inadequate skills development, and poorly functioning markets for selling their products. Also, many factors in Ghana are imperfect for farming causing soil erosion, infertility, and land degradation. Because of these factors, farmers across Ghana are forced to sell out and move to urban centers. These are long-term effects that also make it difficult for prospective farmers to get going.

There are several types of crops that are grown commonly in Ghana, the primary one being cocoa. However, Ghanaian crops vary depending on what region you are in. If you are in the coastal region, you will find almost no farming because the soil is sandy and the area is very heavily populated. You will however, find a lot of fishing. In the more central forested regions, cocoa plants thrive. Cocoa is one of Ghana's most prominent exports. These farmers also grow crops such as rubber, sugarcane, and palm oil. In the northern regions of Ghana, there is not much land that is very suitable for farming. Northern Ghana is just on the edge of the Sahara Desert which makes the land flat and ideal for livestock to graze, but too dry to farm very much. However, northern Ghana does farm some crops such as yams, rice, and millets. Shea and Kola nuts are often found in the region. These crops, however, are often not as high-quality as crops from neighboring countries such as Togo or Benin.

Ghanaian farmers struggle to get high yield out of their crops, so many of them resort to using illegal pesticides on their crops. This is a particularly big problem in the northern regions where the most crops are grown in the least ideal conditions. These, combined with other poor agricultural practices, wind up producing unhealthy, low quality crops for the citizens of Ghana. They ingest these harmful pesticides which can cause serious illness and even death. (Safer Farming Practices in Ghana, Christian Aid) Many groups of people from around the world are trying to educate these North Ghanaian farmers on safe, effective ways of protecting their plants and maximizing yield organically. Now, farmers who have switched to organic methods have seen a significant increase in their yield with plenty of food to feed their families and still sell crops to make a good profit to supplement their dietary needs.

Many of Ghana's villages face problems with a lack of clean drinking water, hospitals, good education, and basic sanitation. Most of these are only problems in small, rural villages, but even the capital of Accra has challenges when it comes to basic sanitation. Many farming families in Northern Ghana face the problem of unpredictable weather. Most of the year is typically very dry and dusty with sandstorms blowing in from the Sahara Desert to the north, but when they do get rain, it often comes in large quantities causing terrible floods that wipe out the few crops they have.

Many of the small villages in Ghana still suffer from a lack of electricity and even the villages that do have electricity experience "cut-offs" frequently. These power outages mean that most of Ghana still lives in the dark outside of large cities and the coastal region. Clean drinking water, however, has become a much less severe problem. Former Ghanaian president Jerry John Rawlings along with the NDC (Ghanaian government (National Democratic Congress)) worked very hard to alleviate the stress this problem was putting on Ghanaian villages. He created hundreds of waterholes and pipe-borne water systems for villages all across Ghana. ("Major Problems Facing Ghana Today", Africaw)

One of the biggest barriers to improving agricultural productivity in Ghana is that the very dry and unpredictable northern Ghana area is spreading down into the forested regions of central Ghana. This is because of bushfires and the people's need for firewood. Taking these trees down is causing an increase in erosion. This makes the soil unable to hold the nutrients necessary for successful farming in Ghana's most agriculturally productive regions. Poor agricultural practices across all of Ghana are also a major problem and one of the reasons farming is so difficult in Ghana. Another problem Ghanaian farmers face is the rural to urban migration. Many rural Ghanaian farmers are unsuccessful their first time farming and they give up and move into urban areas. This leads to urban overcrowding and a lack of materials for the cities. These farmers could be supplying the cities with materials they need to thrive, but there aren't

enough farmers to supply the demand in these thriving suburban cities (Ghana Permaculture Institute).

Most typical city-dwelling Ghanaian citizens are paid at or above minimum wage. Many rural Ghanaian farmers, however, struggle to make the equivalent of minimum wage. They spend hours, days, weeks, months, working on growing healthy sustainable crops and then they are far underpaid by people buying their crops. This is the largest barrier to employment at minimum wage as most of the country is paid at or above minimum wage.

Many rural farmers in Ghana don't have an issue with accessing food markets because they grow their own food. But a vast majority of Ghana's population lives in cities where they have to buy their food from the market. In the Ashanti region of Ghana, approximately 33.7% of children were severely malnourished, many of them were so severely malnourished that they were medically classified as wasted which is defined as "denoting a disease characterized by emaciation". (Scientificjournals.com) The government provides insured healthcare to all of its citizens.

There aren't many clear barriers to accessing food markets. Due to the fact that everyone in Ghana either lives somewhere where they have access to fresh food directly from the farm or they live in the city where food markets are easily accessible. The only barrier Ghanaians would run into is not having enough money because they are either unemployed or can't afford the Ghanaian government's steep prices on food (rice in particular).

The Ghanaian government puts very steep prices on foods like rice forcing citizens to look to neighboring countries for their supplemental dietary needs. Also, many people prefer the quality of neighboring countries' rice over that of Ghana's own rice. This is due to the fact that there is very little land that is suitable for farming, so farmers are forced to use strong chemical pesticides to save what they can grow. These pesticides often do not get washed off of the crops after harvest and are then ingested by the consumer. These pesticides can cause serious illness and, in most cases, death (Christian Aid, Safer Farming Practices in Ghana).

The factor I selected was good governance and how it affects farming productivity in Ghana. The government has put very strict regulations on farming in order to keep up trade with nearby countries. Ghana has recently upgraded their government's method of overseeing Ghanaian agriculture with the new Ministry of Food and Agriculture which encompasses all of the previous organizations such as Agriculture Extensions Services, Veterinary Services, Policy Planning Monitoring and Evaluations, Fisheries, and Agricultural Engineering. These organizations have been combined to better serve the farming population of Ghana and increase governmental communication.

Ghana is still recovering from mistakes the government made back in the 1960s. Throughout the 1960s, Ghana was the world's leading cocoa producer and cocoa accounted for nearly fifty percent of the government's revenue. However, as the price for cocoa dropped in the world markets, Ghanaian government began losing money on the crops. They imposed a very steep export tax and paid farmers less than the actual value for their cocoa leading the country in a decades-long downward economic spiral (Agriculture and Challenges to Development).

Now, a similar problem is occurring with rice. Ghana has put a steep export tax on it and is paying farmers less than they deserve. This continues to lead the country deeper into poverty. Many farmers have now been forced to sell their harvests privately because the government doesn't pay them fairly. These prices, however, are far too high for many citizens to pay. This forces these citizens to purchase significantly cheaper rice from nearby countries.

Every year, nearly 9 billion pounds of rice is smuggled into Ghana from neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. This

has a huge impact on Ghana's economy and causes a significant funding shortage for farmers. Currently, rice smuggled in from Cote d'Ivoire is 28% cheaper than rice shipped into Ghana legally (GhanaWeb). Ghanaian citizens are left with no choice but to buy the imported rice at its significantly cheaper prices. This has started a downward economic spiral that hits Ghanaian farmers the hardest. Their hard work all year long should be well paid for, not outdone by smuggled rice. The Ghanaian citizens, however, do not have the access they need or the education to solve the problem.

Ghana's literacy rate is only at 71.5%, this means that nearly 30% of the population would likely not be able to notice and understand the problems going on in the government. Most of this 30% lives in rural farming areas. These are the people who need this education the most, they are the ones being cheated out of their money. Many of these people are not being taught the new and most effective ways of farming. This means their harvests are going to be lower to begin with, then you add in the fact that few Ghanaian farmers have any technologically advanced farming equipment and their harvests are going to get even smaller. This puts enormous financial stress on farm families in Ghana in that it makes it more difficult for them to sell their rice. The government should provide more public schools in rural areas to increase literacy rates, as well as providing young Ghanians with the resourcefulness to learn about new technologies and farming practices.

This is not the only reason that they have troubles, though.

Ghanaian rice is a significantly lower quality than that of surrounding countries making it less desirable among Ghanaian citizens. The government underpays them for their rice and they now have to compete with billions of pounds of cheap, illegal, imported rice. Every year, more rice is smuggled into Ghana sending their economy constantly downward. Smuggling this much rice also has a huge effect on quality control, import business, and overall food security. If we could eliminate this problem, the country's poverty rate (currently 19%) could start to go down. Farmers would not struggle nearly as much to sell their rice and make a profit, the government would be bringing in a lot more money to help the economy, and overall food security in Ghana would be improved. Population growth could be a big factor in this problem for better or for worse in that either more rice will be smuggled into Ghana, or there will be higher demand for locally grown rice due to the larger population with only a certain amount of rice available from other countries.

Realistically, if the government would step up border security, this problem would be reduced. This could be achieved by working with the Ghana Armed Forces to create a border patrol unit. Typically, higher security drives criminals away. The government needs to patrol their border with Cote d'Ivoire more carefully. This would prevent the rice from being smuggled in; it would help both countries' economies, and it would ensure that there will always be rice in the store when you go to buy it. However, one day Ghana could stop the smuggling and thousands of families would be without their smuggled Cote d'Ivoirian rice and could potentially go hungry.

If Ghana doesn't make this issue public, it is only going to get worse. They need to make the problem known, come up with a solution such as heavier border patrols, and then implement their plan. This may temporarily increase tensions between the two countries, but once they both realize that it helps their economies and it is the best thing to do for their citizens, that would no longer be a problem. People across Ghana are relying too heavily on this unreliable source for food. Ghana needs to eliminate this problem by also ensuring that local farmers have access to the inputs they need and the price structure to ensure that quality rice is grown locally. The land that is good for growing rice needs to be released from the government and put into the hands of local farmers who can use it to grow quality rice to eat and sell. Local farmers could learn to grow quality rice in a sustainable manner so that Ghana may develop a sustainable agriculture system to feed their own people. They could learn these techniques from outside researchers and farmers, if the government would allow them to have access to the farmers and their land.

The government also needs to reduce its import and export taxes so that people can afford to buy quality rice (to supplement what is grown in Ghana) instead of smuggling it in.

Ghana is becoming better in their agriculture sector. Their poverty rate looks to drop to near zero by the year 2020. However, the government could still be doing more to help the agriculture succeed. Most of the success Ghanaian farmers are currently seeing is due to outside groups coming in to help. There are areas of good farmland in Ghana. These areas are being kept under lock and key by the government for fear that the land will soon become useless. However, what the government fails to realize is that if they were to give this land to the public, their rice production would increase, they would have to pay less on imports, they would have to charge less for their rice which would indirectly help stop the smuggling problem, and overall give their economy a boost. The government could also be putting a little more effort into the way these farmers are governed. Currently, the government is doing very little to help these farmers succeed and have bountiful harvests. If they helped farmers get the proper equipment, funding, and education they need to be successful, all of the problems here could be solved. Ghana is starting down this path, but before they can make any real progress, they have to recognize the problems and put in the work necessary to help stop these and prevent them from starting again in the future.

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