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Speakers

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- Hon. Eric Opoku | Minister of Food and Agriculture, Republic of Ghana
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Transcript
Gebisa Ejeta:

Good afternoon. It's a great honor to be here with these distinguished leaders from Africa. I'll briefly introduce each one of them. And before I do that, I'll make very brief remarks now. And that is about agricultural development, economic development in Africa.

For much of the twentieth century, science and technology had been very slow in reaching Africa. But in this century, both in agriculture and economic development, the transformative changes that have taken place in the continent of Africa have been huge. We've made advances in building institutions in the continent over time, in institutions for agricultural research, extension and agriculture education at large. Several universities have been built, both public and private throughout the continent. Great advances have been made in expanding education in the continent.

Significant gains have been made also in research and development. But the part that someone like me who's been at it for a long time laments is there are two things that haven't really gone at pace according to as planned in the continent. One is our technology delivery systems have not been on the right path. And that part of it, to a great extent, is due to the second problem that we've had, and that is that there has not been significant engagement with the private sector, both within and from abroad.

So we've got a long way to go there, but these are truly bottlenecks that we have had. But we've had, as I said indicated, the advances that we've made in science and technology and also and particularly in governance. And several democratic elections have been held in the continent over several countries. But I would like to hold up one country, in particular, and that is because at the time of independence, we had incredibly dynamic leaders in the continent. Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, Tafawa Bali in Nigeria, Sekutu in Guinea and then Jomo Kenyatta and Nyerere in Tanzania and Kenya respectively.

These were incredibly dynamic leaders that have been very transformative right after independence. But over time, we have had challenges in Africa in holding our governance up. But the one single country that has been exemplary in the last ten years, Ghana has elected 10 democratic elections have taken place. And in the last four, four transfers of power have been made.

A significant event in the continent could be exemplary even for the rest of the world, in particular when you take, you know, a look at things that have happened in recent developments. So I want to hold up that not only the economy and education and to some extent the livelihood of people have advanced, but also our governance have significantly advanced. And I say that because part of what an understanding that needs to take place in Africa is that public private partnership is the eventual goal. Public institutions can't do it all. Government can't hire, can't educate, can't lead the country in all aspects of the partnership with the public private partnership is critical for many countries and it needs to be for Africa as such.

And so with that, I will introduce my panel and let them do more of the talking instead of me. To my right is the Secretary of Agriculture from Sierra Leone. I need to read to be able to get it right. Doctor Henry Musa Kpaka is Minister of Agriculture and Food Security where he leads the country's ambitious Feed Salon initiative, the president's flagship program aimed at transforming national food systems, ensuring food security and driving inclusive economic growth. As part of the progress that I've been saying, our secretaries of agriculture used to be just political appointees, but these are people educated in agriculture and holding up.

Doctor Kpaka holds a PhD in political economy from the London School of Economics, a master in public policy from Harvard University and degrees from Whitman College and United World College. Next, the Honorable Eric Opoku, Minister of Food and Agriculture, Republic Of Ghana. He is trained in both Ghana and the United Kingdom in the fields of economic law and governance. Third, last but not least, I'll introduce, I've known Dr. Beth Dunford for a long time. I sat on the BIFAD board for USAID and she was assistant administrator and rubbed shoulders with her for a long time.

She's an internationally recognized development sector professional who most recently served at the African Development Bank's group Vice President for Agriculture, Human and Social Development.

With that, I'll ask my first question. Even though I said we've made these advances, I want to recognize the fact that these are very difficult times for African governments as well in terms of executing and implementing their development programs as a result of events that have taken place beyond their control, including the COVID epidemic that we went through and then more recently, a more inward looking governments around the world that with which they have to partner. So again it's the growing challenges of deglobalization and disruptions in foreign and technical assistance from friendly nations that you could count on in the past decades and the ever growing climate change challenge effects and conflicts around you, how and how how have you managed to strengthen your ongoing programs in food security with diplomatic and cross sector partnership to advance improvements in soil health and agricultural resilience and climate and conflict pressures? And if you may, what new or emerging collaborations hold the most promise for strengthening global food security in the coming year?

This question is directed to the two ministers of agriculture.

Minister Henry Musa Kpaka:

Thank you. Thank you very much. First of all, I want to thank the organizers for having us here. It's always good to be here in Iowa, Des Moines at this time of the year. Jumping to the question. I think, yes, I think you're framing, we have had a shift or a change, a paradigm shift in how the world as we knew it is now and probably for the foreseeable future because people anticipate. And from a government point of view,

in Sierra Leone, I think after COVID, well we had the Ebola and then COVID, and then these other geopolitical crises that have since sort of taken over events, if you like. I think for us, it's really, it's an opportunity. It's actually very painful, there's no hiding that. So let's just put that there, and I think people know that.

But I think for us, from a point of view, need as an opportunity for us to be, If you're Sierra Leone, if you know our history, undergone twenty years of civil war, a lot of aid and people are coming and our young people that used to be in villages and doing agriculture farming move to cities relying on they are in displaced camp, they're relying on food aid and they are all in cities now. And then we come to a scenario where people are pulling back from these kinds of approaches. So for us, it's how we go back to that place where we take ownership of our own destiny, if you like. And so the president's Feed Salon program really was he looked at where we had come from and where we need to be and said, yes, all of this is happening, but we must chat our own way with us driving and building new partnerships. And so, for us, the Feed Salon program for agriculture, we see as really a way where we bring all these young people on board.We address joblessness, increase incomes and build a sustainable economy that we can rely on.

In the past, the strategy we set would rely on tons of money and all of that and as we all know now, this is drying up very quickly. And so, for us is to see how we find new solutions to this. And part of a lot of what we've been doing is to say the private sector is a big part of what we're doing. There are things that governments can do. We resolve to increase how much revenue we collect and put into agriculture. So, we move from two percent of the GDP or government money budget that goes into agriculture from two to almost eight percent over a year. We made sure we talked to nontraditional partners to also bring along the private sector. We identified areas where we say, here if we invest and make the area or geographies investable and find value chains the private sector can come in.

And then science. We have sought out the CGIAR centers that work closely in some of the key value chains that we care about. For the first time, we decided we're gonna map after forty years, we mapped our swell in a really fine way so that we can inform how we provide help to farmers so that we optimize the support that we're getting and don't waste that. And so, yes, the world is changing, but we see it as an opportunity to figure out what we can do on our own. We have a plan to do that. We believe in the private sector, science and you know, things that governments does

not know how to do well, bring other people that can do well, but in partnership. This is how we are facing this new world that we are in.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Thank you.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Thank you very much. Thank you very much, mister moderator. The shifts in global aid and supply chains are not just challenges. They are a catalyst for a new paradigm. For us in Ghana, our garden principle is clear. We have pivoted from dependency to a self-reliant partnership, anchored on two key things. One, the risk in the agricultural space with homegrown policies and pursuing smarter international cooperations. And there are critical or concrete actions that we have taken. We have boosted domestic resilience by aggressively increasing production of indigenous and climate resilient staples such as cassava, yam and plantain.

We are also constructing storage facilities nationwide and we have empowered the national food buffer stock to hold strategic reserves to stabilize prices and ensure an incessant supply of food across the country. We have also embedded climate adaptation directly into farming by promoting the use of drought resilient seeds and also introducing weather predictive technologies for better decision making.

Crucially, we have also encouraged the use of organic fertilizers to improve long term soil structure and then health. We have also transformed our partnership. It must be stated clearly that we in Ghana have moved from aid to mutual investment.

We are deepening South-South cooperation with countries like Morocco and Brazil. And then domestically, we are leveraging public-private partnership to finance agricultural infrastructure in the form of irrigation, the farmer service center, agro production increase and the rest that you can think of. These are very critical interventions to ensure that on our own, we are able to produce sufficiently to feed the Ghanaian people. Now when it comes to promising collaborations looking into the future, we think that the most promising collaborations are multi stakeholder and African led. We are aligning with Continental Kampala declaration to ensure that partner efforts are coordinated.

It must be stated that we are building a powerful coalition for a second green revolution through roots and tuber crops. This revolution is gene editing, sustainable for our soils, inclusive for our youth and women and profitable by building value chains for intra-African trade. Thank you.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Beth, I needed to acknowledge the role the African Bank has played in scaling up technologies in the last several years in the continent, adding to some of the advances that I talked about. Having finished a term already as a Vice President at the Africa Bank, if you may, in your leadership experience there, what initiatives or public private partnerships do you feel are models to follow?

Beth Dunford:

Well, thank you very much, and it's an honor to share the stage with honorable ministers and, of course, with you, doctor. And I think that what we're hearing here is country leadership and country ownership, which I think has to be the heart of any partnership, as I think honorable ministers, you've both said. And this was really the heart of the Dakar summit that the African Development Bank hosted in collaboration with Senegal. His Excellency Macky Sall was president at the time, focused on achieving food sovereignty and resilience. And this was an unprecedented event.

For 43 heads of state and government convened together focused around presidential boardrooms where they presented their own country's food and agriculture delivery compacts. And these compacts, again, presented at the highest levels with buying from the highest levels, set out production target production targets, policy priorities, priority investments in rural infrastructure, unlocking innovative finance, etcetera, etcetera. And again, these are country plans that we can all mobilize behind. And I think you've heard a lot of this here today, but this was at scale at the highest levels of government across the continent. And so within that partnership mindset, the African Development Bank has come in with, by the end of this year, it'll be about $6,000,000,000 to support these country agriculture food delivery complex.

And I think that other partners have really promised generous support as well. Now central to this, as you've mentioned, is technology delivery platforms. And the bank's flagship technologies for African agricultural transformation has been a tremendous effort to get these really impressive improved technologies that are developed and ready to go, but often on shelves and not in the fields with farmers. And so how do you find commercially viable distribution systems to get these technologies out at scale? And TAD has been one of the best examples of making that happen.

And again, it's partnerships led by government with private sector actors, both big actors and small actors, international and also national research institutes, extension agents coming together to really get these technologies out, and it succeeded in getting improved climate adaptive technologies to 25,000,000 farmers across Africa. And again, that impacted scale helped farmers improve production and resulted in a 120,000,000 metric tons of increased production. Now that's impact with partnerships at scale. So that's the kind of thing that we need. Also talking about value addition, the African Development Bank's headquartered in Abidjan.

So when I was living in Abidjan, I was often at the supermarket buying cashews, and it was not unusual to buy cashews that had been grown in Cote D'Ivoire, shipped at about a buck 50 a kilo to Vietnam for processing, and then shipped back at $20 per kilo kilo so I could purchase it in the supermarket in Abidjan. So all of those all of that profit, all of those jobs are exported. We need to keep that in Africa, in the farm economy, in the agricultural economy, to really make agriculture profitable. So I think that, you know, the public private partnerships that go into value addition, special agro industrial processing zones are really, really important where public sector comes in with priority policies that can really help investment environment, also infrastructure and really innovative financing to bring in these private sector actors who can begin to and continue to add value to products to make agriculture the profitable business that it is. And then I hope we can come back to, in the end, we know it's all about finance, finance, finance.

And in our partnerships, we need to make sure that we're getting the finance to the people who need it most. And right now, there's a 75,000,000,000 per year gap in the financing needed for smallholder farmers and for agricultural SMEs. And as much of we've tried and we've had a lot of discussions about it, we have yet to unlock the models that can get there at scale, and that's something that I hope we can talk more about.

Gebisa Ejeta:

In fact, let me take it off your remarks and maybe go back to the secretary's side as well. The bank had been talking about finances for derisking the private sector. And significant investment have been made in the past to encourage advancement of research and all the institutional support that are needed there. But there hasn't been any significant effort in putting together a private sector and seed industry, for example. What has been the bottleneck both in the public sector as well as maybe in the bank in not being able to this is such a crucially important private sector engagement not taking place to deliver technologies that have been developed already.

Minister Henry Musa Kpaka:

That's a good question. I mean, think from a private sector point of view, the African Continent, I guess for the longest time is always viewed as this risky place to invest. So, even when you tell people there are technologies that you can use, there's still that resistance. There's that perception of risk. And so, it's for me I think and even government itself where depending on how you structure your government.

So, if you're in Sierra Leone for example, now you cannot go to the capital markets to get loans or debts because you are under IMF conditions, your economy is not rated, doesn't have a credit rating. So, you posture yourself is towards aid and it's really that looking for no, we want private sector to come to invest, make money and work with our smallholder farmers. I think that's really been a major bottleneck that we see and have not been able to then do, there are some structural things that private sector wants. The critical infrastructure that should be there has been missing and governments are not able to do that because in ways that are attractive. So, this for us is what we want to change now.

We now realize technologies are there. I really liked the conversation on GMOs earlier. I think it's a big challenge for the African Continent, 1,000,000,000 people. Why and you know scientists that we know and trust have said this thing is good, why resist it? I think it's for all of us policy makers to think about it because this has to be science, innovation, technology has to be part of the story.

If you build infrastructure, you create the profit opportunities like Beth mentioned, it's the same thing. Cashew is 10x, the difference between just producing it and shipping it and come back. We have to create these opportunities for it to be there, but we have to change our mindset. We have to invest in this critical infrastructure and we have to be open to using the technologies be able to have this really take off as we're talking about it.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Thank you very much for the opportunity. The president of The Republic Of Ghana, his excellency John Rahmani Mahama, assumed office just nine months ago. And immediately on assumption of office, he launched what we call the agriculture for economic transformation agenda. A clear indication that his excellency wants to use agriculture as a vehicle to engender prosperity among the good people of Ghana. So agriculture is being the pivot around which all our policies are evolving.

Now under that program, we have developed what we call the flagship program to operationalize the agenda. And the flagship program is what we call the feed Ghana program. Under the Feed Ghana program, we want to feed the Ghanaian people from local sources and also feed agro processing factories in Ghana from local sources. We believe that it is through this that we can create the wealth, increase production and secure Ghana when it comes to food. Now how are we doing it?

We are developing what we call agro processing enclaves. In the agro processing enclaves, we are providing irrigation facilities. We are setting up what we call the farmer service centers. In the farmer service centers, we have agricultural machines, agricultural mechanization there. We have a session where we keep the drought tolerant seas.

We have a session for fertilizers, and we have extension services where extension officers will offer services to the farmers. And we have already asked our farmers to constitute themselves into what we call community commodity based cooperatives. So the Ghanaian farmers can have a voice, a voice to negotiate for reasonable prices for of inputs and reasonable prices of their output. So a cooperative can walk to the center, which is serving as a one shop center for agricultural machinery. Whether they have money or not, at the end of harvest, they should be able to go and then pay.

This is providing unimpeded access to mechanization, to advisory services and to all the input that is required for increased agricultural production. Our farmer population is dominated by smallholder farmers. They constitute about 80%. They themselves, individuals, cannot have access to these facilities. But with this arrangement in place, every farmer in Ghana, every farmer in Ghana can have that access.

That is a bold initiative. But on the issue of private investment, let me indicate that the Ghanaian agricultural space is entirely private sector led. Government creates the enabling environment for the private sector to move into action. And so while we are developing the agro production increase, we have in our mind that the biggest motivation for production is marketing. And so we are also developing what is called the Industrial Park, where we send all the facilities for the investors to come.

So if you want to invest in production, the agro production and cliff is there for you. You just allocate the land and then you start production. And then when you want to invest in processing, you go to the industrial Park. Our belief is that if we are able to establish that symbiotic relationship between producers and processes along the value chain, you create millions of jobs. You increase their incomes.

You increase food production, and you are able to stabilize the entire economy. This has been the strategy. Don't forget that Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa globally. And when it comes to quality cocoa, we are number one. We produce the best cocoa in the world.

When it comes to share production, share nuts, Ghana produces the finest quality of share nut globally. And share butter from Ghana is considered premium everywhere. It attracts the highest price. Unfortunately, we process little of our produce back home.

Beth Dunford:

Right.

Minister Eric Opoku:

The bulk of our produce is exported to developed countries. They add value, bring it back to us at capital prices, turning our farmers to be hearers of wood and drawers of water. Even cashew. Ghana produces the best cashew in the world. Unfortunately, the bulk of the cashew that is produced in Ghana is exported.

And then the cashew apple, which is the raw material for the production of the finest beverage, is thrown away. We want to domesticate production and liberate our farmers from the shackles and tentacles of abject poverty. And so what the government is doing is that every investor who is willing to partner with government of Ghana to invest in these areas will be supported, We'll create that conducive atmosphere for such businesses to flourish because they will create jobs for our people. They will increase their incomes. When people who were not earning incomes now earn incomes, they will spend, and you can imagine the multiplying effect on the Ghanaian economy.

So a stable, peaceful country, our doors are open. Whatever resources that you have, bring it to us. We are ever ready to work with you.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Mhmm. Thank you. Anything you wanna add?

Beth Dunford:

So, I mean, I think, you know, again, going back to finance as I was closing up my last intervention, I think that not only do financial institutions look at Africa as risky, they look at agriculture as risky, and they look at small scale actors as risky. So you have a triple biased against financing to these actors. But again, these small small actors again, we need finance across the entire value chain, across the whole food system. But these smaller actors have a huge financing gap that we need to really think more creatively about, and it's gonna need first loss. It's gonna need guarantees.

It's gonna need financial institutions that are able to sort of almost change their business models to reach these farmers. At the African Development Bank, we have the African Development Bank has a program called the affirmative finance action for women in Africa program. It's been able to get financing to women known SMEs across the continent, partnering with a 185 financial institutions, unlocking

$2,800,000,000 so far. And what it's been is partnerships. And, again, but it has required, like, support for first loss, which we need to bring together.

But it's been able to do it, and it's been able to work with these financial institutions to really almost ensure that they have the products that these banks are womanable enough to reach these women owned SMEs. And we need that in agriculture. Last week, I know at the, World Bank fall meetings, there was a launch of the AgriConnect really to focus on this issue that was in collaboration with the African Development Bank and other partners. African Development Bank also had a big conference in March looking at how do we unlock finance for this sector. And so I think that that's a huge nut that we need to crack to really reduce the 75,000,000,000 annual financing yet because we're not going to be able to disseminate technologies until farmers have the ability to purchase to reach the markets that they need.

And so that's an important point within the context, I think, of everything else you've raised here today.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Thank you. Recognizing that each one each may have unique sets of food security policy and initiatives that you may be advancing. I wanted to ask if you may share with us, even though some policy statements have been made, the policy initiatives in your countries that are proving most effective in helping to address your internal food security and livelihood concerns in turning, in particular, soil restoration and sustainable agriculture into tools of national and regional stability?

Minister Henry Musa Kpaka:

Yes, thank you for that question. I think just in in trying to answer that, let me just piggyback on what my colleague from from Ghana is saying. I think when it comes to financing, I think what he described is as a new world where governments are needing to be very intentional about we need to do this. We have to put all the pieces in place all at once and it's what he just described. We're doing very similarly in Sierra Leone and some of it, for example, is we know we need certain champions.

We know for any given value chain, know two or three champions that are going to at once be able to bring the technology, the know how and all of that, but also bring

all the smallholders together in an outgrower kind of model. You have to be deliberate about that. You have to go out, provide that support, provide that money, provide that guarantee. Usually, it's a real, and I'm glad Beth is here, it's a real when you talk to partners that sometimes can provide these monies, it becomes government can't do that, you shouldn't be doing that, but I feel like we're at a point where governments need to do some of that. So, it's just one example.

So, for us, we set up a dedicated financing. We say for the value chains that we care about, we are going to look for these kinds of private sector. We want to give them this kind of money. We want to give them at interest rates that are well below market rates. We want to give them longer term.

We want to train them. We want to organize their farmers. We want to give the farmers insurance so that when you do it, if they get lending from the bank, they're covered. It's all our intentionality and then I mentioned that we've mapped our swells because we don't want to just give inputs. We are looking for SMEs to say one of these programs is a female, a number of female actors that are benefiting to be able to set up a fertilizer blending plant in Sierra Leone using in situ, the information from the swells that we've mapped and they can do batch to smallholder farmers.

We are registering our farmers in a digital manner with unique IDs linked to phone numbers providing support to that. We're also being very intentional in the sense, the BFP I think for us in the West Africa region, they've had the best success when it comes to homegrown school feeding. Just about a year ago, 90% of the rice that they fed in school was imported because we, I walked with them, I said we need to change this. So we walked with them to organize farmers. We gave money that we had and that number dropped from 90 to 60%.

This year, it will go less than 50% of what they're doing. It's these kinds of things that governments, yeah, needing to be very intentional targeted. Of course, you know, it's gonna take, you have to stay at it. You, and we hope that zeal, that will is there, because some of these things, they are so complicated that you put one piece in place, you have to keep following. That's the world we're in.

If we're going to take this in a bold way and drive it in a homegrown manner.

Gebisa Ejeta:

One element I was hoping it would come without me asking was plans that you may have policies in place and initiatives that may be underway to take advantage of the youth dividend that we have in the continent. It just it didn't come up and so

Minister Henry Musa Kpaka:

So so some of these things that I just explained, our mechanization scheme, we brought, they have a, we have what we call machine rings, they have service centers. Machine rings are just we've established across the country 14 centers where we have government bought tractors, harvesters, all of that. We train young people to say, okay, you don't want to use hole and cutlasses, but we can train you on driving, maintaining, repairing, even flying drones to offer these services. We, Hello Tractor, we're partnering them. We have their app, their tools to be able to do that.

That's just one. We're creating a youth incubation center that including even having a nanny house for if you're a young lady with a child that wants to come and get training, your child can be taken care of, and you can get theoretical and practical training. This is something we're doing with support from the African Development Bank and ITA. So there's a host of things. Financing, we're not just giving financing.

We realize, yes, money is very important, but do you know how to start a business as a young person? Do you have a lawyer that can help guide you secure that land? So these are all the things that we're putting together in this youth incubation center and the support that come with matching grants, some of the most successful ones or linking them with community banks where they have shares in these community banks. So that if your initial seed money finishes, there's a community bank that you have a share in that you can continue doing your business. We believe young people, especially in the feed alone program, that they are the engine of this.

And the way they've come up challenges, there's a lot of them now that will be discouraged because they've gone in with such zeal, and we don't have all the resources to keep going, but we'll keep pleading, giving them moral boosters, and providing these facilities. They'll be over, they'll overflow, but there's all of that happening, and we're hoping these anchors that we're calling private sector people can come and work with them. We get demand what they're producing, train them more, and that can be part of the system going forward. Minister Opoku Yeah.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Minister Opoku, you go ahead.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Yeah. I think the question was specific. But before I respond to the question, I also want to make some few comments on the financing issue which my colleague touched on. In addition to the agriculture for economic transformation agenda we have launched in Ghana, we have also initiated another bold step. We have launched another policy we call the twenty four hour economy policy. Under the twenty four hour economy policy, we are encouraging strategist companies in the country to operate within twenty four hours in three shifts of eight hours each.

This has increased the demand for raw materials for them to be in operation for twenty four hours. And it is the agricultural sector that has the responsibility to expand and produce these raw materials, a huge market, an incentive for agricultural production. Now the twenty four hour economy is anchored on some pillars. The first one is what we call fund 24. Under fund 24, government is unlocking $1,000,000,000 $1,000,000,000 for affordable loans to support SMEs. We want to provide them loans with low interest rates, credit guarantees and the rest that will make it affordable for them to invest and expand.

Then again, we have what we call connect 24. For connect 24, we are looking at logistics and transportation system, access to market So that when you produce, you'll be connected to the buyers. Then we are looking at mid 24 or make 24. Under make 24, we are looking at industrialization and value addition. And another critical one is what we call aspire '24.

And aspire twenty four, we are building skills and the mindset of the modern workforce. SMEs need threatens, finance, markets and then skills. All these things are captured in our pillars. And so clearly, have set the stage for SMEs to take advantage, to expand, to grow and to employ. Now back to the question.

You see, we have moved from the period where soil was seen as debt to a level where we have recognized soil as the most strategic asset for national, regional and global

stability. There can never be food security when the soil is not properly or efficiently managed. And our comprehensive approach to ensure effective management of the soil is captured under the FeedGhana program. We have what we call our national push for soil health and fertility management. This is captured under sub program one of the Feed Ghana project, under which we are testing our soils to inform the application of fertilizer and crop suitability.

We have moved from bronchial subsidies to precision agriculture. We think that every action of the farmer must be detected by science because science and agriculture are inseparable. Then again, we are also looking at this is a program that we are implementing under Feed Ghana project. Integrated landscape restoration and agroforest drive. We are integrating cashew trees and shared trees in our croplands for some specific reasons.

Because trees cashew trees, cashew and shared trees sequester carbon. They improve soil moisture and provide extra income. So by this specific action, Ghana is turning environmental health into livelihood stability.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Thank you very much. I was gonna give everyone

Minister Eric Opoku::

I'm not done.

Gebisa Ejeta:

I'm trying to manage my time here. You go ahead. Finish it.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Good, good. And then the third one, we have some of the agro production enclaves dedicated to root and tuber crop production because these are indigenous crops that can survive all weather. Mind you, globally, Ghana is the second largest producer of cassava. And now we are expanding because with cassava, we can achieve full sufficiency. We are adding processing facilities, and we are encouraging a lot of

people to go into that production. These are specific interventions captured under the Feed Ghana program to ensure that Ghana attains food sufficiency.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Thank you very much. I will go ahead and ask my final question. What's, as we close, what's your call to action for the global community from business leaders to nonprofits and government to invest in, if you may focus here in honor of our laureate this year, some soil solutions for security. If each one of you comment on that.

Minister Henry Musa Kpaka:

Let me think like like we've said, swell is swell science, swell fertility, the environment in general, I think we cannot do it. We are tasked with trying to feed for today, but also taking care of the environment, protecting it for the future. I think we can do it. We have the means to do it with science. We have to build the right set of partnerships.

Stuff that is happening here in Iowa, we should be able to do in Sierra Leone. So, it's how we take these technologies, how we open the corridors, and I think now we have to rely on the private sector to be able to bring some of these and for us as governments to open and create that space. And, we think that's where when we say we're open for business, we're open for investments. That's where most African governments in the food space, there's a reason why African ministers of agriculture are now perfect able salesmen like we are because we know that's what we need to do. We need to attract investment in this space, bring the private sector to bring the know how, to bring the cutting edge for us to be able to feed but also sort of protect and preserve our environment for the future.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Relating to call to action. My call is based on a simple truth. In fact, an incontrovertible tourism that the soil must be seen as an asset for the attainment of full security. And to achieve this, we need targeted and synergistic action from government, from the business and investment community and from the

community develop from the development and nonprofit partners. All of us will have a role to play.

So to governments, government all over the globe, my call to action is this. Governments must mainstream soil health in their national security and investment course. We want to see a situation where national security reports will capture food security. Because national security is anchored on food security. Food insecurity is a potential source for economic and political insecurity.

So government must capture that. Then to the investment community, the business community, we in Ghana invite you to partner with us to invest in our agro production increase, to invest in our industrial parks, to ensure that we reduce the post harvest losses. The world is complaining and crying about hunger. Why? Is it that we produce enough food, yet we are unable to feed the people of the world because of our post handling situation of food.

So we need investment in storage facilities, silos and the rest of them, in marketing, in distribution and in processing. So our doors are open as a nation. We have the potentials. We have the resources. We have the agricultural potentials, but some of you have the expertise and the money to make it work.

Can we have a synergy? And then to the development and the nonprofit community, we in Ghana want to establish what we call soil intelligent core soil intelligence core. We want to make sure that every part of our country, we are able to test the soil. In fact, we are envisaging a situation where the Ghanaian farmer will be on the front line of soil testing, and we can call them soil doctors. That is when we can maximize our output from the soil.

So these are opportunities for people to come and then work with us to achieve. These are standards that we want to set for the whole world to understand that Ghana can can transmogrify to become the food basket of all nations. Thank you very much.

Gebisa Ejeta:

It looks like it looks like we have a little more time than than I thought.

Beth Dunford:

Please wrap up.

Gebisa Ejeta:

I now have to wrap up. And gentlemen, with leaders of secretaries of agriculture from Sierra Leone in Ghana, the future of Africa is in good hands.

Minister Eric Opoku:

Yes.

Gebisa Ejeta:

Thank you very much. It was very.