Independence. Something every nation, new or old, strives to accomplish. Countries have been trying for years to achieve a sense of freedom, self-reliance, and self-government to call themselves an independent nation. In 1975, Cabo Verde reached this idea of independence. It allowed itself to be free from the control of the Portuguese and act on its own, not dependent on any other country to tell itself or help it with how it was supposed to rule. However, is that all independence is? By definition, to be independent is to "not depend on another for likelihood or sustenance." For that to happen, a country must not just be independent in government but also independent in agriculture. The harsh climate, poor soil quality, and frequent droughts across the country have made Cabo Verde unable to rely on itself to feed its citizens and keep stable jobs within the agriculture industry, affecting the entire population. Leaving many worried about whether there is any possibility of sustainable income in the agriculture industry in Cabo Verde at all.

As a moderately developed country, 97% (Foreign, 2024) of Cape Verdean schools have clean water, and 85% have clean sanitation. Cabo Verde's persistent push to keep its schooling systems clean has resulted in a 91% literacy rate in people over 15. This high education rate has allowed the country's citizens job opportunities in tourism, the country's most significant industry, resulting in around 70% of its GDP, and foreign trade. A necessity for the stability of the country's food security. (International Trade Portal, 2024) Just under 75% of food consumed in Cabo Verde is imported (Matrix, 2024). The amount of food imported is due to farmers' inability to grow nutrient-heavy crops year-round due to the harsh soil quality on the islands. Making it impossible to make a profit on their crops and feed their livestock.

Cabo Verde is an island with numerous volcanoes. The volcanoes cause most of its soil to be coarse, rocky, shallow, and not nutrient-heavy. Making it non-arable. Only around 10% of all land in Cabo Verde is arable, making in-country farming currently an instable way of preventing hunger. Cabo Verdes's Climate is already very arid. Experiencing little to no rain during their dry season and only periodic spells of heavy rain during their rainy season, which only lasts 2 -3 months (CapeVerdeIslands, 2023), means that the only plants able to survive on the island must be sparse and drought-resistant. Unluckily, the main crops produced are maize, cowpeas, and coffee. Plants that all need more water than is available in the soil.

Droughts are frequent due to the islands' geographical location, affecting Cabo Verde in recent years. The country is facing the threat of desertification and a major socio-economic crisis. With food and water becoming more insecure, inflation has increased. With the loss of purchasing power, more and more citizens face the daily threat of food insecurity. With the expectation of 10% of the entire population succumbing to the threat of food insecurity (Eduonoo, 2023), the nation's government is putting plans into play to rely more on imports instead of supporting the agriculture business, affecting thousands of rural families.

Cabo Verde is ranked 51st out of all African countries in GDP (International Trade Portal, 2023). The Cabo Verdian economy is dependent on the service field. Transportation and other public services carry the economy because of its high focus on tourism. A big part of the service industry and the most common job in Cabo Verde is commerce. Over 40% (globalEDGE, n.d.) of service work is commerce. Trade in grain, livestock, and other agricultural products is the most prominent aspect of the commerce industry. Due to the droughts affecting farmers' produce, many commerce traders are not buying from native farmers as their livestock is thinner and yield is less—because of the worse produce from farmers, an increase of rural families falling below the poverty line.

One of, if not the most extensive, topic when it comes to environmental debates is climate change. Climate change is easily the most significant aspect of global environmental problems. This causes unseen predicaments and new issues because of unfamiliarity and general neglect of the topic. Climate change is one of the main issues for all life in Cabo Verde. Rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and other manifestations of climate change foreshadow peril for the country's citizens. As previously stated, Cabo Verde's biggest issue brought about by climate change is drought. 80% of all Cabo Verdians have said droughts have become more worrisome over the past decade. (Eduonoo, 2023) They have made the agricultural industry very insecure for farmers. Disrupting local fisheries affects plumbing and, most importantly, degrading soil quality. Most of Cabo verde is un-farmable. The already extremely low percentage of arable land on the islands is concentrated on only 5 out of the 10 (datacommons, n.d.). Most of it is on the islands of Santiago and Santo Antao. Because of the droughts, the soil has lost most of its nutrients. It is becoming more like most of the soil quality on the other islands through increased erosion, desertification, and salinization, reducing the land's productivity. The lack of vegetation cover due to prolonged dry periods increases the vulnerability of the soil to wind and water erosion, compounding the difficulty of maintaining fertile land for farming.

Additionally, the droughts add to water scarcity. It forces families, particularly women and children, to spend more time than needed fetching water than going to school. And because more bottled water is found in more urban areas, people, particularly those living on the island of Santo Antao, are migrating towards those areas to cope with the stress. Families are seeking better living conditions, leaving behind their traditional values and farming jobs in search of a better life, creating social challenges and a loss of community.

Cabo Verde has many different family types and dynamics on the island. Many families in more rural areas rely on themselves and their yield for food and selling as a leading income source. Cabo Verdian families typically are around 4-5 people (CapeVerdeIslands, 2023). The average family plot is around 200ft, (CapeVerdeIslands, 2023) and more crops are needed to feed their families off their yield. A big part of the Cape Verdian culture is their love for fishing. An average urban family's diet consists of fish, crabs, lobster, and other seafood as a main dish.Nevertheless, because of the low amount of fish found near reefs because of rapidly changing sea levels, almost all fish consumed on the island comes from imports. As previously stated, commerce is one of the most enormous job opportunities in the islands. Because Cabo Verdian fishermen are not catching enough, and farmers are not growing enough, prices of food found and grown on the island are skyrocketing, making market traders resort to imported food like most superstores. Since these stores usually are cheaper and now sell the same product as the everyday commerce trader, citizens on the islands are buying less and less from the markets, losing tons of citizens their jobs. Climate change and soil degradation profoundly affect family life in Cabo Verde. Agriculture, a primary livelihood for many, suffers from the unpredictable climate and poor soil, leading to food insecurity and economic instability. Families dependent on farming face reduced crop yields and income, exacerbating poverty and limiting access to education and healthcare.

The biggest strength that Cabo Verde has compared to other countries in similar situations is its robust educational system. Its universal healthcare systems and government focus on its student life creates a situation where most minors have better living conditions in school due to the access to clean water there. Over 91% of the Cabo Verdian population is literate. (United Nations, n.d.) An astounding number of 129,000 youth are enrolled in school (United Nations, n.d.). Lots of them are set to graduate. The push for education from the government and the citizens of Cabo Verde's constant interaction with foreign people, ideas, and lifestyles puts many of the population in a position where they have the intellectual capability to help their country with its needs.

**FAO's China South-South cooperations programme**

With the right help and guidance, the people of Cabo Verde can be taught the necessary skills to keep their farming/agricultural industry afloat. All that is needed is the right push and aid to help them on their way. This aid comes from the FAO's China South-South cooperations (SSC) programme, which aims to teach Cabo Verdian Farmers how to deal with their climate, soil, and pest problems.

It has already been shown that this project has worked. The FAO's advancements have helped many farmers learn about the soil on their farms and how to combat the many pests that were previously dormant but are now active due to the heat. One farmer states, "It was in this training that I learned how to deal with the soil." (FAO and ICRISAT, 2019.) China has gone through the various problems Cabo Verde is currently facing and, with their assistance, FAO aims to help them in their quest for a better agricultural life. Nevertheless, on top of that, the FAO needs to help not only farmers but also students so the youth have a better chance of not needing foreign help again and can become completely sustainable themselves. Government assistance is crucial to realizing these goals. With the push of such programs to teach about the country's land and how to navigate it, the available arable land can yield much more than previously recorded. Helping the soil and homegrown food crisis be managed from now till the distant future.

The country's high literacy rate proves that the general population, especially the youth, has the intelligence needed to enter the agricultural field and use their applied knowledge from school to better their country. So a question that might be proposed is why they haven't. This is the same reason many youths in the U.S. neglect agricultural majors and careers. Job opportunities in tech and STEM are considered more exciting and profitable. A solution to this problem of negligence in agricultural careers can be solved by a nationwide campaign pushing not only the importance of agriculture but also the tons of different fields and technological advancements added to the field. Introducing students to the more robotic side of agriculture with engineering farming tools and the more mathematical side with the financial aspects of agriculture. Both are two of the highest-paying jobs in the country. It could strike more interest in the hearts of the youth and get them to pursue a career in agriculture. With the expansion of their horizons in the industry, this plan could change the future of agriculture in Cabo Verde forever.

The tools are in place for Cabo Verde, a country famous for its rich tourist attractions such as beaches, mountains, and forests. It is important to transform into an agriculturally sound environment where no person has to worry about job security or how much food can be put on the table. In this essay, I hope to shed light on the importance of soil, climate change, and keeping the agricultural business alive. Reaching agricultural independence is a challenging task. Nor can it be completed quickly; it is up to our youth to find interest in agricultural fields and work to improve their situation. With the determination and the right resources, Cabo Verde has the tools to keep its agricultural field afloat.

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