

RE-AKUFO-ADDO COLLAPSED COCOA SECTOR

The attention of the Management of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has been drawn to publications on certain media platforms citing statements made by former President John Dramani Mahama, alluding to a collapse of Ghana's cocoa sector.

The Former President made these statements while touring the Western North Region, claiming the producer price and mismanagement have collapsed the cocoa sector. Mr Mahama justified farmers giving their cocoa farms to illegal mining due to low remuneration.

Management of COCOBOD refutes the notion of a collapsing cocoa industry. Such statements are misleading and detrimental to a vital sector like cocoa, which forms the foundation of Ghana's economy. We, therefore, wish to use the opportunity to make some clarifications and also set the records straight.

It is widely acknowledged that Galamsey operations pose a significant danger to our nation, and any attempts to justify or rationalise the conversion of a piece of land, especially a cocoa farm, into a Galamsey site, like the Former President sought to do, must be met with contempt.

This menace has the potential to negate all the investments made by the government to modernise cocoa farming and improve productivity. It is, therefore, crucial that prominent figures in our society exercise caution when making public statements that rationalize cocoa farmers trading their farms for temporary monetary benefit through illegal mining.

Management also wishes to place on record, that the Former President's statement regarding the increase in cocoa producer prices every year during his administration is inaccurate, since the records available point to the opposite.

Specifically, there was no upward adjustment of the producer price of cocoa in the 2012/2013 Crop Season.

Similarly, the producer price of the preceding season was maintained for the 2015/2016 Crop Season, with no upward adjustment.

Indeed, within a three-year period of the Former President's administration, i.e. the 2010/2011 to 2012/2013 crop season, there was a total of six (6) percent increase in the producer price. In contrast, within the last three years, there has been a 23 percent, 0 percent and a 21 percent increase in the producer price of cocoa.

It is important to note that the producer price is largely determined by international market prices as well as other industry costs, and every effort is made to arrive at a producer price that is fair to farmers even when international market conditions are unfavourable.

We further wish to put on record and also assure the general public that the cocoa industry is not collapsing as being portrayed by the Former President. Ghana recorded its highest ever cocoa production volume of one million and forty-five thousand five hundred metric tonnes (1,045,500) in the 2020/21 Crop Season. A cocoa industry which holds the position as the second highest producer in the world cannot also be said to have collapsed.

COCOBOD continues to invest in interventions which will ensure not just the sustenance but the growth of the industry. Notably, the Hand Pollination Programme that increases pod count; the Mass Pruning Programme to enhance pests and disease control and induce flowering as well as the Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme which seeks to deal with the Cocoa Swollen Shoot virus disease that has ravaged about 45% of our cocoa tree stock.

This is the biggest intervention that has ever been made to reverse the major threats that face the industry.

Currently, through a facility from the African Development Bank (AfDB), a total of 38515.54 hectares of otherwise diseased and unproductive cocoa farms have been fully rehabilitated so far, and some 59151.44 hectares have also been treated. The process of restoring other diseased farms is ongoing across the country.

For the first time in the history of the industry, COCOBOD is enrolling cocoa farmers across the country onto the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS) to ensure a decent retirement.

COCOBOD remains committed to supporting farmers and ensuring the sustainability of the cocoa industry, and we will continue to work closely with our stakeholders to achieve our goals.

We call on the general public to support our efforts.