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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION IN GHANA: A REVIEW

Joseph Kofi Teye and Dzifa Torvikey

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CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAGDS	Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development Strategy
ADP	Agricultural Diversification Project
ADRA	Adventist Relief Agency
ADVANCE	Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement Project
AFD	Agence Française de Développement [French Cooperation Agency]
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGRA	Alliance for Green Revolution for Africa
AMSEC	Agricultural Mechanization Services Enterprise Center
ATT	Agricultural Technology Transfer Project
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMB	Cocoa Marketing Board
COMPACI	Competitive African Cotton Initiative
CPP	Convention People's Party
DACF	District Assembly Common Fund
DA	District Assembly
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOWAP	ECOWAS Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFZ	Export-free zones
EMQAP	Export Marketing and Quality Awareness Project
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme

EU	European Union
F2F–WA	Farmer to Farmer Program in West Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASDEP	Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy
FinGAP	Financing Ghanaian Agriculture Project
FOB	Freight on Board
GAIP	Ghana Agricultural Insurance Programme
GASIP	Ghana Agriculture Sector Investment Programme
GCAP	Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHABROP	Ghana Broiler Rehabilitation Project
GHC	Ghanaian cedi
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GMO	Genetically modified organism
GOPDC	Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GREL	Ghana Rubber Estates Limited
GSGDA	Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooporation Agency
KfW	Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau [German Reconstruction Credit Institute]
LAP	Land Administration Project
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
METASIP	Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan

MOAP	Market-Oriented Agriculture Programme
MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MTADP	Medium Term Agricultural Development Programme
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NOPL	National Oil Palms Limited
NPP	New Patriotic Party
NRGP	Northern Rural Growth Programme
OPCP	Oil Palm Development Project
PFJ	Planting for Food and Jobs
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
PPP	private–public partnership
RAFiP	Rural and Agricultural Finance Programme
REP	Rural Enterprises Programme Phase
RTIMP	Root and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme
RTIP	Root and Tuber Improvement Programme
SADA	Savannah-Accelerated Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAAPP	West Arica Agricultural Productivity Program
WFP	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the political economy of agricultural commercialisation in Ghana from the year 2000 to 2018. Agriculture is a major economic activity in Ghana, contributing about 20 percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and employing 42 percent of the economically active population (GSS 2016). Over the past three decades, the agricultural sector averagely grew at about 5 percent per annum, making Ghana's agricultural sector one of the top performers in Africa, and contributing to poverty reduction and food security (Wiggins and Leturque 2011; Sarpong and Anyidoho 2012).

The agricultural sector's performance is, however, threatened by a number of challenges. For instance, crop production is mainly rain-fed and therefore severely affected by climate variability (Teye et al. 2015). Some recent studies have shown that rising temperatures and rainfall variability has caused massive crop failure and out migration in Northern Ghana (van der Geest 2011; Teye et al. 2015) and the coastal savannah zone of Ghana (Teye and Owusu 2015). The agricultural sector is further affected by tenure insecurity (Amanor 2010) and low productivity as a result of the limited use of technology (Sarpong and Anyidoho 2012). According to Martey et al. (2012), another problem that affects agriculture productivity is lack of infrastructure (e.g. roads to convey farm produce to market) and basic services (e.g. water, electricity) in many farming communities. In recent years, the rate of growth of the sector declined from 7.4 percent in 2008 to 0.8 percent in 2011 before rising again to 2.3 percent in 2012, and then 5.3 percent in 2014. In 2015, the growth rate of the sector declined again to 0.04 percent (MoFA 2016).

While a number of researchers have examined the processes, drivers and impacts of agricultural commercialisation in Ghana (see Huddleston and Matthew 2007; Amanor 2010; Yaro et al. 2016), the relationship between changing political landscape and agricultural policy is neither fully understood nor explored. This is odd given that we know agricultural policies of African countries tend to be influenced by political context and interests of political leaders. Drawing on the 'narrative–actor–politics' framework (Keeley and Scoones 2003) and the 'political contexts and incentives' framework (Chinsinga and Poulton 2014), the paper analyses how key actors, narratives and their interests have shaped the processes of agricultural commercialisation in Ghana. The paper, which is based on a review of both published and unpublished works, including government policy documents and administrative reports, addresses the following research questions: How has the changing political landscape shaped the evolution of agricultural commercialisation in Ghana, especially since 2000? How successful are different interest groups in promoting their preferred framing of the agricultural commercialisation process? What were the salient political conditions under which diverse agricultural commercialisation initiatives were pursued?

This case study is very important because, unlike the situation in many other African countries where large-scale farms dominate the agricultural landscape, agricultural commercialisation in Ghana has been largely smallholder based, and 80 percent of land is held under customary land tenure (Kasanga and Kotey 2001; Tsikata and 2011; Yaro et al. 2017). The paper argues that some agricultural commercialisation strategies are chosen over others because they are promoted by powerful policy actors who provide useful resources for policy implementation and whose narratives are consistent with the interests of policy makers. While farmers themselves tend to have limited influence on agricultural commercialisation policies, some policies have been implemented to solicit their support during national elections. Since 2000, successive governments have introduced a number of policies and programmes that support the smallholder, as a result of recent democratisation and regional agreements that call on governments to increase support for the agricultural sector.

The paper is structured into five sections. Section 2 presents the agricultural policy context which highlights features of the agricultural sector, contribution of agriculture to the economy of Ghana and political changes. Section 3 presents theoretical perspectives that will be relied upon for the analysis, while Section

4 discusses the main policies and how they have been shaped by various narratives, actors and interests. Finally, Section 5 presents the main conclusions from the analysis.

2. AGRICULTURAL POLICY CONTEXT

This section provides background information to aid the analysis to be performed later. It describes the features of the agricultural sector in Ghana, with specific reference to the main agricultural activities and contribution of the sector to the economy. The section also analyses the changes in the political system.

2.1. Features and importance of the agricultural sector in Ghana

Ghana's agricultural sector is made up of four broad sub-sectors, namely crops, animals, fisheries, and forestry. The crops sub-sector is the most important in terms of employment, contribution to GDP and wealth creation. Although Ghana has a total land mass of 238,535sq km, only 57 percent is arable. There are three distinct agro-ecological zones, namely the forest, savannah and coastal zones. Crops grown in the forest zone include cocoa, oil palm, coffee, rubber, cashew nut, citrus, plantain and cocoyam. The savannah zones support shea, yam, maize, sorghum, millet, cowpeas and groundnuts. Vegetables, maize, sugar cane, sweet potato, soya bean, cassava and coconut are mainly grown in the coastal areas. Rice, cassava, mangoes and vegetables are widely cultivated across the three agro-ecological zones. Cocoa, oil palm and cashew nut are the most valuable commercial crops, while maize, cassava, rice and yams are the most important staple crops. Cocoa, the most important commercial crop, is produced in six of the ten administrative regions in Ghana, although the Western region alone produces about 50 percent of the total output of this crop (see Table 1). Incentives for cocoa production have been historically prioritised by successive governments and this has resulted in an increase in output of the crop since 2000 (see Table 1). The production of oil palm has also increased since 2000 as a result of similar incentives for the commodity (see Table 2).

Table 1 Annual production of cocoa (2000/01–2016/17) (tonnes)

Year	Regions						
	Ashanti	Brong Ahafo	Central	Eastern	Western	Volta	Total
2000/01	67,225	31,393	30,047	44,613	187,172	1,494	361,944
2001/02	56,983	31,354	29,992	39,348	181,865	1,021	340,563
2002/03	82,445	45,308	39,989	51,604	276,587	913	496,846
2003/04	121,269	69,695	55,819	68,634	419,650	1,909	736,976
2004/05	90,535	55,025	48,868	59,308	344,246	1,336	599,318
2005/06	133,026	72,766	55,497	55,871	422,223	1,001	740,384
2006/07	95,316	65,600	41,926	51,091	359,846	761	614,540
2007/08	125,270	66,921	62,378	55,916	369,458	838	680,781
2008/09	110,592	61,560	60,986	63,356	413,192	951	710,637
2009/10	97,307	60,495	56,513	59,804	357,323	595	632,037
2010/11	170,872	102,475	77,753	79,842	590,371	3,241	1,024,554
2011/12	134,295	76,511	71,760	67,713	525,237	3,833	879,349
2012/13	137,379	88,034	71,540	75,912	458,107	4,495	835,467
2013/14	156,871	87,050	85,435	80,692	482,691	3,481	896,220
2014/15	136,134	81,897	70,690	68,415	380,468	2,650	740,254
2015/16	133,462	74,943	75,870	75,787	415,302	2,680	778,044
2016/17	171,251	96,865	94,603	93,527	486,550	6,280	949,076

Source: Compiled by the authors based on figures supplied by MoFA.

Table 2 Crude palm oil production (tonnes)

Year	Company					Sub-total	Medium-scale mills	Small-scale and other private holdings	Total
	GOPDC	BOPP	TOPP	NGL (NOPL)	AMEEN				
2006	28,743.10	16,485.00	20,348.00	7,019.00	9,805.00	82,400.10	8,387.00	250,888.00	341,675.10
2007	17,842.70	15,305.00	14,797.10	7,721.00	10,785.50	66,451.30	9,225.70	275,976.80	351,653.80
2008	18,055.68	14,960.18	14,249.66	8,492.83	11,863.68	67,622.03	10,148.07	303,572.32	381,342.42
2009	20,143.00	14,124.00	17,373.00	12,775.00	11,000.00	75,415.00	10,836.00	316,222.00	402,473.00
2010	18,960.54	14,232.57	14,544.40	11,812.93	12,589.86	72,140.30	11,584.66	342,012.51	425,737.47
2011	18,045.80	13,916.82	13,627.94	12,856.74	13,314.50	71,761.80	12,357.44	364,279.77	448,399.01
2012	17,131.05	13,601.07	12,711.48	13,900.55	14,039.14	71,383.29	13,130.22	386,547.04	471,060.55
2013	16,216.30	17,554.00	11,795.02	14,944.36	14,763.78	75,273.46	13,903.00	408,814.30	497,990.76
2014	17,027.12	17,817.31	11,971.95	15,168.53	14,985.24	76,970.13	14,598.15	429,255.02	520,823.30
2015	17,476.16	18,173.66	12,930.16	15,579.07	15,284.94	79,443.99	15,345.05	450,913.43	545,702.48

Source: MoFA (2016).

Despite recent improvement in agricultural technology, the agricultural sector is still dominated by smallholder and family subsistence farms. About 90 percent of smallholder farmers cultivate a maximum of 2ha of land. The major commercial crops are largely produced by smallholder farmers; for instance, they produce 90 percent of the annual cocoa output in Ghana. Similarly, although large-scale enterprises are involved in the production of oil palm, smallholder farmers produce about 80 percent of the total output of this crop.

The agricultural sector contributes significantly to socio-economic development in Ghana, especially in terms of contribution to GDP, foreign exchange, and employment. In the 1970s, the sector contributed about 40 percent of GDP. Since the early 1980s, the sector's contribution to GDP has declined tremendously. As shown in Table 3, the contribution of agriculture to GDP has declined from about 30 percent in 2000 to 20.10 percent in 2016 while the contribution of the service sector has increased from 48.8 percent in 2000 to 54.3 percent in 2016. A significant proportion of the contribution of agriculture comes from the crop sub-sector, which contributes about 16 percent to GDP. Within the crop sector, cocoa is the most important crop, contributing averagely 3 percent to GDP. The agricultural sector's contribution to employment has also declined from nearly 58 percent in 2000 to about 42 percent in 2017

Table 3 Contribution of various sectors to GDP (2000–2015)

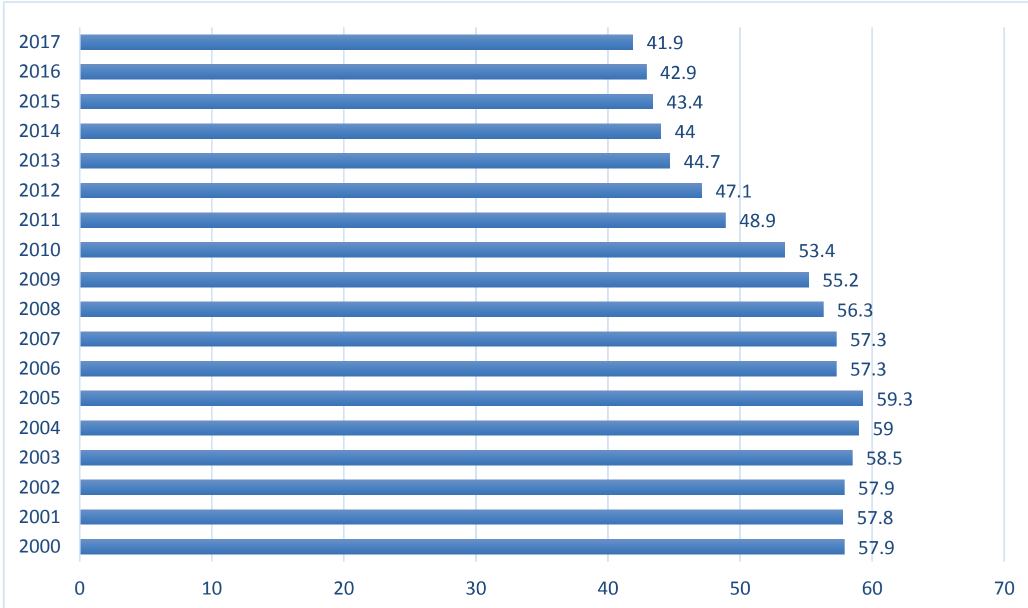
Year	Service	Industry	Agriculture	Crops	Livestock	Forestry and logging	Fishing
2000	48.81	21.25	29.94	19.96	2.63	4.37	2.99
2001	49.20	21.01	29.80	19.84	2.64	4.39	2.92
2002	49.26	21.04	29.70	19.77	2.65	4.41	2.87
2003	48.58	20.81	30.61	20.80	2.62	4.41	2.79
2004	47.88	20.37	31.75	22.03	2.58	4.34	2.80
2005	48.12	20.65	31.23	21.79	2.53	4.31	2.60
2006	48.80	20.80	30.40	21.30	2.45	4.13	2.52
2007	50.20	20.75	29.05	20.27	2.30	4.18	2.30
2008	48.61	20.42	30.96	22.45	2.12	3.74	2.66
2009	49.19	19.00	31.81	23.63	2.04	3.68	2.45
2010	51.13	19.12	29.75	21.71	2.01	3.72	2.31
2011	49.10	25.56	25.34	19.07	1.80	2.77	1.70
2012	49.13	28.02	22.85	17.17	1.59	2.58	1.51
2013	49.79	27.81	22.40	17.43	1.35	2.24	1.38
2014	51.94	26.56	21.50	16.75	1.22	2.34	1.18
2015	54.37	25.35	20.28	15.74	1.16	2.28	1.10

Source: MoFA (2016).

(see Figure 1). The most recent Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS6) indicates that 90 percent of the rural population are engaged in agriculture.

imports were GHC11.89 billion and GHC3.55 billion respectively, giving a balance of food trade surplus of GHC8.34 billion (GSS 2017). Food constituted about 17 percent of total merchandise imports and 32 percent of total mechanise exports in 2013 (GSS 2016).

Figure 1 Percentage of population employed by agricultural sector



Source: Author's own, compiled from data in World Development Indicators, World Bank.

The agricultural sector also generates huge foreign exchange. As shown in Table 4, the main exports of Ghana have historically been agricultural products and minerals. Currently, cocoa contributes about 20 percent of total export earnings. The value of raw cocoa beans exported has increased from about GHC1,211 million in 2010 to about GHC10,147 million in 2015. Cashew nut has also become an important agricultural export commodity in recent years. The value of cashew nuts exported has also increased from about GHC19 million in 2010 to about GHC1,069 million in 2015. The agricultural sector contributes significantly to food security and poverty reduction. As shown in Figure 2, since 2004, the custom value of total food exports has increased tremendously in relation to food imports. In 2016, the custom value of total food exports and

Despite the contribution of the agricultural sector to food security, a significant proportion of the population, especially in the drier zones, are food insecure because they depend on rain-fed agriculture. The proportion of households in the entire country that were under-nourished declined from 5.8 percent in 2008–2010 to 5 percent in 2011–2013. A significant proportion of the under-nourished persons are in the drier savannah zones. The proportion of the population that was food insecure was highest in the Upper East Region (28 percent), followed by the Upper West Region (16 percent) and Northern Region (10 percent) (GoG 2013).

Table 4 Ghana's major exports (in GHC million)

Mining	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Gold (bullion)	3,341.1	5,111.7	8,947.7	8,155.8	12,416.8	14,605.0
Unwrought gold (inc. gold plated with platinum), non-monetary	539.4	1,395.2	2,338.3	2,106.8	416.9	1,183.6
Agriculture	**2010**	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Cocoa beans, superior quality raw beans	1,211.1	3,127.7	3,530.4	2,694.3	5,787.4	10,146.6
Cashew nuts	19.1	709.4	273.0	454.0	293.9	1,069.1
Cocoa products	986.6	1,324.8	1,320.4	1,149.3	1,897.1	–

Source: GSS (2016, as cited by GIPC 2017).

Figure 2 Food exports and imports in Ghana

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data provided by GSS.

2.2. Political context: features of the system of governance and changes in the political system

Ghana's political landscape has witnessed several changes over the years. Ghana became an independent country on 6 March 1957, with Dr Kwame Nkrumah as its first prime minister. The country became a Republic in 1960 and Dr Nkrumah was elected as the first president on the ticket on the Convention People's Party (CPP). He weakened the local government system on the grounds that decentralisation would bring about divisiveness (Ayee 1994). During this period, however, elected parliamentarians and the executive were the influential policy makers. The CPP headed by President Nkrumah was removed in 1966 by a coup. Ghana experienced political instability under several military rulers until 1981 when Jerry John Rawlings took power for the second time. His Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) ruled Ghana till 1992 when it transformed itself into a political party, namely the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The New Patriotic Party (NPP), led by John Agyekum Kufour, ruled Ghana after winning general elections in 2000 and 2004. The NDC, however, came back to power in 2008 until it lost in the 2016 elections to the NPP led by President Nana Addo Dankwa.

While the participation of citizens in policy formulation was very limited during the military regimes (1966–1992), the re-introduction of a democratic governance system has created a platform for state and societal actors to influence public policy processes. Under the current democratic dispensation, the legislature is made up of parliamentarians who help to formulate laws. In response to donor pressures, in 1988 the country embarked on a decentralisation process and 216 districts were created. The District Assemblies (DAs) are made up of 70 percent elected representatives and 30 percent government appointees. The political heads of the DAs are the District, Municipal or Metropolitan Chief Executives. A chief executive, together with one-third of DA members, is appointed by the ruling government. Each electoral area has a unit committee, which is the smallest governance structure in the decentralised structure. While these decentralised structures are well organised on paper, in practice decision-making powers have still not been effectively transferred to local actors (Ayee and Tay 1998; Crook and Mannor 1998; Teye 2008). The Ghanaian situation is consistent with the assertion of Olowu (2001) that poor results of decentralisation programmes in Africa are mainly due to the fact that most governments are not really committed to democratic decentralisation but have formulated decentralised policies just to respond to donor pressure.

Ghana's current democratic system is based on an executive presidential system with key appointments, including that of ministerial positions, made by the president. Some of the ministerial appointees are also cabinet members who deliberate on key policy issues. In addition to the cabinet, the constitutionally established National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) has its chairman as part of the cabinet. The next political structure is the legislature with 275 elected members across the ten regions of the country.

In general, while democracy has deepened the participation of people in policy processes, many authors have noted that the process is still controlled by the ruling government (Mohammed 2015; Koduah et al. 2015). Kpessa and Atuguba (2013) argue that while there is a lot of symbolism in the citizen engagement in policy- and law-making processes, it is still a top-down process. Therefore, like other sectors of the economy, agricultural policies in Ghana are still largely formulated by top government officials with some inputs from state technocrats. The relative autonomy of a ruling government is further reinforced by the weakness of civil society groups. It must be stressed, however, that national agricultural policy goals are also usually in line with regional and global conventions and declarations. For instance, ECOWAS policies on seeds and fertilisers have influenced the development of similar policies in Ghana. Also, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), which requires African governments to allocate 10 percent of expenditure to agriculture, has influenced the Government of Ghana to increase its spending on agriculture in recent years.

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

This section presents the main theoretical perspectives that will be employed to discuss the findings. These are the 'narrative–actor–politics' and the 'political contexts and incentives' frameworks. The section also provides the various definitions of the concept 'agricultural commercialisation'.

3.1. Narrative–actor–politics framework

The main theoretical perspective employed to explain the empirical evidence in this paper is the 'narrative–actor–politics' framework (Keeley and Scoones 2003) which assumes that public policy processes are influenced by an interaction of three components, namely narratives and discourses, actors and networks, and politics and interests. The framework posits that in order to explain the evolution of specific policies it is important to understand not only the 'narratives' or scientific framing of issues but also the way the policy actors are organised around these narratives, and how they use these narratives to promote certain interests (IDS 2006: 4; Sarpong and Anyidoho 2012).

The 'policy narratives' define the problem to be solved and provide possible solutions and interventions that can help solve the problem. Policy narratives that suit the interests of powerful political actors are more likely to be accepted, despite contrary perspectives even if they do not seem to provide viable solutions. In a stylised manner, they detail the aim, causes and impacts of policies. Narratives that are accepted because they resonate with the interests of powerful political actors are usually popularised by a section of the media and advocacy groups which are connected with the powerful political actors. In this way, the narratives become embedded in particular institutional structures and actor networks (IDS 2006). Narratives are accepted when they are consistent with the political economy and are also in line with the interests of policy makers. Based on this assumption, the paper will identify the policy narratives that have contributed to the adoption of particular agricultural commercialisation policies in Ghana.

'Actor and networks' refer to coalitions of interest groups (individuals or institutions) with a shared vision. The existence of actor networks can enhance the sharing of ideas on policy narratives (Latour and Porter 1996; Law and Callon 1988). Networks can also gradually change narratives or reinforce them as they bring together people who exchange ideas on policy goals. The 'politics and interests' component of the framework assumes that the political context is shaped by the interests of particular regime authorities to remain in power. The policy process is also assumed not to be value-free but rather driven by competing interests, whereby different interest groups use different strategies to influence policy makers.

3.2. Political contexts and incentives framework

The 'narrative–actor–politics' framework is supplemented by another framework which focuses on political and bureaucratic contexts and the incentives they generate (Chinsinga and Poulton 2014; Poulton 2014). The framework is particularly useful for analysing government's interests in supporting smallholder agriculture. The framework, which is based on a political economy perspective, assumes that a government may have strong incentives to support smallholder farmers in situations where it perceives that prioritising investment in smallholder agriculture can influence its chances of remaining in power or maintaining medium–long-term political stability. Given the large share of the population in many African countries that lives in rural areas, democratisation might be expected to increase the incentives to invest in smallholder agriculture in order to maintain power. However, Poulton (2012) demonstrated that this does not always happen because African governments have a variety of ways of maintaining support – including appeals to ethnic allegiance, control over land access, and focusing attention on local development issues – such that rural voters can only rarely be said to exchange their votes for better agricultural policy and/or enhanced investment. It has also been argued that farmers are sometimes unable to effectively agitate for pro-poor policies because they are a heterogeneous social group (cash crop producers, landowners, wage workers) that finds it difficult to mobilise themselves for political solidarity and/or fight for common goals (Johnson 2001: 11). The analytical strategy is to examine the extent to which successive governments change agricultural commercialisation processes in line with changes in the political economy.

3.3. Conceptualising agricultural commercialisation

While it is generally acknowledged that agricultural commercialisation is good for dealing with food security, reducing poverty and engineering rural development (Huddleston and Matthew 2007), there are competing narratives on the best strategy for promoting agricultural commercialisation. Govereh et al. (1999) and Sokoni (2008) define agricultural commercialisation as a process involving the transformation from production for subsistence to production for the market. This definition does not explicitly link agricultural commercialisation to the processing of farm produce. Hagos and Geta (2016) assert that agricultural commercialisation is affected by both internal and external factors. The external factors include technological change, development of new infrastructure and market institutions, and trade policies affecting prices. On the other hand, factors such as smallholder resource endowments, including land and other natural capital, labour, physical capital and human capital are considered to be internal determinants of commercialisation of agriculture.

In Ghana's policy documents, agricultural commercialisation is defined as the process of increasing 'the proportion of the quantity of commodity produced that is sold' (MoFA 2010: 38). While this definition, does not directly link agricultural commercialisation to the processing of farm produce, Ghana's agricultural commercialisation initiatives actually focus on various segments of the agriculture value chain. Recent agricultural policy documents state that most of the strategies are aimed at promoting 'a modernised agriculture culminating in a structurally transformed economy and evident in food security, employment opportunities and reduced poverty' (MoFA n.d.).

4. ACTORS, NARRATIVES AND AGRICULTURAL COMMERCIALISATION POLICY CHANGES

The aim of this section is to analyse the actors, narratives and interests that have driven agricultural policy in Ghana since the year 2000. Alternative narratives on agricultural commercialisation have largely centred on strategies for agricultural commercialisation and aspects of the agricultural value chain that should be prioritised (see Yaro et al. 2016). The key interest groups that have made efforts to shape commercialisation programmes include: (a) large-scale and smallholder farmers producing cash crops (oil palm, rubber, cocoa) and who are interested in getting improved access to land and higher producer prices; (b) smallholder food producers who are interested in getting input subsidies; (c) local private and foreign investors who want market liberalisation, improved access to land and tax incentives; (d) civil society groups who are interested in protecting peasant farmers; (e) state officials and policy makers who want to increase government revenue; and (f) donors/non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which are interested in using agricultural commercialisation to promote broader development. The narratives of these actors and how they have influenced agricultural commercialisation are discussed based on the frameworks discussed in Section 3. We analyse the agricultural policy changes by focusing on changing narratives and major agricultural commercialisation policies; the role of donors in agricultural commercialisation; funding and subsidies on inputs; and agricultural commercialisation pathways and land markets. While the analysis focuses on policy changes since 2000, we begin the section with a historical analysis of the agricultural commercialisation policies since the colonial era so as to provide the historical context for subsequent analysis. We also sometimes make reference to earlier periods, especially where recent policies have important historical undertones.

4.1. Evolution of agricultural commercialisation policies/programmes

The agrarian political economy of Ghana has gone through several changes since the colonial era. While subsistence food production was the major agriculture activity in the Gold Coast during the pre-colonial era, the main goal of agricultural policy in the colonial era (1874–1956) was to produce agricultural raw materials to feed British industries and also raise adequate revenue for the colony (Dickson 1969; Hilson 2002). The colonial agricultural policies stressed production of export crops, such as oil palm, cocoa and coffee. Although the Dutch introduced the plantation system to the then Gold Coast in the early eighteenth century, the early British colonial rulers actually favoured production by peasant farmers (Huddleston and Matthew 2007) for fears that extensive land acquisitions for plantations could alienate the peasants and create local opposition and conflicts, given the dominance of the traditional land tenure system (Aryeetey et al. 2005).

The production of cash crops integrated peasants into capitalist modes of production and market exchange although land holdings were still small. The colonial government established well-controlled input subsidy and marketing schemes. However, only farmers who produced export commodities (e.g. cocoa, oil palm and coffee) benefited from government subsidies and commodity marketing programmes. The colonial administration also established the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB) (now Cocoa COCOBOD), an agency which was charged with the development of the cocoa sector in the colony.

The support for smallholder farmers during this era is a result of the political interests of the British colonial administration, especially its fears that the establishment of plantations would alienate peasant farmers which could cause political instability and undermine the colonial government. This is consistent with the argument that the political context and the desire to maintain power can influence governments to support smallholder farmers (see Poulton 2014). However, the benefits of agricultural commercialisation during this era accrued only to farmers who were producing export commodities in the forest zone. Staple food producers were losers because their farming activities were not consistent with the colonial administration's interests.

While many of the agricultural policies implemented between 1957 and 1960 were not too different from those of the colonial era, some policy changes were introduced since 1961 by the first post-colonial government led by President Nkrumah. In this era, Ghana implemented socialist policies based on the belief by Nkrumah's government that capitalism was not good for development. Counter narratives which supported capitalism were championed by the business community and western development partners but these were ignored. A dual production system was introduced to deal with two different issues, namely the feeding of industries and the feeding of citizens. As a way of producing raw materials to feed new industries, the production of tree crops – namely cocoa, oil palm, tobacco and rubber – was actively promoted just as in the colonial era. However, some new crops such as sugar cane, which fed the sugar factories, were also promoted. In contrast with the colonial era whereby smallholders were supported massively to produce for export, Nkrumah's government supported large-scale state plantations on the grounds that small-scale agriculture was difficult to modernise (Yaro et al. 2016). As a way of promoting large-scale agriculture, state farms, workers brigade and farmers' co-operatives were established. These units were expected to help transfer modern techniques of farming to peasant farmers under a seven-year development plan 1962/63–1969/70 (Miracle and Seidman 1968). It was also the period when agricultural mechanisation was used as a tool to enhance production (Songsore 2003). These commercial crops also received input subsidies. In addition to supporting commercial crops, attempts were also made to promote crops and agricultural products that were aimed at solving the nutritional needs of the population. Hence, rice, cereals and fisheries production were promoted in many areas of the country.

After the overthrow of the Nkrumah regime in 1966, the seven-year development plan was abandoned. It was replaced with an economic stabilisation policy whereby many measures were taken to support the production of cocoa and non-cocoa crops such as rice. When General I.K. Acheampong took over power in 1972, he emphasised large-scale private investment in plantation agriculture. However, an effective collaboration between large-scale and small-scale farmers was promoted to enhance production for export and industry. Acheampong's agricultural commercialisation policy emphasised production for consumption by using the slogan 'Operation Feed Yourself'. It prioritised self-sufficiency in food production and encouraged even urban dwellers to have backyard gardens. To push through the agenda, subsidised inputs and credit were given to farmers, while agricultural machinery imports were rendered duty free (Lemmenmeier 2011). The period also saw the mechanised production of rice, and the private sector took the lead in such production with state support of inputs and guaranteed market (van Hear 1984). It also emphasised production to feed the industries by the slogan 'Operation Feed Your Industries'. Ghana's agricultural sector, however, faced serious challenges in the latter part of the 1970s as a result of economic crises that affected state support to the agricultural sector.

As a way of dealing with serious economic challenges that confronted Ghana in the 1970s and early 1980s, the government adopted an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) in 1983 and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in 1988 (Kim 2013). In the agricultural sector, the broad policies adopted included the removal of subsidies, promotion of the production of export crops, and trade liberalisation (Yaro et al. 2016). The main vision of SAPs was to enhance the production of export crops through improved technology and promote value addition to agricultural products by emphasising the processing of food crops (Brooks et al. 2007). The neoliberal agriculture and trade narratives which led to the adoption of SAPs were promoted by international donors, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Aryeetey and Tarp 2000). Counter narratives which centred on the negative effects of SAPs were suggested by several groups in Ghana (e.g. civil society groups, university teachers, farmers and urban dwellers) who were worried about the impacts of SAPs on livelihoods. The government, however, adopted the ERP and SAPs because it badly needed the support of the IMF and the World Bank, which were proposing the reforms as conditions for providing loans and grants to help the ailing economy. As a way of increasing output of cocoa, the government made efforts to increase the producer prices for cocoa for farmers and this achieved good results (Koning 2002).

The desire to increase output of export crops and also to add value to the crops led to incentives being introduced to entice foreign firms to establish agro-processing firms in Ghana. Firms operating in the tree crop sector (cocoa, coffee, shea butter, coconut, etc.) are given a ten-year tax holiday; and companies in sectors such as livestock, excluding cattle and poultry, fish farming, poultry, cash crops, and agro-processing, have a five-year tax holiday. There were also incentives such as retention of capital in foreign accounts and an increase in producer price of export commodities (e.g. cocoa). The desire to promote agro-processing, on the other hand, was based on narratives put forward by the IMF and the World Bank that adding value to primary products will generate employment, increase tax revenue and increase foreign exchange. These narratives were and are still supported by academics in

Ghana (see ISSER 2014).

The desire to increase export earnings made export crop diversification a key policy goal of commercialisation initiatives. Diversification was again based on the narrative by both local economists and the World Bank that reliance on only one major export crop is economically risky because of price fluctuations. The Government of Ghana took these narratives seriously because of past experience in the 1970s when declining world market prices for cocoa affected the economy significantly. The Oil Palm Development Project (OPDP) – Phase II (1984–1988) was implemented to support diversification away from cocoa. The World Bank sponsored an Agricultural Diversification Project (ADP) (1991–1999) (Asuming-Brempong 2003). Various institutional arrangements were made to facilitate the marketing and export of non-traditional export commodities, which includes mango, pineapple, coconut, pawpaw, kola nut, orange, grape, ginger, banana, avocado, and guava. The project has been largely successful. For instance, earnings from non-traditional export crops rose from US$62 million in 1990 to US$110 million in 1994 (Ampadu-Agyei 1994). The efforts to diversify the economy further saw attempts to increase food processing in Ghana as a way of adding value to agricultural products. This was based on the narrative that the export of products without much value addition is what makes African countries poor. The government, knowing its financial constraints, depended on foreign investors to promote such industrialisation and the need to link crop production with food processing. Export-free zones (EFZ) were established and have their own incentives, including 100 percent exemptions for all types of duties for production and ten-year tax holidays.

Many state enterprises were also privatised based on the argument that the state should not be directly involved in production. Appiah-Kubi (2001) highlighted the intensity of the sale of state enterprises by stating that within 13 years (1987–1999), the government earned 14 percent its revenue from divesting state enterprises. It was during this period that many state farms and manufacturing entities were sold. For instance, the Ghana Oil Palm Development Corporation (GOPDC) was divested in 1995 and is now owned by the Belgian company Société d'Investissement pour l'Agriculture Tropicale (nv Siat sa), the majority shareholder, SSNIT of Ghana, and ATMF. The government held its 20 percent share after the divestiture until 2008 when it was sold (GOPDC 2009). National Oil Palms Limited (NOPL), an oil palm-producing company, was put on divestiture in 1996 and incorporated in 1998, and is now called Norpalm Ghana Limited and owned by Norwegian Investors and P.Z Cussons. The private sector gained during this time while some poor workers lost their jobs as a result of retrenchment.

Although these strategies implemented under SAPs enhanced the production of cash crops, they were blamed for ignoring food production and worsening the plight of smallholder farmers. Sawyerr (1988) argued that in the agricultural sector, landowners benefited tremendously from the SAPs as they increased rents, hired more labour, paid lower wages and also enjoyed higher producer prices for export commodities. On the other hand, landless rural people – including migrants and women – were the losers. Despite these criticisms, the SAPs contributed positively to increased agricultural production in Ghana. There is no doubt that donor-funded agricultural programmes in the 1990s helped to promote agricultural commercialisation. Indeed, the Medium Term Agricultural Development Programme (MTADP) (1991–2000), which was implemented with the help of the World Bank, sought to enhance crop production, promote rural infrastructure and develop marketing systems for crops.

While most of the earlier agricultural policies and programmes tended to focus on strategies to increase output by providing farmers with farming inputs (Songsore 2003), policies adopted since 2000 by both the NDC and NPP governments were broadly linked to rural development initiatives and agricultural modernisation programmes. As a result of the past development challenges, including food insecurity and rural poverty, international donors (e.g. Department for International Development (DFID), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Development Cooperation (GIZ)), the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)), have championed the need to use agricultural policy to address food insecurity and rural poverty. There appears to be no domestic contestation of such policy proposals because they appear to offer practical solutions for dealing with food insecurity and rural poverty. Consequently, Ghana has responded to these calls by formulating several agricultural policies and programmes that seek to broadly link agricultural commercialisation with poverty alleviation programmes and rural development in general. Carefully crafted to satisfy the interests of international development donors, these policies and programmes emphasise the supply of inputs, the marketing of agricultural products, value additions and provision of infrastructure in rural areas (see Table 5).

The Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP I), which was developed in 2002 based on the Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Development Strategy (AAGDS), had a vision of modernising the agricultural sector through the use of modern farming technology and providing rural infrastructure (MoFA 2007). The efforts to link agricultural commercialisation to broader rural development efforts is based on narratives by development partners (e.g. World Bank, USAID, GIZ) and rural development scholars that agricultural modernisation will enable rural farm households to participate in the market economy to earn higher incomes and be lifted out of poverty and food insecurity (see Haggblade and Hazell 2010). The NPP government, which governed Ghana between 2000 and 2008, responded positively to these narratives because while in opposition, it has blamed the NDC government for not effectively promoting agricultural modernisation. As a way of modernising agriculture, some of the pillars of the FASDEP are dedicated to irrigation development and increased mechanisation. Irrigation development has become even more important especially because of the global doom narratives on climate change and its impact on crop production.

The argument that agricultural commercialisation should also be linked to poverty reduction strategies also led to the implementation of several poverty reduction programmes that were linked to the agricultural sector. These include Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I) (2003–2005) and Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II) (2006–2009). Based on the limitations of FASDEP I, FASDEP II was adopted in 2008 by the same NPP government to promote the commodity chains of key export crops, as well as address food security concerns. When the NDC government came back to power in 2008, its agricultural programmes did not change much as it continued to implement the donor-funded programmes that linked agriculture with broader development initiatives. The strategies implemented to link agriculture to broader development include the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA) (2010–2013 and 2014–2017), which aimed at modernising agriculture to deal with poverty-related issues. Similarly, the Medium Term Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (METASIP I and II 2011–2015) sought to facilitate investment in the agricultural sector to achieve many developmental goals.

The NDC party also implemented a Tree Crop Policy in 2012 to help implement FASDEP's pillar of cash crop development. This again demonstrates that narratives championed by international donors were largely supported by both the NDC and NPP and this is why abrupt policy changes did not occur. The Tree Crop Policy was devised as a response to the narratives - propagated by development partners and economists - which stated that, aside from cocoa, other tree crops should be promoted so as to diversify the economy. The calls also resonated with the interests of farmers in non-cocoa-growing zones. Some of them have often made public appeals for the government to support the production of the tree crops that they produce for sale. For instance, Somanya mango farmers have often complained publicly that the government does not give them the same support that cocoa farmers receive. The desire to diversify export commodities brought about increased emphasis on the production and exportation of fruit crops such as mango and papaw. In recent years, the fruit export sector has been supported by development partners including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, and the US government. A US government's Millennium Challenge Fund, with a US$547 million allocation, had a strong horticultural component, with pack houses being built in fruit production zones in the country (FAO 2013; Torvikey et al. 2016). Similarly, the Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA) and USAID were instrumental in the promotion of commercial mango farming in the Yilo Krobo District of the Eastern Region of Ghana and linking them with food processors (Yaro et al. 2017). A few individual researchers, however, contested the promotion of these tree crops on the grounds that their cultivation will affect availability of land for food production.

Table 5 Major agricultural commercialisation policies/strategies in Ghana (2000 to the present)

Policy	Main policy goals and objectives
Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy (FASDEP I) 2002	This first food and agricultural sector development policy sought to enhance food security; promote the production of agricultural raw materials for local industry; facilitate the production of agricultural commodities for export; enhance the efficiency in the supply and distribution of input; and facilitate effective and efficient output processing and marketing system.
Food and Agriculture Sector Development Policy II (FASDEP II) 2007	This policy, which was heavily supported by the World Bank, sought to promote the commodity chains of key export crops, as well as address food security concerns. It placed emphasis on farm mechanisation.

National Fertilizer and Seed policies, 2010	These policies, which were based on the Plant and Fertilizer Act, aim to enhance the use of fertiliser and improved seeds. The policies emphasise private sector participation in the production and distribution of fertiliser and improved seeds.
Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA I) 2010–2013	The development of this policy was spearheaded by the NDPC and heavily funded by the World Bank, USAID, and GIZ. The policy sought to use agricultural modernisation to promote broader rural development and housing.
Ghana's Medium Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (METASIP I and II) 2011–2015	The investment plan sought to achieve food security; increased growth in incomes; enhanced integration into domestic and international markets; sustainable management of land and the environment; science and technology applied in food and agriculture development; and improved institutional coordination.
The Tree Crop Strategy, 2012	This policy, funded by Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aims to diversify export commodities to reduce the focus on cocoa. It focuses on the development of cashew nut, citrus, cocoa, coconut, coffee, kola, mango, oil palm, rubber tree and shea nut, through sustainable agro-ecological practices.
Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project (GCAP) 2012	This project, funded by the World Bank and USAID, aims towards improving the investment climate for agribusiness and developing PPPs and smallholder linkages intended to increase on-farm productivity and value addition in selected value chains.
Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA II) 2014–2017	The aim of this programme, funded by the World Bank, USAID, and GIZ, and implemented by the NDPC, was to promote broader rural development through agricultural modernisation, oil and gas development, and promotion of foreign investments in infrastructure, energy, and housing.
Ghana's Medium Term Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (METASIP III) 2017–2021	As part of implementation of this policy, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture launched a flagship programme 'Planting for Food and Jobs' (PFJ) in 2017. The PFJ, which forms part of the government's main agricultural programme, focuses on increasing food production, providing raw material for industry and creating jobs.

Partly in response to claims by private investors that government involvement in the distribution of agricultural inputs was not sustainable, national fertiliser and seed policies were adopted in 2010 to enhance private sector involvement in the distribution of these inputs. While fertiliser and seed importation was liberalised in 1990, these policies provided guidelines for private sector participation in the production and distribution of fertiliser and improved seeds. These policies were again based on neoliberal arguments that state control of input distribution was a problem. In response to counter arguments by peasant farmers and some NGOs that the government must support smallholder farmers, the policies also provided smart fertiliser subsidies for smallholder farmers with farm sizes of less than five acres. Similarly, in response to calls by donors and private investors for increased private sector participation in the agricultural sector, the government implemented the Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project (GCAP) in 2012 with funding from the World Bank and USAID. This project aimed at improving the investment climate for agribusiness and developing private–public partnerships (PPPs) and smallholder linkages intended to increase farm productivity and value addition in selected value chains. The Government of Ghana continues to promote private sector investments with tax incentives. The Income Tax Act, 2015 (Act 896) provides several tax incentives for investments in the agricultural sector.

When the NPP government came back to power in 2017, it also continued with the broad commercialisation policies being implemented by the NDC. However, partly in line with its election campaigns to support smallholder farmers, it has launched a flagship programme, namely Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ), under METASIP III (2017–2021). The PFJ, which forms part of the government's main agricultural programme, focuses on increasing food production, providing raw material for industry and creating jobs. Unlike earlier programmes that focused on supporting large-scale farmers, the PFJ supports smallholder farmers with inputs. Apart from the need to fulfil campaign promises, the policy has been implemented in response to complaints from the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana that government agricultural policies are not helping smallholder farmers. The government has responded to the pressures by the peasant farmers because doing so will enhance its chances of remaining in power. Thus, the implementation of this policy supports the assertion that a government may have strong incentives to support smallholder farmers in situations where it believes that prioritising investment in smallholder agriculture can influence its chances of remaining in power (Chinsinga and Poulton 2014; Poulton 2014).

4.2. Influence of international actors on agricultural policies since 2000

As highlighted in the preceding discussions, international donors have been an integral part of politics and agricultural policy development in Ghana. Their role in agricultural policy development became more pronounced since the 1980s when IMF and the World Bank supported Ghana to implement the SAPs. We assessed the networks between the Government of Ghana and international donors with the view of finding out if the political contexts have influenced donor support for the sector since 2000. Our analysis shows that both the NDC and NPP governments that governed Ghana within the period under consideration heavily depended on donors to implement agricultural policies.

There is no evidence to suggest that donor support was higher under one region. Most of the agricultural investment programmes implemented since 2000 have been heavily supported by international donors, notably DFID, AfDB, European Union (EU), Agence Française de Développement (French Cooperation Agency (AFD)), Alliance for Green Revolution for Africa (AGRA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), GIZ, IFAD, Japan International Cooporation Agency (JICA), Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), USAID, World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), Danida (Danish International Development Agency) and Kreditanstalt fur Wiederaufbau (KfW).

As shown in Table 6, the percentage of agricultural expenditure funded by donors increased from 17 percent in 2006 to 39 percent in 2009 and then declined slightly to 37 percent. Agriculture tends to receive a higher proportion of donor funding in Ghana compared to other sectors. Indeed, the main sources of funds for the agricultural sector in Ghana, excluding administrative costs from 2006 to 2014 are the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) (34 percent), World Bank (31 percent), CIDA (15 percent), USAID (3 percent), EU (4 percent), and other donors (13 percent). As shown in Table 7, a major feature of the donor-funded projects is the fact that they tend to be linked to poverty alleviation programmes. For instance, the Nerica Rice Project, which was implemented in 2003 with funding from AfDB, aims to reduce poverty and ensure food security, through enhanced access to high-yielding Nerica upland rice varieties. The Government of Ghana took a concessional loan of US$3,840,000 from AfDB to promote Nerica upland rice in the country. The government also supported the project with a counterpart funding of US$730,000. The objectives of the project were to contribute to increasing the production of rice for food security and conserving foreign exchange earnings through import substitution.

Table 6 Sources of funds for agricultural sector expenditure in Ghana

Year	Total agriculture expenditure (million GHC)	Funds provided by government (million GHC)	Funds provided by donors (million GHC)	Percentage of total expenditure provided by donors
2005	138.3	101.0	37.3	27
2006	161.9	134.5	24.4	17
2007	207.7	163.7	44.0	21
2008	265.0	186.5	78.5	30
2009	254.1	156.1	97.9	39
2010	268.0	169.1	98.9	37
2011	302.7	190.3	112.4	37

Source: World Bank (2013), as cited by Jatoe and Nyaaba (2018).

Similarly, in 2006, an agricultural development programme was launched between the MCC and the Government of Ghana. MCC provided US$547 million to the Government of Ghana to implement agricultural programmes for reducing poverty and increasing economic growth. The key goals of the overall project include improving tenure security for farmers; provision of irrigation systems; extending credit to farmers; increasing farmers' access to major domestic and international markets; and providing the necessary infrastructure in farming communities (MCC 2016). It is important to note that while the larger project

Table 7 Selected donor-funded agricultural projects

	Project	Project period	Donor
1	Nerica Rice Project	2003–	AfDB
2	Market-Oriented Agriculture Programme (MOAP)	2004–2016	GIZ
3	Agricultural Development Programme	2006–	MCC
4	Export Marketing and Quality Awareness Project (EMQAP)	2007–2014	AfDB
5	Root and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme (RTIMP)	2007–2014	IFAD
6	Northern Rural Growth Programme (NRGP)	2009–2016	IFAD, AfDB
7	Youth in Agriculture	2009–	MoFA
8	Competitive African Cotton Initiative (COMPACI)	2009–2015	GIZ
9	Rubber Outgrower Plantation Project IV	2010–2014	KfW, AFD
10	Rural and Agricultural Finance Programme (RAFiP)	2010–2016	IFAD/Danida
11	Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement Project (ADVANCE)	2010–2014 2014– (Phase II)	USAID
12	Land Administration Project 2 (LAP 2)	2011–2016	World Bank
	Ghana Agricultural Insurance Pool	2011–	GIZ
13	Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project (GCAP)	2012–2019	USAID/World Bank
14	Inland Valley Rice Development Project	2013–	DFID
15	Financing Ghanaian Agriculture Project (FinGAP)	2013–2018	USAID
16	Agricultural Technology Transfer Project (ATT)	2013–2018	USAID
17	Farmer-to-Farmer Program in West Africa (F2F–WA)	2013–2018	USAID
18	Rural Enterprises Programme Phase III (REP III)	2013–2017	AfDB
19	West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program 2A (WAAPP–2A)	2014–2018	World Bank
20	Ghana Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (GASIP)	2014–2018	IFAD
21	Ghana Broiler Rehabilitation Project (GHABROP)	2014–	MoFA

targeted smallholder farmers, its land title registration component intends to secure land rights to enable bigger investors for big investors prospectively.

In 2011, the Ghana Agricultural Insurance Programme (GAIP) was launched, representing the first agricultural insurance system in the country to protect farmers against financial risks resulting from climate change (FAO 2015). The GAIP, which is supported by GIZ, aimed at reducing poverty among farmers by providing insurance against crop failure. Currently, 19 Ghanaian insurance companies form the Ghana Agricultural Insurance Pool, which ensures a solid financial foundation for the programme, and the product range focuses on drought index insurance for maize and soya.

The seven-year US$145 million Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project (GCAP) was launched in 2012, funded by the World Bank–International Development Association (IDA) and USAID. The project aims at reducing poverty and ensuring food security by enhancing the investment climate for agri-business and developing inclusive PPPs and smallholder linkages aimed at increasing on-farm productivity and value addition in selected value chains (MoFA 2016). In line with its goal of developing the commodity value chain for selected crops, the project has connected smallholder farmers to bigger buyers. The project will ensure increased access to secure land, and enhance private sector financing of agriculture, and access to agricultural input and output markets by smallholder farms from investors.

Some of the donor-funded projects also focused on promoting poverty alleviation and rural development by enhancing production of specific crops and linking farmers to markets. These projects are driven by claims by researchers and the donor community that enhancing farmers' access to markets can go a long way to increase incomes and reduce poverty. For instance, the Inland Valley Rice Development Project, funded by DFID since 2013, provides rice farmers in the Northern Region of Ghana with a £10 million fund to enhance their agricultural businesses and irrigation schemes. The amount provided by DFID is Ghana's share of the £50 million fund package to support Africa's agricultural development. Similarly, IFAD funded the Root and Tuber Improvement Programme (RTIP) between 1999 and 2005 with the aim of promoting the development of root and tuber crops such as cassava and cocoyam as part of its main vision of dealing with food shortage problems. A second phase of RTIP, implemented by the same agency under the title Root and Tuber Improvement and Marketing Programme (RTIMP) (2007–2014), sought to enhance farmers' access to markets. Similar agricultural programmes that seek to enhance farmers' access to markets include the Market-Oriented Agriculture Programme (MOAP) funded by GIZ (2004–2016), and the Export Marketing and Quality Awareness Project funded by AfDB (2007–2014).

By providing huge financial support, these international donors are able to influence the Government of Ghana to implement specific agricultural programmes. Despite the fact that both the NDC and NPP governments have depended on donors to fund agricultural programmes, the two parties, when in opposition, tend to campaign to reduce Ghana's dependence on donors, if voted to power. In the last elections in 2016, for instance, the NPP coined the slogan 'Ghana beyond Aid', blaming the then NDC government for over-borrowing and over-dependence on donors to fund development projects. Some academics have shared similar views. However, upon coming to power in 2017, the current government has not lived up to its campaign promises to reduce Ghana's dependence on donors.

In addition to international donors, continental and regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have also influenced agricultural policy formulation in Ghana. Indeed, Ghana's recent agricultural policy decisions draw heavily from regional and continental agricultural policies. For instance, in recognition of the importance of agriculture to the African economies, African leaders met in Maputo in 2009 and agreed to commit themselves to increase annual public investment to at least 10 percent in the agricultural sector under CAADP. This is expected to accelerate food security in sub-Saharan Africa. As a way of enhancing the outcomes of CAADP, the AU heads of states met in Equatorial Guinea in June 2014 and adopted the 'Malabo declaration', which re-commits leaders to double their current agricultural investment by 2025. It is in line with the Maputo declaration to commit 10 percent of national budget to agriculture and to increase agricultural growth by 6 percent annually, that the METASIP set a target of at least 10 percent of national budget allocation for the sector's expenditure. In the last decade, agricultural fertiliser subsidies have been introduced in line with NEPAD/CAADP agricultural development objectives of reducing rural poverty, achieving food and nutritional security, and export promotion. The programme was intended to help smallholder farmers but all categories of crop farmers benefited (Fearon et al. 2015).

At the sub-regional level, ECOWAS member states adopted the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP) under the regional CAADP Compact. ECOWAP envisaged a modern and sustainable agriculture, based on the effectiveness and efficiency of family farms and the promotion of private sector for productive and competitive intra-community and international markets. Ghana's recent policies draw on the ECOWAP proposals for addressing food-security issues within the sub-region. Both the NDC and NPP government have so far supported the regional and sub-regional agreements on agricultural commercialisation.

4.3. Funding of agriculture and incentives for smallholder farmers

There is no doubt that one of the surest ways to examine state support for the agricultural sector is to analyse its public expenditure on the sector. In this section therefore, we examine the trends in government expenditure on the agricultural sector. We also examine government input subsidies and other incentives for farmers.

4.3.1. PUBLIC FUNDING OF AGRICULTURE

Figures for the Government of Ghana's expenditure on agriculture are contested. According to MoFA (2016), the government's expenditure on agriculture rose from 6.4 percent in 2001 to 10 percent in 2006 and has since remained above 10 percent except in 2009 when it was 9.02 percent. Expenditure share of GDP has also increased from 0.70 in 2001 to 1.60 in 2010 before declining to 0.90 in 2011. Both the NDC and NPP governments have attributed this to CAADP and the desire to enhance food security. However, these figures were contested by FAO and the World Bank. A 2015 report by FAO suggests that Ghana's public expenditure on agriculture from 2006 to 2012 was actually between 3 percent and 5 percent of total public expenditure (see Jatoe and Nyaaba 2018). Similarly, Jatoe and Nyaaba (2018), referring to World Bank figures, indicate that Ghana's public expenditure on agriculture as a percentage of total public expenditure declined from a high of 5.7 percent in 2008 to 1.2 percent in 2014 (see Table 8). The main cause of these discrepancies is the lack of agreement on what constitutes agricultural expenditure. In Ghana, a broader definition of agriculture is sometimes used whereby cost of feeder roads and debt service expenditures were sometimes included. Also as a result of poor record keeping, expenditure data are sometimes unreliable (World Bank 2017, cited by Jatoe and Nyaaba 2018).

About 35 percent of Ghana's expenditure on agriculture is spent on administrative costs. Expenditure on the input subsidy programmes has also increased in recent years, while expenditure on investment and extension services have declined in recent years. Indeed, the proportion of MoFA's investment expenditure funded by donors rose from 40 percent in 2006 to 61 percent in 2011 (World Bank 2017, cited by Jatoe and Nyaaba 2018). Between 2015 and 2016, the government reduced its budget allocation to the agricultural sector by GHC40 million (i.e. US$1 million). This budget cut, which was estimated at 10.1 percent, was attributed to economic challenges that pushed the country to seek assistance from the IMF.

4.3.2. INPUT SUBSIDY PROGRAMMES

Since independence in 1957, the Government of Ghana has been primarily responsible for the procurement and distribution of key inputs (e.g. fertiliser, seeds). As shown in Table 9, in the 1960s the Government of Ghana was the sole importer and distributer of fertilisers to farmers in the various regions of the country. Relying on state-owned firms and agricultural offices, MoFA offered the same price for fertiliser to farmers irrespective of where they were located. In order to maintain domestic fertiliser prices during the 1970s when global prices went up sharply due to oil crises, MoFA increased the direct fertiliser subsidy from approximately 40 percent

Table 8 Proportion of public expenditure spent on agriculture as reported by the World Bank

Year	Expenditure on agriculture as percentage of total public expenditure
2008	5.7
2009	4.9
2010	4.2
2011	4.2
2012	2.4
2013	1.2
2014	1.2

Source: Jatoe and Nyaaba (2018), based on World Bank figures.

Table 9 Fertiliser and seeds subsidy programmes

Year	Key policy/incentives
1960	MoFA asserted control over fertiliser market
1970	MoFA increased fertiliser subsidies due to rise in global prices of fertiliser
1984–1991	Direct fertiliser subsidies were removed and the fertiliser market was liberalised
2007	Subsidies on mechanisation
2008	Reintroduction of fertiliser
2010	Fertiliser and seeds policies adopted
2012	Subsidies on improved seeds
2016	Introduction of subsidies on organic fertiliser for the first time in 2016

to 86 percent of the market price. This was in line with the socialist policies adopted in Ghana.

As part of the SAPs adopted in 1983, the government gradually reduced direct fertiliser subsidies to farmers and removed all subsidies in 1991. Also from 1989 to 1991, the retail, wholesale and import components of the fertiliser sector were all liberalised. The cumulative effects of currency devaluation and removal of subsidies led to a rapid rise of fertilisers by over 360 percent between 1982 and 1994. As noted already, these measures were in response to claims by the World Bank and IMF that the economy will do better if the state liberalised the market.

The removal of subsidies on agriculture has become a key political issue since 1996 when Ghana returned to multi-party democracy. During the 2000 elections, the NPP government and the other opposition parties promised to re-introduce subsidies if voted to power. As part of the desire to transform agriculture under the METASIP and in line with its campaign messages, the Government of Ghana introduced a subsidised mechanisation programme in 2007, a year preceding the 2008 elections. The opposition NDC party argued that this was an attempt by the ruling government to use subsidies to buy votes. Under this programme subsidised agricultural machines are provided to individual farmers and private enterprises established as specialised Agricultural Mechanization Services Enterprise Centers (AMSECs) to offer tractor-hire services to small-scale farmers across the country. This programme is based on narratives that suggest that low agricultural productivity is a result of the use of obsolete farming implements. These narratives have usually come from the private sector. The tractor hire services have largely benefited only farmers in the savannah zones: in the forest zones, most farmers do not plough the land. There have also been media complaints that most recipients of subsidies on tractors are in the patronage networks of the government. Some analysts have also noted that tractor-hire services have the potential to transform smallholder agriculture but argue that because most farms are very small, the heavy subsidies on big and costly tractors is inappropriate and therefore there is a need to provide smaller, cost-effective tractors.

Furthermore, in response to rising input prices, pressure from civil society groups, and in line with its campaign messages, the NPP government re-introduced a direct fertiliser subsidy in July 2008; it also suggested it was partly in response to CAADP. However, the opposition saw this as an attempt to use the subsidy programme to win the elections planned for that year. The subsidy programme is based on an annual 'decree' from the ruling government, which announces the amount to be spent on the programme between May and July. Since its inception, various methods – including vouchers and now an electronic platform (the E-subsidy platform) – have been used to distribute the subsidy to farmers. Currently, the scale of production is a determining factor in the receipt of fertiliser. This is because the current fertiliser policy is part of a poverty reduction programme sponsored by the World Bank. The aim is to support smallholder farmers in enhancing productivity by use of fertilisers. Farmers whose farm sizes are more than 15ha do not qualify for subsidised fertiliser.

As shown in Table 10, the nominal amount spent on fertiliser increased from GHC20.654 million in 2008 to GHC117.437 million in 2012, the year of the next election. The amount spent on fertiliser in 2012 was about four times that spent in 2010. Stated differently,

Table 10 Government expenditure on fertiliser subsidies

Year	Total government subsidy (GHC million)
2008	20.654
2009	34.400
2010	30.002
2011	78.746
2012	117.437
2013	64.005
2014	–
2015	44.850
2016	164.24*

Note: *Figure includes expenditure on other subsidy programmes in agriculture.
Source: MoFA (2016), as cited by Jatoe and Nyaaba (2017).

the total amount spent increased by 290 percent between 2010 and 2012. In 2013, just after the election year, the amount spent on fertiliser declined rapidly by 83 percent. In 2014, the government did not provide any subsidised fertiliser to farmers despite a statement in that year's budget that the government would continue to implement the subsidy programme. The government resumed the distribution of fertiliser again in 2015 and in 2016, which was another election year, the amount spent increased again by 272 percent. In 2016, the NDC government introduced subsidies on organic fertiliser for the first time in the history of the country. The government provided GHC18 million for organic fertiliser to be produced by the Accra Compost Recycling Plant. The inclusion of organic fertilisers in the subsidy programme was based on narratives by environmental groups that organic fertiliser is good for both the soil and the environment. The observation that both the NDC and NPP governments introduced new subsidy programmes during election years suggests that political interests of ruling governments determine some of the incentives for smallholder farmers. It must also be stated that during election campaigns, politicians in Ghana make promises on fertiliser and seed subsidies especially when they are in rural communities.

Our argument that governments are more likely to introduce subsidy programmes in an election year is supported by the fact that in 2012, the government expanded the fertiliser subsidy programme to include certified seeds. MoFA noted that the purpose of the seed subsidy is to increase agricultural productivity and promote the use of certified seeds. In 2012, the seed subsidy programme targeted maize, rice and soya bean at the cost of GHC4.8 million. These crops were targeted because they are major staple crops that are widely produced in most regions of Ghana. While the policy was continued in 2013, the allocation for the 2013 seed subsidy was reduced by almost 100 percent (i.e. GHC2.6 million) (Jatoe and Nyaaba 2018) and this clearly shows how governments spend more on agriculture subsidies in election years.

4.3.3. COCOA MASS SPRAYING AND PRICING POLITICS

Ghana's cocoa value chain has a partially liberalised marketing structure. While the Ghana Cocoa Board has created a hybrid system whereby there are about 25 private companies buying the crop, the producer price is annually fixed by the government. Successive governments in Ghana have used cocoa as a source of public revenue. Cocoa producers have historically been taxed to finance public expenditure (Herbst 1993). About 5 percent of government revenue comes from cocoa export tax alone.

It is interesting to note, however, that both the NDC and

Table 11 Cocoa producer prices in Ghana

Year	Average producer price on world market in US$/tonne	Price in GHC/tonne	Percentage change
2002/03	1,280	850.00	-
2003/04	1,600	900.00	5.88
2004/05	-	903.00	0.33
2005/06	-	900.00	-0.33
2006/07	1,900	916.00	1.77
2007/08	1,500	944.00	3.06
2008/09	1,600	1,751.00	81.50
2009/10	1,600	2,280.00	30.21
2010/11	2,133	3,200.00	40.35
2011/12	3,000	3,280.00	2.5
2012/13	2,300	3,392.00	3.4
2013/14	2,130	3,392.00	0.0
2014/15	2,400	5,520.00	62.73
2015/16	2,900	6,720.00	21.73
2016/17	2,950	7,600.00	13.10
2017/18	2,200	7,600.00	0.0

Source: Authors' own, based on Government of Ghana data.

NPP governments tend to use cocoa pricings to solicit political votes from farmers. During political campaigns politicians sometimes tell farmers that if their party is voted to power, they will increase the cocoa prices. Apart from increasing cocoa producer prices when world market prices increase, governments in Ghana are more likely to increase cocoa producer prices either in the year preceding election or during the election year. For instance, as shown in Table 11, the cocoa producer price was increased by 81.5 percent in 2008, which was an election year. This was quite high considering that the annual inflation rate in 2008 was 16 percent and the world market producer price of cocoa rose by 6.5 percent. In view of the cocoa pricing politics, the proportion of Freight on Board (FOB) price that is offered to Ghanaian cocoa farmers has increased from about 40 percent in the 1990s to 73 percent in 2008. In the 2007/2008 season, the government set up a Stabilization Fund as part of measures to guarantee stable income for cocoa farmers. Apart from the producer price, during electioneering campaigns politicians in Ghana also talk about free mass spraying, which was introduced in 2001 to control cocoa pests and diseases.

4.4. Agricultural commercialisation pathways and land tenure systems

One of the key issues that generated competing narratives of agricultural commercialisation in Ghana is whether the state should promote small-scale or large-scale farmers. Ghana has adopted different commercialisation models, largely in line with changing narratives. As explained already, the early British colonial rulers actually favoured production by smallholder farmers for fears that extensive land acquisitions for plantations could alienate smallholder farmers and create local opposition and conflicts. This has partly laid the foundation for the current situation whereby about 80 percent of annual agricultural output comes from individual small-scale farmers, unlike the situation in other countries in Africa like Kenya where there are large-scale plantations.

We have also explained that the early post-independence government (1957–1982) largely promoted large-scale farming. In promoting large-scale state agriculture, Nkrumah overcame the challenges of land acquisition by the passage of some legislative instruments in 1962. Prior to this period, all land belonged to local communities headed by traditional authorities. In 1962, some legislative instruments were enacted through which the government could acquire land compulsorily, subject to the payment of compensation to land-owning communities (Bentsi-Enchill 1964). The arguments for government's compulsory acquisition of land ownership and management include: the satisfaction of 'public' or 'national interests; correction of anomalies in customary tenure systems and making land acquisition easier for government' (Kasanga and Kotey 2001: 1). In most cases, the government does not pay any compensation to the appropriate local community. Ofori (1973) documented several cases where the government established state farms on such lands without paying any compensation to the local people. Relying on these legislative instruments, Nkrumah and early post-colonial governments were able to establish large plantations.

Contract farming also emerged from the mid-1970s on the back of the World Bank advice to capture smallholders. These contract-farming schemes were linked to state-owned irrigation and other infrastructural facilities. Under this strategy vegetables, rice and oil palm, for instance, became subject to state contract farming schemes. In 1975, the Government of Ghana with support from the World Bank established GOPDC in the Eastern Region with mixed models of contract farming, outgrower schemes, linkage to smallholders and an estate running concurrently (Amanor 2001). To date, GOPDC is the biggest oil palm processing company in the country although it has been completely privatised and is now owned by the Belgian comapny nv Siat sa. As noted already, foreign investors and private sector participation in large-scale agriculture was emphasised when Ghana implemented the ERP and SAPs between 1983 and 2000.

Since 2000, there have been renewed debates on whether the state should be involved directly in agriculture production and whether to support small-scale or large-scale farmers. On the one hand, some large-scale farmers and international donor organisations have called for a shift in priority to large-scale commercial farmers. This is based on arguments that large-scale farms use advanced technologies and have adequate financial resources and are therefore able to produce more crops at a relatively lower cost due to economies of scale: smallholder farmers have been depicted as inefficient in producing for the growing population. On the other hand some researchers, civil society groups, and smallholder farmers have argued that focusing on large-scale farmers is inappropriate because smallholders constitute a majority of farmers (see also Byerlee et al. 2009). Also, consistent with Jayne et al. (2010) and Wiggins et al. (2011), some local NGOs, such as Muster Seeds, have argued that any strategy that focuses on the large-scale farmers will cause a displacement of smallholder farmers and thereby leave many people trapped in poverty. These narratives are always presented in relation to land tenure systems and agricultural models.

These debates became more intensive in recent years when large-scale land acquisitions and commercialisation narratives were linked to major global discourses on scarcity. The three main areas of concern were the triple crises of food, energy, and finance which hit major parts of the world. In Ghana, these issues played out very well in the commercialisation drive that was pushed by the government and international development partners (Yaro et al. 2016). To promote large-scale farming, land – a major factor of production – was particularly targeted for individualisation. The SAPs already provided an adequate impetus for this to fester: in early 2001, the Land Administration Project (LAP 1 and 2) funded by the World Bank started. It aimed at solving the systematic problems in land administration in the country. The project sought to answer the reflections of de Soto (2000) and the World Bank's (2007) own policy orientation of neoliberalism, which implies that customary institutions that govern land hinder economic development in developing countries. Hence, the LAP has an indirect motivation of individualising land. In fact, the LAP is not only functioned to modernise statutory institutions, but customary land institutions as well. Under the project, the Land Commission has developed a guideline for large-scale land acquisition. The narrative was that tenure insecurities hinder private sector participation in the agricultural sector.

To deal with the challenges of customary land tenure systems, the government put in place mechanisms to facilitate transnational investments in the agricultural sector. Consequently, large tracts of land were acquired by transnational actors for the cultivation of mainly agrofuel crops (Boamah 2011). In some cases, the Government of Ghana has partnered foreign companies to invest in various agricultural projects. The Land Matrix register recorded 41 large-scale land acquisitions ranging from 6,000ha to 400,000ha between 2001 and 2015. The investors were mainly from Europe, the United States of America, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, and South Africa. In addition to this, hundreds of medium-scale commercial farmers have continued to increase their farm sizes for commercial crops by displacing peasant farmers. In some cases, family heads have sold part of the family land to commercial farmers. Consequently, the area under cultivation has increased from 2.4 million ha in 1990 to about 5 million ha in 2011 (FAO 2013).

These large-scale land acquisitions have generated various forms of resistance from land users, land owners, media and civil society groups who have given large-scale land commercialisation a bad press. Those who oppose the large-scale land commercialisation argue that cocoa has fared well even though it is largely produced by smallholder farmers. Besides, it is the smallholders who continue to provide the country's food needs and so the government was urged to provide the smallholder farmers with the necessary resources to increase their production. There are also concerns that large-scale land acquisitions can cause the displacement of smallholder farmers. As a way of dealing with the concerns, the government and some international donors (e.g. FAO, World Bank) have proposed the use of contract farming and other outgrower schemes to link large-scale agricultural enterprises with smallholder farmers. For instance, Ghana Rubber Estates Limited (GREL) – the largest industrial rubber plantation in Ghana – started an outgrower scheme in 1995 under the Rubber Outgrowers Plantation Project (ROPP) with financing from AFD, KfW and the Government of Ghana, and the outgrowers receive good prices. Also, Blue Skies has an outgrower scheme with mango farmers in parts of Ghana. As stated in Section 4.2, MoFA is implementing the Ghana Commercial Agriculture Project (GCAP) with the view of achieving agricultural commercialisation by providing smallholder farmers in the Accra plains and Savannah-Accelerated Development (SADA) zones with inputs and linking them with large-scale agricultural enterprises through PPPs. The project activities would include developing a framework for outgrower schemes and contract farming arrangements that would sensitise potential smallholder participants in order to align expectations of both smallholders and the 'nucleus'. The policy document justified the benefits of such a commercialisation strategy in the following words:

Innovative institutional arrangements between large(r) scale investors and small-holders can generate mutual benefits and provide effective mechanisms for bolstering small-holder productivity. For instance, out-grower schemes provide linkages between vertically integrated plantations and surrounding small-holders. Contract farming arrangements can provide benefits for input and output dealers and small-holder farmers. (MoFA 2016)

The above statement is consistent with the assertion in the literature that contract farming can introduce small-scale farmers to new technologies which can go a long way to stimulate the broader commercialisation of smallholder farming and its link to markets (White and White 2012; Prowse 2012). Other benefits of linking smallholder farmers with large-scale farmers are captured in other parts of the GCAP document as follows:

Ghana's current agricultural policy framework and national development plan emphasises the importance of graduating from a subsistence-based small-holder system to a sector characterised by a stronger market-based orientation based on a combination of productive small-holders alongside larger commercial enterprises engaged in agricultural production, agro-processing and other activities along the value chain. To maximise the impacts of private investment in agriculture on development, a particular focus is to facilitate small-holder linkages with other commercial businesses through, for instance, contract farming and out-grower schemes.
(MoFA 2016)

While the outgrower scheme has become an important module for avoiding displacement of smallholder farmers by large-scale farmers, some of the outgrower schemes did not succeed due to agro-ecological factors. Others did not live up to their promised benefits for everyone (Tsikata and 2013). A number of partnerships between smallholder farmers and large agricultural enterprises have failed as a result of a lack of transparency and accountability in the contracting process. In many cases, smallholder farmers are the weakest party in such a contractual arrangement and value chain. While the outgrower model has been promoted in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa as the best scheme for linking smallholder farmers with large-scale producers, recent scholarship has shown that its ability to benefit farmers depends on a number of factors including the nature of the crop, and the characteristics of the local economy (Yaro et al. 2017).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The preceding discussions support the argument that agricultural policy is driven by the narratives of various interest groups that interact to push their own agenda (Scoones et al. 2005). The actors that influence agricultural commercialisation policy in Ghana include: large-scale and smallholder farmers producing cash crops and smallholder food producers who are interested in getting input subsidies; local private and foreign investors who want market liberalisation, improved access to land and tax incentives; civil society groups who are interested in protecting peasant farmers; state officials and policy makers who want to increase government revenue; and donors/NGOs who are interested in using agricultural commercialisation to promote broader development. Among these actors, international donor organisations – notably the World Bank, IMF, USAID and FAO – have had tremendous influence on agricultural commercialisation policy. Due to their financial and technical clout, donors have become extremely important in the policy space in the country, especially since 2000. It is important to note that while the desire of these actors is to rely on agricultural commercialisation to promote rural development, the strategies they develop may be different. For instance, the World Bank, which supports large farms as one element within a commercialisation strategy, has been funding the LAP which is targeting modernising land sector agencies and enhancing their efficiency. On the other hand, FAO – which is not in favour of large-scale projects that displace farmers – has been on the ground promoting family farming which it argues has more positive impacts on agrarian households. Civil society groups and farmers have not been very influential in agricultural policy formulation but they have sometimes been successful in shaping policies to favour peasant farmers. Also, they have been active in discussions on the Biosafety Act 831, passed in 2011, which allows for the use of biotechnology in crop production. This involves the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Civil society groups and farmers have held demonstrations to protest the passage of this bill, although the government passed it.

There have been incremental policy changes in response to different framings of problems in the agricultural sector. While the dominant narrative recognises the fact that agricultural commercialisation is good for economic development, there have been alternative views on how agricultural commercialisation should be promoted. The narratives on commercialisation have centred on the search for: best strategy for achieving commercialisation; types of crops to be commercialised; support for smallholders; and scale of production and land tenure issues. Before the 1980s, successive governments have largely attempted to promote agricultural commercialisation by focusing on the provision of farm inputs and extension services, especially to farmers engaged in the production of cash crops. Since the adoption of the ERP in 1983, the government has been promoting trade liberalisation and production for export (Braimoh 2009). As a result of the ERP/SAPs and pro-privatisation narratives championed by the World Bank and IMF, policies were adopted to reduce the state's involvement in agricultural commercialisation processes. The removal of subsidies and the focus on export crops affected the sector.

Since the 2000s, there have been agricultural commercialisation strategies that are broadly linked to rural development initiatives and agricultural modernisation programmes. The efforts to link agricultural commercialisation to broader rural development efforts is based on narratives by development partners (e.g. World Bank, USAID, GIZ) and rural development scholars that agricultural commercialisation will enable rural farm households to participate in the market economy to earn higher incomes and be lifted out of poverty and food insecurity. These narratives have influenced stated agricultural commercialisation strategies in Ghana as the government has always fine-tuned its agricultural policies in order to seek donors' support. This situation causes policy ambiguities as the various strategies are sometimes not consistent with the broad vision of the agricultural sector (see Grainger and Konteh 2007; Teye 2013).

The recent agricultural programmes seek to emphasise a stronger role for the private sector in transforming agriculture from a low-productivity subsistence-based sector to one characterised by high productivity, integrated value chains, and extensive value addition. In relation to agricultural commercialisation pathways, Ghana has historically adopted several commercialisation models including plantation, contract farming and outgrower approach. The government and international donors (e.g. FAO, World Bank) have more recently proposed the use of contract farming and other outgrower schemes to link large-scale agricultural enterprises with small-scale farmers. This strategy is consistent with the assertion in the literature that contract farming can introduce small-scale farmers to new technologies which can go a long way to stimulate the broader commercialisation of smallholder farming and its link to markets (White and White 2012; Prowse 2012). Outgrower schemes are being actively used to link smallholders with large plantations, despite the fact that the argument for an outgrower model as an alternative to land expropriation has also been contested (de Schutter 2011; Oya 2012). The importance of marketing and its promotion of farmer and buyer linkage has been emphasised by Fold (2008). Ouma et al. (2013) attributed the emergence of contract farming in mango in the Northern Region to the dictates of marketisation, which is largely governed by a plethora of players such as NGOs, multinationals and their local allies. The players in these commercialisation pathways are diverse, spanning from private companies, donor institutions, countries, NGOs and domestic investors. At the current juncture therefore, there is policy consistency on promoting commercial agriculture and enhancing farmers' access to markets and technology. Nonetheless, the implementation of policies that would push these is left to donors and NGOs since the state's investment in agriculture is low.

With regard to the relationship between the political landscape and support for the smallholder, we have demonstrated that as a result of democratisation and adoption of regional policies to increase support for the agricultural sector, the government has introduced a number of programmes that support the smallholder. These include subsidised mechanisation as well as subsidies on fertilisers and seeds. Since 2008, in particular, the successive ruling governments have developed ad hoc pro-poor agricultural policies in order to remain in power. There is evidence that democratisation has provided local farmers with more opportunity to influence some aspects of agricultural policy. Birner and Palaniswamy (2006), drawing from panel data between 1980 and 2001 from 14 African countries including Ghana, made two interlinked conclusions. Their first and the most fundamental conclusion is that rural populations leverage on their numbers to demand for greater spending on agriculture as expenditure on the sector was shown to be more in democracies than in non-democratic countries. Their second conclusion is to the effect that cash crop cocoa and coffee farmers are better organised and therefore use their organisational advantage to induce higher government spending in the sector. This has been seen in the case of Ghana, where cocoa farmers tend to enjoy more government support than other farmers.

In the literature, it has been shown that patronage networks can influence the outcomes of agricultural policy (deGrassi 2008). Pan and Christiaensen (2012) found that in Tanzania, 60 percent of recipients of fertiliser vouchers came from households where village officials resided. In a study of a Malawian fertiliser subsidy programme, Chinsinga and Poulton (2014) emphasised the role that political interests and influences played in the implementation of the programme, which affected the way beneficiaries accessed the fertilisers. They argue that the political system in Malawi created a centralised rent culture where the president himself doubled as the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security and used his control to distribute fertiliser vouchers to his political affiliates such as members of parliament from his own party who in turn shared them to their supporters. But has this occurred in Ghana? Media reports of mass cocoa spraying and subsidised fertiliser distribution programmes reported similar clientelism where supporters of ruling party members became more predisposed to receiving these services. Also, the subsidised farm mechanisation programme benefited more individual actors in the patronage networks of the ruling government.

It is important to note, however, that while 'higher level' individual supporters of the ruling party tend to benefit from government subsidy programmes, there were cases whereby districts that do not generally support the government got more subsidies because of the governments' intention to use these subsidies to win political votes in those districts. For instance, in a detailed study of the fertiliser subsidy programme in Ghana, Banful (2011a) found that in 2008, more vouchers for subsidies were allocated in districts in which the ruling NPP lost in the 2004 elections. In fact, they emphasised that the voucher allocation was higher in districts where the government lost higher presidential votes. This suggests that the government attempts to use the subsidies as a means of gaining votes of the electorates, especially in areas where they are unpopular. Banful (2011b) similarly noted that though there are formulae for the allocation of the District Assembly Common Fund (DACF) in Ghana, districts with swing constituencies received higher allocation apparently to solicit more votes for the ruling government. Our analysis suggests that strengthening of civil society groups and promoting democratic governance will go a long way to ensure that the government implements pro-poor agricultural commercialisation policies in Ghana.

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