

African Farmer

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The Voices of Africa's Farmers

Throughout every issue of *African Farmer*, we feature profiles of the women and men who, in the face of enormous challenges, grow most of the food and many of the commercial crops that are at the heart of African economies. Each profile is distinguished by green shading and a country map indicating the farmer's village.

6 Getting Produce to Market

A farmer's work does not end when the crops are harvested. Getting goods to market is often a long and arduous process because of a lack of proper roads, transport and/or storage facilities. Governments and farmers' groups are beginning to tackle these problems of rural infrastructure.

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African farmers' perspectives on family planning differ widely. As many governments are beginning to implement national family planning programmes, farmers discuss their views on such efforts, as well as their reasons for preferring large or small families.

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Global 2000: Africa's Budding 'Green Revolution'

"Benefits? I now find it easier to feed my wife and eight children, and I have been able to build an annex to my home."

The speaker, a 54-year-old farmer from the village of Busa in north-western Ghana, is describing the benefits he has received from joining the Global 2000 programme.

Now in its fourth year, this "green revolution" programme is expanding steadily in both Ghana and Zambia. Organisers are projecting that it will reach about 115,000 farms during the 1989-90 growing season, a 400-fold increase over its first year (see chart). In addition, it is expanding for the first time into Zambia's Eastern province, which has a high concentration of small-scale farmers. The programme also operates on a smaller scale in Sudan and Tanzania.

Global 2000 was founded by former United States President Jimmy Carter, with funding from Japanese shipbuilding magnate Ryoichi Sasakawa and Pakistani banker Agha Hasan Abedi. They wanted to attack the causes of Africa's food shortages, not just the shortages themselves. The programme was designed by Nobel Prize-winning agronomist Norman Borlaug, who bred the high-yield wheat that set off Asia's "green revolution" in the 1960s and '70s.

Global 2000 aims to boost maize and sorghum yields dramatically by giving farmers improved seed and teaching them when to plant, how to sow and weed more effectively, how and when to apply fertiliser and how to better store their harvests. Farmers test these techniques on their own land in special plots that they cultivate under the guidance of Global 2000 staff and extension workers. They are encouraged to grow an adjacent plot using traditional methods so they can see the difference.

The result is usually a maize or sorghum yield double or triple their old one. For a farmer in Ghana, this can mean an extra 30,000 cedis (US\$100), the equivalent of more than eight months'

pay at the official minimum wage.

As the programme has proved itself, it has begun spreading by word of mouth. Global 2000's director in Ghana, Mexican agronomist Eugenio Martínez, explains, "We asked farmers with the test plots to let at least ten farmers watch them, but in the end we had around 50 farmers watching each test plot." Thus, the number of farmers actually reached by the programme is many more than the official number of test plots.

Ministry to extend programme

The programme has strong government support in both Ghana and Zambia and works in conjunction with the ministries of agriculture, especially with their extension services. Ghana's secretary for agriculture, Commodore Steve G. Obimpeh, told *African Farmer* recently, "We have seen their work for the past three years and we have decided, as

from this year, to sort of nationalise the programme. We have drawn up a five-year expansion programme and we are targeting about 90,000 farmers in 1989-90 and we shall increase progressively till the whole of the grain producing areas in the country are covered." (See interview with Commodore Obimpeh, p. 40.)

Similarly, in Zambia the programme is expanding into Eastern province because of repeated requests from politicians and agricultural extension officials there. The Global 2000 director in Zambia, Ravinder Jain, expressed the expectation that if all the farmers in the country adopted these methods, Global 2000 would achieve its objective of ending hunger there by the year 2000.

With Global 2000, farmers in Ghana have doubled or tripled their maize and sorghum yields.



Number of Global 2000 test plots

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90*
Ghana	40	1,600	19,000	85,000
Zambia	250	1,020	5,700	30,000
TOTAL	290	2,620	24,700	115,000

Source: Global 2000

*Projection

Farmers are good credit risks

Apart from increasing yields for grain farmers, and thus giving them more money, Global 2000 has challenged a common belief that farmers are not creditworthy. The Ghana programme extends credit to farmers to purchase fertilisers and seeds, and on average the repayment rate is over 90 per cent.

Says director Martínez, "The problem is that banks usually think of normal credit and give farmers cash, even at the wrong time, when planting season is over, when they don't actually need it. When a farmer has about 10,000 cedis (US\$33) in cash, you can imagine the sort of family pressures on him to use the money for non-farming purposes. We give them credit in kind and take payment in kind and recovery rates, in some areas, have been 100 per cent."

In Zambia, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International has contributed more than 7 million kwacha (US\$700,000) to Global 2000's operations. Last year it introduced a loan scheme to Global 2000 participants that 2,000 farmers took advantage of; this season it aims to include some 15,000 farmers in the scheme.

Not without problems

Global 2000 has not been without hitches, however. According to Dr. Jain, the problems in Zambia relate to the availability of inputs from the country's co-operative unions. Inputs are sometimes late in reaching rural storage depots or in being distributed there because of poor

roads, lack of trucks or other equipment, labour shortages at the depots and lack of proper storage facilities. Thus, some farmers do not get their seeds or fertilisers at the proper time in the growing season.

Another problem is that farmers must sometimes travel as much as 15 kilometres each way to pick up inputs at the depots. This becomes especially difficult if they must make several trips to see if the supplies have arrived yet.

Zambia's government is considering plans to build more depots, improve and maintain rural roads and change the wage system for truck drivers and rural depot workers to give them more incentive. These measures could greatly increase Global 2000's effectiveness. Similarly, Ghana plans to privatise fertiliser distribution in the interests of greater efficiency, and Global 2000 will build an agricultural machinery workshop in the country, according to Dr. Martínez.

As problems like these are addressed, Global 2000 continues its rapid growth. A quotation on the wall in Dr. Martínez's office explains why: "What a farmer hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may foolishly doubt; but what he does himself, he cannot doubt."

—Ben Ephson, Ghana
Fanwell Zulu, Zambia

One Farmer Who Set Out to End Hunger

While the results of the Global 2000 programme can be measured in sacks of grain and extra profits, they can also be measured in terms of effects on the lives of individual farmers. One farmer in northern Ghana, Seidu Sunmaila, has built on his success with Global 2000 to reach even greater heights.

Seidu Sunmaila began farming at the age of 12, and today his family of 15 farms ten hectares of sorghum, maize, cowpeas and beans. Last year he heeded the government's call to join Global 2000 and in the process boosted his maize yield from seven bags per hectare to 21 bags.

Mr. Sunmaila did more than just join, though. He mobilised 27 neighbours to form a Global 2000 group in their village of Dandafuro in Ghana's Upper West region. Their success has been tangible: "Ten out of the 28 members of the group have bought bicycles with the profits," he says.

Mr. Sunmaila went on to mobilise his group to build a crop storage depot in the village. They are now building a two-room school so the children no longer have to walk 2.5 kilometres to school.

Farmers run for office

When Ghana's government introduced elections at the local level this year, and urged ordinary people to run for office, Mr. Sunmaila seized the opportunity. He ran for a seat in the district assembly and beat his opponent by 70 votes.

Asked why he ran, he said, "The standard of living of my people is very poor and I am sure that, being in the district assembly, I can help raise the standard."

He feels sure he can combine the roles of politician and farmer. "What struck me during the initial sitting of our assembly was that many of the assemblymen are farmers, and that the deliberations of the assembly will be scheduled in such a way that it will not be in direct conflict with much of our farming activities."

—Ben Ephson