

LOBBYING STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE-AFFECTED FARMERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN GHANA: A CASE STUDY OF KLOTEKPO IN THE VOLTA REGION OF GHANA

Lord Offei-Darko¹, Vincent Von Vordzogbe², Adotei Jacob Nii Akwei³, Winnifred Aku Adotey⁴, Suzzane Osei⁵, Veronica Ofori⁶, Mary Aboagye⁷, David Kofi Duho⁸, David Djangmah Tawiah⁹, Reginald Torjagbo¹⁰, Gabriel Akwasi Owusu-Akyaw¹¹, Thelma Narooq Bamanteeh¹², Clara Ayambire¹³, and Buah Abigail Audrey¹⁴

^{1,4,7,8,11} Institute for Environment and Sanitation Studies, University of Ghana, Legon Accra, Ghana.

^{2,5,10} Department of Plant and Environmental Biology, University of Ghana, Legon Accra, Ghana.

³ Transform Transport, Accra, Ghana.

^{6,12} Centre For Climate Change and Sustainability Studies, University of Ghana, Legon Accra, Ghana.

⁹ Amoma Hives, Ashale Botwe, Accra, Ghana.

¹³ Ghana Fisheries Commission, Accra, Ghana.

¹⁴ Beacon Power Services, Accra, Ghana.

lordoffeidarko@gmail.com, vonvord@gmail.com, adoteijacob123@gmail.com, winnifredakushikaadotey@gmail.com, oseisuzzane@gmail.com, verokofori91@gmail.com, maboagye036@st.ug.edu.gh, dkduho@st.ug.edu.gh, dtawiah88@gmail.com, kofiregi7@gmail.com, owusuakyawga@gmail.com, tnarooq@gmail.com, claraayambire2@gmail.com, abbybuah@gmail.com

Received on, 20 September 2024

Accepted on, 25 October 2024

Published on, 04 November 2024

ABSTRACT:

Climate change effects such as rising temperatures, and increased frequency of extreme weather events such as droughts and floods significantly impact agriculture in Ghana. These effects threaten crop yields, particularly for rural smallholder farmers who rely on rain-fed agriculture. The case study highlights the significant impact of climate change on agriculture. Informal interviews with farmers revealed their personal experiences with unpredictable weather patterns and prolonged droughts, while a comprehensive review of agricultural policies identified critical gaps in awareness and enforcement. The findings indicate that many farmers lack knowledge of existing agricultural policies and organizations that could support their efforts to advocate for better resources and assistance. To address these challenges, practical lobbying strategies are introduced through training sessions aimed at empowering farmers to effectively communicate their needs to policymakers. This case study underscores the necessity for targeted lobbying efforts to support rural smallholder farmers in adapting to the changing climatic landscape in Ghana.

KEY-WORDS: Adaptation strategies, Climate change, Crop failure, Climate advocacy, Economic impacts, Farming practices, Rainfall patterns, Rural communities, Social vulnerability, Climate justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, agriculture provides livelihoods for 2.5 billion people and accounts for 29% of GDP and 65% of jobs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) (Jayne et al., 2021). Agriculture is vital to Ghana's economy, with about 70% (Darfour, 2016) of the population relying on agriculture for their livelihoods. However, the agriculture sector is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as erratic rainfall patterns and increased temperatures (Desjonqueres, 2024). Given that about 70% of Ghana's population depends directly or indirectly on agriculture, any climate-induced instability in this sector could have far-reaching social and economic consequences (Adom, 2024).

The UNDRIP (2018) provides the need for rural or indigenous communities to have the right to free, prior and informed consent on any changes in existing or creation of new laws or regulations by governments that affect indigenous people. For climate affected farmers in rural communities in Ghana, it is necessary to repeat the centrality of rights in the work on advocacy and lobbying. Looking into the root cause of poverty and marginalization of rural farmers instead of just considering causes is referred to the Rights-Based Approach to development (Cullen, 2024). In Klotekpo, farmers rely predominantly on rain-fed agriculture, making them particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of climate variability. The need for effective lobbying strategies has become paramount as these farmers seek to influence policies that affect their livelihoods and adapt to changing climatic conditions.

This case study aims to discuss the current challenges faced by farmers in Klotekpo due to climate change, identify key agricultural policies, and develop a lobbying strategy that empowers climate affected farmers to advocate effectively for their rights and needs. By understanding the specific impacts of climate change on agricultural practices and engaging with relevant policymakers, this case study seeks to enhance the capacity of local farmers to influence decisions that affect their livelihoods and promote sustainable agricultural practices in their community.

2. METHODS

Klotekpo, is a rural farming community located in the South Tongu District of the Volta Region,

Ghana. Majority of community members rely on subsistence farming as a source of livelihood (National Development Planning Commission, 2018–2021). Rice, a crop which mainly grows within the community of Klotekpo, is highly sensitive to the impacts of climate change (Lu, 20214). To understand the challenges faced by farmers, informal interviews and discussions are conducted to gather personal experiences with climate change impacts. A comprehensive review of relevant agricultural policies is performed to identify gaps in policy enforcement and areas for improvement that could better support farmers. Based on these findings, practical lobbying strategies are introduced to farmers through training sessions. These sessions aim to empower climate affected farmers with skills to effectively advocate for their needs and influence policy changes.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Impact of climate change on agriculture

For rural farmers in Klotekpo, the impact of climate change is evident in the year-on-year activities that mainly are dependent on rainfall rather than irrigation as is the case in the developed world (Rifky, 2024). Farmers in Klotekpo reported significant declines in crop yields due to unpredictable rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts. This has heightened food insecurity within the community. According to World Food Programme (2023), approximately one million people in Ghana are food insecure, with rural areas being particularly affected by adverse weather conditions that disrupt agricultural productivity.

3.2. Agricultural policy awareness gaps

Many farmers in Klotekpo lack awareness of existing policies and organizations that could support their lobbying efforts, indicating a critical gap in communication between policymakers and rural communities. This disconnect not only hampers the effectiveness of agricultural policies but also limits farmers' ability to lobby for resources and support systems to enhance their resilience to climate change. Interviews revealed that while some farmers expressed a desire for more information on government initiatives, they often rely on informal networks for knowledge sharing, which may not provide comprehensive or accurate updates on relevant agricultural policies.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Vulnerability of smallholder rural farmers

The findings from Klotekpo highlight the profound impact of climate change on rural agriculture, particularly the reliance on rainfall for crop production. The significant declines in crop yields reported by farmers are indicative of the broader challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Ghana, where approximately one million people (WFP, 2023) are currently food insecure due to adverse weather conditions disrupting agricultural productivity. This aligns with research indicating that climate change increases the frequency of extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts and unpredictable rainfall patterns, which directly threaten food security in vulnerable communities like Klotekpo (Kpenekuu, 2024).

4.2. Agricultural policies in Ghana

Farmers in Klotekpo face significant challenges due to lack of awareness regarding existing agricultural policies and organizations that could aid their lobbying efforts. This gap in communication between policymakers and rural communities limits the effectiveness of agricultural policies and restricts farmers' access to resources designed to enhance their resilience to climate change. Without proper knowledge of available support systems, farmers struggle to lobby for their needs, which can lead to missed opportunities for assistance and improvement in agricultural practices. Strengthening communication channels and raising awareness about these policies are essential steps toward empowering farmers in Klotekpo and improving their ability to adapt to changing climatic conditions. A summary of agricultural policies in Ghana (Sova et al., 2014; Boadu, 2024) is shown in table 1.0 below:

Table 1: Key messages to addressing existing climate change and agriculture policies

Policy	Intent/Focus	Key initiatives	Expected Policy Outcome	Analysis/Challenges
National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP)	Transform Ghana's agriculture sector through increased public investment & private sector participation.	Mechanization, irrigation and value chain development.	Effort is to enhance water security, strengthen climate resilience and empower farmers to adapt to changing weather patterns.	NAIP has not significantly reduced food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty especially among women, the youth, physically challenged, small-scale producers & entrepreneurs.
Planting for Export and Rural Development (PERD)	Promote cultivation of tree crops like cashew, oil palm, and rubber to boost exports and rural incomes.	More seedling distribution and supporting smallholder farmers through subsidizing organic fertilizers.	Effort here is to enhance foreign exchange earnings and promote cash crops growth (cashew) for job creation.	Weak legal framework and lack of effective regulation on cash crop.
One-District-One-Warehouse	Construct warehouses in each of Ghana's 260 districts to reduce post-harvest losses.	Accelerate the construction of one-district-one-warehouse facilities to reduce post-harvest losses.	Establish road networks, especially in rural areas, which impedes the transportation of agricultural produce to and from warehouses.	A number of warehouses in the middle belt and northern parts of Ghana are in operation.
Modernizing Agriculture in Ghana (MAG) Programme	Improve agricultural productivity and competitiveness.	Strengthen the sustainability of interventions and their long-term impact.	Effort here is to enhance crop production.	Lack of processing & storage infrastructure as well as quality standard testing facilities.

4.3. Developing a lobbying strategy

A lobbying campaign for climate-affected farmers in rural communities requires a strategic and comprehensive planning approach that encompasses several critical steps to effectively advocate for their interests and influence policy decisions (Santos et al., 2021). A lobbying campaign planning process involves identifying key stakeholders, conducting thorough research

on the policy landscape, developing compelling messages, and building strong relationships with decision-makers. By carefully crafting a targeted campaign, it is possible to mobilize support from key decision makers, raise awareness of smallholder farmers on Ghana’s agricultural policy initiatives, and ultimately achieve policy changes that benefit climate- affected farmers. A sample design for building a lobbying campaign is shown in Table 2.0 below:

Table 2: A sample design for building a lobbying campaign

Key Messages	Lobby	Strategies	Suggested Solutions	Responsible/ Collaborating Individuals
Raising awareness of the impact on climate change on agriculture	How is climate change affecting agricultural productivity in Ghana?	Conduct training sessions for rural farmers.	Under changing weather patterns to safeguard food production, Call for urgent adaptation to new farming practices (agroforestry).	Agricultural Extension Officers
				Researchers
				Local NGOs
Enhance Resilience of Farmers	Government to invest in use of technology in agriculture.	Promote climate-smart agricultural practices.	Introduce drought resistant seeds.	Agricultural Advisors
	Provision of financial assistance to farmers.			Financial Institutions
				Government Agencies
Build Alliances for Climate Action through campaigns	Provide financial support for smallholder climate affected farmers.	Collaborate with NGOs and community organizations.	Proactive measures to mitigate the impact of price increases of crops.	Government agencies
	Improve agricultural infrastructure, and implement policies that promote sustainable farming practices.	Engage policymakers in dialogue.		Youth Climate Advocates
				Community Leaders
				Local NGOs

5. CONCLUSION

Climate change poses a significant threat to agriculture, impacting food security and the livelihoods of rural farmers. It is essential for rural farmers to understand their rights and the importance of engaging with policymakers. By organizing and voicing their concerns, rural farmers can influence decisions that affect their lives and communities. Rural farmers must recognize that their voices matter in the decision-making process. Engaging with local and national policymakers is crucial for advocating for the resources and support they need. This engagement can lead to better access to funding, technology, and training programs that help them adapt to changing

climate conditions. Additionally, forming alliances with other farmers and community groups can amplify their impact. When rural farmers unite, they create a stronger platform to address common challenges. This solidarity can lead to more effective lobbying efforts and greater visibility for issues such as climate change impacts on agriculture.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Youth Climate Convening + Building Lobbying Capacity of Climate Affected Farmers (YCC + BLOCAF) - a youth-led project, was funded by UMI Fund. Special appreciation to Dr. Vincent Von Vordzogbe, Senior Lecturer, University of Ghana for the technical advisory role played in the

development of the lobbying manual.

REFERENCES:

01. Boadu, E. S. (2024). Evaluating Ghana's Youth-Centered Food-Security Policies: A Collaborative Governance Approach. *Sustainability*, 16(9), 3830. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16093830>
02. Darfour, B., & Rosentrater, K. A. (2016, July 17). AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN GHANA. 2016 ASABE International Meeting. <https://doi.org/10.13031/aim.20162460507>
03. Desjonqueres, C., Zhao, H., Kosmidou-Bradley, W., & Corral, P. (2024). *Ghana's climate vulnerability profile*.
04. *Government of Ghana*. (n.d.).
05. Kpenekuu, F., Antwi-Agyei, P., Nimoh, F., Osei, M. A., & Guodaar, L. (2024). Understanding drought risk management in vulnerable communities in dryland farming systems: Evidence from northwest Ghana. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 100, 104186. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2023.104186>
06. Lu, M. (2024). Impact of climate change on rice and adaptation strategies: A review. *Advances in Resources Research*, 4(2), 252–262. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.50908/arr.4.2_252
07. Nations, U. (2007). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2011.0040>
08. Rifky, M., Jesfar, M., Dissanayake, K., Ermat, S., & Samadiy, M. (2024). Development and evaluation of an automated irrigation system for ordinary agriculture farm. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 480, 03013. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202448003013>
09. Adom, P. K. (2024). The Socioeconomic Impact of Climate Change in Developing Countries in the Next Decades (No. 681).
10. Cullen, B., & Debevec, L. (2024). Integrating social inclusion perspectives in agricultural food systems research for development: a background paper.
11. Santos, S., Ravara, P., & Rodrigues, D. (2021). *Guide for Participation in Democratic Environmental Governance*.
12. Sova, C., Chaudhury, A. S., Nelson, W., Nutsukpo, D. K., & Zougmoré, R. B. (2014). Climate change adaptation policy in Ghana: Priorities for the agriculture sector. *CCAFS Working Paper*.
13. World Food Population (WFP), Country Brief, Ghana. (2023).

APPENDIX I

A general step-by-step guide for lobbying:

1. *Draw up the list of officials/individuals you will lobby and collect information about their background and potential position or stand to your requested action.*
2. *Based on an outlined list, make a plan on how best to approach each of them according to their category (Government, NGO, Academic institutions)*
 - *Examples on different ways to approach officials:*
 - *Request the support of an ally or someone known to the officials to arrange a meeting appointment; or present/discuss your issue to get some initial feedback on the opinion of the official;*
 - *It is not easy to attract the attention of decision-makers. Hence, it is advisable to establish contact to their secretary/ employee who can be sympathetic to your cause/issue. They can be very critical in gaining the support of the official and also influencing the staff of other officials you will also be lobbying.*
 - *Arrange meetings with decision-makers in formal (their office) or informal settings (restaurant or quiet public place) where appropriate; and explore avenues where you can interact with decision-makers by knowing their activities/schedules. For example, you may attend their inauguration of a school, etc. However, do not be intrusive or aggressive as this may cause consternation and be counterproductive.*
3. *When you do lobby work, make sure you have written materials or documents to submit relating to your issue and requested action.*
4. *Lobbying work is not confined in meetings with decision makers, but also includes the court of public opinion. By getting the active support of donors, members of the media and influential individuals, and generating public attention and concern, the advocate is indirectly taking steps to persuade/ exert pressure on decision-makers to take action.*
5. *All types of decision makers can be lobbied! A person or an organisation with the power to make a decision that can benefit or otherwise affect the advocate and his or her goals can be lobbied. They can be traditional leaders, newspaper editor/publisher, church leaders, and representatives of donor agencies/ organisations, NGOs etc. However, use sound judgement when determining whether attempts to persuade particular people and institutions can or should be made.*