

Land Use Planning and Agricultural Development in Rural Ghana

Ghana is experiencing rapid urbanisation and commercialisation of lands at the expense of agricultural development. This changing phenomenon requires appropriate land use planning that is currently associated with traditional authorities and local governments.

Ghana's population is expected to hit 40 million by 2035 with an annual growth rate of 2.2%. By 2019, nearly 56.1% of Ghana's population lived in urban areas. Urbanisation has serious effects on agricultural land use. In the very past, a visitor could easily get land from traditional owners to engage in crop production. Nowadays, rural agriculture land is hard to come by, due to urbanisation, commercialisation, industrialization, infrastructural development and poor land use planning by local governments and spatial planning authorities.

Towns which are very close to the main city of Accra such as Kasoa (Central region), Weija (Greater Accra), Dodowa (Greater Accra) and Aburi (Eastern Region) are rapidly becoming urban and reducing their agricultural lands. This calls for effective land use planning to accommodate human settlements and food security requirements.

Agricultural lands on pressure

Real Estate Development with an increase in housing demand and industrialization are putting pressure on rural agricultural lands. The introduction of "One District One Factory" (1D1F) in 2017, a policy that aims to ensure that at least each of the 260 Districts have a factory built, will put agricultural lands under pressure because building factories and

other infrastructure requires space. It is therefore imperative that industrialisation and agricultural development are integrated: agro-based factories such as the Ekumfi Pineapple Juice factory in the central region should be established to serve a dual purpose of food production and industrial use. Just as the Government Policy of "Planting for Food and Jobs" goal.

A challenge for local governments

Land use planning is the process of building healthy communities for effective socio-economic development of an area. In other words, it is the design of policies and activities that will increase the economic use of land to ensure sustainable development. The different demands for land (farming, industry, grazing, forestry, wildlife, tourism, housing and real estate, infrastructure and recreation) are enormous and require effective land use and spatial planning.

Ghana has 260 District Assemblies but much of their powers, finances and functions are centrally controlled. Land tenure system in Ghana is very complex. In Ghana, about 80% of the lands are customary-owned and traditional authorities decide who to allocate land to without controlling the purpose of use. District Assemblies in Ghana are recognised as the planning authority at the local level under Local Governance Act, 2016 (Act 936) and Land Use and Spatial Planning Act, 2016 (Act 925), they are to elaborate development plans and zoning of the districts to cater for land use and target which areas are suitable for farming, forestry, industry and markets. But they lack the power and political will to plan, approve and regulate land use at the local areas. Faced with the growing pressure of unregulated and unplanned urbanization and industrialization, local government has a challenge to design and plan spatial development in the country.

A call for proper planning of land use

The over commercialisation of land for urban development and industrial activities will have serious repercussions not only on rural agricultural development and food security but also on natural resources and the ecosystem as a whole (deforestation and diminishing biodiversity). Many lands will lose their value for productive activities if Local Government and Land Use and Spatial Planning Authority do not check land acquisition and use. It is therefore important that Traditional Authorities and Local Government collaborate in the allocation of lands: chiefs and landowners should not directly sell land without the land use and spatial plan of the local areas designed by local government. Land use planning must take into account areas that are not fertile for agricultural purpose and designate that for housing, infrastructure, transportation and factories. Land use and spatial planning should cater for urban agriculture. Since it is difficult to reverse urbanisation, it is imperative for local government to zone areas for urban agriculture. If urban agriculture is lost, food security will suffer, and ending hunger by 2030 would be a miracle. ■

Félix Amakye



Felix Amakye is a Lecturer at the Institute of Local Government Studies in Ghana.

Nicholas Awortwi



Nicholas Awortwi is the Director of Institute of Local Government Studies in Ghana.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS A CHALLENGE TO DESIGN AND PLAN SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT