

**MESSAGE ON THE STATE OF THE NATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC, NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT ON TUESDAY,
FEBRUARY 21, 2017.**

This is a portion of the president's speech focused on agriculture

Mr. Speaker, I believe the starting point in turning round our fortunes must be with agriculture. Unfortunately, the state of agriculture in our country right now is not good. Farmers are left on their own. It is not surprising, therefore, that food prices are high and we are having to import almost everything we eat, including vegetables from our Sahelian neighbours. And yet, agriculture provides the best opportunity to use modern methods to change the lives of many, within the shortest possible time.

We have to irrigate our lands and equip farmers with the skills needed to make farming a well-paying business. We aim to popularize farming by encouraging many people to take it up as a full or part time activity. A National Campaign, "**PLANTING FOR FOOD AND JOBS**", will be launched to stimulate this activity. An amount of 125 million Canadian dollars has been secured from Canada, a friend of our nation, to support the initiative.

This Campaign will be anchored on the pillars that will transform agriculture: the provision of improved seeds, the supply of fertilizers, the provision of dedicated extension services, a marketing strategy and the use of e-Agriculture.

To initiate the Campaign, the District Assemblies will be tasked to identify and register progressive farmers in each of the 216 districts.

Mr Speaker, for too long our farmers have been left to cope by themselves, without the necessary support from government. For too long, our farmers have been left to the mercy of the vagaries of the weather.

We have decided to embark upon a programme to provide water to enable all-year farming. We are calling it the one-village, one-dam policy. It is a programme that I expect will rapidly get the support of the population, and should help to transform food insecurity in our country.

The three northern regions, in particular, will benefit from the availability of water to enable all-year farming, so that the enforced yearly migration can be minimized and food production become more predictable.

I look forward to an increase in public investment in agriculture, starting from the first budget of my government. We must reverse the unfortunate trend of the past eight years, which saw a regular decrease in public investment in the sector that provides a living for the majority of our people.

Mr Speaker, food processing has been the first step towards industrialization in virtually every country, and it is time for us to take it seriously. Not only will it serve to cut down on the wastage of crops during the high season, it will provide more jobs and expand farming business. Food processing will also save time in the preparation and cooking of our local foods, and there will be better control on the hygiene in the process. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to an exciting time in the agricultural sector.