

Changing Seasons - Changing Industries: Part 2

Dear Friends,

In my September article, I opened the discussion about the phenomenon of global changes in climate, and its effect on my environment, and on industries such as **fishing** and **farming** in Ghana. I chose these two because even though Ghana is rich in many minerals, the economy is agrarian: we depend on the land for survival, for food - and the sea for our protein. This is attested to by the fact that Ghana used to be the major exporter of cocoa - from which we get chocolate and other cocoa based products - the yield from which supported and financed our economy. Unfortunately, we have lost that position to our neighboring country Ivory Coast, also known as the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana now ranks second in the production of cocoa.

One significant benefit to the population by way of equipping future generations through education, was the use of the revenue from the Cocoa Industry to set up a scholarship program - and I was one of the beneficiaries. The government awarded scholarships for education from the Cocoa Industry, primarily to help cocoa farmers to be able to send their children to school. But the program was later extended to all who were brilliant but could not afford to be supported in school by their parents. The Ghanaian government created an institution known as the Cocoa Marketing Board which was charged with the responsibility to ensure the growth and sustainability of the Cocoa Industry.

The **farming** industry thrived on the regularity and dependability of the rainfall pattern that benefited farmers and helped the industry. Among the staple foods in Ghana, one will find corn, cassava (root crop), plantain, and rice, among others, that need the **major** raining season for cultivation. We have now lost this trend, and therefore planting and harvesting have also been affected. Even as I am writing this article, we are experiencing heavy rainfalls that used to occur in the raining season, which are causing floods and the destruction of property and loss of lives.

The highway to Akrampa in the last month has been flooded in some places, and sand and other debris have piled up on the roads, pushed thereon by the waters that are flowing from everywhere. In Akrampa, this has increased the degradation of the soil around the foundation of the classrooms, and severely affected their

farming industry, as it has in many parts of the country where produce such as corn (maize), cassava, vegetables, and other food crops, are produced.

The people of Akrampa are what we would describe as **peasant** farmers who work on small tracts of land sometimes as small as a fifth of an acre, and they use simple tools like cutlasses and hoes. They grow mainly corn, cassava, plantain, and vegetables like peppers, tomatoes, eggplant and okra. Their land is such that until it rains, they are unable to do anything on it. The rains soften the soil for them to cultivate. Before the rains, they need the sun to shine hard on the twigs and plants and trees they have cut down so they can burn and clear the land for cultivation. They don't use much fertilizer, or none at all. It is the twigs and leaves, etc., which they leave on the land to decompose which form their basic fertilizer. So, if the cut brush doesn't really dry so that the fire turns them into ash, they have a real challenge. It is the heavy rainfall that soaks and fills the soil with the nutrients needed for growing the crops.

The harvest time should be around the month of August for most of the crops. But that also, has changed because the rainfall pattern has changed. Interestingly, even the education system - vacation and reopening of schools - was based on the rainfall pattern. Schools would go on vacation most often during the heavy rains. This is also the time when the children could be with their parents to help in the sowing of crops. The hard soil requires stronger hands, and that is what the children have, so the parents need them to dig the soil and plant the crops. Thus, in consequence, as earlier stated, school vacations are organized around the wet and dry times of the nation. Of significance, therefore, is the fact that the heavy rains affect school attendance.

All of these issues affect related activities, such as trading in farm produce, that bring in the money needed by the people to take care of their lives: to buy food and clothing and take care of their children. The people are already hard hit by their severe conditions, so when the rains cause these hardships, then things become so much worse. This is why the provision of school uniforms for some of the Akrampa students was such a great help in the past.

The Akrampa Breakfast Program is a fantastic intervention and continues to be the main meal of the day for around 70% of the students. I want to give thanks to each and all of you who give generously to the Breakfast Program.

The reduction of income of the parents as a result of the failings on the farm and trading are related consequences of the changes in climate.

In next month's article I will talk about the effect of the changing climate on the **fishing industry**, other activities in Ghana, and how it affects the lives of the people of Akrampa.

We continue to pray that the Lord, who owns the world and all that is in it, (Psalm 24:1-2) will have mercy on us and turn things around for all mankind.

Blessings,

Pastor Ben Wilson