

The SADA Master Plan

A blueprint to govt's district industrialisation drive

By Maxwell Akalaare Adombila

FOR decades, the Volta Region remained a major contributor to the national food basket, supplying a variety of food and cash crops as well fish and other protein food supplements for the local and international market.

With favourable conditions that support the commercial cultivation of vegetables, legumes, cereals and cocoa, it is almost certain to say that a discourse on agriculture cannot conclude without reference to the region and its swampy farmlands that sweep from the south through to the north.

Yet, as is the case with farming in other regions, commercial and subsistence agriculture in this part of the country has been left at the mercy of the weather and rudimentary farming methods.

There, only one farming season exists within which farmers scramble to cultivate a variety of staples as well as cater for the country's pricy cash crop – the cocoa.

In spite of the region's exceptional prowess of being home to large tracks of water bodies, irrigation facilities are still limited. The few that exist are choked by filth.

Agro-processing facilities and factories in general are hard to come by.

As a result, crops that are produced in large quantities are often ferried to the few processing factories in Accra and Kumasi, with majority of them bought at knock-down prices by traders.

This makes the cultivation of perishable crops such vegetables, tubers and suckers a disheartening venture to engage.

SADA's response

Although various interventions have been undertaken to help address these challenges and free up a lot more of the areas potential in agriculture, not much results have achieved.

The woes of the Aveyime and the Worawora Rice Processing Factories are testament of the predicaments that agro-processing facilities face in this part of the country.

This is one of the challenges the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA), a vehicle for the transformation of the savannah zone, has been working to resolve.

Over the last two years, the authority has been engaging chiefs, political parties and development partners to draw up a concrete development plan that will serve as a blueprint to the transformation of its catchment area – the northern savannah ecological zone (NSEZ).

The SADA Master Plan, as it is called, spells out clear plans that the authority intends to take in each of the five regions under the NSEZ.

The plans, which center on industrialisation, are aimed at helping to transform the region and surrounding communities from the spectacle of underdevelopment to an full of opportunities for indigenes and investors alike.

Key plans

Just like the government's district industrialisation policy, the SADA Master Plan on the Volta Region envisage that he authority will facilitate the establishment of factories in selected districts under its jurisdiction.

Under the plan SADA intends to develop the following key urban centres in the region to serve as the hub for regional and district level commercial, community facilities and administration:

1 A regional centre at Dambai

2. Small cities/key urban centres at Nkwanta and Kete-Krachi and

3. Multi district centres/key rural centres at Tokuroane.

It also envisages the establishment of the following facilities to help propel the transformation of the region.

- Develop an aquaculture research & development centre at Dambai to drive agriculture and aquaculture knowledge development in the region, capitalising on its accessibility to the Lake Volta.
- Develop an agro and food processing park in Dambai that will specialise in yam and cassava production.
- Develop agri-processing park with agro-industries and market centres for agriculture produce in other identified settlements.

Easing connectivity

The authority also intends to facilitate the construction a number of transport networks to facilitate easy connectivity flow of goods and services.

- Establish a river port and logistic park at Dambai to tap into the Lake Volta transportation system to link to the Southern Ghana.
- Enhance regional connectivity to the Northern Region with the construction of a bridge at Dambai and Kete Krachi across the Lake Volta.
- Upgrade coach and bus station at Dambai to enhance inter-city and intra-city transport respectively.
- Develop a regional hospital in Dambai and increase provision of secondary healthcare facilities to improve the quality of healthcare services in the region.
- Develop polytechnic and vocational institutions at the key urban centres including Dambai, Nkwanta and Kete-Krachi.
- Establish flood protection zones.
- Provide 100 per cent infrastructure coverage for water supply and electricity access.
- Upgrade the existing power lines and equipments to reduce power losses.
- Develop the Nkwanta Tourism Cluster with Hill Top Resort with the close proximity to Kyabobo National Park.
- Develop the Volta Tourism Cluster as an urban attractions and recreation hub.

- Develop the Kete-Krachi Tourism Cluster as the prime tourist attraction in the region with scenic lake beaches, waterfront luxury resorts with meeting and convention facilities, golf course and waterfront dining areas.

It is expected that the implementation of these sub-regional projects would help to catalyse the growth of the Volta Region, optimising its strategic location surrounding Lake Volta.

Volta Region in focus

The region is located along the southern half of the eastern border between Ghana and Togo. Primarily served by the eastern transport corridor, the region is connected to the key urban centres along the North-South axis.

Nkwanta is directly linked to the south at Tema in the Greater Accra region, and up north to Yendi in Northern region and Bawku in Upper East.

As the smallest region in the country, Volta is the least income contributor to the total GDP of NSEZ, with only a contribution of nine per cent.

As compared to the rest of the region, the majority of the economic activities and employment in these five districts are in agriculture and related industries.

Significantly, with the presence of Volta Lake, fishing is evident in the Krachi Districts.

Apart from these, other activities include manufacturing, mining and quarrying, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and tourism.

The NSEZ consists part of the Volta Region, which spread across a land area of 8,723 square kilometers (sq km).

It is the second smallest region, constituting of seven per cent of the total land area of NSEZ. A substantial portion at 21 per cent of the region falls within the Volta River Basin, with the Lake Volta as the key asset of the region.

The region is endowed with a variety of land cover with 28 per cent of cropland as well as 23 per cent of grassland and open forest respectively.

Most of the highlands in Ghana surround the Lake Volta, and hence the region has a rather hilly terrain.

Prominently, there is part of the Akwapim-Togo Ranges along the eastern border including the second highest mountain in Ghana at 876 metres ASL located within NSEZ.

Volta under SADA zone

Administratively, five districts of the Volta Region fall under the NSEZ. The region has a population of about 421,340 as of 2010 and the population is mainly concentrated in the towns of Dambai and Nkwanta in Krachi East and Nkwanta South districts respectively.

Together, these settlements represent about 0.6 per cent of the total land cover in the region.

The way forward

It is evident that the SADA has, over the years concretised data that can be used to leapfrog the government's district industrialisation programme, popularly known as 'One District, One Factory.'

It would, therefore, not be out of place if the authority availed itself and its expertise in the area, which is the outcome of close collaborations between credible DPs, to the government as a way of helping realise the goal.

For now, the overall regional growth strategies, broad structure plan and key projects highlighted in the proposed NSEZ Regional Concept Plan, along with the sub-region growth strategies for each region has helped to establish the strategic planning directions for the ecological zone.

It is expected that the concept plan on Volta Region shall be further refined and used as a strategic guide to prepare the development of Tamale and Buipe City Master Plans. –GB

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