



A FARMER'S SAY
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Agriculture land management vital

The anticipated agricultural revolution aimed at ending hunger, creating wealth, expanding exports, and modernising agriculture will not be possible unless the entire public, especially the farmers and local leaders, appreciate the importance of sustainable land management. Successful farming will only be guaranteed in an environment where people engage in agronomic practices that promote good care of the soil and water sheds.

This is an effort that will involve extension staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, farmers, school teachers, political and religious leaders, and other players in the farming value chains.

Sustainable land management is so important to our country that it deserves special emphasis in the education system by ensuring that every school has a garden where learners are taught soil nourishment and protection technologies, including small scale irrigation, terrace making, erection of contour bunds, rain water harvesting, agro-forestry, manure application, and a whole range of agronomic practices.

Since most of our farmers work on small plots of land using the hand hoe as the main tool, it will necessitate a new approach to the way they use the soil and the selection of the seeds they plant for the small scale farmers to transform into market oriented and commercial farming.

Feeding a bigger population in the coming years will require more food production on the same land area, without encroaching on forests and wetlands.

We need forest cover and wetlands to mitigate climate change effects. A recent report from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), dated August 21 2017, has stated: "Forests provide vital ecosystem services that underpin sustainable food supply - from providing habitats for species that support natural pest control to reducing nutrient run-off and protecting vital water supplies. In the long term, forest loss could negatively impact agricultural production". Yet mindless farming practices generate global warming gases which aggravate climate change challenges. Farmers and other agricultural actors must be sensitive to climate change mitigation. Agricultural extension workers will need to be sufficiently empowered in order to pass on the skills for successful crop production despite the changing climate.

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