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KOFI BOA

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Director, Center for No-Till Agriculture (Ghana)

I am Kofi Boa and I am 60 years old (born on July 15th 1955). I am the youngest of four boys of a farming family. I grew up on the farm. My father died when I was a small boy. At age 12, my mother's cocoa farm got burnt by bush fire and life became very tough for the family especially for me the youngest child that was left at home with my mother. My mother had to hire herself out as a caretaker farmer for other landowners and slowly she restored the family's income to keep me in school. The bitter life experienced at that tender age got me to develop a strong hatred for fire on the farm land and I vowed to fight the slash and burn method of land preparation for the rest of my life.

I therefore developed strong interest in gardening at the primary and middle schools and offered to study agriculture at the secondary school and at the sixth form level. I continued my agricultural science education at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana and at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, USA. Before going to the secondary school, I wanted to understand how I could farm without having to burn the vegetation so I spent time talking to the very elderly cocoa farmers because I had heard they used to establish cocoa farms without burning the cut

vegetation. Through those interactions I became aware of a system called “proka” (no-till with mulch), a practice that required clearing the forest and allowing it to stay for about one year to get the cleared vegetation including the logs from the big trees to rot to allow the planting of cocoa seedlings the following year. The one year waiting period seemed too long for me so I set myself to find ways of managing the mulch immediately after clearing the bush to be able to plant any of the food crops found on the traditional slash and burn fields. I have been farming this way from that time till today and this is what has brought me so far in championing the development and promotion of No-till farming, an activity that occupies all my time and will continue to be so for the rest of my life.

I started my professional career as a cocoa agronomist and later worked for the Crops Research Institute (CRI) of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in Ghana as an on-farm research scientist. I was privileged to work on the Ghana Grains Development Project through which I had the opportunity to do a bit more no-till research and extension. When the project ended, there wasn’t enough opportunity to do much no-till work so I quit working for the CRI in 2003 to become completely independent to push for what I believe in – no-till farming.

I met Howard Buffett of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation in 2007 and Mr. Buffett has given me a lot of encouragement and support to push on. I established the Center for No-Till Agriculture at Amanchia in the Ashanti region of Ghana in 2012 to permanently illustrate the evidence and benefits of No-Till farming and to teach other farmers the processes of no-till farming. In 2013, the HGB Foundation uplifted the Center and now the center attracts people from all over Africa. I see public interest growing in No-Till farming in West Africa and more especially in Ghana and I am committed to continue showing the evidence and benefits so as to build farmers interest and confidence in the technology for massive adoption.

Learn more (<http://farmfutures.com/blogs-africas-till-revolution-9442>) about Kofi's work.

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