

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. I know that the Plant Breeders Bill proposed by the Ghanaian Government is opposed by some farmers and believe it is important that the issues at stake are debated.

I believe the New Alliance can make an important contribution to tackling the underlying causes of poverty and hunger in Africa, promoting growth in African agriculture through coordinated public and private investment. This is a critical step that will create jobs in rural areas, raise smallholder farmer incomes and increase the availability and affordability of nutritious food.

I have been assured that African government participation in the New Alliance is voluntary and donor funding commitments are not in any way dependent on government policy reforms. Policy changes are the result of a process of negotiation between African governments, companies, farmers and civil society. This year, the UK is supporting efforts to establish an annual review of all agreements, or 'Cooperation Frameworks' in each partner country, involving all concerned parties.

Agriculture has always been a predominantly private sector activity and, for the Government, the private sector includes a smallholder farmer selling surplus at a local market as much as global agribusinesses. Increased domestic investment in agriculture by small-scale farmers and agribusinesses is critical for sustained growth. However, I do also believe that global food and agribusiness companies can make a valuable contribution to agriculture sector growth and poverty reduction in Africa, by sourcing products from small-scale farms and by providing training and access to improved technology.

With regards to EDMs, I make a general rule of not signing these. They have no legislative effect, are almost never debated in Parliament, and cost the British taxpayer over £600,000 annually in printing and publication costs alone. I do not feel that this represents a good use of public money, especially given the size of the current budget deficit.

I do, however, know how strongly many people in our area feel about this matter, not least the issues being debated in Ghana, and have raised it with the International Development team.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**