

MOFA designs technologies to reduce health hazards

Story: Abdul Aziz

THE Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) is working closely with the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) to design appropriate technologies to reduce the health and environmental hazards associated with using polluted water in fresh vegetable production in urban areas.

The appropriate technologies include the construction of tube wells to support urban irrigation systems in the various Metropolitan areas to improve food safety and human health.

Mr Ernest Debrah, Minister of Food and Agriculture, who announced this at a Seminar on Urban Agriculture for Food Security, said the use of waste water to produce fresh vegetables for the urban population could introduce diseases causing pathogens and heavy metals such as lead into food.

He said the excessive use of agro-chemicals and fertilisers could also affect soil life and lead to the pollution of water supply.

The minister, whose speech was read on his behalf by a Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Mr Clement Eledi, said MOFA had recognised the importance of the urban agricultural sub-sector which had the potential to contribute to the development of the nation.

He said the Ministry was, therefore, interested in supporting and regulating it to become more efficient and sustainable.

The Minister said urban agriculture provided more than 70 per cent of the fresh vegetable needs of Accra and Kumasi as well as



Picture: EBOW HANSON

• A section of participants on their way to attend the one-day policy seminar on Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture (UPA) for Food Security, Livelihood support and Urban Greening in Accra. Among them is Mr Clement Eledi, a Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture.

supplying most of the meat and egg needs of the urban population.

He said the sector was making immense contribution to employment, income generation, food security and poverty reduction and ought to be supported by the government and the metropolitan assemblies to realise its full potential.

Dr Pay Drechsel, the Head of Agriculture, Water and Cities of IWMI, said more than 164 hectares of land were put under vegetable cultivation in Accra and its environs while 800 hectares was under maize production.

He said because the urban agriculture was a year round business, they gained a lot of

income than the farmers in the rural areas whose farming activities were on seasonal basis.

Dr J.O. Gogo, the Director of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), said his outfit had a lot of role to play in providing research work and investigative support to ensure quality standards of both inputs and produce meant for human consumption.

Dr Gogo said the CSIR had developed a new paradigm to guide its work by using the transforming power of Science and Technology for wealth creation and would lend that support to urban agriculture development.