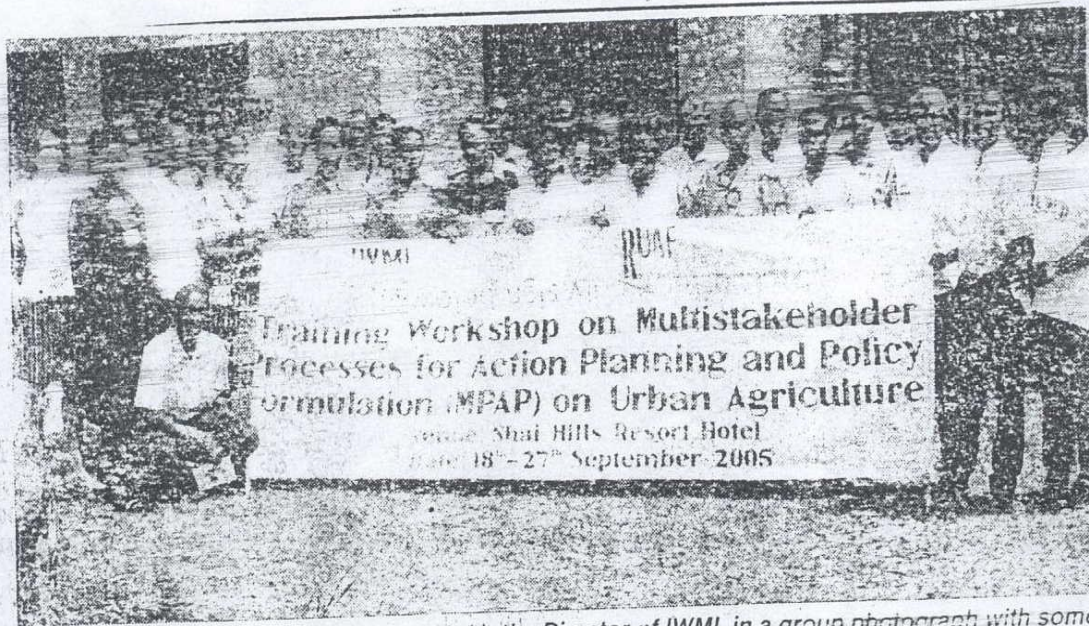


TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2005



• Dr Pay Drechsel (standing sixth from left), the Director of IWMI, in a group photograph with some participants at the opening ceremony of the workshop.

600 hectares of irrigated vegetables farms in cities

Story: Maximus Attah

RESEARCH findings by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) have revealed that more than 600 hectares of the land area in major cities in West Africa are occupied by irrigated urban vegetable farming.

The findings also show that in Ghana, the irrigated areas in the urban centres far exceed the informal irrigated areas in the whole country.

The West Africa Director of the IWMI, Dr Pay Drechsel, who revealed the findings at the opening ceremony of a 10-day training workshop for some non-governmental organisations (NGOs), universities, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and some technical staff of some municipal and district assemblies at the Shai Hills, near Accra, said urban farmers in Accra and Kumasi produced more than 90 per cent of the vegetable needs of city dwellers.

Dr Drechsel indicated that over 250,000 people in the urban centres benefited daily from vegetables produced in the peri-urban fringes, adding that agriculture, therefore, offered many poor farmers the chance to establish sound livelihoods and supported many women specialised in vegetable marketing.

He said despite the numerous benefits agriculture offered, it was hardly given the needed support by many African governments, "hence the generally weak lobby and the high tenure insecurity that go with agriculture in Africa."

A researcher at IWMI, Dr Olufunke Cofie, who facilitated the opening ceremony indicated that the focus of the training programme was in relation to urban agriculture, its relation to food security, local economic development, waste and water management as a strategy for poverty alleviation in the overall context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Dr Cofie stated that the workshop was also expected to broaden the knowledge of participants on issues relating to urban agriculture to be able to develop a joint vision on urban agriculture.

She said the 10-day workshop was also expected to enhance the capacity of participants in urban agriculture, saying that a monitoring methodology would have been agreed upon at the end of the workshop.

She also indicated that the workshop was expected to agree on a multi-stakeholder process in action planning and policy formulation (MPAP) for Accra.