

The last in the series of stakeholder fora is planned for key strategic policy makers and decision makers during the second quarter of 2008, to finalize the draft amendments and review to be presented through the Agriculture sub-committee to the General Assembly session for discussion and ratification. Mrs Doku, the Metropolitan Director of Food and Agriculture, AWGUPA member and Secretary to the Agriculture sub-committee is coordinating the review process.



A section of stakeholders brainstorming at farmers' forum on the review of UPA byelaws. Photo by IWMI.

Accra UPA stakeholders expect the reviewed byelaws to enhance cooperation among relevant regulatory agencies to promote UPA in the city.

UPA farmers use organic manure for crop cultivation

Most farmers in Accra are using poultry manure and only for selected crops in part inorganic fertilizers. Organic manure is applied differently by farmers depending on their knowledge in its use. Discussions were held with two farmers in Accra and an official from the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to ascertain the issues involved in access and use of poultry manure. The details are presented below.

Mr. Mussa Abubakar is an urban vegetable farmer on the land of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Accra. He has Junior Secondary level of education and has been farming for the past 5 years. He obtains poultry manure from Kasoa, a town located 15km west of Accra. He obtains the manure freely but pays 20 Ghana cedis to convey 13 bags to his farm. The manure is applied (broadcast) on 17 beds for about one and half seasons to cultivate onions, cabbage, and lettuce. Asked about possible negative experiences, he responded that he did not perceive any health problems hence the decision to use poultry manure instead of more expensive inorganic fertilizer. He has not received any formal training on the use of poultry manure yet was confident the right amount was being applied to the beds.

Mr. Paul Mensah farms at the Marine drive area in Accra. He obtains poultry manure from farms around La, Lashibi, Madina, and Osu, all within the mega city of Accra. He has 18 years of urban farming experience and it costs him 15 Ghana cedis to convey 80 bags of manure through a distance of 5km to the farm. He allows fresh manure to stay for a period of two weeks to remove excess heat and allow the manure to mature. Once the manure is applied, he turns it in the soil with a garden fork every three days to ensure good mixing with the soil. He applies one bag of manure to two beds. Mr. Mensah has 42 beds and is able to use this manure for about 4 cropping seasons. Constraints in accessing and using manure by the farmers include insufficiency during the off-season period of poultry farmers and the production of excessive heat in fresh manure which prevents crop growth. The transport cost of conveying manure to the farms was also a concern.

Responding to farmers' concerns on the use of poultry manure in Accra, an official of the AMA MoFA, indicated that farmers are aware of places where poultry manure can be accessed but frequently complain of the transport cost to their farms. The official however, observed that because some farmers do not allow the manure to compost, it still generates heat which negatively affects the development of especially young crops. The official confirmed that her unit has not given any formal training to farmers on the application of poultry manure due to budgetary constraints. In lieu of formal training, the normal interaction between the Extension Agents and farmers can give some guidance in the use of poultry manure.

The two farmers indicated that although poultry manure is much appreciated, the high cost of transporting to the farm is the main challenge which may discourage some farmers from using it. The farmers were of the view that poultry manure is a very good and reliable source of nutrients. Perhaps MoFA would have to reconsider a formal training on its treatment and application on farm.

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Knowledge sharing on “Good Practices” for Safer Vegetable Production in urban areas

Knowledge sharing meetings have been held separately with farmers and street food vendors in Accra, Kumasi and Tamale by UPA researchers at IWMI, KNUST, and UDS. The purpose of the meetings were to inform the practitioners about the risks associated with vegetable production using water from polluted sources; to share “good practices” of health risks reduction with them and assess the feasibility and adoptability of these good practices.