

# WAAPP Empowers Communication Officers on Management of Agricultural Projects and Communication

By: Richard Bockarie

“Unless all the achievements of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) are made visible for their clients for action regionally and globally, otherwise, it is like an individual admiring his loved ones in darkness”.

This point was made by Ghana WAAPP National Coordinator Mrs. Azara Ali-Mamshie by quoting the Nigerian World Bank Communications Officer at the opening ceremony of a 9-Day long training workshop for WAAPP Communication Specialists and its communication implementing partners in Kumasi, Ghana.



*Participants from English speaking countries*

She lamented that while the agricultural productivity of many other regions in the world is high; the low agricultural productivity of the West Africa region is a serious and disturbing problem. “The low level of technology dissemination and adoption as a result of the lack of adequate information and communication about them is one of the root causes of the poor performance

of the sector in the region”, she told communications officers from the 13 participating countries at the workshop.

As a response to this daunting challenge, Mrs. Azara-Ali Mamshie told the workshop participants that the purpose was to build their capacities so as to use the influence of the media to bring about positive attitudinal change in a way that technologies generated can be adopted for sustainable productivity and production and even more so in the context of the mandate of WAAPP. “You therefore have to be the “eyes, ears and mouths “of the Programme”, Mrs. Azara-Ali Masmie urged and encouraged them.

Speaking on the achievements WAAPP Ghana made during the implementation of the first phase of the Programme, she said that it was a huge success story. Among many others the Programme was able to develop and release improved varieties of cassava, cocoyam and sweet potato. It also introduced mechanized ridging for yam products, solar dryers, cassava

processors as well as the introduction and use of composite flour (wheat and cassava or sweet potato).

Director of Crop Research Institute, Kumasi, Dr.Rev.Hans Adu-Dapaah spoke in the same vein with emphasis on the importance of communication adding that communication cuts across every human endeavour.

Lead Facilitator Dr.Thiendou Niang said that although WAAPP regional communication strategy has been developed, its effective and efficient implementation is a problem saying:“there is a low mastery of the management of communication projects with under utilization of the social media.”He also disclosed that even though communication is key in the successful management of Agricultural projects and programmes, knowledge about same was woefully low.

During the training workshop, participants were able to learn among others about concept of project management, project quality management, project human resource management; project communication management-best-bet practices, project procurement plan on



*Trainees Inspecting Improved Cassava varieties*

communication activities; introduction to web2.0,E-Extension,blogs management and Face book page management.

order to knowledgeably and effectively report on innovation platforms, the trainees visited the Ayigbe Cassava Innovation Platform

where they were told about its purpose and actors in cassava production and processing chain, the differences between the former Research-Extension-Farmer Learning Approach and the Innovation Platform Technology Adoption Approach(IPTA).“With the IPTA approach, we readily share information and knowledge we need, and therefore, it is easy for us to accept and adopt technologies as well as tackle other issues affecting us”, one of the platform members told the trainees.

The trainees also visited cassava production and processing sites and were able to compare the field performance between the planting of improved cassava varieties and local varieties.

The Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) and WAAPP Sierra Leone were represented by Richard Bockarie, Samuel Serry and Ibrahim Samura respectively.