

ADVANCE NEWSLETTER

USAID Mission Director Visits ADVANCE Project Site



The USAID Mission Director, Dr. Andrew Karas, paid a visit to an ADVANCE model farm site in Ahyiaem community on Tuesday, April 25, 2017, as part of a working visit to the Brong Ahafo Region.

Model farms are 10 to 20-acre maize demonstration sites on which all the improved technologies and practices promoted by the project are being implemented (e.g. effective use of mechanization, minimum tillage, improved seeds, row planting, use of fertilizers and agrochemicals etc.). They are mainly intended to make commercial farmers understand and apply these technologies and practices to increase their yields substantially as well as attract the smallholder farmers to aim at expansion. Maize yields from these farms are expected to be at least five metric tons per hectare. ADVANCE intends to set up 10 model farms in the 2017 farming season. So far, two have been established in partnership with AFGRI Ghana/John Deere.

In a brief interaction with excited farmers, Dr. Karas appreciated Mary Azongo and her smallholder farmers for their relentless efforts to scale up their farm businesses. He encouraged Mary and her outgrowers to continue to practice climate smart agriculture in order to preserve the soil structure and the environment. The Mission Director acknowledged ADVANCE for their support towards improving livelihood, food security and income for a target of 113,000 farmers.

He commended ADVANCE for supporting farmers to improve their farming practices and technology and increasing the competitiveness of the maize, rice, and soybean

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Mary Azongo, an outgrower business, narrating the benefits she expects to derive from the model farm to the Mission Director



Using a poster, the ADVANCE South Coordinator, Peter Asibey (in white shirt), explains the stages of the model farm concept to the Mission Director



ADVANCE Chief of Party (standing third from the right) pointing to Mary Azongo's farm and explaining the model farm concept to the Mission Director

ADVANCE Leads Efforts To Combat Fall Armyworm

The fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) originates from Central and South America and was first identified in West Africa in January 2016. The pest is the larval form of the fall armyworm (FAW) moth, and has indiscriminate appetite for consuming more than 100 different plant species, including leafy crops and cereals, especially maize. The recent invasion of the fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) in Ghana gives cause for concerns because it devours the plants' reproductive parts and could eat through the maize cob, resulting in significant crop loss.

In July 2016, the fall armyworm was

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MEET ADVANCE'S GRANT SPECIALIST



Agatha Ayirewogyie
Grant Specialist, ADVANCE

Since 30 years now, Agatha Ayirewogyie's professional expertise has been in the area of finance and administration. Agatha holds a Bachelor of Commerce (B.COM) degree from the University of Cape Coast (2002) and a Commonwealth Executive Masters Of Business Administration (CEMBA) from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science And Technology (2011)

Prior to joining USAID ADVANCE, Agatha worked with Savanna Farmers Marketing Company Ltd as the Finance and Administration Manager. She joined ADVANCE in 2014 and has since been the Grants Specialist for the project.

As the Grants Specialist, Agatha facilitates and coordinates all grant requests from beneficiaries, conducts all the due diligence to ensure that documentations are compliant with USAID's rules and regulations before a grant is awarded. She also monitors grantees to ensure that the grant equipment or funds are used for the purpose for which they were granted.



Early scouting and detection of Fall Army Worm infestation of 20 acres of mixed crop farm in Jawia in the Sissala West district by ADVANCE team and OB Fuseini Meke



ADVANCE Technical Lead, Allan Pineda, and AEAs setting up a pheromone trap



Outgrowers observing the effect of Fall Armyworm on maize during training

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Advance Takes Lead In Efforts To Combat Fall Armyworm

detected in northern Ghana and Brong Ahafo Region, and has since infested maize farms in the area. This situation poses a major threat to food security and agricultural trade in Ghana as a whole. To mitigate this threat, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Feed the Future Agricultural Development and Value Chain Enhancement project (ADVANCE), in cooperation with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) has established a monitoring and reporting system for the three northern regions, as well as the maize belt within the Brong Ahafo and Ashanti Regions.

ADVANCE has procured 30 pheromone traps for use in 27 different locations in the south and north. In April 2017, over 120 Agric Extension Professionals were trained in the biology and population dynamics of fall armyworm as well as field scouting methods. Forty of them received practical training on the field to set up traps, conduct standard field scouting on maize fields and collect information that is sent to a centralized data manager for processing. Through this data, ADVANCE is monitoring the percentages of plants with window panes, plants with shot holes, plants infested with whorls as well as the number of fall armyworm moths and African FAW moths.

The training has been complimented with an awareness campaign through radio broadcasting to millions of farmers in the country and an alert system in each district to draw the attention of farmers when moths are detected in the pheromone traps. This campaign is run through radio jingles, in English and nine local languages (Twi, Dagbani, Gonja, Mamprusi, Guruni, Buli, Kusal, Dagaare and Sissali), which informs farmers to report any suspected incidence on their farms to local agricultural extension officers or ADVANCE field staff. The jingles are aired on 16 radio stations across four regions including the three Regions of the North and Brong Ahafo Region. Also, ADVANCE in collaboration with Farm Radio International is running awareness radio campaigns in the form of jingle airing and Live Presenter Mentions (LPM) on 26 radio stations in the southern part of the country outside of ADVANCE's operational zones.

In addition, the project has secured hotlines from three telecommunication companies: Airtel, Vodafone and Tigo. Farmers are expected to call and report any suspected incidence of the presence of FAW or any kind of worms in their farms for immediate advice and technical support. The numbers are: Vodafone 0201212121, Airtel 0266222002 and Tigo 057766200. Over 90 farmers from various parts of the country have so far called the hotlines and benefited from technical advice. In addition to printing and sharing over 37,000 posters on fall armyworm, ADVANCE has also been participating in a National Fall Armyworm Taskforce committee meetings on fall armyworm awareness and sensitization.

There has also been FAW awareness creation in every ADVANCE training to farmers and stakeholders since the FAW outbreak. Such trainings include Good Agronomic Practices (GAP) training by production officers and radio planning sessions for radio partners and stakeholders.

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value chains. Emphasizing the importance of partnership between Ghana and the United States of America, the Mission Director affirmed USAID's support to Ghana in Agriculture, Health, Education and Local Governance. He assured the gathering that through their partnership with ADVANCE and other implementing partners, USAID will continue to improve livelihoods in Ghana and also strengthen the partnership between the two countries.

The chief of party for ADVANCE, Dr. Dormon, explained the rationale behind the model farms. According to him, ADVANCE is used to having demo sites to illustrate the benefits of Good Agronomic Practices (GAPs) to smallholder farmers. However, in the bid to scale up production via mechanized farming, especially through the adoption

of the ripping technology, the project has resorted to the model farm concept. Admittedly, the land size and technology needed for a model farm is huge, ranging from 10 to 20 acres. Hence, Dr. Dormon hinted the model farm concept can readily be patronized by outgrower businesses who will in turn support their smallholder farmers to benefit from all the technologies used. This will eventually encourage smallholder farmers to aspire to scale up their farm businesses.

ADVANCE South Coordinator, Peter Asibey-Bonsu, and ADVANCE Technical Director, Allan Pineda, further explained implementation of the model farm concept, from conceptualization to its present stage. Mary Azongo, a beneficiary, also narrated the benefits she has derived from the model farm. According to Mary, AFGRI and John Deere used their

ripper and planter to rip and plant maize seeds in rows together with fertilizer application on her 11.59 acre land. These activities took place in only two days, something which would have taken approximately ten days to complete. According to Mary, it hasn't rained since planting, i.e., about three weeks, yet her maize crops have survived while the neighboring maize farms have not thrived as much. She expects to harvest about five metric tons per hectare.

The Mission Director was accompanied by three other USAID staff: Sean Searcie at the General Services Office, Gloria Odoom from the Economic Growth Office, and Juliana Pwamang from the Health and Nutrition Office. A total of 33 farmers (14 males, 19 females) were present during the visit.

Expanding Farmers' Market Access to High End Food Processors

ADVANCE nucleus farmers visit Nestlé Ghana to strengthen business relationship and learn about food safety and product quality

ADVANCE is committed to developing mutually beneficial business relationships between commodity buyers and farmers as suppliers in the maize, rice and soy value chains, and create opportunities for farmers to sell to high end industrial markets profitably. In this regard, USAID ADVANCE executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nestle Ghana Limited, in December 2016, to collaborate and build the capacity of selected maize farmers in the Northern Region to meet the quality and supply requirements of Nestle.

Further to this MoU, the Nestle quality control team inspected and certified the warehouses of three selected nucleus farmers to hold stock of maize for supply to Nestle. The Agricultural service team of Nestle negotiated and agreed with Kharma and Kukobila Nasia Farms to supply 80 metric tons of maize at GH¢1,400 per ton. Nestle took samples from the 80 metric tons of maize for physical and chemical testing and has constructed and provided 10 sorting and cleaning tables to the three selected OBs for cleaning of the maize.



Nestlé's Corporate Communications and Public Affairs manager, Ama Amoah, (standing left) making a presentation on Nestlé's organizational structure and operations to the visiting team

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ADVANCE agreed an itinerary with Nestle Ghana for the three nucleus farmers who have been trained by ADVANCE and subsequently prequalified by Nestle as grain suppliers to visit Nestlé's factory in Tema to obtain firsthand understanding of Nestlé's production processes, food safety and grain quality requirements. ADVANCE staff and the farmers visited the Nestle Factory at Tema on Friday, June 30, 2017. The three hour visit to the factory had two major segments: first, presentations by Nestle on their history, organizational structure and operations as well as discussions in sourcing grains and other raw materials locally; and second, a tour of the production floor and measures taken by Nestle to avoid food contamination.

In a presentation by Nestlé's Public Affairs and Corporate Communications Manager, Ama Amoah stressed Nestlé's interest in improving quality and food safety in the maize supply chain; and increasing farmer's access to high end industrial markets. She remarked, "Our number one priority is safety". To this end, she revealed Nestlé's excitement about their collaboration with USAID ADVANCE as this would enable farmers increase their yields and also produce to meet Nestlé's quality standards. She cited aflatoxin as the main reason they reject maize grains from farmers. Ama was however positive that through USAID ADVANCE, farmers will adopt agronomic and post-harvest practices to reduce aflatoxin contamination. "Our expectation is that farmers, through USAID ADVANCE's trainings and trade mission, will get the right produce. We buy quality grains. And if



ADVANCE Team and Nucleus farmers in their Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) after a tour to the production plants at Nestle factory

it is possible, we will source all raw materials locally", she enthusiastically affirmed. "Let's continue to take USAID ADVANCE trainings seriously so that we can have more aflatoxin free produce from you", she urged the farmers. The Public Affairs manager also revealed that Nestle was in the process of acquiring Rapid Testing Machines for aflatoxins in Ghana. As part of Creating Shared Value (CSV), the Public Affairs manager elaborated on how Nestle views the well-being of farmers, rural communities and suppliers as vital to their long-term success. She expressed Nestlé's gratitude to USAID ADVANCE for the collaboration. The team toured the cereal, beverage and packaging plants.

The farmers were grateful to USAID ADVANCE for facilitating the visit and expressed optimism that they will adopt the best practices to sustain the relationship. The Managing Director of Kharma Farms, Alhaji Muhib Hussein, asserted: "The linkage with Nestle and the trip has opened business a opportunity which without USAID ADVANCE would not have been possible for me. I am looking forward to expanding my supply to include rice and millet beyond the maize supply to Nestle in

future. Knowing from the factory visit that aflatoxin is a serious hindrance to Nestle purchase of maize locally, I am making myself an ambassador to promote the adoption of practices that will eliminate the poison from my grains and that of my smallholder farmers". He urged USAID ADVANCE to continue to build their capacity to enable them consolidate the business relationship with Nestle.

The nucleus farmers who participated in this visit included the Managing Director of Kharma Farms, Alhaji Muhib Hussein; the Operations Manager Kharma Farms, Amin Muhib Kharma; Operations Manager of Kukobila Nasia Farms, Hisham Seidu; Managing Director of Gundaa Produce Co., Alhaji Zakaria Alhassan; and Operations Manager, Gundaa Produce Co., Musah Alhassan. The ADVANCE team included the Trade and Marketing Team Leader, Northern Region Coordinator, Public Relations and Communications Specialist, and Trade and Marketing Officers. Nestle was represented by their Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Manager, Agriculture Services Manager for Central and West Africa and Tema Factory Performance Manager.

Contact: USAID ADVANCE, Space B7, A&C Business Plaza, East Legon | Tel: +233 302 520231/2 | fkainoo@acdivocaghana.org | Website: www.acdivoca.org

