

FEMALE FARMERS TAKE LEAD IN CLIMATE SMART VEGETABLE PRODUCTION IN GHANA'S COASTAL COMMUNITIES



Left: A farmer at her organic vegetable farm.

Right: Harvested organic vegetables from Fawoman community

Zenabu Ibrahim, a local restaurant operator in Kamgbunli, a coastal community in Ellebelle District of Ghana's Western Region, noted **"I prefer buying eggplant from CSLP enlisted farmer because I can store the eggplant for more than one month and it remains fresh and in a good state. I learned that no agrochemical is added during the production period. In fact, soup prepared from the eggplant is tasty"**.

The case of the operator is not different from other Ghanaians; most people prefer organic products but farmers find it difficult to produce due to several factors. However, with the environmental friendly agricultural practices being advanced by the Feed the Future Ghana Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP), managed by the US Forest Service, admirers of organic products have applauded the project and farmers are beginning to gain the economic benefits. The CSLP has facilitated the adoption of Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices by 150 farmers in the project's geographic zone of influence. Among the key environmental friendly agricultural practices currently adopted by the farmers are the use of improved seeds, the application of organic fertilizers and no use of agrochemicals to control pests and diseases. A farmer at Ayawora, Mrs. Comfort Obeng, emphasized that **"...with the hands-on trainings from the CSLP, I have stopped the slash and burn method of farming and now allow the cleared weeds to rot to serve as mulch for my vegetables"**.

The CSLP has led the establishment of 14 CSA vegetable enterprise groups with most groups chaired and dominated by hardworking female farmers. For the first time in the history of their farming practices, members of 10 groups recently purchased improved and certified seeds worth USD 482 from private seeds vendors. Hitherto, the farmers used their own old seeds that often transfer diseases from the parent plant to the offspring. The enterprise groups have been linked to local markets, and in the just ended 2015/2016 farming season, one group made total sales worth US\$ 9,113. These groups are also organizing themselves to benefit from the organic vegetable supply networks that service Ghana's oil and gas sector in the six coastal districts of the Western Region.

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