

## FEMALE FARMER PROMOTES PLANTING OF COMMERCIAL TREES



The loss of forest cover throughout the Western Region of Ghana is caused by clearing of the forests for agricultural purposes, urban expansion, extraction of mineral resources, and for use as fuelwood. The loss of this tree cover can have devastating impacts on soil and water quality and reduce the ability for trees to sequester carbon which can help mitigate impacts of climate change. In order to help address some of these challenges, the USAID-funded Coastal Sustainable Landscapes Project (CSLP), is undertaking a number of activities with farmers throughout the region to maintain existing tree cover and add additional tree cover that can lead to improved soil and water quality and resulting improvements in agricultural productivity and biodiversity.

The US Forest Service-managed project has encouraged conservation of secondary forest patches as sites for establishment of apiaries, integration of tree cover within agricultural fields that can improve soil quality as well as provide additional income sources, and production of vegetables using climate resilient practices. Such activities, as well as practicing farmer managed natural regeneration of important tree species and the production of honey from her beekeeping efforts has provided farmers such as Yaa Sekyiwaa with greater financial income which is especially important in the off season when her cocoa and coconut production is limited.

Yaa is a 53 year old farmer in the Ellembelle District in Ghana's Western Region and is the first farmer of the CSLP project to undertake the establishment of a tree nursery as an economic venture. She started in 2016 after recognizing the importance of agroforestry practices based on lessons learned from the project trainings and awareness raising activities. By learning of best practices and technologies such as that of agroforestry and tree nursery management, this mother of five was motivated to start a tree nursery. Currently, her tree nursery site has over 400 seedlings of the *Terminalia ivorensis* species (locally called emere) ready for planting and she seeks to raise over US\$200 from the sale of these seedlings. She is optimistic of raising more seedlings as she counts on increasing demand from farmers. Yaa values the importance of trees and notes that; ***"...trees help to make the environment a better place, some rivers are now drying up as people have cut all the trees along the river banks."***

*"It has not being easy establishing a tree nursery, it is labor intensive and requires greater attention. Some seedlings did not survive and had to be replaced. But I have gained great experience and will increase the size of my nursery by permanently acquiring a land for it"—Yaa Sekyiwaa, pictured above.*

Given the importance of trees and the challenges farmers have in procuring high quality seedlings, it is encouraging to see farmers such as Yaa, take the initiative to raise commercial tree seedlings for planting. CSLP hopes this can serve as a long term small scale enterprise to provide Yaa with an important income source while also promoting tree cover that will improve the environmental conditions in the region.

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