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## African leaders asked to support production of local rice

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Madam Sherry Ayittey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, tasked Africa leaders to initiate policies and strategies to promote the production and consumption of local rice.

He noted that African countries had the capacity to produce more rice to feed the people, and said: "What is needed is the commitment and political will from leaders to take bold decisions to motivate farmers to produce on high scale and to encourage the people to consume locally produced rice".

Madam Ayittey was opening the first international workshop on "Sawah", eco-technological and rice farming concept in Sub-Saharan Africa, on the theme: "Improving and Sustaining Rice Production under Changing Climatic Conditions", in Kumasi on Tuesday.

The concept that was developed by Professor Toshiyuki Wakatsuki of the Kinki University, Japan, sought to improve soil

and water conditions management in Africa lowlands, irrigation and fertilizer efficiency to increase rice production per hectare.

Nigeria had successfully utilized the technology to increase rice production.

The workshop, which was organised under the auspices of the Council for Scientific and Industrial research (CSIR) with technical and financial support from the Kinki University in Japan, Japan International Research Centre for Agricultural Sciences, and AfricaRice, based in Cotonou, Benin, brought together participants from Japan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal.

It aimed at showcasing the principles and practices of the eco-technology, sharing ideas and knowledge on its benefit, influencing policy makers on the promotion and adoption of the method and advocating the technology as the best in lowland rice production.

Madam Ayittey said unless Africans decided to be masters of their own inventions, they could not make a headway in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

She called for research and trade among African countries, to reduce the dependency on foreign aid in the face of the current financial crisis in Europe and the Americas.

Madam Ayittey said food security was a major challenge to Africa and appealed to research scientists to share knowledge in science and technology to increase food production and reduce poverty.

Prof. Wakatsuki explained that: "Sawah" was a farmer made system that made maximum use of soil and water to maximize yield without damage to the environment.

He stressed the need for effective and efficient combination of bio and eco-technologies to improve rice production in African.

Alhaji Dr A.B Salifu, Director General of CSIR, said the lack of improved seeds, technology, and poor land tenure system were militating against rice production in Ghana.

He called for technical innovation to promote efficiency to increase yield, enhance food security and reduce poverty.

Mr Joseph Fulong, Northern Regional Director of Food and Agriculture, asked rice farmers to apply modern techniques in the production of the crop, to meet international standards and to attract local patronage.

GNA

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