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What is a learning platform?

A learning platform provides an open and safe space that brings together farmers, researchers, private sector and public institutions at the district level. Participants exchange knowledge, learn from each other and adapt practices and practical innovations that contribute to sustainable livelihoods. Learning platforms are organized around a theme that affects all stakeholders. This brochure focuses on Farmers, State and Private Institutions innovative strategies towards food security in the Sunyani West District of Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. This maiden platform was adapted under the framework of the Inclusion Value Chain Collaboration Programme. It is funded under the Climate Impact Research Capacity and Leadership Enhancement in Sub-Saharan Africa programme (CIRCLE), an initiative of the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom (UK) to develop the skills and research output of early career African researchers in the field of climate change and its local impacts on development.

Benefits for farmers
- Knowledge and ideas for sustainable livelihood
- Be heard and get immediate answers from the relevant institutions
- Learn how other farmers deal with challenges
- Learn how to create opportunities
- Engage with researchers and hear about new research findings

Benefits for public institutions
- Gain more insight into farmers’ different needs and strategies
- Become more visible as an institution
- Clarify and raise awareness about policies, your role and responsi-
bilities
• Improve the quality of your local network
• Share ambitions and responsibilities with other participants
• Engage with researchers and hear about new research findings

Benefits for the private sector
• Engage with farmers and learn from them
• Improve the relationship with farmers
• Learn about farmers main challenges
• Find a basis for more tailored service provision
• Engage with public institutions
• Engage with researchers and hear about new research findings

Benefits for researchers
• Bring research findings back to farmers and practitioners and increase relevance of research
• Validate research findings
• Increase understanding of local dynamics

Communities engaged in the documentation of innovative strategies Farmers within the Communities in the Sunyani West District of Brong Ahafo engaged in this particular learning platform are
• Odumase
• Bofokrom
• Dumasua
• Mantukwa
• Ayakomaso
• Kwatire
• Kobedi
• Asuakwa
• Chira
• Tanom
• Attakrom
• Nsuaatre
A feature of the learning platform is a live interview with “change makers”. Change markers are people or institutions who bring new ideas that impact on the lives of other people and who often “do things differently”. Examples are farmers and food processors from whom others can learn how to deal with livelihood challenges. These change makers have found other ways of organizing their production or have gain innovative ways of farming. Change makers can also include farmers, buyers, extension officers, public officers, development workers, entrepreneurs and researchers who found new ways of engaging with farmers.

The Environmental and Agriculture Women Association of Ghana (EAWAG) is based in Odumase in the Sunyani -West District is a change maker association that brings smiles on the faces of women. Madam Emelia Kyeremah is the founder of EAWAG with the initial aim to provide food and other basic needs for orphans and widows in her community.

In order to sustain these deeds, she decided to form the all-women group called EAWAG with the aim of improving productivity through sustainable farming. Within a year, women farmers have been receiving regular training on best agronomical and ecological farming practices for maximizing outputs.
2. Turning ‘Waste’ Into ‘Gold’  

Madam Joyce Frema’s mushroom innovation

‘I am a native of Adantia with 30 years’ experience in farming. For the past two years I have been growing my own mushroom from cassava peels, residues of palm fruit and other materials from the farm. The mushroom has been a source of protein for my family and gifts for my neighbours’

3. Tiger nut production in plastic bucket - Mr. Kofi Vinyo

I have a triple role a farmer, processor and entrepreneur and the managing Director of Kof Vinyo and Company Ltd.

I am an organic farmer who farms vegetables in addition to ginger, pepper and tiger nuts on larger scale both for export and the local market. Instead of planting on farms, plastic buckets are used to cultivate tiger nuts by filling the bucket with organic compost. This technique is said to be very economical.
because one does not need land for farming and weeding is controlled by handpicking. After harvesting the tiger nuts are processed into powder as ingredient for food.

I am a native of Dumasua and have over 45 years’ experience in farming. I engage in mixed vegetables farming, cultivate cassava, maize and cashew on a larger scale for commercial purposes. In preparing my land for cultivation I use the ‘proka’ method. I learnt from my father the use of Neem tree (Azadirachta indica) tea or liquid and combine this with ashes of trees as pesticides on my farm. By sharing this knowledge with my children, friends and farm neighbors, knowledge is passed on from generation to generation.

4. Transfer of local innovative knowledge and skills from one generation to another Mr. Asamoah Francis

My husband and I live in Dumsua and we have been farming for 30 years farming now BUT now we are Gari processing business owners. We went into the Gari business when cassava from our farm was not getting buyers because cassava was in abundance. We have been in the Gari business for four years and we use the cassava from our own farm for processing. We also rent the place out at a fee to the community members and also provide training. Now our household is food secured throughout the year.

5. Value addition to Cassava in era of poor marketing seasons Madam Christiana Owusu and Mr. Moses Yeboah
6. **Poultry Farmers turn to local veterinary experts** - Caging both exotic and local birds to minimize birds diseases - Mr. and Mrs. Mensah

My husband and I rear farm animals on larger scale for commercial and subsistence purposes for the past 15 years. The farm contains local and foreign chickens, ducks, turkey, pigs, and also food crops to support the family. Our foreign chickens are in kept in pens while the local birds are in free range. Because these foreign chickens were constantly dying we sought for help from the veterinary office.

We were advised to cage the local birds as well, since they manage to sneak into the pens of the foreign chickens to prevent diseases transfer from the local birds to the foreign chickens. Ever since practicing this, we have minimal incidence of birds' mortality.

Now we have been selected as community animal health workers in Mantukwa and give people advice. Our farm serves as a demonstration farm to the community members.

7. **Promoting local preservation of vegetables** - Madame Monica Gyameh

I am a vegetable farmer and one key challenge is the perishing nature of some of these vegetables like tomatoes and pepper. What I do when tomatoes are in abundance, I boil, mill and then re-boil the tomatoes into a paste form. I put them in an air-tight container and then add cooking oil as a preservative. The paste can last for six months provided no one touches it with the hand. Similarly, I boil, dry and mill pepper into a powdered form for use during the lean season.
8. **My Brokering Role is enhancing food security in my community** – Mr. Kofi Asamoah

I am a crop farmer who has turned into a poultry farmer through the community intervention initiated by Ministry of Food and Agricultural (MOFA) Animal Production Department. This initiative was possible because Ayakumaso is a farming community and maize is produced on a larger scale for commercial purposes. Due to this MOFA decided to give the community a six days training on how to turn maize into poultry feeds. MOFA provided hundred old day chicks to the community accompanied by training on how to care for the chicks which include feeding, giving them water and how to administer drugs. My role is that of a broker and I deal with MoFA. It is the entire community’s responsibility to take care of the chicks.

9. **Overcoming seasonal poverty** Madame Naomi Afari

As a farmer I often face financial challenges during lean and dry season. As a way of overcoming these difficulties, I decided to start cooking the beans from my farm and selling together with Gari ‘Gabees’. This additional livelihood is lucrative and helps to over seasonal poverty.
10. A farmer turned a food processor -
Mr. Baah Dapaah
I started as a farmer growing vegetables and cassava for commercial purposes. Later I processed cassava into gari and now I am managing director and owner of St. BASA (GH) LTD located in Chiraa. We buy farmers’ products directly and add value through processing and preservation in cans and bags for export and local markets. Our finished products are called ‘Fresh Mama Foods’. We now have thirty employees working within the company and we serve as a ready market to absorb farmers’ food crops, which may perish in the absence of market.

11. Assertive initiative of farmers in Kobedi community to changing climate
Farmers at Kobedi decided to look for an alternative way of farming in order to cope with the changes in the weather to sustain their farming livelihood. They came together to form a group in order to train themselves with the “Proka” method of farming of which a farmer within the group was already practicing. Department of Agriculture at the District was invited to give support in terms of training in mulching, climate change and adaptation strategies and market opportunities of which MS. Jacqueline is the extension officer. According to Ms. Jacqueline through the group systems farmers can now grow their crops taking into consideration the weather and they are provided with wells to help irrigate their farm during dry season.

12. Success stories of slash and mulch ‘proka’ farming method in Sunyani West District
Indigenous and scientific knowledge of enhancing food security in the era of climate change has brought the ‘proka’ method. What then is ‘Proka’ or ‘slash and mulch’ system of farming?
Box1: What is ‘Proka’ Method of Farming?
Box 1: What is ‘Proka’ Method of Farming?

i. The farmland is prepared by weeding
ii. No use of weedicide in any form to control the weeds on the farm
iii. No application of fertilizers on the farm
iv. Trees on the farm are not completely cut off rather they are prune to allow proper space and sunshine on the farm
v. Weeds left on the farm for decomposition.

Benefits of ‘Proka’ shared

- ‘The mulch provides moisture for my crops and facilitates microorganism and their decomposition adds nutrient to the soil. There is no cost involve with the “proka” as it limits growing of weeds on the farm’ Mr. kusi Baffour, a farmer entrepreneur
- For me “Proka’ method supports the growth of my crops and gives quality yields Mr Samuel Amosah-Asare, a farmer
- With ‘Proka’ the crops grow well even when there is no rain Mr. Seth Osei
- I practice Proka and use the fruits from the cashew nuts to cultivate mushroom of which my family uses as food Mr. John Ackon
- We shifted into proka method of farming as a results of changes in the weather –Mr. Issac Agyei, Mr. Peprah & Mr. Otoo
- Crops from ‘Proka’ can be stored for long days without getting rotten, taste good and contain the best nutrients devoid of chemicals EAWAG
Model 1: farmer as a business
Principles behind this model are
- A Farmer trained to consider him/herself as an entrepreneur.
- A Farmer is therefore the boss and employs people such as laborers.
- A Farmer applies for services needed and pays them accordingly.
- A farmer acquires skills in record keeping and basic accounts to be able to know whether s/he is running at a lost or making profit.
- A Farmer needs to have training in technical skills of the farming system to make maximum outputs.

Model 2: Training on selection of crop varieties
- Farmers receive training on varieties of crop to be planted, for example varieties of maize that fruit early as against the weather and have ready market for their produce.
- Farmers are trained on how to use the “Proka” method to maximize outputs.

COCOBOD CHED Division artificial pollination and cocoa-smart initiatives

Artificial Pollination of Cocoa

Initiative was introduced into Brong-Ahafo in 2017 and it is the transfer of pollen grains from the anther of one cocoa tree to the stigma of another cocoa tree on the same field by humans. It was introduced because of decrease in cocoa yield as a result of excessive use of inorganic chemicals within cocoa farms, thereby killing the insects that help in pollination.

It is normally practiced with cocoa trees which are over 8 years and done in the months of May to early December. Farmers in the field attested that a cocoa tree is pollinated it is able to fruit as much as 70 to 80 fruits per tree and a pollinated one acreage of land can produce between 10 to 12 bags of cocoa beans.
Cocoa-smart initiative under Forest Investment Programme

At Attakrom and Nsuatre COCOBOD (CHED Division) in collaboration with the Forestry Commission embarked on the Forest Investment Programme (FIP) as a way of mitigating climate change introduced this greening Ghana and protecting cocoa trees from the current changes in weather condition. Since Forestry Commission do not have enough land to grow trees as a way of reforesting the vegetation, they nurse the desirable trees for COCOBOD to distribute to cocoa farmers to plant them along their cocoa seedlings. This program is basically the planting of economic trees within cocoa farms to provide shades for the cocoa trees since cocoa do well under forest trees.

What institutions do for farmers?

Ministry of food and Agriculture (District office)
- Providing extension services
- Training for farmers

The Ghana Cocoa Board COCOBOD
- Pest and disease control on cocoa farms
- Extension services
- Providing cocoa inputs
- Buying of cocoa beans
Forestry Commission
- Reforestation of degraded forest areas
- Support farmers in tending trees on farm lands
- Landscape restoration

Centre for Climate Change and Gender Studies (UENR)
- Action research for more inclusive, gender and climate sensitive value chain collaboration
- Capacity building of students (including staff of the forestry commission, other public agencies and NGOs)
- Stir research and publication interest by providing platforms for knowledge creation and sharing, advocacy and sensitizations through periodic public lectures and seminars and conferences

District Assembly (Sunyani West District)
- Promote economic and social development
- Mobilize resources
- Feeder roads construction and maintenance
- Promoting law enforcement and justice

Ghana Meteorological Agency (Sunyani)
- Public weather forecast on daily basis (national weather) on radio and television
- Collect, process, store and disseminate meteorological information
- Research and publications
- Undertake collaborative work with relevant agencies (Agricultural, Water resources, Aviation, Energy, Adaptation programmes, etc.).
- Provide expert advice on Climate issues
- Render other meteorological services on routine/requests
PROFILE OF CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER STUDIES (3CGS)

3CGS is an evidence-based research, capacity building and a policy advocacy Centre at the University of Energy and Natural Resources. The overall objective is to strengthen research capacity and harness it in the services of policy-making, planning and sustainable development and its linkages with energy, agriculture, natural resources and technology.