

## **2018 PLANTING FOR FOOD AND JOBS (PFJ) SEASON LAUNCHED**

The 2018, Planting for Food and Jobs season was launched by the Agriculture Sector Minister Dr. Owusu Afriyie Akoto over the weekends, this announcement was made at a Review Implementation Work Shop of ‘Planting for food and jobs’ in Kumasi.

In attendance were Regional Ministers, Regional Coordinating Directors, National as well as Regional Directors of MoFA.

Recall, the Planting for Food and Jobs Campaign was officially launched by H.E the President at Goaso in the Brong Ahafo Region in 2017. The campaign targeted food security crops such as maize, rice, and sorghum and soya bean, vegetable crops such as tomato, onion, pepper and cabbage were vigorously promoted.

The campaign, Planting for Food and Jobs is reported to have increased food production and income for farmers which has impacted positively on the government’s determination to bring down unemployment in the country. In the first year of its implementation, PFJ has succeeded in creating several thousand direct and self-employed job opportunities.

Addressing the gathering, Hon. Dr. Owusu Afriyie Akoto commended the Regional Coordinating Councils and the District Assemblies for putting their heart and soul into making the first year of the campaign of PFJ a resounding success. *‘You have all worked hard and your general attitude has been positive, motivated by the Biblical message – whatever turns up, grab it and do it heartily. No doubt, there has been challenges during implementation, especially in the area of logistics and personnel, yet today as a result of the support and training you gave to farmers in modern agricultural practices, there has been a marked improvement in the production of some crops especially maize and rice in the country.’* This he said.

The Hon. Minister was happy to say that, the remarkable production of 485,000MT of maize, 179,000MT of Rice, 33,400MT of Sorghum, 9,750MT of Soya bean and 42,200MT and selected vegetables have generated about GHC1.2 million as income to beneficiary farmers.

The Sector Minister also noted the significantly higher yields for some selected crops as compared to 2016 national averages. Maize yields increased by 67percent (from 1.8mt to 3MT), rice by 48percent (from 2.7MT to 4MT) and soya150 (from 1.0MT to 2.5MT).

Mr Ashanti Krobea, a Technical Advisor to the Hon. Minister disclosed that, participation in the campaign, thhas been extended to Senior High Schools, Universities, Chiefs and Prisons to start food farms. The rational is to help project farming as a noble and profitable venture so as to change the mind-set of the youth about agriculture

For the 2018 PFJ Season, the Hon. Minister outlined operational modalities. For the 2018 Campaign, Twenty-nine (29) companies who took part in a bidding process have been selected to supply inorganic fertilizers and 11 companies to supply of organic fertilizers. 10 companies have also been selected for the supply of seeds.

The fertilizer companies participating in the input subsidy programme have been allocated quotas of various fertilizer types. These companies shall continue to import, clear the fertilizers from the port of entry, and distribute to the regions and districts for sale to farmers by their registered sales agents.

### **Fertilizer distribution system**

This year, we have decided to use the coupons system for fertilizer distribution. The system will be implemented as follows:

1. Selected fertilizer companies will distribute their given quotas.
2. Fertilizer coupons for the various types of fertilizers would be printed. Each region/district will have their own unique serial numbers on the coupons. The coupons, which will have very strong security features to prevent counterfeiting, will also have information such as amount, type of product, name of farmer, date issued, name of Fertilizer Company clearly indicated on them.
3. The coupons will be distributed to all regions for onward distribution to the districts.
4. The District Director of Agriculture will authenticate all coupons by affixing his stamp.
5. Specific quantities of coupons will be given to each Agriculture Extension Agents (AEAs).
6. The AEAs will distribute the coupons to farmers within their catchment area
7. The AEAs will keep records the list of beneficiaries of the coupons.
8. Farmers will add cash equal to the amount indicated on the coupon to purchase the fertilizers or seeds from any agro-input shop.
9. The agro-input dealers will keep records of the quantity of coupons received and list of farmers who will purchase fertilizer from their shops.
10. At the end of the month, all sales outlets will send their coupons to the fertilizer companies.

11. The coupons would be aggregated by the fertilizer companies and submitted to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture for processing/audit and payment.

The Sector Minister urged all farmers, input distributors and all stakeholders to play their roles under the programme effectively to make sure that the farm inputs government is paying are put to good use for the benefit of Ghanaians and not smuggled out to neighbouring countries.

**By: Bagbara Tanko**