More than 520 smallholder rice producers belonging to 10 farmer organizations in the Tamale and Tolon-Kumbungu Districts of the Northern Region are attending a three-day capacity-building training to enable them to become competitive players in the marketplace.

The programme is part of the World Food Programme's (WFP) "Purchase for Progress" (P4P) initiative and is being funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

In an address read for him at the opening ceremony in Tamale on Tuesday, the WFP Representative/Country Director for Ghana, Mr Ismail Omer, said the broader goal of the P4P initiative was to increase income levels, improve food security and nutrition, and reduce poverty among participating smallholder and low-income farmers.

"Ultimately, the P4P initiative is aimed at assisting the Government of Ghana in its pursuit to extricate smallholder farmers from the cycle of hunger and poverty which often traps them," Mr Omer said.

He said in addition to capacity building, the P4P initiative was also working to ensure that smallholder farmer organizations were provided with simple modern farm implements to help them to increase their productivity.

He expressed the optimism that the training would equip participants to produce good quality and competitively priced food with reduced post-harvest losses. It would also enable them to join the list of local suppliers who provided food for WFP which currently purchased maize, local rice, beans and iodized salt for its activities in Ghana such as the School Feeding Programme.

The WFP Country Director announced that a total of 1,330 smallholder low-income farmers from 16 maize producing farmer organizations in the Ejura-Sekyedumase District of the Ashanti Region had already benefitted from the first P4P training programme, and that the Tamale workshop was the second in the series.
Some of the topics participants would be taken through at the training session include the application of agronomic practices for good quality farm produce, how to reduce post-harvest losses, the importance of collective marketing, how to negotiate for fair prices and accurate record-keeping.

Source: GNA

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