

PRESS RELEASE

ECOWAS-GBEP 5TH BIOENERGY WEEK OPENS IN ACCRA, GHANA

With the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BLMFUW), ECREEE collaborated with the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) and hosted the 5th GBEP Bioenergy Week in the ECOWAS region in Accra, Ghana (5th ECOWAS/GBEP Bioenergy Week). The event opened on the 22 June 2017 at the Fiesta Royale Hotel with high participation. The event aimed to provide an opportunity to share knowledge and experience with the ECOWAS member states and the global community in sustainable bioenergy service delivery for increasing energy access while ensuring food security.

Specifically, the event aimed, amongst others, to:

- Present the state of the ECOWAS Bioenergy situation and efforts to improve energy access by augmenting the regional energy mix with bioenergy;
- Present the ECOWAS Bioenergy Policy and its role and benefits in achieving the ECOWAS Sustainable Energy Goals while enhancing food security;
- Share the food-energy-water nexus that preserves the environment while enhancing food and energy security;
- Discuss successful, replicable bioenergy systems that provide sustainable energy services for cooking, heating and power generation; and
- Showcase available financial instruments of partners and investment firms.

The opening ceremony was presided over by Mr. John Nuworklu who represented the Hon Minister of Energy of Ghana. In his welcome statement, Mr Nuworklu reiterated the importance Ghana has placed on bioenergy development and pledged the support of the government and the Ministry to ensure successful deliberation during the workshop.

The opening session was also addressed by Dr. Maria Michela Morese – Executive Secretary of GBEP at FAO, who praised the working collaboration between GBEP and ECREEE and expressed satisfaction that the 5th Bioenergy Week is again being held in Africa, and in particular in the ECOWAS region. Dr. Morese stressed that modern bioenergy, especially in the African context, brings many opportunities, but not without challenges. In light of this, sustainability assessment is key in order to maximize the potential bioenergy benefits. The comprehensive and balanced set of social, environmental and economic sustainability indicators of GBEP gives an important and significant contribution to assist countries in monitoring of the sustainability of the bioenergy production and support related regulatory frameworks for bioenergy.

Mr. John Yeboah – Program Office, representing the Executive Director of ECREEE in his intervention recounted the historical steps taken by the ECOWAS Commission to tackle the challenges of energy access, food security and climate change externalities pertaining to the West Africa sub-region. He noted that, creation of ECREEE has led to the formulation of regional RE, EE and Bioenergy policies. He praised the positive collaboration between ECREEE and GBEP and hoped the workshop will deliver all the desired results in terms of capacity building for development of different bioenergy technologies for the African region.

In the frame of the Bioenergy Week stakeholder meeting, the following topics were discussed in plenary sessions and working group meetings:

1. Bioenergy Policy regulatory development
 - Bioenergy development and regulatory framework in Africa
 - The ECOWAS Bioenergy Policy and other national policies
2. African countries experience with successful Bioenergy policy frameworks that resulted in positive effects on the implementation of successful bioenergy services
3. Sustainable Value chains for food energy security
 - Animal agro-industrial solid waste (biogas)
 - Agro-industrial residues (pellets and briquettes for combustion, gasification and biochar systems)
4. Report on developing standards for biofuels in the ECOWAS region.

As highlighted in the ECOWAS Bioenergy Policy, access to modern energy services and food security are the key challenges in the ECOWAS region. Sustainable value chains that integrate food and bioenergy production are an important means of transforming these challenges into opportunities for the region, to expand modern bioenergy access and increase food security, whilst improving health and livelihoods and conserving biodiversity. A special focus was put on bioenergy production from biogas in the region and a SWOT analysis was carried out in order to inform the future Activity Group of GBEP on Biogas.

The 5th ECOWAS/GBEP Bioenergy Week facilitated cooperation and knowledge sharing within the region, and the lessons learned during the event will continue to strengthen sustainable bioenergy projects in ECOWAS and beyond.