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Thursday 30th January, 2020

Stakeholders dialogue to address challenges affecting wood energy pathway



By Morkporkpor Anku, GNA

Accra, Jan. 30, GNA – The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), in collaboration with its partners, has held a national dialogue on wood energy and forest landscape restoration to address the challenges affecting the wood energy pathway.

The wood energy pathway in Ghana involves various actors and offers employment to more than two million people both in urban and rural areas.

Currently, about 73 per cent of the rural population rely on wood fuel for cooking and heating purposes.

Dr Tiziana Pirelli, a Representative from the FAO Headquarters, speaking at the opening of the two-day dialogue said the discourse was part of a series of engagements between bioenergy and the Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) stakeholders and communities, on the positive contribution of the sustainable bioenergy to FRL and vice versa in Africa.

"The dialogue is part of a wider series of initiatives implemented in the context of the project dubbed "International Dialogue on FLR and Wood Energy."

She said the Ghana dialogue was to contribute to the overall objective of the project in raising awareness and dialogue among stakeholder from FLR and bioenergy communities on the positive contribution of sustainable bioenergy to FRL and vice versa.

She said this was in view to intensify opportunities for collaboration and to develop a joint agenda for action.

The project has been implemented by the Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP) on behalf of the FAO in collaboration with IEA Bioenergy with funding from the GIZ on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

In Ghana, the project will build upon the achievements of the activities conducted by GBEP in 2018, in the context of the project 'Capacity building on the GBEP Sustainability Indicators for bioenergy in the Economic Community of West Africa States Countries.'

He said traditional wood energy was still the primary source of energy for many households in some parts of the world and the unsustainable wood energy value chain for traditional wood energy production and use has many impacts to be considered.

"It has debilitating social issues such as the health problems caused by household air pollution, time spent collecting biomass and risk of injury or violence during fuel gathering," she added.

She said limited access to modern energy services also impacts on livelihood, as well as social and economic issues, which top environmental issues such as air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

The FAO Representative said as the demand increases, the sustainable supply of fuelwood could not keep up, leading to deforestation and landscape degradation, reduced biodiversity and soil degradation.

"Unregulated demand and markets for wood energy resulting in illegal and non-sustainable wood cutting of natural forest has been recognised as one of the main drivers of the degradation of forests and forested landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa," she said.

Ms Jocelyn Brown Hall, the Deputy Regional Representative for FAO Africa, said FAO was a founding partner of the GBEP and had since 2006 been actively working to advance bioenergy for sustainable development, climate change mitigation, and food and energy security.

"However, we are well aware that bioenergy is a very complex topic and the GBEP is a unique forum for governments, international and UN organizations as well as other stakeholders to address the challenges we are facing and promote bioenergy as a tool for sustainable development," she added.

She said a lot had been done, but a large amount of work remained in order to develop, disseminate and implement the sustainable development of bioenergy.

She said over the last decade, FAO had set up a number of initiatives to shed light on the implications of bioenergy development, and on how to ensure smallholders are included in the supply chain, as well as on ensuring that food security is safeguarded.

Mr William Togobo, the Director, Renewable and Alternative Energy at the Ministry of Energy, said the Ministry with support from Energy Commission and UNDP had developed a renewable master plan, which was out-doored last year and "we have put in place certain provisions to address this issue."

He said this could not be done without the support of the development partners, the non-governmental organizations, Government Agencies and especially the Media to create awareness and promote the use of LPG.

"The government is determined to reduce the over dependency on wood energy by promoting LPG as an alternate source of energy for households."

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