

GIDA rolls out major irrigation interventions for 2024

• Afram Plains, others to create over 45,000 jobs



By Vincent Amenuveve

THE Ghana Irrigation Development Authority (GIDA) will start the Afram Plains Economic Enclave Irrigation Project (APEEIP) this month as part of interventions to increase food production, create jobs and reduce the country's import bill.

The irrigable area to be developed under the APEEIP project, GIDA's major intervention this year, is 3,500 hectares (ha) for allocation to over eight commercial farmers and 1,000 outgrower farmers.

GIDA, an agency of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), explained that 70,000 tonnes of cereals and 50,000 tonnes of vegetables are projected to be produced to rake in over GH¢716.85 million per year under APEEIP.

More than 2,000 direct and indirect jobs are expected to be created under the APEEIP project alone.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GIDA, Richard Oppong-Boateng, disclosed this in an exclusive interview with the *Daily Graphic* in Accra last weekend.

He explained that the potential of the APEEIP, when fully harnessed,

would serve as the green revolution and a game-changer for production of crops such as cereals and vegetables.

"Harnessing the potential of the area requires development of irrigation infrastructure to support all-year-round agricultural production," the geodetic engineer stated.

Mr Oppong-Boateng said the identified areas under the project had been zoned into four.

They are the Kwahu Afram Plains South and Kwahu Afram Plains North as Zone one; Kwahu East, Kwahu West and Kwahu South as Zone two; Fanteakwa, Birim North, Kwaebibirem, Atiwa and Denkyembour as Zone three, and Sekyere Afram Plains and Sekyere Kumawu as Zone four.

The GIDA chief executive said the areas identified had arable land and abundant water resources made up of streams, rivers and the Volta Lake that would support crop production.

Explaining the commercial design of the project, Mr Oppong-Boateng said the irrigation systems to be deployed were capital intensive and could not be sustained by smallholders alone.

"As a result, smallholder farmers will serve as outgrowers to the private large-scale commercial farmers," he stated.

Large-scale commercial farmers would be allocated land under an



• Richard Oppong-Boateng
— Chief Executive of GIDA

Anchor Tenant arrangement with smallholder farmers as outgrowers, he further explained.

"This arrangement requires financial commitment from both public and private sectors to make the system work," Mr Oppong-Boateng, who has been with GIDA since 1996, revealed.

He said a technical team from GIDA had carried out what he described as a "desk study" using 1:50,000 Topographic Map of Ghana.

That was followed by community entry, stakeholder engagement and sensitisation of six sites across the four zones following a drone survey of the sites.

Mr Oppong-Boateng also

mentioned other interventions earmarked for the year to include the construction of small earth dams and the rehabilitation of three irrigation schemes under the World Bank funded Food Systems Resilience Project (FSRP).

They are the Weta Irrigation Scheme in the Ketu North District in the Volta Region, the Kpong Irrigation Scheme in the Lower Manya Krobo District in the Eastern Region and the Tanoso Irrigation Scheme in the Ashanti Region.

Mr Oppong-Boateng said the small earth dams and the rehabilitation of the three irrigation schemes when completed would create an additional 45,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The projects are also expected to produce both cereals and vegetables projected to raise an estimated GH¢10 million per year.

Background

Ghana is endowed with abundant arable land and water resources for the development of irrigated agriculture.

Since the 1970s, various governments have seen the need to leverage these resources to improve food production, aquaculture development and livestock watering.

In spite of this, the country has developed only 12 per cent (229,100ha) of its irrigation potential of 1.9 million ha since the 1960s.

The country spends huge sums of foreign exchange to import basic food items such as rice, maize and wheat as well as vegetables such as tomatoes and onions for domestic consumption and industry.