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Help produce biodegradable plastics scientists urged

Accra, July 14, GNA - Mr Ishmael Ashitey, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade, Industry and President's Special Initiatives, on Wednesday urged scientists to research into the possibility of producing biodegradable plastics that decompose in the soil. He said that would help curb the mounting plastic problems facing the country.

He said he was confident that the problems with plastic management would end with the adoption of biotechnology techniques in the production of the biodegradable plastics.

"I would like to challenge our scientists to begin to look at how best we can address these problems through the development and adaptation of innovative technologies including biotechnology," Mr Ashitey said. He was addressing about 50 participants attending a national workshop to discuss the final draft components of the National Bio-safety Framework for Ghana.

The consultative workshops started in November 2002 in Accra, through Kumasi, Takoradi and Tamale.

The Consultations on the framework, which ends in August this year, is to help Ghana build capacity to meet its domestic and international obligations in the environmentally sound management of modern biotechnology practices particularly issues affecting Living Modified Organisms.

The Biotechnology and Nuclear Agricultural Research Institute in Accra in collaboration with the National Bio-safety Committee executed the consultative meetings.

Mr Ashitey said science kept in the laboratories was of no value to the man on the street unless applied by the entrepreneur. It was critical that the nation's scientists and entrepreneurs started thinking of partnership.

He said the development of biotechnology in Ghana could offer opportunities for new global partnerships, especially among countries that were rich in genetic resources and those more advanced in the technology.

"It is also possible that through the application of these technologies, new and innovative processing methods could be developed to add value to our agro-based products," he said.

He urged the participants to use the workshop to form networks on how best to use the innovative technologies as a key to sustainable development.

Major Courage Quashigah (rtd) said biotechnology was as old as creation itself since man learnt it through the observation of insects, birds and the wind.

"The long periods of observation have transformed this process in many ways through the application of science to a point today when we are genetically modifying living organisms even to cloning, but philosophically nothing new is being created," he said. He said modern biotechnology especially in the area agriculture had many positive facets including better, and increased crop yield on existing farmlands, less environmental degradation, as well as the development of innovative food products with improved nutritional values.

Major Quashigah said though biotechnology was not a panacea for all food production problems in developing countries, yet it offered one part of a multi-faceted strategy to meet the growing demands for

more good quality foods.

Source: GNA