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## FAO supports private plantations in Ghana

The Ghanaian Government has signed an agreement with the FAO to support private forestry plantations in the country. The government will benefit from a US\$ 138,500 assistance package under the agreement, to design long term mechanisms to support private forestry plantations in the country.

Under a two-month project by the FAO and the Ministry of Lands and Forestry, FAO is providing the money and two foreign consultants to team up with local experts to research into private forestry plantation development and a flexible scheme for providing plantation incentives to firms, land owners, communities and individuals.

It will also come out with terms for the necessary institutional capacity for implementing practical options and ensuring effective monitoring of the results. The results envisaged by the project are long-term financing mechanisms including incentives to support a financially viable private forest plantation programme in Ghana, and information for improved private plantation management and the improved participation of small farmers in plantation development.

The Minister of Lands and Forestry, Mr Cletus Avoka, who signed the agreement on behalf of the government, said that for some time now, the government's attention has been captured by the issue of sustainable forest management and the need to maintain a raw material base.

He said reasonable programmes had been established to ensure that the numerous mills in the country were satisfied to enable them to produce to feed both local and international markets.

Ghana lost about one third of its forest within 17 years between 1955 to 1972. Since 1977, the country's virgin forests have been reduced from 7.44 million hectares to 1.84 million hectares through what government officials term as illegal and unconventional means. The rate of 1.71 per cent mean annual deforestation in this area exceeds that of both Asia (0,66%) and Tropical America (0,84%).

By: William Appiah, Third World Network, Africa Secretariat