

First factory for starch production to be ready in November

A three million-dollar starch processing plant would be built at Bawjiase in the Awutu-Efutu-Senya District in November under the President's Special Initiative (PSI) on agri-business. Ayensu Starch Company (ASCO) would operate the plant owned by 25,000 farmers located in the five districts.

This was announced by Mr Allan Kyeremateng, Ghana's Ambassador to US and Head of the Technical Support Group of the PSI, at a press briefing on the status of the implementation of the PSI in Accra on Thursday.

He said farmers from the five districts, namely Awutu-Efutu-Senya, Gomoa and Agona (Central Region), Ga (Greater Accra region) and West Akim District (Eastern Region) cultivated over 607 hectares of cassava during the minor season between September and October last year and were expected to cultivate additional 1,457 hectares during the major season between March and May this year.

Mr Kyeremateng said the project had been programmed in such a way that cassava, which takes about 12 months to mature for harvesting would be ready for processing when the plant is installed to begin the export of the starch.

He said it was projected that 90,000 tonnes of cassava would be harvested to yield about 20,000 tonnes of high-grade cassava starch for export per annum.

Mr Kyeremateng said the company had entered into an arrangement with International Starch Trading of Denmark to market their product and in addition it was negotiating market access arrangements in South Africa.

Mr Kyeremateng said about 10 proposed farmer-owned companies in 50 selected districts throughout the country would be involved in the project intended to address the problem of rural poverty through wealth creation in rural communities.

He said starch was one of the most widely used industrial raw materials in the world with extensive application in the pharmaceutical, food, textile, paper and allied industries.

About 25,000 farmers would be engaged in the project launched by the government in August last year.

Mr Kyeremateng said under the Garments and Textiles Initiative, over 200 local companies have already been screened and selected to participate in the programme based on their interest after visits to their companies.

He said the choice of garment production for export was based on the expected contribution of the sector to export revenue generation as well as enormous potential for job creation.

It is estimated that over 70,000 jobs would be created within the next three years and the primary export destination would be the US market taking advantage of the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Mr Kyeremateng said currently, a capacity audit and assessment exercise was being

conducted in selected companies to assess their technical, managerial, investment and infrastructure requirements to enable them to gear up for mass production of garments.

He said an intensive market search exercise was being conducted in the US and Europe to identify market opportunities for garments to be produced under the PSI.

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