

€3.9m 'Equity Project' launched



Martha Rainer Opoku Mensah

By Eugene DAVIS

The Equity Project, an initiative aimed to support producer organisations within West Africa and promote fair trade as well as increase producing countries ability to access Fairtrade markets, has been launched in Accra.

According to its National Technical Assistant, Martha Rainer Opoku Mensah, the Equity Project is primarily targeted at small producer organisations in West Africa, and that the total budget of 3.9million euros would be shared across five countries, including Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali and Cote D'ivoire.

The first phase of the implementation is expected to last three years and Fairtrade

has already launched the project in Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali and Cote D'ivoire.

"The value chain we are looking at, are those in cocoa production, cashew, fruits, citrus, and those in crafts," Martha Rainer Opoku Mensah said.

The project, she said, is to strengthen the capacity of these producer organisations and help them to access markets, in order to be able to compete on the international market.

"We are giving them money and what they are supposed to do is to write, send in proposals on a project that they want to implement.

So basically, we want them to identify issues that affect their work, that falls in line with the objectives of the project and once they submit it, it will be reviewed and based on how good

the proposal is, then we go on to support them with this finance," she told B&FT.

Already, Fairtrade has received 16 projects from Ghana as of July, and Mrs Mensah stated that only six have been successful so far, for the Equity Project.

On the unsuccessful projects, she said: "If you look at Cocoa value chain, most of them were requesting funds to go into tree planting, which is already being supported by the government of Ghana and some organisations and NGOs that are already in the system. So, once you already have the government supporting these, then the Equity Project won't fund it.

We are looking at other gaps that exist; so, as part of the concept development, you

(producer organization) were supposed to tell us, what support you received from either the government or other institutions, what's still the gap that you think the Equity Project will be able to fund or address."

Fairtrade Africa is a global movement which seeks to address the injustices of conventional trade by supporting small holder farmers and workers to secure better terms of trade.

The implementation of the Equity Project is in partnership with AVSF (a French NGO) to support the development of Fair Trade in West Africa. The Project is jointly funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) and the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM).



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