

## Aveyime rice project seeks funding

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The Prairie Volta Limited formerly known as the Aveyime rice project in the Volta Region is seeking a 30 million dollar funding to enable the farm develop over 6 thousand hectares of land for cultivation of rice for local consumption and export.

Currently, 750 hectares of land have been developed, while some 600 bags of rice were cultivated last year. The 30 million dollar funding officials are seeking will be used to develop irrigation infrastructure, provide seeds and agronomy service to farmers and procure tractors and combine harvesters to effectively cultivate the land during each harvest season.

Rice has become a staple in Ghana far outstripping the dominance of maize in our diet. Unfortunately, much of the rice consumed in this country is imported. It is estimated that Ghana spends between 300 and 500 million dollars annually to import rice into the country.

Officials believe the money for rice importation could be channelled to other areas of development if Ghanaians are provided with the capacity to grow the product.

There are currently three varieties of local rice in Ghana; jasmine perfume, basmati and the traditional long grain rice. Experts say all three are high quality and provide the same nutritional value and taste as imported rice.

The Prairie Volta Limited through the help of ADB, acquired a loan of 4.6 million dollars for new and modern equipment to boost local rice farming.

The farm has purchased a drying complex to remove the moisture from the rice before husking, eight silos with the capacity to store an estimated 1500 tonnes of rice, four de-husking machines, de-stoners and a water polisher to polish the rice. Several trenches have also been dug at the farm site to provide irrigation for the crops. Eight water pumps have also been procured to help in the irrigation activities.

Financial Manager of Prairie Volta Limited, Richard Amoasi-Andoh in an interview with Joy News said, "The farm on the average produces 26 to 30 tonnes of rice a day cumulating to 20 bags of rice. From 2009 to 2011 when production resumed, we have made an average of 4 million dollars from sales and we are targeting a sales output of 7.2 million dollars for this year."

Despite these initiatives, the farm is reeling under financial challenges. Director of Prairie Volta, Everett Anderson is therefore calling on government and other business organizations to support the farm. Adding, "the farm will need a financial support package of 30million dollars to revamp its operations."