

FDA ORGANIZES TRAINING FOR STAFF IN PACKHOUSE INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION

The Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) in collaboration with the International Executive Service Corps (IESC) under the USAID-Improving Food Safety Systems Project, a project dedicated to equitable, sustainable economic growth in developing countries organized a workshop, between the 4th and 10th July, 2018, at the Head Office of the FDA to build the capacity of FDA officers in the Agro Products Department with knowledge and skills required for inspecting and certifying packhouses.

The importance of fresh horticulture produce to the Country's nutrition and health is one that cannot be over emphasized. However, in as much as fresh fruits and vegetables play essential roles in our wellbeing, they can also be vehicles for foodborne diseases such as cholera and gastroenteritis, amongst others, if proper care is not taken during their production, handling, transport and distribution.

The Public Health Act 2012 Act 851, which replaced the Food and Drugs Law PNDC (305B) 1992, expanded the definition of food in section 149 to include live plants and raw produce, together with pre-packaged foods. This is what has necessitated the action to build capacity in raw plant and agro produce regulation.

Opening the Workshop, the Chief Executive Officer of the FDA, Mrs. Delese A. A Darko reiterated the point that, the replacement of the Food and Drugs Law, PNDC Law 305B with the Public Health Act, 2012, Act 851 which expanded the definition of food in section 149 brought about the birth of the Agro Products and Biosafety Department to ensure the safety of raw agro produce.

She further said that agro produce safety regulations have been further entrenched in the light of the new Government directive to inspect and clear food, including agro produce imported into the country starting this July, 2018.

She also said that the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) through its Fruit and Vegetable for Health Initiative (PROFAV/PROFEL) are leading a global campaign to reduce the risk of chronic diseases by ensuring adequate supply, availability and consumption of fruit and vegetables.

As part of the training, officers were taken through guidelines for packhouses inspections using the Global Food Safety Initiative. It is expected that officers would implement the newly acquired knowledge at the ports to ensure FDA's mandate of assuring public health and safety is achieved.