COCOBOD newsletter

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Ghana Cocoa Board
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COCOBOD Calls for Equitable Cost-Sharing of Traceability Infrastructure

- Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, COCOBOD Chief Executive, addressing the European Union (EU) delegation.

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, has underscored the need to implement an equitable cost-sharing framework involving Ghana, the European Union (EU), and operators to sustain Ghana's cocoa traceability infrastructure, under its Cocoa Management System (CMS).

He said, while the advantages of a robust traceability system are anticipated to benefit all stakeholders in the industry, producer countries, such as Ghana, have thus far borne the brunt of the costs associated with establishing the essential infrastructure for traceability.

It is, therefore, important, he added, to engage in further dialogue to establish clear protocols and formulae for the distribution of operational costs of the traceability system along the value chain.

The COCOBOD CE made this call during a meeting in Accra with an EU delegation led by its Commissioner for Environment, Oceans, and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevicius.

He highlighted the fact that cocoa production in Ghana and neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire is already suffering from the effects of changes in climatic conditions, that threaten the livelihoods of millions in the region and warned that without proactive measures, cocoa production in the two countries will continue to suffer the effect of the increasingly severe climatic conditions.

The situation, he said, raises the need for greater support from the EU for climate adaptation and carbon management programmes, in the global south. He added that cocoa trees can play a pivotal role in reforesting vast areas of Ghana and serve as an effective tool for carbon sequestration.

Mr. Alex Assanvo, the Executive Secretary of the Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative (CIGCI), on his part, affirmed the significant strides made by Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in advancing their traceability infrastructure for their cocoa exports. He asserted that both countries are on track to meet the requirements under the impending EU regulations but expressed concern over the persistence of unauthorised cocoa trade routes into the EU market.

He said despite the progress and costs incurred by the two leading cocoa-producing countries in their traceability efforts, a substantial volume of cocoa continues to find its way into the EU through channels not sanctioned by the regulatory bodies in the two countries.

He therefore emphasised the importance of implementing stringent measures to curb the illicit inflow of cocoa into the EU. Failure to do so, he cautioned, could render the EU legislation more punitive than constructive for Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.

In response, the EU Commissioner commended Ghana for its efforts toward aligning with the EU, adding that sustainable trade will generate local value for Ghana and other cocoa-producing countries.

While recognising the importance of the traceability infrastructure in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, he acknowledged the necessity for a cost-sharing mechanism but insisted that the responsibility should lie with operators, particularly in acquiring the traceability information required by EU port authorities.

He said the EU is committed to working with cocoa-producing nations to foster sustainable agricultural practices and improve economic outcomes for local communities.

Virginijus Sinkevicius, EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans, and Fisheries.

Alex Assanvo, Executive Secretary, Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative (CIGCI).

Cocoa Farmers Need To Be Introduced To DAF – COCOBOD CE Urges

- Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, COCOBOD Chief Executive, during a tour of the model Dynamic Agroforestry (DAF) farm of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo has called for the Dynamic Agroforestry (DAF) model and its techniques to be disseminated to farmers across the country as part of efforts to restore farmlands degraded by the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD).

Hon Boahen Aidoo made this call during a field trip with the Swiss Ambassador, H.E. Simone Giger to the DAF plots at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG). According to him, it is important to share the model with farmers because it is the transformative approach Ghana needs as it endeavours to regenerate its forests and revive lands impacted by the CSSVD.

“DAF is a good technique which must be disseminated to the farmers so that as many farmers as possible will adopt

it especially as we look to restore a lot of our farmlands which have been affected by the CSSVD", he emphasised.

The COCOBOD CE described the DAF model as a good upgrade to Ghana's Conventional Cocoa Cultivation Practice (CCCP) and explained further that there is not enough biodiversity and biomass to provide soil moisture on the conventional cocoa farms to help cocoa survive, especially during the dry season. The CE was confident that the classical DAF techniques of integrating a diverse array of trees and food crops that increase biodiversity while providing enough biomass for the soil, will bear more cocoa due to soil capability.

"In the conventional farm, the biodiversity is not much, and the biomass is not there to provide enough soil moisture to make cocoa survive during the dry season. This is a good model, an upgrade of our existing system. We need this model to rejuvenate and regenerate our forests and I believe this is the way to go", he shared.

He therefore called on CRIG to adopt a system of DAF that will be beneficial to Ghanaian farmers and allow for easy adoption.

Hon Aidoo recognised the significant costs associated with the DAF and its potential financial implications for individual farmers and called for support from the Swiss Ambassador to collaborate with COCOBOD and CRIG in scaling up the project.

"This calls for more investments which I think individual farmers will find difficult to make. At COCOBOD, we are playing our part, but this is where partnership comes in. So we want you to play the advocacy for us in the industry because without the bean there will be no bar therefore now the bean needs support from the bar so that we all sustain the industry", he said.

On her part, the Swiss Ambassador, H.E. Giger commended the CRIG team for the effort put into the project and reemphasized the need to carry out the DAF project on a larger scale not only with Ghanaian farmers but possibly with other countries. She acknowledged the call for support and assured that the call would be carefully

considered for further deliberations with donor partners to drive the project and scale it up significantly.

Dynamic Agroforestry: A Transformative Approach to Ghana's Conventional Cocoa Cultivation Practices

- A presentation on Dynamic Agroforestry (DAF) at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

Cocoa farming has long been the backbone of Ghana's agricultural sector, playing a significant role in the country's economy and providing livelihoods for millions of farmers. However, Conventional Cocoa Cultivation Practices (CCCP) have faced criticisms for their contribution to deforestation, soil degradation and biodiversity loss.

Notwithstanding, there is a growing recognition of the potential of Dynamic Agroforestry (DAF) as a promising alternative that will not only sustain cocoa production but also promote sustainability and resilience in cocoa farming systems while conserving the environment.

Understanding Dynamic Agroforestry

DAF is an innovative approach to farming that integrates a variety of plants and animal species in a synergistic

manner to create diverse, productive, and resilient farming systems. Unlike CCCP, DAF mimics natural ecosystems through the construction of natural forest-like systems with high biomass production. Its primary emphasis lies in the natural regeneration of native trees and shrubs along with managing tree canopy through pruning.

In Ghana, DAF involves intercropping cocoa with shade trees, fruit trees, and other crops, intentionally establishing strata for the cocoa, to foster biodiversity and soil health. DAF was initially rolled out in Ghana by Kuapa Kookoo and their partners under an initiative named “Sankofa”.

CRIG and DAF

In a bid to provide technical support to the implementation team, the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) allocated a 2 hector plot to establish a DAF plot to conduct research on the DAF model, focusing on the use of the lowest fertility soil to grow cocoa without touching any forests.

The first DAF plot at CRIG was established in May of 2022 and is currently 19 months old. With the welfare of Ghanaian farmers at its core, CRIG has also initiated another DAF plot, modified to conduct further research aimed at determining the most suitable DAF system that will be beneficial to the Ghanaian farmer and allow for easy adoption.

BENEFITS OF DYNAMIC AGROFORESTRY

The DAF model is centred on the principle of diversity. Planting a variety of tree species alongside cocoa trees yields various benefits such as:

1. Biodiversity Conservation: DAF, through mimicking the natural ecosystem, promotes biodiversity by providing habitat for a wide range of plant and animal species. This enhances ecosystem resilience and supports pollination.

2. Soil Health and Fertility: The presence of diverse plant species helps to improve soil fertility and structure, preventing soil erosion. The plants that are pruned are used as shrubs to build biomass for the soil which maintains and promotes soil moisture, and nutrient cycling, thereby

decreasing reliance on chemical inputs.

3. Livelihood and Sustenance for Farmers: In addition to cocoa, the DAF model gives farmers the liberty to select and plant a variety of food crops that can fetch them extra income as well as serve as an extra source of food. By diversifying their crops and income sources, farmers can improve their livelihoods and food security. This also reduces their dependence on a single commodity and boosts their finances.

4. Climate Resilience: With climate change posing increasing challenges to agriculture, Dynamic Agroforestry offers a level of resilience. The integration of trees in the DAF system helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change by buffering against extreme temperatures, increasing carbon sequestration, and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions.

CHALLENGES OF DYNAMIC AGROFORESTRY

While the adoption of DAF presents promising opportunities, it also has its share of challenges. Some of these challenges include:

1. Cost of Establishment: The financial burden on farmers in establishing a DAF plot poses a significant challenge within the DAF system. There is the need for careful consideration of expenses such as acquiring the needed seedlings and shade trees, which might not be readily available in the farmers' local environment. These costs altogether might be beyond the farmers' means.

2. Initial Labour Requirements: Farmers who lack the resources to cover initial costs of labour for clearing the land to create a suitable surface for planting cover crops essential for DAF plots, might find it difficult to adopt the DAF system as the initial costs are relatively higher as compared to the CCCP.

3. Choice of Tree Species: To ensure the success of the DAF system, it's crucial to tailor it to benefit the farmers. This requires identifying the optimal combinations of crops and shrubs to integrate into the DAF plots for maximum yields once the cocoa trees mature. These combinations

should also bring value to the farmer through generating returns from the produce. To achieve this, comprehensive technical assistance and training is required to empower farmers with the knowledge needed to make informed decisions when establishing their DAF plots.

In conclusion, DAF offers a promising pathway to transform Ghana's cocoa industry. By embracing DAF, Ghana can unlock the full potential of its cocoa sector while protecting the environment and improving the well-being of farmers. With commitment, continuous support and investment, DAF can pave the way for a more resilient and sustainable future in Ghana's cocoa industry.

By Agnes Annoh
Public Affairs Department

Understanding Cocoa Traceability in Ghana

Tracking the journey of cocoa beans from the farm where they are grown to the consumer, ensuring transparency, accountability, and ethical sourcing within the cocoa supply chain.

1 What Is The State Of Traceability In Ghana?

Historically, Ghana has been able to trace its cocoa beans to the sourcing society or farmer cooperative. In 2019, the country began the development of its Cocoa Management System (CMS) to bridge the gap between the corporative to the farmer and the plot of land that produced the beans.

The CMS establishes a national mandatory traceability system for all Ghana cocoa beans using a comprehensive integrated digital database that captures farm and farmer information, including the polygons and physical conditions of farms, farm activities, and farmer household characteristics.

2 Key Steps In The Traceability System.

a Acquiring robust data on farmers and their farms.

b Continuously collecting data on farming activities; cultivation practices, harvesting methods, etc.

c Implementing identification and tracking of the movement of cocoa beans within Ghana's borders.

d Verifying and updating information to ensure accuracy and reliability of data through regular inspections and compliance validation to uphold standards.

e Utilizing technology for monitoring, reporting, and communicating transparently with partners and stakeholders along the supply chain.

3 Why Is Traceability Important for Ghana's Cocoa Industry?

Traceability is crucial for Ghana's cocoa industry to ensure ethical sourcing, promote sustainability, prevent any kind of forced labour on farms, and maintain product quality and safety.

4 How Can Consumers Help?

Consumers can educate themselves and raise awareness about the challenges facing cocoa farmers and insist on chocolate companies paying fair prices for cocoa beans to economically empower farmers to uphold standards and sustainable practices.

Consumers can use their purchasing power to drive change by boycotting products from companies that engage in unethical practices, such as undermining the Living Income Differential (LID) while supporting brands that prioritise farmer welfare and traceability.

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