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## Quality Deterioration and the Role of Rehabilitation of Cocoa Production Chain in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The goal of obtaining good income for cocoa cultivation is intrinsically connected to the sustainability of this sector. This on the other hand cannot be realised without a well laid out plan to attain quality in all the various management aspects in the long cocoa production chain. Over 90 % of Nigeria's cocoa is produced in the cocoa-belt of the southwestern Region which is located in the Derived Savannah Agroecological zone of Nigeria.

Many of the existing cocoa trees were planted under cleared or thinned primary forest that was then in abundant supply. Reserves of suitable soils no longer exist and so future cocoa plantings are likely to be on soils that have already been exploited, hence, a downward trend is noticed in cocoa production. There is therefore need to search reasons and make recommendation for improved cocoa quality management.

In this study, we investigate bio-physical, climatic and management factors of selected cocoa farms in southwestern Nigeria and estimate their effect on the overall quality in the cocoa production chain. We analysed 16 soil samples for basic cations, NPC and pH. Information on factors affecting cocoa quality was elicited by interviewing farmers from 60 households on their farm using standardised questionnaires.

We discovered certain nine primary activities in the production chain that contribute to overall quality of production as seed choice, nursery, transplanting, young plantation, field production, harvesting, primary processing, storage - bagging, and marketing. Primary processing, harvesting and seed choice are the first three activities with the highest percentage of contribution to cocoa quality. Restoration of cocoa yield to its peak level is possible by systematic replacement of inferior trees.

We recommend a viable, well-informed and well-equipped extension services that will enhance the practice of good husbandry, especially among the smallholder cocoa farmers.

**Keywords:** Cocoa production, extension service, production chain analysis, quality management, Nigeria