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“Management of land use systems for enhanced food security:
conflicts, controversies and resolutions”

Land Use Systems and Food Security in Forest Areas of Ghana: Conflicts, Controversies and Resolution

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Abstract

Cocoa farming is one of the dominant land use systems in the forest belt of Ghana. The farms are established initially with food crops such as maize, cassava, yam, cocoyam, plantain and cassava, which contribute to both household and national food security. An alternative land use system in the forest belt is gold mining. Recent practices of small scale gold miners who are leasing fields earmarked for new cocoa plantations and destroying already established farms to mine gold has led to conflict among land owners, tenant farmers and miners. The fact is that some young farmers are abandoning cocoa farming to join the mining business which they perceive as more lucrative. Other young farmers are complaining about the sharecropping system operated among cocoa farmers. The result is poor farm management and low yields of both cocoa and food crops leading to high food prices and eventually low access to adequate and nutritious food. This makes the issue of pitching small scale mining against cocoa farming a controversial one. This paper describes the efforts that are being made by a network of cocoa value chain actors, municipal assembly, government and non-governmental agencies to resolve the issues through consultative and participatory approaches. A survey including 483 farmers and small scale miners in three regions (Western, Eastern and Ashanti) of Ghana as well as representatives of 30 relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies sought the opinions of respondents concerning the sources of conflict, controversies in tenure arrangements and factors of success for land use planning that supports and enhances food security. The way forward is for all to act in ways that will further the welfare of people and their communities by creating convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient and attractive environments for present and future generations.

Keywords: Cocoa farming system, food security, Ghana, land use planning, small scale mining