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Private Standards, their Institutional Arrangements and their Theoretical Links to Livelihoods Improvement and Food Security

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Abstract

This paper analyses the differences of the tripartite systems of the most active private standards (UTZ Certified, Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade) involved in the cocoa value chain. During the last decade, private standards have gained momentum within the cocoa value. This is reflected in the level of engagement from industry and retail actors as well as on the continuous increase of certified producers (volume of product) at the producing countries. These private standards are very similar in their overarching aim, namely, to improve the income, the yields, the environment or social conditions of the farmers they certify. Herewith they aim to improve the livelihood and food security of those farmers. Although, these standards make an effort to differentiate themselves from each other at the market place i.e. emphasis on environmental issues or working conditions and social aspects. All standards are based on the same concept of a tripartite system. However, the differences among the systems in place result in considerable implications on the quality infrastructure which can be reflected during implementation such as costs or efficiency. We analyse all the documentation publicly available related to the quality infrastructure in place of the above mentioned standards and analyse it using basic institutional parameters/indicators. Key informant interviews were done to verify the results and for cross-verification. We conclude that these standards are converging in their systems over time. Furthermore, we urge to bring into the discussion the accreditation bodies in place and/or the system in place to control/monitor the certification bodies, since the latter control/monitor the implementation of the standards at the farm level and thus a considerable amount of integrity is needed, which is being currently questioned by various actors in the cocoa value chain.

Keywords: Certification, cocoa value chain, tripartite system