

# The interface between expert and farmer knowledge on cocoa pruning



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## Context



### Trends in the cocoa sector

- Increasing incidence of pests and diseases
- Reduction in yield/supply
- Intensified use of standards and associated training

### Pruning has the potential to:

- Improve aeration –reduction of pests & diseases
- Maximise light capture and nutrient use – yield increase

## Our Goal:

Examine interfaces where expert and farmer knowledge on pruning of cocoa meet, assess the kinds of interactions therein and detect emerging spaces for exchange and hybridisation.

## Preliminary Results

### Knowledge and practice of pruning

#### Experts

Acknowledge formative, structural and sanitary pruning.  
Knowledge is relatively unitary, generic and largely focused on the act of pruning.

Develop recommendations and manuals for farmer training and adoption.  
Practice is biased towards structural pruning.

#### Farmers

Acknowledge pruning as a balancing act between shade, sunlight and pod bearing.

Knowledge is relatively composite, situated and largely focused on tree response to pruning.

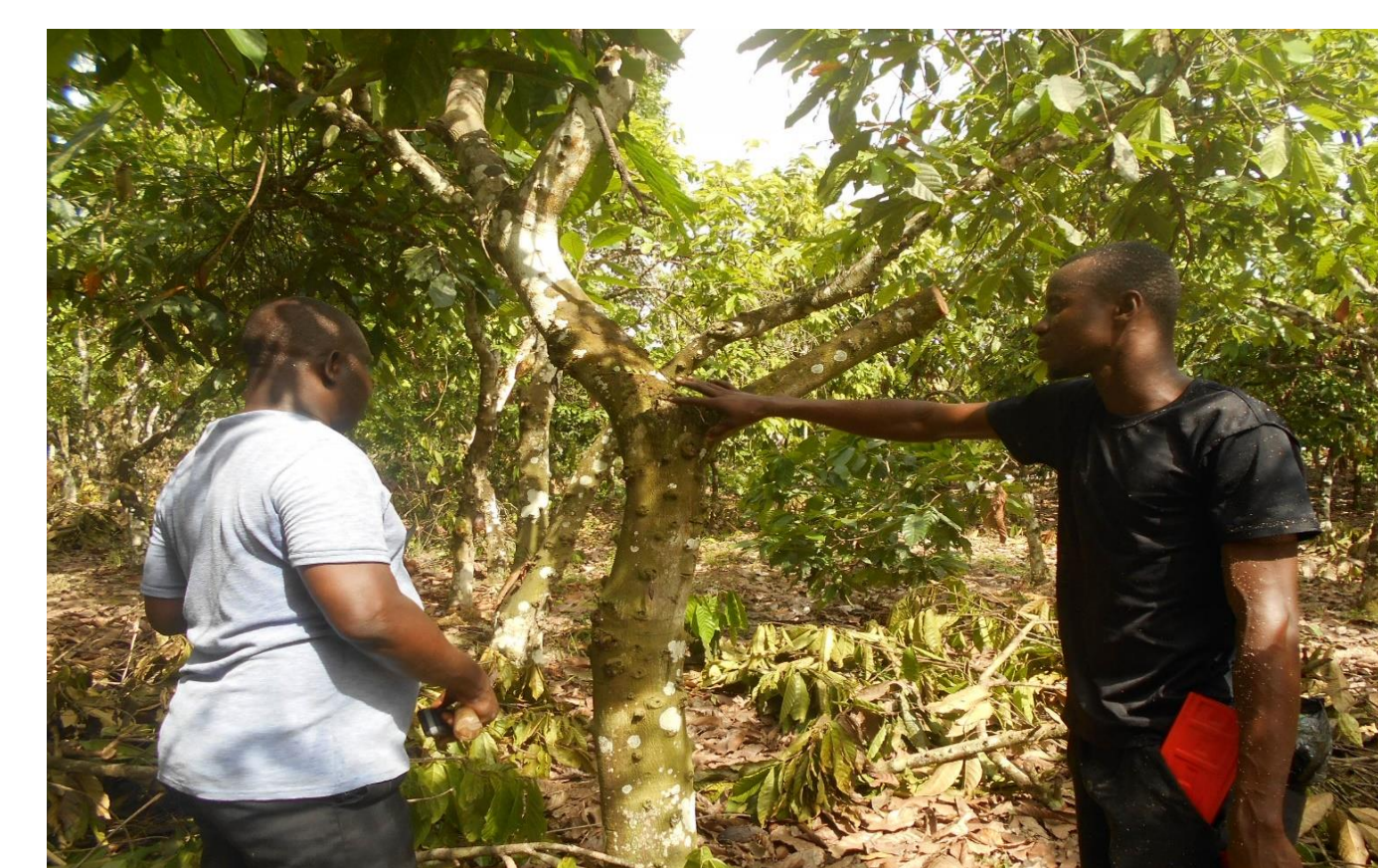
Develop adaptations of recommended practice to find a balance between pest and diseases reduction and pod bearing.  
Practice is biased towards sanitary pruning. Hardly cut pod bearing branches.

### Knowledge transfer and/or exchange

- Choice of interface and interaction therein is driven by expert narrative and quest to make sure farmers prune. Biased towards structural pruning.
- Farmers negotiate for space during interactions in coaching and gang pruning interfaces.



**Left.** Mass training of farmers on pruning by technical officer.



**Right:** Gang pruner and farmer interacting during pruning.

### Interfaces and associated dominant narrative

#### Mass training

- Farmers lack the right knowledge on pruning- Need increased training

#### Demonstration farm

- Farmers can learn better by seeing – Need training by demonstration

#### Coaching

- Different farmers have different learning capacities and adoption rates- Need segmented coaching

#### Gang Pruning

- Farmers are not pruning or do not have the capacity to prune- Need direct pruning services

#### Farmer Narrative in all interfaces

- Expert practice does not consider local farm/field conditions in relation to pruning.
- Need to find balance between pruning for pest and diseases reduction while maintaining pod bearing branches.

## First Conclusions:

- Interaction in the interface is based on the assumption that farmers do not prune although farmers largely do sanitary pruning.
- Interactions are largely top-down transfer of expert knowledge and practice. Farmers show both active and passive resistance.
- Dominant narrative of experts and farmers offer less space for exchange of knowledge and practice.
- Emerging space for exchange and hybridisation evident in coaching and gang pruning with field trainers and pruners who are farmers and/or locally recruited.

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