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Ways of Sustainable Cocoa Value Chain Improvement in West Africa

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Abstract

Cocoa is one of the major cash crop in West Africa, providing a source of income for about 20 million people. One and half million farms are producing 2.6 million tons of cocoa per year with an average of 3 to 4 hectares size per farm in forested or formerly forested areas. West Africa cocoa production represent 88 % of all Africa production and 63 % of the total world production. In West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana respectively with 884,000 and 2.1 million, represent 89 % of West Africa total production. Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are the two leading producers in the world earning respectively 5 billion and 2 billion dollars from export. The main challenges for farmers are low productivity, low incomes and limited development in farming communities. Many threats are affecting sustainability of cocoa value chain in West Africa at different level. At economical level, challenges are income inequality and inadequate infrastructure and low access to finance are key challenges. Indeed, producing countries retain only a small proportion of the global cocoa market's value, which stood at 45 billion in 2019 and expected to reach 61 billion dollars by 2027. At social level, child labour is the main challenge. In 2021, about 1.6 million children labouring in the Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire cocoa industry, including hazardous tasks such as carrying heavy loads, climbing cocoa trees for harvesting, and using sharp tools to open cocoa pods. The main environmental threats are deforestation and climate change. In the absence of other options to increase efficiency, and overcome poor farm management, old plantations, soil degradation threats, and pressure from pests and diseases, cocoa producers often clear forestland to increase production. In addition, cocoa production is affected by extreme weather conditions, which are becoming more frequent and make certain regions less suitable for growing the crop. Many initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Liberia aim to improve sustainability of cocoa value chains in West Africa through productivity improvement and processing to create more value. In Cameroon, the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa initiate by the sustainable trade initiative is a key project to improve sustainability.

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