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## Women farmers’ strategies to enhanced cocoa production: An Ivorian perspective

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### Abstract

In recent years, much has been done to promote equal human rights and financial independence for women cocoa producers. Nevertheless, women’s role in cocoa farming households remains largely unrecognised. A focus on sex-disaggregated statistics leads to gender-related biases associated with imbalanced or incomplete representation of population groups and biased ways in which gender information is elicited. To overcome knowledge gaps on gender, this study focuses on Ivorian women cocoa farmers. Female-headed households in Côte d’Ivoire own, on average less land compared to male-headed households. Nonetheless, women’s land tenure is a highly dynamic issue, and in recent years a growing number of female-headed households in cocoa-producing communities has been observed. Besides, female-headed households show an increasingly higher diversification in their cocoa farms. Based on 40 narrative interviews with female cocoa producers and representatives of producer associations, we aim to understand female-headed household farming and diversification strategies and their current challenges and opportunities related to their agricultural activity. Narrative interviews are a means of collecting women’s own stories about their experiences as cocoa producers. The results of this study give insights into socio-cultural factors affecting women’s participation in the Ivorian cocoa value chain, differentiated social needs, and strategies to overcome constraints. Land access, access to finance and labour, and high illiteracy rates are crucial issues limiting women’s participation in the cocoa value chain. However, due to their increasing interest in agriculture and economic independence, and entrepreneurial skills, women have developed strategies to overcome constraints such as organisation, diversification, and gender awareness raising.

**Keywords:** Cocoa, diversification, gender, human rights, social inclusion