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Women, products from associated species with cocoa trees and food security of cocoa-producing households in central Côte d’Ivoire

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Abstract

Products from companion species of cocoa trees are among the natural resources that women in central Côte d’Ivoire use to diversify household food consumption and improve their income. The lack of data to assess the importance of species associated with cocoa trees to the food security of the households visited is one of the obstacles to their promotion. The objective of this study, carried out in central Côte d’Ivoire in the forest-savannah transition zone, was to analyse the contribution of species associated with cocoa trees in agroforestry systems to the diet and food security of households of women involved in cocoa production in this rural area. To achieve this objective, semi-structured interviews were conducted with women to collect data on their food habits and consumption in order to assess the level of self-sufficiency and food security of households. To do this, the CARI (Consolidated Approach to Reporting Food Security Indicators) methodology, which is used to analyse food insecurity and establish its prevalence within a population, was applied. Analysis of the data collected shows that out of 268 women involved in cocoa production, more than 30% of women own a cocoa farm. Concerning the species associated with cocoa trees, they are composed of fruit and forest species. A total of 79 plant species have been identified, divided into 67 genera and 31 botanical families. The species that are strongly present are *Musa paradisiaca*, *Persea americana*, *Citrus sinensis*, *Elaeis guineensis*, and *Mangifera indica*. In general, the species associated with cocoa trees are used for self-consumption and sale. For other services, they serve as a source of shade, pharmacopoeia, social aspect (donation and reception of guests), as bio-fertiliser, lumber and firewood. The study shows that 12% of households surveyed are food insecure, of which 4% are severely food insecure and 8% moderately food insecure. Less than 25% of the populations assessed were heavily engaged in coping, stress and crisis strategies at the time of this work. These results shed more light on the contribution of cocoa-based agroforestry systems to the survival of the local population and the level of food security.

Keywords: Cocoa agroforestry systems, Côte d’Ivoire, food security, food self-sufficiency, gender