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Cocoa farm reconversion in Ghana's cocoa regions: The influence of farm and socio-economic factors

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Abstract

West Africa grows more than 6 million hectares of cocoa trees, representing 70 % of world cocoa lands. Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa after Cote d'Ivoire with an average cocoa yield of 330–400 kg ha^{-1}, compared to Cote d'Ivoire's yield of 500–600 kg ha^{-1}. The two main cocoa regions of Ghana are the Western (Western North and South) and Ashanti regions. The declines in production volumes from 969,000 MT in 2016/2017 to 580,000 MT in the 2023/2024 cropping season in Ghana have been attributed to factors including climate change. In the Western South cocoa region, cocoa is facing a fierce competition from other perennial crops especially rubber plantations. It is also observed in this region that several cocoa farmers are converting their cocoa farms to rubber farms (conversion). In the Ashanti cocoa region however, old varieties of cocoa are being cut down for the replanting of improved varieties (reconversion). This study assesses the determinants of cocoa farm reconversion in the study regions, and was conducted in the Ellembelle and Amenfi Central districts (Western South Cocoa region), and Afigya Kwabre North district (Ashanti Cocoa region). Data is from a baseline survey of 15 cocoa communities in July 2022 of the "Cocoa for Future Project", where 400 cocoa farm households were randomly sampled. The hypotheses are that cocoa farm characteristics (variety, disease, cocoa age, etc.) and socio-economic factors (income, education, etc.) influence cocoa reconversion. The study is significant as it exposes the real threats that the cocoa sector face from diseases and non-productive old cocoa varieties amidst the concerted policy efforts to revamp the sector. Using a logistic regression model, factors that positively influence cocoa farm reconversion to high-yielding cocoa varieties are farmer based organisation (FBO) membership, land ownership status, educational level, and cocoa farm location. The study recommends stakeholders efforts to creating an enabling environment for cocoa farmers to promote cocoa replanting.

Keywords: Cocoa regions, conversion, improved cocoa varieties, old cocoa variety, perennial crops, reconversion

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