

Cooperative intermediation and cocoa smallholders' preparedness for emerging sustainability regulations in Côte d'Ivoire

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Introduction

- Côte d'Ivoire is the world's top cocoa producer, but cocoa expansion has driven over 90% of its deforestation since 1960.
- New regulations, the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and the African Standard ARS-1000, require deforestation-free, traceable cocoa.
- Smallholders are not directly regulated, yet their market access increasingly depends on meeting these requirements.

➔ Are cocoa farmers ready to comply and what determines their preparedness?

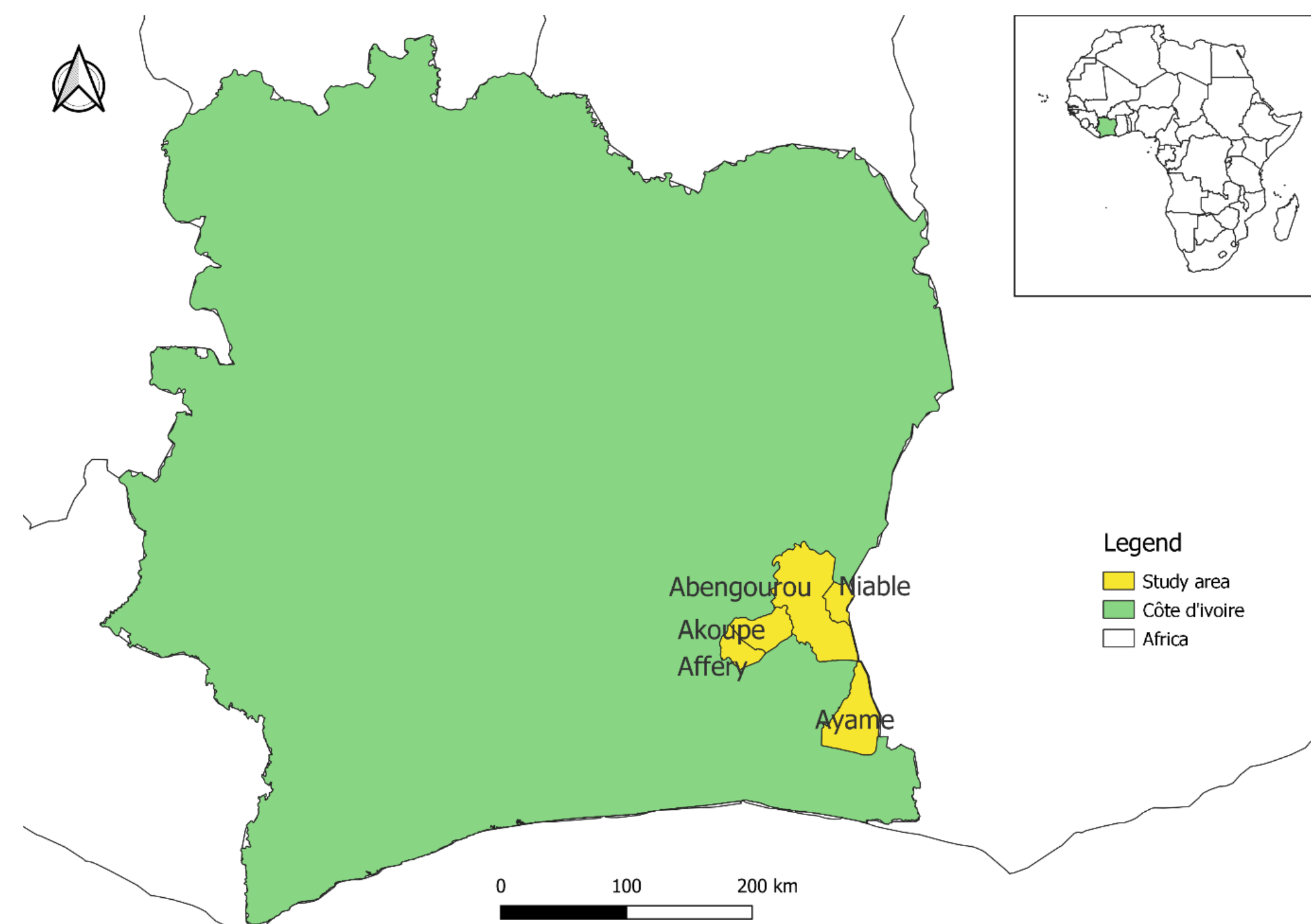


Figure 1: Study area, Côte d'Ivoire

Data and Methods

- 235 cocoa farmers surveyed
- 159 cooperative members & 76 non-members
- 34 semi-structured interviews
- Cooperative managers and farmers
- Data collected in August 2025
- Across three eastern Côte d'Ivoire regions
- What do we measure?
- Awareness & readiness indices for EUDR and ARS-1000
- Analysis
- Linear regressions - Qualitative thematic analysis

Conceptual framework

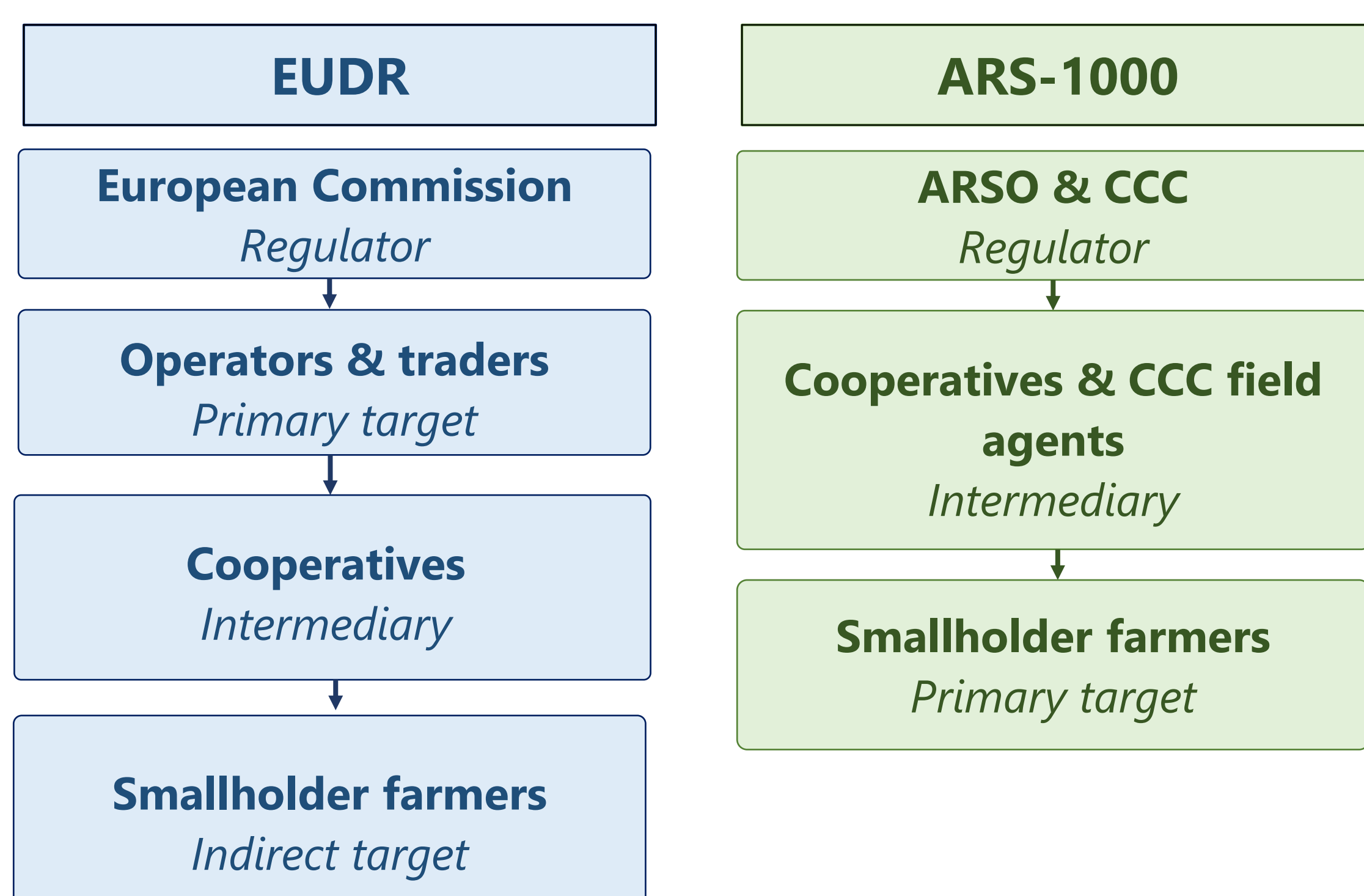


Figure 2 : RIT framework applied to ARS-1000 & EUDR



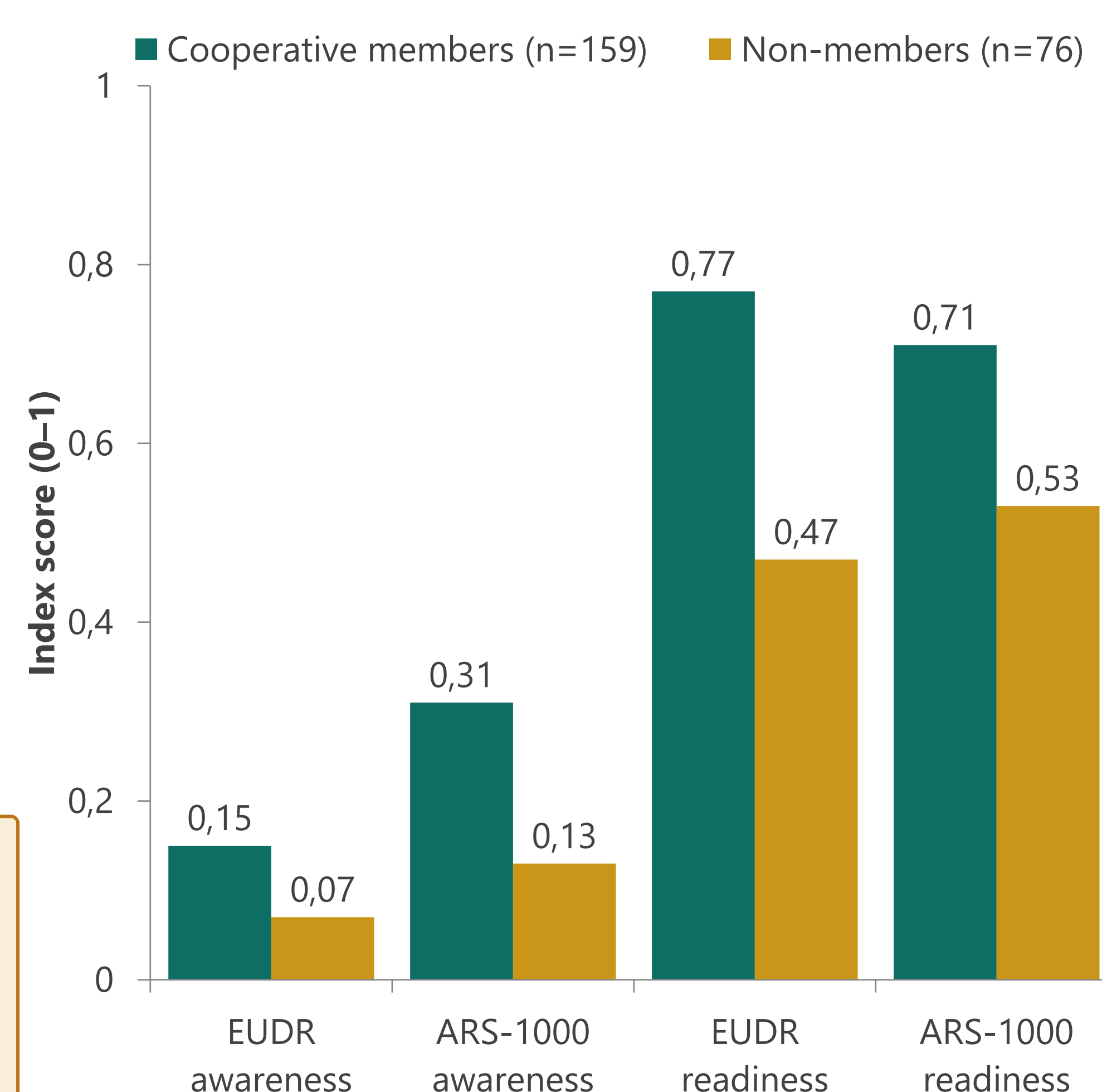
Figure 3 : Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)



Cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, © M. Sahiry

Results

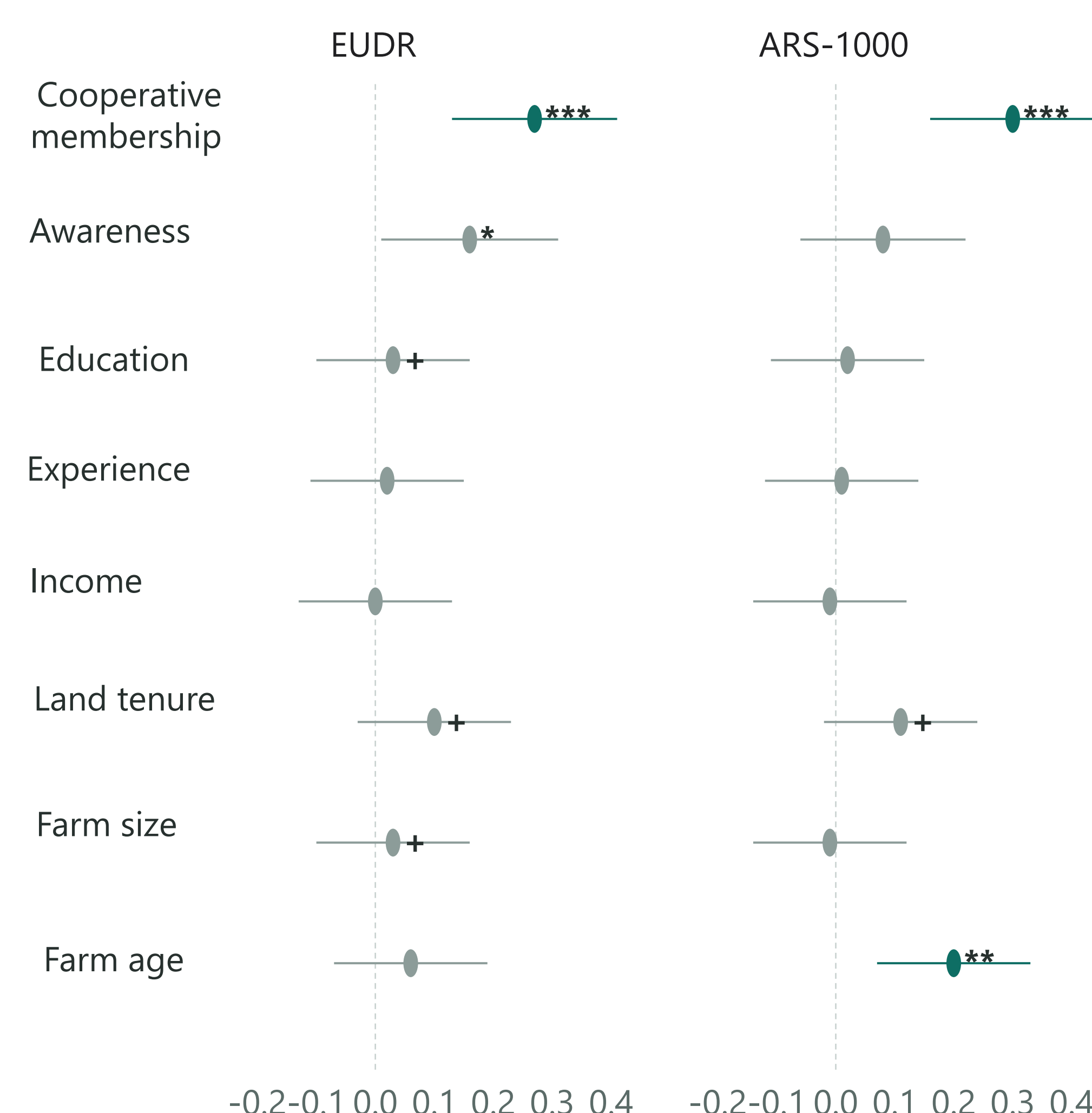
Awareness and preparedness by membership



Results

- Exporters push mapping and traceability costs onto cooperatives
- Cooperatives map plots and issue farmer ID cards through trained 'Producteurs Relais'.
- Cooperatives are actively shrinking membership to meet forest-proximity rules, leaving non-members more exposed.
- Knowing the rules rarely translates into action for non-members, who face real and perceived eligibility barriers to mapping

Determinants of preparedness for requirements



Highlights

- Cooperative membership is the strongest and most consistent predictor of both awareness and readiness.
- Among cooperative members, individual livelihood assets no longer predict readiness: cooperatives standardize the path to compliance.
- EUDR and ARS-1000 follow different pathways: EUDR relies on cooperative-run traceability & documentation, ARS-1000 on incentive-driven farming practices.
- Farmers outside cooperatives face a greater risk of exclusion from compliant cocoa markets.