

Female farmers' strategies to enhanced cocoa production: an Ivorian perspective

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Introduction

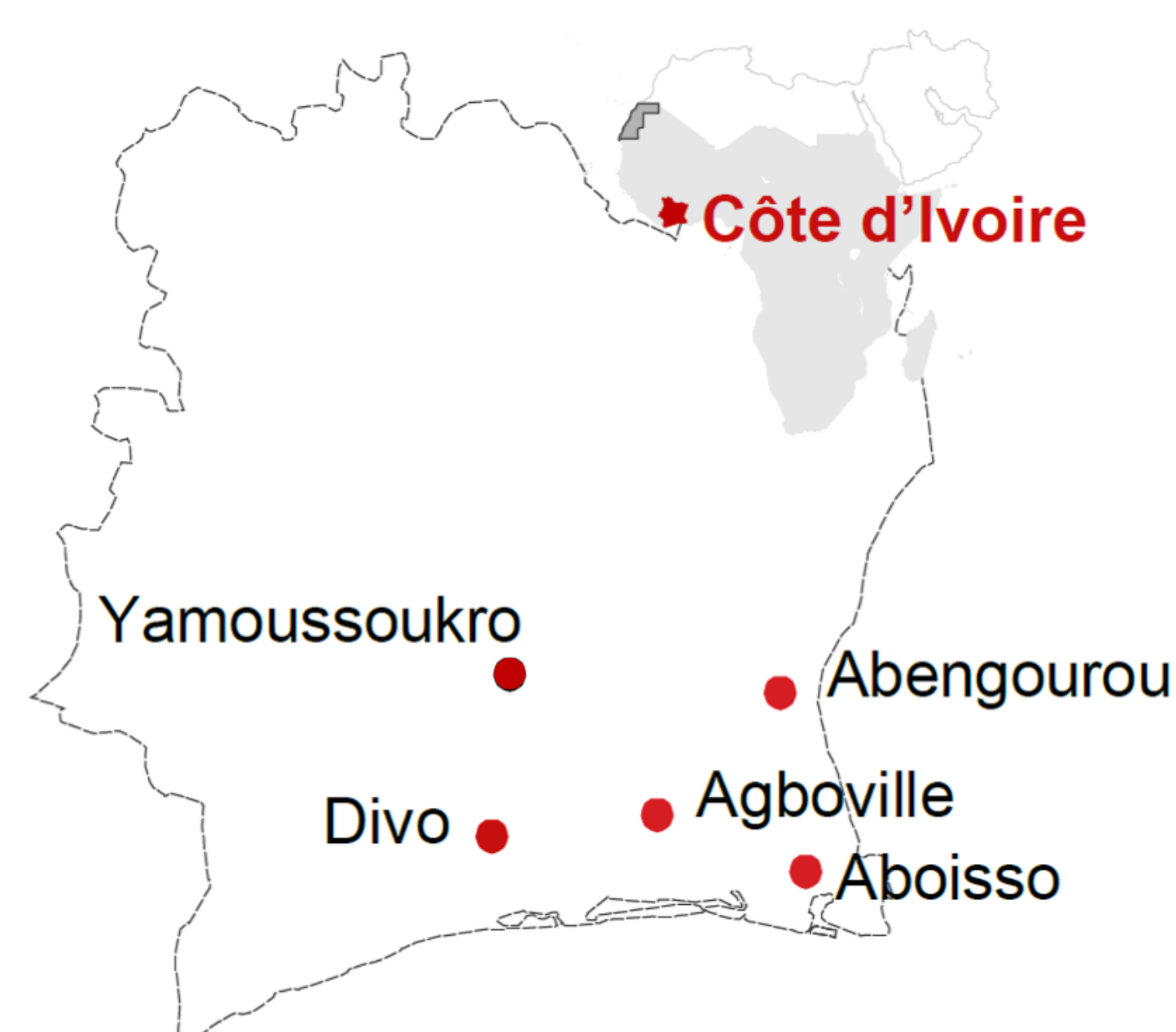
- A focus on sex-disaggregated statistics leads to gender-related biases.
- Misconception that cocoa is a 'male crop' and that "cocoa is of less importance for female-headed households vs. male-headed households".
- To better understand gender inequalities in the cocoa sector, a series of approaches and tool boxes have been developed.
- Women's role in cocoa farming households remains largely unrecognized and socio-economic dynamics that influence gender participation in the cocoa value chain, the motivation and opportunities for women farmers still need to be understood.

Literature review

- By 2020 women represented less than 6% of Ivorian cocoa farmers (Ruf et al. 2020).
- Female-headed households own on average less land compared to male-headed households (Bymolt et al. 2018).
- Women are involved in almost the entire household cocoa production; for heavy tasks and for the application of agricultural inputs typically hire male labourers; however, male-headed households often hire labour for this as well.
- Women are often responsible for the food crops that are grown in association with cocoa or in other land parcels (Bymolt et al. 2018; Busquet et al. 2021).

Research design

- Narrative analysis based on 40 narrative interviews with female cocoa producers and representatives of producer associations (following methodological guidance of Della Porta 2014).
- Research was conducted in December 2022 and January 2023 in Divo, Yamoussoukro, Agboville and Abengourou regions of Côte d'Ivoire (map).



Regions PRO-PLANTEURS 1+2 (© GIZ)

Results

- **Socio-cultural factors** affect women's participation in the cocoa value chain
- **Land access, access to finance and labour, high illiteracy rates and heavy workload** constitute crucial issues that limit women's participation in the cocoa value chain.
- Women are largely marginalized by custom with regard to **land access**.
- Due to their increasing interest in agriculture and **economic independence**, and **entrepreneurial skills**, women have developed strategies to overcome constraints such as **organization, diversification, and gender awareness raising**.

"...in my youth, I learned how to cultivate. Us, in Africa, at some point, they [men] might leave [...] When I cultivate his cocoa, [...] if he leaves, he is going to have children [with another woman]. Maybe one day his parents will come to take inheritance, his field. And I'm going to stay with my children, [...] That's what I said to him, "sorry you have to give me some land to cultivate too". At first, he didn't want to. But as I insisted with courage, I said to myself that I must stand up for myself, for the children. If he's not here tomorrow, what are we going to do? So, I had to play my role too [...] if he was able to cultivate the land, I [am able] too, I am like him, I can cultivate. This is where I started working in the field, the rain was bothering me, under the sun. I had two twins, but still I did little by little, that's it" (Female cocoa producer).



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