

BEHIND BARS:

**INVISIBLE FARMERS AND
WORKERS IN THE COCOA SUPPLY
CHAIN**

SCOPING STUDY



INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Authors

Anna Laven & Martha Ataa-Asantewaa

Reviewers

Anika Altaf, Isa Baud, & Dzodzi Tsikata

© 2025 INCLUDE Knowledge Platform

Herta Mohr building

Witte Singel 27A

2311 BG Leiden

+31(0)71 527 6602

info@includeplatform.net | includeplatform.net

Disclaimer

This work is a product of the INCLUDE Knowledge Platform Secretariat, with contributions from external sources. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the INCLUDE Knowledge Platform, its members, or the organizations they represent.

Rights and Permissions

This material is subject to copyright. INCLUDE Knowledge Platform encourages the dissemination of its knowledge. This work may be reproduced, in whole or in part, for non-commercial purposes, provided that full attribution is given to INCLUDE Knowledge Platform.

For any queries regarding rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, please contact:

info@includeplatform.net

Contents

Introduction	2
Scoping study objectives, assumptions and approach	2
Part I – The knowledge gap	4
Too little is known about the majority of cocoa farmers and workers	4
What isn't measured isn't managed.....	6
Numbers do not speak for themselves	7
Counting the workforce.....	8
Mobility of cocoa farmers and workers	11
Part II - Case study	13
Invisible farmers in Nyamebekeyre, Ghana	13
Findings.....	14
1. Who are involved in cocoa production? How are they involved? Are they recognized?.....	14
2. To what extent do different types of farmers and workers have access to resources, services, sustainability programs?.....	20
3. What are their aspirations? Do they intend to stay in cocoa, and in what role?.....	22
Conclusions, implications and recommendations	25
Conclusions.....	25
Implications for further policies.....	26
Recommendations for further research.....	28
References	30
Annex 1 – Literature search	29
Annex 2 - New EU legislation ends the voluntary character of sustainability efforts	30

Introduction

Scoping study objectives, assumptions and approach

Ultimately, the objective of this scoping study is to inform a proposal for multi-year, interdisciplinary independent research (mixed-methods) in West-Africa that helps to close the knowledge gap on farmers and workers that are currently not recognized for their contribution to cocoa: “invisible farmers”. The study is based on the following assumptions/hypotheses:

1. Mitigating negative impacts on human rights in companies’ supply chains does not stop at the level of registered farmers, e.g. as members of a farmer group or with a passbook. Registered farmers are usually older (often male) farm owners and are considered to be “head of the household”.
2. *Invisible farmers* are more likely to be subject to human rights violations and more likely to live in extreme poverty.
3. *Invisible farmers* are a diverse group, they comprise family labour (female spouses and adult children), tenants (including sharecroppers and caretakers) and workers, including motivated youth that intends to stay longer into cocoa and represent the future generation of farmers. Standard approaches are not likely to reach and benefit the heterogenous farming population.
4. Not reaching a large part of the cocoa farming population with agronomic and financial services, often part of sustainability programs, is likely to affect the adoption levels of recommended agricultural practices and limit the effectiveness of services and programs. It might also contribute to the high turnover of farmers in company’s sustainability programs.
5. An outreach bias toward relatively older male land owners, registered farmers, and household heads deepens existing inequalities within households and communities and hinders innovation.

The aim of the scoping study is twofold: 1) validate our hypotheses; 2) understand the extent of the knowledge gap on invisible farmers and whether or not a more in-depth study is to be justified. Therefore, we:

1. Conducted a *light* literature review on key topics (Annex 1)
2. Analyzed existing data sets on farm and household characteristics and land tenure arrangements (Table 1)
3. Consulted with small group of experts and peers
4. Conducted a field study in a cocoa growing community in Ghana

Table 1 Consulted data sets

Reference	Year	Country	Regions	Sample size	Linked to company program
A	2018	Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire	All main cocoa growing regions	3000	No
B	2023	Ghana	Western North Region and Central Region	1006	Yes
C	2023	Côte d'Ivoire	East and South West	2050	Yes

INCLUDE

In this report we present first the insights from secondary resources, including a review of three data sets. In the second part we present the findings from our case study. In the last part of this scoping study we present our main conclusions and immediate policy implications. Furthermore, we justify the need for a larger and more in-depth study, how this can be shaped and identify next steps.

Part I – The knowledge gap

Too little is known about the majority of cocoa farmers and workers

The starting point of this scoping study is that *everyone who cultivates cocoa should be recognized as a farmer by the cocoa sector, irrespective of gender or landholding status* (Definition adopted from Mars Cocoa for Generation Report, 2022).

This inclusive definition has not yet become the standard in industry. Although, cocoa farming is usually a family business with several family members involved in the cultivation of cocoa, commonly used definitions of cocoa farmers tend to be narrow and rather exclusive, generally referring to farm-owners (or farm managers) who are seen as the head of a household (Heck and Laven, 2022). These farmers (often relatively older male land owners) are usually the ones *registered* (e.g. as members of a farmer group or with a pass book) and are invited to participate in training, services and sustainability programs.

This narrow definition is problematic as it does not recognize the contribution of other household members (like female spouses and adult children), tenants (including sharecroppers and caretakers) and workers, who usually do a large part of the work on the farm (Heck and Laven, 2022; Kissi and Herzig, 2023). Consequently, an important part of the cocoa workforce is not directly participating in any outreach activities, which is likely to affect adoption levels of recommended practices and potentially undermines the effectiveness of services and programs with disappointing incomes as a result. Moreover, the bias in outreach reinforces the status quo and deepens existing inequalities within households and communities (Heck and Laven, 2022).

Another challenge is that this exclusive definition is not appropriate when you consider EU Deforestation Regulation and the EU directive on corporate sustainability due diligence. This recently published EU legislation makes companies responsible for mitigating negative impacts on human rights and the environment in their supply chain, which does not stop at the level of the *registered* farmers (or mapped farms) (see also Annex 2). Currently, little has been documented about *who is behind* farmers that are usually targeted, and the conditions under which these *invisible* farmers, household members and workers contribute to cocoa production (see also Kissi and Herzig, 2023). The sector can no longer afford to remain ignorant about these invisible groups, not only because they comprise more vulnerable people, who are more likely to be subject to human rights violations and to live in extreme poverty, but also because part of them exist of younger (often migrant) farmers and workers that aspire to remain in cocoa.

Box 1 gives an overview of definitions of different types of farmers and workers. This box is based on a *light* literature study and was informed by one case study in Ghana. This scoping study does not reflect the changing contexts in cocoa production and shifts in land and labour relations (e.g. Hill, 1963; Amanor, 2008; Amanor, 2010).¹

¹ A more in-depth study would benefit from a comprehensive literature review.

Types of farmers and workers

Cocoa farmer

Everyone who cultivates cocoa should be recognized as a farmer by the cocoa sector, irrespective of gender or landholding status (Definition adopted from Mars Cocoa for Generation Report, 2022).

Farm-owners

These are farmers who established the farm themselves. These include landowners who established their farms and *abunu* sharecroppers who received part of the farms they established. Farm-owners have autonomy over their farm and carry out activities on their farm with family or hired labour or both.

Sharecroppers on new farm

Sharecropping arrangements are typically classified as *Abunu* – whereby the sharecropper (tenant) and landowner divide the harvest 50:50. Under *Abunu*, the landowner offers an uncultivated part of their land (often bush or forested land) to a farmer (or labourer), who then works for several years to clear the land and establish cocoa trees on the new plot. After the new cocoa plantation is established (often a period of around six years), the land will be divided in two equal parts with (customary) ownership rights secured for each party. From this time on, the cocoa plots will be independently managed, and the sharecropper has become a farm owner. In the first years, the *Abunu* sharecropper will not have any cocoa to sell and will therefore be excluded from any outreach activities.

Sharecroppers on established farm

This is typically classified as *Abusa*: – whereby usually two thirds of the harvest is for the sharecropper. Usually the sharecropper establishes and manages the cocoa farm and sells the cocoa under his/her name. This also gives the sharecropper access to training, services and sustainability programs.

In a recent publication (van der Haar et al, 2024) a helpful distinction is made between studies that aim to collect data on sharecropping: ‘Sharecropping in’ and ‘Sharecropping out’. ‘Sharecropping in’ refers to the situation where land that is owned by another household but cultivated by the respondents’ household under a sharecropping arrangement. ‘Sharecropping out’ refers to land that is owned by the respondents’ household members but cultivated by another household under a sharecropping arrangement. Although the distinction is useful, it becomes more complex if a sharecropping arrangement involves members of the same household.

Caretakers

Caretakers manage established cocoa farms in exchange for usually one-third of the yield and have no (or little) decision-making power. Caretakers are different from sharecroppers, as they (at least in the context of Ghana) cannot sell the cocoa under their name (see the case study for more details on caretakers).

Absentee farmers

Absentee farmers (or Telephone farmers) are farm owners who have given their farm to a caretaker to manage. These owners are not involved in farming or do not even live in the community anymore. Often they involve migrant (former) sharecroppers who return to their hometown after the farm is divided. However, although they are absent, once the farm is established, the whole cocoa yield is sold under his/her name. Depending on the arrangement, usually the absentee farmer takes two-thirds of the yield.

Long-term labourer

Long-term labourer usually involves a one-year contract with the cocoa farm owner. The arrangement involves payment, accommodation, feeding and safety offered by the farm owner as the worker lives with the farm owner's family.

Daily labour

Day labour represents workers who sell their labour daily (normally a 5-6 hour workday, generally from 8 am to 1 pm), where the farmer pays at the end of the day. These labourers sell their labour not only to cocoa farmers but also to sharecroppers and caretakers. Aside from payment, the farm owner has no other responsibility towards the by-day labourers.

There is another group of farmers that is not (yet) on companies' radar: producers that belong to companies' indirect supply chain (Box 2). From this group, farmers' identity, farm locations and volumes of cocoa produced are not known, let alone their income levels and working conditions and that of their family members and workers. In 2022, it was estimated that between 40% and 75% of the supply of cocoa to the key supply chain companies is still supplied indirectly, via third party suppliers like local exporters (IDH et al, 2021; Nestlé Cocoa Plan, 2021; Lumina Intelligence, 2020).² Currently, due to lack of provable traceability, it is estimated that less than 25% of the supply chain would comply with the requirements of the EU Deforestation and Due diligence regulation.³

Box 2 Definitions of direct and indirect supply

Direct and indirect supply

Direct supply chain

Cocoa that is produced by individual farmers, producer cooperatives, and organizations and purchased directly by a company at the first purchase point, and the producer(s) identity, farm location(s) and volume is/are known.

In cases where intermediaries are involved in purchasing, the above criteria will apply to the intermediary (e.g., *traitants, pisteurs*, licensed buying companies, and purchasing clerks). A producer(s) identity, farm location, and associated volume must be known and shared with the company who buys the cocoa to be considered "direct" (personal communication World Cocoa Foundation, 2023).

Indirect supply chain

Cocoa purchased by a company from an intermediary where the producer(s) identity, farm location(s), and volume are unknown / not shared with the purchasing company (personal communication World Cocoa Foundation, 2023).

What isn't measured isn't managed

Datasets that are collected to support companies in their sustainability and procurement strategies usually only collect data from farmers that are in their direct supply chain. Usually, only these registered farmers participate in interviews and focus group discussions, which are either farm owners, or the ones selling cocoa. Without deliberate effort this means that other contributors

²

<https://www.earth-sight.org.uk/news/idm/indirect-supply-chains-post-major-deforestation-risk-global-cocoa-industry>

³ If your company isn't compliant with EUDR by December 2024, you risk a fine of 4% of your company's EU turnover, the seizure of goods, supply chain delays, trade sanctions, loss of market access, and negative publicity.

remain invisible and will not be targeted with outreach activities, which reinforces existing inequalities.

More recently, different studies have aimed to understand better the diversity of cocoa farming households and differences between responsibilities and decision-making power of different household members (Laven, 2010; Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018; Habraken et al, 2022; Heck and Laven, 2022; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023; Laven et al 2023; Mason et al, 2023).⁴ These different studies demonstrate the heterogeneity of the farmer population and reveal some of its dynamics. These studies also show that certain groups tend to be systematically underrepresented in data sets, such as female (single) headed households, sharecroppers, youth headed households, who are all *unique* groups in terms of the challenges they face, the extent they have access to services, and the way in which they benefit from these services. Without over-sampling, the share of these unique households often turns out to be too small to do any robust analysis. The existing data sets also show that spouses and adult children of cocoa households, sharecroppers of new farms, caretakers, workers and their families are usually not targeted in data collection.

The next table illustrates the type of data that was collected in the data sets that were reviewed.

Table 2 Efforts of four data sets to include different types of households

Efforts to include invisible farmers in recent quantitative data sets	A	B	C
In your study, did you ask about the type of sharecropping arrangement?	yes	yes	yes
In your study, did you ask how much of the farm work is usually done by: the respondent, other household members, sharecroppers, caretakers, labourers?	no	no	yes
In your study, did you hear about the concept of telephone farmers/absentee farmers? If so, in what way was it referred to?	no	no	no
In your study, did you ask about decision-making on the farm?	yes	no	yes
In your study, did you ask about decision-making in the household?	yes	no	yes
In your study, did you make an extra effort to survey farmers who live more remotely?	no	no	no
In your study, did you do any extra effort to include sharecroppers?	no	yes	no
In your study, did you do any extra effort to include women?	yes	yes	no
In your study, did you do any extra effort to include youth?	no	yes	no

Numbers do not speak for themselves

Recent traceability efforts in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire have managed to map the majority of cocoa farms. According to Cocoa Forests Initiative (CFI), both in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire, companies reached on average 72% traceability in their direct supply chains (WCF, 2022).⁵ The government of Côte d’Ivoire has mapped 1 million farmers with 3.2 million ha of cocoa farms. In Ghana a total of

⁴ [Farmer segmentation.pdf \(mars.com\)](#)

⁵

<https://www.worldcocoaoundation.org/press-release/cocoa-forests-initiative-reports-progress-on-traceability-agroforestry-and-forest-protection-in-ghana-and-cote-divoire/#:~:text=Ghana%20and%20C%3%B4te%20d%E2%80%99Ivoire%20have%20reached%20new%20milestones,for%2072%20percent%20of%20the%20total%20cocoa%20area.>

515,762 farmers owning 845,635 farms have been registered in the national Cocoa Management System (CMS), accounting for 72 percent of the total cocoa area. This corresponds with estimates of number of smallholders in recent studies. These estimates suggest there are around 800,000 cocoa *smallholders*⁶ in Ghana and 1 million in Côte d'Ivoire (Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality 2021;⁷ Kissi and Herzig, 2023;⁸ IDH, 2022; IMANI, 2024).

However, the total number of people that depend on cocoa production for their livelihood is estimated to be much higher than the numbers presented above. Worldwide it is estimated that around every farmer some 10 additional people depend on cocoa production for their livelihood.⁹ For Côte d'Ivoire, it is estimated by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) and Conseil du Café et Cacao (CCC) (2022)¹⁰ that 25 percent of the total population depend on cocoa for their livelihood, which would come down to more than 7 million people.¹¹ For Ghana, earlier studies suggest that around one-third of their population depend on cocoa for their livelihood (different authors in Laven, 2010), which would come down to ~ 8 million people.¹² These numbers do not reveal if they include children of cocoa growing families and workers, or if they refer only to the adult work force.

Counting the workforce

Cocoa growing households usually combine household labour with hired labour and communal labour (Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018). Household labour comprises the work of spouses, adult children and children of school-going age, which is often considered as child labour.

A lot has been written on “women in cocoa”. However, most (recent) studies tend to focus on the relatively small proportion of female heads of cocoa growing households, showing clearly that female-headed households are among the poorest households. Fewer studies have documented the contributions of female spouses to cocoa production, including managing young cocoa farms, preparing food for the men and workers, and fetching water for spraying (e.g. Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018; Bah and Laven, 2018; Heck and Laven, 2020). In addition, most studies tend to be rather narrow and do not pay attention to the complex (and changing) family arrangements and the relevance of social reproduction for the cocoa industry.¹³ Despite their active roles, spouses' efforts are generally not recognized for their contributions or are undervalued. ‘Wives’ often depend on their husbands for compensation and tend to have little say about how the cocoa farm is managed and how the money earned with cocoa is spent (Heck et al., 2020).

In the context of cocoa, child labour is perceived as one of the most critical human rights violations. According to a comprehensive study by NORC (2020), 1.56 million children were engaged in child labor in cocoa production, including approximately 790,000 children in Côte d'Ivoire and 770,000 in Ghana, of which 95% are involved in “hazardous work”. Most children involved in hazardous activities

⁶ A smallholder usually refers to a person who owns or manages a small-scale farm.

⁷

<https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/02/25/covid-19-effects-on-cocoa-sectors-in-ghana-and-cote-d%E2%80%99ivoire>

⁸

<https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/02/25/covid-19-effects-on-cocoa-sectors-in-ghana-and-cote-d%E2%80%99ivoire>

⁹ [factsheet-cacao.pdf \(imvoconvenanten.nl\)](#)

¹⁰ <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/news/idh-and-conseil-du-cafe-cacao-launch-cocooperation/>

¹¹ [voorkust in cijfers en grafieken \(wekelijks bijgewerkt!\) | AlleCijfers.nl](#)

¹² 2010 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS FINAL RESULTS.pdf (undp.org)

¹³ Duncan (2010) has looked closer into family arrangements and has done more work on women's labour in the male-dominated cocoa industry. Dzanku and Tsikata (2022) have pointed to changes in the availability of household labour and its implications for the cocoa industry.

are working on their families' land. The reported number of children involved in child trafficking or forced labor ranges between 1,000 and 14,000, depending on the definitions used. There is agreement that not all work done by children should be classified as child labour and there are some age-appropriate tasks that children can legally do to help their families ("child work"). While occurrence of child labour in cocoa production has been extensively documented, less is known about the role of adult children in cocoa production. Existing data sets suggest that some youth become owners of farm, after being involved in a sharecropping arrangement, or they work as day labourers or caretakers (Amfo et al., 2021; Addaney et al., 2022; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023).

After family labour, hired labour is the main contributor to cocoa production. Box 1 already indicated the different types of labour that can be distinguished, such as sharecroppers, caretakers and daily labourers. However, their exact numbers have not been well captured. What makes it challenging to count these numbers is that land tenure and labour contracts are usually informal agreements, with many variations by country and by region. Moreover, farmers are usually not stuck in one arrangement; they might operate farms under different arrangements and might move from one arrangement into another, as part of their livelihood trajectories (Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023). Several studies show that a considerable proportion of today's farm owners obtained their farms through sharecropping (e.g. Asamoah & Owusu-Ansah, 2017; Addaney et al, 2023).¹⁴ Box 3 elaborates on sharecropping arrangements in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

Box 3 Sharecropping arrangements in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

Sharecropping (or a share contract) should be considered as both a land and labour arrangement. For landless labourers/farmers sharecropping is a way to access land, while for farm-owners it is a way to access (cheap) labour. According to Ghana Statistical Service (2020) almost 18% of ownership of land is mainly through sharecropping.

Sharecropping as a land tenure arrangement occurs in many variants and is rapidly changing with context- and location-specific variations. However, two generic types of arrangements occur in the literature – the 'abunu' under which a sharecropper can own half a farm she or he brings to maturity, or 50% of the yields, and 'abusa' under which one-third of a yield of an established or managed farm is often received (Gyasi, 1994; Amanor, 2008; Ruf, 2010; Grega et al., 2015; Roth et al., 2017; Baah & Kidido, 2020). The 'abunu' system acted as a pathway to landownership through which particularly landless (women, youth and migrants) can access land (Boni, 2006; Grega et al., 2015; Asamoah & Owusu-Ansah, 2017; Addaney et al., 2022; Roth et al., 2017; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023).

In Ghana, these arrangements emerged in the 1940s and 1950s. Historically, the 'abusa' system is said to have been the trend, but with emerging land shortages however, the 'abunu' system was introduced and currently prevails in the tree-crop sector (Baah & Kidido, 2020).

In Côte d'Ivoire, 'abunu' contracts emerged later than in Ghana. In Côte d'Ivoire, the 'abunu' contract is sometimes referred to as 'Partager-Travailler' (Work-and-Share) or 'Planter-Partager' (Plant-and-Share). Bymolt et al (2018) illustrate that 'abunu' is often an informal arrangement, agreed upon verbally before a witness and may not be extensive in detail. In some cases there may be misunderstandings or disputes during the course of the contract period which may need to be renegotiated.

¹⁴ In a study in 2017 of all seven cocoa-growing regions in Ghana, over 25% of farmers were revealed to have obtained their farms through sharecropping (n = 1761) (Asamoah & Owusu-Ansah, 2017). A recent smaller study in Ghana also found that most cocoa farms (45 %) were acquired through sharecropping (n =100) (Addaney et al., 2023).

As a labour tenure arrangement, sharecropping is regarded as a significant type of labour after family labour (Abenyega & Goockowski, 2001; Boni, 2006). Sharecroppers were known to have been instrumental sources of labour in the expansion of cocoa and oil palm frontiers from the 1920s, establishing or managing established farms (Gyasi, 1994; Amanor, 2008). Sharecropping remains an integral system in Ghana’s cocoa sector as a dominant source of labour even now (Abenyega & Goockowski, 2001; Amfo et al., 2021).

Sharecropping is often discussed in the context of migration (e.g. Casely-Hayford, 2004; Abdul-Korah, 2006); migrants tend to be overrepresented in sharecropper populations (Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018). Migration and cocoa production are historically interlinked (Amfo et al, 2021; Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018). Several studies show migration patterns into cocoa producing regions, incentivized by the promise of land and jobs, and how this had an impact on deforestation and the labour market. Both in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana most migrants are national migrants.

Table 3 shows how recent research has been more deliberate in including data from (or about) groups of farmers and workers that have been so far invisible.

Table 3 Available data of usually underrepresented or invisible groups for data sets A,B,C

Full sample ¹⁵	A (Ghana)	A (Cdi)	B (Ghana)	C (Cdi)
% of farm/land owners	86%	98%	67%	98%
% of farmers involved in sharecropping	36%	4%	33%	38%
% Abunu	86%	50%	80%	No data
% Abusa	14%	50%	20%	No data
% Sharecropping in	No data	No data	No data	5%
% Sharecropping out	No data	No data	33%	33%
% of female respondents (usually female household heads)	15%	4%	15%	8%
% of youth (< or = 35 years)	13,5%	21,5%	11%	14%
% of migrants (born in another community/region/country they currently live)	25%	17%	48%	No data

Although Table 3 suggests a relatively high involvement of sharecroppers in company programs, only in one of the studies (Reference C – Côte d’Ivoire) a clear distinction was made between ‘Sharecropping in’ and ‘Sharecropping out’ (Box 1). For data set C, 5% of the respondents were ‘Sharecropping in’, while 33% were ‘Sharecropping out’. For dataset B it was reported that 33% of the respondents were ‘Sharecropping in’.

The above data suggests that many farmers work under mixed arrangements (owning some land and sharecropping in at the same time). Although Dataset A and B did also collect data on the type of sharecropping arrangements (Abunu or Abusa), they did not further explore the details of

¹⁵ For reference A, instead of the full sample we only included data from cocoa households (who depend on cocoa for most of their income) For Ghana, n = 1318, for Côte d’Ivoire, n = 910.

arrangement, for example, if the arrangement involved an established farm or a new farm. The data also did not reveal what the exact division was of the yield and/or land, how costs and risks were shared, and how on-farm decisions were made. Furthermore, table 3 suggests that quite a big share of respondents is not born in the same region (or community) where they currently live and farm. This suggests that the link between migration and cocoa production is still evident. Migrants are known to be involved more often in sharecropping and caretaking arrangements.

Other take aways from the reviewed data sets:

- Female-headed households, youth and sharecroppers are unique groups and together comprise a significant part of the total cocoa farming populations.
- Female-headed households are among the most vulnerable households, with the largest living income gaps. Female-headed households have on average smaller plots of land, lower productivity levels and higher production costs. Female-headed households are usually single-headed households and depend highly on cocoa production for their income.
- Youth tend to produce higher yields, but have smaller pieces of land. Although they can be seen as high potential and tend to have more agency, they are among the poorest households.
- It is common for farm owners to have a sharecropper arrangement with labourers, particularly for (older) female farmers.

The next section of this chapter reflects on the mobility of farmers and workers and possible implications.

Mobility of cocoa farmers and workers

In trying to understand different groups of farmers it is important to avoid “boxing” farmers, as their current status is likely to change over time. Moreover, a transfer in farm-ownership, or change of arrangement, might result in opting out of a sustainability program or cooperative, and/or in deciding to sell their cocoa to another buyer.

In this section we share what is already known about who leaves, who stays and who enters cocoa production, and what are possible underlying reasons.

It is assumed that farmers who leave cocoa, generally do so because of their age, lack of physical strength, sickness or death. However, whether this means that they ‘only’ stop working on the farm and whether they actually transfer their cocoa farm (e.g. sell to others) is not clear. Some farmers might choose to keep their property, while outsourcing the work. In case cocoa farms are being sold, it is likely that cocoa production continues as farmers generally do not own the trees. However, in case the cocoa farm is sold to illegal mining companies, the trees and farm will be destroyed. Particularly in Ghana, Galamsey mining is a severe problem, which affect cocoa production levels and the environment. Another reason why cocoa farmers might opt out of cocoa is that their farms are being affected by climate change and diseases (such as the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease). Over the recent years there has been a sharp decrease in cocoa production, which resulted recently in a sharp increase in prices.¹⁶

Box 4 Land ownership and tree ownership¹⁷

¹⁶ Due to the existing regulating market systems, farmers do not immediately benefit from this price increase.

¹⁷ All naturally occurring trees are owned by the national government, including trees that grow on private land.

In Ghana, land ownership and tree ownership are separate. In a recent study, Tropenbos International et al. (2023) showed that in recent years, a policy was developed in Ghana that allows farmers to register trees on their land in order to claim ownership of them. However, this posed a number of challenges, including a costly regulatory burden. Also in Côte d'Ivoire a law (2014) was introduced that conferred ownership of the tree to the owner of the field, although trees had not belonged to farmers for decades. However, since only a few farmers have land title the situation remains unchanged for many of them.

Several studies suggest that the current generation of farmers aspire a different future for their children; children themselves also usually have other aspirations (e.g. Ataa-Asantewaa 2023). Eventually, this could mean an outflow of a generation of cocoa farmers. There are also farmers and workers who have the ambition to stay in cocoa only temporarily (and for example use the money they make to invest in another business). Lastly, there are seasonal workers, who annually flow in and out of cocoa, according to the seasonal calendar.

There are also newcomers into cocoa, who are usually relatively younger farmers or workers. We distinguish five groups of entrants:

1. (young) Professionals in the city, especially those working in the agricultural sector, who invest in cocoa farms since they recognize their business potential. But they manage them from a distance, without leaving their day “jobs” (Heck and Laven, 2016).¹⁸
2. Young, often single male, entrepreneurial farmers who seek a career into cocoa. They often also work (or start) as farm labourers, or go into land tenure arrangements, to gain experience and save for their next investment (Heck and Laven, 2016; Habraken et al. 2022).
3. Young farmers, for whom cocoa is considered as *last resort*: children of cocoa farming families who inherited a plot of cocoa land and who perceive little opportunity to engage in alternative livelihoods, due to a lack of education, employment opportunities and role models.
4. Workers, often (male children of) migrants, who provide labour as sharecroppers, caretakers, seasonal labour or in labour gangs. Kissi and Herzig (2023) suggest that migrant labourers often aspire to own their own farms, while non-migrant labourers see cocoa farming as a means of income accumulation to venture into non-farm occupations.
5. Entrant- temporary farmers looking for money to move to other investments.

The size and exact profiles of these different groups of farmers and workers moving in and out of cocoa are not yet well documented and understood.

¹⁸

<https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ideation-of-SME-Services-in-Cocoa-Growing-Communities-in-Ghana.pdf>

Part II - Case study

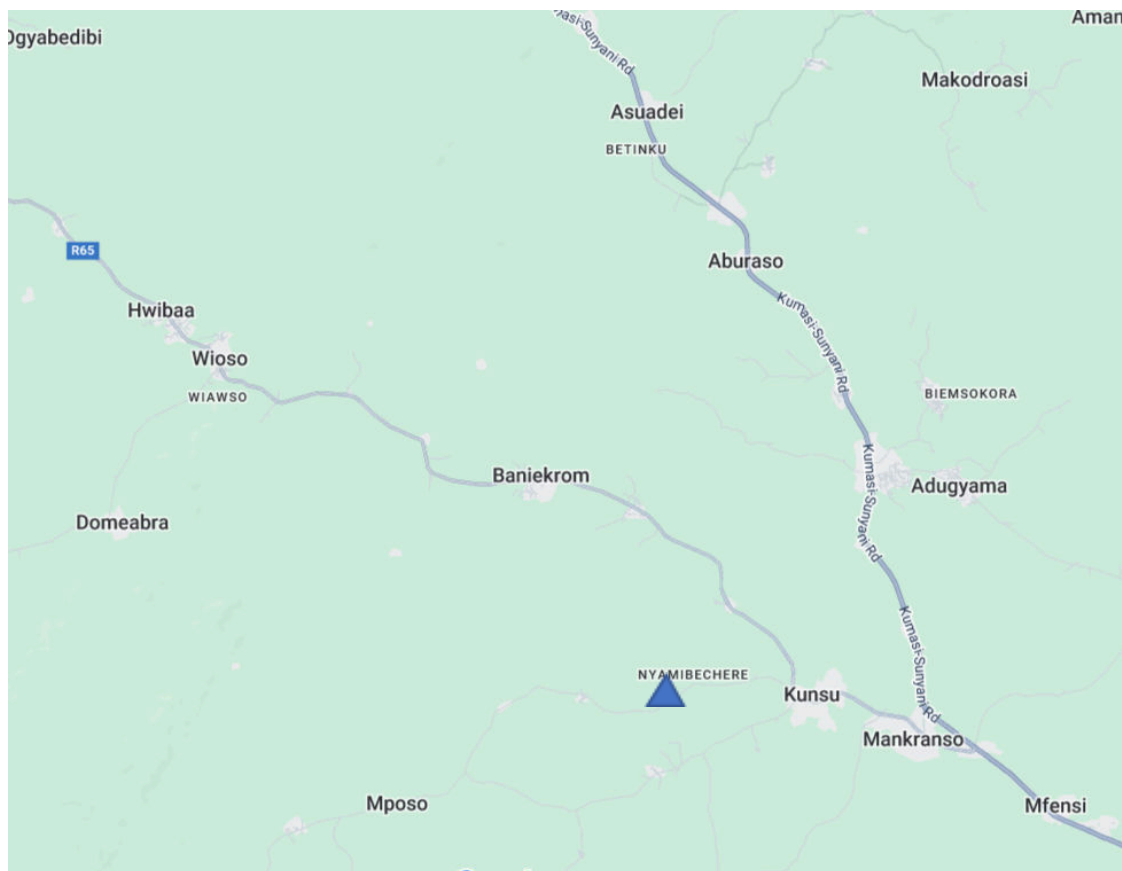
Invisible farmers in Nyamebekeyre, Ghana

In this section, we summarize the results of field research to validate our preliminary findings from the literature. This single case study was conducted at Nyamebekeyre¹⁹ in the Ahafo Ano South-West District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana (*Nyamebechere*, Map 1) with the aim to identify potential “invisible farmers”, their current situation and their aspirations following three key research questions:

1. Who is involved in cocoa production? What is their role? Are they recognized as cocoa farmers?
2. To what extent do different types of farmers and workers have access to resources, services, and sustainability programs?
3. What are their aspirations? Do they intend to stay in cocoa, and in what role?

The eight-day fieldwork (15-22 December 2023) used random sampling of households involved in cocoa production. Cocoa purchasing clerks (PCs) and cocoa households living in hamlets were purposefully sampled for the study as their involvement required extra effort to reach them.

Map 1 Fieldwork location: Nyamebekeyre



¹⁹ Nyamebekeyre is a community with about 2000 inhabitants mainly involved in cocoa and food crop farming. Farmers mostly produce plantains under the forest regeneration program called the modified *taungya* system under which farmers’ plant trees and food crops. Nyamebekeyre was selected based on its accessibility.

Table 4 gives a breakdown of the respondents involved, according to their role.

Table 4 Breakdown of respondents in the case study

Sample	Number in sample (n)	Percent in sample (%)	Males (%)	Females (%)	Households heads (%)
Farming households	63	88%	71%	29%	73%
Labourers	3	4%	67%	33%	-
Purchasing clerks	6	8%	100%	-	100%
Total Sample	72	100%	74%	26%	69%

Findings

We organize our findings around the three main research questions:

1. Who are involved in cocoa production? How are they involved? Are they recognized?

As pointed out in Part I of this scoping study, usually narrow definitions are used for identifying cocoa farmers, whereby a distinction is made between farm-owners and “sharecroppers,” “landless farmers”, or “labourers” (see Amfo et al., 2021, 2022; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023). Our case study shows that we can distinguish different types of farm-owners, based on their level of involvement in farm establishment and farm management. In addition, we see a clear difference between sharecroppers, caretakers and labourers, both in the way they are involved in cocoa farming, the benefits they receive and in terms of their “visibility”. Below we elaborate on the different types we encountered. Box 5 explains more in-depth the dynamics of land/labour arrangements in Nyamebekyere.

Different types of farm-owners:

- **Active farm owners** who established cocoa farm themselves, including former sharecroppers who received part of the farms they established. These farm-owners have autonomy over their farm and manage the farm. They are actively involved in cocoa production, together with their family, hired labour, or both. Most of the farm owners were males and many of them were migrants, who had been in the community for an average of 24 years.
- **Non-active farm owners** who own the farm but did not play an active role in their establishment, nor in their management. In the case study, this group obtained land which they handed over to sharecroppers under an “abunu” arrangement. After dividing the established farm into two, they entered an agreement with a caretaker to manage the cocoa farm for them. These *non-active farmers* found in our study were all Ashanti and were primarily females of 50+ years. Although many had been living in the community for many years, only one (out of 5) was born in the community.
- **Absentee farm owners** are farm owners who have relinquished the management of their cocoa farms to a caretaker. In our study 60% of the absentee farm owners were men. Most of them have left the farming community. Those who have stayed in the community are no longer involved in cocoa farming. Though absent, they still have complete control over the farm, buyers, the inputs, and the cocoa is sold under his/her name. The caretaker is

responsible for all the farm work, and in return they receive one-third of the yield, while the owner takes two-third (“abusa” arrangement). Absentee farm owners were all migrants from the Bono region and had lived in the community for an average of 18 years; none of them was born in the community.

In our case study, landless farmers can be divided in three main groups, although the details of the arrangement depend usually on the owner:²⁰

- **Sharecroppers** were identified as farmers who are establishing cocoa farms under agreement with landowners for part of the land/farm or the yield (“abunu arrangement”).²¹ In our case study, these included landowners who had not shared the land/farm with the sharecropper yet, even though the farm was already established. In anticipation of activating the “abunu” arrangement, which would turn the sharecropper into a farm-owner (obtaining half of the farm), they operated under an “abusa” yield arrangement where the sharecropper takes two-thirds of the yield and the landowner one-third. The sharecropper who has established the farm, has full autonomy over the farm, continues to provide labour and inputs, and can sell the yield under his/her name. In our sample, the majority of sharecroppers were males and migrants who had lived in the community for an average of 25 years, of which 43% were born in the community. Originally, they were coming from the Bono and Northern Regions.
- **Caretakers** were identified as farmers managing an already established farm under an “abusa” arrangement. The main differences with sharecroppers are: 1) caretakers come in to provide labour when the farm has already started fruiting; 2) caretakers only receive one-third of the yields in return for their labour; 3) Despite now being responsible for all the farm activities, they cannot sell the produce under their name. Interviews with caretakers revealed that in case a caretaker sells under his/her name to a licensed buying company of his/her choice, this might be considered stealing. In our sample, caretakers were mostly males, who often migrated (relatively recently) from northern communities.

“I cannot buy the cocoa from a caretaker, but I can buy from a sharecropper. The farm owner has to designate me to buy or send someone with the caretaker before I can buy” (PC, Nyonkopa).

“I sell to him [PC] because he is the one the farm owner asked me to sell to. I cannot sell it to any other PC; they will not buy from me. They will accuse me of stealing if I sell to anyone other than whom the farm owner selected. I will not have sold to that PC, but I have no autonomy over the cocoa I produce though one-third belongs to me” (caretaker).

- **Farmers with mixed arrangements** manage (or provide labour on) more than one cocoa farm. In our sample, the majority of farm-owners became an owner of a farm through sharecropping, but some also bought an already established farm. Some combined caretaking with sharecropping, with the aim to become future farm-owners. There were also farm owners who were into caretaking and owners who owned one plot but were sharecroppers on another plot. Farmers involved in mixed arrangements were mostly males, half of them northerners. Around one-third was born in the community.

²⁰ In this case study we did not dive deeper in family labour and land arrangements, which can be considered as a limitation.

²¹ Sharecropping is a dynamic arrangement in Ghana with context, and even household specific variations (see Box 5). What is reported here is the variation that was found in the study community.

- **Long-term labourers** usually have a one-year contract with the farm-owner. This arrangement involves one large-sum payment, accommodation, food and safety. Usually, the labourer lives with the farm owner's family. In our case study there were five cases where farm-owners indicated to be involved in such an arrangement.
- **Day-labourers** are paid at the end of the day, after a 5-6 hour workday, generally from 8 am to 1 pm.²² Aside from payment, the one who hires the labourer has no other responsibility towards the by-day labourer. We found that day labourers were young individuals, all senior high school students, who had come to earn some income during the school holidays. All had their parents farming cocoa in the community and also had to provide family labour to their families. These day labourers preferred their arrangement over a longer-term arrangement or becoming involved as caretaker, as arrangements per day gives them more flexibility to combine work with school or vocational training. None of the day labourers were born in the community (they had migrated with their parents who were farmers). They lived for an average of 9 years in the community.

Box 5 Dynamics of sharecropping and caretaking at Nyamebekyere

The sharecropping arrangement in Nyamebekyere involves sharing the land/farm at the end of farm establishment under “abunu” arrangement where the farm is divided into two and each party takes half. The process involves a sharecropper who comes to the community to look for land for cocoa farming. After he/she found a suitable land, he/she approaches the landowner to talk about the conditions. The conditions involve a payment of money called “nsa sika” or “amantem sika”. The amount of money is based on the relation with the land owner (e.g. relatives might pay less) and the availability of cocoa land in the community. Some charge as low as GHC 500 (USD 36.65) for 5 acres of land, while others charge up to GHC 2000 (USD 146.63) for the same acres of land. The payment is often used to seal this informal transaction. Aside from the payment, the sharecropper is also given a period for turning the land into a cocoa farm. This period ranges from 5-7 years regardless of the land size. This is considered a grace period where the sharecropper takes all the produce from the land. After this period, the landowner decides how the cocoa yield and land is divided. If all the land has not been turned into cocoa yet, whatever cocoa yield is shared in an “abusa” arrangement where the landowner takes one part, and the sharecropper takes two parts. After the cocoa farm has been completed the farm is divided into two under “abunu” arrangement. In this case, the sharecropper becomes a farm owner who has autonomy over their own share of the land. So, in this community the “abusa” arrangement changes into an “abunu” arrangement.

In Nyamebekyere we also found cases whereby farm-owners hire caretakers to manage an already established farm under an “abusa” arrangement, whereby the caretaker offers labour and the farm owner covers the input cost. In this case, the farm owner takes two-thirds of the yield while the caretaker receives one-third of the yield in return for their labour. Besides work on the cocoa farm, the caretaker is also expected to provide non-cocoa labour, which is called “Nnaho”. “Nnaho” can range from two weeks to about one month of free labour to the farm owner. The caretaking arrangement involves paying a down payment “amantem sika” which can range from as low as GHC 50 (USD 3.67) to 1000 (USD 73.31), independent of the size of the farm.

Depending on the relations between the caretaker and the farm owner and the conditions of the farm, caretaking can also be done under an “abunu” arrangement.

²²The current rate is GHC 50/day (USD 3.67) , and the price review rests with the labourers, who often increase the price whenever the government increases cocoa prices. *Ghana cedi to dollar exchange rate as of Friday 29 Mach 2024*. See <https://www.remitly.com/nl/en/ghana>.

Our case study shows that in Nyamebekyere most farms were obtained through sharecropping (Table 5). This confirms the importance of sharecropping in cocoa production that has been pointed out in recent studies (e.g. IMANI 2024; Addaney et al., 2023; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023). Interestingly, although many of the sharecroppers were migrants, in search of cocoa land, all of them owned some family land in their hometowns (often for food production).

“I have plenty of land in Drobo, but it is a family land unsuitable for cocoa. Just last year, I started growing cashews on my part as we found the land to be suitable for it. When I pass on, the land will belong to the extended family and not my children” (Absentee farmer)

“We have lands in Tatale; they are vast but not enough for all the family members. I have a share, but the grains I can produce from them cannot sustain my family. That is why I left to other family members and came here to look for a caretaking job” (Caretaker)

“I still have a food crop farm in my hometown. Every farming season, I go to make a food crop farm because we go back often for funerals and other family engagements, and we must eat when we go back.”

Table 5 How farmer respondent obtained their farm/land²³

How to farm/land obtained for farming	Number of farmers (n)	Percentage of farmers in the sample (%)
Farm through sharecropping	61	92%
Farming own land	3	5%
Farming bought land	2	3%

The next table (Table 6) summarizes the different types of farmers and their features. What stands out are the gender and age differences between the groups we identified. Males are over represented in every category, except for the non-active farm-owners. Absentee farmers seem to be relatively old, while caretakers and sharecroppers are relatively young (see also Amfo et al., 2021; Addaney et al., 2022; Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023). Furthermore, the differences in origin are remarkable, suggesting that Nyamebekyere is a migrant community with an over representation of northerners in caretaking and day labour arrangements. Interestingly, in this case study, the majority of the farmers considered themselves migrants, even among those who were born and raised in the community:

“I was born here, but we are from Wioso. My parents came here around 1959 to make a cocoa farm. I am the chief of this community now, but I cannot be buried here when I die. My parents are from Wioso, where I will be buried” (Chief of Nyambekyere).

“I was born here; my parents are from Tatale and came here to work as cocoa caretakers. My parents have passed on, and I go to Tatale, but I do not feel comfortable there... We have land there for farming, but I prefer here, “baabi ani ha” (this is also a place to live). This is my home now” (cocoa caretaker).

²³ We acknowledge that our sample may have been biased in that all the interviewees referred to themselves as migrants. However, as explained earlier, there is the possibility that previous studies have been too generalized over origins and sources of cocoa farms. This study made the conscious effort to look into migration, source of the cocoa farm, and how the farmers identify their origins.

Most of the community's inhabitants were the Bono people (From the 3 Bono regions of Ghana-Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo) and Northern people (from the 5 Northern regions of Ghana).²⁴ There is a clear distinction between these two dominant tribes: the Bono people are mostly sharecroppers, most of whom have become farm owners through the farm/land sharing “abunu” system, while the majority of persons from Northern Ghana were caretakers and farm labourers. The community owners were the Ashanti, who owned the land in the community.

Table 6 Demographics²⁵

Type of farmers/labour	Gender (M/F) (%)	Avg age (years) (min-max)	Avg household size (persons) (min-max)	Origin	Avg years in community (min-max)
Sharecroppers (n=7)	80% males	43 (30-63)	9 (4-23)	50% Bono, 40% Northerners	25 (11-48)
Caretakers (n=14)	78% males	40 (25-56)	5 (1-9)	71% Northerners	11 (1-43)
Farm owners (n=17)	65% males	48 (32-79)	6 (1-11)	59% Bono, Northerners, 18% Ashanti	24 (12-58)
Non-active farm owners (n=5)	20 % males	58 (51-65)	4 (2-6)	100% Ashanti	36 (8-58)
Farmers with mixed cocoa arrangements (n =14)	85% males	42 (21-58)	7 (3-23)	50% Northerners, 29% Bono	27 (2-54)
Absentee farm owners (n=6)	60% males	69 (58-75)	5 (1-9)	100 % Bono	18 (14-21)
By day labourer (3)	67% males	25 (18-28)	5 (5-6)	67% Northerners	9 (7-12)

Table 7 looks in more detail into gender, age and ethnicity differences. In Part I, we pointed out that youth²⁶ and female farmers tend to be less visible and recognized for their contributions to cocoa production. In our sample, the majority of youth were caretakers, which shows their relatively recent entry into the cocoa sector. Others were farmers with mixed cocoa arrangement, by-day labourers,

²⁴ The Bono people mostly came from the Berekum and Drobo areas. The Northerners mostly came from the Northern, Northeast, Upper West, and Savannah regions of Northern Ghana and mostly belonged to the Dagaaba, Bassari, Gurma (Gruma), and Busanga (Bissa) tribes.

²⁵ It should be noted that by-day labour and labourers are different in terms of duration of contract. Though we did not interview any labourers, some of the respondents mentioned having used labourers in establishing their farms and some still had labourers helping with their farms. In our sample we only have three by day labourers, and labourers identified refused to partake in the study, which of course makes it not possible to draw any conclusions.

²⁶ In the context of Ghana, youth is often defined as young people up to 35 years old (Heck and Laven, 2022).

and sharecroppers showing their ability to use their labour to get money or a farm from sharecropping.

Interestingly, the majority of the youth did self-identify as heads of their households. This is because they were young migrants in new communities without their extended family and have had to lead their own households.

Women were underrepresented in our sample. Among the female farmers we identified, many started as sharecropper and are currently owners (n=19). The women in our sample are relatively older and the majority had not received any formal education, which is confirmed in a number of studies (e.g. different authors in Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018). The finding that most women obtained their farm through sharecropping is unexpected.²⁷ Although, we did find a recent study that confirms that women mainly obtain their farms through sharecropping (Addaney et al., 2022), the dominant narrative is that women are often not involved in sharecropping as landowners/farm owners discriminate against women, and hence many women get their farms through inheritance (Ataa-Asantewaa, 2023; Bymolt, Laven and Tyszler, 2018).

Table 7 Demographic among youth and women cocoa farmers in Nyambekyere

Famers by gender/Youth	Average age	% Education level	Avg household size	% Household heads	Type of farmer/labour
Male	43 (18-79)	None 20%; Primary 23%; J.H.S 34%; S.H.S 21%; Tertiary 2%	6(1-23)	79% heads of household	by day labour 4%; caretakers 23%; mixed arrangements 30%; owners 30% (88% by sharecropping); sharecroppers 13%
Female	52 (28-75)	None 53%; Primary 16%; J.H.S 31%	5(2-12)	47% heads of household	by day labour 5%; caretakers 9%; mixed arrangements 21%; owners 53% (60% by sharecropping); sharecroppers 12%
Youth	28(18-35)	None 11%; Primary 18%; J.H.S 42%; S.H.S 29%	4(1-9)	51% heads of household	by day labour 17%, 45% caretakers mixed arrangements 18%; owners 8% (90% by sharecropping); sharecroppers 12%

²⁷ We recognize that this unexpected result can be explained by our light literature review, prioritizing recent studies. For a more comprehensive understanding of family arrangements we recommend a more thorough literature review.

2. To what extent do different types of farmers and workers have access to resources, services, sustainability programs?

In terms of access to labour, the case study shows how both land owners, sharecroppers and even caretakers access additional labour for the production of cocoa, either via family labour, hired labour or labour groups (in which they sometimes themselves participate). For the establishment of a cocoa farm, often additional labour is hired (for land clearing and preparation), while family labour is used primarily for planting and weeding. One of the critical moments when farmers make use of hired labourers is for the application of agrochemicals, particularly the spraying of pesticides and fungicides. Usually, farm owners, sharecroppers, and caretakers prefer to delegate this type of work because it requires much labour and is also considered harmful to their health. While it seems complicated enough, most sharecroppers and caretakers sell their labour to multiple cocoa farming households.

“I hire labour particularly for spraying because it is not easy for one person to do. I do the weeding, pruning, harvesting, and drying myself. My wife and children gather the pods during harvesting. For breaking the pods, I use the labour group; they do not charge me money because I am part of the group” (caretaker)

“ I hire casual labour to please help me clear and prepare. I do the rest with my wife and children. My wife mostly does the planting of all the food crops but also helps me with planting the cocoa seeds at stake” (sharecropper)

“ I did the farm with my husband and children. We also hired labour for land clearing and preparation. A labourer stayed with us for one year, helping make the farm. Now that my husband has passed, I hire labour for weeding, pruning, harvesting and spraying. I then do the rest myself. This, for me, is cheaper than giving one-third of my yield to a caretaker” (farm owner).

In terms of access to inputs, mostly the sharecropper or the farm owner is required to buy the farm inputs from their share of the farm income. Caretakers usually do not buy any inputs, and depend on the farm-owner to make such farm investments. Interviews with caretakers suggest that although there is a direct relationship between yields and the income they receive they see it as the responsibility of the farm owner to provide inputs.

Table 8 shows how different groups of farmers and workers participate in trainings, programs and groups. What this shows is that caretakers, while being responsible for carrying out the farm activities, they are often: a) not part of the training and therefore less equipped to implement good practices; and/or b) they are not always interested to participate in the training as they don't receive sufficient benefit. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the use of mobile money services (for premiums and cocoa sales) affects the likelihood that caretakers receive a share of premiums, which might disincentivise caretakers to invest in sustainable practices even further.

Table 8 also shows how most sustainability (or traceability) programs in the cocoa sector target mainly farm owners and sharecroppers on already established farms (who sell cocoa under their names). These farmers form the company's direct supply chain (Box 2). The case study also shows that farm owners do not always participate in programs, group activities or training. For instance, only 20% of the non-active farm owners and 33% of the absentee farmers engaged in the company's training over the last five years, only 17% of absentee farmers participates in a company's program.

None of the owners allowed their caretakers to join farmer groups. This puts caretakers (who do not have the autonomy to sell cocoa under their names) in a disadvantaged position.

“The program does not cover you if you have no cocoa to sell to us. You are not part of the program if the cocoa is not sold in your name. We only gave the cocoa seedlings and shade trees to farmers with their names with me” (PC).

“.. Unless my farm owner directs, I cannot even attend a training. It is unfair because though my farm owner spent eight years making the farm, I have now also been working on this farm for the past seven years and counting while he is not even farming and yet I am not considered worthy to get the training needed to maintain his farm properly that is very unfair madam [referring to the interviewer]” (Caretaker)

“The PC gives premium, so my farm owner asked me to sell [Nyonkopa PC] to him. I take the cocoa to him because I can be arrested for stealing if I sell to any other PC. However, I do not attend their programs or training because it wastes my time. When they give the premium, the PC sends it directly by mobile money to my farm owner, and I do not receive a cent” (caretaker)

Table 8 Farmers recognition and access services and sustainability programs

Type of farmers/labourer	% with passbook	% Register with the buyer	Number of buyers registered with	% In buyer program	% in cooperative/group	% received training in last five years
Sharecroppers (n=7)	71%	71%	1 (1-2)	60%	71%	71%
Caretakers (n=14)	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	0.1%
Farm owners (n=17)	53%	100%	2 (1-3)	70%	88%	71%
Not active farm owners (n=5)	60%	100%	2 (1-2)	0%	60%	20%
Farmers with mixed cocoa arrangements (n =14)	43%	93%	2(0-4)	43%	71%	71%
Absentee farmers (n=6)	50%	100%	2 (2-3)	17%	50%	33%
By day labour (n=3)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

In Part I, we discussed how not reaching a large part of the cocoa farming population with sustainability programs and services is likely to affect the adoption levels of recommended practices

and limit the effectiveness of services and programs. It might also contribute to the high turnover of farmers in sustainability programs.

Our case study did come across the common practice of farmers to sell to multiple buyers (Table 8). For PCs this is a reason to be selective in who they register. For PCs, only those farmers who sold consistently to them over many years were considered as “their farmers”, while the records of irregular farmers are merely recorded for payments. Table 9 illustrates that most PCs classify substantial portions of their client farmers as unregistered. All the PCs interviewed referred to unregistered cocoa farmers as “prostitute farmers”. This category is not to be considered as serious farmers, according to the PCs.

“I have many farmers leave the program [sustainability]; I used to have three storage units but now only have two. Cocoa farmers are like prostitutes; their main reason is money... loans in the cocoa off-season if you cannot give them, and they take their cocoa to other PCs, hoping they will give those loans. Some prefer to sell to more PCs, so whatever is offered, they get more of it” (PC)

“It is very difficult dealing with cocoa farmers, this season you have 100 farmers, the next season you have 80 even with new farmers coming in. Even if you give them gold, they will still sell to other PCs beside you.” (PC).

Farmers, on the other hand, see selling to many buyers as a coping mechanism, whereby selling to multiple buyers is a means to expand their support base. This support base is mostly used in the cocoa off-season to access loans. With a connection to many PCs, farmers believe their chances of securing a loan from any of them are increased. This may explain why many farmers move in and out of sustainability programs with different buyers in the same community.

“I sell to PBCs, Nyonkopa, and Amarjaro PCs. One I give to because we are from the same church but I sell to more PCs so I can at least get a loan from one when I need it in the cocoa off-season. If all three gives me, then I will have more.” (Farm owner)

“One should never sell to only one company. What will I do if I need a loan and that PC does not have money? If there are many, at least I can get a loan from one of them. Also, some pay premiums and others do not. PBC does not pay premiums, but the PC gives inputs on credit so I can get input for my farm.” (Sharecropper)

Table 9 Recognition of farmers in PCs supply chain

LBC	Registered farmers (main farmers)	Unregistered farmers	Programs	% of leading farmers in the program
Nyonkopa	80	20	Traceability, VSLA	50%
PBC	113	50	None	
Agroecom	35	15	Sustainability	60%
Adikanfo	10	15	None	

3. What are their aspirations? Do they intend to stay in cocoa, and in what role?

Demystifying the cocoa sector study showed how in 2018 cocoa farming was one of the best livelihood options in rural Ghana (Bymolt, Laven, Tyszler, 2018). Although this might still be the case we see that recent challenges affect cocoa production, which might push more people out of the sector.

Our case study shows a difference in aspiration between farm-owners, sharecroppers and caretakers. Most farm-owners and sharecroppers see cocoa farming as a stepping stone to more profitable non-farm activities. However, caretakers aspire more from cocoa and are often more dependent on cocoa than others. Cocoa farmers' livelihood trajectories or pathways perspective determine their current and future livelihoods and will shape the future of cocoa farming.

This study identified at least three pathways into cocoa farming among farm owners, sharecroppers, and caretakers. Most farm owners and sharecroppers had transitioned from food crop farming to cocoa farming (Figure 1), whereby sharecroppers usually were involved in food crop farming in their hometowns before migrating to cocoa growing communities. The main reason to shift from food to cocoa production is the higher returns from cocoa, even if the yield is divided.

"I was into food crop farming, and I chose cocoa because it is the most expensive crop in Ghana. It is also a property I can leave to my children" (a sharecropper who has become a farm owner)

"We chose cocoa because we were searching for a better livelihood. We were into food crop farming, but it was difficult for us. Also, the land belongs to the whole family, and we cannot use it for cocoa, but now, we have our cocoa farm that we can leave to our children. We can now support our children better; two of my children are in S.H.S and I can pay their fees" (farm owner)

"We have land in my hometown, but it is only suitable for grains and cereals. Even if I harvest much millet, it cannot support my family for three months, but the money from caretaking can do that. I also have a lot of opportunities here; I can sell my labour to other farmers when I need money; in the north, I cannot do that" (Caretaker)

It is interesting to note that farm-owners prefer to outsource the work to caretakers and by day labour once the farm is established. This suggests that their ambition is not primarily optimizing their yields and income from cocoa, but rather they value a cocoa farm as an asset which they can pass on to their children. This is why farm-owners would usually not sell their cocoa farm (even if the trees are very old) unless the farm has been put forward as a collateral for loans.²⁸ In this case study, few farm owners were willing to sell their farm in order to travel outside Ghana for greener pastures and were happy if "galamsey" operators will want to buy it. This is because galamsey operators pay more for the land than other buyers.²⁹

For sharecroppers, usually their ambition is to become farm-owners. Looking at our data, many of the farm-owners of today used to be sharecroppers, which shows that they have been successful and achieved their goal. However, the ambition does not stop here. Our data suggests that after having become a farm owner, many aspire to become "absentee farmers". For some this would allow them to return to their hometowns while for others this would make it possible to engage in non-farm

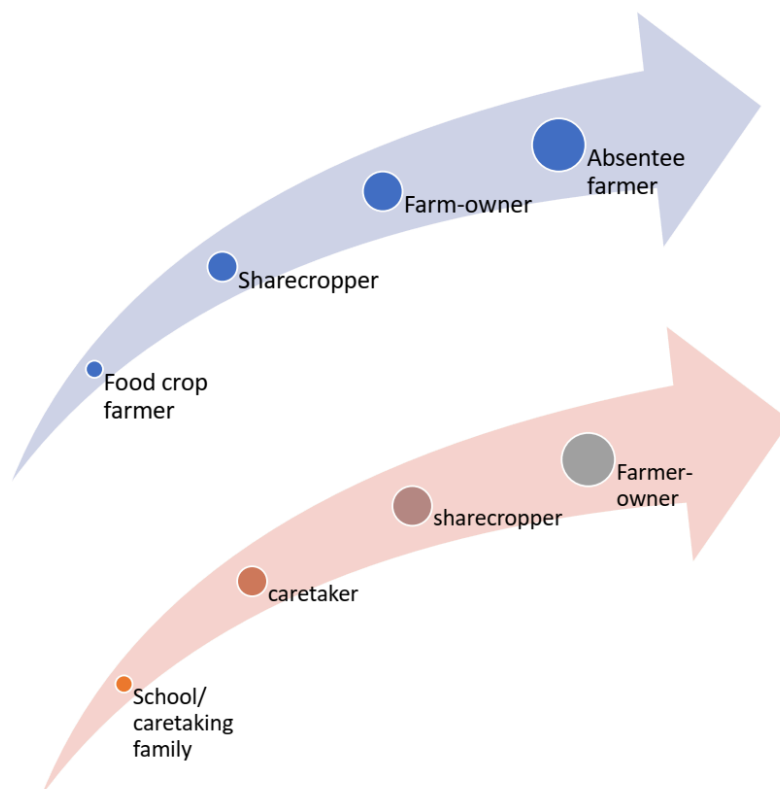
²⁸ This collateral called "awowa" in the cocoa sector is a case whereby the farmer loses the management of the farm for certain number of years to a creditor until the credit is paid off.

²⁹ Looking closer at the tension between illegal small-scale mining and cocoa farming is out of the scope of this study.

livelihood activities in nearby cities. Thus, sharecroppers are keen on owning land, but once the farm is established they might hire caretakers do to the work (and share the yields). Furthermore, they aim to educate their children for salary jobs and for their children to inherit the cocoa farm. When their children inherit the farm, it is likely that they do not work on the farm, but become “absentee farm-owners”.

For caretakers we see a different trajectory, they tend to see cocoa as their “lifeline”. As we have noted earlier, caretakers are usually younger males, who appear to have just finished basic (primary and Junior High School) or at most Senior High School (Table 7). Caretakers seem very dependent on cocoa and aspire to become cocoa farm owners mainly through sharecropping. Few were found engaged in caretaking and sharecropping at the same time. However, while there is evidence that some caretakers have indeed become farm owners through sharecropping, our findings suggest that for caretakers it will be quite challenging to become an owner. This is because caretakers take only one-third of the cocoa income and tend to find themselves in a survival-oriented livelihood.³⁰ Most caretakers will probably not achieve their goals without any external support.

Figure 1 Transitions among cocoa farm owners at Nyamebekyere



³⁰ Survival-oriented livelihood is a situation where all the income generated in the household is geared towards household basic needs and survival. It often not enough for savings and investment.

Conclusions, implications and recommendations

Conclusions

The majority of people that contribute to the cultivation of cocoa is currently not recognized by the cocoa sector, and does not benefit (automatically) from access to services and sustainability programs. In particular, the sector, including research, has a bias in outreach and data collection towards registered farmers (ie with a passbook or member of a cooperative), which contain relatively older male land owners. There has been a blind spot for contributions of other household members (women in male-headed households and adult children) and tenants (sharecroppers and caretakers), and for farmers that are not part of companies' direct supply chain.³¹

Consequently, the cocoa sector understands too little about the majority of people involved in cocoa production, from farm establishment, to farm management and providing farm labor.

Recent studies have more deliberately collected data on cocoa farming populations that are usually underrepresented in data sets: female-headed households, youth and sharecroppers. These studies show that female-headed households and youth-headed households usually belong to the households with the largest living income gaps. The big difference is that (at least some) youth can be seen as high potential (producing high yields and an entrepreneurial attitude) while female-headed households can be seen as most vulnerable (with smaller plots of land, low yields and less access to household labour). These studies also show that it is very common for farm owners to have a land/labour arrangement, particularly for (older) female farmers. The data shows that these underrepresented groups together comprise a significant part of the total cocoa farming populations. Their unique features require deliberate efforts to avoid the situation that these farmers cannot reach their full potential and are left behind. Another group that is usually overlooked are women in male-headed cocoa producing households. and while they usually contribute to the family farm, their efforts are generally undervalued.

One important knowledge gap is a lack of understanding of the details of (informal) land/labour arrangements and its implications for living income calculations, risks of human rights violations and deforestation. Better targeting of landless farmers requires a better understanding of land/labour arrangements and who are involved in them. A single case study in the Ashanti region of Ghana (Nyamekyere) sheds some light on this.

The case study shows that there are many different types of farmers, and most of them remain under the radar. In our case study we distinguish three types of farm-owners: active, non-active and absentee farm-owners. In addition, we differentiate between landless farmers: sharecroppers who establish a cocoa farm, sharecroppers who manage an established cocoa farm and caretakers who manage a cocoa farm. We also distinguish workers: by day labourers and long-term labourers. Our study illustrates how these different farmers and workers engage in different arrangements, whereby benefits, investments and risks are shared differently. The case study confirms that it is very common for cocoa farmers to engage in an arrangement with a sharecropper or young caretaker. This suggests an increasing pressure on arable land and land becoming (even) more fragmented in the future

The case study shows that *invisible farmers* comprise sharecroppers who are establishing new cocoa farms, caretakers and labourers. Most of them are (relatively) young male migrants. In addition,

³¹ Indirect supply refers to cocoa being sourced from intermediaries and do not know their identity, farm location(s) and volumes produced). In 2022, it was estimated that between 40% and 75% of the supply of cocoa to the key supply chain companies was supplied as indirect (Laven and Ataa-Asantewaa, 2024).

household members that also contribute to cocoa farming but that are not involved in selling the cocoa usually remain under the radar and are not targeted by training or other cocoa farm related services.

Among the invisible groups examined,³² caretakers seem the most vulnerable group and tend to find themselves in a survival modus. In addition, our findings suggest that long-term labourers are another vulnerable group, being highly dependent on farmers that hire them, in terms of payment, accommodation and food intake. The informality of land and labour arrangements puts tenants at risk.

Our case study indicates that it is common for farmers to sell to more than one buyer as a strategy to spread opportunities and risks. This is likely to contribute to the known high turnover of farmers in sustainability programs, as they seem to move in and out with different buyers. Our case study also shows how not all farmers access training or participate in programs. Particularly owners who are less involved in cocoa farming often choose not to participate in such activities. Also caretakers are either not invited or they are not interested. Some explained that they see little of the benefits of spending their time in such activities. This likely impacts the adoption of good agricultural practices and the effectiveness and impact of sustainability programs. It also suggests that programs are not always perceived as fundamental for farmers to improve their livelihoods. In the context of Ghana, procurement and access to financial services (e.g. loans of purchasers or premiums) is what incentivizes them most to sell to a particular buyer.

The groups we distinguished differ in involvement in cocoa farming and in aspirations. While caretakers intend to stay longer into cocoa and aspire to become an active farm-owner, farm owners and sharecroppers seem not interested to remain actively involved in cocoa. Although they aspire to access cocoa land as an asset that their children can inherit, they are not necessarily interested in cocoa farming as a profession and rather become an “absentee farmer”, outsourcing the work. Looking at the future of cocoa farming, this suggests that cocoa farming remains an important livelihood strategy and cocoa farms remain important assets, however cocoa related labour is likely to be increasingly outsourced. A consequence might be that land is not only becoming more fragmented, but also less productive. We observed that both absentee farmers and caretakers lack incentives to participate in farm-oriented services.

Implications for further policies

Raise awareness on the existence of large invisible groups in the cocoa supply chain

What is not measured is not managed. Datasets that are collected to support companies in their sustainability and procurement strategies usually only collect data from registered farmers that are in their direct supply chain. Usually, only these registered farmers participate in interviews and focus group discussions, which are either farm owners, or the ones selling cocoa. Without deliberate effort this means that other contributors remain invisible and will not be targeted with outreach activities, which reinforces existing inequalities.

This unawareness starts with the commonly used definitions of cocoa farmers, which tend to be narrow and rather exclusive.

³² Female spouses and adult children were not examined in this case study. Consequently, our finding that caretakers are the most vulnerable cannot be fully qualified.

Use a more inclusive definition of farmers and workers as the standard in policy, outreach and research

*Everyone who cultivates cocoa should be recognized as a farmer by the cocoa sector, irrespective of gender or landholding status.*³³ This inclusive definition has not yet become the standard, with the result that little has been documented about the invisible groups of farmers, and the conditions under which they contribute to cocoa production.

Recent segmentation studies shed some more light on cocoa farming populations that are usually underrepresented, such as female-headed households, youth and tenants.³⁴ Available data shows that underrepresented groups have unique features and do not automatically benefit from standardized programs.

Take deliberate efforts to reach invisible groups

Current data collection efforts and sustainability programs have had limited outreach. As a result there has been a bias towards farmers in the direct supply chain, and within that a focus on registered farmers (usually the relatively older male landowners and household heads). This deepens existing inequalities within households and communities and hinders innovation. This is problematic as it limits the effectiveness of programs and services.

Develop dedicated programs and approaches that respond to unique features of invisible farmers

Not everyone benefits from standardized programs. Available data suggests that invisible and underrepresented farmers are more likely to be subject to human rights violations and more likely to live in extreme poverty. On the other hand, invisible groups, such as migrant tenants, comprise motivated youth interested in a future career in cocoa. Their unique features require deliberate efforts and targeted programs to avoid the situation that these farmers cannot reach their full potential and are left behind.

The details and risks of informal land tenure arrangements need to be better understood and mechanisms need to be developed that protect tenants and their families from being exploited

A lot of the information on the workforce in cocoa is hidden, particularly because land and labour arrangements tend to be informal and not everyone is registered as a farmer. This makes it difficult to make accurate living income calculations and to assess and address potential human rights violations in cocoa, and exploitation in informal negotiations. Measures to formalize land and labour relations should be explored.

³³ [Cocoa for Generations - 2022 Annual Report 0.pdf](#)

³⁴ For example, [Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire by KIT](#) (2018), [KIT segmentation study for Nestlé](#) (2022), [Cocoa Household Income Study](#), developed by KIT and WUR, initiated by World Cocoa Foundation (2024).

Companies should map and formally include the invisible parts of their supply chains in their efforts to comply with the EU Corporate Due Diligence Directive and EU Deforestation Regulation to avoid exclusion of invisible farmers from accessing global markets.

Mitigating adverse human rights and environmental impacts in companies' supply chains does not stop at the level of registered farmers. Companies will need to capture their impact on invisible farmers that are part of their direct and indirect supply chain. This requires finding out who is part of the supply chain; investigating how these farmers might be affected by the legislation; and finding ways to mitigate the unintended adverse consequences of the legislation.

The existing gaps in registration, formal documentation and access to digital services should be recognized and addressed

Increasingly digital payment, savings and services are part of company programs and traceability efforts. To avoid that the bias towards registered farmers is deepened, it will be important to recognize existing gaps in mobile ownership, and lack of formal documentation or farmer identity cards among many of the invisible farmers. Without doing so, standardized programs, traceability efforts and digitalization might deepen existing inequalities and push out farmers further into informality.

Companies should develop responsive sustainability programs and procurement practices that reflect the diversity among farmers and their different interests

While many farmers are invisible for companies, often companies (particularly brands) are invisible for farmers. A more direct (and long-term) trading relationship and better communication lines allow for a more mutually beneficial economic exchange and better tailored farmer support.

Recommendations for further research

For sector-wide learning on the future generation of cocoa farmers we recommend to complement new data collection efforts with mixed methods research

This scoping study shows that the topic of invisible farmers has gained momentum, but there is still a lot that is unknown. Our single case study has revealed new insights and the level of complexity in terms of land/labour arrangements in one single community. To move from anecdotal evidence to robust evidence there is a need for larger scale (mixed methods) research, including more comprehensive literature review, that looks more at the (family) arrangements, aspirations and mobility of different types of cocoa farmers in different landscape in Ghana and in Côte d'Ivoire. This will contribute to a better understanding of the future generation of cocoa farmers and help to develop a more inclusive and sustainable sector.

Complement recent and ongoing data collection efforts aim to increase the sector's knowledge on invisible farmers

There are a number of studies in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire which have been rolled out in 2024, using the Cocoa Household Income Study (CHIS) methodology, developed by KIT and WUR and initiated by

World Cocoa Foundation.³⁵ In this methodology a more inclusive definition of cocoa farmers is used (see Part I)³⁶ and data will be collected by different parties among farmers that find themselves in direct and indirect supply chains, using a landscape approach. This data will become available in the public domain. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints these studies will not use mixed-methods and focus on statistical analysis.

Broaden the scope of research on invisible farmers and include family and household labour

This scoping study did not fully capture the role of women in male-headed households and family arrangements. For a comprehensive study on invisible farmers and workers we can build on different scholars, such as Amanor (201) and Dzanku and Tsikata (2022).³⁷

³⁵ See for more information

<https://worldcocoafoundation.org/programmes-and-initiatives/cocoa-household-income-study-methodology>

³⁶ This also results from the authors' engagement in CHIS and ongoing discussions with KIT and WUR on this topic.

³⁷ We are grateful to Anika Altaf and Dzodzi Tsikate for giving valuable comments and suggestions for further research.

References

- Abenyega, O., & Gokowski, J. , 2001. Labour practices in the cocoa sector of Ghana with special focus on the role of children. Findings of a 2001 survey of cocoa growing households. Institute of Renewable Natural Resources, (KNUST) Kumasi International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) with the assistance and collaboration of: International Labor Organization (ILO).
- Abdul-Korah, G.B., 2006. Where is not home? Dagaaba migrants in the Bono Ahafo Region 1980 to the present. *African Affairs*, 106/422, 71–94. doi:10.1093/afraf/adl023.
- Addaney, M., Akudugu, J.A., Asibey, M.O., Akaateba, M.A., & Kuusaana, E.D., 2022. Changing land tenure regimes and women’s access to secure land for cocoa cultivation in rural Ghana. *Land Use Policy* 120(2022) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2022.106292>.
- Amanor, K., 2008. The changing face of customary land tenure. In J.M. Ubink & K. S. Amanor (eds) 2008 *Contesting land and custom in Ghana. State, Chief and the Citizen*. Leiden University Press, 55—80.
- Amanor, K. 2010. Family Values, Land Sales, and Agricultural Commodification in South-Eastern Ghana. *Africa*. 2010; 80(1):104-125. doi:10.3366/E0001972009001284 [Valeurs familiales ventes de terre et march andisat.pdf](#)
- Amfo, B., Aidoo, R., Mensah, J.O., & Maanikuu P.M.I, 2023. Linkage between working conditions and wellbeing: Insight from migrant and native farmhands on Ghana’s cocoa farms. *Heligon* 9(2023) e13383.
- Amfo, B., Mensah, J. O., & Aidoo, R., 2022. Migrants and non-migrants’ welfare on cocoa farms in Ghana: Multidimensional poverty index approach. *International Journal of Social Economics* 49(3) 389-410.
- Asamoah, M., & Owusu-Ansah, F., 2017. Report on land tenure and cocoa production in Ghana. A CRIG/WCF Collaborative Survey, February 2017. https://www.worldcocoafoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/files_mf/1492612620CRIGLandTenureSurveyFinal41217.pdf. (Accessed 17 May 2021).
- Ataa-Asantewaa, M., 2023. Uncovering smallholder heterogeneity: An analysis of diverging livelihood trajectories and outcomes of engagement in tree-crop value chains in Ghana. PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
- Baah, K., & Kidido J.K., 2020. Sharecropping arrangement in the contemporary agricultural economy of Ghana: A study of Techiman. *Journal of Planning and Land Management* 19(2), 50-62.
- Bah, A., & Laven, A., 2018. Closing the income gap of cocoa households in Côte d'Ivoire - taking a gender-sensitive household approach. The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT).
- Bymolt, R., Laven, A., & Tyszler, M. 2018. Demystifying the cocoa sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). <https://www.kit.nl/project/demystifying-cocoa-sector/>. (Accessed 6 July 2019. 2021).
- Duncan, B. A. 2010. Cocoa, Marriage, Labour, and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 80(2), 301–321. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40645398>
- Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, 2021. COVID-19 effects on cocoa sectors in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. <https://www.agroberichtenbuitenland.nl/actueel/nieuws/2021/02/25/covid-19-effects-on-cocoa-sectors-in-ghana-and-cote-d%E2%80%99ivoire>.
- Dzanku, F. M., Tsikata, D., & Ankrah, D. A. 2021. The gender and geography of

agricultural commercialisation: what implications for the food security of Ghana's smallholder farmers? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 48(7), 1507–1536.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1945584>

Grega, L., Ankomah, E.K., & Darkwah, S.A. 2015. Analysis of land tenure systems and its relationship with productivity in the agricultural sector in Ghana. *ACTA*, 63: 893–902. <https://doi.org/10.11118/actaun201563030893>.

Gyasi, E.A. 1994. The adaptability of African communal land tenure to economic opportunity: The example of land acquisition for oil palm farming in Ghana. *Journal of the International African Institute*, 64: 391–405. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160788>.

van der Haar, S., Janssen, V.C.J., Diallo, O., Boza, F.B., Diarra, I., Ingram, V., Kouadio, K.A.S., Laven, A., N'dri, A.N., N'guessan, A., Waarts, Y., 2024. *Cocoa household income study approach; A sector-wide approach to assessing the living income status of households in the cocoa sector*. Wageningen, Wageningen Economic Research, Report 2024-038. 60 pp.; 1 fig.; 4 tab.; 22 ref.

Habraken, R., Laven, A., & Steijn, C., 2022. Pathway for closing the income gap for cocoa farming households in Cote d'Ivoire, a segmented approach. KIT Royal Tropical Institute. <https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/KIT-Cocoa-farming-HH-segmentation-study-Full-report.pdf>.

Heck, V. P., & Laven, A., 2016. Ideation of small medium enterprise (SME) service in cocoa growing communities in Ghana. Mars, Solidaridad, Barry Callebaut & KIT Royal Tropical Institute. <https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Ideation-of-SME-Services-in-Cocoa-Growing-Communities-in-Ghana.pdf>.

Heck, v. P., Laven, A., & Vos, A., 2020. The Resilience Journey, Empathy Generation (Phase 1). Executive Summary. KIT Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam. Commissioned by Mars Wrigley. Available at <https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Resilience-Journey-Empathy-Generation-Phase-1.pdf>.

Heck, v. P., & Laven, A., 2022. The Resilience Journey: Viability (Phase 2). KIT Royal Tropical Institute. Commissioned by Mars Wrigley. Available at <https://www.kit.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/KIT-Viability-Report-2022.pdf>.

Hill, P. 1963. *The Migrant Cocoa Farmers of Southern Ghana*. Cambridge: University Press,

IDH, GISCO, C-lever.org, 2021: Cocoa Traceability Case Study. Cargill. P. Stoop, N. Ramanan, H. Geens, A. Lambrecht and S. Dekeister. https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/uploaded/2021/06/Case-Study-Cargill_FinalVersion.pdf

IDH & CCC, 2022. IDH and Conseil du Café-Cacao launch Cocooperation. <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/news/idh-and-conseil-du-cafe-cacao-launch-cocooperation/>.

IMANI, 2024. Revised final report. The profitability and environmental sustainability of cocoa farming models in Ghana. For The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO).

Kissi, E., & Herzig, C., 2023. Labour relations and working conditions of workers on smallholder cocoa farmers in Ghana. *Agriculture and Human values* >>>><https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10470-2>.

Laven, A.C., 2010. The risks of inclusion: Shifts in governance processes and upgrading opportunities for cocoa farmers in Ghana. PhD dissertation, University of Amsterdam. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers.

Mars Cocoa for Generations Report, 2022. Progress report 2022. MARS, <https://mars.pagetiger.com/cocoa2022/1/page4.htm>.

Sara Mason, Richard Gilbert, Lauren Weiss and Annabel Beales, 2023 Farmer segmentation. A guide for procurement professionals. How companies can effectively target support for smallholder farmers in global supply chains. Farmer Income Lab. Business Fight Poverty. <https://www.mars.com/sites/g/files/dfsbuf106/files/2023-08/Farmer%20segmentation.pdf>

Nestlé Cocoa Plan, 2021. Annual progress report. https://www.nestlecocoaplan.com/sites/default/files/2023-08/NEST7399_22_NCP-Progress-Report-2022_V19_1.pdf

Roth, M., Antwi, Y., & O’Sullivan, R., 2017. Land and natural resource governance and tenure for enabling sustainable cocoa cultivation in Ghana. Washington, DC: USAID Tenure and Global Climate Change Program.

Ruf, F.O., 2010. “You weed, and we’ll share” Land sharing contracts and cocoa booms in

Ghana, Cote d’Ivoire and Indonesia. Technical Report, March 2010. <https://doi.10.13140/RG.2.1.1327.4640>.

Tropenbos International, 2023. Cocoa agroforestry in West Africa. Experiences from the private sector and opportunities for collaborative action. <https://www.tropenbos.org/resources/publications/cocoa+agroforestry+in+west+africa.+experiences+from+the+private+sector+and+opportunities+for+collaborative+action>.

van der Haar, S., Janssen, V.C.J., Diallo, O., Boza, F.B., Diarra, I., Ingram, V., Kouadio, K.A.S., Laven, A., N’dri, A.N., N’guessan, A., Waarts, Y., 2024. Cocoa household income study approach; A sector-wide approach to assessing the living income status of households in the cocoa sector. Wageningen, Wageningen Economic Research, Report 2024-038. 60 pp.; 1 fig.; 4 tab.; 22 ref.

World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), 2022. Progress on traceability, agroforestry, and forest production in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire. Cocoa and Forest Initiative Report. World Cocoa Foundations.

Annex 1 – Literature search

Table 11 Input for literature research

Population	Interest	Context	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<p>Cocoa sharecroppers, cocoa caretakers, migrant cocoa farmers, migrant cocoa caretakers, migrant cocoa sharecroppers, cocoa labourers, absentee farmers, smallholder cocoa households, unregistered cocoa farmers, unregistered cocoa labourers, unorganized cocoa farmers, part-time farmers, spouses of cocoa farmers, children of cocoa farmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land arrangements • Labour arrangements • Migration into cocoa areas • Migration out of cocoa areas • EU legislation • Indirect cocoa supply chains • Unorganized farmers • Unregistered farmers • Sustainability programs (outreach and inclusion) • Traceability (certification, verification) • Livelihood trajectories • Segmentation • Aspirations • Inclusive cocoa value chain (exclusive) • Galamsey and cocoa • Climate change • Pests and diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghana • Côte d'Ivoire • Burkina Faso • Togo • Mali • Liberia • Guinea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published articles • Grey literature • Case studies • Census data (statistics) • Studies published in the English language • Studies to 2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies on smallholders in the food crop, livestock, fisheries or aquaculture, other tree crops and forestry sectors • Studies outside the specified context of sub-Saharan Africa • Studies in languages other than English • Studies not accessible via the UvA digital library or other online sources

Annex 2 - New EU legislation ends the voluntary character of sustainability efforts

The European Union (EU) has introduced new regulations that will significantly change the global cocoa landscape. The first is the regulation on deforestation-free products to restrict imports of key agricultural commodities, including cocoa grown on land that was deforested after 2020. The second is the so-called 'EU Due Diligence legislation' that would require companies doing business in the European market to take measures to ensure human rights and curb environmental harm in their supply chains. The third legislation is the Forced labour regulation or regulation.

The regulation on deforestation-free products has been published in June/July 2023 and will have entered into force with an 18 month period before entry into application thus December 2024. This means that any cocoa harvested for the 2024 Main Crop will be subject to the regulation.

According to the EU's proposed Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) companies doing business in the European market must have a due diligence strategy document in place in which they publicly communicate their due diligence approach. If companies cause environmental or social harm, they will have to pay a penalty unless they can prove they have acted in line with due diligence.

To ensure due diligence across the supply chain, companies will have to identify and confirm the business practices of their suppliers and subcontractors. This includes those located outside Europe. To make sure suppliers follow the rules, companies may ask for specific due diligence documents. Such documents could include contractual clauses, codes of conduct or certification by independent auditors.

In practice, the EU legislation will put human rights and due diligence higher on the agenda. For the regulation on deforestation European cocoa importers will need to provide evidence that imported cocoa beans were not produced in forest-protected areas and show how they are respecting human rights (i.e., no child labour and forced labour). Officially, the right to a 'living income and living wage' is not part of the EU Legislation and regulation, but is recognized as a prerequisite for human rights and environmental protection

EU Legislation reinforces existing private and public commitments

National initiatives for sustainable cocoa (ISCO's) have emerged in countries where large volumes of cocoa are being traded, distributed, processed, manufactured and consumed, e.g. Germany (GISCO), Switzerland (SWISSCO), Belgium (Beyond Chocolate), the Netherlands (DISCO) and recently France (French Sustainable Cocoa Initiative). Signatories of these initiatives are representatives of national governments, industry (brands, processors, traders), retail, civil society, certification organizations, knowledge institutes, etc. The four pillars of ISCO's commitments towards sustainable cocoa are:

- 1) Contribute to a Living Income for cocoa farmers and their families;
- 2) Halt cocoa-related deforestation and promote sustainable reforestation and biodiversity;
- 3) End child labour and forced labour in the cocoa value chain;
- 4) Enhance the transparency in the cocoa value chain and promote the production and consumption of sustainable cocoa.

Brands, traders and retailers have their sustainability sourcing strategies, whereby traders are key implementers of brands' sustainability strategies. Large traders, such as Cargill (Cocoa Promise), OFI (Cocoa Compass), Barry Callebaut (Cocoa Horizons), and ECOM (through its Sustainable Management Services - SMS) have, among others, all set up sustainable sourcing programs in their origins or support brands in setting up their programs.

New EU Legislation demands traceability

Currently, due to lack of provable traceability, it is estimated that less than 25% of the supply chain would comply to the requirements of the EU Due diligence regulation. Chocolate and cocoa companies focus sustainability and traceability efforts on their direct supply chains, which means that the companies have direct interventions with the farmers aggregators (such as cooperatives or middlemen).

It is estimated that around 55% of the supply of cocoa to the key supply chain companies is still supplied as indirect, via third party suppliers like local exporters. For a multinational cocoa trading and processing company like Cargill, indirect supply is 40% of its total supply (IDH et al, 2021). Nestlé, one of world's largest chocolate brands, reports that 49.4% of their cocoa is sourced beyond their Nestlé Cocoa Plan (2021). According to a recent report by Lumina Intelligence, major chocolate brand Mars doesn't know 76 % of the farms they source from (www.earthsight.org.uk).

Companies need to increase the share of farmers as part of their direct supply chain, over which they have more control. What is challenging is the high turnover of farmers, who shift to other buyers and sustainability programs.

Investments in traceability and sustainability become more urgent for companies (also for procurement departments).

INCLUDE

KNOWLEDGE PLATFORM ON INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

INCLUDE is an independent knowledge platform funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2012. Through Research, Knowledge Exchange and Policy Dialogues, INCLUDE promotes and facilitates evidence-based policymaking on inclusive development, with a focus on Africa.

INCLUDE Secretariat

Wassenaarseweg 52, 2333 AK, Leiden, The Netherlands
+31(0)71 527 6602
info@includeplatform.net
includeplatform.net