

Cocoa Farmers' Livelihoods and Sector Sustainability. Immersions in support of Multi-Actors-Partnership in Ghana

Exposure and Dialogue Programme in Ghana
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In Cooperation with Cocoa Sector Stakeholders in Ghana

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Editorial



„Since the whole community of cocoa farmers is committed to organic, the groundwater can recover and the people are getting chemical-free drinking water. This, in turn, results in a better health of everybody and more capacity to work.”

This lesson made a lasting impression on Kirsten Offermanns, EDP participant from KfW Development Bank, when she immersed with a cocoa farming family in Ghana. From an 11-year-

old girl and the members of ABOCFA cocoa cooperative she learnt about the life changing impact of rule-based cooperation and farmers' self-organization. Best agric practices and social cohesion may truly work as a game changer; also *“for the kids... (having) more power to learn at school.”*

‘Having seen some light at the end of the tunnel’ – higher income and community welfare financed by additional benefits like above-average premiums paid for high quality cocoa, as

being exemplified in Bühler Manager Joachim Essig's piece on the ABOCFA model, does contrast sharply with the exposure insights gained by CHED Extension Supervisor Linus K. Fiakeye in two other, rather marginalized cocoa communities: *"About 60% of the cocoa seedlings transplanted were dead due to inadequate shade trees both temporary and permanent as well as drought. The cocoa seedlings were planted haphazardly; an indication that the host did not have access to extension services."*

More about the real-life details, the ups and downs, the opportunities, the challenges, the work load and the immense risks cocoa farmers are being exposed to can be learnt about hands-on when executives and experts set off and give up their comfort zones to stay for some few days in the cocoa origins. But they learn also about people's rich wisdom, their hopes and aspirations as well as about the confidence such people can radiate in spite of rather difficult living conditions.

We are very grateful to all our partners on the ground as well as to our client organizations and companies in Europe for having cooperated so successfully in making another, this third EDP Leadership Training in the Ghanaian cocoa sector possible. It truly was again both a pleasure and an honor to moderating the personal encounter of such a motivated group of *learning experts* from the industry and German development cooperation visiting expert hosts in this special environment of today's Ghana! It is very worth noting that – this time again – we enjoyed the full-time involvement of three CHED experts as EDP participants who enriched and deepened our learning process profoundly. May God continue to bless your work with the farmers: *ABOCFA, CHED Ashanti Region as well as CHED Management (Accra), Goshen Global Vision and Optimal Change Programme!*

Special thanks go to our expert facilitators whose tireless efforts in enabling our cross-cultural communication and joint learning have been outstanding once again: *Gloria, Bismark, Osobroni, Diana, Esther, Kwame (CK), Emmanuel, Rosemond and Rita!* Medase paa!

We trust that the people in the EDP network will enjoy the read when part-taking in the *INSIGHTS* of this Ghana EDP participants group!

Jörg Hilgers, Ghana EDP Coordinator

What „organic“ got to do with girls

Buying Fairtrade chocolate was always important to me. Frankly speaking, however, I did not much care about the "organic" label, until I went to Ghana. Even though Fairtrade and Organic-agric certification are combined, often, the Fairtrade seal used to be more important to me because it meant caring about other people. 'Organic', in contrast, was primarily about my own wellbeing – so I thought. When I met my 11-year old host sister Akwasi in a village community in the central region of Ghana, my perspective on that matter changed completely.

At 5:30 a.m. Akwasi gets up, almost every morning, except Sundays. Before having breakfast she fetches water for the family at a nearby well. In her village, 'nearby' means walking about 100 meters; for other kids that could be even for two kilometers. (Hence, it is kids and women who cater for the water demands of their families.) The construction of the improved water supply had been done very well; supported by international development cooperation partners. Much more significant for Akwasi, her family and the whole community, though, is the quality of the well's water.

In conventional farming, farmers often use agro-chemicals as well as non-organic fertilizers. The ingredients of these, once in contact with the ground water, may contaminate the drinking water of a whole settlement area, causing sickness of human beings and the animals; the more

as the prescribed administration of agro-chemicals are not properly followed, often. This is different in Akwasi's community. Everybody is focused on cocoa farming and now almost all cocoa farmers are members of the local cocoa farmers' cooperative ABOCFA. In that region ABOCFA is the only cocoa cooperative producing and marketing cocoa which is both Fairtrade and Organic-certified.

Hence, ABOCFA farmers follow five fundamental principles: (1) Protect the soil. (2) Protect biodiversity. (3) Recycle local resources. (4) Do not contaminate soil, water or crops. (5) Use local seed and planting material whenever possible.

Agro-chemicals are "prohibited materials" and the farmers avoid non-organic practices and chemical applications. Every farmer has committed him- or herself to these principles, for instance, to ensure that the prohibited materials cannot contaminate the water resources. If only some few farmers in that community would not comply with these organic standards, the groundwater resource might get contaminated and an essential natural resource the entire community depends on would be at risk. Therefore, it is absolutely crucial that the whole community is dedicated to organic farming, not only individual farmers.

That is what makes ABOCFA Cocoa Cooperative so special: Since the whole community of cocoa farmers is committed to organic, the groundwater can recover and the people are getting chemical-free drinking water. This, in turn, results in a better health of everybody and more capacity to work. Moreover, for the kids it means that they have more power to learn at school.

There are other benefits Akwasi and her peers enjoy: ABOCFA is receiving substantially higher premiums as they make sure, their cocoa beans are both Organic & Fairtrade. This additional income is invested in financing the high quality management and organization of ABOCFA; top-ups of the farmers' agric income and project activities that strengthen the well-being of the local community, e.g. co-funding of health stations, schools etc.



Thus, ABOCFA helps the school in which Akwasi and her friends learn to provide better services. Due to the better quality of the water, the kids have better possibilities to learn and prepare for their future. In the end, ABOCFA is creating more options for kids like Akwasi. One day, Akwasi might decide to become a cocoa farmer, a doctor, an IT-specialist, a rocket scientist or maybe the first female president of Ghana? Who knows...? To me, organic agriculture, in fact, has got a lot to do with girls like Akwasi.

Kirsten Offermanns, KfW Bankengruppe



“Light at the end of the tunnel?” - The ABOCFA cooperative model

Cocoa farming is a hard job. All over Ghana, there are many old and not well maintained plantations. Cocoa diseases can kill the harvest of a whole year and there is no insurance covering this risk. About 40% of Ghana's cocoa trees are over-aged or infected by diseases. In the catchment area of ABOCFA the situation is quite different. These are some of my lessons learnt.

Before the farmers can harvest the cocoa pods and produce the precious raw material that the processing industry adds much value to; there is a lot of work to do by the families: pruning the trees – in the right manner; cutting-out mistletoes and weeding the plantations. New plantations have to be prepared when the trees have grown too old or fell sick – mostly by cutting down all the existing vegetation. If so, a mix of vegetation is to be planted newly, composed of maize, cassava, banana and other crops, while the cocoa seedlings are being inter-cropped; quite according to the books of good agric practices. It takes at least three years until newly planted cocoa trees bear fruits and the cocoa plantation starts running.



What I witnessed during my exposure is quite above average. This is due to the fact that my hosts are both, well educated formally and well-trained; credits to the extension services they received, either by ABOCFA cooperative; or by the Government-owned Cocoa Health Extension Division.

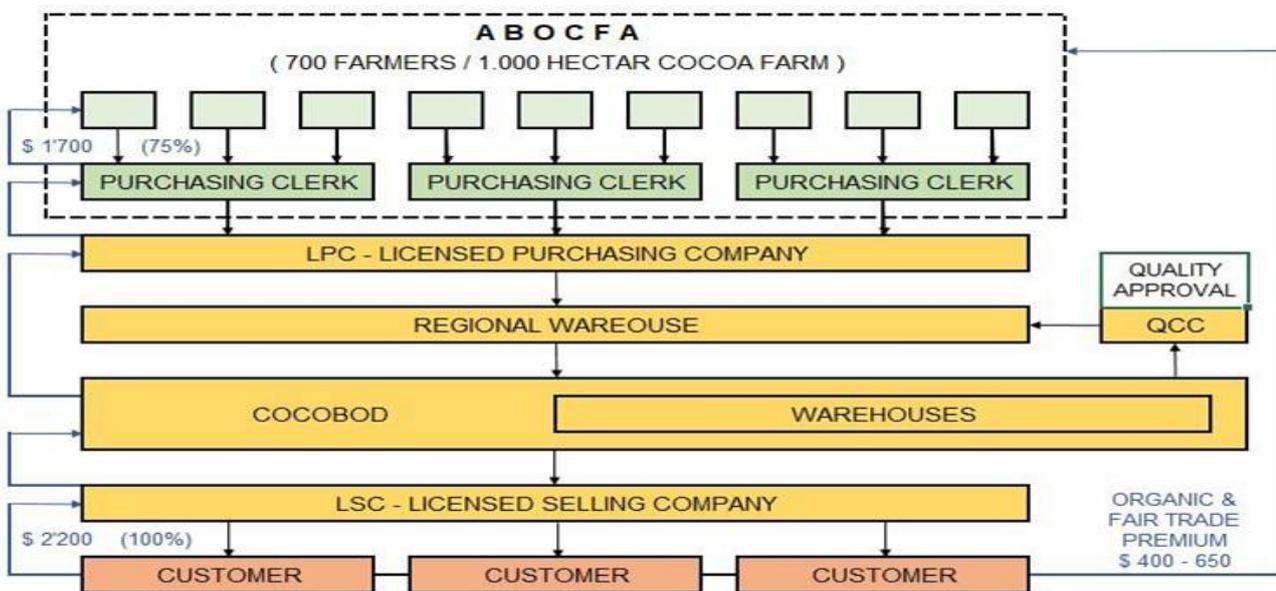
I had the unique chance to join my farmer for a practical exercise, learning about his daily work in the plantation. When harvesting the pods, we removed them from the trees and opened the pods the old way by a machete. When collecting the seeds in a wicker basket, the placenta can be removed at this collecting stage, or later along fermentation. We took the beans to a place, where we cut some banana leaves and built a small heap fermentation site. Usually, the beans stay there for 5 to 7 days and the heap has to be turned-over every second day. This kind of heap fermentation at smallholder's places is different from Asia and Latin America, where the beans are being collected raw, and get fermented in wooden boxes at collecting centers. After fermentation, the beans get sun-dried on drying mats for another 5 to 7 days. When there is rain, these mats must be folded and covered by plastic foil or metal sheets to keep the beans dry. Finally, the beans get collected from the drying tables and are being transported to the local purchasing clerk. After weighing and recording the amounts in a paper book, the farmers get paid cash from that PC. This gentleman is storing the beans for pick-up by respective COCOBOD -“Licensed Purchasing Company” (LPC).

Looking at these post-harvest handling procedures I dare say that there are some efficiency gains to be made when adopting strategies from cocoa producing countries e.g. in Central America.

In my exposure case of an obviously quite well-functioning and well-governed cooperative that attained the interest of a motivated buyer from the Netherlands, the Premium bonus came up the amount of 650 US\$ per ton for some years. Tony's Chocolonely had been paying that for some years - on top of the COCOBOD's farm gate price of c. 1'700 US\$. These premium payments went straight to the cooperative and to the farmers. Sure, this premium approach does come with a lot of additional efforts and hard work but it also has tangible benefits in return.

Compared to other cocoa regions in the world that I know, the standards in this particular community in Ghana's central region are rather developed. Many houses are built by solid bricks, well furnished and the windows have mosquito protection. During the time of my immersion, there was a rather stable electricity supply. The meals we had were rich and cooked with a lot of healthy ingredients produced on the family's farm, augmented by home-reared chicken and dried fish from the market. Food and accommodation were very good. Although expecting mothers giving birth at the clinic still have to bring their own water (which I find hard to take) the water supply situation had improved during recent years, in general, also due to development activities that the cooperative conducted or had helped to organize.

To attain such benefits, it had been inevitable to teach the farmers an entrepreneurial approach and build social capital: trust and cooperation. Indeed, this is necessary to run cocoa businesses profitably and at the same time mobilize the farmers for the common good— which ABOCFA did it and still does.



The cooperative is trading cocoa beans – like anybody else in Ghana – through the standard channels under COCOBOD (see flow chart) but is 100% focused on organic & fair trade beans. Farmers receiving the annual granted “farm gate price” per ton from the COCOBOD, which is the stock market price minus c. 25% handling fee.

In parallel ABOCFA is marketing their Organic & Fair Trade label beans (e.g. via BioFach Expo Germany) and is closing supply contracts with chocolate manufacturers directly (e.g. Tony's NL, Felchlin CH, Whittacker's NZ, Taza Chocolate USA). The premium bonus is bypassing COCOBOD, going straight to ABOCFA. 50% of the bonus is going to the farmers, 50% is spent for infrastructure, organic agriculture support, for instance, for the spraying teams and the training in good agric practices.

Organic beans need a lot more attention than conventional as the farmers can only use certified fertilizers and pesticides, which have to be applied by special spraying teams. Also, the trees have to be cut differently in order to provide more sunlight to the pods as to avoid moldering. The ABOCFA farmers manage to yield c. 1.2 tons per hectare, which is less than what the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) coined a ‘reasonable average’ (1.7 t/ha). However, that output is almost three times more than the average yield of cocoa farms in Ghana.

One must not forget that the cocoa farmers need to cultivate several by-crops to be maintained and harvested for providing food to the family kitchen and making additional money by sales on local markets – to make ends meet. Despite all the ABOCFA benefits in my host community, most farmers I met still consider themselves poor; sitting at the lower end of society. All individuals I met were talking about finding a better life somewhere, most preferably in Europe. Some of them already have relatives there. There is a high risk of young farmers emigrating from the cocoa business – even in that area. Indeed, the young generation doubts in having a future in cocoa farming



My personal résumé: ABOCFA making c. 1'200 tons p.a. of cocoa beans which are Organic & Fair Trade certified is definitely a model that others should adopt! Cocoa beans from Ghana are having a good reputation and – currently - the prices at the stock markets are comparatively high. Even if a part of this market price is consumed by COCOBOD, the cocoa farmers in Ghana have a future when they focus on agric diversification, certification and producing high end quality. However, policy makers and administrators must not forget: Working towards better education at school, child protection, provision of health insurance, decent infra-structure, women empowerment etc. are key issues to be handled wholeheartedly. They are both pre-requisites and overarching goals and objectives in order to satisfy farming communities' basic needs and, hence, keep the youth stay in larger numbers compared to what is happening today.

Joachim Essig, Bühler Barth GmbH

Observations in two cocoa farming communities in Eastern Region of Ghana

The exposure programme provided hands-on experience to various stakeholders (both international and national) with regards to the origin of the cocoa value chain. Participants undertook several activities which generated new ideas for improved cooperation among stakeholders and also assess farmer's livelihoods.



The visiting team assisted their hosts to prepare breakfast after which they visited the host cocoa farms. We participated in farm activities such as harvesting of ripe pods, breaking of pods and fermentation. Tools used for harvesting and breaking of pods were Go-to-hell/ Sickle and breaking knife/ mallet respectively.

About 60% of the cocoa seedlings transplanted were dead due to inadequate shade trees both temporary and permanent as well as drought. The cocoa seedlings were planted haphazardly an indication that the host did not have access to extension services. On the mature cocoa farm, no pruning had been done so far. No fungicide spraying was done to prevent the attack of black pod disease. The insecticide spraying was done only once instead of four times in a year for the mature cocoa. No cocoa fertilizer was applied although that would increase the yield.

In the evening we went to fetch water from a stagnant pond

together with the host children. There are a number of challenges that we observed in this village: Lack of potable drinking water. No electricity. No staff houses to host teachers in the community. No telecommunication network. Poor roads. No officially stationed community extension agents to deliver extension services.

The team went for exposure also to a neighbouring village and stayed with another host family. There also we visited two of the young cocoa farms owned by the host lady. The two farms were pegged and cocoa seedlings were planted in lines. The temporary shade trees were also planted in rows and about 98% of the young cocoa seedlings planted survived. The team asked the son who is taking care of the farm whether he had access to extension services but the response was no.

We met the Chief and the Elders in that village. In our discussion we strengthened the need to have the farmers organize in groups and form associations as well as cooperatives. According to my professional role I felt urged to inform them that the focus of Ghana Cocoa Board is to encourage all cocoa farmers to be in groups. This will enable farmers to take decisions on their own, assess credit and other inputs for their farm operations.



In the evening the visiting team again helped the host children to fetch water from a bore hole which served as one of sources of potable water in the community.

Also in this village we observed that there is no electricity, no telecommunication network facility; and no officially stationed Community Extension Agents to deliver extension Services; but the roads are also in a poor condition.

The EDP participants converged and reflected on their immersion with the various host families. The visitors and facilitators were given the opportunities to tell their respective stories. The discussions were centered on activities undertaken by the households and activities engaged in by the visitors. Lessons learnt by the visitors were also discussed and shared among the participants.

To me, the Immersion Programme served as a measure to undertake reality checks on policy implementation. It also served as a tool for needs assessment of farmers and as an instrument for future planning. On that background I recommend to make use of immersion trainings in the cocoa sector.

Linus Fiakeye, Cocoa Health Extension Division / COCOBOD

Education of Farmers – the Backbone of Sustainable Cocoa Sector Development

Together with his wife, Mr. E. hosted my immersion in cocoa producing communities in the Ashanti region. He works as a community extension officer under CHED (COCOBOD) and is a very involved and hard working person. Being a trainer – in the real sense – of the cocoa farmers he commands of very professional pedagogical skills and the required dedication to mobilize and motivate the farmers to improve agric skills and technical knowledge of good agric practices. In the morning, Mr. E. provides the trainings in the context of the Farmers Business School in his area of duty and I attended class in a make-shift shed. In the afternoon we engaged in different cocoa farming activities in the host community, like opening cocoa pods, learning-by-doing fermentation, weeding, pruning etc.

In regards to education, having been exposed to the Farmers Business School (FBS) was the most significant take-away for me.



Knowing that the illiteracy rate is still relatively high, I was very skeptical of the entire concept and its success rate. How can you provide exercise notebooks to someone who cannot read or write and expect to get some meaningful outcome? To my surprise, it worked very well. Apart from a very visual professional training provided by Mr. E., in which the application of pictograms and images were the norm, every concept was thoroughly explained orally and the examples had to be provided by the farmers themselves. Thus, class activities

boosted participation and lively exchange.

Additionally, approximately two thirds of the farmers were literate. Those would help their peers understand the concepts and would walk them through the course carefully. The same applied for using the pocket calculators for budget planning. Merely one third of the trainees would know how to use it and supported their other colleagues in showing them how it works. The collaborative working environment gave me hope and that is when I realized that this is truly helping the attending cocoa farmers.

As an extension officer, Mr. E. has his own day-to-day challenges. For instance, just like his colleagues, he has to deal with poor road infrastructure while riding his motor bike to work. The combination of the two leads to strong spinal cord, neck and back pain in the long term. That is the reason why he wishes that more extension officers receive pick-up 4WDs to handle their work in the field, especially for carrying materials and tools. An issue that had been reported also from another female extension agent involved in our EDP group.

To be precise, this is just a glimpse into a very multi-faceted and complex picture of the relevance and some aspects of education I received during my exposure visit. To the extent I was exposed to a true best-practice-example I realized how this kind of non-formal agric training currently works and how it should be contributing (more) to a sustainable future in the cocoa sector. However, our reflection with experts also showed that the Farmers Business School is forced to contribute substantially to catching-up competence development of farmers in a context where formal education is failing all too often. Too many (primary or junior secondary) schools seemingly cannot (or do not even intend to) instill the key competences required to manage cocoa farming as a business. Hence, many farmers, even younger ones, do not properly understand the need to diversify their sources of income from on- and off farm activities and how they could proceed as there seems to be too much emphasis on university education. 'White collar' jobs is what many youth aim at, merely ending-up as petty traders in the urban centers since manual labour in agriculture is being discouraged by too many factors. Hence, even having more Farmers Business Schools is no panacea.



Nevertheless, I truly believe that investing in education in rural areas is the way to go so as to

alleviate some of the sustainability issues that cocoa farming is facing. I wish for a future in which more companies and institutions participate in similar immersion programmes or initiatives for raising awareness about the true sustainability challenges of the cocoa farming and processing industry at the source, particularly in regards to education. I wish for a future in which the relevant authorities invest their resources, time and energy in improving the pedagogical skills of those who teach the children at schools and those who train the farmers. Making it more attractive for the youth to engage in cocoa farming, however, requires concerted efforts of the national sector stakeholders in a country like Ghana. Where applicable, international stakeholders and private companies may contribute their share, but improving on education and technical training is a core responsibility of the State, in the first place.

Sorana-Florentina Ionita, Bühler AG

Cocoa Roots – or how I came to pose weird questions



My exposure to the world of cocoa started with Kwaku, the caretaker of an extended family farm in a village in Western Ghana. Kwaku knows everything about farming and all the different places he took me during these three days, by heart. He is deeply rooted in his day-to-day hustle and I felt that cocoa production seems to be a kind of vocation to him. I learnt from him a lot about the agric work in cocoa and also felt the hardship of manual labour e.g. when pruning and weeding. I never imagined it could be this tough! However, his perceptions and perspectives combined with the inputs I got from my expert facilitator Kwame made me reconsider some aspects of this particular value chain originating in tropical agriculture.

After having ‘enjoyed’ that back-breaking work Kwaku and his people do for a living, we talked of mechanization. Kwaku pointed out that purchasing and operating costs of machinery would easily overstretch the economic means of cocoa farms. Likewise, access to rural financing institutions or even repair workshops are not available in his part of the country. Interestingly, there were generally little signs of support from the national extension services, the agricultural department or even social support groups. The lack of any machinery is actually quite stunning given that agriculture elsewhere is often using enormous machines.

Why do we just accept that millions of tons of cocoa beans in Ghana are harvested, carried home, fermented, dried and packed manually? Is it because the back-breaking manual labour of humans in this region of the world is still too cheap to buy; as even the people themselves do not put a price tag to their physical efforts? In my view: It is not only the machines that are missing. In my exposure village it is hard to get access to *regular* (sic!) extension services. There are no co-operatives helping to better self-organise the cocoa farmers and there are no proper financial services. The recently founded 25-member Village Saving and Credit Association is just the exception proofing the rule.

Kwaku and I talked about prices of chocolate bars in Europe and the fixed farm gate price of cocoa beans in Ghana. I shared with him what I had learnt about the very low share cocoa farmers earn in the international cocoa trade. Kwaku, however, was not at all surprised that farmers get less than 5% of the final value. Later in our group we learnt from other experts that cocoa farmers’ share might even be as low as 3%. That is truly astonishing given all the work

and the full entrepreneurial risk taken by the farmers.

Surely I am not the first being puzzled by the weird economics of cocoa: How is it possible that a very hard working land owner cultivating an above-average-sized farm growing a cash crop in high global demand cannot even afford to build a brick house, have a TV set, pay for a health insurance or a weeding machine? What is wrong about the global value chain dynamics that the West African countries with their market power of providing around 60% of raw cocoa to the world market cannot fix better prices? [\(1\)](#) Why are the cocoa prices in Latin America higher? Is their cocoa really any better? The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has oligopolistic powers and full control on every relevant move in the national cocoa market, but rather subsidizes the national farm gate price in times of low world prices for cocoa – while international chocolate consumption is ever rising.

The more one thinks about it, the weirder the ideas; hence, would an OPEC-kind of cocoa cartel improve the market power for Ghanaian farmers? Maybe not, if the domestic issues of the cocoa value chain are not being settled properly; for instance, as the bargaining power of the producers is limited due to the political economy of the 'pricing committee' under COCOBOD featuring other interests than those of the small holders.

Just imagine what the farm gate price is for alternative, highly demanded, yet illegal cash crops such as *coca*. What if the culturally anchored restraint, politeness and belief in the seniority principle were to one day turn into social unrest and violent protest? Just as an idea to bring that urgent requirement of farmers' living income into the focus of the political interests of those stakeholders who could do something about it, from both, the public and the private sectors. If to them it would not be a question of enabling farmers leading a decent life by decent and paying work, the risks to sourcing, bearable transaction cost, social cohesion and governability should be!

Surely, the cocoa economics does not make any sense to the next generation: The two elder children of the farm owner who hosted me went to secondary school and now live in Accra. While both are visiting their mother regularly, it is quite clear that they will not return to the village to take over the farm. Although it is an 11 ha-farm, thus sized much above the average of 2.5 to 3ha, there is no real future in cocoa farming the daughter told me. She is actually earning better as a *hairstylist* (!) in the city and can even afford to send her mother some allowances once in a while. Here it is; the often mentioned generational shift: Most cocoa farmers are beyond their fifties and would not even like their children to have to work on their cocoa farm. They do wish them a better, modern future with less back-breaking work and better income.



That is why one has to ask those who could do something about it: What if cocoa farmers would fully resort to production of other, e.g. mainly food crops and leave cocoa farming altogether as might be the case rather sooner than later looking at the demographics and the need to adopt to climate change everywhere in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Kwaku has had various different jobs prior to becoming a cocoa caretaker. He tried the Ghanaian dream, moved to Accra and worked in the big city for a well-off family as a domestic

worker. Just a few months later he realised that this was just not his line of work. He became an assistant bus conductor, but again learnt that this kind of job was not his. It was then that he decided to become a cocoa farmer. Ever since, he never regretted his choice. Kwaku starts smiling when he is telling about his farm life, the various duties and hard work involved. He is proud of the fact that he has advanced his understanding of growing cocoa, that he probably now knows and harvests more than his father, a cocoa farmer all his life, ever did.

Despite of all of what we discussed and contrary to the national trend, *Kwaku-the-caretaker* pursues his own dream: Along with three of his brothers he is trying to set-up a very large cocoa farm of their own in their home region. Their "own" family farm! They have already contracted the land, agreed on the share with the land *owner* (!) and plan to start planting their own trees over the next year – though he will have to keep working as caretaker for my host lady for some more years until his farm is well established. In his imagination, he already sees 'his' farm right in front of him – and smiles! And so do I!

I like to thank all those wonderful people I met and who contributed to my learning during this remarkable cocoa exposure experience in Ghana!

(1) Few weeks after the EDP on site Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire have agreed on a minimum price as a joint marketing strategy; the effects of which are yet to be seen; c.f. <https://edpev.de/aktuelle-nachricht/news/detail/News/cocoa-floor-price-2600-us-dollar/>

Dr. Jens Mackensen, KfW Development Bank

Lessons from women on living the Agenda 2030

My hostess is a very hard working person who is strong in faith and well respected by her community, even without a husband at her side. She takes care of two boys who are members of the extended family. Both get a thorough introduction to hard work at home from an early age. As soon as they return from school their second shift of domestic duties starts and only ends with nightfall.

After just a few days in the household I discovered many similarities with other women in my life, notably my paternal grandmother and my mother in law. In Germany we used to say: 'Sie ist vom alten Schlag,' which means: 'She is the traditional type.'

In the words of my hostess: Nothing is wasted. Everything is used. Everything that can be used is used. Do not spend money on something that you can make or do yourself!

This traditional wisdom she learned from her mom. In Ghana there seems to be a long line of women (and maybe men?) who live a very simple, modest, down to earth life – or as we say in these days of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals, a sustainable life.

In practice this means for example preparing very labour intensive, time consuming traditional dishes yourself instead of buying them ready made by the roadside or in a shop. It also means using by-products from the farm, like empty cocoa pods, burning them and using the ashes for boiling soap, together with homemade palm oil.

I still remember sitting by the fire and stirring the liquid for what seemed to me a very long time until it turned solid. I cherish the soap my hostess gave to me to take home as a very special souvenir of my stay with her and the boys. And I feel challenged to look at my own life in Germany and the many comforts I enjoy, even take for granted.

With her sustainable way of life, my hostess will leave behind a very tiny ecological foot print, just like my grandmother. My own foot print will be enormous by comparison! So my hostess has given me a lot to think about. As a first step I started to look into soap making!

Ute Möhring, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development



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Imprint

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