



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

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Creating Employment For Youth and Women as Cocoa Entrepreneur

Current Situation

Global demand for sustainable cocoa is growing annually by 2 to 3%. Production in West Africa, which makes up 70% of global supply, has in recent years been declining by 2% annually. Although the region faces increasing demand from the world market, it is facing complex economic, social and environmental issues.

Major players in the cocoa industry are eager to invest in an increasingly efficient and effective cocoa supply chain, resulting in better quality, greater productivity and increased farmer income in order to secure sufficient future supply. The cocoa sector faces several challenges such as poor soil fertility management, ageing cocoa farmers and tree stocks, diseases, improper application of chemicals and unregulated deforestation. These threats are hindrances to the sustainability of cocoa farming. At the same time, farmers suffer poor labour conditions and low incomes.

This discourages potential farmers from engaging in cocoa farming and existing ones from re-investing. They lose interest and quit farming, a phenomenon which in the long run affects the potential to meet worldwide demand for cocoa.

One of the main problems faced by the cocoa sector, which is often overlooked in most discussions and interventions, is the resulting ageing farmer population and the drudgery they have to succumb to. Cocoa production in Ghana, for instance, is mainly undertaken by the aged. The average age of Ghana's cocoa farmers, according to research, is between 50 and 55 years.

Due to the numerous challenges surrounding cocoa farming and the lack of income opportunities it is currently providing, it has lost its attractiveness as a profession for young people. Therefore, the future of a sustainable cocoa sector is under threat due to declining production and lack of uptake and investment in sustainable farming.

The active participation and involvement of young, educated people (male and female) in cocoa production is not only vital for the sustainability of the cocoa sector, but also for increased productivity which will translate into higher income and revenue from the cocoa value chain.

Research has found that the farms of younger and more educated persons tend to be more productive and sustainable than those of older farmers. Young farmers are more likely to introduce innovative production methods which increase yields sustainably and improve the incomes generated. This is essential for the long-term sustainability and growth of the cocoa sector, as is the active inclusion of women.



Our Approach

To tackle the challenge of the ageing farming generation, which will involve engaging interested young people in cocoa producing countries, Farmgate Cocoa Alliance proposes the following project objectives:

1. Assist the youth and women of cocoa producing countries to secure access to arable lands, suitable for the production of best quality sustainable cocoa.
2. Train and develop skilled and qualified labour that would provide the requisite services that will ensure proper implementation and maintenance of Good Agricultural Practices to improve productivity and sustainability.
3. Provide FCA women and youth with additional livelihoods in the short, medium and long term.
4. Provide market and fair prices for other food crops and enterprises of women and youth cocoa farmers.

Project Scope and Activities

For the purposes of this project, FCA will target young men and women from the age of 18 years to 30 years.

The project will target youths, in cocoa growing communities of which 60% must be women. This will be implemented in three cocoa producing countries (Ghana, Ivory Coast and Cameroon) in the coming years.

Women

The project will establish a total of three (3) women-oriented cooperatives, one in each of the project countries, that specifically cater for women in cocoa farming. Size of the cooperative will not be less than 1,000 women. Hence, the project will also be used to develop a special vehicle unit to train, sensitize and educate these women cocoa entrepreneurs on how to manage their cocoa farms as a business. Training will also support these women farmers with the skills of alternative livelihoods ventures such as to combine their farm with other livestock, vegetables, cassava, plantain and fish ponds. Training on how to locally process their crops to increase local consumptions.

There are already significant amounts of women engaged in cocoa farming, they will join our sensitizing team to encourage young women to develop interest and aspire them to become the next generation cocoa entrepreneur. The newly recruited women cocoa farmers will be organized into groups within their communities. Other activities will include, registration and data collection from these grouped women cocoa farmers, that will enable the next step to build their capacities and bring together to join an existing group, cooperative and or to register their own group or cooperative.

The project will also help to facilitate the issue of land tenure and ownership, provide better information among these farmers on how to mitigate climate change impact, and to farm in a sustainable manner and avoid deforestation in the farm plot.



Youth

Project will create an enabling environment with the public and private sector to facilitate land acquisition in member countries. The organization also provides linkages with governments for formulation and implementation of policies on youth development, such that the youth can own farms. This creates the possibility that they can take over farms from ageing farmers, making it possible for them to have access to loans and other forms of support that will enable them to enhance production and quality. The project will also support government initiatives in land tenure ownership of youth.

Engaging with women and young people

Entertainment centres, community centres, schools and religious centres are all places where the youth and women can easily be reached. With collaboration from parents, guardians, traditional leaders, opinion leaders and elders, meetings and trainings will be organized to get young people (of working age) attracted and retained in the production of cocoa.

Access to educational scholarships and grants, informal education where necessary, awards and rewards schemes and occasional entertainment/sporting activities will encourage and attract more youth to engage in cocoa production. FCA also intends to identify and promote youthful cocoa farmers as role models (*termed Cocoa Celebrities*) to motivate and attract the youth into cocoa farming.

This will be followed by training which will take various forms such as on-farm practical, study tours (on-field and cross countries) and education on local climate and weather patterns and their effects on cocoa production. The project will provide tools/equipment, seeds, advice on land acquisition and grants to incentivise and attract the interest of more youth and especially women.

Monitoring and Progress

All forms of trainings and activities shall be planned and implemented in groups of not less than 30 farmers, with group leaders who will be responsible for reporting on group needs, challenges and lessons learnt. To ensure that FCA keeps track of impacts, success and lessons, monitoring and evaluation shall be done by FCA National Secretariat of each country and reports submitted to FCA General Secretariat, who will then copy the necessary partners and stakeholders.

Monitoring visits will be done mainly to assess the implementation of trainings and technologies, adoption, their effects and challenges. Feedback between farmers and FCA will be established with all seriousness and priority.

This will also ensure that the farmer is consistently guided towards the set objectives and that appropriate corrective measures are taken when necessary.

Service Providers

In addition to young men and women farming on their own land, a special unit will also be formed for these men and women to provide key agricultural services to aging cocoa farmers.



They will be trained to help and support ageing cocoa farmers in order to facilitate the following activities on their farms to ensure Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs):

- Land preparation and cocoa establishment
- Nursery establishment
- Weed and shade management
- Soil management
- Spraying of insecticides and other chemicals
- Fertilizer application
- Harvesting, pod breaking, fermentation and drying

Land Acquisition

The following avenues will be exploited to secure 20,000 ha (2 ha per youth) of land without necessarily clearing new frontiers or forest carbon stocks:

- Share cropping/tenancy (30%)
- Family lands (20%)
- Traditional rulers (40%)
- Own lands/Outright purchase (10%)

Outcomes

The project presents a huge investment opportunity to investors and other private individuals and organizations.

FCA is, therefore, seeking financiers, partnerships, sponsors, donors and all forms of support to collaborate and form a formidable win-win team to improve the lot of farmers and ensure sustainability of cocoa worldwide.

The key project outcomes include:

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