

## **The Cocoa & Forests Initiative: Collective Action to End Cocoa-Related Deforestation**

The governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and 35 leading cocoa and chocolate companies, representing 85% of global cocoa usage, joined together in the [Cocoa & Forests Initiative](#) to end deforestation and restore forest areas.

Their combined actions play a crucial role in protecting and restoring biodiversity, sequestering carbon stocks in West African forests, and addressing climate change in line with the Paris Climate Agreement. The Cocoa & Forests Initiative delivers on Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land).

The Cocoa & Forests Initiative is a public private partnership based on frameworks for action ([Côte d'Ivoire](#) and [Ghana](#)) and action plans for the private sector ([Côte d'Ivoire](#) and [Ghana](#)) and public sector ([Côte d'Ivoire](#) and [Ghana](#)) that spell out commitments to:

- protect and restore forests,
- promote sustainable cocoa production and farmers' livelihoods,
- engage communities and boost social inclusion.

To learn more, follow #CocoaAndForests on social media, or visit [Cocoa & Forests Initiative](#).

The [World Cocoa Foundation](#) (WCF); [IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative](#); and the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana drive the Cocoa & Forests Initiative. The Prince of Wales (now King Charles III) launched the Initiative in March 2017.

Deforestation of tropical rainforests is a major issue in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, which together produce nearly two-thirds of the world's supply of cocoa, the main ingredient in chocolate. According to Global Forest Watch, between 2002 and 2023, Côte d'Ivoire lost 28% and Ghana 13% of their humid primary forest, with a large portion of this loss attributable to cocoa farming expansion.

A comprehensive analysis is required to determine the exact contribution of cocoa production to deforestation. WCF, CFI members, and partners are working together on science-based methods to determine the share of cocoa production to overall deforestation rates with a high level of accuracy in cocoa producing countries. Data reliability and a good knowledge of the cause and location of deforestation is essential to develop effective and adequate mitigation measures and ensure that WCF members and partners are compliant with regulations such as the EUDR.

Cocoa provides crucial income to communities in rural West Africa, but farmers are too often faced with poverty. Poverty is one of the causes of deforestation. Accelerating a transition to sustainable livelihoods is essential for farmers' economic security and a healthy planet.



**The first priority is the protection and restoration of forests that have been degraded.** To this end, the governments and companies have pledged no further conversion of forest land for cocoa production and have committed to the phased elimination of illegal cocoa production and sourcing in protected areas.

Both countries are introducing a differentiated approach for improved management of forest reserves, based on the level of degradation of forests. In 2019, the government of Côte d'Ivoire adopted and published a new forest code which, among other things, put forth policies for the promotion of cocoa agroforestry to restore degraded land, improve forest cover, and promote sustainable livelihoods and agriculture in the classified forests and rural zones. Both governments have shared maps on forest cover and land-use, and continue to update the maps, including socio-economic data on cocoa farmers, to inform private sector investments. Companies have made significant investments in the promotion of cocoa agroforestry and the restoration of degraded forests.

To ensure effective implementation and monitoring of these commitments, companies have pledged to develop traceability from farm to the first purchase point for their own purchases of cocoa. They also work with governments to ensure an effective national framework for traceability encompassing all traders in the supply chain and to anticipate forthcoming due diligence legislation. The companies will similarly share information with the national satellite monitoring platforms to effectively monitor progress on CFI, as well as proactively address threats of new deforestation.

**The next critical priority is sustainable agricultural production and increased farmer incomes.** These are essential pre-requisites for reducing pressure for agricultural encroachment into forests and strengthening the resilience of cocoa farmers to climate change.

The governments and companies are accelerating investment in long-term productivity of cocoa in order to grow “more cocoa on less land.” Key actions include provision of planting materials for the promotion of cocoa agroforestry, training in good agricultural practices, soil fertility, land tenure reform, and capacity building of farmers’ organizations. Sustainable livelihoods and income diversification for cocoa farmers are being accelerated through food crop diversification, agricultural inter-cropping, and development of mixed agroforestry systems and shade-grown cocoa.

**The final area of focus is strong community engagement and social inclusion, with a particular focus on women and youth.** The governments and companies have committed to full and effective consultation and participation of cocoa farmers in the design and implementation of key actions, and promotion of community-based management models for forest protection and restoration. The governments have adopted social and environmental safeguards and are assessing and mitigating the social impacts and risks of any proposed land-use changes on affected communities.

## Annexe 1: CFI tracking table

Description	Target (Current reporting year)	# Through direct investment (Current reporting year)	# On behalf of clients (Current reporting year)	# Through direct investment (Since 2023)	# Through direct investment (Since 2018)
<b>FOREST PROTECTION AND RESTORATION</b>					
# of farms mapped in direct supply chain: Total Active	58 354	32 741	10 159		
# of hectares in the direct supply chain with deforestation risk assessments completed	58 354	0	0		
# metric tons of directly sourced cocoa traceable from the farm to the first purchase point (target is 100%)		100%	7 810		
# hectares restored in Forest Reserve / Forêts Classée	0	0	0		
# trees registered	0	0	0		
# of farmers with land tenure agreements/documentation obtained via company support	2 223	0	0		
# farmers informed, trained, and / or consulted on the new Forest Code, forest policy, law enforcement, forest protection, and restoration	4 626	0	0		
# Individuals receiving incentives to protect and restore forests and / or adopt agroforestry (e.g., PES): New	0	0	388		
# Individuals receiving incentives to protect and restore forests and / or adopt agroforestry (e.g., PES): Total Active	0	0	388		
# farmers applying agroforestry: New		0	0		
# farmers applying agroforestry: Total Active		9 956	619		
# farmers provided with technical assistance to adopt and expand agroforestry	700	7 838	1 903		
# multi-purpose trees distributed for on-farm planting	18 000	78 111	50 000	238 124	238 124
# hectares cocoa agroforestry: New	700	0	0	5 114	5 114
# hectares cocoa agroforestry: Total Active		10 171	5 108		
# of trees distributed for off-farm planting	2 500	2 505	0	9 965	9 965
# hectares of forest area restored off-reserve / in rural zone	50	1 657	0	1 657	1 657
# farmers provided with technical assistance to be more resilient to climate change and reduce and remove carbon emissions on farm (e.g., CSC)	4 626	0	0		
\$ contributed to fund		0	0		
<b>SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND FARMERS' LIVELIHOOD</b>					
# farmers provided with technical assistance (based on plans) to professionalize & optimize cocoa farming practices	10 385	11 499	9 772		
# individuals participating in additional Income Generating Activities (IGA's)		7 347	1 299		
# individuals provided with technical assistance (based on plans) to increase income from non-cocoa sources / IGA's	1 400	9 427	7 395		
# Individuals provided with technical assistance to save money and access finance	300	5 391	0		
# of members of VSLA groups in the current year	2 000	8 352	2 838		
# of VSLA groups in the current year	100	47	18		
<b>SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY</b>					
# of cocoa communities with active forest restoration and protection program (CBNRM): New	0	0	0		
# of cocoa communities with active forest restoration and protection program (CBNRM): Total Active		0	0		
# hectares under CBNRM	0	0	0		
# of individuals participating in women's empowerment projects and activities	200	1 491	1 541		
# of individuals participating in youth focused projects and activities (15-35 years old)	0	645	0		

## Annex 2 - Result Stories

### Payment for Ecosystem Services in Cocoa Landscapes

#### ECAM Cooperative – Côte D'Ivoire

The Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) project in cocoa landscapes of Côte d'Ivoire was designed to recognize and reward farmers who protect trees and apply good agroforestry practices on their cocoa farms. Cocosource believes that agroforestry and regenerative agriculture are essential for the long-term sustainability of cocoa, which is why it joined this initiative.

Implemented by Nitidæ and co-financed by Enabel and Ferrero, the project was carried out in partnership with the cooperative ECAM. Its goal was to strengthen existing agroforestry systems by identifying cocoa farmers who already maintain healthy shade-tree cover and good farm management, and by providing them with financial incentives to continue these practices.

To do this, the project assessed nearly 1,000 cocoa plantations using a simple and low-cost evaluation method based on four key elements: the size of trees on the farm, the diversity of tree species, the number of shade trees, and how tree canopies are layered. This approach made it possible to fairly identify farmers who implement agroforestry while producing cocoa.



*Field officers from the ECAM cooperative assessing cocoa plantations*

During the last season, 995 plots covering more than 4,600 hectares were analyzed, and 388 farmers were found eligible for payments. These farmers received incentives that reward forest protection, support biodiversity, and help secure long-term cocoa productivity.

One of these farmers is Richard Kouakou, a 37-year-old cocoa farmer of Petit Ouelle in the Nawa region, whose experience shows how recognizing the value of trees can transform farming practices and motivation at the field level.



*Richard Kouakou participant of the PSE project*

Richard has been a cocoa farmer all his life. Like many farmers in his community, he has always understood that trees play an essential role on cocoa farms. What changed over time was not his respect for trees, but his deeper understanding of how protecting them sustains the land, supports the land, the climate, and the future of his family.

“I have been a cocoa farmer for more than 15 years,” Richard explains. “Even before this project, we knew that planting and protecting trees in our plantations was important. Trees bring rain and protect cocoa so it does not suffer.”

For many years, he maintained shade trees on his farm based on experience passed down from previous generations. “We knew trees were good for shade,” he says, “and that cocoa grows better under them. But we did not know that this way of farming was also recognized and supported.”

That understanding deepened when coaches and project partners visited his farm as part of a Payments for Environmental Services initiative. They measured the trees, explained their environmental and biodiversity value, and trained farmers on forest protection and agroforestry practices. “Before, we did not really understand the full value of these trees,” Richard says. “Sometimes we neglected them. Today, we understand their importance for the soil, for nature, and for our cocoa.”

The training changed how he and his community think about agroforestry. “Before, we protected trees mainly so people would not cut them,” he explains. “We also used some for traditional medicine. But now, thanks to the training, we protect them because we know they are important for the environment and for the future of farming.”

When Richard was selected as a beneficiary, the recognition confirmed that his efforts mattered. “They came and saw with their own eyes that I had taken care of the trees,” he says proudly. “I was happy to be among those selected.” The financial incentive, he adds, was encouragement to continue on the same path. “It gave me motivation to do even better,” he says. “I told my brothers and friends how important it is to protect trees on their farms.”

Since then, Richard has planted more shade trees and further improved how he manages his cocoa farm. Through the project, he also received tools and equipment. “Today we know we can grow cocoa without cutting trees,” he says. “This way of farming protects nature and will also improve cocoa production.”



*ECAM Cooperative*