



CLIMATE SMART COCOA IMPLEMENTATION UNDER THE GHANA FOREST INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Introduction

Cocoa is the third largest export commodity of Ghana and is an important revenue for many small scale farmers. Despite being the world's second largest producer of cocoa beans, Ghana records one of the lowest average yields in the World. In an attempt to increase yield, farmers resort to expanding their farms at the detriment of the forest. This phenomenon, pose a great threat to the forest resources of the country, the environment as a whole and our quest to help mitigate climate change and adapt to the inevitable consequences as well.

The Ghana Forest Investment programme has contributed significantly to addressing climate change in cocoa production by promoting the Climate-Smart Cocoa (CSC) concept which has the potential to remedy both the environmental degradation, increase yield on the same parcel of land and ensure resilience of farms to the impacts of climate change.

Why the Introduction of Climate Smart Cocoa

The decision to go Climate Smart Cocoa production was one that bothered on the wellbeing of farmers, their livelihood, security of the Ghana cocoa industry and the fight against climate change.

Environmentally, with the changing trends in climate, studies from the Cocoa Research Institute clearly showed that the climate and soils of the country may not be able to support cocoa production if drastic measures were not taken to halt the degradation happening in the forest and the changing patterns in the long-term weather.

Concerns such as climate change and unsustainable land use threaten the sustainable production of cocoa in the country and as a matter of fact the livelihood of many Ghanaians which rests on this industry. Many Cocoa farmers have limited capacity to manage and adapt to challenges that negatively impact crop yields therefore CSC is a way to develop their skills and build their capacity to achieve long term sustainable production of cocoa in light of climate change pressures.





Through the CSC, farmers are encouraged and guided to adopt climate-smart agriculture practices that foster resilience to climate change while sustainably increasing cocoa production.

One major reason that led to the decision to go Climate Smart Cocoa is the breaking of the “Sun Loving” cocoa myth. Whispers from the corridors of the country and neighboring Ivorians had it that cocoa thrives better without shade trees. Though there is a level of merit in that claim, the overall impact of this system wasn't suitable for the farmer and the environment at the long run.

There is initial high yield but the life cycle of the farm is reduced drastically which does not ensure sustainability. It also has devastating impact of the forest and the environment as a whole. The Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana through years of studies concluded that ensuring a certain number of shaded trees in cocoa farms provide cover that reduces evapotranspiration, makes the farm resilient to pest and diseases and ensures long term productivity while enhancing the environment.

The adoption of Climate Smart Cocoa is therefore indispensable for mitigating the projected effect of climate change on cocoa production and demonstrating that cocoa and forest can co-exist for mutual benefits.

Progress Made under the Initiative

Under the Investment Programme, a strong coordination and friendship has been established among the key agencies on the cocoa and forest mosaic landscape. This union has served as a vehicle to propel the Climate Smart Cocoa agenda. Through the CIF support to Ghana, the following have been made available making it possible for the landscape to see transformational changes in the behavior and management practices of both forest users and managers;

Logistical Support

The Investment Programme has supported the operations of Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ghana Cocoa Board, and Forestry Commission in providing technical backstopping to farmers regarding sustainable cocoa production and productivity.

Particularly, the programme has provided about 40 vehicles, 70 motor bicycles, 50 bicycles to support the outreach and extension services of these agencies to deliver the necessary information to forest users towards the overall goal of the programme.



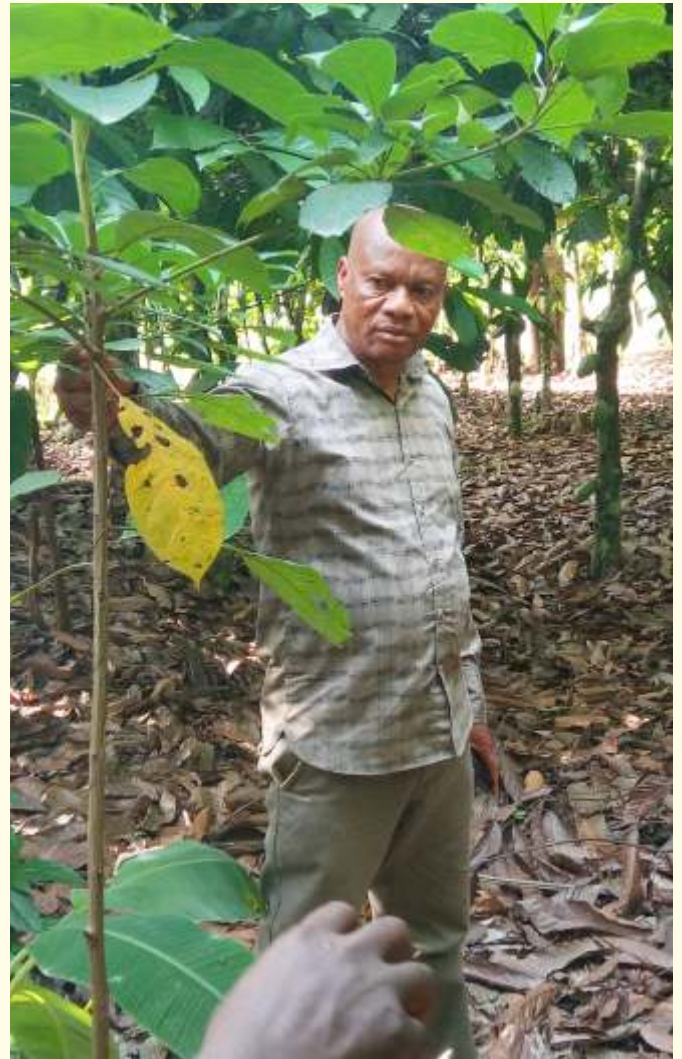
Awareness Creation and Sensitization

Support through radio programmes, farmer field schools and community durbar promote actions needed to transform and reorient management practices and to draw the cognitive awareness of farmers and other beneficiaries on the importance of shade trees in cocoa farms. This was very key to erase the harbored perception that existed among farmers that shade trees hinder productivity. Farmers have greatly welcomed the idea and are adjusting their management techniques in line with the CSC objectives. The impacts of these information are witnessed through the behavioral change on the landscape.

Provision of Free Shade Tree Seedlings to Farmers

One of the key outputs under the Investment Programme was the piloting and demonstration that Climate Smart Cocoa works. Accordingly, model sites were developed by Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana to demonstrate the feasibility of the initiative and provide a learning platform for participating farmers.

This was complimented by the provision of free seedlings to farmers to incorporate in their farm. The overwhelming acceptance of the incorporation of a minimum of 18 trees per hectare of cocoa farm have seen the programme target of 46,000 ha over a 5 year period over achieved by 300% by midterm.





Training Programs

Farmers and community extension agents in the project regions have benefited from various training modules regarding Climate-Smart Cocoa production. The various training modules are structured to equip them with long term skills required to practice Climate-Smart Cocoa beyond the project duration. Farmer Business schools are also organized periodically for the farmers to enhance their management skills by tapping into the lessons and emerging initiatives from the field.



Consolidation of Gains/Wayforward

Clearly, Climate Smart Cocoa practices are the way forward to address the anticipated impacts of climate change on cocoa production and the negative impacts of this important commodity to the environment particularly deforestation caused by expansion of farms as a means to increasing production. The implementation of Climate Smart Cocoa production under the Investment Programme has shown promising results in the attempt of the country to move towards deforestation free cocoa. The Investment Programme will continue to promote this initiative taking into account the lessons learnt, opportunities and the challenges.

To consolidate the gains and ensure sustainability beyond the project, the Investment Programme is redirecting resources into strategies that have shown promising results in terms of the overall goal of improving the management practices of forest managers and users. In this regard, Ghana will continue to build the capacity and skills of farmers and extension agents necessary to sustain the gains beyond project duration. The Implementation Partners of the Investment Programme have shown commitment to adopt and mainstream the lessons from the field into their day to day administration therefore many of the bankable strategies will continue to be implemented beyond the project cycle.