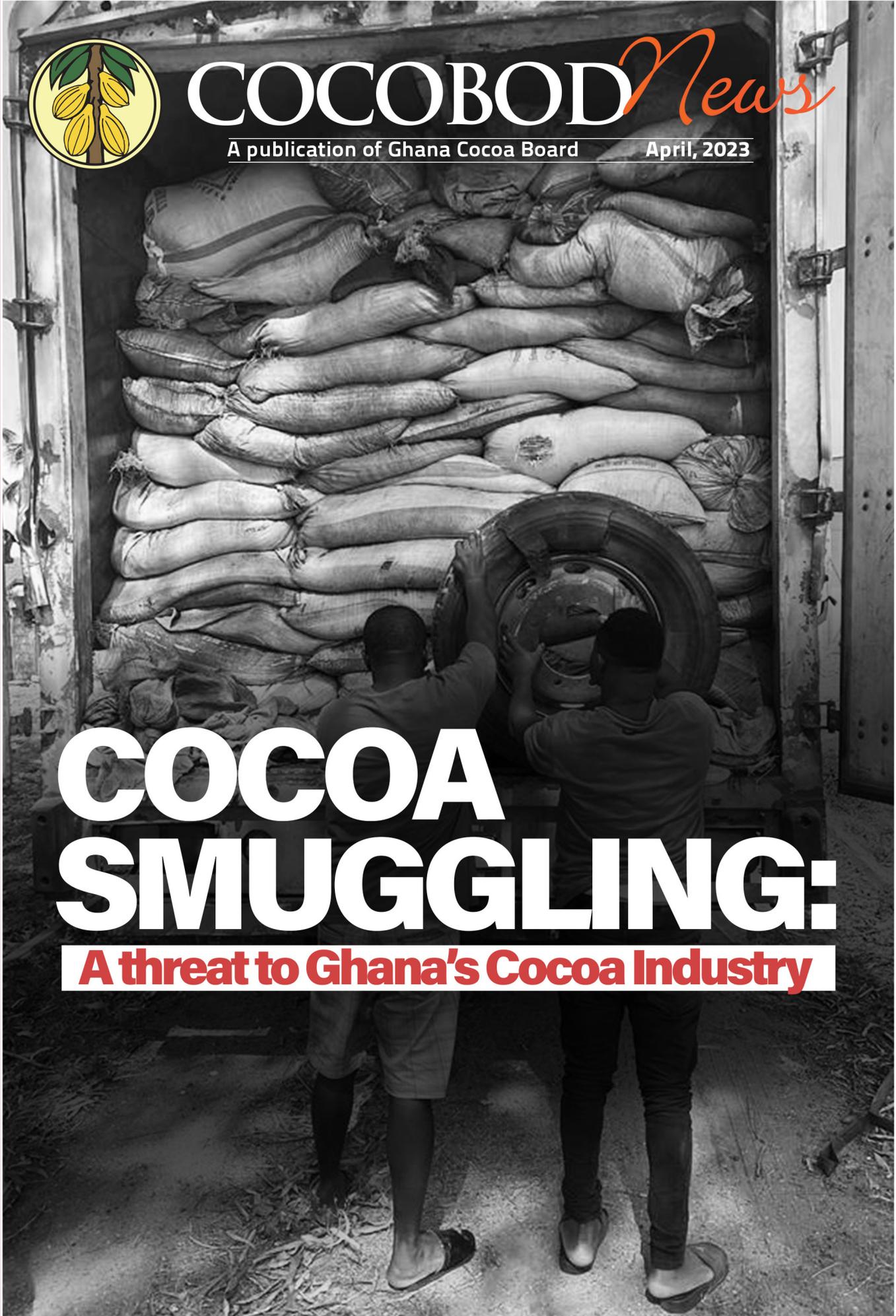




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COCOA SMUGGLING:

A threat to Ghana's Cocoa Industry

*Stay Healthy
Enjoy a Taste of Cocoa
Every Day*



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COCOA SMUGGLING: A THREAT TO GHANA'S COCOA INDUSTRY



The contribution of cocoa to the economy of Ghana cannot be overemphasized. Since its discovery over 14 decades ago, the produce has continued to play a key role in the socio-economic development of the country. Per recent data collected by the Ghana Cocoa Board through the Cocoa Management System (CMS), there are currently more than 800,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana, who, together with their families, directly depend on cocoa production for their livelihoods.

Cocoa continues to lead as the country's major agricultural export commodity, earning the country an average of Two Billion Dollars (\$2bn) annually. These earnings, in the form of foreign exchange inflow, are used for various developmental initiatives for the benefit of millions of Ghanaians.

The annual inflow of the Cocoa

Syndicated Loan, for example, goes a long way to strengthen the Ghana Cedi against the United States Dollar, thereby helping to stabilize inflation and improve the economy.

In spite of the fact that Ghana still maintains its position as second largest world producer of cocoa, with an annual average output of about 850,000 metric tonnes, the country's cocoa faces several threats and challenges which have the propensity to derail efforts at enhancing its growth and development.

One such threat is the canker of cocoa smuggling. Ghana's cocoa production has seen some downward trends in recent years, and the spurious activities of smugglers to neighboring countries have been identified as one of the key causes of this decline. Many unpatriotic Ghanaians continue to take advantage of the porous nature of our

land borders to smuggle the produce and deny the country the expected earnings.



Ghana's cocoa production has seen some downward trends in recent years, and the spurious activities of smugglers to neighboring countries have been identified as one of the key causes of this decline

Even more worrying is the fact that COCOBOD, in an effort to develop the industry, spends millions of Ghana Cedis annually to support farmers and other stakeholders in the value chain through various interventions. This is in the form of provision of highly subsidized inputs such as fertilizers, chemicals and free extension services.

Again, COCOBOD, through the Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, is cutting and replanting diseased and moribund cocoa farms across the country as part of efforts to revive over-aged and ailing cocoa trees.

It is important to state that cocoa farmers in other competing cocoa producing countries do not enjoy such benefits from their authorities.

Regrettably, the country is being denied huge chunk of the expected returns on these investments as a result of smuggling.

WHAT IS COCOBOD DOING TO ADDRESS THE MENACE OF SMUGGLING?

Management of COCOBOD has, over the years, introduced a number of measures to help curb cocoa smuggling. These measures include strong collaboration with authorities of neighboring countries, the introduction of incentives to individuals who provide information leading to the arrest of smugglers, as well as building strong cooperation with the security services in tightening our various borders.



COCOBOD, in an effort to develop the industry, spends millions of Ghana Cedis annually to support farmers and other stakeholders in the value chain through various interventions

In fact the security agencies, the Special Services Department of COCOBOD and some patriotic Ghanaians, deserve commendation for their various efforts which have helped in intercepting huge tonnes of cocoa in various parts of the country in recent months.

Records indicate that between October 2022 and March 2023 about 2657 bags of cocoa which translate into over (166) metric tonnes were intercepted in some parts of the Eastern, Western North and Greater Accra regions.

These produce were suspected of being smuggled to Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. The operations led to various arrests with many of the culprits undergoing trials

in various courts across the country. Additionally, COCOBOD offers two-thirds of the value of every confiscated cocoa to the individuals who provide the necessary information leading to the interception. The Board also offers support to security personnel manning our various borders all in an effort to motivate them to help deal with smugglers.

The Board also engages in advocacy and awareness creation activities, through the use of various communication channels, on the dangers and effects of smuggling.

CURBING SMUGGLING SHOULD BE A COLLECTIVE AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- Smuggling, just like other criminal activities, does not occur in a vacuum. It is perpetuated by groups and individuals. Dealing with it therefore requires a holistic approach.

COCOBOD alone cannot tackle this menace. It will require the effort of all well-meaning Ghanaians. At a time Ghanaians continue to feel the impact of the economic challenges currently confronting the country, particularly the continuous depreciation of the Cedi against the US Dollar with its concomitant effects on prices of goods and services, we must remind ourselves of how the prevention of cocoa smuggling can help boost export and reduce the pressure on the Cedi.

By helping to solve the smuggling menace, we will be saving the future of the cocoa industry whilst sustaining the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and their families.

By preventing smuggling, we will be helping COCOBOD to address the myriad of challenges threatening the sustenance of the cocoa industry. This will ensure that revenues are made available for the Board to continue to implement the various social interventions to support on-farm activities, motivate cocoa farmers through payment of remunerative producer prices, put smiles on the faces of all players on the cocoa value chain and help grow the Ghanaian economy.

LET US ALL HELP STOP SMUGGLING NOW!!!!





GHANA BEST COCOA FARMERS ASSOCIATION LAUDS COCOBOD BOSS AND MANAGEMENT

The president of the Ghana Best Cocoa Farmers Association, Mr. Charles Gyamfi has heaped praises on the Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo for spearheading the implementation of sustainable agronomic programmes and practices that have contributed to a viable cocoa sector in Ghana.

The outpour of acknowledgment to the Chief Executive was made during a recent courtesy call by members of the Ghana Best Cocoa Farmers Association at the COCOBOD Head office, Cocoa House in Accra. The gallant team of best farmers led by Mr. Charles Gyamfi, presented a magnificent citation to Hon Boahen Aidoo lauding him and COCOBOD management for the immeasurable impact made in the cocoa sector.

Leading the delegation of farmers, Mr. Gyamfi who was the 2016 National Best Cocoa Farmer said it was necessary to acknowledge the efforts of COCOBOD headed by Hon Aidoo, whose tenure saw the record-breaking cocoa production

level of 1.4 million metric tonnes in the 2021 crop year recorded in Ghana's cocoa archives. This achievement is said to have greatly impacted on the livelihood of cocoa farmers in Ghana, coupled with the introduction of the Living Income Differential (LID).

'Your commitment to improve the welfare of farmers and innovativeness in introducing sustainable Productivity Enhancement Programmes especially Pruning and Hand Pollination deserves massive commendation. Earlier, my colleagues and I paid a courtesy call on H.E President Nana Akufo-Addo who was pleased with the feedback from a crop of citizens like us who contribute to feeding and sustaining the economy,' he said.

He added that his team took advantage of the courtesy call on the President to highlight the need for Government to complement the good works of the Board which has already invested in several Social Responsibility projects in providing road infrastructure, schools, health and general welfare of cocoa

farmers and Ghanaians at large. As such, his team deemed it fit to officially convey the Presidential compliments and show their appreciation to Hon Aidoo and COCOBOD management for their good work.

Upon receiving the citation, Hon Aidoo was appreciative of the magnitude of acknowledgement received from the farmers. 'I am deeply moved by your show of appreciation and I am honoured by your expression in acknowledging the hard work my colleagues and I put in, all these efforts are in the best interest of your welfare.

This recognition is positive feedback, and it gives me more motivation to ensure that the resources of the Board are effectively used for our mutual benefits', Hon Aidoo expressed.

Hon Aidoo urged the farmers to continue in their roles as ambassadors in their respective communities and encourage more youths to venture into cocoa farming to help guarantee the sustainability of the cocoa sector.

COCOBOD, SWISS PLATFORM STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION ON SUSTAINABILITY



Shots from COCOBOD and SWISSCO meeting held in Accra

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO) have taken steps to strengthen existing bilateral relations in the cocoa sector through a joint programme aimed at promoting sustainability within the value chain.

The two organisations, which play vital roles in the international cocoa and chocolate market, have been collaborating for years on various projects of bilateral interest. The latest is an agreement to collaboratively address six crucial factors that tend to undermine efforts to promote a sustainable cocoa value chain.

At a meeting held in Accra, the Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo and the Swiss Ambassador to Ghana, Simone Giger, who led a team from SWISSCO, both underscored the commitment of the respective organisations in the joint effort to address the challenges in the cocoa value chain.

Hon Aidoo said the policies of Ghana on cocoa align with the global common

agenda to mainstream sustainable practices at every level of the value chain, hence, the development of the Cocoa Management System (CMS).

The CMS, he said, cures the challenge of a lack of credible data on farmers and will serve as a reliable mechanism to monitor activities from pre-production to post-production. It will aid in the effective application of incentives to guide farmers toward more and more sustainable practices.

Hon Aidoo added that the CMS will also enable the effective monitoring of the government and COCOBOD's zero-tolerance stance on child labour, the use of weedicides on cocoa farms and deforestation, all of which are inimical to sustainability. Moreover, it will improve transparency and enable the traceability of cocoa beans from farm to port.

The CMS must, therefore, be seen as a sign of Ghana's preparedness to pursue development sustainably under the guiding principle that development must satisfy present needs without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, Hon Aidoo said.

It is for this reason that other countries and stakeholders in the international cocoa trading arena need to demonstrate commitment to tackling challenges within the industry, including addressing the environmental, economic and social issues that affect sustainable cocoa production, Hon Aidoo noted. Adding that, every stakeholder stands to lose if these challenges are not addressed.

On her part, the Swiss Ambassador, Simone Giger, said she was pleased that Ghana had agreed to strengthen its partnership with Switzerland on sustainability.

She acknowledged the importance of Ghana's cocoa sector to her country, adding that the SWISSCO delegation will share experiences and insights on ways to create a viable and resilient cocoa sector for present and future generations.

ENROLLMENT OF FARMERS ONTO THE COCOA PENSION SCHEME RECORDS SUCCESSES

Thousands of cocoa farmers in parts of the Ashanti Region have been successfully enrolled onto the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS) under phase one of the national enrolment exercise.

The exercise marks a deliberate effort to migrate all cocoa farmers in the country onto the scheme to guarantee a decent retirement.

The enrollment, which started in New Edubiase, Obuase, and Bekwai has recorded about 90% turn out, five days into the exercise. Cocoa farmers in communities in Nhyinahini, Tapa and Antoakrom are expected to be enrolled from 27 March 2023.

The enrollment primarily targets cocoa farmers who have been registered under the Cocoa Management System (CMS) and issued with Cocoa Cards.

Mr. Daniel Aidoo Mensah, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of CFPS, at a press briefing in Kumasi described the exercise as 'an incremental effort to enroll thousands of cocoa farmers in all the 70 Cocoa Districts who have been issued with their cocoa cards.

According to Mr. Mensah Aidoo, the security of the scheme is not only guaranteed by the Ghana Cocoa Board Law 81, but also, the CFPS is registered under the National Pensions Regulatory Authority.

'PNDC Law 81 (1984) enjoins the Board to implement a welfare that provides decent retirement for cocoa farmers in the country, he said.

He assured that all bottlenecks that stalled the initial roll out plan had been 'removed following the establishment of a 'clean data on cocoa farmers through the CMS and called on all stakeholders within the value chain to support this 'national effort'.

Mr. Fiifi Boafo, Chairman of the Implementation Task Force of the CFPS indicated that government had concluded to set aside at least 1% of the total volume of cocoa produced annually to be distributed to cocoa farmers on pro rata basis as part of its contribution towards supporting the scheme. He said farmers will contribute 5% on every sale of cocoa made at the sale centers into their pension accounts.

He further indicated that an automated system had been devised to be used by purchasing clerks to ensure the smooth and safe deduction of farmers' contribution to the scheme.

He appealed to the media to make their platforms available for fruitful discussions about the scheme and its requirements and assured of his outfit's support in working together with them to mobilize cocoa farmers to be part of the scheme.

Responding a question, Fiifi Boafo urged his colleague journalists to avoid politicizing the CFPS and said the scheme is safe, secure and will see progress in its operations from time to time.

'Oh No, I am not sure any government would want to collapse this noble initiative. At best, there will be efforts to rather increase the government contribution from where it started from to higher rate', he noted.

Over 30 media houses participated in the press conference



A female farmer going through the registration process of the cocoa farmers pension scheme

CONSIDER COCOA PRICING IN YOUR LEGISLATION- COCOBOD CHIEF TELLS EUROPEAN UNION

Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen-Aidoo has reiterated his call on the European Union (EU) to reconsider the element of cocoa pricing in its legislation. According to him, the legislation in its current form cannot sustain the industry and improve the incomes of cocoa farmers.

Hon Boahen Aidoo made these comments when he met with a four-member delegation from the European Union to among others discuss ongoing conversations on sustainability, traceability and child labour within the sector.

The EU is the world's largest importer of cocoa, accounting for 60% of world imports. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon are major suppliers of cocoa to the EU market, with Ghana producing the best premium quality.

Hon Aidoo said Ghana is committed to maintaining its status as the best producer of premium quality cocoa in the world, in addition to ensuring that cocoa cultivation is devoid of deforestation and use of services of children in cocoa farms and urged the EU to fulfil its part of the social contract.

The COCOBOD chief mentioned that Ghana has worked to provide a common ground for sustainability. 'Although deforestation is a huge challenge, we must consider that cocoa is the only crop which has preserved Ghana's forest and supported global effort', he emphasized.

On the issue of pricing, he mentioned that the Living Income Differential (LID) policy was introduced to mitigate poverty among cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and it is therefore imperative that particular attention is paid to the cocoa farmer who forms the basis for all the discussions. The Chief Executive added that the Board has introduced the Cocoa Management



Shots from COCOBOD's management meeting with EU delegation

System (CMS) to ensure cocoa traceability and sustainability.

According to him, with all these interventions in place, the EU must also ensure that they meet their end of the bargain by paying the right prices for cocoa. He was grateful to the EU for various support and their Sustainable Cocoa Initiative to enhance the sustainability of cocoa production and trade.

Head of Cooperation, EU delegation to Ghana, Massimo Nina, who led the team, said the EU is committed to building stronger relations with COCOBOD in its efforts at ensuring traceability and sustainability.

He acknowledged the concerns raised, admitting, that the current pricing framework does not match the living income of cocoa farmers in the two leading producing countries.

According to him, there is a need for the European Union to take steps to ensure that cocoa farmers' income and livelihoods are improved to correspond with their inputs in cocoa production.

He commended Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire for their initiative to introduce the LID to mitigate the plight of cocoa farmers.

Mr. Massimo Nina further added that the Union would work closely with collaborators to ensure equitable pricing for cocoa farmers. 'I must say your processes towards ensuring sustainability, traceability and elimination of child labour within the sector are on a good track', he added.

The EU has over the years committed to a set of concrete time-bound actions to improve the sustainability of the cocoa supply chain in West Africa, to halt deforestation and child labour, and improve the living income of farmers.



MEMBERS OF SPD MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TOUR SPD SEED GARDENS



The Chairperson for the Management Committee of the Seed Production Division (SPD) of Ghana Cocoa Board, Rev. Prof. Hans Adu-Dapaah, has commended staff of the Division for working to raise enough cocoa seedlings for supply to farmers across the country for the 2022/23 Crop Season.

seedlings for planting since more than 70% of the expected seedlings output for the year is complete. 'We were given 70m seedlings to raise and Akontombra nursery site has produced more than 10m seedlings ready for replanting, so the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) should take it up for distribution', he added.



Prof. Adu-Dapaah gave the staff a pat on the back when he addressed a portion of the Division's nursery workers during a 2-day field visit by members of the Management Committee to some nursery sites in the Brong Ahafo and Western North regions to assess the state of cocoa seedlings raised for the Season under review.

The Deputy Chief Executive in-charge of Agronomy and Quality Control (A&QC), Dr. Ebenezer Owusu was delighted with the work done, adding that, if the target set for every season is met, the industry would experience a massive rise in production.



According to him, such visits afford members the opportunity to have firsthand information on progress of activities of the Division to aid them in the discharge of the assignments entrusted into their hands by the Board.

Dr. Ebenezer Owusu added that the work of SPD needs to be propagated nationwide for the public to also have a fair knowledge about the industry's work. According to him, it is important for the public to understand the volume of investments being made by the Ghana Cocoa Board in the cocoa industry to ensure value for money.

According to the chairman, farmers should be ready to receive their

The team was accompanied by some regional staff.

CRACKDOWN ON COCOA SMUGGLING YIELDS PROMISING RESULTS

Efforts by the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and security agencies to combat the smuggling of cocoa beans to neighbouring countries have yielded positive results, following the interception of truckloads of cocoa beans in the past few weeks.

In Accra, COCOBOD received information from the Mamprobi Police about an interception of 508 bags of standard cocoa beans and 72 bags of cocoa waste beans (Abinkyi) at the Lartehbiokoshie 'A' cluster of schools in the Ablekuma West Municipality.

Abdul Rahman Amadu, the driver of the truck with registration No. GS 8541-21, carrying the beans was arrested along with two individuals believed to be labourers, who aided in the concealment of the beans in polythene sacks to evade detection. In total, 511 bags (64kg per bag) of good quality cocoa beans and 123 bags of cocoa waste (Abinkyi), each weighing 50 kg, were retrieved.

Following the Accra incident, COCOBOD officials in the Volta Region also intercepted a Mercedes Bens Actros truck with registration number GX 7632-14, carrying smuggled cocoa beans and bound for Togo.

About 320 bags of cocoa beans in polythene sacks, were seized and taken to the Volta Regional Police Headquarters in Ho. The driver of the truck and a 42-year-old Nigerian national named Isaac Oluwaje, who claimed ownership of the cocoa has since been arrested.

The total quantity of the seized cocoa beans, after reconditioning and re-bagging at COCOBOD's Tema Take-Over Centre, was 406 bags of 64kg per bag.

Oluwaje stated that he purchased the cocoa from Bonsu Nkwanta in the Western North Region and intended to sell it to dealers in Togo due to a shortage of cocoa in that country.

In a separate incident at Aflao, two persons, Ebenezer Tetteh and Francis Awuah, who were transporting cocoa beans across the border at Aflao were arrested through a joint effort by COCOBOD and the National Intelligence Bureau. The team retrieved some 276 bags of cocoa beans transported from Osinase in the Eastern Region.

Again, in a night operation on March 13th, 2023, COCOBOD personnel stationed at Sefwi Wiawso successfully intercepted and detained two KIA

Rhino trucks, bearing the license plates AS 885-19 and AS 7457-17, in the Wiawso vicinity. The vehicles were found to be transporting 339 bags of cocoa, believed to be intended for smuggling into the Ivory Coast.

The Director of Special Services at COCOBOD, Mr. Charles Amenayaglo, who gave these strides has praised the efforts of the informants who provided the intelligence that led to the interceptions, adding that COCOBOD would continue to work tirelessly to prevent the smuggling of cocoa beans.

He said the recent interceptions of trucks loaded with cocoa beans demonstrate the success of these efforts, adding that, COCOBOD would continue to be vigilant to ensure that Ghana's cocoa industry remains profitable and sustainable.

He urged the public to report suspicious activities involving the transportation of cocoa beans to the authorities, promising that their identities would be kept confidential and their efforts would be rewarded greatly.

Meanwhile, the smuggling suspects have been arraigned before various courts.



A truck load of smuggled cocoa intercepted by the Ghana Police Service



COCOBOD, WCF SHARE CHOCOLATE PRODUCTS WITH FARMERS & SCHOOL CHILDREN

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in collaboration with World Cocoa Foundation has shared a variety of chocolate products with some Cocoa Farmer Cooperatives in various cocoa-growing Regions as part of this year's National Chocolate Day celebration.

In an interaction with the farmers on Tuesday, February 14, the Executive Director for the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), Rev Edwin Afari encouraged them to consume cocoa-based products and join the campaign for local consumption, to help boost the country's cocoa sector.

Rev. Afari also commended cocoa farmers for their continued adherence to the good agronomy practice that has helped maintain the country's premium quality on the international market 'Ghana still maintains the premium quality standard because of the good practices you adhere to, please continue with it', he advised.

Rev. Afari further encouraged the farmers to capitalize on COCOBOD's productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) to help increase the country's cocoa production levels.

The Country Director for World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), Dr Betty Annan highlighted the need for Cocoa Farmers

in the country to appreciate and consume the final product of their hard work.

'Farmers work day-in day-out but the purchasing level of the final products is low, that is why we are celebrating the 2023 chocolate day with them in their respective communities' she emphasized.

She said the WCF shares in the agenda of COCOBOD to encourage farmers to develop a taste for cocoa-based products.

Adding on, Dr. Annan stressed on the need for local chocolate processors to build on the platform created to

promote their products, in order to help boost the country's consumption drive.

'I believe this is a good platform to rally behind COCOBOD's agenda to boost the country's chocolate consumption drive', she added.

The team also visited some selected public schools in the region where they shared chocolate and a variety of cocoa-based products with the pupils and their teachers.

The donation was part of a series of programmes Ghana COCOBOD and some collaborating agencies organized in celebration of the 2023 National Chocolate Week



Dr. Betty Annan (Country Director, WCF) presenting cocoa products to cocoa farmers

COCOA FARMING MITIGATES CARBON FOOTPRINT - CRIG BOSS



Dr. Padi (Executive Director, CRIG) addressing the officials from the European Union

The Executive Director of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), Dr. Francis Padi, has justified the contribution of cocoa farming towards promoting agroforestry and carbon footprint reduction in Africa and beyond.

Dr. Padi disclosed this during a working visit of a team of officials from the European Union (EU) responsible for monitoring the implementation of trade and environmental regulations. He explained that since its inception in 1938, CRIG has extensively researched into cocoa, alongside tree crops like coffee, shea, cashew, and cola; and provided impressive findings that have supported the cultivation of cocoa in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner in the country.

He indicated that as a research institute specialized in agronomy, entomology, plant breeding, pathology and new products development; the institute's core mandate focuses primarily on the integration of agroforestry in mainstream cocoa farming with the overall goal of ensuring sustainable use of the ecosystem.

'Satellite images of Ghana support the massive contribution of cocoa farming to agroforestry because cocoa farming drives a number of environmental co-benefits, significantly sequestration

carbon emissions. When you view these satellite images, you realise that most of the areas covered with greenery, are areas where cocoa farming is rife and in such zones, eco-tourism is said to thrive and promote biodiversity', he said

The CRIG boss said his outfit would continue to influence the implementation of good agronomic practices through farmer sensitization to help farmers to improve productivity levels while promoting high quality of cocoa beans that meet international standards.

Mr. Regis Neritan, leader of the EU delegation, commended the institute for its groundbreaking research and innovation laurels. He said COCOBOD has a commendable strategy for cocoa sustainability that deserves to be showcased to major stakeholders and international legislators for consideration when making laws that affect the welfare of cocoa producers.

Mr. Neritan expressed the EU's readiness to support in the issue of fair pricing if Ghana and Ivory Coast through the Ghana Cote d'Ivoire Cocoa Initiative are able to provide accurate data on their social and environmental sustainability strides to support a valid case for increased cocoa pricing on the international market.

He reiterated the need for enhanced dialogue and consultations to help make COCOBOD's sustainability strategy more relevant to international policy.

The delegation used the opportunity to tour selected CRIG cocoa farms to acquaint themselves with some field activities. Other facilities of the institute were also toured by the team.



CHED STAFF CLIMAX HERITAGE MONTH IN GRAND STYLE

This year's commemoration of Ghana's Heritage Month saw staff of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) of COCOBOD, climax the celebration with a display Ghana's cultural diversity with a major display of traditional attires, dance and moments of food tasting of local delicacies.

The month of March is reportedly christened as 'Heritage Month' to celebrate the culture of Ghanaian people and promotes tourism by telling the story of various ethnic groups alongside showcasing various delicacies, and unique traditional attires in various informal and official setups across Ghana and in the diaspora.

To encourage workplace harmony through projecting Ghanaian cultures, the Executive Director of CHED Rev. Daniel Afari said that, celebrating cultural diversity at work place is essential for creating a healthy atmosphere for work adaptability in dynamic modern times. The reason given as the rationale for ensuring that the Division extensively observed the month as such.

In collaboration with the CHED Staff Association, CHED Ladies Club and Management, the Human Resource Department of CHED put up an extensive line up of activities for the month long celebration centered on various Ghanaian lifestyle themes for each Friday in the month of March. The first Friday of March required staff to dress in various African print fabrics, the second Friday required staff to dress in an 'old school fashion' theme which required them to dress in vibrant fifties and sixties fashion.

The third Friday of the Heritage Month was dubbed 'Rep your High School' which required staff to wear their high school uniforms to rekindle the spirit of youthfulness and add fun to the celebration.

On Friday 31st March 2023, staff of the Division climaxed the heritage month with a colorful display of



various traditional attires representing the Northern Western Eastern and Southern ethnicities in Ghana. The newly appointed Deputy Chief Executive for Agronomy and Quality Control Dr. Ebenezer Owusu who was in attendance at the celebration, commended staff for their enthusiasm and dedication to foster workplace harmony for organizational growth.

Dr. Owusu stated that it is important for staff to adopt the spirit of tolerance despite the existing cultural and ethnic

differences and added that, staff should exercise the same commitment to their service delivery to ensure that the organizational goals of COCOBOD are achieved.

The lineup of indigenous foods and cocoa drinks at the forecourt of CHED also served all patrons from the Quality Control Division, Seed Production Division and Main Board with a memorable mouthwatering food tasting opportunity.

HERITAGE MONTH IN PICTURES





FARMER COOPERATIVES SENSITIZED ON THE COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME



Over 150 executives of Cocoa Farmer Cooperatives in the Amenfi East District have been sensitized on the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme ahead of the commencement of enrolment in selected communities in the district under the phase I of the programme.

The enrolment, which started from 31st March is expected to end on 21st April 2023 as part of the roll out plans of the Board of Trustees of the CFPS to enlist all cocoa farmers who have been issued with their Cocoa Cards under the Cocoa Management System onto the Scheme. The farmer executives met in a farm to discuss the modalities of the pension scheme and its benefits.

The Chairman of the Implementation Task Force, Mr. Fiifi Bofo, in an interactive session with the farmers on basic enrolment requirements, lauded the significant roles the farmer leaders towards educating their members and called on them to act as agents if change.

The pension scheme, according to him, is a contributory scheme where farmers contribute a minimum of 5% with the opportunity to contribute more.

He added that it is controlled by the National Pensions Regulatory Act 766 and governed by a 10-member Board of Trustees with the interest of cocoa farmers represented on the Board.

The deduction of contribution of farmers would be done at points of sale using a mobile App supported with software that enables instant alert to be received by contributor on his phone.

A 5% deduction on every sale will be done by the Purchasing Clerk who has been mandated by the Trustee while at least 1% on the actual value of sales made would be automatically added as COCOBOD's contribution and the total would be credited to the pension account of the farmer.

Speaking on the continuity and safety



Farmers present during the sensitization programme

of the scheme, Mr. Bofo stated that PNDC Law 81, 1984 and the NPRA Act 766 are legal instruments that guarantee the safety of the scheme against any 'attack' whether now or in future.

'I do not anticipate any such attack on the continuity of the scheme since it is insulated from political manipulation by law,' he added.

Two accounts exist under the scheme out of which 25% of the total contribution would be credited to his Personal Account and 75%, to a Retirement Account. A farmer may opt to access a soft loan from the Personal Account but this does not apply to the Retirement Account.

There is no entry age limit but contributors who sign onto the scheme at ages below 50 years would be eligible to retire at a non-compulsory age of 55. However, regardless of the entry age, after 5 years of good standing on the scheme a farmer is eligible to retire.

Mr. Fiifi Bofo further called on farmers who have still not gotten their Cocoa Cards for various reasons to contact the District Office to be assisted in that regard, adding that the card was an essential part of the enrolment process.

'Opportunity exists for farmers who may not be able to enroll during this 2-week period to be captured even after the exercise has ended since we are ready to enroll all farmers to enjoy a decent retirement', he assured.

He appealed to the farmer representatives to use available means to announce the enrolment exercise to their members by way of their support towards mobilizing cocoa farmers to visit the centers to sign on to the scheme.

Meanwhile, plans are far advanced to gradually enroll all farmers in the country before the next cocoa season begins, barring any challenges.

COCOBOD, GTA SPREAD CHOCOLATE LOVE AT KIA AND HOSPITALS

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in partnership with Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) has distributed made-in-Ghana chocolates to some travelers at the Kotoka International Airport (KIA) and patients at selected hospitals as part of activities to climax the 2023 National Chocolate week.

Passengers who arrived with Ethiopian Airlines, Emirates, Delta, Turkish Airlines, Kenya Airline, KLM, and British Airways at terminal 3 of KIA were each treated to a bar of 100grams of chocolate made by local Ghanaian chocolate processors.

Similarly, at the domestic terminal, over three hundred passengers arriving aboard domestic carriers like Africa World Airlines and Passion Air from the Western, Northern and Ashanti Regions were also treated to chocolate bars upon their arrival at the luggage claim points.

At the Cocoa Clinic in Accra, patients on admission were also treated to some assorted cocoa products while those at the Outpatient Department (OPD), the hospital's laboratories, pharmacy and various medical services units also received bars of chocolate.

The Deputy Director of Health at the Cocoa Clinic, Dr. Eric Fordjuor, who led the team from COCOBOD to the wards informed the patients that COCOBOD and its subsidiary companies cared about their welfare and wanted to share some chocolate and cocoa-based products with them, so they do not feel left out of the National Chocolate Week celebrations.

The Deputy Manager of Nursing at Cocoa Clinic-Accra, Madam Wilhelmina Mensah, further advised patients to regularly take dark chocolate and other cocoa-based products to help boost their immune systems.

At the St. Martins Hospital at Sukura, the Outreach Coordinator and Senior

Dental Nurse, Madam Esther Ofori Doe expressed appreciation to COCOBOD for thinking of patients on such a special day in the month of love.

During visits to various wards, the patients were excited to receive bars of chocolate and thanked the management of COCOBOD for their kind gesture.

Senior Public Affairs Officer at COCOBOD, Mr. David Asare Oduro, said the welfare of citizens is also of topmost priority to management, hence the drive to encourage cocoa consumption, to ensure every household enjoys the health benefits.

He encouraged the patients and travelers to inculcate the habit of consuming cocoa-based products, especially natural cocoa powder daily to help boost their immune systems against infectious disease and improve on daily health.

The donation formed part of a drive to ensure increased consumption of cocoa-based products on National Chocolate Day and to help the public develop a taste for cocoa-based products.

Some beneficiaries of the donation of chocolate and varieties of cocoa-based products included schools, farmer cooperatives and the public.



CHOCOLATE WEEK 2023 IN PICTURES





MEET DR. EBENEZER OWUSU - DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (A&QC)



Dr. Ebenezer Owusu's interest in nature has come full circle, turning passion into a career that has led him to the pinnacle of decision making in Ghana's cocoa sector.

He took over the reigns of Deputy Chief Executive, responsible for Agronomy and Quality Control at Ghana Cocoa Board in March 2023.

As the team lead for Agronomy and Quality Control at Ghana Cocoa Board,

Dr. Owusu says timely execution of agronomic practices and interventions is one of his biggest priorities as it is critical to the country's quest for another 1 million or more tonnes of cocoa production output in a season.

He describes as regrettable that a lot of work has been done and money invested in the current season but illegal mining and smuggling of cocoa beans have taken a chunk off the expected production level.

He still maintains a positive forecast for attainment of a million or more tonnes next season.

'This is doable. It has been done before and we can do it again in the next season. The rains are pouring so it is up to us to do our work well', he said confidently.

In his own words' 'If you don't say I can, nobody will say you can.'

As a new addition to the team, Dr. Ebenezer Owusu opened up to COCOBOD news about his career and personal life and we bring excerpts of the conversation.

BACKGROUND AND INTERESTS

Dr. Ebenezer Owusu is from Nyameani, near Lake Bosomtwe in the Ashanti Region. He is married to a banker with whom he has two young women and a young man.

His love for football means having a favourite team in every country. His top three are Arsenal in the English Premier League, Barcelona in La Liga and Asante Kotoko in the Ghana Premier League. His all-time favourite player is the late Diego Armando Maradona from Argentina.

Another favourite past time is visiting natural environments. Even though he says waakye is his favourite meal, he is not fussy when it comes to anything edible. However, he is particular about eating the right meal at the right time to maintain a healthy body.

EDUCATION AND CAREER

Dr. Ebenezer Owusu is a proud 'Senior', an alumnus of Prempeh College where he stepped into his first major leadership role as Assistant Prefect of Pearson House. He completed his A'Level Certificate in Biology in 1988.

He holds a BSc. degree in Botany with Zoology from the University of Ghana. He served at the Botany Department during his National Service assignment and enrolled at the Department for his master's degree immediately afterwards.

After a year of studies, he transferred to Tufts University in Boston, USA, as an exchange student in Plant Pathology. Dr. Owusu excelled so much at the Tuft University; his hard work and credentials earned him a PhD within the period of attaining his master's degree.

He was then offered employment at the Botany Department (now Department of Plant and Environmental Biology) as a lecturer in Plant Pathology and Microbiology in 2002.

He doubled as a part time lecturer in the Department of Community Health at the University of Ghana Medical

School and the University of Allied Health and Sciences, Ho during his stint at the Department of Botany.

His career credentials also include lecturing on Environmental Ecology at the Ghana Armed Forces Staff College, Teshie, Accra.

Dr. Owusu is a consultant to Primetime Limited, producers of the National Science and Maths Quiz and has been setting biology questions for the much-loved national quiz programme since 2012.

He has served on about forty (40) boards, committees and ad-hoc committees in the University of Ghana. He was head of the Botany Department of the University of Ghana prior to his appointment at COCOBOD.

MEMBERSHIP OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES

Dr. Owusu is a member of several prestigious global professional associations including the American Society for Microbiology, Society for Conservation of Biology, Ghana Science Association and a founding member of International Society for Fungal Conservation.

WORK IN COCOA SECTOR

As a young man, Dr. Owusu has fond memories of assisting his uncles on their cocoa farms during school vacations but some of his biggest contributions came through chairing the Board of the Quality Control Company of COCOBOD, and research and publications on cocoa.

He has supervised over fifty (50) dissertations and projects in the areas of Agronomy, Quality Control of Plant Produce and Plant Pathology.

Some of his published works include,

- Effects of Cocoa Fungicides on Soil Micro Organisms
- Effect of Copper-Based Fungicides on Soil Fungi in The Eastern Region – 2017
- Influence of Copper- Based Fungicides on Copper Contamination of Soils on Cocoa Farms at Akyem Tafo
- Prevalence of Mycotoxigenic Fungi and Mycotoxins (Ochratoxin A) in Dried Cocoa Beans

ADVOCACY AND HUMANITARIANISM

Dr. Owusu is a passionate proponent of inclusiveness and an advocate for

persons with learning disabilities.

He has been a volunteer and a financier of programmes supporting persons with learning disabilities for several years.

He is vice chairperson of the African Leadership Council on Special Olympics and board chair of Special Olympics Ghana, a member of the global sporting organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

He has also served as a member of the Africa Regional Committee of Special Olympics International Strategic Planning Committee.

His passion for inclusiveness includes advocacy and work in remote villages, promoting and supporting the education of children in deprived communities. He does this through the Foundation for African Children's Education (FACE), a subsidiary of a Canadian charity organization where he serves as a member of the local board of directors.

Every year, the organization supports about 400 children in poor communities by counselling them and their guardians about the importance of education, support them to enroll in school, provide school supplies and allowance for school lunch. The organization has supported over 800 children in the past 12 years.

APPROACH TO WORK

Dr. Ebenezer Owusu is a champion of professionalism and a good working environment. He values good interpersonal and professional working relationships. "I believe in creating a comfortable working environment for everyone. If you make people comfortable enough, they give off their best."

His friendly demeanor and openness during our conversation affirmed this disclosure.

His best career advice, "In any situation, do not count yourself out. If there are opportunities; don't say if I go, I will not get it. Just take that step and go. Even if you go and you don't get it, you have not lost anything. This has taken me to so many places."

ADVICE TO STAFF

"What can be done today, don't wait for tomorrow. At least, it reduces the workload."

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, has tasked members of the re-constituted National Committee for the Promotion of Cocoa Consumption (NCPCC) to adopt innovative approaches to shore up the Board's efforts at consolidating successes chalked in its domestic cocoa consumption drive.

At a ceremony held at Cocoa House, Accra, to inaugurate the committee, Hon Aidoo charged the 9-member team to commit to the Committee's mandate of promoting cocoa consumption in Ghana.

'I wish to say that the new members of the Committee are people with experience in marketing communication, investment, tourism, and economics just to name but a few, and they have accepted to carry this huge responsibility for moving per capita consumption, which is currently around 1kg, to an appreciable level within the shortest possible time', he said.

According to the Chief Executive, over the past years, Government through COCOBOD had been pursuing a 50% cocoa processing policy to ensure that at least half of the country's annual cocoa output is processed locally, not only to take advantage of the economic fortunes of the cocoa trade; but also, to drum home the nutritional and health benefits of cocoa while encouraging massive consumption among the citizenry.

'The anticipated increase in local processing as well as the current relatively low per capita consumption provides enough justification for us to increase our pace within the cocoa consumption drive. Already the COCOBOD AfcFTA Cocoa Consumption Committee has been working tirelessly with local processors and state agencies to ensure smooth penetration into the African market', he added.

The Committee would be responsible for formulating concepts and strategies for the generic promotion of cocoa consumption in Ghana, develop programmes and activities that will create and increase national awareness of the health and nutritional benefits of cocoa, to sustain a nationwide cocoa consumption drive.

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Fiifi Boafo, thanked Management for reposing trust in the team to lead the campaign to increase the national per capita consumption of cocoa.

MEMBERS OF RE-CONSTITUTED NCPCC URGED TO BE INNOVATIVE



A group photograph of members of the NCPCC

Mr. Boafo assured Management of the Committee's commitment to fulfilling its mandate especially given the rich expertise of the newly appointed members.

He appealed to state institutions and policymakers to collaborate and harness the necessary resources to support the committee's work.

'My team and I will entreat policymakers and Management to grant us the necessary support to facilitate and approve policy recommendations

and proposals submitted by the committee. A collaborative effort from all stakeholders will serve as a justification for the confidence reposed in us", he affirmed.

The other members of the committee are Dr Raphael Odoom of the University of Ghana Business School, Mr. Ben Anane Nsiah - GTA, Mr. George Asafo Agyei - GIPC, and Mrs. Ruth Maafo GEPA. Others are Mr. Samuel Takyi-CMC, Mrs. Afua Sarpong Appiah-Kubi, Mr. Benjamin T. Larweh and Ms. Jemima Boadu Ayebofo, all of COCOBOD.

BE THE FUTURE AMBASSADORS TO INCREASE COCOA CONSUMPTION IN THE COUNTRY - ALSYD ACADEMY STUDENTS CHARGED



Pupils of ALSYD Academy in a group photograph at the Tetteh Quashie farm

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) says the country's per capita consumption of processed cocoa products can significantly improve if a collective effort is made to build a consumption habit amongst children.

The country's current per capita consumption stands at 1kg, a marked improvement from 0.5kg in 2017 but COCOBOD says there is great potential to match up to consumption levels in Europe and the Americas where per capita consumption level is between 7% to 11%.

On a recent tour of the Tetteh Quarshie Farm at Mampong Akuapim in the Eastern region by pupils of ALSYD Academy, an Accra-based basic school, the pupils were tasked to see themselves as ambassadors of the cocoa consumption campaign, to help drive local consumption.

Mrs. Akosua Agyente Kwapong, Principal Research Officer at Ghana Cocoa Board, who facilitated the tour said success of the government and

COCOBOD's campaign for increased consumption of Ghana's processed cocoa would be boosted if children develop a healthy appetite for cocoa products.

"To love chocolate and any other products made of cocoa starts from you the young ones. Adding chocolate to your snacks frequently will help you develop a healthy taste as you grow and you can then also train your children to develop appetite for it", she said.

She added that the Government through COCOBOD and the Ministry of Tourism extended the celebration of Chocolate Day to a week to help increase sensitization on consumption and encourage local processing of cocoa.

Mrs. Kwapong highlighted the health benefits of cocoa such as its energy boosting properties, improving brain function and strengthening of the immune system as some of the reasons why it is important for children to develop a taste of processed cocoa products from an early age.

Beyond the health benefits, she explained the economic benefits of cocoa production to Ghana and listed some of the projects revenues from sale of cocoa beans have been used for in the country.

"Aside processing our cocoa locally in the country, the sale of cocoa on the international market are used to provide infrastructural facilities and services such as roads, schools, scholarships, hospitals among others in deprived communities across the country". She emphasized.

A teacher of ALSYD Academy, Madam Gifty Pobi described the visit as insightful and a great opportunity for the pupils to learn more about the history of our national heroes and the cocoa sector in the month of March, which is dubbed Heritage Month.

"Learning the history, importance, and health benefit of cocoa in the country is a great experience to these kids and I believe anytime they consume anything made of cocoa, they will be proud because they know the source" she said.

Madam Pobi further urged other schools to also embark on such educational excursions to enable the pupils relax and learn more about their heritage and the country's prized assets.

"They now know we can derive a lot of benefits from cocoa, and this visit will help them think and explore a more advanced way of cocoa farming and processing as they grow which will help the industry some years to come", she stressed.

More than sixty (60) students, comprising class one(1) to class four (4) visited the farm.

BEST BCC GRADUATING STUDENT GETS COCOBOD EMPLOYMENT



impart the fundamentals of agronomy learnt during the period to support cocoa farmers.

Hon Aidoo explained that the decision to give employment to the best student stems from the Board's commitment towards a succession plan that aims at making the youth the next generation of cocoa farmers in the country. Presentation of the letter of employment to Abdulai on behalf of Management, the Deputy Chief Executive for Finance and Administration, Mr. Emmanuel Ray Ankrah welcomed Mr. Abdulai as the newly employed Assistant Technical Officer of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) and urged him to use his knowledge and skills to support extension service delivery.

Mr. Ray Ankrah assured the officer of an enabling environment where his knowledge and skills will be nurtured to meet the organizational goals for the sustainability of the cocoa sector and added that he should work hard and serve as a good example for the youth who aspire to pursue careers in the agricultural sector.



Mr. Ismaila Abdulai in a group photograph with some members of COCOBOD management

Mr. Ismaila Abdulai, the 2022 best-graduating student from the Bunsu Cocoa College (BCC) has been offered a job at Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) by Management in fulfilment of a promise made by Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, Chief Executive of COCOBOD.

Mr. Ismaila Abdulai graduated with a Diploma in Agronomy and Extension (Cocoa and Coffee) at the college's 1st graduation held at the college in December 2022. The College, which

is affiliated with the University of Cape Coast is currently a Diploma and Certificate Awarding college and focuses on Agronomy and Extension in cocoa and Coffee production.

Motivated by the sterling academic accolades of Mr. Abdulai, the COCOBOD boss who is also the Chairman of the College's Council, at the graduating ceremony, promised to reward the overall best student with a job at COCOBOD to enable him to find space to

The Co-ordinator for the Diploma Programme, Mr. Nana Yaw Cudjoe, on behalf of BCC thanked the Management of COCOBOD for honouring its promise and noted that the gesture would go a long way to encourage other students to strive for excellence and contribute their quota to a viable cocoa sector in Ghana.

Mr. Abdulai thanked COCOBOD management for the employment opportunity and promised to work diligently towards the realization of the corporate goals of the Board.

JOURNALISTS TRAINED ON ENROLMENT OF FARMERS ONTO THE COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME



Selected journalists from media houses in the Western Region have been trained ahead of an enrolment exercise expected to start in the Region to enrol cocoa farmers on the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS).

The journalists, who were mainly into reporting on cocoa and agriculture-related activities in the region were drawn from media houses in Elubu, Aiyinase, Ellembelle, Tarkwa, Wasa Akropkong, Prestea, Dunkwa, Bogoso, Samreboi, Takoradi and beyond.

The training forms part of a series of publicity and sensitization programmes planned by the Board of Trustees of the Scheme to rally the support of the media towards the successful implementation of the first phase of the enrolment scheduled to start in the region from 31st March to 21st April 2023.

The Chairman of the Implementation Task Force of the CFPS, Mr. Fiifi Bofo at a 'Meet the Press' encounter in Tarkwa called on the media to use their agricultural programmes and other platforms to educate farmers on the benefits of being part of the scheme.

He explained that the scheme is secure, operates under the National Pensions Act 2008 (Act 766) and governed by a 10-member Board of Trustees Licensed

by the National Pensions Regulatory Authority.

'Interest of cocoa farmers is represented on the Board of Trustees to ensure that the views of cocoa farmers are included in its operations to ensure transparency. There is also a custodian of the fund, which is independent of Ghana Cocoa Board and Government', he added.

The Ghana Cocoa Board Law 1984 (PNDC Law 81) enjoins the Board to set up the Scheme to provide a decent pension for farmers when they retire from active farming.

Mr Bofo explained further that once a farmer is enrolled onto the scheme, in the ensuing cocoa season, anytime a farmer sells their cocoa, at least 5% of the farmer's earnings will be deducted at the point of sale through a mobile App while a minimum of 1% of the sale value would be added to the farmer's contribution as COCOBOD's contribution to the scheme.

He again said opportunity exists for farmers to elect to pay extra from the sales made aside the 5% mandatory contribution.

The pension scheme, he added will operate under two accounts. 25% of the total contribution will go into a

Personal Savings Account and 75% into a Retirement Account.

After 5 years of continuous contribution to the scheme, a contributor may apply for a loan from his personal savings account.

Although a contributor is eligible to retire from the scheme after 5 years on the scheme, he/she may decide to remain on the scheme for a longer period to enable him/her to accumulate more for a better pension in future.

The Western Regional Manager of the Seed Production Division of COCOBOD (SPD), Mr. Ofei Annoh said there is a well-coordinated stakeholder education programme across all cocoa regions in the country to mobilize farmers to enroll onto the scheme. He urged farmers to support the programme for a better retirement.

Under the phase I of the enrollment, thousands of farmers in fifteen (15) cocoa districts in the Ashanti and Western South regions are expected to be enrolled onto the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme between March to April. The exercise would be scaled up incrementally to ensure that farmers in the remaining 55 cocoa districts in the country are successfully enrolled onto the scheme to achieve a full-scale operation of the CFPS.

RANDY RETIRES



Mr. Randolph Addai (Former Director, Human Resource, COCOBOD)

The Director for Human Resource at Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Mr. Randolph John Adei, has officially retired from the Board after thirteen years of service. His retirement took effect on 7th April 2023, when he attained age sixty, being the official retirement age per Ghana's Pension Act 2008.

At an emotional send-off party held at the AU Village in his honour, Mr. Randolph Adei, who prefers to be called 'Randy' said he was grateful to God for enabling him to retire honourably from a reputable state agency like COCOBOD that invests in the development of its employees.

He was also thankful to his family, especially his wife and children, for giving him the necessary support as a husband and father to ensure his personal development without which he would not have chalked the successes witnessed.

Recounting his years of service, Randy disclosed that before joining the Board in 2010 as a Human Resource Manager, he had served in the Ghana Armed Forces, which accounts for his disciplined style of management, which

manifested in all the positions he held until his retirement.

Randy noted that he joined the Board through the Seed Production Division (SPD) on 4th October 2010 as a Human Resource Manager and has served in all Divisions of the Board such as CHED in 2012, CRIG in 2014, and functioned as the Western Regional Administrator at Kajebril in 2015, till his appointment as Acting Deputy Director Human Resources in November 2018 at the COCOBOD Head Office.

He was assigned Deputy Director of HR on 1st October 2019 and finally confirmed as Director of Human Resource on 9th March 2020 attaining the highest rank in the HR cadre based on COCOBOD's hierarchical structure.

Randy will be remembered for spearheading innovations in digitizing the COCOBOD Performance Appraisal System, notably migrating it from a manual system to an online portal, digitizing employees' personal records and staff identification, which has strengthened the security dynamics of COCOBOD, giving it a modern corporate outlook.

In honour of his meritorious service, the Management of COCOBOD and the staff of the Human Resource Department presented a heartwarming citation and gifts to the latest retiree from the Board.

Meanwhile, Mr. Francis Gyamfi Ocran has been appointed to follow the heels of Mr. Randolph Adei as Director of Human Resource.

Mr. Gyamfi has been a staff of the Board since 1990 and therefore takes up this role with over three decades of industry experience and training, having worked with most of the Board's Divisions and Subsidiaries including QCC, CHED, Bunso Cocoa College and CRIG.

He hopes to influence change in attitude towards work, help reduce wastage and improve efficiency. He is also passionate about rewarding hard work and promises to empower staff to deliver on their mandates.

In his spare time, Mr. Gyamfi Ocran enjoys political discussions, poultry keeping and cocoa farming. He is married with two children.



CHED SENSITIZES FARMERS ON COCOBOD INTERVENTIONS



The Cocoa Health and Extension Division of Ghana Cocoa Board (CHED) has sensitized cocoa farmers in the Boinso District of the Western South region to adopt the various Productivity Enhancement Programmes introduced by the Board to help boost production levels in the region.

Speaking at a farmer rally in the District, the Regional Manager, Mr. Samuel Osei said pruning of overgrown cocoa trees, hand-pollination, applying fertilizers, weeding and disease control around the farm at the appropriate times within the crop year, help boost pod production per tree and should not be taken for granted.

Mr. Samuel Osei said quite a large sum of money is invested into cocoa production annually to ensure good returns for cocoa farmers in Ghana.

He therefore urged farmers who have benefited from the subsidized fertilizer programme to pay for their supplies in time to ensure sustainability of the intervention.

While explaining the need for the farmers with diseased and over-aged farms to subscribe to the Cocoa



Participants being addressed by Mr. Samuel Osei (Western South Regional Manager, CHED)

Rehabilitation Programme, he disclosed that areas where farmers allowed for their farms to be rehabilitated by COCOBOD are now seeing great results while anticipating bumper harvests in the upcoming seasons.

At the same forum, Mr. Osei cautioned farmers against cutting down cocoa trees to plant rubber. He said the short-term gains could not exceed the numerous benefits that come with new initiatives introduced by government such as the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS).

He used the platform to educate the farmers on the Cocoa Farmers' Pension Scheme and the ongoing enrolment exercise. He said once enrolled; a farmer can contribute a minimum of 5% of the total beans sold at a point

of sale of their cocoa. He added that government also adds its part of the contribution which is invested together with the farmer's contribution.

He gave assurance that the CFPS is governed by law and will continue to operate as long as the laws of Ghana exist. The farmers expressed appreciation for such platforms to educate them about programmes and interventions by government, as well as the opportunity to make suggestions that influence policy to help boost the country's cocoa sector.

They gave assurance of their readiness to comply with, and adopt the good agronomic practices recommended by COCOBOD to ensure Ghana maintains its position as the leading producer of premium cocoa in the world.

STAFF HEALTH – DIABETES EDUCATION FOR GOOD HEALTH

Few diseases command the ‘respect’ that diabetes does, even atheists break into uncontrollable ‘tongues’ once you diagnose them with this disease or merely suggest that they may have the condition. Unfortunately, many of us out of fear of the unknown, lack of knowledge or purely for financial reasons never test for diabetes until we are saddled with complications.

The world has never been this heavy and sedentary, as our waistlines continue to expand so have the number of people with diabetes, especially the Type 2 variant, which is associated with our lifestyle. It is time to focus on ‘waist management’ to combat this menace that causes pain, suffering and financial challenges not only to those who have the disease but in addition to their families, work, countries, and the world by extension.

This is definitely not the time to court additional financial burden; if we have diabetes let us manage it effectively and if we don’t, we should work hard to prevent or delay its onset.

TELL-TALE SIGNS of DIABETES

The majority (90%-95%) of people with diabetes have Type 2 diabetes and this starts slowly, and we may often ignore the warning signs. If we can test for COVID-19 for FREE and vaccinate for FREE, I dare say we owe it a duty to test every person over the age of 18 years for diabetes. Let us not wait. We have to stop the march towards 700 million

people. Be wary of these and see your healthcare professional immediately:

- Increased appetite or unexplained weight loss
- Slow-healing cuts
- Frequent yeast infections (including ‘whites’)
- Pain or numbness in extremities
- Vision changes
- Fruity or sweet-smelling breath
- Fatigue or weakness
- Dry mouth or dry skin
- Extreme thirst
- Frequent urination
- No Symptoms (absolute silence!)

Always remember that not all silence is golden and just like high blood pressure you may have diabetes and feel or show absolutely nothing.

TEN STEPS TO TRACK & MANAGE DIABETES

These points may help you ward off the disease but in addition, will serve as guidelines to prevent early complications when you already have the disease.

1. Check your blood sugar.
2. Check and control your blood pressure.
3. Check and keep your cholesterol at bay.
4. Protect your eyes by checking at least once a year.
5. Protect your kidneys (blood and urine tests).
6. Take care of your feet.

7. Control your waistline (weight)
8. Exercise appropriately and regularly and manage Stress.
9. Eat right.
10. See an informed health professional regularly.

AS ALWAYS LAUGH OFTEN, ENSURE HYGIENE, WALK AND PRAY EVERYDAY AND REMEMBER IT’S A PRICELESS

GIFT TO KNOW YOUR NUMBERS (blood sugar, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, BMI)

Dr. Kojo Cobba Essel
Health Essentials Ltd/Mobissel
(www.healthessentialsgh.com)

*Dr. Essel is a medical doctor, holds an MBA and is ISSA certified in exercise therapy, fitness nutrition and corrective exercise. He is the author of the award-winning book, ‘Unravelling the Essentials of Health & Wealth.’

Thought for the week – ‘There is an URGENT need to SCREEN, DIAGNOSE and provide appropriate TREATMENT to people with diabetes.’

Help to fight diabetes. If you do not know what to do, contact your nearest health facility or send an email to info@healthessentialsgh.com
References:

1. ‘Unravelling the Essentials of Health and Wealth’ – Dr. Kojo Cobba Essel



THE COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME: A GAME CHANGER FOR COCOA PRODUCTION?

BY JOY SENA ANKU - CMC

Globally, pension schemes are mandatory in the formal sector in providing a decent retirement for workers. In view of this, both employees and employers consciously make regular contributions into pension accounts from their earnings so that when they retire, they can rely on it.

Ghana's economy is largely informal and majority of farmers, especially those in mainstream cocoa farming, fall within this category, hence, their inability to enjoy a pension after years of working.

However, recognising the vital role of cocoa farmers in Ghana, the framers of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) law considered it appropriate to include a provision that requires the institution of a pension scheme to guarantee a decent retirement for our gallant cocoa farmers when they retire from active farming.

Section 26 of the COCOBOD law, 1984 (PNDC L.81), enjoined the cocoa industry regulator to establish a contributory insurance scheme for cocoa farmers within the framework of the Social Security Scheme to enable cocoa farmers enjoy a well-deserved pension upon retirement.

However, for almost four decades this provision was not given effect until in December 2020 when His Excellency, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo demonstrated his commitment to his campaign promise to institute a pension scheme for cocoa farmers in Ghana by launching the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS) in Kumasi.

At the ceremony, Nana Akufo-Addo tasked COCOBOD and National Pensions Regulatory Authority to provide modalities for the national roll out of the scheme. What, perhaps, skeptics thought was a mere political statement delivered at a rally 3 years ago, has seen tremendous successes at every stage of its implementation. A successful pilot phase of the

scheme at New Edubiase in the Ashanti Region gave impetus while a massive enrolment of thousands of cocoa farmers in the Ashanti and Western North Regions a couple of months ago has provided adequate signal to an incremental roll out of the much anticipated initiative ever to happen in the Ghanaian cocoa sector.

Per the scheme's modalities, a registered farmer shall contribute a minimum of 5 percent of every cocoa beans sold to be saved in pension accounts. Government will also contribute at least 1% on the sales into the same accounts.

Cocoa farmers have been urged to cooperate with officers from COCOBOD who have been tasked to collect their data for enrolment onto the Cocoa Management System (CMS), a robust database of all cocoa farmers and their farms.

The CMS is the engine that drives the CFPS as only farmers who have successfully been captured under the CMS qualify to be enrolled to benefit from the pension scheme.

Enrolment onto the CFPS took off in 14 districts ahead of a nationwide exercise expected to migrate thousands of cocoa card-bearing farmers onto the scheme by the end of this crop season. The massive education and sensitization by the implementation task force on the benefits of the scheme and the need for all farmers to get enrolled for a better future seem to doing the magic in whipping up the interest of cocoa farmers.

The enthusiasm of farmers has been reported to be very high. At one of the rallies held at Wassa Manso and Anomawobidi communities in the Western South Region, cocoa farmers have heaped praises on the regulator for introducing the scheme. One farmer in a video shared on social media said;

'Finally, COCOBOD has heard our cry.

We know it is because of us cocoa farmers that COCOBOD is rolling out this scheme and we will continue to sensitise other farmers to enrol as well. For us in this district, we are very pleased and we welcome the scheme wholeheartedly."

A group of young cocoa farmers, who were present at one of the rallies in a video also expressed their excitement about the scheme. One of them, Ahmed, said;

'I am excited about the pension scheme. I pray COCOBOD will pay the benefits promptly. It is very good so I implore the youth to partake. Farming is very hard but the thought of being taken care of when you retire, is what motivated me to start my cocoa farm."

“
we are very pleased and we welcome the scheme wholeheartedly

Another young farmer, Seidu Amidu, revealed how he used to take part in illegal mining but had stopped because of the introduction of the scheme. He lauded the scheme saying; '..since the introduction of the pension scheme, I have stopped the galamsey koraa. Now even if I get 10 acres of land, I go farm cocoa."

Though it is too early to measure the overall impact of the CFPS on the Ghanaian cocoa sector, it is evident that the event enrolment of the scheme has lightened a glim of hope among cocoa farmers in Ghana and inspired the youth to sign on to cocoa farming as a lucrative venture.

The youth believe that if their peers in white-collar jobs in the cities enjoy pension, they also stand the chance of receiving a decent pension some day in their cocoa farming profession when they retire. Migration to cities in search of non-existent jobs or to engage in menial jobs is therefore not an option. Thanks to the game changer, CFPS.

COCOBOD HONOURS VISUALLY IMPAIRED COCOA FARMERS



Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has honoured fifteen visually impaired cocoa farmers for their outstanding contributions to the sustainability of the cocoa value chain, at the first ever awards programme instituted for the physically challenged in cocoa farming at a ceremony in Cape Coast.

Championed by the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) of COCOBOD, the programme rewarded the farmers with cash prizes, farm inputs, protective clothing and assorted cocoa products.

The fifteen awardees, seven of whom are still in active farming, were drawn from the Western, Central and Bono Ahafo Cocoa regions and have farmed for between fifteen to sixty years.

The Executive Director of CHED, Rev. Edwin Afari said the awards were instituted with approval from the management of COCOBOD in recognition of the exceptional contribution of the physically challenged to Ghana's cocoa sector.

He stressed that their achievements are worth celebrating and emulating

and called on industry stakeholders to support their efforts.

'Management thought it necessary to shine a light on the significant contribution the physically challenged, specifically the visually impaired make to the country's cocoa production at a special ceremony such as this. As we celebrate your efforts, it is hoped that it will encourage others, including our able-bodied youth to venture into cocoa farming', he said.

Rev. Afari further encouraged the awardees to continue implementing good agronomic practices such as pruning and pollination. He urged them to make use of the expertise of the District Extension Coordinators who are available to assist farmers in all 70 cocoa districts nationwide.

The Central Regional Chief Cocoa Farmer, Nana Kwasi Ofori thanked COCOBOD for recognizing the contribution of the physically challenged in Ghana's cocoa production.

'This is quite encouraging to farmers, specifically physically challenged cocoa

farmers because these farmers have shown resilience and dedication to cocoa farming and serve as role models for the youth to venture into farming", he observed.

Nana Ofori called on the Management of COCOBOD and other stakeholders to continue to support physically challenged cocoa farmers, in order to reduce their dependency on others. He also called for the awards scheme to be included in the annual calendar of the cocoa sector.

He called on COCOBOD management and other industry stakeholders to continue supporting these farmers to reduce their dependency on others as these impaired farmers are vital in the sustainability of the cocoa value chain.

'This award scheme should not be a one-day affair but should be consistent on the calendar of events for the sector, as this would go a long way to empower families and our nation financially", he said.

The awardees also expressed appreciation to COCOBOD for honouring their efforts.



COCOA FARMERS URGED TO EMBRACE PRUNING

Mr. Richard Atta Adusei, Sefwi-Boako District Extension Officer of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division has advised cocoa farmers, especially farmers within the Boako District to prioritize the cocoa pruning exercise implemented by the COCOBOD.

The District Extension Officer indicated that any farmer who did not patronize the cocoa pruning exercise would not be given agro chemicals this year.

Mr. Atta Adusei who said this in

an interview with the Ghana News Agency on the success of the pruning programme in the Boako District indicated that the district last year pruned about 12,716 hectares of cocoa farms, with 11,823 farmers benefitted from the share of agrochemical.

He, lauded the programme, noting that with the support of technical officers, they would achieve a hundred per cent target this year.

Mr. Adusei cautioned that farmers

who would not allow their farms to be pruned would also not benefit from the cocoa mass spraying exercise.

This year, we will give out agrochemicals based on the cocoa management system implemented last year and will also be doing a mob up this year; he said

Mr. Adusei, therefore, appealed to farmers to adhere to advice from technical officers to improve upon their production.

CHED, SPD RECEIVE SUPPORT FROM THE COCOA SECTOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT PROJECT

Two key divisions of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) and the Seed Production Division (SPD) have received a boost in the form of computers and peripherals devices under the Cocoa Sector Institutional Support Project (COSISP).

COSISP is an initiative of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning which aims to improve performance in the regulation and administration of Ghana's cocoa sector through capacity building and sound project management.

The initiative which began in April 2021, involves several stakeholders, and is funded by the African Development Bank (AfDB). It has achieved a 20% implementation rate since effective implementation.

The Deputy Chief Executive of

COCOBOD in charge of Finance and Administration, Mr. Emmanuel Ray Ankra, who made the presentation on behalf of management said it is in the interest of management to provide the necessary resources needed to improve performance which is expected to translate to increased crop yields for the sector.

Mr. Ray Ankra said that CHED and SPD are the engines that drive the forefront of the cocoa sector and are vital components to its performance. He added that if extension services are not right, post-crop will be negatively impacted. He charged the divisions to ensure the effective utilization of these resources to translate into increased crop yields.

‘Let us see the impact through increase in yield through your work which has been facilitated through this support programme’ he stressed.

The beneficiary divisions were presented with 98 desktop computers, 12 laptops, 110 multifunctional printers, 468 tablets, 3 servers, 110 UPSs, 2 rack-mount UPSs, ArcGIS Enterprise software for mapping with 100 users and Microsoft power Bi for data analytics (licensed for 45 users).

The devices will be distributed to the district offices and cocoa stations of CHED and SPD to support the Cocoa Management System and other operations.

The Executive Director for CHED, Rev. Edwin Afari, acknowledged management for showing commitment in ensuring the provision of resources to facilitate work processes for officers in the divisions and said that the provision of the devices was timely as they will go a long way to fill the data collection and communication challenges of the Division.



Mr. Ray Ankra (DCE, F&A) presenting the items to Management of SPD and CHED



COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME

*Providing a Decent Pension
for Our Cocoa Farmers*

MODE OF CONTRIBUTION

- 1.** Purchasing clerks are the main facilitators of the deduction process
- 2.** A farmer must provide his/her Cocoa Card as proof of identity and fill a consent form at the point of sale of beans
- 3.** The farmer must insist on the use of the electronic weighing scale by the Purchasing Clerk to ascertain the exact value of cocoa beans sold
- 4.** A minimum of five percent (5%) of cocoa sold will be deducted from the total sales and credited to the farmer's pension account using a mobile technology
- 5.** The farmer has the option to voluntarily select from 2.5%, 5% or 7.5% of the cocoa sales to add to the mandatory (5%) contribution.
- 6.** COCOBOD/Government will contribute a minimum of 1% on the total sales made by the farmer at the same time deductions 4, and 5 are being made
- 7.** The farmer will receive an alert message instantly on his phone to indicate completion of transaction
- 8.** 25% of the total contribution will be credited to the Personal Savings Account and the remaining 75% will be credited to the Retirement Account
- 9.** The farmer may withdraw 20% of his Personal Savings account balance every 2 years after the first withdrawal.
- 10.** When the farmer is due for retirement, he/she will receive a Lump Sum equal to the balance in the Personal Savings Account.
- 11.** The farmer will receive monthly pension payments from the retirement account which is guaranteed for 15 years





Ghana's Cocoa- The Benchmark for World Quality Standards

