



COCOBOD *News*

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9% REDUCTION IN FARM-GATE COCOA PRICES FOR IVORIAN FARMERS:

**IMPLICATIONS ON GHANA'S COCOA
SECTOR**

REASONS TO CONSUME Cocoa



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|----|---|---|----|
| 01 | Provides the most powerful dietary antioxidants | Has Aphrodisiac effect | 06 |
| 02 | Reduces blood pressure | Prevents stroke by improving blood circulation | 07 |
| 03 | Delays physical signs of ageing | Fights stress | 08 |
| 04 | Fights dental decay. | Minimizes discomfort/pain associated with menstrual periods | 09 |
| 05 | Rich dietary iron which helps to fight anemia. | Protects blood vessels. | 10 |
| | | Boosts sense of well-being. | 11 |

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9% REDUCTION IN FARM-GATE COCOA PRICES FOR IVORIAN FARMERS: IMPLICATIONS ON GHANA'S COCOA SECTOR

The International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), in its Cocoa Market Report for March 2021 disclosed that Cote d'Ivoire had reduced farm-gate prices of cocoa by 9%. Ivorian farmers, prior to the beginning of the 2021 mid-crop season were earning \$1.80 per kilogram of cocoa. That is, until any further announcement in the near or distant future, farmers in the world's leading cocoa producing country will be earning \$1.35 per kilo, translating into \$86 per bag of 64 kilos.

On the eastern border of Cote d'Ivoire is the Republic of Ghana, second leading producer of cocoa, where cocoa farmers earn Ghc660 per bag of 64 kilos, an equivalent of \$111.86. Thus, in statistical terms, Ghana is currently paying cocoa farmers \$25 (about Ghc147.50) more than neighboring Ivory Coast.

This disclosure has generated series of debates, particularly among players on Ghana's cocoa value chain, about

the possible repercussions on Ghana's cocoa industry. Over the past few years, the two countries, who together produce more than 60% of the world's annual cocoa output, have collaborated to implement major mutually beneficial policies, including the recently implemented Living Income Differential (LID) pricing mechanism which guarantees additional \$400 per tonne of cocoa sold by the two countries.

Therefore an independent major decision taken by any of these two countries with respect to the cocoa business will obviously have an effect on the other country. It is against this backdrop that COCOBOD News, in this edition, discusses the possible implications of this price reduction in Cote d'Ivoire on Ghana's cocoa industry.

As has been happening over the years, farmers along the boarder towns tend to smuggle cocoa beans from the country with lower farm-gate price to the other where they are guaranteed

higher earning. Those familiar with the cocoa story within the sub-region will attest to the fact that Ghana's cocoa has mostly been at the losing end with farmers and other gangs moving the produce to Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. It will therefore be easy for a layman to conclude that now that the tables have turned and the cocoa is likely to be smuggled into the country, we should begin to jubilate. After all, we want to increase production beyond one million tonnes.

Unfortunately, it does not work that way. Already, the two countries have implemented the LID and buyers are supposed to be paying an extra US\$400 in addition to the prevailing world market price of every tonne (16 bags) of cocoa beans purchased from these two countries.

However, this is not without challenges. Several efforts are being made by the big international players to make this worthy cause worthless. The outbreak

of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought its own problems to the international cocoa trade buyers who are finding it difficult to honour their beans purchase contracts.

It will therefore not be in the interest of Ghana to buy additional cocoa beans (smuggled) into the country from Cote d'Ivoire. Despite the instability of cocoa prices on the world market, the Ghana Government, through COCOBOD has constantly cushioned farmers with remunerative producer prices. As it stands now, there are no indications that the current producer price of Ghc660 per bag will be reduced despite the increased arrivals of cocoa at the takeover centers as against a fall in the country's cocoa export. Additional beans will therefore mean additional payment for these smuggled produce, including the LID.

Aside from these economic reasons

against smuggling Ivorian cocoa into Ghana, the issue about bean quality is also worth discussing. Ghana's cocoa stands out in terms of quality and this is known the world over. The quality of any cocoa bean smuggled into the country can therefore not be assured and hence must not be entertained.

There is therefore the need for all who matter, especially the security agencies, to play their respective roles to help protect our heritage by using every means to prevent foreign cocoa beans from entering the country. The joint anti-smuggling task force must be empowered to execute their mandate without any hindrance. Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have agreed to form a joint committee to find a lasting solution to security challenges faced by cocoa farmers along the southern parts of the shared border of the two countries, which include anti-smuggling. Efforts must be made to ensure that this

agreement sees the light of day.

While doing our best to prevent smuggling, let us continue to work on the efforts to increase local processing and consumption of Ghana's cocoa products. Ensuring value addition to the beans will reduce our reliance on foreign buyers for price determination, facilitate stable prices and boost the local economy.

COCOBOD News wishes to assure stakeholders that the current policies and interventions being implemented by the Board are aimed at ensuring the growth and sustenance of the cocoa industry. We need the concerted involvement of all to achieve this, including saying NO to smuggling.

END

COCOA FARMERS URGED TO EMBRACE MASS SPRAYING EXERCISE

The Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipal Chief Farmer in the Eastern Region, Nana Kumi Abiesi, said COCOBOD had increased spraying machines in the various cocoa growing areas to enable the spraying gangs reach every farm to combat the capsid virus.

Speaking at a meeting with cocoa farmers at Nsawam, he said, embracing the mass cocoa spraying exercise would help farmers to increase their



crop yields. Nana Kumi, who is also the Chief of Abiesi near Nsawam, said when farmers embraced the programme it would help increase the national cocoa output, thereby, reducing poverty among the farmers.

He said the spraying exercise has become a crucial agronomic practice for ensuring healthy cocoa tree growth, as such, its introduction and sustenance

year-on-year was a testimony to the government's determination to help improve the cocoa industry.

The chief farmer, therefore, urged his fellow farmers to embrace the mass spraying exercise and allow their infested cocoa trees to be treated or removed and replanted, as the case may be, to increase yield.



COCOBOD INTRODUCES COCOA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS)

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COCOA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS) INTRODUCED BY THE GHANA COCOA BOARD (COCOBOD) IS UNDERWAY IN THE WESTERN SOUTH REGION

The implementation was scheduled to start in the first quarter of 2020 but the outbreak of COVID-19 within the same period made it impossible for any meaningful activity to be undertaken.

The integrated cocoa farmer database project includes the development of a software data system, a census of all cocoa farmers in Ghana as well as mapping of all farms.

As part of the project, COCOBOD is also sensitizing farmers and relevant stakeholders to understand how the new system will operate, considering that this is an innovation in the cocoa industry.

The system will be useful for cost-effective policy implementation and the delivery of major interventions in the cocoa sector. The CMS will collect data on every transaction within the industry with regard to cocoa purchases, input sales, the delivery of subsidies to farmers and the clocking of all extension officers for all-farm visits.

It will allow for the continuous tracking of all such transactions and support cashless payments within the industry, linking various electronic wallets together to ensure quick payments.

The full implementation of the project as planned will ensure that for the first time there will be an accurate record of the land size, geographic locations, population and record of cocoa farms and farmers in Ghana.

Real-time capturing and monitoring of transactions among stakeholders will also be made possible, such as the monitoring of the activities of LBCs and other private service providers, as well as the monitoring of compliance with CRIG/EPA guidelines for handling COCOBOD approved fertilizers and agrochemicals.

According to COCOBOD, the system would replace its open-market general subsidy on cocoa inputs with personalized subsidy to only cocoa farmers and their co-operatives. This is to ensure that approved and subsidized fertilizers and agrochemicals actually reach the intended end-users, cocoa farmers, and are not smuggled out of the country.

COCOBOD News sees this as a very brilliant innovation. Agriculture, and for that matter farming, might have been perceived as old-fashioned over the years, but the good news is that it has been evolving from the known low-tech approaches to modern and hi-tech methods. Scientists, farmers and policy makers have worked hand-in-hand to infuse modern technologies into the farming process.

Currently, Ghana's cocoa industry is in the midst of profound transformation following the introduction of innovative Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) all aimed at ensuring a more sustainable cocoa economy. The Hand Pollination, Mass Pruning, Cocoa Rehabilitation, Irrigation, CODAPEC and Hi-Tech Programmes

have become common expressions in Ghana's cocoa fraternity. There is no doubt that the CMS will be a catalyst for the smooth implementation of these PEPs.

Looking at, and more importantly, discussing the CMS as a part of the technological revolution of Ghana's cocoa industry, we will not be far from the truth if we assert that every actor on the cocoa value chain is a potential beneficiary of the system.

Aside from researchers, farmers, input suppliers, Licensed Buying Companies, staff of COCOBOD and its subsidiaries as well members of civil society organizations who have been earmarked to directly benefit from the system, the CMS has the potential to ignite the curiosity and passion of the youth, the next generation of cocoa farmers, into the farming business. In fact, it is already happening in many regions across the country, where farmer cooperatives and associations are using apps and other inexpensive technologies to improve profits and elevate the image of members from peasants to professionals.

COCOBOD News wishes to appeal to all and sundry to give the implementation team and staff the necessary cooperation as we roll out the CMS. It is our hope that by the end of the current crop season, the CMS will become fully operational for the benefit of the cocoa industry in particular and Ghana as a whole.

PRESIDENT DECORATES HON AIDOO WITH COMPANION OF THE ORDER OF VOLTA



and for the betterment of the lives of the millions of cocoa farmers in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

He acknowledged that the benefit of LID has already been realised by the two countries. The extra revenue inflow from LID has enabled both countries to announce unparalleled increases in their producer prices of cocoa for the new season despite the fall in the international price of cocoa brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The President added that the exceptional feat chalked by the two men, 'does not only serve to immediately provide our dear farmers with remunerative incomes but also safeguards their future welfare by creating a lasting buffer for them against the shocks associated with drops in the world market price of cocoa'.

President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has conferred the national award of Companion Of The Order Of Volta, Honourary Division, on Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, the Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD).

The award was conferred on him for spearheading the joint Ghanaian and Ivorian effort to secure a New Trading Mechanism which allows for a new cost item of US\$400.00 per tonne, as Living Income Differential (LID), for every cocoa sold by the two countries.

Similarly, the same award was conferred on his Ivorian counterpart, Mr. Ibrahim Kone Yves, the Director General of Le Conseil Du Café-Cacao (CCC), at the same ceremony which was held on Thursday the 12th of November 2020, at the Jubilee House, Accra.

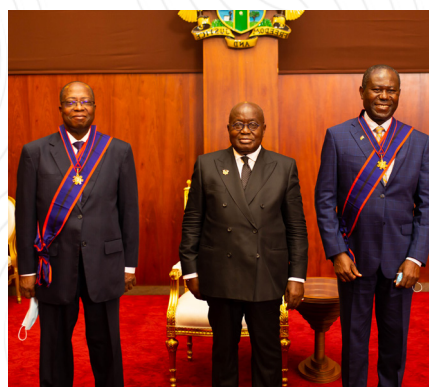
The National Award of Companion Of The Order Of Volta, which was instituted in 1960, is categorised as a national Order of Merit and reserved for persons who have distinguished themselves in some form of public service to Ghana.

The two gentlemen, who head the respective cocoa regulatory

organisations in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are the 44th and 45th individuals to have merited the award.

Already, the President of Côte d'Ivoire, H.E. Alassane Dramane Ouattara on 1st October 2020 in Yamoussoukro awarded the two men; each as Commander of the National Order of Merit of Côte d'Ivoire, for their achievement in the cocoa sector.

In presenting the award, President Akufo-Addo remarked that the ceremony was in honour of two outstanding men who have shown exceptional commitment to the growth and development of the cocoa industry



President Akufo-Addo said Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire need to continue to work together to consolidate present gains and deepen cooperation in the fight against the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) and in promoting environmentally friendly farming practices devoid of child labour.

He further expressed confidence in the two gentlemen to work together to improve the cocoa sector as a whole.

In his response, Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo said he was humbled to be honoured with such a high national award in his lifetime. He credited President Akufo-Addo and his Ivorian counterpart, H.E. Alassane Dramane Ouattara for initiating the processes which ultimately led to the achievement of a new trading mechanism for cocoa from the two countries.

Mr. Ibrahim Kone Yves, on his part, said that he had been very much moved by the honour. The award, he added, was not just for him but for all who supported efforts towards achieving the LID and, indeed, for the entire Ivorian nation.

COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME LAUNCHED

President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has launched the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme which aims to guarantee a decent pension for cocoa farmers in Ghana, so they can maintain a good standard of living after retirement.

The scheme is in fulfilment of a 36-year-old provision in Section 26 of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) Law 1984 (PNDC L.81) which mandates COCOBOD to establish a contributory insurance for Cocoa Farmers.

The launch took place at a durbar at the Jubilee Park, Kumasi in the Ashanti Region on Tuesday, 1st December.

In his keynote address, President Akufo-Addo said the establishment of the pension scheme was not just in fulfilment of the legal mandate but in line with the plans to improve the living standards of cocoa farmers in Ghana.

COCOBOD, he said, has maintained a farmer-focused approach to managing Ghana's cocoa sector, leading to the introduction of Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs), along with other interventions to achieve greater efficiency, while safeguarding the immediate and future welfare of cocoa farmers.

The programmes, he added, have all helped to place cocoa farmers in a better position to first earn a decent living while actively farming and secondly, to make contributions into the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme for their retirement.

The President stated that, the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme is singularly historic in its provision of a safety net for cocoa farmers in Ghana. It enables the farmers to make voluntary contributions towards their retirement while COCOBOD makes a supplementary contribution on behalf of the farmers as well.

"This guarantees a decent retirement income for our gallant cocoa farmers for life and ensures that they can maintain decent standards of living after retirement."



He entreated all cocoa farmers to sign on to the scheme to enjoy the full set of benefits it offers.

The Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, on his part also called on cocoa farmers to sign on to the scheme and make the necessary contributions to ensure its success and more importantly, to take full advantage of this opportunity to secure their future.

He also asked the farmers to cooperate with the officers from COCOBOD who have been tasked to collect their data for the Cocoa Management System (CMS), which will hold a robust database of all cocoa farmers in the country and track their contributions. The CMS, he added, will also facilitate the prompt payment of claims to beneficiary farmers.

He assured the farmers of COCOBOD's sustained commitment to making cocoa farming more financially profitable for farmers and encouraged the youth to also take up the cocoa farming business.

COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME IN BRIEF PERSPECTIVE

1.0 BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Section 26 of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) Law 1984 (PNDC L.81) which mandates COCOBOD to establish a contributory insurance for Cocoa Farmers, the Government of Ghana in collaboration with COCOBOD

and the National Pensions Regulatory Authority has set up a Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme to support our gallant farmers to enjoy a decent pension.

2.0 NATURE

The scheme is open to all cocoa farmers in Ghana. It enables them to make voluntary contributions towards their retirement while COCOBOD makes a supplementary contribution for the farmers.

To ensure the successful rollout of the scheme, COCOBOD has in earnest began the collection of data on farmers for the Cocoa Management System (CMS). The CMS will hold a robust database of all cocoa farmers in the country and track their contributions. It will also facilitate the prompt payment of claims to beneficiary farmers.

Cocoa farmers are, therefore, encouraged to register under the CMS in order to be part of the scheme.

3.0 BENEFITS OF THE SCHEME

- It is open to all cocoa farmers in Ghana.
- A guaranteed decent retirement income for Cocoa Farmers for life.
- A lump sum payment to Cocoa Farmers upon retirement.
- Ensures that Cocoa Farmers will have a decent standard of living after retirement.

All cocoa farmers in Ghana are encouraged to sign on to the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme to enjoy the full benefit of the scheme.

DRINKING COCOA HAS BOOSTED MY IMMUNE SYSTEM AGAINST MALARIA – FATHER CAMPBELL

Rev. Fr. Andrew Campbell, the Parish Priest of Christ The King Catholic Church joined the national campaign to encourage the consumption of chocolate and cocoa products with a powerful personal story of how his consistent consumption of cocoa powder has made him virtually immune to malaria in over three decades.

‘I’ve been taking cocoa powder for the past 30 years. This morning I already had two mugs of cocoa. I do that every day; I take two, three, four mugs of cocoa every day’, the Reverend Father said in a video released as part of the National Chocolate Week celebration.

The good Father went on to state that, he had had malaria only once in the 30 years he has been taking cocoa powder, and that singular case of malaria came after he failed to drink cocoa for a week.

‘I’ve had malaria once in those 30 years and that was because I didn’t take my cocoa for one week, and I got malaria,’ Rev. Fr. Campbell said. ‘I got it once in over thirty years and I attribute that to the cocoa powder I take.’

The National Chocolate Week celebration began on the 8th of February and ended on the 14th of February. It was under the theme: Eat Chocolate; Stay Healthy; Grow Ghana.

The week was packed with activities to encourage the consumption of chocolate confectionery, beverages, and chocolate-infused dishes even beyond the period of the celebration. Rev. Fr. Campbell in the video went on to credit cocoa with other positive health outcomes he has experienced

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I’m 75 years old next month... “My blood pressure today was 119 over 69, and for a man of 75, it’s a blessing



over the years, including maintaining a healthy blood pressure even in his advanced age.

‘I’m 75 years old next month,’ he said. ‘My blood pressure today was 119 over 69, and for a man of 75, it’s a blessing.’ ‘When I was doing my research on chocolate and cocoa, it said chocolate and cocoa powder reduces blood pressure; reduces cholesterol; it prevents heart attack and stroke; it improves moods; it contains antioxidants; it’s the best drink before bed for a good night’s sleep; it improves your skin health, your mood and your hair.’

Similarly, the Most Rev. Paul K. Boafo, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Ghana, who calls himself a proud son of a cocoa farmer, also recounted how cocoa seeds were regularly incorporated into the family meals due to their nutritional benefits.

‘Growing up as a young boy in the Western Region, following my father to the cocoa farm, we would even use the little seeds as a form of food in our stew. We will pluck it, boil it, grind, and it will be part of the stew because of its nutritional value,’ he recalled.

‘Chocolate comes from our cash crop cocoa, which our farmers have cultivated all these years and it has a lot of value for us. Apart from the

money it brings to us.”

‘It is known to solve a lot of heart conditions and that is why I will recommend it to each and every one of us as Ghanaians to be drinking cocoa and to be eating chocolate. I would also recommend to all institutions that we would prefer cocoa drinks to other drinks that are served in our institutions and in schools, the Most Rev. Boafo advised.

The general public was encouraged to celebrate the National Chocolate Week with bars of chocolate, cocoa beverages, and chocolate-infused dishes and share photos and videos of their chocolate moments using the hashtags: #EatGhChocolate #GhChocolateWeek #GhChocolateReigns #EatChocolateStayHealthyGrowGhana

The Chocolate City at the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange also opened on 10 February. For the next five (5) days various media organisations and chocolatiers were present to encourage patrons to share their Chocolate Moments on digital platforms and win prizes.

The National Chocolate Week was organised through the collaborative effort of COCOBOD, the Ghana Tourism Authority, the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, cocoa processing companies and other stakeholders in the cocoa industry.

A SURVEY TO ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF COCOBOD'S PEPS TAKES OFF



The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) is set to commence a field survey exercise under the Environmental, Social and Management System (ESMS) in May 2021. The exercise aims at finding out potential social and environmental risk factors which may have occurred from the implementation of the Board's Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs).

As part of an entrenched clause in the AfDB Loan facility secured to fund the PEPs, COCOBOD is expected to conduct field surveys to find out whether the PEPs are negatively impacting the environment and social life in communities or not and where a potential threat is identified, take steps to eliminate or reduce its impact.

A two-day training programme has subsequently been organized to adequately prepare staff of COCOBOD's Research Monitoring & Evaluation (RM&E) Department and the Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED) ahead of the survey which is expected to be completed in two weeks.

The ESMS seeks to assess the implementation of the PEPs and how the processes conform to the best environmental and social standards in communities where such projects are being run.

Participants, numbering 30, will visit farming communities and administer questionnaires to about 2,730

respondents comprising, beneficiary farmers, disease spotters, pruners, sub-contractors, pollinators and weeding labourers on a wide range of issues bothering on environmental and social sustainability in their respective communities.

In general, respondents will share their views on issues such as pollution, accidents, loss of income, conflicts, disasters, child involvement in farming, threat to animal species, and forest degradation and indicate whether or not the implementation processes of the various PEPs sub-projects have contributed to their occurrence. Other issues that the survey will also address are matters relating to professional misconducts by officials; land tenure issues; wages of workers, among others.

Speaking at the opening session of the training programme held in Kumasi, the Deputy Executive Director (CHED) in charge of PEPs, Mr. Faruk Kwansah Nyame said environmental and social issues have far-reaching implications on the cocoa sector.

He further observed that such issues cannot be decoupled from production and called on the enumerators to take the training seriously.

Mr. Nyame regretted that COCOBOD is always being accused by the international community of doing very little to address child labour and forest

degradation issues although several interventions had been put in place by the Board to curtail the issues. He blamed it on the lack of reliable and creditable data to justify the efforts of the Board at addressing these thorny issues.

'When we fall short of social and environmental issues such as child labour, deforestation, water pollution, health and safety issues, labour and working conditions, grievance and redress mechanism, stakeholder engagement etc, although we may be making remarkable strides in achieving targets set for our various PEPs, we will score low by sustainability standards and the world will see us as being insensitive to the plights of the society and environment', he cautioned.

Mr. Nyame encouraged the beneficiaries to ensure due diligence in the exercise adding that, data obtained would be used to effectively communicate the Board's position to change the world views about COCOBOD and its efforts at ensuring sustainable cocoa production in the country.

A facilitator of the training programme, Dr. Isaac Manu, Deputy, Manager (RM&E) COCOBOD disclosed that the findings from the survey will help COCOBOD's Management to take some critical steps to mitigate shortfalls identified, adding that stakeholder engagements will be carried out to further discuss the findings.

He also said a Feedback Grievance & Redress Mechanism (FGRM) had been put in place at the community, Regional and National levels to receive and manage complaints from farmers and other stakeholders as the Board scales up its PEPs.

He further hinted that a final report on progress made will be submitted to AfDB to indicate how the Board has fared in its efforts to eliminate or reduce the prevalence of some pertinent social and environmental issues that directly or indirectly affect sustainability.

Meanwhile, COCOBOD has over the past 4 years, committed resources to embark on projects such as Hand Pollination, Irrigation, Pruning, Rehabilitation of diseased farms, Rehabilitation of Overaged farms, Warehousing, and Promotion of Cocoa Consumption as part of a broader strategy to improve the cocoa sector and make it more resilient.

COCOBOD, "LIGHT A VILLAGE" DONATE SOLAR LAMPS TO FARMERS IN VOLTA REGION



Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in collaboration with Light A Village, a non-governmental organization, has donated complete sets of solar lamps to 48 cocoa and coffee farm households in Adofe and Dzogbede in the Ho West District of the Volta region of Ghana.

Presenting the solar lamps to the beneficiaries, Mr. Owusu Manu, Deputy Director of Research at COCOBOD indicated that the donation formed part of a larger education support programme by the two organisations in aid of the educational aspirations of farmers in remote communities.

The programme also aimed at lighting up communities that are not connected to the national electricity grid.

Mr. Owusu Manu noted that cocoa and coffee are important to Ghana's economy so the Board and its collaborators will make efforts to support its development adding that, 'It is in view of this that we support schools and communities without light. He was quick to add that the reason for the donation was to help the children

study in the evening.

Concluding, Mr. Manu entreated the farmers to form groups to make them stronger in seeking support and building a better-managed market for their produce. 'To get the best outcome of your activities, your best bet is to form groups'.

The President and Founder of Light A Village, Dr. James Quartey in his message to the beneficiaries, expressed his joy about being able to organize resources to support those without electricity in Ghana to access light for their daily lives. He was particularly happy about the close cooperation with COCOBOD on this venture.

Dr. Quartey expressed confidence in further partnerships with COCOBOD to help children access education by providing their communities with solar lamps for studies.

Ms. Benedicta Tamakloe, founder of Bean Masters Coffee and a lead person for organizing the farmer group who was at the presentation ceremony

recounted that her organization sources and roasts Ghanaian coffee from women-owned farms.

She disclosed that her organization is committed to using 10% of their net profit for the development of the farms from which they source coffee.

She encouraged other farmers who are actively in coffee farming to join the association adding that combining skills, knowledge and other abilities will help them develop together. Working together they can better identify growth opportunities and better overcome challenges.

Mr. Owusu Manu later presented bars of chocolates to some school children in the community. He took the opportunity to educate them about the nutritional and health benefits of cocoa. He noted that cocoa, which forms the base of every chocolate product, has the propensity to boost the cognitive abilities of humans, especially, that of children while providing the highest source of antioxidants for the human body.



GHANA AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE TO COLLABORATE ON COCOA SECURITY ALONG COMMON BORDER



Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire have agreed to form a joint committee to find a lasting solution to security challenges faced by cocoa farmers along the southern parts of the shared border of the two countries.

Ghanaian cocoa farmers who farm across the Tano river are often accosted by irregular Ivorian Para-military forces when they are ferrying their harvest inland.

Cocoa farmers report falling victim to the activities of the irregular Ivorian forces, who extort the farmers or seize their cocoa beans.

The agreement to form a joint committee was reached when Ghanaian officials hosted their Ivorian counterparts in a meeting at Half Assini in the Western

Region on 24th February 2021.

The delegation from Ghana was led by the Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo and made up of officials from COCOBOD, the Western Regional Minister, Hon. Kwabena Okyere Darko-Mensah, members of the Regional Security Council and border security agents.

The Ivorian delegation was constituted by the Deputy Director-General of Le Conseil Du Café-Cacao (CCC), Dr Koffi N'goran, their National Land Forces General and other members of various security agencies and a Regional Minister for Agriculture.

The joint committee will be tasked to work with all stakeholders on both sides of the border to fashion an enduring solution to the problem which has been in the area for decades.

The farmers have been traumatised for decades, hence the need for this urgent meeting with our Ivorian counterparts,

Hon Boahen Aidoo said, in an interview with the media after the meeting.

"This is not a new problem but it has been escalating of late and for us, in Ghana we see it as a national security issue. So, the National Security Minister and the President have been made aware and for the first-time major steps are being taken to stop the illegal activities and give the farmers peace".

He added that the Ivorians admitted to having been made aware of the activities of the Para-military forces.

Many Ivorian farmers have also reported similar encounters with the forces. They gave the assurance that in the immediate term they will conduct a thorough 'clean-up' of the boarder and crackdown on the criminal elements.

The Ghanaian Marine Police will also be conducting regular patrols of the Ghanaian side of the Tano river to check criminal activities.



OPERATION 60 PODS PER TREE LAUNCHED AT NANKESE

Operation 60 pods per tree, a strategy to increase cocoa yield has been launched at Nankese, a farming community near Akwadum in the Eastern Region. The operation, according to the District Officer is an intervention to help sustain the cocoa industry and complement COCOBOD's on-going Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs).

Addressing farmer cooperatives at the launch, the Executive Director of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), Dr. Emmanuel Nii Tackie Otoo commended staff of the Nankese District for initiating such a laudable initiative. He also praised the cooperatives for throwing their weight behind such an important intervention.

"I am very delighted for what I am seeing today. There is a clear evidence

of unity among you and I thank God that finally you have understood, can attest and proclaim the good news about efforts being made by COCOBOD to sustain Ghana's cocoa industry".

According to him, farmers can only achieve the Operation 60 pods project if they adhere to good agronomic practices.

Dr. Nii Tackie stressed the need for the farmers to allow their diseased farms to be cut and for those whose farms are in good shape, pruned to enable more pod setting for increased yield.

"If you don't allow your farm to be pruned for flower development and artificial pollination for more pods, your yield will reduce", he added.

He further stressed the need for all the cocoa famers in the district to join cooperatives to enable the Board deal easily with them.

According to him, forming cooperatives gives the farmer more privilege like easy access to subsidised fertilizer, the newly introduced motorized slasher/pruners among others.

He further encouraged all cocoa farmer cooperatives within the district and across all cocoa growing areas to challenge themselves just as the Nankese cooperative has done.

In attendance were the Omanhene of Nankese who chaired the function, some officials from the Cocoa Health and Extension Division as well as heads of security agencies in the district.



COCOBOD JOINS FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL MINING; PROPOSES GH¢3 MILLION AS COMPENSATION TO COCOA FARMERS

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), in a bid to join Government's crackdown on illegal mining on cocoa farms, has proposed an amount of Three Million, Six Hundred and Thirty Thousand Ghana Cedis (GH¢3,630,000) as compensation to cocoa farmers who have lost their lands to illegal miners.

This proposal was presented by COCOBOD to stakeholders at a National Consultative Dialogue on Small Scale Mining organized by the Ministry for Lands and Natural Resources in Accra.

Presenting the policy document on COCOBOD's position on the fight against illegal mining, the Deputy Chief Executive in Charge of Agronomy and Quality Control, Dr Emmanuel Agyemang Dwomoh disclosed that cocoa generates more than USD2.2 billion annually in foreign earnings to Ghana. He said cocoa is the mainstay of the Ghanaian economy; hence

the Board would not renege on its efforts to sustain the cocoa sector by influencing government policies aimed at deterring illegal miners and their collaborators from persisting in their trade.

Dr. Dwomoh emphasized that mining has had disastrous effects on our environment resulting in crop loss, reduction in farmers' income, contaminated waterbodies and threat to wild life. He said an amount of USD200 million had been invested by COCOBOD for farm rehabilitation, irrigation, fertilizer subsidies, public sensitisation and education to facilitate sustainable production.

'COCOBOD is paying GH¢11,892 per acre of each rehabilitated farm and urged Government to safeguard these investments to avoid losing them to illegal mining with its adverse effects on the environment and livelihood of

farmers", he said.

The way forward proposed.

Dr. Dwomoh said that a legislative framework that focuses on processes should be developed, as an approach towards sustainable land and water management system in cocoa growing areas where illegal mining is rife.

'Where mining is inevitable, an amount of GH¢3,630,000.00 being projected revenue per hectare should be paid as compensation to the farmer whose farm has been destroyed", he emphasised.

He said there is the need for COCOBOD, Lands and Minerals Commissions to collaborate, streamline and tighten sanctions against illegal miners in cocoa growing regions. 'No issuance of license or lease for mining in cocoa farm lands until public forum is organized in prospected communities", he stressed.



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Where mining is inevitable, an amount of GH¢3,630,000.00 being projected revenue per hectare should be paid as compensation to the farmer whose farm has been destroyed

THE FIRST-EVER FINE FLAVOUR COCOA FERMENTATION CENTRE OPENS AT OFFINSO



The first farmer-owned cocoa fermentation centre in Ghana under the Fine Flavour cocoa production initiative of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has been opened at Offinso in the Ashanti Region.

The fermentation centre was jointly funded by Tachibana & Co. Ltd., Guittard Chocolate, Transroyal Ghana Limited and COCOBOD with technical support from the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

Speaking at a ceremony to officially hand-over the facility to the Fine Flavour Cocoa Farmers' Cooperative, the former Executive Director of CRIG, Dr. Isaac Yaw Opoku said the fermentation centre was built to ensure that the high quality of cocoa produced in the area was not compromised.

He further disclosed that the country currently produces about 30 metric tonnes of the premium variety of cocoa and projected a rise in production with the identification of more conducive areas for its production.

'Our initial soil tests showed that the soil in Offinso supports the fine flavour cocoa production. We have recently identified soils in Akim Oda and two other districts as perfect for the same exercise so that Ghana's production



level scales higher in the next few years".

Dr Opoku disclosed that Fine Flavour cocoa is highly-priced on the world market, selling at around US\$5000 to US\$10,000 per tonne.

According to him, Ghana's attempt to penetrate the niche cocoa market began with a pilot project in the Offinso District in 2008. He lauded the steady growth in the membership of the Offinso Fine Flavour Farmers' Cooperative from 15 to 515 and expressed optimism that the numbers would go up as more farmers sign on to the project.

The Chairman of the Offinso Fine Flavour Farmers' Cooperative, Mr. Alex Opoku Mensah said the fermentation centre had come as a great relief to farmers and will eliminate theft of cocoa and exposure of cocoa beans to bad weather conditions during the post-harvest processes.

He expressed appreciation to COCOBOD and the partner organizations for their continued support towards the

production of Fine Flavour cocoa. Mr Opoku Mensah appealed to the funding partners to support them with three tricycles to aid the carting of cocoa beans to the centre for fermentation and also appealed to Transroyal Ghana Limited to pay for cocoa purchased from farmers on time to enable them to meet their financial obligations.

Speaking on behalf of the partner organizations of the project, the Managing Director of Transroyal Ghana, Mr Adamu Mohammed pledged to provide the farmers with the tricycles requested to help them transport their cocoa beans to the fermentation centre.

The Chief of Kokote, Nana Opoku Asiedu II who represented the Chief of Offinso traditional area expressed appreciation to COCOBOD and the partner organizations for establishing the fermentation centre in Offinso. He advised the farmers to manage the centre well to encourage the establishment of similar centres at various farming communities in the area and beyond.



COCOA PROCESSORS AND CHOCOLATIERS URGED TO SEIZE TRADE OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICA

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo has called on local cocoa processors and chocolatiers to take advantage of the trade opportunities in Africa, facilitated by the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, (AfCFTA) in order to sustain the cocoa sector which is the backbone of Ghana's economy.

achieving our target of over 1kg per capita consumption," he indicated.

The Chief Executive said the global market for processed cocoa was huge, adding that AfCFTA had the potential to strengthen and grow intra-Africa trade from the current base of 15% to 52% if stakeholders are able to rise up to the



'There is the need to stimulate increased demand for made in Ghana cocoa products by providing timely and accurate information on market trends for Ghanaian businesses, which the Ministry is dedicated to facilitating", he added.



Hon Boahen Aidoo, at a forum organised to interact with cocoa processors, manufacturers, chocolatiers and other key stakeholders in Accra, informed participants that COCOBOD had seen a huge market potential in AfCFTA and had therefore set up a Committee to liaise with the AfCFTA Secretariat and local cocoa processors to promote the consumption of Ghana's cocoa products in Africa.

According to Hon. Aidoo, as the world's number one producer of premium quality cocoa and the second largest producer in terms of volume, Ghana is yet to fully benefit from the precious commodity because local value addition is relatively low. He said the Committee had been established to serve as a liaison between processors, local chocolatiers and industry stakeholders to take advantage of the consolidated market and reduced tariff regime that the AfCFTA agreement seeks to achieve.

'Whilst we have managed to increase our per capita consumption level to 0.53kg, we are still a long way from

prospects it offers.

Hon. Aidoo appealed to cocoa processors and chocolatiers represented at the forum to support the national cocoa consumption promotion agenda by making cocoa products available to every Ghanaian at all levels for consumption while aiming to further diversify into other finished products such as cosmetics and spices.

He further urged the processors and chocolatiers to make recommendations to help drive the cocoa consumption campaign to ensure job creation, increased revenue and ultimately, the realization of Government's Ghana Beyond Aid agenda.

The Technical Adviser on Multilateral Regional and Bilateral Trade at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Mr Anthony K. Nyame-Baafi, stressed the need for stakeholders to consolidate and expand existing markets for Ghana's cocoa products. He said it would be profitable to explore market opportunities in North, East and Southern African countries such as Egypt, Kenya and South Africa.

Speaking on behalf of the Cocoa Value Addition Artisans Association of Ghana (COVAAG), Mrs Dela Austin appealed to Management of COCOBOD to facilitate easy and affordable access of cocoa beans and other cocoa-related raw

materials to small scale artisans and manufacturers to feed the local market.

She assured industry stakeholders that local chocolatiers would take up market opportunities by adding value to their products, and requested that conducive trade exhibition avenues should be provided regularly to serve as platforms for chocolate artisans to market their products. Mrs Austin highlighted a number of challenges facing the association which COCOBOD Management promised to address.

Participants appealed to government to review the huge taxes imposed on cocoa and its related products to make it easy for entrepreneurs in the sector to succeed.

Dr Edward Amporful, Chairman of the COCOBOD AfCFTA Cocoa Consumption Committee assured participants, particular processors and chocolatiers that the Committee would work in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders to ensure the attainment of the common objective of promoting the consumption of Ghana's cocoa beyond Ghana.

ASHANTI REGIONAL COCOBOD STAFF URGED TO SUPPORT CMS IMPLEMENTATION



Staff of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in the Ashanti Region have been urged to ensure the successful implementation of the Cocoa Management System (CMS), which is an integrated data management platform on cocoa farmers and other stakeholders in Ghana's cocoa sector.

The call was made by Dr Emmanuel Nii Tackie Otoo, Executive Director of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) of COCOBOD. He made the call at a workshop held at the Ashanti Regional capital, Kumasi, for staff in the region.

He indicated that the acquisition of reliable data is critical to the growth of the cocoa sector, hence, the need for all to embrace and work towards

the successful implementation of the system.

The Senior Public Affairs Manager of COCOBOD, Mr Fiifi Boafo advised staff to engage the relevant persons and groups in cocoa communities and sensitize them on the numerous benefits that farmers, in particular, and all stakeholders in general, will derive when the system becomes fully operational.

"There is the need to effectively engage with all stakeholders, clear every misconception about the CMS and provide the necessary feedback for a more effective system", he said.

Mr Boafo also indicated that the local media, cocoa farmer cooperatives and community information centres, as

well as, opinion leaders will be engaged to propagate the need for all to register. Sensitization on the Cocoa Management System has begun in the region and is soon to be followed with the mapping of cocoa farms and enumeration of cocoa farmers in order to give them unique identification (ID) cards.

A farmer's ID card will hold information about the farmer and his/her farm. It will facilitate the sale of cocoa beans, access to farm inputs, subsidies and other support services from COCOBOD.

The cocoa management system will also help with the traceability of cocoa which has become a major international issue, with sourcing countries raising ethical issues on child labour and deforestation.



Many Ghanaians responded positively to the call by the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to consume more chocolate and share their chocolate experiences during the National Chocolate Week celebration in February this year.

Social media platforms were soon flooded with videos, pictures and messages telling personal stories of delightful moments with chocolates; romantic times with partners involving chocolates; confessions of guilty pleasures and many conversations about the nutritional benefits of cocoa and chocolates.

By the third day of the week-long event, which began on 8th February, the hashtags #GhanaCocoa #GhChocolateWeek #GhChocolateReigns were among the top social media trending topics in Ghana. These hashtags will go on to remain top trends beyond the last official day of the celebration, the 14th of February.

INCREASE IN CHOCOLATE SALE

Several media reports pointed to increases in the sale of chocolate during the celebration. Traders who had stocked up ahead of the event reported steady rises in sales volumes as the days crept to the climax on 14th February.

Many of the buyers who were interviewed said they were buying chocolates as part of gift packages for their families and especially, their romantic partners.

INCREASING LOCAL CONSUMPTION

This year was the first time that the otherwise National Chocolate Day was magnified into a week-long event, the National Chocolate Week. It was under the theme: Eat Chocolate; Stay Healthy; Grow Ghana.

The late Minister of Tourism and Diasporan Relations, Jake Obetsebi-Lamprey, is credited with the creation of the Chocolate Day in 2007 to coincide with Valentine's Day, so to make the gift of chocolates the preferred present of the day.

This year's expanded event is part of a grand national plan and renewed effort by the government to boost the local

GHANA CELEBRATES CHOCOLATE WEEK WITH TREATS AND STORIES OF CHOCOLATE MOMENTS



consumption of cocoa and chocolate and engender a rise in per capita consumption.

The government also wants to attract investments into the cocoa processing and value-addition space to increase the nation's capacity to process large volumes of its cocoa. This will create jobs and increase revenue for the country.

The wildly successful celebration of Ghana's chocolate and cocoa products was organised by COCOBOD, in collaboration with the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), cocoa processing companies and other stakeholders in the cocoa industry. It was aided by an impressive social media campaign and numerous engagements with traditional media partners.

CHOCOLATE CITY

The creation of the Chocolate City is one of several innovations of this year's grand celebration. It opened at the Tetteh Quarshie Interchange for 5 days,

starting on the 10th of February.

It hosted a fantastic assortment of products from exhibitors who make chocolates and other products with cocoa. The Chocolate City created a central location for consumers to explore and relish the many different products made from cocoa – from edibles to cosmetics.

Similar to the experiences of traders in the markets which were reported in the media, exhibitors at the Chocolate City also reported high sales volumes with some often running low on stocks by each day's closing time.

The Chocolate City was also the venue for other activities including live band performances; live radio programmes; the Inter-University Hall Quiz Competition, which the 'Farmers' of the Akuafio Hall, University of Ghana coincidentally won; and a scintillating performance of Kofi Kinaata's new single, Chocolate, which he debuted at the launch of the National Chocolate Week.

Ghanaian rapper Amerado also released a single to celebrate the week.

2021 Chocolate Week in Pictures







COCOBOD BUILDS CAPACITY OF RESEARCH OFFICERS TO SERVE REMOTE COCOA FARMING COMMUNITIES



Remember safety is the primary reason we are training you. The principles of road safety and Ghana Cocoa Board's Health and Safety policy must be your guide throughout the training

The Deputy Director of Research in charge of Research and Evaluation at Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Mr. Michael Owusu-Manu, has cautioned research officers working with the Board to be guided by the principles provided under the Roads Safety Policy and the Board's Health and Safety Policy in the discharge of their duties.

Mr. Owusu-Manu gave the advice during the opening ceremony of a two-week capacity building programme at the Bunso Cocoa College aimed at equipping some 35 Monitoring and Evaluation Officers of the Research Department from all cocoa regions in Ghana with knowledge and skills in motor riding for official duties.

'Remember safety is the primary reason we are training you. The principles of road safety and Ghana Cocoa Board's Health and Safety policy must be your guide throughout the training, especially, during the practical

aspect", Mr. Owusu-Manu advised.

The Manager responsible for Training and Manpower Development at COCOBOD, Mrs. Eunice Antwi disclosed that management had procured motorbikes to ensure that cocoa farms within remote communities receive the necessary technical support throughout the cocoa season.

She added that various training programmes were being designed to boost the capacity of the Monitoring and Evaluation team and assured the trainees that their professional proficiency will continuously be improved through regular training.

Chief Executive of the Road Safety and Transportation Consultancies Limited (RSTC), facilitators of the training, Dr. Godfred Akyea-Darkwa commended the Board for proactively improving the quality of staff riders and drivers through regular road management

science training.

He disclosed that human error is the highest risk factor for road accidents in the country and added that the situation could be reduced drastically through regular training and education as adopted by COCOBOD.

On behalf of the trainees, Mr. George Akoto Mensah, from the Twifo Praso Station, thanked management for making the safety of COCOBOD staff a top priority.

He also expressed gratitude for the capacity building opportunities available to staff and gave the assurance that the knowledge and skills to be acquired from the training in motor riding skills will be applied to their daily operations.

COCOBOD HOLDS CAPACITY BUILDING SEMINAR FOR FINANCE MANAGERS



“It is our hope that the seminar will be effective and beneficial to help attain the financial goals of the Board



The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has held a capacity building seminar on Accounting and Financial Management for Finance Managers at the Board, its divisions and subsidiaries.

The seminar was organised under the theme, ‘Embedding Value; the Future of Finance at COCOBOD’.

Addressing the participants, the Deputy Chief Executive in charge of Finance and Administration, Mr Emmanuel Ray Ankrah, emphasised the value management places on continuous knowledge acquisition to keep up with the latest trends in management and operations.

He was confident that the event will result in measurable improvements in the performance of the Financial Managers which will ultimately reflect in the Board’s finances.

‘This platform is to help provide new ideas and approaches on how our financial reports in the cocoa sector are made and help change the narrative of the value of finance’, he stated

Mr Ray Ankrah further urged the managers to actively seek out emerging trends within the financial sector of the cocoa industry and implement them to enhance their work.

The Director of Human Resources at

COCOBOD, Mr. Randolph Addai, said management continuously seeks to attain the most effective accounting plan to sustain the cocoa sector.

‘It is our hope that the seminar will be effective and beneficial to help attain the financial goals of the Board’, he said.

The seminar facilitator, Dr Noel Tagoe,

a former Professor of Accounting and Management Practices at Nottingham University, in his presentation, highlighted key action matrices that management needs to adopt in all financial transactions of the Board.

He further elaborated on the need for transparency in information sharing and planning as a key component in carrying out effective accounting.



Mr. Julius Martinson Heads Quality Control Company Ltd (QCC)



Mr. Julius Mark Kodjo Opoku Martinson has assumed the position of the Acting Managing Director (MD) of the Quality Control Company Ltd. (QCC), a subsidiary of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD).

He was officially handed the top post on the 16th March 2021 following the retirement of the former MD, Mr. Peter Atta-Boakye.

Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson comes to the job with over three decades of experience, having risen through the ranks of QCC, serving in different capacities in various cocoa growing regions before his transfer to the QCC Head Office in Accra. Until his new appointment, he was the Deputy Managing Director of QCC, working closely with his immediate boss whom he described as 'an excellent personality and a dear friend'.

QCC is the semi-autonomous subsidiary

of COCOBOD; responsible for the maintenance of post-harvest quality standards. Among other functions, the company carries out inspections, grades and seals cocoa, coffee, and sheanut for the local and international markets.

In an exclusive and revealing interview for the COCOBOD Newsletter, Mr. Martinson (as he is affectionately called by colleagues) shares his personal and professional life as well as what he brings on board in his latest appointment.

CHILDHOOD

Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson was born in Kumasi, the Ashanti Region – the last of five (5) siblings. A few months after, his parents relocated to Accra. His father (from Larleh in the Eastern Region) and Mother (a Ga, from Greater Accra) were both employed in the healthcare sector. 'Unfortunately for me, dad passed away when I was just six years.

So, I stayed with my mom, throughout my growing life."

The self-described 'principled but affable' personality was heavily shaped by his disciplinarian older brother, Mr. G.T.A. Martinson, who stepped up as a quasi-father figure to protect and provide guidance for his younger brother following the passing of their dear father.

The QCC Boss said growing up, he was most inspired by his older brother (now deceased) whom he described as 'a disciplinarian and principled; a bit stereotyped; wanting you to go according to instructions.' According to him, such tenets shaped his life, especially, his career life. 'I always want things to be done right. That is all I want', he said. Narrating further, the QCC boss said the experiences with his late brother made him bold, strong, resilient, and disciplined.

EDUCATION

Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson went to the St. Anthony's Preparatory School at Latebiokoshie for his basic education from 1969 to 1976, and then continued to the Accra Academy from 1976 to 1983 for his 'O' and 'A' Level Education, before going to read Zoology with Botany (Entomology option) and graduated with a BSc Honours Degree from the University of Ghana, Legon in 1987. He was in Commonwealth Hall; a proud Vandal.

In his years in school, he was a competitive athlete of various track and field sports which included basketball, volleyball and athletics. His real passion was (and still is) the 'beautiful game of football' which he excelled most at, but nowadays – having long retired his boots – he enjoys football matches from the screens. 'When I was in Accra Academy, I remember we had this Inter-School Competition and they had a song for me when I get onto the tracks, and for all our athletes at Accra Academy. I played basketball and volleyball too but the best of all is my football. I loved football. I played for Accra Academy and I played for the Legon team as well. I was involved in many competitions including the Inter-University Games.

CAREER ASPIRATION

Growing up with a mother who worked in the healthcare sector and three older sisters who all became healthcare workers, Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson saw himself following a similar path and that meant, he also became interested in science at a young age.

'To be frank, I wanted to be in the medical field because my mom is a family planning nurse and a midwife, and my dad was also in the medical field. As a result, I said well, why don't I become a doctor and then I'll be on top. But as the Good Lord would want it to be, I didn't enter the medical field, but still remained in the science field'.

THE RISE TO BECOME HEAD OF QCC

Mr. Martinson's study of Zoology with Botany (Entomology option) landed him a job with the then Produce Inspection Division (now the Quality Control Company Ltd. (QCC) and that began the three decade-plus long journey, starting from Kade in the Eastern Region as a Senior Officer, to becoming the Head of the Company.

He was transferred from his Kade post, after some years of service, to Suhum, then to Sefwi Debiso and later to Sefwi Wiawso in 2002 as the Deputy Regional Manager and nine (9) years on as Regional Manager for the Takoradi Port. In 2014 he moved to the Ashanti Region where he was promoted to the position of Senior Manager in 2015. In 2020, he moved to Accra as Deputy Managing Director, before becoming the Acting Managing Director in March this year.

VISION FOR QCC

Now, as head of the company, Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson aims to inspire true commitment to the quality control policies of QCC among all levels of staff.

The kind of commitment, he says, which will last beyond his time as head of the company, so that the 'future success and sustainability of QCC' is assured.

'The whole company is about quality and our policy emphasises the importance of providing inspection services that meet or exceed the expectations of our clients. So, I want to ensure commitment to this policy. That is my vision. I want to ensure total commitment to the policy and implement it at all levels. Everybody has a role to play to achieve that vision.'

His approach to achieving his vision is to provide the leadership needed to improve three critical elements of the company: its People, its Procedures and its Technology.

THE PEOPLE – Professionalism and Ownership

There is very little discretion in the work that QCC field operatives undertake, he said. There are laid down procedures to follow to achieve stated goals and any attempt to circumvent those processes threatens Ghana's place in the world cocoa trade. It is therefore important that the staff exhibit professionalism in executing their duties. It is also necessary to create a culture of ownership among staff and encourage continuous improvement of the human resource through training and capacity building.

'Professionalism and excellence in the service delivery for me is key. We want to build our capacity to deliver. So, I

encourage staff to take part in training programmes; internal and external ones. Always get additional knowledge in line with what you are doing to improve upon your performance'.

PROCEDURES – Maintaining Premium Quality

Ghana's top position in terms of the quality of cocoa beans has been years in the making, through the institution of processes and procedures from pre-harvest to post-harvest, he acknowledged. While QCC's role is mainly in post-harvest, it recognises the need to work even more closely with stakeholders at every stage of the value chain to uphold the procedures which ensure premium quality.

'We want to make sure that every industry player in the value chain will be brought on board to ensure that the premium that we enjoy will be sustained. We need to make sure Ghana continues to enjoy its premium, and everybody in the value chain from the farmer, the LBCs and the transporters play their roles properly'.

TECHNOLOGY – Improving Efficiency

Additionally, Mr. Julius M.K.O. Martinson said, 'we are in a technological age and we should adopt state-of-the-art equipment which will improve the efficiency with which the company executes its tasks.' He described the move from the empirical testing of cocoa moisture content years ago – where one sticks his or her hand into a bag of cocoa to help determine its moisture content to the use of the electronic Aquabuoy, as one such technological input that improved operations.

ADVICE

'For me, I also always say, if it must be done, then it must be done well. We should all live as a family and whatever role you have been asked to play, play it very well. It is in your own interest and that of the company because it will go around, and the benefits will come to you.

Finally, DISCIPLINE is key in the transformation of goals into accomplishment, therefore, this is one of the core values I intend to instil into staff.

Anticipate, Prepare & Respond To Crisis; World Day For Safety & Health At Work

“Every day, 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents or work-related diseases more than 2.3 million deaths per year. 317 million accidents occur on the job annually; many of these resulting in extended absences from work. The human cost of this daily adversity is vast and the economic burden of poor occupational safety and health practices is estimated at 4 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product each year”- ILO

28th April is World Day for Safety and Health at Work and over the past year we have all realized that it is possible for a single virus to change everything and we may not be able to anticipate certain conditions but leaving everything to fate can be disastrous.

We have also been exposed over several years to conditions such as back and neck pain that can keep people away from work for months and also lead to loss of revenue. Imagine the sole bread-winner in a household is unable to work and gain adequate income. That opens the flood gates to poverty, malnutrition, risk of many more diseases and to make matters worse the little money available may be used for ‘cut-corner’ medical care.

Safety at workplaces should not be limited only to corporate settings in flashy buildings but it extends to mom and pop shops, small container shops and even ‘apempemu’ stores. As we work at protecting our team members with face masks and sometimes face-shields in addition, physical distancing, proper handwashing options and sanitisers as well as helping to boost immune systems, we need to tackle other risks and challenges that put our health on the line.

We all agree that ‘decent work must be safe’ yet we have all not shown enough commitment; Governments, Employers and employees all have duties, rights and responsibilities to ensure the highest priority is accorded to the principle of prevention. Statistics show that where institutions invest in prevention measures over a period of time, a significant decrease in work-related accidents and occupational disease takes place.

Let us spend the last few days of April assessing our work area; we can get professional help or we can start off on our own. Whatever it takes ‘just do it.’ If you spend time walking around your office or shop with the intention of looking for risky situations etc. you will find them and then you can make adequate provision to modify and I dare say you will reduce the incidence of crisis.

Some areas that require prompt action in most workplaces include:

Signaling that safety is a priority

Right from the entrance to the workplace, appropriate notices should show the commitment to safety and health.

Appropriate markings for walkways

Vehicles and humans should not compete for the right of way especially in places with trucks etc. there should be clearly demarcated areas for pedestrians.

Management of extreme temperatures

In our setting, extreme heat is a major challenge. Workplace design should place emphasis on proper ventilation and in places that are already built, structural changes may be needed in addition to industrial fans and easy access to clean drinking water.

Fire drills and evacuation plans

If employees are not aware of what to do in the event of a fire for instance then it needs to be tackled immediately.

There should be a plan in place

First Aid awareness

What does one do in the event of an injury or other potentially fatal event occurs? Employees and even employers need to be equipped with basic first aid skills.

Ergonomics

Many of the aches and pains we experience are caused by poor posture at work and even beyond. This affects those seated in offices as well as those operating machinery or working on the floors. Correct techniques, taking appropriate breaks and balancing effect on the body should be taught and practiced.

Use of PPEs

Many employees have access to these and know its use but still fail to make use of them. Regular knowledge sharing and understanding will eventually bring a positive change.

Managing Stress

Stress is a window to many disease conditions and poor performance and it is important all workplaces address this.

Time management and wellness programmes including exercises help to combat this. Make sure you sleep adequately to prepare for work

Avoiding clutter

When your work area is messy, not only are you at risk of injury, you also feel harassed or stressed out and cause more errors.

Items need to be arranged to avoid falling from heights that can injure people (even kill) or destroy things

Exercise Breaks

I am a huge advocate of taking short breaks from work to exercise, stretch tired muscles and joints and breathing properly to keep us refreshed.

Remember being at work does not grant us the visa to eat any junk food and drinks. Prepare !

Other Interventions

I believe workplaces should have happy hours for more interaction (may not need to be physical especially in these times), they should also take part in programmes like DUMP where unused or expired medicines are collected safely and the appropriate agency contacted to help dispose off. Harboursing such medications has often resulted in poisoning, addictions etc. Watch that First Aid box!!!

Once again won't it be great if your workplace actively encourages ‘ICE’ – IN CASE OF EMERGENCY. Save at least two numbers on your cell phone beginning with ICE e.g. ICE Kojo 090..... when you are not in a position to help yourself, anyone who picks up your phone will be able to contact someone who knows a lot about you.

The list is endless but let us start with the basics and work our way to a safe and healthy work environment with PREVENTION at the fore.

Employers need to be aware that provision of personal protective equipment is not the all in all. PPEs should be seen as the last line of defense for the employee. Prior to using the PPEs the employer must ensure that machines, equipment, processes and the premises are free of risk to the health of all workers.

Employees also play a crucial role and it is expected that they will all actively cooperate with employers in the implementation of the preventive and protective measures.

It is important that workplaces have a visible occupational health and safety specialist or in the absence of one a safety officer who will coordinate all processes such as risk assessment and management, monitoring of working environment and practices that may affect worker's health, advice on planning and organization of work, designing and implementation of preventive programmes and even appropriate referrals to healthcare and rehabilitation.

If we made a conscious effort to calculate the money drained off that is related to lost working time, treatment of occupational injuries and diseases, interruptions in production, rehabilitation and compensation, it will leave no doubt in our minds that prevention is a PRIORITY!

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/ St Andrews Clinic

Dr. Essel is a medical doctor, holds an MBA and is ISSA certified in exercise therapy, fitness nutrition and corrective exercise.

Thought for the week – ‘Economic recession or pressure to maximize profits cannot justify cutting corners in workplace safety’ – Guy Ryder. ILO Director General. (28th April 2015)

‘Almost 3 million workers die each year from occupational accidents and work related diseases. This is an unacceptable and avoidable human cost. We can and must reduce and eliminate such deaths, injuries and diseases from work.’

ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder

References:

United Nations Website (un.org)

International Labour Organization website

COCOA CON-SUMPTION

NATURAL COCOA POWDER

‘Natural’ signifies that it is unprocessed beyond the initial separating from the cocoa butter and grinding into a powder; it is also sometimes labelled on packaging as ‘unsweetened cocoa powder’ or ‘pure cocoa powder.’ It is fruity, complex, and bitter in flavour, and light brown in colour.

Cocoa beans are naturally quite acidic, and regular cocoa powder is as well, with a pH level between 5.3 and 5.8. This makes it a great addition to recipes that include baking soda, as the cocoa will trigger the chemical reaction that causes lift and lightness in your final bake.

HOW TO STORE COCOA POWDER

Like your spice collection, cocoa powder should be stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry place, such as your pantry or cupboard. The fridge or freezer might seem tempting, but both of those spots actually foster humid environments;

for cocoa powder specifically, they should be avoided. Well-stored cocoa powder will keep for up to two years, but the strength of flavor does fade a bit over time.

SOME CREATIVE WAYS YOU CAN INCLUDE COCOA POWDER IN YOUR MEALS

■ Cocoa Powder in Oatmeal

Add some cocoa to your oatmeal to make it a little chocolatey. To take away the bitterness of the cocoa powder, add a little honey and some banana. Breakfast is served.

■ Add Cocoa Powder to a Smoothie

Smoothies are a natural pairing for high quality cocoa powder. The sweetness of the smoothie masks the somewhat bitter flavor of the cocoa, making this a great introduction to cocoa powder. To make a cocoa smoothie, blend your favourite fruits (strawberries, bananas, or blueberries work well) with Greek yogurt and a bit of ice. Add 1 tablespoon of cocoa powder for a rich, chocolatey burst of flavor.

■ Sprinkle Cocoa Powder over Fresh Fruit

The intense taste of cocoa powder pairs perfectly with the natural sweetness of fruits. This makes the perfect healthy dessert for people trying to watch their calories. Simply slice your favourite fruit and sprinkle it with a dusting of cocoa powder for an antioxidant-rich treat. Pineapple, raspberries, and bananas are the perfect pairing for cocoa powder.

■ No-Sugar-Added Chocolate Milkshake

Love chocolate shakes but not a fan of all the fat and calories? Blend a frozen banana with milk and cocoa powder for a guiltless treat.

RECIPE:

Peanut Butter Chocolate Chia Pudding

PREP TIME	5 mins
RESTING TIME	4 hrs
TOTAL TIME	5 mins
SERVINGS	2 servings
CALORIES	393 kcal

INGREDIENTS

■ 1/4 cup chia seeds

■ 1 cup non - dairy milk (Coconut or Almond Milk)

- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 tablespoons pure maple syrup
- 3 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 1/2 tablespoon natural cocoa powder

INSTRUCTIONS

Stir all together until totally smooth.

Chill at least 4 hours or overnight.

Serve with chopped peanuts and shaved chocolate

NUTRITION

Calories:	-	393kcal
Carbohydrates:	-	40g
Protein:	-	14g
Fat:	-	21g
Saturated Fat:	-	4g
Sodium:	-	176mg
Potassium:	-	533mg
Fibre:	-	10g
Sugar:	-	23g
Vitamin A:	-	465IU
Vitamin C:	-	8.5mg
Calcium:	-	342mg
Iron:	-	3.2mg
Net Carbs:	-	30g



A JOURNEY THROUGH THE FINE **FLAVOUR LAB** OF THE COCOA RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF GHANA

By Benjamin Teye Larweh

Ghana's cocoa industry has made significant progress over the years. The implementation of innovative policies and programmes, coupled with the commitment of staff, farmers and other actors on the cocoa value chain has ensured that the industry continues to remain relevant in both national and international socio-economic discourse.

One important institution that has played very significant roles in the success story of the cocoa sector is the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG). The Institute was established in June 1938 at Tafo in the Eastern Region of Ghana to investigate problems of pests and diseases in order to sustain production in the Eastern Region.

Over the years, CRIG's mandate has been significantly widened to meet emerging challenges including investigating soil fertility and agricultural practices (with a view to increasing yield), research into coffee, kola, shea, cashew and quite recently, research into development of by-products of cocoa and other mandated crops. The objective of the last mentioned mandate is to diversify utilisation of cocoa and generate additional income for farmers.

Another significant but little known activity which is currently being undertaken by CRIG is the 'Flavour Project'. Mr. Stephen Yaw Opoku, Head of the Flavour Laboratory at CRIG, citing several scientific studies (CRIG cocoa manual, 2010; Magi et al., 2012; Afoakwa et al., 2008; Owusu, 2010), mentioned that the key criteria for assessing cocoa quality by buyers and manufacturers are its purity and wholesomeness, yield of cocoa nibs, uniformity, flavour and functional potential.

But the most important quality



indicator is the amount and type of flavour compounds that the cocoa has. He said flavour is therefore central to acceptability of cocoa beans and cocoa products such as chocolate and consequently, contributes significantly to determining the quality.

It is for this reason that the Flavour Project has been instituted to pilot the cultivation of fine flavour cocoa by farmers. The piloting is the first of its kind in Western and Central Africa.

Through a WCF/USAID African Cocoa Initiative (WCF/USAID/ACI) Phase 1 sub-grant Ghana Quality Innovations Project implemented by CRIG, a State of the Art cocoa flavour laboratory has been established at Tafo. The lab, situated at the premises of

CRIG, is currently evaluating the flavour potential of some newly developed cocoa hybrids that could be recommended for planting by farmers. A sensory evaluation panel has also been trained and certified to carry out cocoa sensory evaluation and bean quality assessment.

Currently, in addition to Ghana, only Madagascar produces fine flavour cocoa. Again, the establishment of the flavour lab has facilitated the introduction of flavour evaluation into the research done at the Institute. Previously, cocoa beans were shipped to Europe and the United States of America for flavour evaluation.

The Flavour Project is initiating the screening of CRIG's gene bank (more

than 1000 accessions) to profile and document their flavour diversity. This would greatly help in breeding of specific flavours.

According to Mr. Opoku, it is known all over the world that Ghana produces the best quality cocoa, unique and with diversified flavours, but there still exists the potential to develop more varieties with unique and desirable flavours that could be introduced into the chocolate world. Farmers are however only cultivating a handful of these varieties.

Following the establishment of the lab and provision of very essential logistics through the World Cocoa Foundation, there was the need to build the capacity of all stakeholders on the cocoa value chain. Thus more than 1089 staff of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division and Quality Control Company Ltd were trained in 2019. The staff would eventually be required to train farmers on the effect of post-harvest practices on flavour development.

The training programmes have been more experiential, and farmers are allowed to taste variety of chocolate produced from diseased pods, over-ripe pods, under-fermented pods, over-fermented pods as well as well fermented pods. The experiential training method has been very effective because farmers can easily perceive the flavour defects due to the wrong post-harvest practices they undertake on their produce.

This innovation developed by CRIG is happening nowhere else in the world and if efforts are made to reach all cocoa farmers with this kind of experiential training, farmers will significantly change their post-harvest handling practices, and the overall effect will be improved cocoa beans quality, improved cocoa flavours and increased premium for Ghana's cocoa both in the local and international markets.



Mr. Opoku observed that instead of waiting for CRIG to visit their farms, farmers who have benefited from the training now voluntarily send their beans to the lab for testing. "In fact some of them end up going back home with chocolate produced with their cocoa beans. Sometimes, the training team randomly picks samples of beans produced with Good Agronomic Practices (GAPs), prepares chocolate and liquor with the samples and sends them back to the farmers", he joyfully added.

There is however a challenge. The installed capacity of the chocolate machine is not large enough to mass produce for CHED to use for the training programmes across the cocoa regions. But there is still hope for expansion.

Eleven (11) different chocolate types (dark, milk and other flavours including coconut, mint, coffee, pineapple, vanilla ginger and caramel) are currently manufactured in the Flavour Lab.

It has been observed throughout our sojourn at the lab that, indeed Ghana has chalked many "firsts" in the African cocoa fraternity.

a. First cocoa sensory evaluation laboratory in Africa.

b. The only country in Africa to have a team of certified sensory evaluators.

c. Ghana is represented on the ICCO Ad hoc panel on fine/flavour cocoa.

d. Ghana is the only African country to be represented on the shadow Technical Committee of the Cocoa of Excellence programme.

With the introduction of the Living Income Differential (LID) pricing mechanism which is already yielding positive results, everything must be done to jealously guard the premium quality cocoa that Ghana has produced over the years. There is no doubt the Flavour Project is key to sustaining and significantly improving upon this achievement.

Therefore from the research scientist, the cocoa farmer, the field officer who interacts daily with farmers, the purchasing clerk who buys cocoa beans from our farmers, the quality control expert who determines the suitability of the cocoa bean for the market and other essential actors on the cocoa value chain, let us all remember that every single action we take with the cocoa bean has an effect (positive or negative) on the chocolate flavour that is produced.

If you want to test the flavour quality of your cocoa bean from any part of the cocoa growing regions in Ghana, it is possible to do so. Just locate the flavour lab at CRIG, Tafo through your District Cocoa Officer with samples of your produce. Mr. Stephen Yaw Opoku and his able team are ever ready to attend to you.

As for me, I have already submitted samples from Nobi and I am patiently awaiting the outcome.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GHANAIA COCOA FARMER



By Abigail Ahorgba

Back in the Primary School and even the Junior High School days, our teachers would occasionally ask us about our preferred professions for the future. The usual suspects were Doctor, Nurse, Accountant, Lawyer, Businessman and the likes. None of us, in our wildest dream, would mention 'a farmer'.

Even though we were children, we could still understand that a good profession was one that could earn you the necessary living income and dignity to be able to live a fulfilling life. Farming was and is still not considered one of them.

Clearly, in our part of the world, right

from infancy, 'farming' is perceived as a poverty-stricken profession solely preserved for illiterate and less privileged in society. In view of this stereotype about farming, our societies have managed to bring up people whose career preferences are anything but farming.

The reality, however, is that farmers play a major role in society; they feed us, some of them warm us and all are custodians of the landscape and nature. Being the oldest professionals on the face of the planet, farmers have demonstrated responsibilities and commitments that go way beyond their farms, crops and livestock, with many playing vital roles in their communities and societies.

There is a cocoa slogan in the Akan language which literally translates 'the entire nation will starve if the farmer stays at home'. This adage is an exact demonstration of the importance of farmers in the socio-economic growth of Ghana. In Ghana, the majority of the citizens are farmers, with those in the cocoa fraternity constituting a significant majority. Cocoa is estimated to generate more than 2 billion United States dollars annually to boost the economy. Aside from cocoa cultivation, these farmers are also involved in food crop and livestock farming in an effort to ensure that the more than 30 million

Ghanaians do not go hungry.

But what do these farmers do on daily basis? To what extent do they sacrifice their comfort and happiness to sustain the farming business? To find answers to these and many other questions concerning cocoa farming, we decided to spend a day with Mr. Fiko Kwadzo Biom, a cocoa farmer at Fankyekor in the Papaase cocoa District in the Oti Region (Volta Cocoa Region) and can say without hesitation that 'dedication' is one word that best describes the cocoa farmer. It is a fact that a few other professionals understand sacrifice, patriotism and patience more than the Ghanaian cocoa farmer.

Mr. Biom is 68 years old. He has a 10-acre matured and a 4-acre newly cultivated cocoa farms. He also has cassava, plantain, cocoyam, maize, yam and other food crop plantations. He began his cocoa farming more than 50 years ago and has never looked back since.

On this particular day, the team got to Fankyekor at 7am after a two-hour drive from Hohoe. He was already up from bed, ready to receive us. According to him, he wakes up at 5:30am every day, sometimes with hesitation due to tiredness carried over from the previous day's work. He had already





the best days are those days that he enters his farm to meet a sight of fresh and healthy-looking cocoa pods ready for harvesting.

Through hard work and dedication, Mr Friko Biom has educated all ten of his children and his last child is currently at the University of Professional Studies, Accra. He has also built a five-bedroom house in his hometown and contributed to the construction of a church in the Fankyekor community. He was also a major sponsor of the construction and opening of a Basic School in the community.

Having spent a day with Mr. Biom was enough to imagine what this man, together with the other millions of illustrious farmers go through on daily basis to ensure that there is enough food on the table of every Ghanaian and also ensure adequate production of cocoa to sustain the economy. Our farmers need to be applauded and appreciated.

attended to his mandatory morning duties including sharpening his cutlass and putting the necessary logistics together for the day's activities before we arrived. So at exactly 7:30am, we set off to the farm. Mr. Biom joined the team from Hohoe in a pickup vehicle and the wife rode on the family motorcycle with two farmhands. According to him, going to the farm on the motorbike takes about 5 to 8 minutes from his residence. On days when they have to walk, the journey takes them about 30 minutes. The family hardly takes breakfast at home.

Upon reaching the farm, Mr. Biom took us round to witness what he had already told us on phone – the nature of his farm, size, state of the other food crops being cultivated, etc. He was emphatic that he planned not to do any major activity that day and rather tell us what every day is to him as a farmer.

'I begin the day's work depending on the required activity for the day. This usually ranges from weeding, cutting down parasitic trees, planting seedlings, harvesting, breaking pods, fermenting or working on the other food crops", he said softly. According to him, he never forgets to pray to commit the day into the hands of his maker before beginning to work.

Whatever he decides to do, he does it with all his might. His wife and

farmhands are always ready to offer their best to ensure the achievements of daily targets. Mr. Biom and his family work in the rain and in the sun to ensure that they have something to boast of during harvest time.

At midday, his wife stops working to prepare lunch in a small mud house built in the middle of the farm. The meal is prepared with everything God has blessed him with from his farm. Enough food is prepared for Mr. Biom and all his farmhands. After lunch, they all rest for a while under a shady tree before resuming work.

As work progresses, the sun also travels slowly in a quest to set below the horizon and give way to the cooling of the earth. This is the only time that Mr. Biom and his team will wrap up their day's work and leave for their humble abode.

At home, Mr. Biom takes his supper, usually something light. Sometimes after supper, he visits family and friends, listens to the evening news on his radio or chats with his wife for a while before finally going to bed at about 8:00pm. He always sleeps with full gratitude because YET ANOTHER DAY IS DONE.

According to him, all days might look the same because of how routine things are done in his household, but

Each day, they go into the fields to see what is growing and what remains to be done. But it is always the same thing: nothing is growing, everything needs to be done. Our society's perception and attitude to farming seem to suggest that farmers sow their seed on soil guaranteed by poverty to fail. But their complaints are less and they persevere till the end. For they know that at the end of the tunnel, there is a respite.

I conclude by siding with W.D. Ehrhart, who wrote in his famous 'The Farmer' from Beautiful Wreckage that 'a farmer of dreams knows how to pretend. A farmer of dreams knows what it means to be patient'.

Farmers are awesome. Farming should rank high on our list of admired professions because they provide one of the most basic needs for the survival of the human race, food.

Our teachers have a very popular slogan 'If you can read this, thank the teacher'. I think our farmers deserve one more beautiful slogan added to their endless list of slogans- 'If you have eaten today, bless the farmer'. Do you have any other slogan in mind?

Reference

W. D. Ehrhart, 'The Farmer' from Beautiful Wreckage. Copyright © 1999 by W. D. Ehrhart.

COCOBOD CE CELEBRATES CHOCOLATE WEEK WITH PUPILS IN AHAFO



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COCOBOD does not support child labour; we will ensure that cocoa farmers do not engage in such practices

As part of activities marking this year's Chocolate Week, the Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, interacted with pupils of the Boaso and the Twewaaho MA Basic schools in the Tano North and the Tano South municipalities, respectively, in the Ahafo Region.

He distributed bars of chocolate to them and encouraged parents and guardians to include cocoa products in the diet of their children and wards for them to derive the benefits contained in cocoa.

'Apart from the support cocoa provides for Ghana's economy, it is also very important for the body, therefore, everyone needs to consume some amount of cocoa every day.

'The inclusion of the okro-like fruit of cocoa and other ingredients in the preparation of stew, especially by farmers, makes their stew a chocolate recipe', he said.

He added that the consumption of cocoa increased the intelligence of children and buttressed his assertion with the fact that all Nobel prizes in the sciences were won by people from places where cocoa was eaten most in the world.

Hon Aidoo advised cocoa farmers to refrain from using children as labourers; describing the practice as dangerous.

He said the practice could put impediments in the marketing of cocoa beans from the country, since consumers of the product across the world abhorred child labour.

'The COCOBOD does not support child labour; we will ensure that cocoa farmers do not engage in such practices,' he added.

He said with the implementation of the free senior high school policy, COCOBOD had decided to channel the funds used for cocoa scholarships into the construction of hostels in the universities to help provide accommodation for students, including the children of cocoa farmers.

At the Boaso MA Basic School, the Head Teacher, Mr Newton Gborgbor, appealed for the construction of a library and an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) centre for use by the pupils. Touching on the subject of employment

in an interview after his interaction with the pupils and teachers, Hon Aidoo said last year, COCOBOD engaged 30,000 youth as hand pollinators to boost the yield of cocoa in the country, while 50,000 people were also employed to rehabilitate moribund cocoa farms.

He said 48,000 youth had also been engaged in the mass cocoa spraying exercise across the country, adding that in all, COCOBOD had a staff strength of 9,000. 'Besides the support the cocoa industry is providing for Ghana's economy, the number of people who are directly and indirectly benefiting from the cocoa industry makes the crop an important source of livelihood in the country,' the CE said.

Hon Aidoo thanked cocoa farmers for their significant contribution to Ghana's economy and gave an assurance that the government would continue to support the sector to enable cocoa farmers to enjoy the fruits of their labour.





COCOBOD LEADS CAMPAIGN TO BOOST LOCAL COCOA CONSUMPTION

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) is seeking to increase local processing of cocoa beans by raising the domestic demand for cocoa products through a campaign to encourage consumption of cocoa within the country.

Speaking at the launch of Accra-based Asaase Radio's Chocolate Month Programme, Senior Public Affairs Manager of COCOBOD, Mr. Fiifi Boafo said the National Chocolate Week, which begins with an official launch by Vice President, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia on Thursday, February 4 is expected to spark the interest of Ghanaians to indulge in the mouth-watering products derived from Ghana's cocoa.

Mr. Boafo, however, expressed regret that a large percentage of the finished cocoa products on the Ghanaian market are produced outside the country. He said this is because local processing is largely done at the primary level which includes conversion of the cocoa beans into cocoa butter and liqueur rather than finished products.

He explained that the processing has been at the primary stage for years because local demand for finished cocoa products has been low.

He admitted that great strides have been made over the past four years,



adding that policies introduced by the government within the period have led to an increase in local processing from 26% to 40%.

He hinted that government is due to announce a major programme in the coming days, in support of local processing companies to further boost local processing.

'We have the cocoa beans and the technology but the market for the finished product is just not encouraging.

It's not just the processing we want to focus on. We want to create a local demand that will spur on investors to get into local processing of finished cocoa products.

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It's not just the processing we want to focus on. We want to create a local demand that will spur on investors to get into local processing of finished cocoa products.

Mr. Boafo added that to boost demand, the health benefits of chocolate which he described as enormous, must be communicated to Ghanaians. In this regard, he commended Asaase radio for dedicating the month of February to promoting cocoa processing and consumption in the country through a series of programmes designed for that purpose.

The Head of Communications at Asaase Radio, Mrs. Naomi Nelson-Barnes said the station is dedicated to helping build the local economy through support for indigenous production, hence, the decision to support the effort to increase local processing and consumption of cocoa products



The kidneys are a pair of extremely efficient organs working overtime to keep toxins out of our blood. Unfortunately, because they work so hard they compensate for each other's deficiency hence kidney disease often goes undetected until it's too late.

Once again, a "Silent Disease" comes up. Over the years I have learned that when it comes to the human body, silence is not always golden. The list of silent killers, silent thieves and other silent varieties continues unabated and includes; high blood pressure, high cholesterol, osteoporosis, glaucoma, type 2 Diabetes and kidney disease.

You may already know that the body can function perfectly with one healthy kidney hence the ability to donate a kidney for transplant. March 11th is World Kidney Day and it's about time we all come together to raise awareness about kidney disease and emphasize ways of protecting our kidneys to ensure kidney health for everyone everywhere."

This year our focus is on improving the quality of life of people living with kidney disease and it brings to the fore once more the need to look at health and wellness holistically; physical, mental, social, financial, spiritual and even digital health.

Our kidneys specialize in removing wastes and water from the blood, balancing chemicals in the body, releasing hormones, controlling blood pressure, producing Vitamin D for strong healthy bones and even aid in blood production by producing red blood cells.

Our focus today is on chronic kidney disease also known as chronic kidney failure, which is associated with a gradual loss of kidney function. Imagine what happens at an advanced stage when it is unable to perform its functions above.

Initial presentation of kidney disease is non-specific and may include; nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, fatigue and weakness, sleep problems, changes in urine output, decreased mental sharpness, muscle twitches and cramps, hiccups, swelling of feet and ankles, persistent itching, chest pain, shortness of breath and hypertension that is difficult to control. Remember these may also occur in other diseases so don't play doctor; get help.

CAUSES & RISK FACTORS

These conditions or lifestyles may increase our

risk of chronic kidney disease;

1. Uncontrolled Diabetes

Uncontrolled High Blood Pressure and other heart diseases

2. Diseases of the kidney

- Polycystic kidney disease
- Recurrent kidney infection
- Prolonged obstruction of urinary tract my stones, enlarged prostate or cancers.

3. Smoking and excessive alcohol and aphrodisiac consumption

4. Obesity

5. High Cholesterol

6. When a family member has had kidney disease

7. Age especially after 65 years

COMPLICATIONS

No part of the body is immune to the devastation of Chronic Kidney Disease. Some common challenges are;

- Heart and blood vessel disease
- Fluid retention including flooding your lungs.
- Decreased sex drive or impotence
- Anaemia
- Weak bones and hence bones may break easily
- Brain damage
- Decreased Immunity

GOLDEN RULES TO PREVENTING OR MANAGING CONDITION

If you have kidney disease you MUST talk to a dietician. The role of diet can never be overemphasized.

1. Keep Fit and Active

- "on the move for kidney health"

2. Control Diabetes or blood sugar

3. Monitor and control Blood Pressure

- Uncontrolled high blood pressure is the most common cause of kidney damage

4. Eat Healthy and Keep Weight In Check

- Limit protein intake and avoid products with added salt such as salted snacks, canned vegetables and processed meats and cheese.

- Choose low potassium products such as apples, grapes, carrots, cabbage and green beans. Flee from high potassium foods such as banana, orange, potatoes, spinach and tomatoes.

- Modify your eating pattern to prevent or

manage diabetes and heart disease.

5. Maintain a healthy fluid intake

- Fluids especially water help kidneys clear sodium, urea and other toxins

- Drink about 2 litres of water a day but remember our needs may vary according to exercise, weather, health conditions, pregnancy, breastfeeding etc.

- If you have had a kidney stone before then it is important you drink 2 to 3 litres of fluid to prevent new formation.

6. Do Not Smoke & (AVOID OR MINIMISE ALCOHOL)

- Smoking increases your risk of kidney cancers and
- Also slows the flow of blood through the kidneys.

8. DO NOT take over-the-counter medication on a regular basis

9. CHECK your kidney function

- It is crucial to get medical examinations regularly. If you have any of the risk factors discussed earlier then it is a crime if you don't. All that may be required is a urine and /or blood test.

TREATMENT FOR END-STAGE KIDNEY DISEASE

In Ghana like many other developing countries less than 8% of those with the condition get optimal management this is because at this stage there are simply two options Dialysis and Kidney Transplant.

Dialysis artificially removes wastes from the blood but the cost of the procedure and the frequency required makes it inaccessible to the majority of people.

Kidney Transplant is also highly specialized, expensive, you will need to take medicines for the rest of your life to avoid rejection of the transplanted kidney and one needs to find a compatible donor.

So take all the necessary steps to protect your kidney now; prevention is certainly important but if you already have kidney disease you need to work with your healthcare team, family and caregivers to make the very best out of life.

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/ St Andrews Clinic

Dr. Essel is a medical doctor, holds an MBA and is ISSA certified in exercise therapy, fitness nutrition and corrective exercise.

Thought for the week – "On World Kidney Day and Beyond I invite you to drink adequate amounts of water; water may protect your kidneys but it won't cure from Chronic Kidney Disease."

References:

Kidney Disease – WebMD

Kidney Health Series – Roche

www.worldkidneyday.org

Which foods boost the immune system?

A healthful, balanced diet plays a vital role in staying well. The following foods may help to boost the immune system:

1. Blueberries

Blueberries have antioxidant properties that may boost the immune system.

Blueberries contain a type of flavonoid called anthocyanin, which has antioxidant properties that can help boost a person's immune system. A 2016 study noted that flavonoids play an essential role in the respiratory tract's immune defence system.

Researchers found that people who ate foods rich in flavonoids were less likely to get an upper respiratory tract infection, or common cold; than those who did not.

2. Natural Cocoa drink or Dark chocolate

Dark chocolate contains an antioxidant called theobromine, which may help to boost the immune system by protecting the body's cells from free radicals.

Free radicals are molecules that the body produces when it breaks down food or comes into contact with pollutants. Free radicals can damage the body's cells and may contribute to disease.

3. Turmeric

Turmeric is a yellow spice that many people use in cooking. It is also present in some alternative medicines. Consuming turmeric may improve a person's immune response. This is due to the qualities of curcumin, a compound in turmeric.

According to a 2017 review, curcumin has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects.

4. Oily fish

Salmon, tuna, pilchards, and other oily fish are a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids.

According to a 2014 report, long-term intake of omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

RA is a chronic autoimmune condition that occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks a healthy part of the body.

5. Broccoli

Broccoli is another source of vitamin C. It also contains potent antioxidants, such as sulforaphane. For these reasons, it is a

good choice of vegetable to eat regularly to support immune system health.

6. Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are rich in beta carotene, a type of antioxidant that gives the skin of the potatoes its orange colour.

Beta carotene is a source of vitamin A. It helps to make skin healthy and may even provide some protection against skin damage from ultraviolet (UV) rays.

7. Spinach

Spinach may boost the immune system, as it contains many essential nutrients and antioxidants, including:

- flavonoids
- carotenoids
- vitamin C
- vitamin E

Vitamins C and E can help support the immune system.

Research also indicates that flavonoids may help to prevent the common cold in otherwise healthy people.

8. Ginger

People use ginger in a variety of dishes and desserts, as well as in teas.

According to a review, ginger has anti-inflammatory and antioxidative properties and is likely to offer health benefits. However, more research is necessary to confirm whether or not it can effectively prevent illness.

9. Garlic

Garlic may help to prevent colds.

Garlic is a common home remedy for the prevention of colds and other illness.

One review looked at whether taking garlic supplements containing allicin reduced the risk of getting a cold.

The group of participants taking a placebo had more than double the number of colds between them than those taking the garlic supplements. However, the researchers concluded that more research is necessary to determine whether or not garlic can help to prevent colds.

10. Green tea

Green tea contains only a small amount of caffeine, so people can enjoy it as an alternative to black tea or coffee. Drinking it may also strengthen the immune system.

As with blueberries, green tea contains flavonoids, which may reduce the risk of a cold.

11. Kefir

Kefir is a fermented drink that contains live cultures of bacteria that are beneficial for health.

Initial research suggests that drinking kefir may boost the immune system. According to a 2017 review, various studies have shown that regular consumption of kefir can help with:

- fighting bacteria
- reducing inflammation
- increasing antioxidant activity

The majority of the research that supports this was carried out on animals or in a laboratory. Researchers need to perform additional studies to understand how kefir may prevent disease in humans.

12. Sunflower seeds

Sunflower seeds can make a tasty addition to salads or breakfast bowls. They are a rich source of vitamin E, an antioxidant.

In the same way as other antioxidants, vitamin E improves immune function. It does this by fighting off free radicals, which can damage cells.

13. Almonds

Almonds are another excellent source of vitamin E. They also contain manganese, magnesium, and fibre.

A small handful or a quarter of a cup of almonds is a healthful snack that may benefit the immune system.

14. Oranges or kiwifruit (kiwis)

Oranges and kiwis are an excellent source of vitamin C, which is the vitamin that many people turn to when they feel a cold developing.

While scientists are still not sure exactly how it helps, vitamin C may reduce the duration of common cold symptoms and improve the function of the human immune system.

15. Red bell pepper

For people trying to avoid the sugar in fruit, red bell peppers are an excellent alternative source of vitamin C.

Stir-frying and roasting both preserve the nutrient content of red bell peppers better than steaming or boiling, according to a study on cooking methods.

Source: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322412#which-foods-boost-the-immune-system>

OUR LIFE-SAVING DATE WITH A DENTIST

When visiting a dentist has not been part of your health & wellness routine then it becomes a chore to incorporate it into your schedule BUT the benefits far outweigh the adjustments one needs to make. The impact that your teeth and other structures in your mouth have on your physical and social well-being is amazing. Like many other aspects of our health, prevention & monitoring are key.

Christmas is many months away so this year may I once again suggest that NO DENTIST. NO CHRISTMAS! Do everything possible to set up a date with your dentist at least once in 2021. Avoiding hard foods or speaking in the elderly may be a sign of teeth problems. Losing teeth may also signify bad health and gum disease can raise your heart disease risk while giving off a bad odour. Bad odour and speaking differently may cause people, especially, the elderly to avoid meeting people leading to isolation that has a profound effect on one's life. Losing teeth and dental caries also leads to difficulty eating and malnutrition bells may start sounding.

Uncontrolled Diabetes makes it more difficult to fight bacteria leading to more accumulation of plaque and hence more gum and teeth challenges. Gum disease also makes it more difficult to control blood sugar and the cycle continues.

If you have dentures, it's no excuse to skip your date with your dentist. You still need to make those vital visits periodically.

Dentists do not only repair the damages we have caused to our teeth but also practice a lot of preventive medicine.

They remove plaque that our regular toothbrushes would otherwise have had no chance against; they examine for cancers of the mouth and play a vital role in our fight against other diseases including the dreaded diabetes.

A quick dental class may put everything in the right perspective; 'There are four (4) types of dental problems; Decay, Gum Disease, Oral Cancer and Acid

Erosion. Current evidence-based advice suggests that all patients (including those who are not at risk) should be accorded the benefit of advice with regard to their dental and general health.

a. Prevention of Decay; brush twice daily, last at night and on one other occasion. Spit out your toothpaste after brushing and do not rinse. The frequency and amount of sugary foods should be reduced and when eaten should be restricted to mealtimes.

b. Prevention of Gum Disease; brush twice a day. Do not smoke. Clean in between teeth using floss or interdental brushes.

c. Prevention of Oral Cancer; do not smoke. Do not use smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco). Increase fruit and vegetable intake – 5 portions per day.

d. Prevention of Erosion; avoid frequent intake of acidic foods or drinks (orange, grapefruit, lemon, black currant juices).

Cocoa has an impressive effect on teeth especially when it has little or no additives. So this may be another great reason to make pure cocoa products a vital component of your lifestyle BUT it does not replace the need to see your dentist.

Maybe you should adopt my slogan too 'No Dentist. No Christmas.' To conclude my one-minute dental class take note of these and put them into practice:

1. Brush your teeth at least twice a day

a. The second brushing should definitely be before bedtime and do not rinse out the toothpaste. This ensures contact with the teeth and prevention of bacteria invasion during the long sleep hours.

b. Chewing sticks may play a role but ensure you use a soft-bristled brush and FLUORIDE toothpaste. IT IS NOT HOW HARD YOU BRUSH YOUR TEETH THAT MATTERS BUT HOW FREQUENTLY

AND HOW WELL IT'S DONE. Brushing too hard especially with hard bristles may lead to sensitive teeth and that is not pleasant.

c. Hard bristles may benefit smokers but please don't treat your mouth and teeth the way you scrub a basin. Treat gingerly.

2. Floss your teeth at least once a day – for many of us it's a huge challenge but I am sure that just as in other scenarios practice will improve our skill.

3. Change your toothbrush every three to four months or as soon as the bristles cry for help.

4. Do not smoke

5. Visit a dentist twice a year. I am still struggling to schedule an appointment this year, so let's get it done together.

6. Acidic fruits such as oranges and lemon should be restricted to mealtimes. Mealtimes because a lot of saliva is produced, and it neutralizes the acidic juice. Never brush your teeth after drinking orange (acidic) juice, as you will wash the saliva away during that process and the acid will be the lubricant left.

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)

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Thought for the week – 'Watch your intake of sugar; including the hidden sugar in foods and drinks. Overcoming your sugar addiction could be the beginning of the end of obesity.'

References:

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

2. Dr. Nana Kofi Acheampong, Dental Surgeon UK

3. Dr. Princess Boahen. Dental Surgeon, White Tooth Dental Clinic. Ghana



12 Provides energy and vitality

13 Boosts fertility in both sexes.

14 Inhibits dangerous clot formation within blood vessels.

Improves memory and general brain functions.

18

15 Affords anti-cancer and cancer-prevention properties.

Promotes nourishment/health of brain cells.

19

16 Promotes cleansing and detoxification of the body.

Supplies many essential dietary minerals.

20

17 Minimizes worrisome changes that accompany menopause

Offers healthy levels of dietary fiber.

21

An initiative of NCPCC-COCOBOD
Endorsed by Prof. F.K. Addai
(Head of Anatomy) UGMS



COCOBOD INTERVENTIONS

TO INCREASE COCOA PRODUCTION AND ENHANCE FARMER INCOME

- **ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATIONAL COCOA REHABILITATION PROGRAMME**



- **NATIONAL PRUNING EXERCISE**



- **HAND POLLINATION PROGRAMME**



- **RE-LAUNCH OF THE COCOA DISEASE AND PEST CONTROL PROGRAMME**



- **THE COCOA ROADS PROJECT**



- **COCOA FARM IRRIGATION PROGRAMME**

