



COCOBOD*News*

A publication of Ghana Cocoa Board

April, 2022

GHANA TO ATTAIN FULL VALUE FOR ITS COCOA BEANS



Reasons to **Consume** **COCOA**

Provides Energy and
Vitality

Boosts Fertility in both
Sexes

Inhibits dangerous clot
formation within Blood
Vessels

Affords Anti-Cancer
and Cancer prevention
properties

Promotes cleansing and
Detoxification of the body

Improves Memory and
general Brain functions

Promotes nourishment/
health of Brain cells

Supplies many essential
dietary minerals

Minimizes worrisome
changes that accompany
Menopause

Offers healthy levels of
dietary fiber

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GHANA TO ATTAIN FULL VALUE FOR ITS COCOA BEANS

Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world with an average annual output of about 850,000 metric tonnes. Unfortunately, not much value is added beyond primary processing while the actual dividend lies in chocolate production estimated at US\$ 150 billion globally. An increased participation in the global chocolate value chain has significant implications on incomes of cocoa farmers, domestic industries as well as an enhancement to Ghana's currency stabilization efforts.

An analysis of the level of cocoa processing in the country indicates that despite having a total installed processing capacity of nearly 500,000 metric tonnes, processing companies in the country operate below optimal capacity due to technical and financial challenges. As a first step, in 2017, the Government of Ghana announced an agenda to ensure domestic processing of at least 50% of the nation's annual cocoa output, thereby reducing the volume of low-valued raw cocoa beans exports to Europe, North America and Asia.

Subsequently, through Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and other key partners, several efforts are being implemented to increase domestic processing to stimulate value addition

and the consumption of Ghana's cocoa, a move that has created a new trajectory for the country to fully benefit from the multibillion dollar global chocolate industry. Despite the significant progress made especially in the areas of sensitization, stakeholder consciousness and other support services, it appears the country still has numerous hurdles to cross in order to benefit from the billions accruing from cocoa Trade annually.

In this edition of the COCOBOD News, we republish an article co-authored by Sophie Van Huellen (PhD), Lecturer in Development Economics at the Global Development Institute (GDI) at the University of Manchester (Previously with SOAS University of London) and Fuad Abubakar Mohammed, the Head of Ghana Cocoa Marketing Company UK Ltd. The article title is,

'WHY GHANA DOESN'T GET THE FULL VALUE OF ITS COCOA BEANS – AND HOW THIS COULD CHANGE'

The global chocolate industry is worth over US\$150 billion. West Africa alone supplies over 70% of the cocoa beans, but most of the value in a chocolate bar is generated in Europe and North America. West African economies receive less than 7% amidst a growing demand for consumer chocolate in

Africa, most of which is satisfied through imports.

The pattern is typical in economies that mostly rely on exporting raw materials. They have to choose between generating revenue from these commodity exports and adding value to products locally. The trade-off arises because industries that add value take time to build up and tend to supply the domestic market first before being able to compete internationally.

Value addition does not immediately generate foreign exchange. The choice is usually in favour of exporting primary commodities, because foreign exchange earnings cannot be compromised.

A case study by Sophie and Fuad titled **"Potential for Upgrading in Financialised Agri-food Chains: The Case of Ghanaian Cocoa"** showed how this dilemma plays out in Ghana's cocoa industry. A solution was subsequently proposed which preserves foreign exchange earnings while utilizing Ghana's existing marketing system to support a growing domestic chocolate industry.

GHANA RISKS BEING TRAPPED

Exports of raw cocoa beans are a key source of foreign exchange for Ghana's central bank. Ghana's cocoa sector is

regulated by the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) which operates under the PNDC Law 81. COCOBOD has a monopoly, through its subsidiary Cocoa Marketing Company, over the marketing of Ghanaian cocoa beans.

The Board obtains United States dollar loans with low-interest rates on international markets, using cocoa contracts as collateral. With few exceptions, only contracts with multinational buyers qualify as collateral since domestic buyers tend to have poor credit ratings and small balance sheets. In this way, COCOBOD has secured nearly US\$25 billion over the past 28 years. The Bank of Ghana needs these US dollars to maintain a foreign reserve and stabilize the local currency.

Ghana has increased its own cocoa processing in recent years, from 200,000 tonnes to nearly 350,000 tonnes in 2021, but it mostly remains at the stage of semi-finished products. The major share of value in a chocolate bar is still generated abroad.

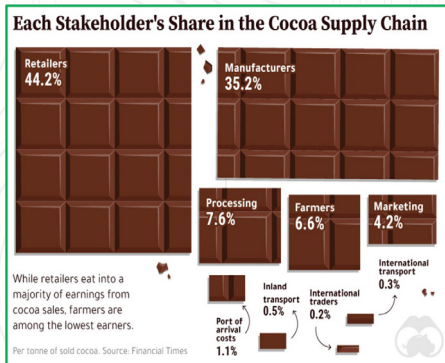
The reason is the importance of cocoa for Ghana's foreign exchange earnings. Policies prioritise cocoa trade for foreign exchange rather than adding value domestically.

Cocoa processing companies in Ghana operate under the Ghana Free Zones requirements which give incentives to firms that export a minimum of 70% of their products. The Free Zones companies are also eligible for tax exemptions on imports of raw materials and machinery. So there is support for domestic processing if the products are exported, but not if they are produced for the domestic market.

Chocolate production for the domestic consumer market is further discouraged by an extreme tax rate of nearly 60% on domestic sales of chocolate and semi-finished cocoa products. For example, as at 2019, natural cocoa butter was sold at an export price of around US\$4,600 per tonne but sold locally at around US\$7,300 per tonne.

Sales within the free zone are tax exempt, but the tax applies to domestic chocolate makers not operating under the free zone policy of Government.

These small players have a double hurdle: they must buy semi-finished cocoa products at an extreme tax



rate and pay additional tax on sugar and milk imports. This means their chocolate products cannot compete with imported ones.

There is another obstacle too: Ghana sells its cocoa beans in US dollars to both domestic and multinational buyers. This puts domestic buyers at a disadvantage against their multinational competitors who are heavily subvented by their overseas parent companies on a bigger balance sheet. Domestic companies rely on the domestic banking sector particularly export development banks. In some cases, such local financial institutions are limited in their ability to extend US dollar credit.

Among the cocoa processing factories in Ghana are top global brands like Barry Callebaut, Cargill and Olam. Only two Ghanaian-owned factories—the state-owned Cocoa Processing Company (Golden Tree brand) and Niche Cocoa, make chocolates for the domestic market.

In addition, despite the tax burden, other small to medium-scale chocolate makers have emerged in recent times.

Stunting their ability to add more value carries a risk. Ghana could fall into a trap where it cannot move beyond the stage of primary processing or low value addition. To truly benefit from its resource wealth in terms of income generation and job creation, Ghana has to move into higher value addition activities.

A WAY OUT OF THE TRAP

Ghana's cocoa financing over the past two decades relies on offshore US dollar funding and benefits the Bank of Ghana by providing foreign reserves.

It also benefits COCOBOD by providing credit at lower interest rates than it could get in Ghana. It is therefore being proposed that the same approach is

used to facilitate the domestic cocoa processing initiative.

Instead of requiring Ghanaian cocoa factories to borrow US dollars to buy cocoa beans, Cocoa Marketing Company could market primary processed cocoa products to overseas buyers on behalf of domestic processors, making sure that the product bought guarantees the US dollar income needed to pay for the cocoa beans that go into the products.

Based on the facts outlined above and the current efforts being put in place by Ghana Cocoa Board and the Government of Ghana, it is obvious that Ghana is on the verge of accelerating its cocoa value addition agenda and benefitting from both the local and African markets.

Full attention is being given to the current challenges confronting, mainly small and medium scale cocoa/chocolate manufacturers, who have recently become a force to reckon with in the country's path to increase local cocoa value addition.

Current laws and policies that hinder domestic value addition are being looked at, with the aim of strategically positioning Ghana as the chocolate production hub of Africa, to replace imports from Europe and North America.

While rallying solidly behind the viewpoints expressed by the duo authors, COCOBOD News therefore wishes to urge the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade, Ghana Revenue Authority, Free Zones Board and Ghana Cocoa Board to fast-track their holistic look at the Free Zones Tax Policy and review the export zone tax on chocolate and semi-finished, products as the move will offer smaller confectionery makers easy access to cheaper semi-finished products; and ultimately bolster Ghana's foreign exchange earnings through exports of high valued chocolates products.

With the commitment shown by the Government towards the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, there is no better time than now to put in place pragmatic policies to increase Ghana's domestic chocolate products output and become a key player in the global chocolate value chain.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Mr. Peter Mac Manu, has called for closer collaboration between COCOBOD and the Minerals Commission to fight illegal mining (Galamsey).

The Galamsey menace, he noted, still poses a significant threat to Ghana's cocoa industry.

He is confident, however, that a joint effort by the two organisations can help prevent the further destruction of cocoa farms and its related setbacks. Mr. Mac Manu made this statement during a media session at a meeting between COCOBOD and the Minerals Commission, represented by their respective Board of Directors and management.

According to him, the indulgence of the youth in illegal mining has affected the production of cocoa in some cocoa regions, noted for high records of cocoa cultivation (Western North, Western South, Ashanti, etc).

'Galamsey has been a topic associated with Cocoa cultivation and this is due to the negative impact it has imposed on cocoa farmlands. COCOBOD knows that the activities of Galamsey have caused setbacks to cocoa farming and finds it mandatory for the two parties to share ideas, correct and find proper remedies to the problem" he emphasized.

Mr. Peter Mac Manu added that the situation is a pressing one, therefore, management cannot sit aloof and watch the industry collapse.

This has necessitated the conversations between COCOBOD and the Minerals Commission.

The Board Chairperson for the Minerals Commission, Hon. Barbara Oteng Gyasi lauded the initiative and charged members to contribute effectively to the discussions.

According to her, the attractive nature of the commission's revenue and activities has attracted the youth into illegal mining despite its dangers associated to it.

Hon. Barbara Oteng Gyasi, therefore, stated that the Commission has already begun discussions that seek to solicit remedies to the issues mentioned.

'As a Commission, we have looked at



The Board Chairman Mr. Peter Mac Manu, addressing the Media during the session

LET'S COLLABORATE TO FIGHT GALAMSEY – MR. PETER MAC MANU

this issue and initiated the Community Mining Scheme which will formalise Small Scale Mining. However, the Ministry is working with Geological Investigations to map out mining areas" she emphasised.

This initiative, according to her will go a long way to complement government's effort to curb the menace. According to her, some modalities will be put in place to help support the initiative.

'Some measures like the regulations on the Minerals Act should factor the peculiar situation of cocoa, engagements with Law Enforcement Agencies and Legal fraternity will help ensure enforcement of existing Laws," she said.

Also, 'sharing of digital spatial information between COCOBOD and Minerals Commission. The Commission would explore non vertical mining i.e. underground mining, also the engagement should be extended to stakeholders such as forestry Commission, and E.P.A".

Adding on, she stated that, COCOBOD will be mandated to share data from the Cocoa Management System (CMS) to enable the Minerals Commission identify specific cocoa areas that have been affected and a massive sensitization for cocoa farmers on mining activities through their respective Corporatives to achieve the purpose.



BUSINESS COMMUNITY URGED TO HELP BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF GHANAIAN CHOCOLATE

Participants at some meeting to discuss ways to promote Ghana's cocoa and chocolate industry have unanimously agreed that the surest way to bridge the current gap between demand and supply of Ghana's chocolate and other cocoa products is intensified efforts for investment into cocoa value addition.

The Ghana Tourism Authority, in Collaboration with Ghana Cocoa Board, Cocoa Processing Company and other stakeholders in the cocoa industry, organized the meeting at the Kempinski hotel in Accra as part of the 2022 National Chocolate Week Celebrations.

In his welcome address, Mr. Akwesi Agyemang, Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Tourism Authority said the meeting dubbed 'Chocolatarium –The Business of Chocolate' was to provide a common platform for all key players on the cocoa value chain to map out strategies to sustain the cocoa and chocolate business and also ascertain various means of funding the business.

Mr. Agyemang said in addition to the already known chocolate and other cocoa products, there are several cocoa by-products that can be taken advantage of.

Dr. Francis K. Padi, Executive Director of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana, in a panel discussion on the topic 'Cycle of Chocolate/Business', said apart from chocolate, the Institute had

developed more than 20 different by-products of cocoa that could be scaled up on large commercial basis. He urged members of the business community interested in investing in such products to contact CRIG for the way forward.

'By law, CRIG is not mandated to commercialize these products. We develop them to support the private sector so all interested investors are welcome', he added.



Mr. Vincent Akomeah, Managing Director CMC

Mr. Vincent Akomeah, Managing Director of the Cocoa Marketing Company, commenting in a panel discussion on the topic 'Marketing and Funding for Cocoa/Chocolate Business', emphasized the premium quality of Ghana's cocoa bean and added his voice to the call for cocoa value addition. He said COCOBOD had

consistently spearheaded the National Cocoa Consumption Campaign to create the enabling environment for the various processors, manufacturing and chocolatiers. He also urged the private sector to take advantage of the numerous opportunities in the cocoa value chain to help grow Ghana's cocoa sector.

Mr. Yofi Grant, CEO of Ghana Investment Promotion Center said there are a lot of business opportunities in Africa, following the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) and urged the business community to consider investing in the cocoa sector.

Hon. John Ampontuah Kumah, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance, in his Special Guest Remarks, acknowledged the importance of the tourism sector in national development. He said the cocoa sector still remains the backbone of Ghana's economy and reiterated the readiness of the Ghana Cares Programme to partner local processors in a collective effort to increase cocoa processing and consumption.

Other speakers at the meeting were Mr George Adjei Bekoe, Vice President of Cocoa Value Addition Artisans Association of Ghana as well as representatives from Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Ghana Tourism Federation and Ghana Enterprises Association.

COCOBOD TO HAND OVER REHABILITATED COCOA FARMS TO FARMERS



A cross section of some happy cocoa farmers in the Western North Region

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) will soon begin the process of handing over the management of rehabilitated cocoa farms to their owners.

This comes after a successful two-year-long rehabilitation of hundreds of acres of Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) infected farms, under the COCOBOD and Government funded Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme.

The Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, made this announcement when he inspected a 145.8-hectare rehabilitated cocoa farm at Kumikrom in the Bekwai District of the Western Region.

The inspection was part of a two-day field and farmer-engagement tour of some cocoa communities in the Western North Region. It was also an opportunity for the Chief Executive to check the progress of some cocoa road projects in the Region.

During his interactions with the cocoa farmers at Kumikrom, he disclosed that it was time for early beneficiaries of the

rehabilitation programme to take over the care of their farms.

He asked the farmers to adhere strictly to good agronomic and agroforestry practices to ensure that the farms can produce at their optimum capacity without adverse impacts on the environment.

The National Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, which was officially launched by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in 2020, was devised by COCOBOD to curtail the rapid spread of CSSVD on cocoa farms.

The process begins with the cutting and chemical treatment of cocoa trees on diseased farms. The farms are then replanted with disease-tolerant, early bearing, high yielding cocoa varieties. During the two-year-long rehabilitation process, COCOBOD bears the cost of all the activities on the farm and the cost of labour.

It also gives an amount of GHC1000.00 per hectare to each farmer who has an infected farm which is under

rehabilitation. In the case of tenancy, both affected tenant farmers and their landowners are compensated.

A survey conducted in 2017 found that more than half of the 509,295.53 hectares of cocoa farm in the Western North Region had been infected and nationally, 315,886 hectares out of a total of 1.9 million hectares of cocoa farm had been lost to the CSSVD.

Consequently, cocoa production in the Western North Region had dropped from over 330,000mt in 2010/2011 to 154,000mt. Aside the primary goal of stopping the further spread of the disease and restoring the productivity of CSSVD devastated farms, the programme also safeguards the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and helps to ensure better food security through the planting of plantains, tubers and grains, during the first two years of the cocoa trees' growth.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs have also been created for the youth in cocoa communities, who provide labour and technical support to rehabilitate the cocoa farms.





COCOA SOIL MANUAL DEVELOPED TO IMPROVE COCOA FARMING



Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo has hailed the Cocoa Soils Project for acknowledging and addressing key challenges relating to efficient use of farmlands within Ghana's cocoa sector, as the Board continues to seek and adopt sustainable methods of cocoa farming.

He was speaking at a handing-over ceremony at the Cocoa House in Accra, where a Training Manual for Field Officers titled, 'Managing Soils for Increased Productivity and Decreased Deforestation in Cocoa' was officially presented by the Cocoa Soils Project team to Ghana Cocoa Board.

He expressed optimism that the manual will help address practices that reduce the nutritional value of farmlands.

Hon Boahen Aidoo recounted that a recent field visit to the Western North Cocoa Region revealed that trees cut down as part of the National Cocoa Farm Rehabilitation Programme have been cleared from farmlands and sold to traders as firewood. 'It is unfortunate that the trees cut

during the farm rehabilitation exercise, which could have served as a reservoir of nutrition for replanted trees and food crops have been cleared by farmers out of ignorance. I am happy that the manual has captured practices to maintain and restore soil fertility, to help tackle such problems."

Hon Boahen Aidoo emphasized that Ghana Cocoa Board is keen on harnessing soil nutrition to increase productivity on the same arable land, as part of efforts to stop the extension of farming into forest zones.

The Cocoa Soils Project Coordinator and Country Director of IITA, Dr Richard Asare disclosed that the manual is the first version of recommendations from ongoing Integrated Soil Fertility trials to enhance soil fertility and productivity in the country.

He expressed confidence that once validated and integrated into extension messages, the manual and its subsequent versions would help to deepen understanding of the cocoa tree's nutritional requirements while addressing the problem of expansion of cocoa farmlands into forest zones.

'It is our belief that together, we can facilitate access to scientific knowledge to cocoa farmers and policy makers to help improve incomes and enhance sustainable cocoa production, and at the same time, mitigate cocoa driven deforestation risks in the country."

The manual focuses on addressing issues under four key thematic areas, productivity, deforestation, environmental protection and health of cocoa producers.

Highlights include good agricultural practices to help farmers increase their productivity by at least 30%, Soil Fertility Management, and Integrated Management of Pests and Cocoa Diseases.

The manual and handbook were developed through collaborative work by scientists from Ghana, Cameroon, Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria, through a consortium of public-private institutions, including the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana and led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, with funding support from the Norwegian government.

NO COCOA FARMS WILL BE GIVEN TO GALAMSEY OPERATORS - CHIEFS IN AOWIN DISTRICT DECLARE



Seated left, Nana Adu Kwesi, Kyedomhene of Jema, and seated right, Hon Boahen Aidoo, Chief Executive of COCOBOD

The Chiefs of some communities in the Aowin Cocoa District of the Western North Region have declared their communities a Galamsey-Free enclave.

This is to deter landowners and farmers, particularly, cocoa farmers from giving their farmlands to illegal small-scale miners, popularly called, Galamsey operators.

The communities have decided to severely sanction any cocoa farmer who will give out his/her farm to miners/ prospectors.

Nana Adu Kwesi, the Kyedomhene of Jema made this disclosure at a durbar attended by a delegation from COCOBOD led by the Chief Executive, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, as part of a two-day working tour of the Western North Region.

COCOBOD was forced to cease its rehabilitation exercise in a number of cocoa-growing areas due to instances of farmers turning over their farmland

to Galamsey prospectors for significant sums of money after the diseased cocoa trees on their farms were cut and compensations had been paid.

The Municipal Chief Executive (MCE) of Aowin, Mr Samuel Adu Gyamfi, who also addressed the delegation said, he and the Chiefs together with other community leaders held meetings to discuss the Galamsey menace and, thereafter, signed an agreement that stipulates, among others, that landowners will not be allowed to sell or lease their lands for Galamsey.

When it comes to cocoa farms, in particular, they agreed that any farmer who gives out his or her cocoa farm which is undergoing rehabilitation will be made to pay the cost of the rehabilitation exercise undertaken on the farm.

He stated that he had obtained the list of all treated farms in the Aowin Cocoa District, so that anyone who allows Galamsey on their farm will be

promptly arrested and prosecuted.

He said the agreement was necessary to protect the millions of dollars the government is spending to rehabilitate Cocoa Swollen Shoot Viral Disease (CSSVD) infected farms in the area.

He further cautioned against any other acts which may threaten cocoa farming/businesses within the district. Following the assurances from the Kyedomhene and the MCE, the COCOBOD boss, Hon Aidoo, also promised to work with the Chiefs and the people to ensure that all diseased farms are restored.

He further announced plans for the establishment of the Jema cocoa seedlings garden; a nursery to raise disease- tolerant, early bearing, high yielding cocoa crops to meet the needs of the community and surrounding areas.

2021 MOST ENTERPRISING FEMALE COCOA FARMER RECEIVES GH¢250,000.00



Hon Boahen Aidoo presenting the Cash prize to Madam Adjoa Sintim (2021 Most Enterprising Female Cocoa Farmer)

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has presented Madam Adjoa Sintim, the 2021 Most Enterprising Female Cocoa Farmer with a supplementary prize of GH¢250,000.00.

The prize was donated by the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) in fulfilment of a pledge ahead of the 2021 National Farmers' Day celebration to finance COCOBOD's award package for the 2021 Most Enterprising Female Cocoa Farmer, however, the management of COCOBOD decided to present Madam Sintim with the full donated sum in addition to her original award package from COCOBOD.

The award recognises her hard work towards the sustenance of cocoa farming as well as her invaluable impact in ensuring sustainable livelihood interventions in farming communities in the Ahafo, Eastern and Ashanti Regions.

Management of the Board used the opportunity to encourage women in cocoa farming to continue to play their respective roles in sustaining the cocoa

economy.

The Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo thanked WCF and lauded its commitment to cocoa farmers, particularly, women in cocoa farming. He expressed the need for continued monetary assistance and collaboration with the foundation for their collective interest.

'So far, we are pleased with the efforts of the WCF and the financial support the foundation provides, as it goes a long way to financially cushion the Board to fund activities in support of cocoa farmers', he said.

Hon Aidoo urged Madam Sintim to continue in her strides and advised her to plough back the fund into her cocoa business while encouraging her to set up an educational fund in remembrance of the award.

He implored cocoa farmers to adopt and invest in modern technologies like irrigation and hand pollination, alongside adherence to the existing

agronomic interventions prescribed by the Board to enhance production and mitigate the effects of climate change on production.

The Country Director of the WCF, Dr Betty Annan expressed her organisation's commitment to serving the interest of cocoa farmers, especially women in cocoa farming and recognised the instrumental roles women play in community development and nation-building efforts.

She congratulated the awardee for her hard work and indicated that she is the pioneer beneficiary of the initiative to be given an amount of that magnitude and advised her not to rest on her oars.

'The 2022 cash prize will be increased to GH¢300,000.00 where the best awardee will be given Gh¢100,000.00 from the amount while the remaining Gh¢200,000.00 will be spread across other award categories, as incentives for them,' Dr Annan disclosed.



The 2022 cash prize will be increased to GH¢300,000.00

Receiving the prize, the 69-year-old best female enterprising farmer expressed her gratitude to the management of COCOBOD for the support and to WCF for their commitment to financially empower women in cocoa farming.

She reiterated her commitment to her cocoa trade and further revealed her dedication to increase investments into schools, toilets and material resources which she has funded over the years at Sankore, Dunkwa and Subriso communities.

Madam Sintim appealed to COCOBOD management to support and facilitate irrigation and road projects to address major bottlenecks in cocoa production in these communities. She re-echoed the request for the timely supply and delivery of farm inputs such as fertilizers to farmers, stating that the move is a paramount determinant of produce yields.

CMS IS CRITICAL TO ENHANCING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COCOA SUPPLY CHAIN – HON BOAHEN AIDOO



A group photograph of participants present at the Stakeholder engagement

The Cocoa Management System (CMS) is a critical aspect of the efforts by Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to enhance traceability and the sustainability of Ghana's cocoa supply chain, says Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, the Chief Executive of COCOBOD.

The CMS, he said, is Ghana's response to the increasing global awareness of the need to pursue development sustainably under the guiding principle that development must satisfy present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Hon Aidoo made this assertion at an engagement meeting with the European Union (EU) Delegation to Ghana and the German Cooperation to Ghana (GIZ) to present and discuss the scope and structure of the CMS.

The engagement meeting was the latest instalment in a series of multi-stakeholder dialogues with the European Union (EU) beginning in September 2020 to discuss the sustainability of the cocoa industry.

INTEREST OF COCOA FARMERS

The COCOBOD boss emphasized that in

all the conversations and interventions being adopted by stakeholders to improve the cocoa industry, the interest of cocoa farmers must remain supreme.

‘Those of us with the advantage of the industry know-how have a duty to resolve the problems of the cocoa farmer to ensure that he becomes a vital link in the chain’, he stated.

For that reason, he added, COCOBOD has been implementing measures such as the Productivity Enhancement Programs (PEPs), intensive cocoa agroforestry in the cocoa rehabilitation program, education support, effective extension delivery, mainstreaming of anti-child labour education into cocoa extension delivery, and the Cocoa Management System (CMS).

The CMS, he said, cures the challenge of a lack of reliable and credible farmer data which has been a significant setback in the attempt to modernize the industry and achieve sustainability in cocoa production.

GHANA'S LEADING ROLE

In his remarks, H. E. Irchad Razaaly, the EU Ambassador to Ghana

acknowledged the leading role that Ghana, as a cocoa-producing country, has been playing in the sub-region to improve the cocoa sector.

He said the upcoming EU regulations are not aimed at punishing any industry but is in response to consumer concerns to check the environmental impact of goods imported into the EU market, hence, the need for other stakeholders, such as Ghana to engage in further dialogue to inform the regulations.

Dr. Emmanuel Opoku, the Deputy Chief Executive in charge of Operations at COCOBOD made a presentation on the objectives and challenges of the CMS. Mr. Arie Asafu-Adjaye, the Managing Director of Digital Innova (technology partners) discussed the practical applications of the technology upon which the CMS is built.

Dr. Ernest Felix Appiah, of the Quality Control Company (QCC) and Mr. Alex Sackey a digital payment expert, respectively, gave presentations on the overview of the end-to-end cocoa traceability system and the new payment model for cocoa purchasing under the CMS.



A group photograph of the sensitization team with the Chiefs and Elders of Asamankese

ASAMANKESE CHIEF PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR COCOA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The chief of Asamankese, Osabarima Adu Darko III has pledged full support for the Cocoa Management System (CMS) exercise expected to start on 21st February, 2022 at Asamankese and other surrounding communities.

According to the chief, his elders and other members of Asamankese who have amenities such as rooms and mattresses to accommodate the enumerators and surveyors are willing to make such logistics available to support the CMS team upon arrival.

Receiving a delegation from COCOBOD at his palace, Osabarima Adu Darko lauded COCOBOD for the path it has taken to

digitise key operations within the cocoa sector to facilitate easy interactions with farmers and other actors in the value chain. He also called on Ghanaians to support every initiative of government that improves living condition and guarantees a blissful future.

'This programme is fantastic and we must all support it. We know census of any kind is important in planning and taking critical decisions for nation building', he indicated.

Osabarima Adu Darko described the data collection exercise as a national assignment and urged his elders and cocoa farmers especially to avail

themselves to be captured under the CMS.

A senior Public Affairs Officer of COCOBOD, Mr Emmanuel Boapong Gyan, responding to some questions raised by the elders disclosed that the CMS is expected to start in the Eastern Region on 21st February 2022 in phases with about 130 staff expected to be deployed to Asamankese and its environs.

According to him, the CMS will result in farmers being issued with Cocoa Cards which will serve several purposes including enrolment on to the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme.

10,577 COCOA COOPERATIVES REGISTERED WITH DEPARTMENT OF COOPERATIVES

The Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED) has facilitated the registration of some 10,577 cocoa farmer cooperatives with a total membership of 735,797 with the Department of Cooperatives.

Of the total membership, 36% are women. The Brong Ahafo Cocoa Region alone has 873 cooperatives with 77,671 members.



Dr. Mercy Asamoah, Deputy Executive Director - CHED, delivering the speech on behalf of the Chief Executive of COCOBOD

The Deputy Executive Director of CHED in charge of operations, Dr. Mercy Asamoah, speaking on behalf of the Chief Executive Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo disclosed this at the launch of the Brong Ahafo Women Cocoa Farmers' Co-operative & Marketing Central Union Ltd at the Sunyani Jubilee Park.

Speaking on the theme - The Woman

Cocoa Farmer; The Engine of Growth for National Development, Hon Boahen Aidoo extolled the indispensable roles played by women cocoa farmers and urged them to stay focused and relevant in the value chain.

'Just as the engine of a vehicle is very important to facilitate its movement and continuous relevance, so, is the Woman Cocoa Farmer, an Engine of growth for national development', he espoused.

He further indicated that for a woman cocoa farmer to become an effective engine of growth, she must strive to achieve high yields, averaging around 1,500 kg/ha, or about 23 bags/ha or between 8 - 10 bags per acre through the adoption of Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs).

Hon Aidoo reiterated the need for cooperative members to be more united, focused and collective in their pursuits.

According to him, the decision by several cooperatives to metamorphose into Unions is an excellent move that will facilitate members' access to credits, and subsequently whip up trust among members and the business community.

He further reminded the cooperative executives on the basic requirements of a sustainable union and charged them to ensure good corporate

governance, financial sustainability & accountability, commitment to payment of dues, savings & investments, capacity building of members (through CBS, FBS and GAPs), honesty and credit worthiness, constant training in Additional Livelihood & marketing linkages to financial and other institutions, need for members to be fully involved in the on-going PEPs, support for members to register healthcare insurance and need to educate & organise women to vaccinate against the COVID-19.

The COCOBOD boss encouraged the women to use their union to address the numerous challenges women face in their cocoa farming operations.

Hon Aidoo indicate that CHED is in a process to update it's database on all cooperative as well as Unions to facilities engagement between such bodies and his outfit.

Speaking on behalf of the Cooperative, Madam Martha Addai, President of the Association thanked COCOBOD for the numerous assistance cocoa farmers in the Region have received to boost their farming operations and encouraged her colleagues to plough back proceeds from their farms to enhance and maintain productivity.

She was optimistic that the Union will be able to assist members to access credits and called on other female cocoa farmers to come board for a united voice.



GENESIS OF SHEA – THE MYSTICAL TREE

By: Geoffrey Opoku-Darko, CRIG



It is legendary that Shea was of divine origin because it was sent by Horus, the Falcon Headed Egyptian god in the foothills of the Ethiopian highlands.

It is believed that Horus had his supernatural strength from always feeding on the Shea nuts. Whenever he flew, he dropped the nuts after eating and they germinated. This chronicle was seconded by Cheikh Anta Diop, one of the greatest Egyptologists affectionately known as the Pharaoh of Knowledge. He stated that golden jars of a rich butter, believed to be shea butter, was used for the skin and hair of females of the Great Royal Dynasties of Egypt such as Cleopatra, Nefertiti, Ankhnesenamum among others.

The Scientific name of Shea is **Vitellaria Paradoxa**. The plant is considered a wild plant with a gestation period of 15 to 20 years. In the absence of any hazards like tree felling, the shea tree can live for up to three hundred years and bear fruits for two hundred years.

It breeds mainly in nineteen countries across the African continent; Benin, Ghana, Chad, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali, Niger,

Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zaire and Guinea.

In 1966, Ghana added shea to the mandate crops of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana. (CRIG). CRIG, through its scientific prowess, has since managed to reduce the gestation period of shea to between 4 and 5 years.

It grows in almost half of the country, including the entire area of Northern Ghana namely; Western Dagomba, Southern Mamprusi, Western Gonja, Lavara Tuma, Wa and Nanumba. The Shea tree has no capacity for vegetative regeneration and can only be propagated by seed.

In 1976, a sub-station of CRIG was established in Bole, a town in the Savana Region. It was established to fully harness the potentials of the Shea crop. CRIG therefore initiated scientific research into the cultivation and processing of Shea nuts.

Shea has contributed greatly to Ghana's socio-economic development, particularly in alleviating the plights of women in the Northern part of the country. It serves as a local resource

that could be improved to generate revenue for the country. With the current attention being given to shea by the Ghana Cocoa Board and CRIG, there is no doubt that it can go a long way to support the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 1 which hinges on poverty reduction.

Shea Butter

From Shea butter (cosmetics and soap): Shea butter moisturizing soap, Shea butter soap, Shea Alata Samina, Shea butter lotion etc.

Shea butter is considered as a superfood for the skin as it is rich in unsaturated fats, with a large proportion of non-saponifiable components, essential fatty acids, vitamins E and D, phytosterols, provitamin A, and allantoin. It has been used since time immemorial for skin care, baby care, and consumption. Given below are the various shea butter benefits for the skin.

Benefits of Shea Butter for the Skin

Incorporating shea butter into your regular skin care routine will work wonders. Check out here.

1. Moisturizes Dry Skin

Shea butter is an excellent moisturizer for the face and the body. Its fat content is responsible for its emollient and humectant properties. It locks in the moisture in the skin and keeps it hydrated for long. Dehydrated and dry skin becomes rough and scaly. Certain areas of the body can even develop skin cracks due to dryness. Shea butter can nourish the skin with its fat content. It can also help to soften the skin on the hands and feet and makes it supple.

2. Treats Acne and Blemishes

Shea butter is known for its healing properties, which can be attributed to the presence of several fatty acids and plant sterols such as oleic, palmitic, stearic, and linolenic acids. These oil-soluble components do not undergo saponification or convert into soap on coming in contact with alkalis. Shea butter is more non-saponifiable than other nut oils and fats, thus imparting it great healing potential. Raw, unrefined shea butter is effective in curing skin rashes, scars, stretch marks, burns and acne.

3. Reduce Razor Irritation and Bumps

Shaving hair using razors can often leave your skin irritated and itchy. At times, it might even develop bumps post shaving as a result of the irritation.

Shea butter can help reduce this as it moisturizes and soothes the irritated skin. One can also apply the butter a day prior to shaving to smoothen the skin and hair. This will make the shaving process easier and faster and doesn't leave any irritated spots behind.

4. Reduces Stretch Marks

Shea butter is often used as a base in ointments or creams prepared commercially for stretch marks treatment. This is because it can dramatically help prevent and reduce stretch marks formed during pregnancy due to weight gain and/or weight loss.

These marks are formed when the skin stretches beyond its elastic capacity. The application of shea butter will restore the natural elasticity of the skin and also improve collagen production. It is a natural emollient. Daily massage of the affected area with this skin healing butter can lighten stretch marks.

5. Excellent Lip Care

Shea butter is easily absorbable and provides extra moisture and nutrients

that the lips need during the cold season and dry weather conditions.

Thus, it acts as a perfect lip balm and is also effective for treating dry and chapped lips. When applied, it forms a barrier on the lips and retains moisture in the skin.



Benefits of Shea for the Hair

Shea is considered as a natural conditioner for the hair, thanks to its moisturizing and healing properties.

Repairs Damaged Hair

A number of chemical treatments like straighteners, perms, and curlers are responsible for stripping off the natural moisture from the hair. Shea butter can help restore this lost moisture. It also protects the hair from harsh weather conditions and the harmful free radicals in the air and water. Moreover, shea butter has a low SPF that is sufficient to protect the hair from sun damage caused due to exposure to ultraviolet radiation. It repairs the damage that has already been caused by the harsh weather and the sun.

Conclusion

In conclusion, shea has without doubt, been a blessing to the world especially Northern Ghana. Though a mystical plant in the wilderness with a gestation period of 15 to 20 years, the painstaking efforts of the CRIG has led to its domestication, reducing its gestation period to between 4 and 5 years.

It is hoped that with more efforts and improved interventions from the industry regulator, much attention will be given to support the production and marketing of the crop in an effort to reduce the country's overreliance on cocoa. By so doing, the country stands to diversify and expand its foreign exchange base to mobilize more funds to accelerate the country's developmental agenda.

The belief is that one day, shea will rub shoulders with cocoa by generating more foreign exchange annually to Ghana's economy than even cocoa.

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COHOSSA SUB-COMMITTEES INAUGURATED



A cross section of participant seated at the inauguration

The Ghana Cocoa Board Head Office Senior Staff Association (COHOSSA) has inaugurated sixteen sub committees at Cocoa House in Accra. The move is to foster effective leadership and active participation amongst its members.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chairman of COHOSSA, Mr. Michael Nkansah mentioned that the establishment and inauguration of the committee, the first in the history of the association is to ensure inclusiveness of all members of the association.

He also stated that, the association together with the various sub-committees is committed to work closely with management to advance policies and programs to promote the welfare of members and the growth of the cocoa industry.

Inaugurating the committee, Legal Affairs Manager, George Ferguson-Laing, urged the committee members to take advantage of their position to promote the interest of members of the association as well as the general interest of the industry.

Director of Audit at COCOBOD (Now retired), Mr. Charles Asamoah Frimpong, in his address commended the association for the initiative and

emphasised that committee members have been charged with a duty that should inculcate respect and diligence.

‘We all expect the members in this sub-committees to exhibit high sense of commitment, loyalty, diligence, professionalism, and integrity in the discharge of their work’, he further added.

Mr. Asamoah Frimpong charged committee members to ensure that the needs of members are prioritised. He also encouraged them to ensure effective working relations between the various committees, executives and the entire association.

The fifteen (15) committees are Sports and Fitness, Education/ Training, Sponsorship, Technical and Project and Medical and Health. The rest are Security and Intelligence, Transport and Travel, Finance, Clubhouse Management, Publicity and Communication, Constitution and Legal Affairs among others.

The committees consist of members from all cocoa growing communities.

Present at the ceremony were Deputy Director-Human Resource, Mr. Francis Gyamfi Ocran and Deputy Director-Public Affairs, Mr. Fiifi Boaho.



A shot of the Former Audit Director, Mr. Asamoah Frimpong addressing participants at the inauguration

2022 CHOCOLATE WEEK CELEBRATION; A BRIGTHER STEP INTO GHANA'S CONSUMPTION DRIVE

By Edward Kojo Asante, Public Affairs

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), being the industry regulator of the cocoa sector has over the past years pushed for the rise in Ghana's chocolate consumption among the citizenry. However, changing the narrative from a per capita consumption of 0.05kg to 1kg comes with the adoption of more innovative ways to promote cocoa as food.

In an effort to promote consumption in the country, the Former Minister for Tourism, Hon Jake Obetsebi Lamprey (Deceased), in 2005, re-christened 'Valentine's Day' which is celebrated on the 14th of February every year to 'Chocolate Day', and ever since, the celebration has seen families, friends, lovers among others come together to share or gift a bar of chocolate to mark the day.

The 2022 celebration took a different twist as COCOBOD in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and other stakeholders along the value chain, rolled out series of activities to make it a week-long celebration under the theme, **"Eat chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana"**.

The activities included a media launch, road show, health walk, poetry night, family's day, a cook-off competition, a quiz competition among others.

The celebration which started with a media launch at Mampong- Akuapem in the Eastern Region, the origin of cocoa plantation, saw some Management of the Board, Government officials and other stakeholders along the value chain who gracing the occasion. Other dignitaries included Nana Osabarima Kwame Otu Dartey III, Mampong-Hene and his entourage.

The Health and Nutritional benefit of consuming natural cocoa cannot be over emphasized as management, staff, general public and other stakeholders



along the value chain embarked on a health walk from Ayi Mensah to Peduase on the Aburi Mountains with brass band music, singing and dancing along the route which drew attention to the celebration.

However, opening of the chocolate city at the Tetteh Quarshie roundabout in Accra, created the platform and avenue for the various local processors and hand-made chocolatiers to exhibit throughout the celebration.

Consequently, accessing various chocolate products was made simple to visitors, chocolate lovers, families, etc.

The presence of local and foreign chocolate makers such as, Niche chocolate, Allsave, Omama chocolate, FairAfric chocolate, Prime cocoa among others complemented served as substitute to the well-known ones on the market.

Meanwhile, some celebrities and media influencers like Stonebwoy, Okyeame

Kwame, Tracy Sarkcess, Kofi Kinata, and Giovani Caleb among others, well noted for the key role they play in their respective industries, went buzzing with their presence, bringing in more chocolate lovers to other activities at Chocolate City.

The celebration with its numerous activities such as families' day out, Poetry night, live band and others received massive participation from the general public which projects a promising future for the increase in Ghana's per capita consumption.

As the market base has been created for the chocolate makers in the country, it is ideal for them to take advantage of the opportunity to expand and create more varieties for the general consumers within and beyond the country.

We present to you the 2022 National Chocolate Week Celebration in pictures!!!!!!

NATIONAL CHOCOLATE WEEK 2022 IN PICTURES







COCOBOD MARKS HERITAGE MONTH WITH A TASTE OF OLD 'SKUL'

Staff of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) joined the rest of the nation in celebrating Ghana's 65th National Independence Day with fantastic displays of old school apparel to drum home the need for the citizenry to cherish and promote the rich Ghanaian culture.

The initiative is directly linked to what has become known in recent times as Heritage Month; held every year in March to appreciate cultural diversity and promote tourism in the country.

We can do more to promote our cultures and who we are, said Mrs Nana Akua Achiaa Mansah, the Human Resource Manager of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) of COCOBOD.

CHED and the rest of COCOBOD, she added, is happy to join in portraying Ghana's rich cultural heritage through the display of various stylish traditional dresses.

She further indicated that the Heritage Month remains a good national initiative that will go a long way to promote decency in dressing, respect for tradition and African values among the citizenry. She called on all, especially, the corporate world, to endeavour to observe the Heritage Month to promote its core values.

COCOBOD MARKS HERITAGE MONTH



BRING BACK THE COMMUNAL SPIRIT: MY CRY, OUR WISH

By Josephine Dake - Abrahams (RTI Officer- COCOBOD)

Growing up, during festive occasions, especially Christmas, dad and mom would usually package some items to be delivered to our neighbours. Mom would cook rice with local fowl or jollof with chicken and stew. This would be nicely packaged in a special container called the "parish bowl" and further placed in a woven or a plastic basket, neatly covered with a napkin and given to us (children) to take to our neighbour(s). In our garden at home were sweet potatoes, cassava, plantain and others. Daddy would usually uproot sweet potatoes during the Christmas season and distribute to people far and near.

One special delicacy for the grown-ups was "joseph" meat. Mommy would usually prepare cat meat locally termed "joseph" stew to serve to friends and family that visited during the yuletide. It was fun and a time to bond. Neighbours could visit each other anytime as well.

In the 90s aging backwards, this kind of communalism was a normal happening. It was not a problem to chastise a neighbour's child when he or she went wrong because society was by then egalitarian, meaning sharing and owning everything together. You would usually hear announcements being given about communal labour for a particular weekend. The whole community would eagerly come out to weed and clean gutters with their working attire and tools. The communities were very neat as compared to what we see today. It was an eyesore to see heaps of rubbish around those days.

Town Council pronounced then as "tankas" were like the local police/watchmen who were up to the task of supervising the cleanliness of homes and town as a whole. Society lived in fear and respect of the Tankas and whenever we heard that they were coming, one would immediately begin to clean up.

We would see people running in haste to clean their homes and surroundings all in a bid to swerve being arrested or fined. Town council could go as far as entering you washrooms and kitchens to see whether they were kept neat. They would also check the Wells and water storage tanks to ensure that they were clean for use and consumption. Ghana was indeed neat then. I honestly miss those days.

At church, during confirmations, the confirmants after church service jointly partied together. There was hardly "solo acts" of partying with just your known friends and family. The confirmants usually would move to one person's house and party and then move to the next person's home/venue and then the next and the next, doing the same thing until dusk. It was interesting, exciting and egalitarian. These days however present quite a different story. After your graduation or confirmation, you only move with your family or one or two friends to a venue or home to party.

That communal spirit or togetherness is missing. That "life" was a very important part in our upbringing. We learnt a lot of things.

But what do we see or experience today? You can even be arrested for reprimanding another person's child. You would be described as being abusive if only the one in question is able to prove it.

You cannot even use the cane anymore. Truth be told, some have abused it yes, but the outright abolition of it makes no sense. Bible says "spare the rod and spoil the child". Communication is indeed key but at a particular stage in correcting a child, there is a need for the cane.

Modernization has had its own positives but its negative effects on communalism are enormous and devastating. The loss of the communal spirit in Ghana has adversely affected us. People want to do things only within their nuclear family for fear of being attacked or for fear of the unknown. This tendency has crept into the office and work spaces where cliché, sects and cronies feel comfortable among themselves and would not like to bring others on board. Poor team spirit, lack of equal opportunity to develop potentials, break down of social ties resulting in a feeling of neglect, dejection, loneliness and aggravating into suicidal thoughts.

You cannot easily talk to someone or pour yourself out without difficulty. You cannot go to your neighbour's to play or talk for fear of being framed up or set up. Many have died in their quietness and keeping to themselves what the existence of communal spirit would have addressed easily.

The system has become porous. There is therefore an urgent need to look at this situation. In as much as we are developing the country, we need to revisit our communal past; the very thing that was a source of bond, which made even the rich in society built houses and never thought of erecting giant fence walls or electric security. The government has for some years now been implementing a policy of cleaning our environment every month.

This takes place on Saturdays. But how successful has this been? It has been extremely hectic getting the masses to come out and clean the frontage of their homes. Everything is seen as the work of government forgetting that we are the government. We deliberately keep our refuse at homes and wait till it begins to rain, offering us the opportunity to throw the heaps of rubbish into surrounding gutters and in extreme cases, is discharging our septic tanks into run-off waters. The result of this is the perennial flooding that has become a thorn in the flesh of Accra and other major cities across the country.

What is the way forward? This is where my cry and lamentation come in. Communal life is calling and knocking on our doors. It will make people feel that they belong and it will make people feel loved. When you feel that you are part of a community or you can pour out to someone when you have a challenge, it makes you feel loved and belonged.

Do you miss the communal spirit? Do you miss the communal love? How can we bring it back? Does the government have a role to play in this? What about the church, mosque, traditional leaders?

Communal life is one of the previous things ancient civilisation bequeathed to us. Our forefathers cherished it and enjoyed absolute peace. We have sacrificed it on the altar of modernity and westernization and today, the centre is weak and things can no longer hold. We have not fallen apart yet. Let us re-look and re-examine ourselves as citizens and leaders and help bring back the kind of life which once provided respect and dignity of humanity.

I say, Bring back the communal life – My cry; our wish.

BE PRUDENT IN ALL YOUR DECISIONS – HON BOAHEN AIDOO TO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES



A cross section of some management members being sworn-in

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, has tasked the newly constituted management committees of its divisions to act with prudence in all their deliberations and decisions.

He added that it was important for them to have the interest of cocoa farmers in mind when they formulate plans and advise management of COCOBOD as it steers the cocoa industry through difficult times brought on by the knock-on effects of COVID-19 and more recently, the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

‘In these difficult times, we are calling on the new management to give leadership. We want you to show the leadership that, will ensure prudence in the management of affairs ...and we believe that with time we will overcome these difficulties’, he assured.

Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo made this call at a ceremony at Cocoa House in Accra, to swear in the respective management committees for COCOBOD’s Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), the Seed Production Division (SPD) and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

He acknowledged that COCOBOD is bracing for a projected worsening of market conditions which will affect the international price of cocoa, the shipment of cocoa beans and the importation of fertilisers.

He said Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are key suppliers of essential elements in the production of fertilisers and other agrochemicals used by many countries, including Ghana to meet the demands of its agricultural sector. As such the present conflict in the region has resulted in a major drop in fertiliser production worldwide and Ghana will be affected.

He added that though COCOBOD and the government will continue to maintain the policies which protect Ghanaian cocoa farmers from external market shocks, it has become essential for the farmers to increase their use of organic fertilisers, like poultry manure, instead of inorganic fertilisers.

He said COCOBOD will increase its sensitisation effort on the use of organic forms of fertilisers.

The various divisional management



committees will serve as important advisory bodies to the management of the divisions.

Prof. Festus Kwabena Annor-Frempong, the former Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics & Extension, University of Cape Coast and Rev. Prof. Hans Adu-Dapaah the Former Director of the Crop Research Institute are the respective Chairmen of the management committees for the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) and the Seed Production Division (SPD).

Prof. Joseph Opoku Fening the Former Director of the Soil Research Institute is also the Chairman of the management committee for the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).



IMPAIRED BUT NOT DESPAIRED

THE STORY OF TWO COCOA FARMERS IN THE BRONG AHAFO COCOA REGION

By David Asare Oduro, Public Affairs

'Impaired but not despaired', said two physically challenged cocoa farmers in the Brong Ahafo Cocoa Region who believe strongly that opting for the streets in cities to beg for alms should not under any circumstance be an obvious choice for persons who somewhat have some deformities.

Today, it is not uncommon to find hundreds of physically disadvantaged persons on streets begging for alms in major cities in Ghana. While the increase in the number of phenomenon has partly been attributed to the 'Ghanaian hospitality' syndrome, there are others who blame the development on the lack of the enforcement of the laws banning street begging.

Similar to the issue of child beggars and hawking on the streets, the safety of physically challenged beggars is seriously compromised due to the degree of susceptibility to vehicular accidents (Mawuli, 2017).

The Beggars and Destitute Act, 1969 (NLCD 392) Section 2 prohibits public begging.

In battling the menace however, one is compelled to ask a number of questions such as how the extent of enforcement of the tenets of the Disability Act as well as the effectiveness of the Department of Social Welfare in addressing this menace?

As the debate around these questions lingers on, some physically challenged persons have already changed the narrative by defying all odds and ventured into cocoa farming as a way of contributing their quota in sustaining an industry that has over the past 143 years, remained the backbone of Ghana's economy.

THE MOTIVATION

Encouraged by the continuous roll out of productivity-driven and price-guard initiatives by COCOBOD to augment the efforts of cocoa farmers in Ghana, some of these challenged persons in the Brong Ahafo Cocoa Region have found solace in cocoa farming; a profession which, ordinarily does not present an option for such group of persons in society, given its terrain and nature.

The Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED) in a recent report has hinted of several physically challenged persons in Ghana's cocoa regions signing on to cocoa cultivation instead of migrating to the cities to resort to begging.

CHED'S POSITION ON THE DEVELOPMENT

The Deputy Executive Director of the Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED) in charge of Extension, Dr. Mercy Asamoah, explained that her outfit is

still in awe of the numbers of physically challenged cocoa farmers including the 'the blind' who have opted for cocoa farming regardless of the nature and nuances of cocoa cultivation.

'What is even more intriguing is the fact that these distinguished farmers did not opt to grow any other crop but chose cocoa which takes between 3 - 6 years to reap the full benefits of the toils and efforts put in. The youth must take lessons from this and also sign on.

Our outfit is keenly interested in their decision and we are more than poised to provide all the support they will need to help them achieve their dream,' she assured.

Dr Asamoah further indicated that CHED had stepped up efforts to build a database on all physically challenged persons who are contributing in diverse ways in mainstream cocoa farming as well as others who are earning some sort of living by providing other essential services to support activities on the value chain.

According to her, the development ties into the Board's Environmental Social Management Plan (ESMP), a key condition of the Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) which primarily focuses on promoting gender equality, social inclusiveness and zero tolerance for discrimination in all its forms.

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 enjoins all member countries of the United Nations to work towards creating support services and opportunities that help in combating poverty. Unarguably, poverty reduction efforts require the involvement of every member of the society in one economic activity or another to ensure uninterrupted production of goods and services to drive economic growth and sustainable societies.

This makes the decision of the physically challenged to grow cocoa a move that must stir up massive support and commendation by all.

KNOW THE FARMERS BETTER

Mr. Stephen Kwadwo Gyamfi, a 60-year cocoa farmer in Anyinasu - Korano in Berekum East (1.41 hectares of cocoa) has been blind for 21 years due to Glaucoma. But his condition was no excuse in his quest to fight poverty by venturing into cocoa farming.

Mr. Gyamfi has been cultivating cocoa for the past 17 years and strangely enough, he does all the agronomic activities, including refilling of dead seedlings on his farm by himself with very little support from other persons.

According to him, the motivation for doing cocoa farming stems from his desire to be self-reliant and also be part of a sector that guarantees reliable source of income for his family.

The totally blind cocoa farmer is optimistic about expanding his farm, and increasing yield in the next few years while pulling his colleagues who are in similar or worse conditions along.

Responding to how he is able to detect the route to his farm, the exact location of his farm and how he is able to distinguish weeds from the cocoa trees, Mr. Gyamfi explained that since he was not born blind, he has over the years, trained himself to use mental imageries and sensory adaptation to locate his bearing to his farm and back home without any 'special aide'.

'It is my eyes that are blind but there is another eye in my brain that is still active – that is the secret,' he expressed.

Apart from a request for assistance to recruit and pay farmhands and tricycles to help him manage his farm due to old

age, Mr. Gyamfi narrates an instance where he narrowly escaped death on one fateful day as a stream connecting the route to his farm overflowed its banks, and in an attempt to cross, fell into the ferocious stream during a rainy day but luckily got saved by a colleague farmer.

His urgent appeal, therefore, is for COCOBOD to fix a bridge over the stream to avert imminent danger not only to his life but also to other farmers who use that route.

Still in the Anyinasu area is the story of another physically challenged female farmer with multiple disabilities; Yaa Asuamaa is a 54-year old deaf, dumb and partially blind farmer whose farm is located at Kwasi Boakrom.

Speaking through an interpreter who happened to be her daughter (who has learnt to use unorthodox sign language to communicate with her over the years), the single parent farmer narrated that she started cocoa farming some 10 years ago after inheriting a parcel of land from her late parents.

Following her passion for cocoa farming, Yaa Asuamaa indicated that her whole day starts in the farm and ends in the farm.

'I have made my farm my second home; I spend almost all my time weeding, pruning, harvesting and breaking pods from this farm,' she indicated.

Narrating further, Yaa said she has no plans to quit cocoa farming anytime soon and described cocoa farming as a lucrative venture. However, her major concern is that some members of the extended family are scheming to take over the farm and also evict her from her family house.

She is therefore appealing to COCOBOD to assist her with farm implements and chemicals as well as funding support to enable her maintain her farm.

Her hope is that, one day, she will become an award winner in her district.

COCOBOD MAKES MOVES TO INTERVENE

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo on hearing about the precarious nature

of the bridge that links to the farm of Mr. Gyamfi, detailed the Board's road engineers to examine the possibility of having a bridge built over the stream to avert any looming disaster.

MOTIVATING THE FARMERS

CHED has observed the development in the cocoa sector with much interest and is currently doing everything possible to incentivise all physically challenged cocoa farmers in the country.

The Division is in the process of establishing an accurate database on all such farmers to ascertain their peculiar disability and effects on their farming operations so that the appropriate support services could be offered to them to alleviate their plight. Again, in the not too distant future, the Division intends to make a case to the Board to consider a District or Regional level award package to further spur them on to give off their best.

The Cocoa Management System Coordinator in the Sunyani Cocoa District, Mr. Ebenezer Osei Sakyi later disclosed the existence of several persons with various forms of physical deformities including limb loss who are into cocoa farming across the cocoa regions. He said the CMS has identified such persons for what he termed as 'proper and special' attention.

THROWING A CHALLENGE

The article, 'Impaired but not despaired' presents real-life scenarios to further buttress the claim that 'Disability is not inability. The article also sends a clarion call to all persons with various deformities not to allow their conditions to make them feel that nothing good can come out of them. There are more productive ventures they can explore to contribute to the national building efforts.

IMPAIRMENT IS NOT A REASON TO DESPAIR INDEED.

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Next Episode: Some female mechanics who are supporting cocoa farming in their unique ways. Watch out for the details.



EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF THE KWAHU EASTER PARAGLIDING FESTIVAL FOR THE PROMOTION OF COCOA CONSUMPTION

By Kenneth Osei Ampofo, Public Affairs

The Kwahu paragliding event has since 2006, been attracting several experienced pilots from many countries including Norway, USA, France, Brazil, Japan, South Africa and Australia to Ghana to offer exciting experiences and adventure to thousands of revelers who are mostly Ghanaians and tourists.

For the past 16 years, the event has made the Odweanoma mountain which, hitherto was unpopular now famous not only in Ghana but globally. The Paragliding Festival is usually organized during Easter, in April at Kwahu Atibie.

As the campaign for increased cocoa consumption intensifies, Management of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), through the National Committee for the Promotion of Cocoa Consumption decided to explore how the event could be used as an avenue to drum home the essence of consuming cocoa to promote good health.

COCOBOD therefore participated in the 2022 edition of the Kwahu Easter Paragliding Festival which provided a good platform for the promotion of cocoa consumption at the Odweanoma Paragliding Mountain during the Kwahu Easter festivities at Atibie in the Eastern Region.

The celebrations spanned a period of five days and spread across the whole of the Kwahu escarpment starting from the Nkawaw area through to Atibie, Obomeng, Asakraka, Bepong, Abene, Mpraeso, Tafo, and Nkwatia among others.

The festival which had been on a break

since 2019, bounced back with much enthusiasm and action flocked with massive participation after Covid-19 pandemic restrictions were eased. The much enchanting environment was bustling with myriad home goers, tourists and paragliders proving a sight to behold.

The paragliding festival was one such events that the cocoa consumption campaign, targeting the improvement of the current per capita cocoa consumption of 0.55kg, needed to reach out to the people for effective communication.

The mass gathering of revelers was indeed an appropriate avenue to bring closer mood improving products like chocolates to their door step. Realizing this, Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) rallied cocoa processors to exhibit their products. Indeed, this needs to be sustained in the coming years with a lot more processors coming on board.

It is obvious that, COCOBOD could effectively leverage the cocoa consumption drive on the paragliding festival as it provides the platform to bring cocoa products to the attention of both local and international consumers specifically at the Odweanoma Paragliding Field, and later expanded to the whole of the Kwahu enclave in the Eastern Region.

With Government and COCOBOD's resolve to process at least 50% of the country's annual yield and subsequently increase the current per capita consumption rate of 0.55kg to 1kg, it is incumbent on COCOBOD and its stakeholders to drive the cocoa

consumption agenda with the full force that it deserves.

Currently, Ghana's per capita consumption is highly inadequate considering the enormous health and nutritional benefits that cocoa offers as compared to the average per capita consumption of about 8kg for the Western world. This indicates that much more work needs to be done in promoting consumption in Ghana and subsequently extend to the rest of Africa by taking advantage of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) program.

Through this trade approach, Ghana could expand the marketing and sales of processed premium quality cocoa and at the same time attract other African consumers to share in the health and nutritional benefits that cocoa provides.

The variety of chocolates and other cocoa products including cocoa jam, biscuits, vinegar, brandy, gin, wine, soap, body lotion and natural cocoa powder processed by different companies offer enough choices to the consumer.

It is worthy of note that CPC as part of their contributions towards the Paragliding Festival, distributed free chocolate drinks to paragliders at the landing site of the Odweanoma Mountains.

Consequently on the backdrop of sustainability of the initiative, COCOBOD has to determine to continue with its productivity driven programmes to increase yield; support value addition activities and boost cocoa consumption as well.

RECAP: 2021 CHOCOLATE WEEK

Storytelling has been a big part of the Ghanaian culture for centuries now. In 2021 when the President of the Republic, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo told the country about his chocolate experience during the National Chocolate Week celebrations, that singular act sparked conversations that led to a chain of storytelling about cocoa across the country.

For many Ghanaians, the stories brought nostalgic memories of days when families would share chocolate only on special occasions like Christmas and birthdays. It is this occasional consumption that the organizers of the National Chocolate Week celebrations sought to change in 2021 with a campaign themed 'Eat Chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana!'

For a delicacy that has been tagged as a confectionery for the rich, this was not going to be a walk in the park. In came Kofi Kinata and Amerado Burner, two young music artistes whose music appeal to the young and old alike. With lyrics alongside catchy beats, they introduced Ghanaians to the health benefits of consuming cocoa and drummed home the economic benefits of processing and consuming our cocoa right here in Ghana.

This came as a big boost for local cocoa processors, especially artisanal chocolatiers whose products are relatively unknown to the mass market. With installations at some shopping centres and transport terminals in some

regions across the country, they set up display and sales points through the facilitation of Ghana Cocoa Board.

Bringing their products to centres where potential consumers could easily access was a mark of genius as many Ghanaians through that, discovered some of the numerous emerging chocolate and cocoa product brands in the country.

With visits to cocoa growing areas in the Brong, Ahafo and Western regions, the Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board, Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo spent time with cocoa farmers at various durbars where he shared with them, various cocoa products as they discussed the future of the cocoa industry.

Simultaneously, a team from Ghana Cocoa Board, Ghana Tourism Authority and some cocoa processors and chocolatiers embarked on a nationwide media campaign to drive the cocoa consumption agenda.

Not to be left out, some major financial institutions partnered with Ghana Cocoa Board to bring the taste of chocolate to their customers as appreciation for their loyalty to their brand.

As a surprise to the bank customers, Ghana Cocoa Board facilitated the presence of singer, Kofi Kinata at selected branches of some banks including the Agricultural Development Bank, Absa and Prudential Bank. This whipped up more excitement and

sparked further conversations about Ghana's chocolate in both traditional and new media.

With short messaging services, Ghana Cocoa Board sustained the discussions by sending out information about Ghana's cocoa and activities of the Chocolate Week celebrations, to selected key influencers to drive interest in the cocoa consumption campaign.

One of the biggest draws to the Chocolate Week Celebrations was the set-up of a Chocolate City at the Tetteh Quarshie Roundabout in Accra. The Chocolate City, which was a dome set up to give visitors the ultimate chocolate experience welcomed visitors with a cocoa-farm inspired ambience from the entrance to internal décor inspired by the cocoa pod and its various by-products.

At the Chocolate City was an exhibition of various products made out of Ghana's premium cocoa. The exhibits were eye-opening to many visitors who discovered that food spices could be made from cocoa. Soaps, alcoholic beverages, cosmetics and confectionaries made with cocoa were on display and also for purchase.

Every day at the Chocolate City was an experience of Cocoa Heaven for visitors. With surprise cocoa products giveaways, live band performances, treasure hunt, University Alumni Quiz competition, family day and many other activities, visitors were highly entertained while enjoying the taste of Ghana's cocoa products.



FACTS - COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME

1. WHAT IS THE COCOA FARMERS PENSION SCHEME (CFPS)?

It is a contributory insurance and welfare scheme that provides a decent pension for cocoa farmers.

2. WHAT LAW MANDATES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CFPS?

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) Law 1984(PNDC LAW 81) gave mandate to the Board of Directors of (COCOBOD) to Institute the scheme.

3. WHY THE DELAY IN INSTITUTING THE (CFPS) ?

The lack of credible data on cocoa farmers, and other actors in the cocoa industry contributed to the delay.

4. WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CFPS NOW?

COCOBOD, through the Cocoa Management System (CMS) has successfully registered all farmers and captured other operational activities within the sector.

5. HOW USEFUL IS THE (CMS) TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CFPS?

Through the CMS, all registered cocoa farmers have the Cocoa Card. The card will henceforth be presented at the points of sale of cocoa. The card keeps record of all transactions on the CFPS and related activities.

6. WHO CAN SIGN ON TO THE SCHEME?

Only cocoa farmers who have the Cocoa Card can register under the CFPS?

7. HOW MUCH WILL A CONTRIBUTOR CONTRIBUTE ?

For now 5% will be deducted any time a farmer sells his/her cocoa. This will be transferred into the Farmer's Pension Accounts instantly and an alert received.

8. CAN THE CONTRIBUTOR NOMINATE A NEXT -OF-KIN ?

Yes, contributors will be required to nominate beneficiaries. Opportunity exists for update of such persons nominated as beneficiaries.

9. WHAT IS COCOBOD/ GOVERNMENT'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCHEME?

COCOBOD will contribute at least 1% on every sale of cocoa made by a contributor.

For example, if a farmer sells a bag of cocoa, he is expected to be paid Ghc660.00. Of this amount, government will contribute Ghc6.60 into the pension accounts while the farmer contributes Ghc33.00. The farmer will therefore be paid a 'take-home' of Ghc 627.00 for selling a bag of cocoa.

10. WHERE DOES ONE PAY THEIR CONTRIBUTION?

Deductions are made at the point of sale of cocoa through the purchasing clerk's device or Application.

11. AT WHAT AGE CAN A FARMER JOIN THE SCHEME?

There is no entry age limit. Once you have the cocoa card, you obviously become a registered farmer who must enjoy pension.

12. WHEN IS A CONTRIBUTOR ELIGIBLE TO RETIRE FROM THE SCHEME?

First and foremost, after 5 years on the scheme, a contributor is eligible to retire. However, the contributor can remain on the scheme for up to 55 years if he/she joined the scheme at an age lower than 50 years. Similar to all pension schemes, the more year and the higher your contribution, the better your pension.

13. HOW DOES THE SCHEME SAVE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FARMERS?

Two accounts exist. We have the Personal Savings and Retirement Accounts. 25% of the total contribution would be credited to the Personal Savings Account and the remaining 75% would be credited to the Retirement Account of the contributor.

14. CAN A CONTRIBUTOR MAKE A PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL?

Yes, they may be allowed to withdraw up to 25% of their Personal Savings Account Balance after the initial 5 years on the Scheme. Again, they may also withdraw 20% of the same Personal Savings Account balance every 2 years after the first withdrawal.

15. HOW DO CONTRIBUTORS ACCESS THEIR STATEMENTS?

Contributors can always download their statements or check their balances on their mobile phones using a simple Application.

16. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PENSION/ GRATUITY?

When a contributor is due for retirement, he/she will receive a Lump Sum equal to the balance in the Personal Savings Account. The contributor will then receive monthly pension payments from the Retirement Account which is guaranteed for 15 years.

17. HOW SECURE IS THE CONTRIBUTORS' FUND?

The Scheme operates by the provisions of the National Pensions Act 2008 (Act 766). It is governed by a Board of Trustees Licensed by NPRA. There are two cocoa farmers' representatives on the Board. There is also a custodian that is independent of COCOBOD and the Government.

18. ANY GUARANTEE FOR THE CONTINUITY OF THE SCHEME?

The CFPS is governed by Law and as long as the law exists, the Scheme will continue to operate. There will however be changes in the scheme's operations as the scheme makes progress.

19. WHAT IS THE FAR-REACHING IMPACT OF THE SCHEME ON THE COCOA ECONOMY?

CFPS is part of efforts aimed at making cocoa farming attractive to the youth in the country.

20. IS IT COMPULSORY FOR ALL COCOA FARMERS?

All cocoa farmers are encouraged to sign on to the scheme in their interest.

MONKEYPOX OUTBREAK 2022 AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By Dr. Bertha Serwa Ayi

Introduction

It was a warm day in October 2003 in San Diego, California, USA. I was attending the Infectious Disease Society of America's annual conference. I passionately stood up at a meeting to express my thoughts about media reports connecting Ghana, my country of birth, to a monkeypox outbreak in the US. Fifty three people had contracted monkeypox in a multistate outbreak.

It turned out that after testing and investigation by the CDC, the infection was related to prairie dogs purchased as pets at a pet store in Illinois. The prairie dogs had been kept close to rodents imported from Ghana, a country where the human monkeypox disease has never been reported to date. These rodents were later found to test positive for the monkeypox virus.

The prairie dogs became infected as a result of proximity to the infected rodents and then transmitted the infection to their owners. This resulted in a ban on importation of African rodents into the US to date to prevent further outbreaks. That was the last time the US had an outbreak of monkeypox disease. No one died in the outbreak. One child developed a brain infection or encephalitis.

Monkeypox, a disease caused by the monkeypox virus, occurs very infrequently and in very scattered locations in parts of Africa. There are two clades (or types) of the virus: a West Africa (WA) clade in which 1 to 3.6 out of 100 infected patients die (1% to 3.6% mortality) and the Congo Basin (CB) variant, in which about 10 out of 100 infected patients can die (10% mortality). So far, the virus isolated in this current outbreak is of the West African variant, implying that the risk of dying from this disease is very low.

Background

The outcome of the 2003 outbreak



reflects concepts in the natural history of the disease. It is a zoonosis in which humans get infected from infected animals. Monkeypox disease is usually a mild self-limited illness caused by the monkeypox virus. It usually does not require treatment. It can be severe in children, pregnant women, and those with impaired immune systems.

The virus belongs to the orthopox family of viruses. It is a disease that affects animals. It was first discovered in a laboratory monkeys in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1958. The monkeys had been imported from Singapore to study the polio vaccine, giving rise to the name, 'monkeypox'. Since then, there have been a few more outbreaks in laboratories around the world including the US. However, mentally, people tend to associate it with Africa because in 1970, the first human case was reported in an African child.

Since its discovery in 1970, there have been infrequent occurrences in a few locations around the world. From January 1, 2022, to May 1, 2022, the Democratic Republic of Congo reported one thousand, two hundred and thirty-eight cases with fifty-seven deaths, while Nigeria reported forty-six cases and no deaths. In July and November of 2021, two travelers returning to the US from Nigeria were diagnosed with monkeypox and recovered.

Between 2018 and May 2022, there have been nine cases related to travel in non-endemic countries: Two in the US, five in the UK, one in Israel and one in Singapore. None of the travel companions were infected, and only

one healthcare worker in the UK became infected.

On May 18, 2022, a man in Massachusetts with no history of travel was diagnosed with a confirmed case of the disease, and eight suspected cases are under investigation. This is occurring at a time when two hundred and fifty cases have been reported since May 13, 2022, in eighteen countries, in persons who have not traveled to the countries where cases have occurred in the past- suggesting a worldwide outbreak. These countries include USA, Canada, Portugal, Spain, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Netherland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Portugal and Spain have the largest numbers. The cases have been found mainly, but not exclusively, in men who have had sex with men, and are seeking care in sexual and outpatient clinics for for a rash appearing around the genital areas.

Signs and symptoms

Monkeypox disease starts with a headache, fever, cough, sore throat, and lymphadenopathy (enlarged lymph nodes) accompanied by muscle aches and a profound sense of exhaustion.

This lasts about three days and occurs about five to twenty-one days after exposure to an index case. This period of carrying the disease without showing symptoms is known as the incubation period. These initial symptoms are followed by a rash. The rash is made up of flat lesions (macules), which progress to palpable flat-topped rashes (papules), and then to fluid-filled lesions (vesicles). These rashes start around the mouth, progressing to the head, chest and abdomen, and then to the arms and legs, including the palms of the hands and soles of the feet.

Symptoms can mimic chickenpox, smallpox, and syphilis. However, smallpox disease does not present

with enlarged lymph nodes. Chickenpox disease has rashes at various stages of development while in monkeypox the stages of the rash is the same on all parts of the body.

Chickenpox rash starts on the hands and moves to the center of the body while the rash of monkeypox starts in the center parts of the body and marches to the arms and legs. The monkeypox rash is deep in the skin and therefore firmer to touch. The individual rashes may have a dimple or appear umbilicated. The fluid in these rashes are infectious. Over a period of two to four weeks, the rashes will scab over and subsequently become noninfectious.

The infected person can transmit the infection in three main ways: direct contact, respiratory droplets and inanimate objects. This period of being infectious starts a day before the person is feverish, and if he or she has a rash, during the whole period of the active rash.

First, very close contact may cause the virus in bodily fluids to get onto another person. Second, large respiratory droplets from the sick person can be inhaled leading to infection. Finally, fomites (particles of clothing or other inanimate objects) from the body of the patient can cause the disease to be transmitted too. A pregnant woman can also transmit to her unborn child leading a congenital infection and still birth.

Infection by droplets can occur if an individual is within three to six feet of sick persons. Unlike chickenpox, monkeypox is not airborne and cannot travel for long distances. In this current outbreak, the rash is in the genital area and seems to be occurring in men who have sex with men suggesting that close contact with the skin around the genital area of an infected person is key to the transmission.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is established by finding the virus using with real time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or DNA sequencing performed on body fluids from infected persons. There are three categories of sick persons for consideration in view of disease control and mitigation methods.

A suspected case is any person of any age presenting with an unexplained acute rash in a non-endemic country, who has a fever, lymph node swelling and other characteristic symptoms, and whose rash cannot be explained by causes such as chickenpox, chikungunya virus, zika virus, dengue fever, drug reaction or the more common causes of an acute rash.

A probable case is a suspected case who also has the following: an exposure to a confirmed case, travel history to an endemic country, multiple anonymous sexual partners in the last twenty-one days, hospitalized or tested positive for the orthopox family of virus with an antibody test or other testing method.

A confirmed case is a probable or suspected case whose bodily fluids have been tested to be positive for the monkeypox virus by real time PCR testing or sequencing. This person should isolate for twenty-one days, and his or her contacts should be monitored closely.

Prevention and control action points

All doctors and healthcare workers worldwide should be on the lookout for all cases and report to local authorities to allow prompt diagnoses and prevent spread.

All probable and confirmed cases should be reported to the WHO.

Hospitals and healthcare workers should use standard contact and droplet precautions when they care for these patients. Masks must be worn when in proximity with an infected person because of the respiratory method of transmission. Healthcare workers must promptly identify infections so that confirmed or suspected patients can isolate themselves and prevent transmission and curtail the outbreak.

Specimen from infected, suspected, and probable cases should be handled with care when being transported to designated equipped laboratories to prevent transmission to the laboratory staff.

Treatment and vaccination

In September 2019, a new vaccine, JYNNEOS, was licensed by the FDA for prevention of smallpox and monkeypox

in people older than eighteen years of age. It was made from the Modified Vaccinia Ankara- Bavarian Nordic (MVA-BN), a live non replicating virus.

Its other names are IMVAMUNE, MVA, or IMVANEX. ACAM 2000 is a live vaccinia virus vaccine that was approved in 2007. It tends to cause self inoculation and has been associated with heart muscle inflammation in 5.7 out 1000 recipients. It has 85% efficacy against the monkeypox and has received emergency access investigational drug use for other orthopox viruses such as monkeypox in an outbreak. Both vaccines can be deployed in individuals whose risk of disease acquisition is high and in healthcare workers who have been exposed or may be exposed to the disease.

Tecovirimat is an antiviral agent that occurs in oral formulation and intravenous forms approved by the FDA in July, 2018 and in May 2022 respectively for the treatment smallpox.

Tecovirimat can be used to treat severe monkeypox and is available by calling the US CDC. It goes by the name TPOXX or ST-246. Vaccinia Immune Globulin intravenous (VIGIV) originally licensed for use in complications related to smallpox vaccination is also available for post exposure treatment.

The CDC will take requests for vaccines, Tecovirimat and VIGIV only from State or Territorial health authorities. Medical countermeasures for monkeypox can be obtained by calling the CDC Emergency Operations Center at 770-448-7100. The CDC can also be reached for information by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO in the US (1800 232 4636)

The general risk of acquiring this infection is currently extremely low. It is nowhere as highly transmissible as COVID-19. The risk of dying from this disease is very low. It has no potential to cause a pandemic.

Stay calm and arm yourself with knowledge.

Ref: www.WHO.int www.cdc.gov

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email: Serwabb@berthaayi.com

MEDICAL CHALLENGES THAT MAY FALL BELOW THE RADAR



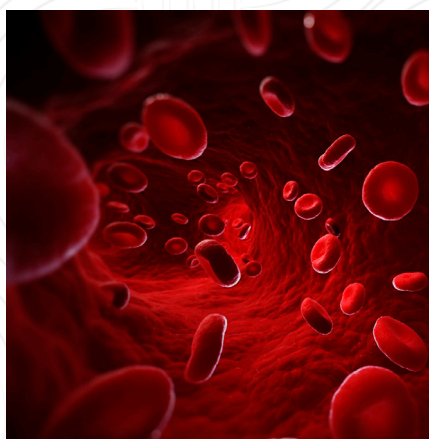
Your Health is Your Responsibility – Take Control!

It is important that we do everything possible within our power to ensure that we stay healthy. Having the appropriate knowledge is very important in our quest to remain healthy so that we can do more of the things we enjoy. Some conditions have a way of escaping our memory and we occasionally need a reminder.

Over the past few years I get very anxious in the month of March, when we celebrate our Independence. We live in a country that is so blessed but we do everything possible to mess it up; then you really wonder what else we expect of the Almighty.

Let us look at some easy to forget medical conditions and hopefully the engagement will ease my "March" anxiety.

1. Pregnancy complications of Rhesus Negative mothers
2. Bell's Palsy or Facial Palsy
3. Post Partum Blues or Depression
4. Underperformance in school children



1. Pregnancy complications of Rhesus Negative mothers

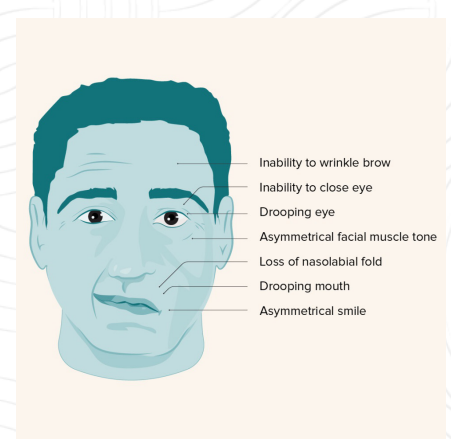
a. This is a potentially serious condition but easy to correct. Could this be the cause of the poor pregnancy outcomes or multiple abortions you are experiencing?

b. If a woman is Rhesus (Rh) Negative and carrying a baby who is Rh positive, then the mother's immune system will see the baby's red blood cells as 'foreigners' and will make antibodies to fight and destroy the baby's red blood cells. This may not be a problem with the first pregnancy but subsequent ones are at risk since the antibodies would have built up significantly.

c. This process of antibody production could occur when an Rh negative mother has a miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and induced abortion. It is IMPORTANT to know your blood group – O negative, A negative (and all the ones that are followed by a negative), will need to alert your health care giver when pregnant.

d. If you are Rh negative, it is important that to protect your babies, you are given an injection called Rhogam (this is no advertisement), which is a type of vaccine. It should ideally be given when your pregnancy is 28 weeks old and then repeated within 72 hours of delivery if baby is Rhesus positive.

e. There may be some issues with Rhogam but the benefits outweigh the downsides.



2. Bell's Palsy or Facial Palsy

a. This is not a STROKE but seek immediate medical care since you may not know what it could be heralding.

Bell's palsy is a sudden weakness of

the face causing one half to droop. Your smile is one sided and your eye on one side resists closing.

b. It may occur at any age. The exact cause is unknown but it affects a nerve controlling muscles of the face. It is sometimes considered to be a reaction that occurs after a viral infection such as a common cold and may also occur in pregnancy.

c. Bell's palsy is often temporary and most people experience total recovery within six (6) months. Rarely it may leave permanent tell-tale signs and may also recur in a handful of people.

d. One may experience increased sensitivity to sound on the affected side, headaches, pain around the jaw or behind the ear on the affected side. There may also be abnormal production of tears and saliva. Seek medical care.



3. Post Partum Blues or Depression

a. We all expect a new addition to a family to bring excitement and joy but sometimes it may cause depression.

Post partum depression is not a character flaw or a weakness and with the right intervention at the right time and with good family support, you can enjoy your baby.

b. Post partum blues is a milder form of post partum depression. In some cases one may even develop post partum psychosis after you have your bundle of joy. This is in no way a thesis to scare you away from childbirth but rather to make you aware so that you can take the appropriate steps quickly once you are confronted with the situation.

Always SEEK prompt medical care, there is no point "waiting to see."

c. One may often experience some of the following; loss of appetite, inability to sleep, intense irritability and anger, overwhelming fatigue, lack of joy in life, difficulty bonding with baby, feeling of shame, guilt or inadequacy and even thoughts of harming yourself or your baby.

Avoid diagnostic greed, do not wait for many symptoms before seeking help, you are better off seeing a professional and being declared okay than to wait until things become complicated.



4. Underperformance in school children

Quite often, children may not be performing well in school and we unfortunately resort to the cane, screaming at them and heaping insults on them without finding the root cause.

We will be complicating matters and eventually set the stage for rebellion in addition to poor or underperformance in school. We need to consider the following (other reasons or causes exist) before drawing conclusions and as parents or guardians, our input is extremely important.

■ Poor Nutrition

Food is fuel for the body and the brain can never perform appropriately without the proper "fuel".

We need to ensure that children eat a balanced meal before going to school. Hunger or poor meals could distract a child at school and prevent him/her from understanding what the teacher may be imparting. Check the meals and

you may realize you have a straight As child!

■ Poor Eyesight/vision

The child may not be doing well simply because he is unable to read from the board. It may only need a simple test of vision to correct this.

■ Hearing Challenges

Certainly if the child has a problem with hearing, he may miss so many things discussed in class or even hear the "wrong" things. Your guess in such a situation is as good as mine.

So the next time your child finds himself at the bottom of the class check the above and get medical assistance, you may be hosting a genius. I believe you are aware that some children will bloom late and at that point there is just no way to stop them, even the sky limit cannot limit them.

The drill remains the same, you will cope better with all the above if you stay healthy – exercise often, eat right, drink adequate amounts of water and get enough sleep hours.

AS ALWAYS LAUGH OFTEN, ENSURE HYGIENE, WALK AND PRAY EVERYDAY AND REMEMBER IT'S A PRICELESS GIFT TO KNOW YOUR NUMBERS (blood sugar, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, BMI) Dr. Kojo Cobba Essel
Health Essentials Ltd/ Mobissel
(dressel@healthessentialsgh.com)

*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 – "Lack of sleep may predispose you many diseases including a STROKE. Jump into bed an hour earlier and sleep a stroke away."

You cannot be healthy during WAR or VIOLENCE, let's all pray and work towards PEACE in our WORLD"

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My parents taught my siblings and me to pray in every situation. They made us to understand that God always pays heed to the prayers of little children. This gave me an assurance that I could always talk to God and ask him to protect me from the rod of my basic school teachers.

'All those without numbers, come out'! This unfriendly voice usually came from my mathematics teacher. It was a terrifying command that was always followed by incessant prayers from all of us 'without numbers' to escape the rod of the wicked mathematics teacher.

Unfortunately, those prayers were never answered. Every day was a bad day right from Primary to Junior High School. We were beaten for every little disobedience and disregard for school rules and instructions. This left me thinking as to whether what my mum said about prayers was true or false.

As I aged, I realized that all those 'assumed' unanswered prayers were molding me. Though my school days as a child were painful and dreadful, they were worth the experience because I later got to know that despite being beaten, every day of that stage was a great lesson for the future.

In today's world with many socio-economic challenges, people are afraid to take any risk hence their inability to attain perceived dreams and aspirations. In this edition of COCOBOD news, I take a look at some people who looked beyond the horizon when everything else was falling apart and how they ended up having a breakthrough.

The Merriam Webster online dictionary describes horizon as a range of perception, experience or something that might be attained. Our contemporary society will ordinarily empathize and hardly begrudge orphans who end up being deviants or unscrupulous because it is assumed that, these individuals did not grow up in a 'favorable home' environment.

Nevertheless, history has debunked this perception with various records of underprivileged orphans who have ended up as scholars, presidents, and global entrepreneurs. Some typical examples of these meritorious individuals who changed the world around us include Aristotle, who lost both parents when he was still very

UNANSWERED PRAYERS: STILL LOOK BEYOND THE HORIZON!!!

By Abigail Ahorgba

young but became one of history's greatest Greek philosophers and polymaths.

Bill Clinton was also born in Arkansas in 1946 as William Jefferson Blythe III. His father died in a car accident three months before he was born. His mother who could not cater for him financially left him in the care of his grandparents, Eldridge and Edith Cassidy; yet Clinton grew up to become the 42nd President of the United States.

Famous Nelson Mandela grew up in poverty. He lived with his uncle after his father died. He was forced to marry one of the village girls but Nelson had other alternatives so he ran away to the city of Johannesburg. He went through many trials and imprisonment and yet he became the first black president of South Africa.

American business mogul, entrepreneur, inventor, and investor, Steven Jobs was adopted by Clara and Paul Jobs, a middle-class American couple. He was an illegitimate son of a Syrian Muslim Addulfattah Jandali. He was born in 1955, but due to family infighting, his parents never married and Joanne, his mother left Wisconsin to deliver her son in San Francisco where she chose to place him in an adoption facility.

The greatest challenge I believe confronting humanity today is not money or opportunity but the wrong mindset. One important thing we all have to recognize like that little child who was beaten every day in primary school is the need to strengthen the inner self and change our perception of issues.

Most of these individuals mentioned faced strong opposition, and yet they had to go against the odds. Most were ignored, maltreated, sidelined, some

had to drop out of school, and others were also put in prison, yet the drive to reach their desired aspirations was greater than these odds. They are considered great leaders whom the world will always celebrate despite the pain and torture they had to go through.

If we had the opportunity to interview our presidents, ministers, members of parliament, directors, managers and other recognized business gurus in Ghana today, we will realize that the road to where they are now can only be described as 'turbulent and draining'.

They however did not allow the thorns of life to stifle their ambitions. They worked hard, defied odds and looked beyond the horizon.

People, ironically those close to you, may not believe in your aspiration and even serve as huge impediments. Nonetheless, each day, look above those perceptions holding you down, chin up, and say to yourself 'it is possible'. As Christians, we know about the power of the tongue and must continue to confess only positives into our lives no matter the seen and unseen obstacles we come across on the way. It is a fact that after the tunnel, there is a respite. Let us strive on and we shall surely get there.

Steve Jobs asserted that, 'the ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do'. What do you want to change or achieve? Just look beyond the Horizon...

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Reasons to **Consume** **COCOA**



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Well-Being

Has Aphrodisiac effect

Prevents Stroke by
improving Blood
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Fights Stress

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Protects Blood Vessels



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