



A NEW ERA FOR GHANA'S COCOA INDUSTRY: CHARTING A PATH OF GROWTH AND INNOVATION

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MEMBERS Dr. (Mrs.) Mercy Asamoah, Rector, Bunso Cocoa College Dr. Edward Okyere Amporful, Chief Pharmacist, Cocoa Clinic Ms. Jane Yeboah, Manager, Public Affairs Mr. Benjamin Teye Larweh, Deputy Public Affairs Manager **DESIGN** Obed Aboagye-Frimpong, Snr. Public Affairs Officer

PHOTOS Archibald Owusu-Ansah, Public Affairs Officer Edward Kojo Asante, Asst. Public Affairs Officer

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very ending, they say, is the beginning of something new. Every era also has its defining narrative, waiting for individuals to shape it with their actions. The cocoa industry, one of the key sectors of the country's economy, is set to enter a new era of managerial leadership.

In January 2025, the administration of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) led by Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo, ended, marking 8 years of continued efforts to transform the cocoa sector.

However, the quest to revive the once vibrant cocoa industry has not stopped with the exit of the former administration. Ghanaians, and for that matter our hardworking cocoa farmers, have been ushered into a renewed era of hope and prosperity, following a successful transition in the helms of leadership.

The advent of a substantive administration, made up of individuals with proven track records, has brought positive vibes and high expectations amongst players in the cocoa industry.

Led by seasoned media personnel with vast experience in public administration, management and communication, Dr. Randy Abbey is already exuding confidence amongst both the local and international players, sending early positive signals about major turnaround in the fortunes of the industry.

With support from a team of experienced management staff who have once occupied various positions within the sector, it is expected that they will bring their experience to bear, even as Ghanaians and farmers in particular remain hopeful of a rebound



Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey, Ag. Chief Executive, COCOBOD

in the fortunes of the cocoa sectors.

The new management, COCOBOD NEWS believes, are not unaware of the challenges that lie ahead of them.

It is an undeniable fact that the cocoa sector, globally, has gone through what could best be described as a topsyturvy moment in the last decade. The sector, from September 2016 to

February 2017, recorded very low prices per tonne at USD\$1,983.00.

However the narrative changed in April 2024 when prices surged astronomically to USD\$11,000.00 per tonne, being the highest price ever recorded on the international market, according to data from the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO).

Unfortunately, however, these incidents have occurred through contrasting fortunes; for example, in 2017 when Ghana experienced a relatively high production, the prices on the international market had sunk so low that Ghana and other leading producers could not benefit from its high production.

Ironically, when international market prices surged to its highest ever in 2024, Ghana recorded low production as a result of internal and extraneous factors such as El Nino, CSSVD, smuggling, illegal mining amongst others which continue to pose threats to cocoa farming.

As the saying goes 'water, water everywhere but not a single drop in the bucket', the price of cocoa on the world market has seen a consistent surge in the last two or so years but Ghana, the second leading producer, has not benefitted much from the windfall due to supply deficits occasioned by both natural and man-made factors.

Aside from the low onward production output, the recent nemesis of overreliance on the over-30-year-old 'forward sales policy' has been identified as a major setback. While Ghana continues to record low production, we find ourselves perpetually tied to this old-aged forward sales policy which consequentially denies us the benefit of profiting from spot price surges in the world market.

However, while this exogenous factor must be the least of the incoming management's worries, the real danger lies in the internal challenges, prominent among them being the deadly CSSVD, illegal mining activities, and prevalent cocoa smuggling syndicates.

Though the past administration, under Hon. Boahen Aidoo, has made several efforts to tackle the deadly Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) with the flagship Cocoa Rehabilitation programme, several thousands of cocoa farms have either been attacked by CSSVD or are characterized by aging cocoa trees, which leads to lower yields and suboptimal cocoa bean values.

The effects of the activities of illegal mining on Ghana's agriculture sector in general and cocoa production in particular is no longer a subject of public debate. Whilst many farmers are helplessly losing their cocoa farms to illegal mining, the country continues to

face the danger of being blacklisted on international markets because of the excessive pollution of farmlands as a result of the activities of illegal mining and its impact on cocoa produce.

Another major challenge that has to be addressed is the increasing activities of cocoa smuggling syndicates. A report quoted the former Chief Executive, Hon. Boahen Aidoo as saying that in the 2023/24 crop season, Ghana lost about 160,000 tonnes of its cocoa beans to smuggling. This is more than a third of the country's cocoa output for the same year.

The change in weather patterns and the effects of El Nino, as witnessed last season continue to pose serious dangers to the cocoa industry and require more proactive and predictive measures to mitigate effects on growth and production.

However, despite these trends, there are several positive stories that must inspire and give Ghanaians renewed hope for better prospects for the cocoa industry, even as we prepare to welcome the new crop of leadership with high expectations.

The last eight years saw Ghana achieve its highest-ever cocoa production of over One Million Metric Tonnes. The Living Income Differential (LID), which symbolizes a major milestone in the sales of cocoa from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, was successfully negotiated and implemented for the benefit of our gallant cocoa farmers.

Other impactful initiatives under the Productivity Enhancement Programmes such as Mass Pruning, Hand Pollination, Cocoa Farms Rehabilitation, Cocoa Management System, and Farmer Pension Scheme, have all contributed to the modest successes achieved over the years and portend positive projections for the industry.

New Path towards growth and innovation

The growing dynamics in the cocoa industry demands that management adopt innovative and creative solutions to deal with current challenges confronting farmers and other stakeholders along the value chain.

From the on-field practices that put sustainability at the forefront of production to seeking reliable means of raising capital for purchasing produce from farmers, the need for innovation has become increasingly critical.

The international community, particularly the EU continues to demand high standards from producing countries in terms of sustainable practices. In area of funding, Ghana is looking to limit the over-dependency on external support in the shape of syndicated loans.

All these require that management adopt cutting edge innovative solutions that do not only empower farmers but also enhance the country's economy and ensure an independent cocoa sector that is capable of withstanding the test of time.

Some new major policy drive

Even before the Dr. Randy Abbey-led management swings into full action having fully apprised itself of the status quo based on hand-over notes left by the outgone management, there are few areas which we believe may engage the attention of leadership.

The need to improve upon the various Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) continue to be high on the agenda. The proposed new phase of the Rehabilitation Programme, which tasks farmers to maintain the farms from the cutting to bearing for a commensurate amount directly paid to them is a laudable initiative which will not only enhance its implementation but also serve as a motivation for be beneficiary farmers.

To encourage all year-round production, there would be the need to explore modern irrigation techniques which are cost-effective to farmers.

There are increasing calls for COCOBOD and other stakeholders to show keen interest in the multibillion dollar global chocolate industry by pursuing programmes and policies that encourage local processing and consumption of cocoa products. Management must intensify efforts at creating an enabling environment for processors and artisanal chocolate manufacturers to expand their business.

As expectations rise among policymakers, think tanks, farmers, and key stakeholders, including civil society organizations, it is imperative that we all unite behind the incoming administration to support initiatives aimed at revitalizing our cocoa industry.

Together, we can ensure a brighter future for this vital sector. When our cocoa thrives, Ghana prospers. May God bless our cocoa sector and strengthen it for generations to come.

COCOBOD WELCOMES DR. RANDY ABBEY AS AG. CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Dr. Ransford Abbey exchanging pleasantries with some management staff of COCOBOD

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) warmly welcomes Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey as its Acting Chief Executive, following his official appointment announced at the Presidency.

Randy, as he is affectionately known, joins the COCOBOD family at a pivotal time with vast experience in corporate governance, management consultancy, and communications.

His proven track record of excellence, strategic vision, and commitment to organizational growth makes him the ideal leader to steer Ghana's cocoa sector into a new era of innovation and sustainability.

Dr. Abbey's extensive career includes leadership roles such as Managing Director of Ignite Media Group, as well as serving on the Executive Council of the Ghana Football Association and as President of Heart of Lions FC. These roles reflect his dedication to fostering collaboration, building impactful relationships, and delivering results.

His impressive academic background, including a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) from SBS Swiss Business School, an MBA in General Management, and certifications in dispute resolution, further solidifies his capacity to provide exceptional leadership for COCOBOD.

On behalf of all staff, stakeholders, and partners, we embrace Dr. Abbey and pledge our support in working with him to enhance the livelihoods of cocoa farmers, strengthen partnerships, and ensure Ghana's cocoa remains a global benchmark of excellence.

Welcome aboard, Dr. Abbey! Together, we look forward to achieving greater heights for Ghana's cocoa industry.



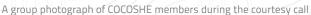




Dr. Abbey inspecting some facilities during his visit to the fine flavour lab at CRIG, and the Dzatabu Warehouse, Tema

PRESIDENT MAHAMA URGES COCOBOD TO PRIORITISE FARMERS' WELFARE







Pres. Mahama addressing members of COCOSHE

President John Dramani Mahama has urged the leadership of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to embrace innovation by adopting modern technology and best agronomic practices to enhance yields without expanding farm sizes. He emphasized the need to move beyond traditional farming methods to ensure increased productivity and sustainability in the cocoa sector.

President John Mahama said this when the Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey led members of the Cocoa Coffee & Sheanut Farmers Association (COCOSHE) to pay a courtesy call on him at the Jubilee House, Accra.

President Mahama was grateful to the farmers for their continued pragmatic investments that have kept the cocoa, coffee and shea sector running.

He noted that the cocoa sector is saddled with financial challenges; mainly debts which have been accrued over the years and expressed optimism that the GHC32 billion debt owed by COCOBOD would be managed through fiscal discipline under the new leadership.

Speaking on environmental protection, President Mahama underscored the need for legal measures to safeguard cocoa farms from destruction. He stated,

'We will pass laws to protect cocoa trees and ensure they are not cut for mining. This way, we will improve the sector and save the environment."

He emphasized that preserving cocoa farmlands is crucial for the sustainability of the industry and the well-being of future generations. The President pledged to revamp the cocoa sector which is fraught with challenges including illegal mining, smuggling and inadequate input supply to farmers.

He also hinted at plans to diversify the sector, disclosing that Ghana and Columbia are in talks to collaborate in coffee production. He expressed trust

in the discussions held with the heads of the Sahel states to lift the ban on the export of shea fruits for processing as a major step to augment Ghana's annual production level of about 70,000 metric tonnes.

In a speech read on his behalf, Alhaji Alhassan Bukari, the national president of COCOSHE noted that the shea sector which is equally important as cocoa and contributes to foreign revenue generation is badly affected with the collapse of the Buipe Shea Processing Plant leading to job losses.

Alhaji Bukari however expressed his trust in the president to revamp the Buipe Shea Factory to play its befitting role in Ghana's economy.

He reiterated COCOSHE's plea for the government to prioritise farmers' welfare which is an incentive to boost production while calling for stringent measures to curb cocoa smuggling which has become detrimental to the country's foreign exchange earnings.

'Ghana is losing volumes of cocoa in this illicit activity to our neighbours, shoring up their production levels and reducing ours. Illegal mining is taking over the lands of our cocoa farmers to their displeasure and forcing some of them to watch helplessly," he bemoaned.

COCOBOD SIGNS DECLARATION OF INTENT TO COOPERATE WITH APEX BRAZIL AND BRAZILIAN MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK





Dr. Randy Abbey exchanging the signed documents with the Brazilian delegation

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has signed a Declaration of Intent to Cooperate with Apex Brazil and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to strengthen bilateral collaboration in the cocoa sector. The signing took place during a high-level meeting at Cocoa House in Accra as part of a Brazilian Presidential Mission to Africa.

The Brazilian delegation, led by Her Excellency Mariana Madeira - Brazilian Ambassador to Ghana, officials from Apex Brazil and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, engaged COCOBOD's Acting Chief Executive and his management team in discussions on enhancing technical and economic cooperation between the two nations.

The discussions focused on leveraging

Brazilian technology to improve cocoa productivity, exchanging best practices in disease management, and fostering research collaboration between Brazil's cocoa sector and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

A key concern raised by the delegation was the global cocoa economy and pricing dynamics. The meeting also emphasized the importance of collaborating among the world's five largest cocoa-producing nations - Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Brazil, Nigeria, and Ecuador - to improve farmer incomes and promote sustainability in the cocoa value chain.

The visit further explored areas of scientific cooperation, including joint research on cocoa flavor analysis and strategies for managing cocoa diseases

such as Witches' Broom in Brazil and Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) in Ghana.

Additionally, the delegation expressed interest in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire's Living Income Differential (LID) of \$400 per tonne, a model that ensures better earnings for cocoa farmers.

At the end of the meeting, the three parties—COCOBOD, Apex Brazil, and the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock—signed the Declaration of Intent.

The agreement marks a significant step towards strengthening bilateral relations, promoting sustainable cocoa farming, and enhancing research collaborations between Ghana and Brazil.

TETRETE OKUAMOAH SEKYIM II COMMENDS COCOBOD BOSS FOR STRONG START









A group photograph of COCOBOD delegation and members of the Wasa Amenfi Traditional Council

The Paramount Chief of the Wasa Amenfi Traditional Area, Nana Tetrete Okuamoah Sekyim II has heaped praises on the Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Randy Anertey Abbey for his proactive leadership despite spending only a few months in office.

The Omanhene made these remarks when Dr. Abbey, accompanied by some senior management staff, paid a courtesy call on him during a three-day working tour of the Western North and South Regions.

Highlighting the complexity and demands of COCOBOD's operations, Tetrete Okuamoah noted that the organization requires immense effort, time, and dedication to satisfy stakeholders along the cocoa value chain. He emphasized that Dr. Abbey's early actions demonstrate his strong commitment to revitalizing the sector through sound policies.

"It is a very clear indication of how determined you are in moving the industry forward, despite taking over from the previous administration just a few months ago," he said.

The Paramount Chief further urged the new management to continue projects initiated by the previous administration, including road constructions, hospitals, schools, and other infrastructural developments critical to supporting cocoa communities.

"Some projects were halted under the previous administration; don't abandon them. Continue, so you will be remembered for your legacy," he advised.

Tetrete Okuamoah also stressed the importance of sustaining productivity initiatives such as the Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, CODAPEC Hi-Tech, Pruning, and Hand-Pollination, which he described as crucial in maintaining and enhancing cocoa yields nationwide.

On illegal mining (galamsey), the Chief lamented its devastating impact on cocoa farms, particularly in the Western South Region, which according to him, contributes between 20% and 40% of Ghana's total cocoa production. He called for national collaboration in combating the menace and pledged his support for any anti-galamsey initiatives introduced by COCOBOD.

"Illegal mining is a national crisis, not just a local issue. I am ready to support any policies you outline to address this threat," he stated.

The Paramount chief further appealed

to the COCOBOD leadership to prioritize setting a decent producer price for cocoa farmers to discourage the sale of farmlands to illegal miners and attract more youth into cocoa farming.

"Consider the farmers' hard work, sweat, and dedication, and reward them with a fair producer price to sustain their commitment to the sector," he concluded.

Responding to Omanhene's concerns, Dr. Randy Abbey assured him of the Board's commitment to addressing the challenges. He reiterated COCOBOD's focus on increasing productivity, improving farmers' livelihoods, and intensifying the fight against illegal mining activities.

"Nana, I can assure you that the 2025/2026 crop season will open with a new and better producer price this August. We are also putting in place strong policies to curb the galamsey menace and boost production, despite the challenges the sector is facing," Dr. Abbey pledged.

The visit formed part of COCOBOD's broader stakeholder engagement efforts aimed at strengthening partnerships and building a resilient and sustainable cocoa industry.

COCOBOD CHIEF EXECUTIVE ENGAGES SHIPPING LINE AGENCIES ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS







A cross section of some management staff present at the meeting

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Ransford Abbey, has met with key representatives of shipping line agencies engaged in business with COCOBOD.

The meeting served as an opportunity for the agencies to formally congratulate Dr. Abbey on his appointment, familiarise themselves with the new management, and discuss pressing industry concerns affecting cocoa exports.

The representatives of the shipping agencies highlighted critical challenges affecting their operations. One major issue raised was related to some hurdles associated with container inspections. They noted that delays in the inspection process significantly increased operational costs and negatively impacted their efficiency.

Additionally, the bad state of the Kejebri road in the Western Region was cited as a key concern, as it discouraged truck drivers from making trips, thereby delaying cocoa shipments to the ports.

They called for closer collaboration with

COCOBOD to review the operational framework and develop a streamlined process to improve turnaround times for their vessels.

In response, the Chief Executive assured the shipping agencies that COCOBOD would work with them to explore ways to address the specific challenges in the shipping and logistics subsector of the cocoa value chain, including taking steps to remove the bureaucratic bottlenecks affecting their operations.

Dr. Abbey reiterated his commitment to continuous dialogue with industry players to ensure a seamless cocoa export process that benefits all stakeholders involved.

Dr. Abbey used the meeting to address the broader issues affecting cocoa production. He posited that the surge in illegal mining (galamsey), cocoa smuggling, and the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD) has contributed to the decline in output.

He assured the shipping agencies that COCOBOD, in collaboration with

the National Security apparatus, was actively working to curb cocoa smuggling by tightening monitoring measures along the country's borders. He further emphasised that the government, through relevant ministries and agencies, was taking decisive action against illegal mining, which has destroyed vast cocoa farmlands.

Dr. Abbey also underscored the importance of education in tackling illegal mining, stating that farmers were being sensitised on the long-term risks of selling their farms for illegal mining purposes. He mentioned ongoing community outreach programmes aimed at discouraging cocoa farmers from engaging in such land sales to miners.

On the issue of CSSVD, he reiterated COCOBOD's commitment to rehabilitating affected farms with disease-resistant/tolerant cocoa seedlings and improving farm management practices as part of a broader effort to sustain cocoa production.

GHANA TREE CROP DIVERSIFICATION PROJECT TO REFORM COCOA SECTOR WITH DIGITAL TRACEABIL IN WESTERN NORTH AND **EASTERN REGIONS**

The Ghana Tree Crop Diversification Project (TCDP) is set to bring digital innovation to the country's cocoa industry, aiming to enhance traceability and efficiency across the cocoa value chain.

The project, expected to be carried out in the Western North and Eastern Regions over the next five years, will operationalize the Ghana Cocoa Board's (COCOBOD) Cocoa Management System (CMS) in three major cocoa-producing districts: Assam, Adabokrom, and Asamankese. Its main goal is to improve connections between farmers, producers, and consumers.

In an interview with Wahab Suleman, the Project Coordinator of the COCOBOD Project Implementation Unit for the TCDP, he highlighted the importance of integrating the cocoa sector to ensure its long-term sustainability and competitiveness. "The cocoa sector needs to be well-integrated to respond effectively to the demands of the global market. Digital traceability is a vital step toward ensuring transparency, efficiency, and sustainable growth in the industry," he said.

He disclosed that COCOBOD has already made substantial investments in the development of the CMS, a digital platform designed to streamline operations, improve data management, and track cocoa produce from the farm gate to the final export. However, despite these investments, the system's full potential can only be realized once it is operationalized in districts where cocoa is produced.

According to him, the TCDP will focus on helping COCOBOD transition from analogue to digital operations by bringing the CMS to the selected project districts: Essam, Adabokrom, and Asamankese. This shift he says, will allow for improved data collection and monitoring, enhancing



traceability throughout the entire cocoa supply chain.

Additionally, he said the system will track every step, from cocoa bean production to export, providing transparency and ensuring that all actors in the value chain are adhering to the highest standards of quality and sustainability.

'Operationalizing the CMS in these districts will ensure that farmers and stakeholders have access to real-time information, which is crucial for making informed decisions," Wahab Suleman explained. 'This project will enhance the distribution of inputs and delivery of onfarm services for effective management of cocoa production, providing muchneeded support for the sector as it adapts to global trends in sustainability and traceability."

By focusing on value chain digitization, TCDP aims to address key challenges in the cocoa sector, including inefficiencies, lack of transparency, and unsustainable practices. With improved traceability, COCOBOD will be able to verify the origin and sustainability of cocoa beans, ensuring that they meet international standards.

Mr. Suleman disclosed further that farmers will also benefit from the CMS. as they will have better access to market information, price trends, and best agricultural adding practices, that the digital shift will not only increase productivity but also financial enhance inclusion, as farmers will receive more timely and accurate payments through digital platforms.

The TCDP has received strong support from its financing partner, the World Bank, which is keen on seeing the project succeed. Dr. Ashwini Sebastian, the Senior Agriculture Economist and TCDP Task Team Leader at the World Bank, has expressed confidence in the project's potential to transform the cocoa sector.

"We have high hopes for the Ghana Diversification Project. Tree Crop The operationalization of the Cocoa Management System is a critical component of this initiative, and we believe it will pave the way for more sustainable and profitable cocoa production in Ghana," Dr. Ashwini said. "This project is not just about digitization; it's about creating a more integrated and competitive cocoa industry that can meet the demands of both local and global markets."

The operationalization of the CMS in the selected districts will mark a key step in Ghana's journey to modernize its cocoa sector. By leveraging digital tools for traceability and transparency, the TCDP is positioning Ghana as a leader in sustainable cocoa production, with the ability to meet international market demands while improving the livelihoods of local farmers.

COCOBOD PLEDGES STRONGER COLLABORATION WITH COOPERATIVES TO BOOST COCOA SECTOR



Dr. Francis Baah, Ag. Deputy Chief Executive (A&QC) addressing participants



Jubilant members of the Ghana Cooperative Cocoa Farmers Association present at the launch

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has reiterated its commitment to strengthening ties with organized cooperatives to drive growth and sustainability in the cocoa sector.

The Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Dr. Randy Anertey Abbey described cooperatives as essential players in the cocoa value chain and emphasized their critical role in promoting the Board's programmes and initiatives.

Speaking on his behalf at the launch of the Ghana Cooperative Cocoa Farmers Association & Marketing Ltd in Kumasi, Dr. Francis Baah, Deputy Chief Executive of COCOBOD in charge of Agronomy and Quality Control, encouraged cocoa farmers to reinvest proceeds from their farms to enhance their businesses.

Dr. Abbey further highlighted the need for increased irrigation as a response to unpredictable weather patterns, which have significantly impacted cocoa production.

"Years ago, we experienced eight months of continuous rainfall and four months of dry season, but today, the situation is reversed. Irrigation is the future of cocoa farming," he stated.

He expressed concern over the growing threats of illegal mining (galamsey)

and cocoa smuggling, describing them as major factors contributing to the decline in cocoa production. He assured farmers that COCOBOD is working on strategies to provide critical support services such as inputs, fertilizers, and logistics to improve cocoa productivity.

Dr. Abbey also urged farmers not to hoard their cocoa beans in anticipation of higher prices, stressing that, "This year promises a good harvest. We need the beans to sell and generate the necessary revenue to continue supporting you."

The National President of the newly launched association, Mr. Issifu Issaka called on cocoa farmers to remain united in pursuing common goals and advocated for cocoa price adjustments in farmers' best interests.

Nana Osabarima Adusei Peasah IV, Chief of Akyem Tafo, encouraged farmers to support government efforts to combat illegal mining and smuggling. He stressed the need to protect cocoa farmlands.

The Global President of the World Cocoa Farmers Organization (WCFO), Nana Abraham Adusei, also advised farmers against ceding their lands to illegal miners, warning of the long-term consequences.

The launch event saw solidarity messages from key industry stakeholders, including Solidaridad, AgriTerra, the World Cocoa Foundation, the Ghana Cooperative Council, the Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative and Zenith Bank.

The establishment of the Ghana Cooperative Cocoa Farmers Association & Marketing Ltd, the umbrella body for all cocoa farmer cooperatives in Ghana is expected to provide cocoa farmers with a stronger voice in the sector, ensuring better support and opportunities for growth.

COCOBOD CHIEF EXECUTIVE CONFERS WITH GBESE MANTSE AS PART OF STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION





The Ag. Chief Executive of COCOBOD exchanging pleasantries with the Gbese Mantse

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey has emphasized his administration's commitment to fostering strong partnerships with chiefs and community leaders to drive meaningful reforms in the cocoa sector.

Dr. Abbey made this known during a courtesy call on the Gbese Mantse, Dr. Nii Ayi Bonte II at his palace. The two engaged in discussions on shared strategies to revitalize cocoa production.

The COCOBOD Chief Executive explained that since the Gbese Mantse, is the customary landlord of COCOBOD, it is proper that the board confers with him for the forward march of the board.

Dr. Abbey acknowledged the financial challenges currently facing COCOBOD but reassured stakeholders that proactive measures are underway to restore production and strengthen the

resilience of the cocoa sector.

He stated that he had put together a team of highly competent professionals to lead his management in revitalizing the struggling cocoa sector. Rather than dwelling on its challenges, he emphasized the need for a forward-thinking approach to drive sustainable progress.

'We recognize our financial challenges, but we are working tirelessly to revive our production levels so that we can have more to support the community's development projects," he said.

He expressed optimism about the future, underscoring a shared vision of sustainable growth and improved livelihoods for cocoa farmers to ensure a sustainable cocoa industry.

The COCOBOD Chief Executive also acknowledged Gbese Mantse's track record over the years, which has earned him respect in several fields including

sports.

Dr. Nii Ayi Bonte II recounted with pride his enduring relationship with the COCOBOD Chief Executive, highlighting how their long-standing connection has enabled them to collaborate effectively in overcoming challenges in their respective fields.

He pledged to leverage his strong ties with COCOBOD to drive the growth of the cocoa sector by offering strategic recommendations that support and enhance the board's policies.

'Our deep-rooted relationship with COCOBOD has always been a pillar of strength for our people," he said.

Nii Ayi Abonte II acknowledged the numerous challenges confronting the Ga community, ranging from infrastructural to socioeconomic issues and urged COCOBOD to consider the Ga State within its corporate social responsibility programmes.



WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO PAYING REMUNERATIVE COCOA PRICE DESPITE CHALLENGES - COCOBOD CE

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey, has indicated that despite the myriad of challenges bedeviling the cocoa sector, President John Dramani Mahama remains committed to fulfilling his promise to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers across the country.

Speaking at a farmers' rally held in his honour at Attronso in the Sefwi Bekwai District during his three-day maiden visit to the Western North Region, Dr. Ransford Abbey disclosed that plans are underway to review the producer price of cocoa in August for the 2025/2026 season.

This, he noted, is part of efforts to demonstrate the government's commitment to improving the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and attracting the younger generation to the sector.

'Despite our financial constraints,... His Excellency President John Dramani Mahama is committed to offering cocoa farmers a better price for their produce," he emphasized.

The COCOBOD CE bemoan aging population of cocoa farmers, describing it as a threat to the long-term sustainability of the sector. He emphasized the importance of attracting youth into agriculture through modernization and innovation.

'We are working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, under the leadership of President Mahama, to modernize cocoa farming. By introducing advanced tools and equipment, we aim to make the sector more lucrative and appealing to young people," he stated.

On climate change, he announced plans to prioritize irrigation systems on cocoa farms to mitigate the unpredictable rainfall patterns. He urged farmers to join cooperatives, which would allow



COCOBOD to implement irrigation projects more effectively when rolled out.

'We cannot implement irrigation systems for individual farmers, it's costly and access to water sources has been severely affected by illegal mining (galamsey). Cooperative farming is the way forward," he explained.

He also disclosed that efforts to amend existing laws protecting cocoa trees will help to secure Ghana's cocoa industry from environmental threats. He further said all relevant stakeholders are being involved in this painstaking process to achieve a more robust legal regime for crop protection.

'Cocoa farming is a source of generational wealth, we need laws to protect cocoa trees and stop the destruction caused by galamsey operators," he said.

Dr. Abbey assured farmers of the timely supply of fertilizers and agrochemicals and called on all to support COCOBOD's efforts at preventing the diversion of essential farming inputs.

'These inputs are procured with significant investment to reduce the burden on farmers. I will personally ensure that any misconduct or diversion is addressed and if anybody, including staff is found complicit in diversion, they will be held accountable," he said. He urged on all stakeholders within the cocoa value chain to unite and support his administration in revitalizing and sustaining the sector.

Dr. Abbey was accompanied by members of COCOBOD management during the tour.







GOVERNMENT WILL PRIORITISE LOCAL PROCESSING OF COCOA TO SAFEGUARD PRICES

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board, Dr. Randy Abbey has reaffirmed the commitment of the government to support local cocoa processing and consumption as a key price-guard strategy.

Dr. Randy Abbey expressed worry that though the country has an installed domestic processing capacity of 504,780 tonnes, existing processing companies were operating below 50% of their capacity, a development he noted has resulted in low domestic consumption and the failure to secure the much-needed benefit from the multi-billion-dollar global chocolate industry.

He further observed that despite the increase in per capita consumption of cocoa in Ghana from 0.5kg to 1kg, the achievement cannot be compared to the rate of consumption in non-cocoaproducing countries in Europe and the Americas.

'Ghana has long been recognized as one of the world's leading producers of cocoa, yet we are yet to reap the full benefits of this beloved crop in terms of domestic consumption," he said.

He added that by increasing domestic consumption, the country would not only reduce its over-reliance on global markets but also provide our cherished cocoa farmers with a stable and reliable income.

Stressing the need for deliberate policies and programmes on the part of the government to help address the unfortunate situation, Dr. Randy Abbey further observed that improving local capacity in processing and consumption will help stimulate economic growth by creating opportunities for cocoabased industries such as chocolate production, beverages, cosmetics, and pharmaceutical companies.

These remarks were contained in a speech read on his behalf by the Deputy Director in charge of Research & Monitoring, Mr. Michael Elow Amoah, at the official launch of the 2025 National Chocolate Week Celebrations. The acting COCOBOD CE pledged



that the government would continue play an active role incentivising local domestic cocoa processing, supporting small-scale cocoa processors, fostering public-private partnerships to improve capacity utilization.

'I am pleased to inform you that His Excellency, John Dramani Mahama,

the President of the Republic of Ghana, has directed me to put in place measures that will ensure that Ghana increases its export of processed cocoa products at the expense of raw cocoa beans," he said.

Dr. Randy Abbey also used the occasion to laud the National Chocolate Week Celebration for not only helping to boost local demand for cocoa products but also leading to the emergence of innovative cocoa-based products on the local market and creating more jobs for hundreds of artisanal chocolate makers.

The COCOBOD CE said National Chocolate Week Celebrations have the potential to achieve even bigger successes and therefore urged

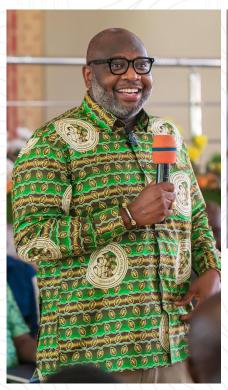
stakeholders in the cocoa and the tourism industry to do more to fully realise the vision and objectives for which the initiative was instituted.

The 2025 National Chocolate Week is slated from February 7 to February 14, 2025, under the theme 'Eat Chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana".

Amongst activities earmarked for the celebration include Church visits, Exhibition of Cocoa and Chocolate Products, Time with School Children, Visit to the National Chief Imam's Palace, Cocoa Quiz Competition for National Service Personnel, Chief Executive's visit to Cocoa Communities as well as Street Float and Chocolate Feast.



COCOBOD CE DECRIES PRIORITIZING ROAD CONSTRUCTION OVER CORE COCOA MANDATE

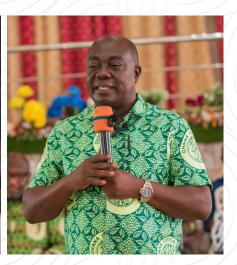


The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey has expressed strong disapproval about the decision of the Board over the years to focus more on building roads than on COCOBOD's main responsibilities, such as making funds available for cocoa purchases, provision of inputs, increasing production, ensuring quality and sustaining the cocoa sector.

Dr. Ransford Abbey, who was on a duty tour in the Brong Ahafo Cocoa Region used his interactive meeting with cocoa farmers at Temponso in the Bechem District to clarify that the construction of roads is not part of COCOBOD's official mandate, but the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Roads and Highways.

According to Dr. Abbey, COCOBOD's incessant involvement in road construction at the expense of its core mandate has significantly contributed to the financial challenges the institution currently faces. He pointed out that contracts awarded under the second phase of the Cocoa





Roads Improvement Programme (CRIP II) during the previous administration has plunged the institution into heavy debts.

'Under the CRIP II project, contracts were awarded in US dollars, resulting in a debt of GH¢21 billion. This debt has become a burden as the institution embarks on a financial restructuring process," he said.

He further explained that COCOBOD does not receive funding from the Government of Ghana through the national budget for road construction.

Instead, the Board has, in the past, undertaken such projects on a limited basis as a gesture of goodwill, aimed at complementing the Government's efforts to improve access in cocoagrowing communities and facilitate the transportation of cocoa beans from farms to buying centers.

'When the Finance Minister presents the national budget in Parliament, there is no allocation made to COCOBOD for road projects. Instead, funds for road construction are directed to the Ministry of Roads and Highways," he explained.

The COCOBOD CE emphasized that road projects previously undertaken by COCOBOD were corporate citizenship efforts to support the improvement of

road network in hard-to-reach cocoa growing-communities. He added that such initiatives could only continue after the institution's financial health has been restored through fiscal discipline and prudence.

'Our production levels are currently low, but the international market price is favourable. We must work to increase production and hope for continued price stability and take advantage. If these conditions are met and operational costs are covered, we can consider completing some of the neglected road projects and starting new ones," he assured.

He also reaffirmed COCOBOD's commitment to supporting cocoa farmers and improving their livelihoods across the seven cocoa-growing regions.

'You are my priority. Even in the face of financial challenges, I am committed to enhancing your welfare. Without your efforts and the beans, you produce, COCOBOD wouldn't exist. The more you produce, the more reason I have to remain in the office so let us work together for our collective good", he added.

He called on all cocoa farmers to help the government to turn COCOBOD's fortunes around, particularly in the upcoming 2025/2026 Crop Season and beyond.

COCOBOD ORGANISES LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR **DEPUTY MANAGERS** Ghana Cocoa Board A group photograph of participants at the training programme

Management of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has organized a threeday leadership workshop for deputy managers from across its subsidiaries and divisions.

The workshop aimed to strengthen leadership competencies by focusing on decision-making, communication, team building, problem-solving, and conflict resolution, all essential for fostering strong professional relationships within the cocoa sector.

Welcoming participants, Deputy Human Resource Manager, Mrs. Gifty Opoku Agyeman, emphasised the importance of regular leadership training for staff to enhance their effectiveness in executing their duties.

'As a deputy manager, you need continuous training to refine your managerial and leadership skills to ensure efficiency and timely delivery," she stated.

She further highlighted COCOBOD's extensive stakeholder network, stressing the need for high management standards to handle crises effectively through proper communication.

'As a manager, you must deliver accurately and efficiently to all actors along the value chain, especially in times of crisis. That is why it is crucial to continually build the capacity of staff

leading our subsidiaries and divisions," she added.

Mrs. Opoku Agyeman encouraged participants to make the most of the training, noting its significance in sustaining the industry's reputation.

Training plays a key role in improving an organization's image. As beneficiaries of this program, I urge you to leverage this opportunity to strengthen COCOBOD's standing, both internally and externally, to sustain the cocoa sector," she concluded.

In total, about 20 participants attended the workshop.







Shorts of participants at the workshop

COCOBOD CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAILS COCOA AS PILLAR OF GHANAIAN HERITAGE

The Chief Executive of the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey has described cocoa as a heritage crop contributing significantly to Ghana's economic transformation agenda.

Dr. Anertey Abbey observed this in a compelling address to climax the second annual Heritage Month observed by COCOBOD under the theme "Ghana Cocoa, the Heartbeat of Our Heritage".

The Chief Executive underscored the integral role of cocoa in Ghana's cultural and economic fabric and urged all to protect it against human factors that threaten its continuous existence.

Dr. Abbey seized the opportunity to pay homage to pioneering figures such as Tetteh Quarshie, along with past COCOBOD executives and staff, acknowledging their contributions to sustaining the cocoa sector. He emphasized that Heritage Month serves as a profound reminder of the deep-rooted connection between cocoa and Ghanaian identity.

'We must view cocoa not merely as an economic crop but as the lifeblood of our people, the backbone of the livelihood of our rural communities, and the pillar upon which Ghana's global reputation in the cocoa industry stands," he stated.

He lauded the dedication of cocoa farmers whose relentless efforts have positioned Ghana as a leading producer of premium cocoa and commended COCOBOD staff for embracing traditional attire throughout the month-long celebration, highlighting the importance of cultural diversity in fostering unity.

Addressing current challenges such as climate change, moribund farms, price volatility, illegal mining (galamsey), and smuggling, the COCOBOD Chief Executive assured that the new administration he leads is committed to implementing policies



Dr. Randy Abbey, praising Mr. Richard Osei Bonsu for his inspiring poem about the cocoa industry

and programmes aimed at overcoming these obstacles and called for collective action and resilience to build a robust cocoa sector.

'We have no need to lament over the prevailing challenges. Rather, we must brace ourselves for what lies ahead. I have every trust in your competencies and abilities to work together to build a resilient cocoa sector,' he said.

Dr. Abbey outlined strategic initiatives including investment in modern agricultural techniques such as irrigation, replanting of old farms, encouraging youth involvement in cocoa farming and fair prices for cocoa farmers. He also highlighted the necessity for Ghana to transition from being solely a producer and exporter of raw cocoa beans to becoming a global powerhouse in cocoa processing and value-added products.

Dr. Abbey urged all stakeholders to honour the legacy of their forebears by ensuring that cocoa remains central to Ghana's heritage for future generations.

He encouraged staff to embrace a culture of diligence, hard work, and commitment to build a robust cocoa sector.

The event was marked by vibrant displays of traditional attire and captivating cultural performances.

A standout moment came when Mr. Richard Osei Bonsu from the Human Resource Department of COCOBOD delivered a powerful and inspiring poem.

His recital not only eulogised the virtues of cocoa but also highlighted the pressing challenges facing the industry, culminating in a passionate call to action for its preservation.

Dr. Randy Abbey, moved by the depth and delivery of Mr. Richard Osei Bonsu honoured him for his exceptional performance.

2025 COCOBOD HERITAGE MONTH IN PICTURES





COCOBOD STAFF TRAINED ON RTI TO BOOST INFORMATION ACCESS

The officer in charge of the Right to Information (RTI) Desk at Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hannah Joy Amissah, has successfully concluded a 12-day training programme aimed at enhancing staff capacity in handling RTI requests across the cocoa regions.

The training, which ran from March 17 to March 25, 2025, primarily targeted RTI-designated officers. Its objective was to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively process information requests in compliance with the Right to Information Act, 2019 (Act 989).

Following the passage of the Act, public institutions are required to appoint officers responsible for ensuring transparency and access to

information. In response, COCOBOD identified and trained existing staff to take up this crucial role. These RTI liaison officers located in the regions will serve as the first point of contact for information requests and ensure proper documentation for onward submission to the RTI Desk at COCOBOD headquarters for further action.

Through interactive sessions, participants gained a deeper understanding of Act 989, explored legal procedures for handling RTI requests, and discussed best practices for ensuring transparency.

As each of these officers has now been equipped to serve as a vital bridge between COCOBOD and the public, it is indicative of how access to information

will be efficient and smooth.

The enthusiasm and engagement of participants underscored the programme's importance, with many expressing their readiness to apply their newly acquired knowledge in their respective regions.

A total of 219 participants from various cocoa regions, including 10 designated RTI Desk officers, took part in the training. This bold initiative marks a significant step in COCOBOD's commitment to openness and accountability within Ghana's cocoa sector and reinforces its dedication to transparency, effective information dissemination, and compliance with the Right to Information Act.



WCF, COCOBOD GIFT CHOCOLATES TO FARMERS AND THEIR WARDS ON CHOCOLATE DAY

The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and COCOBOD embarked on a community engagement initiative to educate cocoa farmers and students on the health benefits of consuming natural cocoa as part of the 2025 National Chocolate Week celebrations.

The WCF delegation, led by Country Manager Baaba Wood, and COCOBOD, represented by Dr. Mercy Asamoah, Rector of Bunso Cocoa College, visited cocoa-growing communities, including Boso, Etukrom, Kwamena, and Bunso. The engagement aimed to promote cocoa consumption while encouraging best farming practices to improve cocoa quality.

Speaking to pupils from selected schools in these communities, Madam Baaba Wood emphasized the importance of education and encouraged students to remain committed to their studies. She advised them against skipping classes and urged them to focus on their academic pursuits.

Presenting WCF-sponsored chocolates from the organization's partners, she highlighted the cognitive benefits of cocoa consumption.

"Cocoa contains essential ingredients that help you retain what you have learned. Make it a habit to drink and eat more cocoa-based products. But do not forget that you must be in school always so that you can realize your dreams in life," she stated.

Addressing cocoa farmers at various locations, Dr. Mercy Asamoah underscored the need for farmers to ferment their cocoa beans properly to maintain quality standards required to produce premium quality chocolate. She also encouraged them to incorporate cocoa into their daily diet for better health.

She used the opportunity to promote admission into Bunso Cocoa College, detailing its training programmes in











Sweet moments with some selected schools in the Eastern Region.

agronomy, extension services, and other courses designed to equip students with skills for future employment in the cocoa sector and related areas within the value chain.

She commended the farmers for their hard work towards sustaining Ghana's cocoa industry, which remains a key driver of the country's socio-economic development.

"This year, we feel highly privileged to visit you in your communities to share the joy of National Chocolate Week and to acknowledge your hard work in sustaining this great industry," she noted.

The 2025 National Chocolate Week was marked across Ghana's cocoa-growing regions to encourage increased cocoa consumption and promote its numerous health benefits.

The distribution of chocolates to farmers and their children symbolises a renewed effort by the two entities to motivate cocoa growers and their families in an efforts at recognising their crucial role in upholding Ghana's reputation as a leading cocoa producer.

Renowned American author, journalist, and lecturer, Gail Sheehy, once said, 'If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living." The reality of this statement holds true in our everyday lives. Change often brings with it a mixture of hope, uncertainty, and renewed energy.

Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey was appointed Acting Chief Executive by His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic, in the third week of January 2025. Dr. Abbey's appointment was met with keen interest among staff and stakeholders in the cocoa fraternity.

Known for a calm disposition, analytical thinking, and strong administrative value skills, many within the organization looked forward to understanding his vision and how it would shape the future of Ghana's cocoa sector.

Following his assumption of office, Dr. Abbey embarked on a few familiarization tours of COCOBOD's Head Office, Divisions, Subsidiaries, and operational areas in the Eastern Region. Yet, across corridors and group chats, whispers and many questions echoed among the more than 10,000 employees nationwide: 'When will the new CE speak directly to us? What direction is he taking? And what about staff welfare?"

Eventually, the HR Directorate released an official circular announcing a staff durbar to be held on Monday, 7th April 2025, at the Head Office in Accra. Staff were to be nominated from the Regions and Subsidiaries to attend the session in person, while others could join virtually.

Fortunately, I was nominated by my Boss to attend physically, a privilege I didn't take lightly. As I made the journey to Accra through the heavy traffic that sunny afternoon, a myriad of thoughts ran through my mind; What kind of future awaited COCOBOD under this new leadership? Would the CE address staff anxieties about job security, promotions, and working conditions? I was also on the lookout for a compelling story that I could author for publication in the COCOBOD Newsletter, and I had a hunch I might just find one there.

The Roof Top was filled to capacity when I arrived. I saw staff busy chit-chatting and waiting in full anticipation of the formal introduction of our new Management. When Dr. Abbey mounted the podium, the Roof Top was quiet with expectation. And rightly so, he began not with praise or pretense but with candor and courage. He laid bare the challenges confronting the cocoa industry: ballooning debt, rolled-over cocoa contracts, the scourge of Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD), declining productivity, and distressed farmers. In conclusion, it looked like the picture wasn't pretty, but it was real.

Notwithstanding, in the midst of the sobering analysis, he offered a word of hope. 'With prudent management, fiscal discipline, good agronomic practices, and the unwavering dedication of our staff,

BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST AT COCOBOD: RETHINKING WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS

By Abigail Ahorgba, APR



we can revive this industry in three years" he said. And when we do, it will be to the benefit of every farmer, stakeholder, and worker along the cocoa value chain."

His assurance sparked a ripple of optimism among staff listening in-person and those who joined online. One could feel a shared resolve rising among staff – 'we're in this together."

But what truly struck a chord with me, and what gave birth to this article, was what followed next, the call for integrity. Turning to organizational culture, Dr. Abbey issued a bold call for a change in the quality of workplace conversations. 'I will not entertain gossip and backbiting," he warned firmly. 'If anyone brings me information about a colleague, I will only act on it after I have conducted my own thorough investigations. This is the only way we can build a trusted and unified team."

It was a simple statement, but it landed heavily, and powerfully. At that moment, I knew I had my story for the next edition of the newsletter: 'Building a Culture of Trust at COCOBOD: Rethinking Workplace Conversations."

The cocoa industry serves as a strong bedrock of the Ghanaian community. At COCOBOD, our mission extends far beyond cocoa, it is about sustaining livelihoods, securing Ghana's economic legacy, and demonstrating excellence in public service.

To fulfil this mission, we must cultivate a workplace environment grounded in trust, respect, and purpose. Gossip, backbiting, and the subtle undermining of colleagues, often disguised as 'helpful information'', - erode morale and tarnish the organizational culture.

These habits break teams, breed suspicion, and ultimately derail progress. Most of the

time, these unethical acts are performed to gain favor from unsuspecting 'influential officials." But we can, and must, do better.

The CE's caution finds resonance in timeless principles that echo across cultures and faiths. A quote of Eleanor Roosevelt, the longest-serving first lady of the United States, reads "Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people." In the Holy Book of the Christian faith, Proverbs 11:13 (NIV) reminds us that: 'A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret."

Similarly, Ephesians 4:29 (NIV) counsels: 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up... that it may benefit those who listen."

In the professional context, these values translate into tangible actions:

- Avoiding the temptation to speak ill of others.
- Correcting misinformation instead of spreading it.
- Reporting wrongdoings through proper channels, not casual chatter.
- Focusing on facts, not hearsay.

Real leadership is not defined by how much information one knows about others, but how well one supports and empowers their team. At COCOBOD, we must strive to be leaders at every level, whether managing a Department, Division, Subsidiary, Unit, or contributing as a Senior/Junior Staff member. Let us remember: It is not a weakness to speak well of others. It is a strength. It is not a weakness to withhold lies and gossip. It is character.

As we journey through 2025 and beyond under the leadership of Dr. Abbey and his team of Executives, let us make a collective commitment to rethinking how we speak, share, and relate. Let us create safe spaces for collaboration, support systems for growth, and communication rooted in truth and dignity.

Our strength as an institution lies not only in our resources or policies, but in our people. And when our people trust one another, speak positively, and champion integrity, the possibilities are endless.

Indeed, if we want to grow and sustain the cocoa sector, it must begin with how we build one another up, one good conversation at a time. We must epitomize the change we want to see.

COCOBOD STAFF IN VOLTA REGION UNDERGO TRAINING IN SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT SKILLS





Staff of the Volta Regional Office of Ghana Cocoa Board have successfully undergone a two-day training on risk, disaster, and safety management skills at Hohoe.

Organized by the Human Resource Department in collaboration with the Special Service Department, the training aimed at equipping staff with the requisite knowledge and skills to enhance their performance and preparedness in dealing with risks and disasters effectively.

Through interactive sessions and expert-led simulations, participants

delved into critical areas such as disaster preparedness, risk assessment, and safety protocols. Facilitators from the Special Services Division shared valuable insights, emphasizing the best practices and modern approaches to risk management.

Explaining the rationale behind the exercise, the Risk and Disaster Manager at the Special Services Department, Mr. Edward Omane Odame, who was also the Lead Facilitator, noted that modern-day management practices required that staff not only build capacity in their job specificities but also on preventive safety skills to deal

with any eventualities.

'The training demonstrates a collective commitment by management to fostering a safer and more resilient working environment," He stressed, adding that plans were far advanced to replicate the laudable exercise in all the cocoa regions across the country.

The Volta Regional Administrator, Mr. Frank Amoah Frimpong, emphasized management's proactive stance in mitigating potential hazards and ensuring swift response when challenges arise

CHIEF IMAM URGES GREATER SUPPORT FOR COCOA CONSUMPTION TO PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH





A group photograph of COCOBOD delegation at the Chief Imam's palace during the Chocolate Week Celebration

The National Chief Imam, His Eminence Sheikh Usman Nuhu Sharabutu has appealed to Ghanaians to patronize the consumption of locally manufactured cocoa products as part of their contribution towards promoting healthy living.

The Islamic Leader observed that since cocoa is an integral part of the country's economy and a major source of employment for many youth, it is important that Ghanaians make its consumption an integral part of their lives to promote good health and enhance the country's economy.

The National Chief Imam made the appeal when a delegation from the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) paid a courtesy call on him at his palace on Wednesday.

The visit was to officially inform him and his office about the 2025 National Chocolate Week celebration and to court his blessings and support towards the annual campaign to create awareness about the consumption of chocolate and other cocoa products.

Describing the campaign as a very important one, the Islamic Spiritual Leader, who addressed the delegation through his Spokesperson, Sheikh Aremeyaw Anas, said it was worrying that despite all the numerous health and economic benefits derived from cocoa, 'many Ghanaians still do not take full advantage of it to improve their health and develop the economy".

He therefore promised to use his office as a platform to help support the campaign and encourage Ghanaians, particularly the Muslim community to embrace the consumption of locally made cocoa products.

Sheikh Usman Sharabutu commended the management of COCOBOD and GTA for being consistent in their campaign to ensure healthy nutrition for Ghanaians.

The delegation made donations of assorted chocolates and cocoa products to the office of the Islamic Leader.

A member of the delegation, Mr. Kenneth Ampofo, on behalf of the team, expressed gratitude to the National Chief Imam for the warmth reception and the opportunity to convey the National Chocolate Week message through his august office.

This year's National Chocolate Week Celebration is under the theme 'Eat Chocolate, Stay Healthy, Grow Ghana".

The week-long celebration involved other series of activities such as Church Visitations, Exhibition of Cocoa and Chocolate Products, Time with School Children, Cocoa Quiz Competition for National Service Personnel, Chief Executive's visit to Cocoa Communities, Melting Moments, as well as Street Float and Chocolate Feast Climax.

RETIRED STAFF ASSOCIATION OF CMC INAUGURATED

By Joe Obeng Yeboah, CMC

The Cocoa Marketing Company (Gh) Ltd (CMC) has officially inaugurated its Retired Staff Association, marking a significant milestone as the last subsidiary of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to establish such an association.

The highlight of the short ceremony held at the Cocoa House in Accra, was the swearing in of the first cohort of executives of the association, with Reverend Chris Padi as Chairman, Mr Ricky Kudolo as Vice Chairman and Madam Janet Baidoo as Financial Secretary. Mr Elis Otis Osei and Mr Jacob Allotey took up the positions of Secretary and Organising Secretary, respectively.

Delivering the keynote address, the Deputy Managing Director in charge of Operations, Mr. Paul Isaac Kwofie, congratulated the newly elected executives. He encouraged them to ensure the welfare of members remains a priority. He stressed the need to

foster a sense of belongingness among members of the Association.

He emphasized the importance of collaboration between members and their executives, noting that their collective experience in the cocoa industry remains valuable. He urged them to remain engaged with the affairs of CMC, as their insights and expertise could still contribute meaningfully to the company.

To you, the members, I encourage you to work collaboratively among yourselves and with your executives, in order to affect positive decision-making in CMC, albeit you are no longer in active service," he said.

Mr. Kwofie acknowledged that the formation of the association had been long overdue, especially considering that smaller organisations had established similar groups years ago. However, he reassured members that it was better

late than never.

He also advised active staff to respect and assist the retired staff, in times of need, reminding them that every worker will one day reach retirement.

"You should be given the needed respect, recognition and assistance, should you call for one, when you are around," he stressed.

Reverend Chris Padi, Chairman of the association, expressed gratitude to the Management and staff of CMC for their contributions towards the establishment of the group. He reaffirmed the executives' commitment to working diligently in the interest of retired staff.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by representatives from the Retired Staff Association of COCOBOD, Union Executives of CMC, the Senior Staff Association of CMC, and some Management staff of CMC.



A group photograph of the retirees

DR. EMMANUEL A. OPOKU RETIRES



Dr. Emmanuel Adem Opoku, (second from right) in a group photograph with his office staff

Dr. Emmanuel A. Opoku, Deputy Chief Executive in charge of Operations at the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), retires after 33 years of dedicated and impactful service.

Joining COCOBOD as a Research Officer on 2nd February 1992, Dr. demonstrated exceptional commitment and passion, which propelled him through the ranks. By 1996, he had risen to the position of Research Manager, setting the stage for an outstanding career.

Reflecting on his early years, Dr. Opoku recounted the demanding nature of the work: "At that time, sometimes, you had to work late into the night because the work actually demanded that we stayed a little longer."

His diligence and innovative mindset led to his appointment as Deputy Chief Executive in charge of Operations in 2018, having previously served as Director of Research and Monitoring and later as Executive Director of the Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED).

Dr. Opoku's passion for excellence saw him spearheading several transformative initiatives at COCOBOD.

During his tenure at the Research

Department, where he spent his formative working years, he played a critical role in managing the processes for the Board's annual cocoa syndicated loan, ensuring its successful execution year after year.

Reflecting on this period, he remarked, "At that time, that is 1992, the Board had conceived the idea of going for an offshore loan facility, and I was a key person who put all the modalities in place ahead of the loan. It was a novel decision but with the help of my team, I delivered".

At CHED, Dr. Opoku championed the integration of pollination into mainstream cocoa farming, an idea that became a cornerstone of the Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs). "I insisted on its inclusion in cocoa farming activities, and thankfully, when the whole policy of PEPs came up, pollination became a key component. I really feel fulfilled," he said.

Dr. Opoku highlighted his pride initiating and driving the Cocoa implementation of Management System, a transformative project that established comprehensive and robust database for cocoa farmers across the country. He emphasised that this groundbreaking achievement, coupled with the successful pilot of the Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme, marks a significant milestone that will be forever etched in the history of the cocoa sector.

When asked about how he perceives the future of the cocoa sector, Dr. Opoku expressed optimism, citing recent policies introduced to boost production as very positive and directional.

However, he urged staff to dedicate themselves to their work and called on future management to prioritise technical areas such as the Seed Production Division (SPD), CHED, and the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG). He also emphasised the need for sustained investment in the cocoa rehabilitation programme to safeguard the industry.

As he takes a bow, Dr. Opoku remains open to supporting COCOBOD's growth. "Yes, today I am retiring, but when my experiences are needed, I will freely share with anyone who needs help. As you know, I sleep and drink cocoa, so I shall be ready to help," he assured.

COCOBOD News, on behalf of all staff, extends heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Emmanuel A. Opoku on his welldeserved retirement and wishes him happiness and fulfilment in the years ahead.



DR. ROB LOCKWOOD RETIRES AFTER 55 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO COCOA RESEARCH

By Geoffrey Opoku-Darko, CRIG

Dr. Rob Lockwood, the lead consultant of the Mabang Megakarya Selection Programme (MMSP) at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), has retired after 55 years of research and impactful service to the cocoa industry.

Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. Lockwood demonstrated exceptional research acumen, passion, and commitment to cocoa breeding and notably led efforts to identify high-yielding cocoa clones resistant to Phytophthora megakarya (P. megakarya), a major threat to cocoa production.

Speaking at a send-off ceremony held in his honour at the MMSP premises in Mabang, Ahafo Region, the Executive Director of CRIG, Dr. Francis Padi, expressed deep appreciation on behalf of the management of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and CRIG.

He lauded Dr. Lockwood and his

fellow pioneers for conceiving the MMSP initiative in 2003 and, through dedication, hard work, and perseverance, transforming it into a successful cocoa research center.

Dr. Padi also extended gratitude to key partner institutions, including the Dutch Buffer Stock Fund, Mars-Wrigley, Cocoa Research UK (CRUK), the Government of the Netherlands, and the Ghana Cocoa Growing Association (GCCRA), for their immense support in ensuring the success of the project.

Recalling his early years, Dr. Lockwood fondly shared how he arrived at Tafo (CRIG) from England on May 1, 1969, as a Plant Breeder and dedicated his expertise to enhancing cocoa research.

His solid efforts, particularly at MMSP, played a vital role in improving cocoa productivity and ensuring sustainable cocoa production in Ghana.

Expressing his profound gratitude, Dr. Lockwood thanked God for granting him the privilege of retiring honourably from CRIG and COCOBOD. He also extended appreciation to the people of Mabang, his colleagues, and especially his wife and children, whose continued support allowed him to work successfully until retirement.

As a distinguished breeder and research leader, Dr. Lockwood's contributions to cocoa science will be remembered for generations. In recognition of his immense impact on CRIG, COCOBOD, and the cocoa industry as a whole, management and staff presented him with a heartfelt citation as a token of appreciation.

With resounding gratitude, they bid him "Ayekoo!" wishing him a happy, healthy, and fulfilling retirement.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S TOUR TO COCOA REGIONS IN PICTURES





COCOA BEYOND BEANS EXPORT: WHY GHANA MUST PRIORITISE OCAL PROCESSING NOW

By Benjamin T. Larweh, APR

Ghana, the world's second-largest cocoa producer, is globally renowned for the superior quality of its beans, contributing about 20% of the world's supply (ICCO, 2023). For decades, the cocoa sector has been a cornerstone of the national economy, fueling export revenues and serving as a livelihood for millions of Ghanaians.

Yet, despite this dominance, Ghana captures only a small fraction of the estimated \$130 billion global cocoa industry. The country continues to export most of its cocoa in raw form, forfeiting the significant value-added earnings associated with processing.

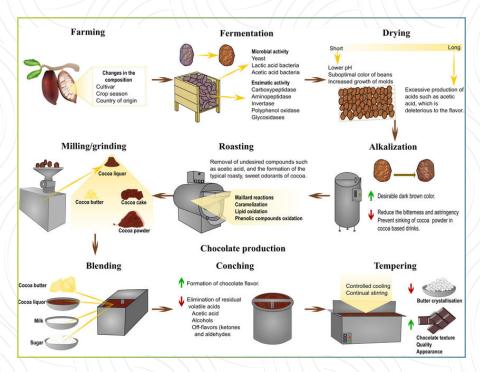
This phenomenon benefits multinational corporations that buy Ghana's raw beans for processing abroad, retaining the lion's share of the profits. Ghana, by contrast, earns less than 6% of the final value of cocoabased products.

This heavy reliance on raw bean exports makes the economy vulnerable to global price fluctuations and limits the nation's revenue potential. Although there have been efforts to enhance local value addition, progress remains slow and hampered by systemic challenges.

This article makes a case for Ghana to move decisively beyond its role as a raw material supplier and reposition itself as a global hub for cocoa processing and value addition. Doing so would not only strengthen the country's economic resilience but also allow it to capture a more equitable share of the international chocolate market.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR LOCAL COCOA PROCESSING

Beyond the economic imperative, prioritizing local cocoa processing can catalyze broader industrialization. It would drive job creation, particularly for the youth and women, and create stronger linkages between agriculture and manufacturing. Local processing also promises to spur technological innovation, develop human capital, and enhance Ghana's competitiveness on the global stage.



Presently, Ghana processes less than 40% of its average annual cocoa production of 800,000 metric tonnes. This means a significant portion of potential value is lost at the export stage. While public-private partnerships and government-led initiatives have increased domestic processing capacity in recent years, from about 25% to under 40%, the country still has a long way to go.

COCOBOD has been pursuing an agenda to increase domestic processing to at least 50% of the country's annual output, but the sector faces several Local entrepreneurs, challenges. especially artisanal manufacturers, struggle with access to capital.

High production costs, including electricity tariffs, coupled with taxes on semi-finished cocoa products from free zone enterprises, make it difficult for domestic firms to compete. Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor transportation networks and limited storage facilities, further compounds inefficiencies across the supply chain.

Meanwhile. multinational maintain dominance in both the local and international markets, crowding out local players.

If Ghana is to unlock the full potential of its cocoa industry, there is a need to urgently address these bottlenecks and create a more supportive environment for local processing.

A COCOA FACTORY IN EVERY REGION

A strategic way to promote value addition and ensure equitable development is by establishing cocoa processing factories in every cocoagrowing region.

This decentralized approach would convert these regions into industrial growth hubs, directly benefiting cocoa farmers and stimulating local economies through job creation, infrastructure development, increased business opportunities.

Each factory could produce cocoa liquor. butter, cake, powder, and finished cocoa products. This would retain more value domestically and also reduce Ghana's reliance on raw bean exports while encouraging regional economic diversification.

Investment and Funding Considerations The cost of establishing a state-of-theart medium-scale cocoa processing facility ranges between \$10 million and \$25 million, depending on location, technology, and capacity.

Rolling out this initiative nationwide across cocoa-producing regions could require investments of approximately \$150 million. This may look high on the surface, but the long-term socio-economic benefits could be mind-blowing.

Financing could come from a mix of government funds, private sector investments, and public-private partnerships (PPPs). The state can play a pivotal role by easing bottlenecks in bean supply to small-medium-large scale local processors, facilitating initial capital support, offering tax incentives on imported processing equipment, and formulating policies that attract both local and international investors.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PAYOFFS

The economic and social benefits of localized cocoa processing are far-reaching. Thousands of direct and indirect jobs could be created in manufacturing, logistics, packaging, marketing, and quality control. Many of these roles would be accessible to individuals with minimal formal education, helping reduce unemployment and improve livelihoods in rural areas.

Moreover, processed cocoa products fetch higher prices on international markets than raw beans. Shifting to value-added exports would increase Ghana's foreign exchange earnings and reduce its exposure to volatile commodity prices.

For farmers, the presence of local processing plants would translate into increased demand for cocoa beans, better farm-gate prices, and reduced transportation costs. These improvements would not only raise incomes but also stabilize the market and encourage sustainable farming practices.

A STRATEGIC SHIFT FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Local cocoa processing is not merely a tactical decision; it is a strategic imperative. By expanding its processing capacity, Ghana stands to retain more wealth within its borders, capture a greater portion of the global chocolate market, and spur transformative national development.

A robust local processing sector would also support export diversification,

reducing Ghana's economic vulnerability to commodity price shocks. Countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Malaysia have implemented similar strategies with success. Ghana can do the same by developing strong local brands, investing in packaging and branding, and positioning its chocolate as a premium product globally.

The National Committee for the Promotion of Cocoa Consumption and the COCOBOD AfCFTA Cocoa Consumption Committee can play a critical role in promoting cocoa consumption in Ghana and the African Region in advancing Vision.

To achieve this transformation, a multipronged approach is needed:

- Policy and Regulatory Reforms: The Government must provide tax reliefs, subsidies, and grants to attract investors into the sector. Simplifying regulations and creating a businessfriendly climate will also be essential.
- Infrastructure and Technology: Investing in roads, electricity, and modern equipment will lower production costs and enhance efficiency.
- Human Capital Development:
 Training programmes and partnerships with educational institutions can develop the skilled workforce needed for the processing industry.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Strong collaborations between government, private businesses, and international development partners will provide financial and technical resources to scale up local processing.
- Export Promotion and Branding: Marketing Ghanaian chocolate and cocoa products through trade shows, digital platforms, and diplomatic channels can boost international recognition and demand.

CONCLUSION

The future of Ghana's cocoa industry lies beyond the export of raw beans. By building cocoa factories in each cocoa-growing region and investing in value addition, the country can significantly boost its economy, create jobs, and improve farmer incomes. Such a strategy would also promote equitable development across regions and enhance Ghana's standing in the global chocolate industry.

But this vision cannot be realized by government efforts alone. It requires

the collective will of patriotic Ghanaians, especially those with the wherewithal and influence to drive real change.

This paper, therefore, calls on individuals, local billionaires, business leaders, and corporate entities to see cocoa value addition not just as a business opportunity but as a national duty.

Investing in local cocoa processing is a legacy-defining move. It creates sustainable wealth, transforms communities, and positions Ghana as a true powerhouse in the global cocoa and chocolate value chain. The cocoa sector has fed our economy for over a century; it is time we fed it back by investing in its future. The opportunity is clear. The benefits are undeniable. The time to act is now.

About the Author

Benjamin T. Larweh is an Accredited Public Relations Practitioner, a Development communication strategist, and the Deputy Public Affairs Manager at the Ghana Cocoa Board. He is also a PhD candidate in Communication Studies, with a research focus on stakeholder collaboration in extension communication within Ghana's cocoa industry btlarweh@yahoo.com

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COCOA CLOCK RESET: WHY THE SEASON NOW STARTS IN AUGUST

By David Oduro Asare, Public Affairs

Ever heard of 'Shifting Cultivation'?

Chances are that the term rings a bell. Rightly so! It's one of those topics in Agricultural Science that sticks with every student. Perhaps, because there is always a 'shift' from a point to another point in life's journey which everyone goes through. I still remember with a bit of flair, explaining it in class years ago that with this system of farming, 'Farmers move from one plot to another because the old land is tired, gone fallow, serves no good purpose and needs time to recover."

But here's the twist: what if I told you that same principle is quietly playing out today? Make no mistake! It's not with soil... but with Ghana's cocoa calendar. Intrigued? Let's dig in.

After years of opening the cocoa season in October with all the pomp and pageantry at farmer rallies, Ghana Cocoa Board shifted to September during the last crop year and now, it's August. Perhaps the old calendar had gone 'fallow" too and was no longer yielding the best results. So, like the good farmers say, 'we've moved on to richer ground."

What accounts for this change? And what does it mean for farmers, cocoa buyers, and the sector at large? This article therefore explores why the shift to August might just be the magic wand to refresh the sector.

Traditionally, Ghana's cocoa season follows a cycle that aligns with the major harvest, international trade activities, and global cocoa events. In 1962, the Cocoa Producers' Alliance (COPAL) was formed, with Ghana as a founding member alongside Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Cameroon. COPAL, originally modelled after Organisation of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC) also included cocoa-producing countries from Latin America and Asia.

One of COPAL's key initiatives was for member states to observe October 1 as COPAL Day, promoting cooperation among cocoa-producing countries, encouraging local value addition, and boosting cocoa consumption due to its health benefits. Ghana began officially marking COPAL Day in 2005.

Over time, October 1 became associated with the announcement of a new crop year and the producer price of cocoa.

However, these hallmark events have shifted occasionally; sometimes preceding October (in September or August) or occurring after October, based on strategic needs and industry realities.

For the 2025/2026 Crop Year, the season officially opens in August, marking a bold and timely move by Ghana's cocoa regulator, COCOBOD. This decision is seen as a direct response to ongoing price volatility, supply chain disruptions, and the critical need to improve farmer incomes.

Dr. Ransford Anertey Abbey, Chief Executive of COCOBOD. He recently embarked on his first round of trust-building farmer engagement rallies across the cocoa regions of Ghana where he used the opportunity to emphasise that the move is aimed at ensuring funds for cocoa purchases are available earlier while discouraging smuggling.

'The August opening is a calculated policy decision to ensure our farmers are not left behind in the global cocoa trade. It will also ensure we eliminate the smuggling incentives that have drained the sector," he said.

Dr. Francis Baah is the Head of Agronomy and Quality Control at COCOBOD. Explaining the decision, Dr Baah echoed the importance of adapting to shifting weather patterns.

'The weather pattern nowadays is very unpredictable. We used to have about eight months of rain and four months of dry season. But now, it's the reverse. So, farmers in the regions that had good rains sometimes have beans ready for sale before September. It is appropriate we modify our activities to serve our farmers better, and that is what we want to do," he explained.

Clearly, gleaning from the reasons



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given by the two executives of the Board, COCOBOD is responding not only to climate changes, but also to the evolving realities of farmers and the cocoa value chain.

But how have farmers and other stakeholders received this news? Madam Leticia Yankey, leader of Cocoa Mmaa, a women's cocoa farmer group in Dunkwa-On-Offin, praised the revised calendar in these words:

'When I visit my farm, the signs are clear that the pods will mature earlier for me to sell my cocoa this year. The opening of the season in August means I can sell them before October."

Nana Obodie is the President of the Concerned Cocoa Farmers Association of Ghana, an advocacy group that rallies COCOBOD's support to support farmers. Nana gave a thumbs-up:

'This is exactly what we expect the regulator to do to help our farmers enjoy the work they do. Our farmers sometimes have the beans bagged before October. Why should they be keeping them until October? Their incomes are locked. This new move is positive!. We are working out a plan to engage senior high leavers to support our farmers in pollination and that means, more pods before October."

Indeed, for many smallholder farmers, earlier season openings mean earlier cash flow, an important buffer during lean times.

Obed Owusu Addai, a respected voice on the Ghana Civil Society Cocoa Platform,

welcomed the shift as a long-awaited policy response to current trends in cocoa marketing:

'Great efforts by COCOBOD! Our organisation has observed that the foreign LBCs seem to be enjoying some monopoly and this is not good for local LBCs with weaker financial muscles. We suggest funds are advanced to the Ghanaian local LBCs to keep them ready and prepared for August," he noted.

Indeed, there's growing recognition that institutional responsiveness, flexibility, and stakeholder engagement are crucial for a resilient cocoa economy and this shift I calendar obviously means something good for the sector.

The August opening also affects buyers. Cocoa buying companies, which operate under strict financial and logistical schedules, may have to adjust accordingly, but they appear optimistic. Victus Dzah, a veteran in licensed cocoa buying operations, with over two decades experience, remarked as follows:

'Reforms are always good to pursue, especially if they serve a good purpose. Our role in this chain is to buy the cocoa, so once the season allows us to buy, by a circular announcing the opening, we will do just that to ensure we get the cocoa beans."

This new calendar comes with real opportunities, including earlier income for farmers, reduced smuggling, and better alignment with the harvest cycle in many regions. However, the benefits won't materialise on their own.

Achieving them will require shared responsibility. District LBC offices must mobilise early, ensure timely financing and prioritise logistics. At the same time, farmers must uphold post-harvest standards, particularly proper fermentation and drying to secure the Ghana's premium cocoa.

Sensitization is also key. Public Affairs teams, extension officers, media outlets, opinion leaders, civil society, and farmer-based organisations must step up public education and monitoring efforts.

Cocoa farmers in Ghana are being encouraged to make their cocoa beans available at buying centres and insist on the price that would be announced in the circular announcing the opening of the new season.

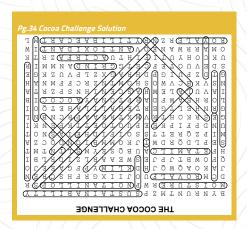
In conclusion, the August shift is not just a change of date. It is unprecedented and represents a strategic adaptation to real challenges. It also signals the new administration's commitment to a cocoa economy that is relevant, responsive, and resilient.

If well-resourced and backed by strong stakeholder coordination, this new cocoa clock reset could become the turning point Ghana's cocoa sector has long awaited.

Cocoa Clock Reset; illicit trading in Ghana's cocoa value chain is no longer worth the risk.

David Asare Oduro is a teacher, preacher, public speaker, and PR professional with over 13 years of experience. He currently serves as Head of the Research & Publications Unit, Public Affairs Department Annexe, 7th Floor, Cocoa House, Accra.

Comments: davidoduro29@gmail.com



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- 30. Smuggling 31. Plantation 32. Sustainability 33. Aphrodisiac 34. Antioxidant35. Decay



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Minimizes worrisome changes that accompany Menopause

Offers healthy levels of dietary fiber



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