



COCOBOD *News*

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DARK HARVEST

**Tackling the Twin Threats of Illegal Mining
& Cocoa Smuggling**



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S END-OF-YEAR MESSAGE TO STAFF

COLLEAGUES,

The year 2023 can best be described as remarkable for a number of reasons. The Cocoa Management System (CMS) was successfully completed to enable the much-anticipated Cocoa Farmers Pension Scheme (CFPS) to kick off.

Cocoa farmers received the highest increment in cocoa price in history in addition to similar feats made in the Board's Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) giving us every cause to commend ourselves for the good work done.

I am therefore elated to express my heartfelt gratitude to each member of the industry for your dedication and hard work towards a thriving cocoa sector.

As we reflect on the past year's achievements, let us also look forward to the opportunities that the coming year brings. I have every confidence that with your continued passion and expertise, each of you will work harder to reach new heights for a brighter future for our organization, the farmers and the communities we serve.

During the year, Management committed to a roadmap aimed at rallying the support of all staff, towards a process of cultural and institutional change with the view to build an agile cocoa sector. The Marketplace Innovation programme which was spearheaded by the Maddison Pine team triggered the generation of ideas to

improve efficiency and effectiveness in the way we do things in the cocoa sector.

Through this bold initiative, there has been some consciousness for change, as a new set of workable ideas for changing staff perceptions to promote good corporate governance has been observed. Management recalls with pride the hearty enthusiasm shown by staff from the divisions and subsidiaries at every stage of the programme's implementation. I take this opportunity to thank each one of you for lending your utmost support to this very important exercise. Let us incorporate the ideas and concepts shared together into our routine activities to bring about the dynamism and innovation we all expect.

Amidst the successes chalked, we have also come to terms with the daunting challenges that we faced during the year. Although we have navigated them with resilient and innovative strategies, smuggling and diversion of cocoa beans and farming inputs, the threat of illegal mining and effects of climate change remain hurdles we all need to work together to eliminate. Our commitment to sustainable practices, quality, and teamwork has truly set us apart and positioned the sector on a path of progress and prosperity.

I have every belief that with strong determination, respect for our shared values and collaborative efforts, we will continue to achieve new heights in the coming year. Your contributions have not only shaped our success but have also created a positive workplace culture which has stimulated the smooth implementation of the Board's Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs).

As we enter a new year, I want to encourage all staff to challenge themselves in the area of staff voluntarism. Here, I mean staff should come up with proposals to support key areas of the Board's activities, especially in cocoa production, and to support the adoption process of the PEPs by our farmers. Our farmers have come to the full realization that pruning, pollination, fertilizer application, rehabilitation of dead farms and diseases and pests control are the magic wands for boosting the productivity of farms. Together, let us work to hasten the adoption among our farmers to build a strong industry.

In the spirit of the holiday season, I wish you and your loved ones joy, peace, and rejuvenation. Take this time to rest, recharge, and return in the new year with fresh perspectives and renewed energy. As usual, never give out a gift bag to a dear one without a piece of cocoa product to enable them to experience the vitality, energy and complete health obtained through cocoa consumption.

Finally, colleagues, thank you for being an integral part of the COCOBOD family. Together, let us make the upcoming year even more remarkable.

AFEHYIAPA TO YOU ALL.

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DARK HARVEST: TACKLING THE TWIN THREATS OF ILLEGAL MINING AND COCOA SMUGGLING



The agriculture and mining sectors play very important roles in Ghana's socio-economic development. While the country's economy is largely agrarian with agriculture serving as the main source of food, income and livelihood for many rural households, mining brings in foreign income and revenues from taxes.

Agriculture and mining create employment for members of local communities, with some mining firms supporting rural development through the provision of social amenities such as health facilities, schools and roads in rural communities to demonstrate their social citizenship.

It is therefore appropriate to assert that agriculture and responsible mining have social, economic and environmental benefits. However, recent upsurge in illegal mining and other negative environmental practices across the country has repercussions on sustenance of agriculture, raising concerns and generating debates among agricultural scientists, farmers, government officials and other stakeholders.

Being a country that depends heavily on agriculture for its growth and sustenance, as well as the second leading producer of cocoa in the

world, Ghana's illegal and artisanal mining debates have far reaching consequences beyond national level.

As the country grapples with efforts to curb this illegal menace, especially on cocoa farms, the activities of social and economic saboteurs have succeeded in increasing the rate of cocoa smuggling to an unprecedented level.

"Dark Harvest," as used in this editorial, encapsulates the sinister nature of these activities, where exploitation and illicit gains thrive.

So, in the heart of Ghana's current socio-economic fiber, a battle rages beneath the soil and amidst the rich cocoa farms cultivated by illustrious sons and daughters of the land — a battle against the threats of the twin enemies, illegal mining and cocoa smuggling.

Though an age-old canker, the clandestine partnership of illegal mining and cocoa smuggling, today, threatens not only the livelihoods of rural folks and the nation's economic stability but also the very fabric of ethical business and environmental sustainability.

The very nature of illegal mining, with its antecedent unscrupulous practices,

scars cocoa farmlands and also endangers the health of communities relying on these areas for their livelihoods.

The allure of quick profits drive this ruthless pursuit of precious minerals, leaving a trail of environmental degradation and social unrest in its wake. There is no better time than now to confront this menace head-on, recognizing that the earth holds more than just minerals, as it is key to sustainable prosperity and the future of Ghana's cocoa.

Simultaneously, shadows of the ever-increasing pace of smuggling across the shores and borders loom large over Ghana's once thriving cocoa industry.

The very backbone of the nation's economy has been infiltrated by smugglers, seeking to exploit its value.

Investigations by the Special Service Department of COCOBOD, security agencies and civil society organizations reveal an intricate web of undercover routes and covert operations by unpatriotic indigenes and foreigners - a clear indication that safeguarding Ghana's cocoa trade is not just a socio-economic imperative but a moral obligation.

Due to geographical proximity with Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, illegal cross border movement of premium quality cocoa through the Western and Eastern corridors to Cote d'Ivoire and Togo has heightened in the last five years. This phenomenon has led to a drastic reduction of crop outturn from border regions (Western North & South, Volta, and Brong Ahafo) and even parts of Eastern region.

According to the Research Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), an estimated figure of 216,000 tonnes of cocoa were smuggled to Cote d'Ivoire and Togo in the 2022/23 cocoa season.

This figure represents a cursory estimated value of \$754,272,000 Million Dollars. For the past five years, the Volta region has produced an average of 6,701 tonnes.

The Western North and South regions have respectively produced 154,567 tonnes and 221,693 tonnes on average. The Brong Ahafo region has also produced an average of 92,487 tonnes. Currently, these regions are recording 30% lower than the average for the past five years.

Various individuals, groups, officials of relevant government agencies and civil society organizations have acknowledged the prevalence and consequences of these twin threats on Ghana's cocoa business. Ghana Cocoa Board, regulator of the cocoa industry has also initiated and implemented a number of measures to arrest the situation, but there seems to be no end in sight to this plight.

It is however crucial to acknowledge that tackling the dark harvest requires more than surface-level efforts. To sever this unholy alliance, a multi-faceted approach is imperative.

COCOBOD News, in this edition, calls for a comprehensive approach that integrates efforts from various stakeholders in Ghana, including government entities, local communities, businesses, the media and international partners, in addressing the challenges posed by the underworld of illegal mining and cocoa smuggling.

At the forefront of the fight are government authorities. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and ensuring

rigorous enforcement of laws are essential to curb illegal activities. Government agencies must have the resources and capabilities to monitor, investigate, and prosecute those involved. Government must institute and implement comprehensive policies that address the root causes of illegal mining and cocoa smuggling.

These must include, amongst others, measures to improve economic opportunities, regulate mining activities including rigorous licensing regime, and enhance border controls.

Communities within affected areas must be empowered with knowledge and resources to resist the allure of illegal activities. Providing alternative livelihoods and ensuring that the benefits of legal and sustainable practices reach these communities are crucial.

It would also be beneficial to establish secure and accessible channels for reporting illegal activities, as well as encouraging community members to play an active role in combating these issues. Companies involved in cocoa production and mining should commit to ethical and sustainable practices.

Implementing transparent supply chains and supporting initiatives that promote responsible sourcing can contribute to eradicating illicit practices. Businesses should engage in CSR initiatives that directly benefit the communities affected by illegal activities. This could include investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure development.

International cooperation is crucial in tackling the transnational and trans-boundary aspects of illegal mining and smuggling. Collaborating with neighboring countries and international organizations can help address the cross-border nature of these issues.

International organizations must provide technical and financial support to enhance the capacity of Ghanaian authorities in monitoring and combating illegal activities strengthens the country's ability to address these challenges.

NGOs and civil society organizations can play a vital role in advocating for policy changes, raising awareness about the consequences of illegal activities, and mobilizing public support

for anti-smuggling and anti-mining initiatives.

Also, the critical role of the media in shedding light on the secret activities in the country, forming a crucial bridge between the shadows of these illicit practices and public awareness, cannot be overemphasized.

Through Investigative journalism and public advocacy, the media can be used as a powerful tool in unearthing the complexities of the underworld.

Again, by providing the platform for public discussions and education on threats posed by illegal mining and smuggling on human lives and the economy of the country, the media act as catalyst for exposing the interconnected nature of these challenges, facilitate dialogue between different stakeholders, and also encourage collaborative efforts at addressing the root causes and consequences of these illegal activities.

It is the hope of COCOBOD News that the media would also continue to assume a front seat role as the watchdog of the society, in holding authorities accountable for the enforcement of policies and regulations in addressing the root causes of these menace.

In conclusion, Ghana's rich cultural heritage and natural resources, including cocoa, are too precious to be compromised by the avarice of a few.

The nation's identity is intertwined with its rich natural resources, and it is the responsibility of every citizen to safeguard this heritage. Tackling the twin threats of illegal mining and cocoa smuggling requires transparency, ethical practices, and stringent enforcement of regulations.

It is only by confronting and dismantling the illicit interconnection of illegal mining and cocoa smuggling that can Ghana pave the way for a future where its cocoa is continuously cherished, its trade is just, and its environment flourishes.

It is time to unite as a nation, rallying behind the cause of preserving our land and securing the future of generations to come.

By confronting the dark harvest, we are laying the groundwork for a more sustainable and resilient Ghana—one where the earth is revered, and the fruits of labour are enjoyed by all.

FARMERS DISRUPT PRESIDENT'S SPEECH TO CELEBRATE HISTORIC NEW COCOA PRICE



It was an unexpected turn of events at the Nana Agyemang Prempeh Park in Tepa, on 9th September, when hundreds of enthusiastic cocoa farmers interrupted the President of Ghana, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo, during his address at the official opening of the 2023/24 cocoa season.

As soon as the President announced the 63% hike in the producer price of cocoa, which is the record highest in the last 50 years, it was greeted with rapturous excitement from the crowd, with hundreds of farmers suddenly swarming the podium amidst singing and dancing, forcing the President to suspend his speech for several minutes to respond to the cheers and praises from the over joyous farmers.

Not even several pleas from the Master of Ceremony (MC) to the farmers to allow the President to complete his speech were heeded by the jubilant farmers who continued to demonstrate their gratitude to the President, the Minister for Food and Agriculture and Management of Ghana Cocoa Board for the extraordinarily life-changing moment of their lives.

The newly announced cocoa producer price of GH¢ 20,943.00 Ghana cedis per tonne, which was set by the Cocoa Producer Price Review Committee (PPRC), made of industry experts and farmer representatives, signifies a substantial increase of 63% over the previous price of GH¢ 12,800 per tonne. This translates into GH¢1,308.00 Ghana cedis per bag or its equivalent of 64kg.

The quantum increase is in line with the constant objectives of the Government

and Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to ensure better compensation for the hard work and dedication of cocoa farmers, who have been grappling with numerous challenges.

The excitement by the cocoa farmers was re-echoed by the National President of the Cocoa, Coffee and Sheanut Farmers Association, Alhaji Alhassan Bukari, who commended the Government and Management of COCOBOD, for responding to the cries and concerns of Ghanaian cocoa farmers for a substantial increase in producer price this season.

THE PRESIDENT'S PROMISE TO COCOA FARMERS

Apart from giving farmers a fair and remunerative share for their efforts, the President reiterated that the government will continue to support farmers in diverse ways to improve production and their well-being.

"Government, through COCOBOD, will continue to adopt innovations aimed at improving the welfare of the Ghanaian farmer through the implementation of productivity enhancement programmes and remunerative producer pricing" the President noted.

He, therefore, expressed optimism that the programmes implemented by COCOBOD will enable the country to attain a significant level of self-reliance, promote industrialization and provide adequate cushion against the adverse effects of price shocks, adding "We will not relent on our promise to create positive and permanent changes in the cocoa and agricultural sector of our economy".

AGRIC MINISTER DECLARES 'WAR' ON SMUGGLING

On his part, the Minister for Food and Agriculture, Hon. Dr. Bryan Acheampong, gave a firm assurance about the government's resolve to deal with smuggling which is one of the biggest cankers plaguing the country's cocoa industry.

He said pragmatic steps had been put in place to drastically deal with individuals and groups perpetuating the heinous act which denies the country and farmers the reward for their toils and sweat.

"The sad part of this unfortunate situation is that individuals who are engaged in this nefarious act of smuggling are neither farmers nor staff of COCOBOD, but rather private merchants who regrettably contribute nothing to the country's production capacity. But I want to assure you that we are now ready as a country to deal with this menace of smuggling should it raise its ugly head again." Hon. Bryan Acheampong further pledged.

COCOBOD CE'S APPEAL TO FARMERS

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board, in a statement, urged cocoa farmers to continue to adopt the numerous productivity enhancement programmes, particularly pruning and hand pollination, being rolled out by COCOBOD to boost productivity and improve their incomes.

He reiterated COCOBOD's commitment to the welfare of farmers, including offering them fair pricing consistent with global trends.

WOMEN LEAD THE CHARGE FOR GHANA'S COCOA REVOLUTION

The Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon Joseph Boahen Aidoo, has lauded female cocoa farmers for their contribution to the growth and development of the country's cocoa industry.

According to him, it is refreshing to note that many women are thriving cocoa farmers; a development which he said, was very positive for the growth and sustainability of the industry.

Addressing the 2023 national best cocoa farmers and shea nut picker at a ceremony organized at the Cocoa House to formally present their awards to them, Hon Aidoo said the fact that this year's award is dominated by female cocoa farmers debunks the long-held notion that women are marginalized in terms of ownership and access to land for farming.

Three female cocoa farmers swept national awards at this year's edition, including the National Best Cocoa Farmer, the National Most Enterprising Cocoa Farmer and the National Best Shea Nut Picker awards.

Commending the awardees for their show of patriotism and selflessness, Hon Aidoo regretted the ever-increasing spate of cocoa smuggling and the alleged complicity of some cocoa farmers. He lamented the fact that investments being made into the cocoa industry by government through various interventions were going down the drain following the decision by some farmers to sell their produce outside the shores of the country.

"Your continuous show of patriotism will forever be recognized and rewarded; today Ghana continues to grapple with smuggling. We are losing a lot of our produce to neighbouring countries because some farmers have chosen to smuggle out their produce outside, despite benefitting from the huge interventions being rolled out by the government" the COCOBOD boss lamented.

Hon. Aidoo cited the deplorable situation in the Volta and Oti Regions, revealing that the latest figure from the two regions indicates a paltry 4.69-tonne of cocoa for the year 2023.

This, according to him, was a result of smuggling. He, therefore, called on the media to shine a light on incidents of smuggling to help deal with the menace.

The Board Chairman of COCOBOD, Mr. Peter Mac Manu, on his part, praised the award winners for religiously following the training and agronomic services offered to them by cocoa extension agents in their various communities.

He charged them to continue to serve as ambassadors and encourage their colleague cocoa farmers to also embrace the various Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs) being rolled out by COCOBOD.

Meanwhile, the reigning National Best Cocoa Farmer, Mad. Adwoa Sintim, attributed her production success to strict enforcement of pruning and the adoption of other interventions such as hand pollination and rehabilitation.

Speaking on behalf of the award winners, Mad. Sintim, who was full of commendation for the management of COCOBOD revealed that ever since she embraced the pruning exercise, following advice from the cocoa extension agents in her area, she has seen huge increases in yields per acre on her farm.

According to her, though she was initially hesitant about allowing extension officers to cut down some of her cocoa trees, she reluctantly gave in after much persuasion, stating elatedly

that she now wishes they could cut more.

"At first I didn't want them to touch my cocoa trees, I fought with them because I was not happy but today, I want them to come and cut more because it has really benefitted me," she said.

The National Best Cocoa Farmer therefore called on her colleague farmers to embrace the interventions being rolled out by COCOBOD to increase their yields.

NATIONAL BEST COCOA FARMER

The 70-year-old Mad. Adwoa Sintim, who won the overall National Best Cocoa Farmer with a total crop yield of 75,460.96kg and 3,025.70kg per hectare, took home one Toyota Hilux double cab in pick-up, 1 standard pruner, 1 carton royale & 1 carton 50g chocolate, a plaque, 2 polo shirts, 2 overalls with hat and 2 safety goggles. others are 2 respirators, protector, 2 hand gloves, 2 Wellington boots and a motorized sprayer.





NATIONAL MOST ENTERPRISING FEMALE COCOA FARMER

This category was won by 64-year-old Mad. Faustina Asamoah. With a yearly yield of 55,988.78 kg and 2,488.39kg/ha, Mad. Faustina Asamoah took home 1 single cabin mini truck, 1 tricycle, 1 standard pruner, a carton each of royal and 50g chocolate, a plaque, polo t-shirts, a hat, safety goggles, respirators, ear protectors, hand gloves, wellington boots, a motorized sprayer, and a cash sum of Gh¢100,000 from world cocoa foundation.



NATIONAL BEST COFFEE FARMER

Mr. Paul Kwame Baffoe also won the National Best Coffee Farmer and was presented with a tricycle, 6 hand gloves, a carton each of royal and 50g chocolate, a plaque, polo t-shirts, a hat, safety goggles, respirators, ear protectors, hand gloves, wellington boots and a motorized sprayer.



NATIONAL MOST PROMISING YOUNG COCOA FARMER

Thirty-five-year-old Mr George Opoku Koduah won the National Most Promising Young Cocoa Farmer.

With a yearly crop yield of 47,983.35kg and average productivity of 2,367.21kg/ha, Mr Opoku Koduah took home 1 single cabin mini truck, 1 tricycle, 1 standard pruner, a carton each of royal and 50g chocolate, a plaque, polo t-shirts, a hat, safety goggle, respirators, ear protectors, hand gloves, wellington boots, a motorized sprayer and a tricycle donated by the World Cocoa Foundation.



NATIONAL BEST SHEA NUT PICKER

This award category was won by Sumaila Rukaya from Wa in the Upper West Region. She took home a tricycle, 5 pairs of hand gloves, 2 pairs of Wellington boots, overalls with hat, a polo shirt, 4 torchlights, a carton each of royal cocoa and 50g chocolate, 4 machetes and a plaque.

INSPIRING THE YOUTH OF GHANA: LESSONS FROM 2023'S MOST PROMISING YOUNG COCOA FARMER

By Issah Alhassan, Public Affairs



Life they say, begins at 40, but for George, the 2023 National Most Promising Young Cocoa Farmer, this thing called life with its hassle and bustle began 13 years ago when he ventured into the lucrative cocoa business.

To say he has peaked too early will be highly unfair. Like Henry Longfellow said "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight but they were toiling upward in the night". George's journey to agrarian stardom has not happened on a silver platter, it has come about through dint of hard work, dedication and perseverance.

But in a society that hardly rewards agrarian efforts and has ingloriously described it as job exclusively reserved for the old, the likes of George are defying the odds and changing the old negative narrative and inspiring hope in the young generation.

Probably there are few more George Opokus out there holding onto the anchor of Ghana's economy and particularly the cocoa sector.

The story of George is being highlighted with the hope that many young Ghanaians who are currently struggling to secure jobs and means of livelihood may perhaps find it worthy of inspiration that cocoa farming is a lucrative and sustainable business.

From a humble background as a Senior High School graduate with additional training from Cocoa Health and Extension Division's Farmers Business School, George shot into the limelight in 2019 when he won the District Best Cocoa Farmer for Prestea, took it a notch higher the following year as the Municipal Best Farmer (General

farming) in 2020 at Anyinase before crowning it with a Regional Most Promising Young Cocoa Farmer Award for Western Region in 2022.

Those who are conversant with cocoa production data and regional nuance in Ghana are not oblivious of the fact that Western Region is one of the major hubs of cocoa and so to emerge a winner does not come easy, but George scaled through at the age of 34. Indeed, the sky was only a limit for him.

A year later, young George has achieved yet again another milestone, winning the highest National Young Cocoa Farmer Award at the recently held Farmers' Day and Awards Night celebration at Tarkwa in the Western Region.

Farm History & Labour Strength

George owns five farms with a total size of 20.27 hectares, equal to 0.2027kilometers square, all located in Opokukrom in the Prestea District of the Western Region.

Acquiring the land through outright purchase and inheritance from his father's family, George began his farming career by sourcing planting materials from the Seed Production Division, Saaman Cocoa Station.

With a labour strength of more than 30 and fleet of farming tools, equipment and machinery, including serviceable motorized and pneumatic spraying machines, pruners and harvesting hooks, George can boast of a total crop yield of at least 47,983.35kg, which translates into an average of 2,367.21kg/ha.

Additional Livelihood & Social Responsibility

The 'enterprising' George approaches

farming with lots of dynamism and diversification. Aside the cocoa farms, George is also into the cultivation of other food crops such as cocoyam, plantain, maize and rice, as well as rearing of livestock including flocks of sheep and poultry.

The 2023 National Most Promising Young Cocoa Farmer is not just a farmer but also a community benefactor. Beyond his personal achievements, George has also contributed immensely towards the development of his community.

His philanthropy extends to areas of roads and educational infrastructure. He has supported the construction of bridges, teachers' accommodation quarters and kindergarten blocks for his community, as well as clearing of roads to his cottage.

Hope for the Youth

At the age of 35, George represents the hope and aspiration of many Ghanaian youth who are working hard to overcome life and its difficulties.

George has a strong dedication to creating a sustainable future for cocoa farming. He also believes in inspiring and nurturing the next generation of cocoa farmers. It is his hope that his achievements will be a source of inspiration to young and upcoming Ghanaians to venture into the lucrative business of cocoa farming.

To him, with strong commitment and dedication, nothing is impossible. Rising through the ranks to become a national best cocoa farming awardee is an evidence of his unwavering determination and passion for the industry.

Kudos to you George!!

On Friday, September 15, 2023, a transformative incident occurred in the heart of the cocoa-rich Bekwai Cocoa District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

The Cocoa Farmers' Field School, conducted in Kokofu, exemplifies the importance of such initiatives to the cocoa farming community. This article explores the significance of farmer field schools, focusing on the one that took place in Kokofu, Bekwai Cocoa District, and casting light on the invaluable knowledge shared and its effect on local cocoa farming.

The primary focus of the Kokofu Cocoa Farmers' Field School was the successful implementation of the Productivity Enhanced Programme (PEP) initiatives of the Ghana Cocoa Board.

This programme is intended to equip cocoa farmers in Ghana with the knowledge and instruments necessary to increase their crop yield and promote the sustainability of cocoa farming. At the heart of the Kokofu event was the in-depth investigation of the "4Ps": pruning, poultry manure application, pollination, and pod protection.

These practices are crucial for ensuring healthier cocoa trees and increased production. The farmers had the opportunity to learn from experts about the complexities of each "P" and how they interrelate to produce a robust cocoa farming ecosystem that guarantees massive yields.

The success of the Kokofu Farmer Field School was largely dependent on the knowledge of its instructors. Prince Kwadwo Amoako, the District Cocoa Officer at CHED, Bekwai District, and Oheneafewo Bonsu, the District Extension Coordinator, led the discussions.

A GLANCE AT THE FARMER FIELD SCHOOL: EMPOWERING COCOA FARMERS

By Prince Kwadwo Amoako - District Cocoa Officer, Bekwai



A shot of management interacting with Mr. Ebenezer Adusei, Chief Farmer

In addition, Community Extension Agents (CEAs) from Kokofu and Jacobu, namely Seth Aning-Sarfo and Maxwell Okpoti, contributed invaluable insight. Their collective knowledge and experience served as a guiding light for the cocoa farmers in attendance.

The practical component of the Kokofu Field School was one of its highlights. Cocoa farmers present had the opportunity to visit the property

of Chief Farmer Ebenezer Adusei, where they observed the successful implementation of the "4Ps" firsthand.

Observing the concepts in action left a lasting impression on the cocoa producers, reinforcing their applicability and efficacy. The field school's visit to a pollinated farm was an essential component. Here, cocoa farmers realised the significance of pollination in cocoa farming. They observed a direct correlation between proper pollination practices and enhanced cocoa pod formation, which ultimately led to increased yields.

The Kokofu Cocoa Farmers' Field School exemplifies the significant contribution farmer field schools make to the lives of cocoa farmers. As cocoa farming continues to evolve, initiatives such as these are essential for ensuring the prosperity of cocoa farmers and the longevity of this essential industry.



CRIG: PIONEERING COCOA SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION IN GHANA



The Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), a Division of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) was established in June 1938 at Akim Tafo in the Eastern Region. It was formerly named Tafo Central Cocoa Research Station and its mandate was to investigate problems of pests and diseases, which had considerably reduced cocoa production in the region.

The station owes its establishment to Sir Frank Stockdale (the Advisor to the Secretary of State of the British Colonies) who recommended the setup of the research station during his visit to West Africa in 1935.

In 1944, the station was upgraded to the West African Cocoa Research Institute (WACRI), while maintaining its headquarters at Akim Tafo with sub-stations at Moor Plantation in Ibadan, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

After the attainment of independence of Ghana and Nigeria, the inter-territorial basis of the Institute came to an end in 1962 and WACRI was accordingly

dissolved. The Government of Ghana took over the station and renamed it the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

MANDATE

The Division's mandate at its inception in 1938 was to investigate pests and diseases of cocoa in order to maintain production in the Eastern Region. In 1944, the mandate was widened to include investigation of soil fertility and agricultural practices. Since 1966, CRIG's mandate has included research into coffee, kola, sheanut and cashew.

MISSION STATEMENT

To be a centre of excellence for developing demand-driven, sustainable and environmentally acceptable technologies which will enable stakeholders to realize the overall vision of the cocoa industry.

The Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana operates under a multi-disciplinary thrust system established in the 1990s to research into production problems of and cocoa, coffee, kola, shea and

cashew and to contribute effectively to the fulfilment of COCOBOD's vision to increase productivity at the farmer level. The Thrust System has been largely successful in knowledge exchange between scientists of different disciplines.

There are currently six Thrusts which include, Soil and Crop Management Thrust, Crop Improvement Thrust, Insect Pests Management Thrust, Plant Diseases Management Thrust, Post-Harvest Quality Management Thrust and System Assessment and Analysis Thrust.

I. Soil and Crop Management Thrust

This Thrust is mostly concerned with problems of climate, soil and crops, and the development of appropriate technological packages to achieve optimal growth.

II. Crop Improvement Thrust

It focuses mainly on the development of high-yielding planting materials with improved tolerance to pests, diseases and drought for the mandate crops.

III. Insect Pests Management Thrust

The Thrust is concerned with the biology and ecology of the arthropod fauna of mandate crops. Finding and validating solutions to improve insect identification and management methods and promoting sustainable use of conventional and biological pesticides.

IV. Plant Diseases Management Thrust

The focus of this Thrust is to employ general disease control strategies in plant virology, mycology, nematology, bacteriology and parasitology to manage diseases of CRIG mandate crops.

V. Post-Harvest Quality Management Thrust

This Thrust is concerned with the following: development of novel food products, value addition and product diversification and new techniques in processing, preservation, packaging and storage; Physiological and pre-harvest conditions affecting commodity quality.

VI. System Assessment and Analysis Thrust

The focus of this Thrust is to address socioeconomic issues relating to farmers through adoption, diagnostics and impact assessment studies of farms or farmer interventions and build statistical and socio-economic support for research in other thrusts.

About five years ago, CRIG set up the New Products Development Unit to conduct research into the development of new products from cocoa pod husk, pulp juice, discarded beans and wastes of other mandated crops (cashew and shea).

The by-products include Cocoa Wine, Cocoa Brandy, Cocoa Gin, Cocoa Vinegar, Cocoa Jam, Cocoa Butter Body Pomade, Cocoa Butter Soap, Cocoa Butter Moisturising Soap (Alata Samina), Cocoa Butter Lotion, Roasted Cashew Nuts, Cashew Apple Jam, Shea Butter Soap, Shea Butter Pomade, Shea Butter Lotion, Shea Butter Moisturising Soap (Alata Samina), Shea 'Alata Samina' Shower Gel, among others.

These products developed at CRIG have passed quality assessment by Ghana Standard Authority and have been registered by the Food and Drugs Authority.

Over the years, CRIG has supported Ghana's cocoa sector in achieving:



- Development of early-bearing and high-yielding crop varieties

- Control of capsids by spraying with specific insecticides

- Characterization of cocoa swollen shoot disease as caused by a virus, discovery of mealy bugs as vectors of the virus and control of the disease

- Mass hand pollination of clonal seed garden for large-scale production of seedpods

- Understanding of cocoa fermentation and flavour chemistry

- Production of pectin, alcohol and alcoholic beverages, animal feed, soap and cosmetics as by-products from cocoa, cashew and shea wastes

- Development of agronomic packages guaranteeing yield of over 3 tonnes/ha for cocoa and coffee.

- An improvement in post-harvest management of cocoa and improved quality of Ghana cocoa beans. Currently, the laboratory manufactures two (2) different chocolate types; dark and milk and also has about seven (7) flavours namely lemon, mint, coffee, pineapple, vanilla, ginger and caramel.

- The implementation CODAPEC & HITECH programmes and the PEPs based on innovations developed by CRIG. These programmes continue to receive technical backstopping from CRIG.

- The training of staff of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED)

and Quality Control Company Ltd. (QCC) who then go on to train farmers on the effect of post-harvest practices on Flavour development. Some farmers who have benefited from the training now voluntarily send their beans to the laboratory for testing.



GHANA CONTINUES TO BE AN IMPORTANT FORCE IN GLOBAL COCOA TRADE: BARRY CALLEBAUT

The newly appointed Vice President for Africa in charge of cocoa at Barry Callebaut, Emmanuel Toureille has reaffirmed Ghana's position as the beacon of quality cocoa, playing an important role in the global cocoa trade. He said this global niche is a pre-requisite for strengthening collaboration with Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) to ensure transparency and sustainability of the cocoa sector.



In his maiden meeting with COCOBOD Management at Cocoa House in Accra, Mr Toureille expressed satisfaction with efforts between his outfit and COCOBOD which have, over the years, recorded significant improvements, especially in areas of traceability programmes, cocoa farmer's welfare schemes, and trade development policies.

According to him, Ghana is an important collaborator in the global cocoa economy and will continue to be the origin of extreme importance to industry players, especially Barry Callebaut.

"To this effect, it is important that both the regulatory party and trader work hand in hand to confront the challenges. It is only through effective collaboration that we would be able to achieve common goals in the interest of all stakeholders", he reiterated.

He added that available data indicate that Ghana has shown commitment to the cause for sustainability by taking the lead to implement productivity enhancement programmes and going further to initiate the adoption and compliance of international trade and export regulations compared to other cocoa-producing countries.

"Barry Callebaut would ensure that it provides the necessary technical backstopping where needed to COCOBOD, especially in the implementation of projects like the Cocoa Management system (CMS) to ensure the synchronization of data. My outfit will be a 100% critical partner with COCOBOD to ensure success", he assured.

Speaking at the meeting, the Deputy Chief Executive in charge of Operations at COCOBOD, Dr. Emmanuel Opoku conveyed Management's satisfactory sentiments, to continue the collaborative ventures in critical areas of the cocoa sector specifically in the domains of research, cocoa farmer welfare improvement schemes and traceability to ensure compliance to the modified EU Regulations.

Dr. Opoku indicated that flagship programmes like the CMS, have



been a robust and costly venture for implementation, and the Management of COCOBOD would need the support of all to ensure their successful outcomes. He called on partners, especially chocolatiers and License Buying Companies (LBCs) to pay the prevailing market prices and premiums due to farmers to improve their welfare.

On his part, the Deputy Chief Executive for Agronomy and Quality Control, Dr Ebenezer Owusu highlighted the need for industry stakeholders to always ensure that differences are ironed out for the betterment of the sector. He added that the Board would avail itself for deliberations and negotiations on critical areas of cocoa production where necessary.



A group photograph of COCOBOD Management and the delegation from Barry Callebaut

CMC MD URGES STRATEGIC EVALUATION FOR A RESILIENT COCOA INDUSTRY

The Cocoa Marketing Company (Gh) Ltd. (CMC), led by its Managing Director, Mr. Vincent Okyere Akomeah, recently convened a conference at the Bunso Cocoa College in the Eastern Region.

This gathering brought together the Company's Management staff, Regional Managers, and Unit Heads to engage in some introspection on whether the company, is living up to expectations despite the challenging environment, vis a vis its corporate strategic plan implemented over the past three years.

Mr. Akomeah opened the discussion by asking whether the company's staff could draw positive inspiration from the actions and decisions made by the management team for the betterment of the CMC. He also emphasized the importance of asking crucial questions about the company's current status, its trajectory, and whether it was providing the necessary motivation and leadership.

"We need to find out where we are, are we on track, [and] where are we going. We need to ask a lot of questions. Are we inspiring? We need to be pragmatic and honest with ourselves. We need to say it as it is to proffer the necessary recommendations that will move the company forward," he stated.

The Managing Director acknowledged the significant challenges faced during the 2022/23 cocoa crop season. The company received 650,000 tonnes of cocoa, falling short of the projected 850,000 tonnes, and that had adverse effects on CMC's operations.

He noted that among the key headaches that confronted the company was the financing of the syndicated loan it assisted COCOBOD in securing, "but with the support of the generality of the staff of CMC, we were able to repay this loan one month before schedule. We have done extremely well and have to clap for ourselves. This is commendable and we are so grateful for that."



Mr. Vincent Okyere Akomeah, Managing Director Cocoa Marketing Company

Mr. Akomeah minced no words in revealing that as CMC basks in the glory of such an achievement, management must know that the business of CMC is evolving, and staff must also evolve since past strategies cannot be used to conquer challenges as they evolve.

"Your solutions need to evolve and as leaders of this great institution, you also need to be dynamic to defeat the challenges we faced in the past. This is why we are here."

Mr. Akomeah highlighted the changing landscape of the cocoa industry, where rising cocoa prices no longer guarantee success due to limited cocoa supply.

He illustrated this situation with an Akan proverb: "Wo nya akokor funu a, wo nnya silver, wo nya silver a, wo nnya akokor funu," which translates to the notion that when prices rise, there may

not be cocoa to sell, and when prices fall, there is an abundance of cocoa.

The issue of cocoa smuggling to neighbouring countries like Cote d'Ivoire and Togo was also raised as a challenge affecting the cocoa industry. Mr. Akomeah acknowledged the industry's difficulties related to pricing, operations, and strategies, with CMC positioned at the centre of these challenges. He urged CMC staff to demonstrate their ongoing relevance in the face of these ever-evolving circumstances.

The CMC boss pointed out that the early opening of the cocoa season in September 2023, serves as ample indication of the changing times. A similar action was taken only as far back as the third week of September in the 2008/2009 Cocoa season. He acknowledged the need for CMC's management to regroup and assess the company's trajectory.

While expressing confidence about CMC's overall resilience in the face of global and local challenges, Mr Akomeah stressed the importance of conducting critical appraisals of individual operational centres in Tema, Takoradi, and Kumasi to determine their specific contributions and costs, rather than relying on averages, which conceals a lot of details.

"Sometimes, we use averages, but the word average is a criminal phenomenon and hides many details. People hide under average to do a whole lot of things; we don't want to put everybody in the soup."

He advised the participants not to be leaders who will only come out to take the shine, when their subordinates have performed and retreat, when the bullets fly, encouraging them to assess themselves as leaders to face the 2023/24 cocoa season with all the confidence needed for the performance of their duties.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE JOINS ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF WOMEN IN COCOA FARMING

The Brong Ahafo Women Co-operative Cocoa Farmers and Marketing Central Union (BAWCOF) Limited has held its end-of-year festival with a call on members to rededicate themselves to best farming practices that increase yields without compromising the future use of the environment.

The celebration was under the theme "Empowering women in SDGs, nurturing women, nurturing cocoa, promoting sustainability together".

Speaking at the ceremony, the Chief Executive of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo commended members of the union for their tremendous contribution towards the growth of the cocoa sector, adding that their unity supports the Board's policy of mainstreaming farmer cooperatives in the implementation of its numerous programmes.

"I am impressed to see strong and beautiful women lightening up the cocoa sector and contributing significantly to the betterment of their livelihoods", he said.

According to him, the level of enthusiasm he had witnessed in members of the association has rendered void, the negative comments from a section of the public alleging the industry's inability to better the lives of our cherished cocoa farmers in the country.

Hon. Boahen Aidoo charged members to adhere to the good agronomic practices the COCOBOD has implemented over the past years to ensure that their livelihoods as women in the cocoa farming business are improved. He added that adhering to good agronomic practices will boost their yields and translate to improved productivity.

"Never abandon the 4Ps, which are Pruning, Pollination, Poultry droppings and Pest management to significantly improve yield per acre. When you prune your farm there will be proper flowering and aeration which will enable you to have a bumper harvest", he advised.



Hon. Aidoo further entreated the farmers to work closely with the Community Extension Officers (CEAs) in their various communities for proper education and direction on how to maintain their farms as well as other decisions regarding their farming activities.

He further indicated that the introduction of the Cocoa Management System (CMS) has helped management to have a complete database on cocoa farmers across the country which will help to effectively implement programmes such as inputs and fertilizers distribution, prompt payment after the sale of cocoa beans to LBCs, payment of pension benefits and tracing of cocoa sold on the international market, among others.

"It is very important to note that, we are exempted from EU's regulation on traceable cocoa, the CMS has given us an upper hand to be able to track the cocoa we sell to our customers outside the shores of Ghana", he added.

"The Cocoa Management System is not political machinery, so those who have not registered due to their political inclinations should endeavour to register for COCOBOD to buy their

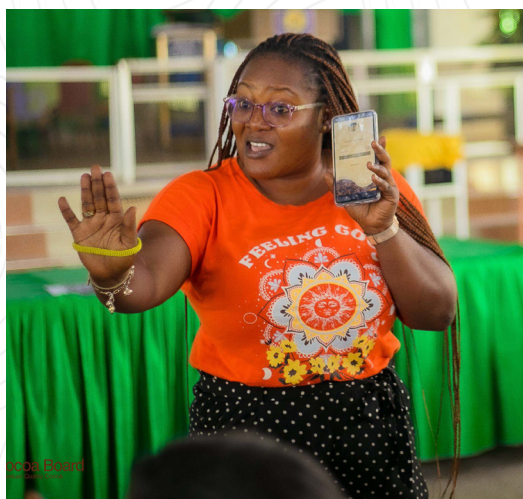
cocoa coming season", he entreated. In a brief remark, Nana Akwasi Bosompra I, the Paramount Chief of Goaso Traditional Area, underlined the significance of women engaged in cocoa farming. He stated that the cocoa farming occupation is time-demanding and therefore requires constant attention and effort to ensure a bountiful harvest, hence the role of women.

Ms. Martha Addai, the President of BAWCOF, reiterated the cooperative's staunch commitment to its members' financial well-being and emphasized that achieving that goal requires the establishment of a credit union to mobilize sufficient savings to support the association's projects and programmes.

Ms. Addai appealed to the management of COCOBOD to continue to support the union in other ventures such as soap making, bead making, and handmade chocolate among others which will serve as alternate sources of income for members and by extension, the association.

The festival brought together about 7000 members drawn from 96 societies in the nine cocoa districts in the Brong-Ahafo Cocoa Region.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TRAINED ON COCOA PURCHASE AND LBC DEPOT APPS



About 900 Purchasing Clerks, Depot Keepers and District Officer's of the various LBC's in New Edubiase in the Ashanti Region have been sensitized and trained on the Cocoa Purchase Application and LBC Depot Application.

The Cocoa Purchase App and the LBC Depot App are components of the Ghana Cocoa Traceability System (GCTS) which will enable smooth electronic transactions between the Cocoa Farmers', PCs, Depot Keepers and the Take Over Centers across the country.

The introduction of the Purchase App and the LBC Depot App will help management of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) comply with European Union(EU) Due Diligence Act (Child Labour and Deforestation) to enable continuous trading of Ghana's cocoa on the European Market.

Addressing the participants, the project coordinator, Mr. Kwame Osei Owusu explained that the App's will help digitize and streamline the activities of the License Buying Companies(LBC's) across the country.

'The App's will help reduce the use of paper and pen in the system, therefore every sale made, every tonne of cocoa weighed at the shed can be sent directly from the app to your main office in Accra, Kumasi or wherever your head office is located', he said.

Mr. Osei further added that, the introduction of the App will enable Management of the Board have a comprehensive data of every transactions made between pc's and farmers and help run a more transparent operations with its stakeholders along the value chain and also on the international market.

'The App's are very powerful tools, whatever transaction made in the process of buying and selling of cocoa can be easily tracked, knowing where it was done and the LBC's involved, can also be determined by Management in Accra, so don't underestimate the App', he emphasized.

In terms of accountability, Mr. Osei stated that, the App's will help monitor all activities performed by the various LBC's across the country, which will help the Board determine the amount of cocoa purchase by each LBC and also inform the Board of any future support to the LBC's.

Mr. Osei also reiterated management's commitment to ensure that the sector receives a massive lift in technologies in the daily operations of all players along the value chain to make it more convenient and sustainable. He further encouraged participants to take the training serious since it is the order of the day.

'Every cocoa producing country in the world is advancing, Ghana also needs to advance, so please take it serious and learn to make it more attractive to the youth and anyone who wants to venture into cocoa farming', he encouraged.

Over 18,000 farmers are expected to be sensitized on the innovation.





LOTTE HOLDINGS STRENGTHENS TIES WITH COCOBOD

A delegation from Lotte Holdings, a Japanese confectionery company, has paid a visit to the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) ahead of the company's 60th anniversary celebrations.

The visit underscores the importance of Ghana's cocoa in Lotte's confectionery production and their commitment to ensuring a sustainable cocoa supply chain.

Lotte is renowned for its delectable range of candies and chocolates, relying on high quality cocoa beans sourced mainly from Ghana. As the company approaches its 60th year in the industry, it recognizes the pivotal role of Ghana's cocoa which constitutes about 80% of the cocoa used in their business.

During the visit, the company's

representatives had the opportunity to meet with management of the Board and discussed the upcoming anniversary, the long standing relationship between the two bodies through ITOCHU Corporation, how to further strengthen existing ties as well as foster sustainable cocoa, which aligns with Lotte's commitment to sourcing cocoa responsibly and ethically.

Gen Tamatsuka, President and CEO of Lotte Holdings, thanked COCOBOD for their support and consistent efforts towards ensuring the export of the finest of cocoa beans to the company.

One of the central themes of Lotte's visit to COCOBOD is their shared commitment to maintain strict quality standards of cocoa beans. This led the team to embark on a tour of the Quality Control Company (QCC) laboratory



at Tema to familiarise themselves with procedures pertaining to cocoa certification.

The Deputy Director – Research at QCC, Dr. Paul Agyemang, welcomed the team and expressed COCOBOD’s commitment to ensure that they provide premium quality cocoa at all times. He explained that there are ongoing chemical checks aimed at meeting Japanese targets and advised that the cocoa beans should be shipped shortly after analysis is completed.

Reiterating COCOBOD’s commitment, Mr. Samuel Saka Boateng, Managing

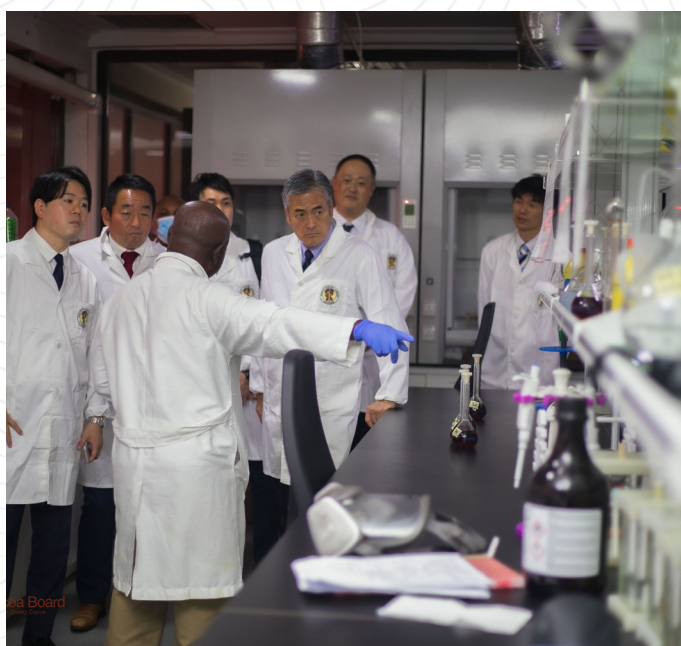
Director, QCC assured Lotte that COCOBOD does not ‘envisage bringing cocoa that will violate Japanese standards’ and called for collaborative support in the form of exchange programmes to enable the QCC team to continually provide the best of services.

‘There should be some exchange so that we can visit your facility to learn about what goes on there, what exactly your requirements are and what we need to do. That will inform our staff and improve their capacity to be able to deliver the best for you’, he stated.

To climax their visit, Lotte

representatives had the opportunity to visit Korboe farms owned by an award winning cocoa farmer at Tafo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. They were taken through the process of harvesting to drying of the cocoa beans. This firsthand experience allowed them to gain valuable insights into the intricacies of cocoa farming.

Lotte, by this visit, has showcased that they are not just in the business of making delicious treats but are committed to sustaining their partnership with COCOBOD to impact the sustainability of cocoa production in Ghana.



39TH FARMERS' DAY AWARDS NIGHT IN PICTURES



2023/24 COCOA PRICE ANNOUCEMENT IN PICTURES





PATIENT HONOURS MRS. SCHOLASTICA POKU ADUSEI OF COCOA CLINIC

Madam Mercy Nana Esi Aidoo, a client who underwent a surgical operation a year ago at the Cocoa Clinic, Accra, has presented a citation containing emotionally stimulating words to Mrs. Scholastica Poku Adusei, a Principal Nursing Officer at the Clinic. The carefully chosen words reflected the extraordinary support received from the nurse during her period of ill-health at the facility.

'Your sense of empathy is the perfect prescription that kept me going and facilitated my recovery process and has kept me among the living', a portion of the citation read.

As congratulatory messages flooded the COSSAH H/O Platform in the early hours of Monday, 6th November 2023, to celebrate her, COCOBOD News proudly associates and celebrates her accomplishment.

In what appears to be contemporarily unconventional in clinical practice, Scholastica is being celebrated not only for monitoring closely and observing Mercy's responsiveness to recovery after her operation at the Cocoa Clinic but taking upon herself the extra duty of discussing her painstaking observations with the team of surgeons who worked on her.

Her extremely cogent medical suggestion is said to have confirmed her suspicion of some emerging complications the patient was exposed to, culminating in the client's referral to the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital.

In an interview, Scholastica explained that for some strange reasons, she felt that something odd was about happening although the operation performed on the client was successfully done by very

experienced team of surgeons.

'My brother, I just can't explain what was going through me about this very client. Much as I cannot disclose all the details because they bother on confidentiality, I can only say that I followed up on her in an unusual manner, monitored her situation continuously while discharging other duties.

At every time, I would discuss my observations with the Doctors and make suggestions for further investigations to be carried out on her. I feel proud that the doctors were always ready to understand me. Later when a complication was observed and she had to be transferred to the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, I did not stop there.

I went ahead to continue my monitoring together with my colleagues at the hospital. Ordinarily, I should have withdrawn my services because she was in another medical jurisdiction, but I said No, so I went ahead and when she finally recovered, I felt relieved. I thank God and the leadership of Cocoa Clinic for all the support', she narrated.

Scholastica further indicated that at a thanksgiving service which was held by Mercy's family at a branch of the Light House Church in Accra, Cocoa Clinic was celebrated through the effort she put in to ensure that Mercy recovered perfectly to be counted among the living.

'We were honoured at the church where Madam Mercy worships. I am told the pastors prayed for the clinic and for me as well. I just cannot hide my joy. I share this happiness with all my colleagues and also use the opportunity to thank all who have congratulated me through various means. I am fulfilled indeed through this

normal duty', she expressed.

The Deputy Director of Health, Dr. Eric Fordjuor, while praising his colleague, described the development as not being the first time a staff has brought honour to the facility. Corroborating the virtues the nurse portrayed, he said she was meticulous, vigilant, observant, diligent and assiduous during the time the client was under her care.

According to him, his amazement stems from the fact that Scholastica showed an unflinching desire to continue monitoring the patient even when she was referred to the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital and called on all to emulate such gesture.

'We all as medical staff need to put in extra efforts especially when it has to do with healthcare delivery, it makes clinical practice complete and brings relief to our clients. I am not sure she was expecting any kind of appreciation from what she was doing but, today, see what is happening, she tells me she is being celebrated on a number of platforms and even her colleagues are congratulating her', he observed.

As many continue to heap praises and eulogize Scholastica, the iconic Florence Nightingale of our time, virtues such as meticulousness, excellence, diligence, sensitivity, affection, and heartiness remain essential to our call to duty.

Undoubtedly, there may be a lot more unsung heroes and heroines in various offices across the industry. Let us keep on doing what we love to do and one day we will be honoured with, perhaps 'Ayekoo', or better still a jump in our career path which will come with countless benefits.

CONGRATULATIONS SCHOLASTICA!

COCOA CLINIC CELEBRATES GOLDEN JUBILEE WITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE

The Cocoa Clinic of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) celebrated 50 years of health care services and community partnership with a thanksgiving service at the Apostolic Church of Ghana, Kaneshie on Sunday, December 10.

The Director of Health of COCOBOD, Dr. Jerry Owusu Ansah while appreciating God for sustaining the Cocoa Clinic for fifty years, said management aspires to transform the clinic into a modern center of medical excellence to serve the health needs of Ghanaians.

To this end, Dr. Owusu Ansah announced that there is an ongoing renovation project at the premises of the Cocoa Clinic in Accra as part of efforts to bring excellent medical care to Ghanaians.

He thanked the current Board Chairman, Mr. Peter Mac-Manu, the Chief Executive, Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo and the Director of General Services, Mr. Richard Danquah Boateng, who are championing the expansion of facilities to meet the classification of a modern medical facility, and hospital staff for their commitment to duty.

“We are not only grateful to God, but to all past and present staff of the clinic at all branches, who have worked and continue to work tirelessly, sometimes under challenging circumstances, to deliver optimal health care to the people we serve”, he said.

Giving insight into the future of the clinic while celebrating its roots, Dr. Owusu Ansah also lauded the foresight of past chief executives of COCOBOD for establishing and maintaining the clinic, which started in an office at Cocoa House with two staff in 1973.

He recognized the efforts of the first Medical Director of the Clinic, Dr. Paul Nyame, who was present at the thanksgiving service for the relocation to its present site.

Dr. Owusu Ansah also hailed the former Chief Executive, Mr. John Newman who is also a former Chief



of Staff to late President John Atta Mills for presiding over the expansion of facilities to include a pharmacy and ward at its present site while in office, leading to its transformation from a day clinic to a 24-hour medical facility.

He expressed gratitude to the Apostolic Church, Kaneshie for their continued support to the clinic and for hosting staff for the golden jubilee thanksgiving service.

The Kaneshie District Superintendent of the Apostolic Church, Pastor Seth Gakpetor who presided over the thanksgiving service congratulated the Clinic for showing gratitude to God for the milestone chalked.

He said the Clinic and the church shared a unique legacy. The church is celebrating 75 years of existence and Pastor Gakpetor highlighted the partnership that have been built with the clinic over the years, resulting in unwavering support in various projects, in service to the Kaneshie community and beyond.

He called for continued cooperation and collaboration in service to the health and spiritual needs of the community. The thanksgiving service saw a beautiful song ministration from the Cocoa Clinic Choir, which drew thunderous applause for a riveting performance.

The management of the clinic supported the anniversary celebration of the church with cash gift while the church did same in support of the Clinic’s Golden Jubilee anniversary.

The Executive Director of CHED, Reverend Edwin Afari closed the service with words of exaltation to God for sustaining the clinic for fifty years and for more successes in the future.

In attendance were the Executive Director of the Quality Control Company, Mr. Samuel Saka Boateng, Heads of Departments of the Clinic, Former Management members including Past Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Mr. John Newman, and the first Administrator of the Clinic, Mr. Kwabena Ofori.

Other guests who graced the occasion include a former Hospital Administrator, Mr. Francis Temeng, former matrons, Mrs. Elizabeth Abebrese and Mrs. Augusta Asafu-Adjaye, past Head of Laboratory, Mr. Joseph Amoako – Lartey, past Head of Radiology, Mr Charles Ocansey, as well as staff and national service personnel of the clinic.

The Cocoa Clinic, established in October 1973, has been celebrating its golden jubilee year with a series of activities including a national Public Lecture, staff Fun Games and free health screening at all of its branches across the country; Tema, Tafo, Kumasi, Debiso and Kadjebril.

CHED LADIES LEAD BREAST CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN



A photograph of CHED staff and some market women creating awareness on breast cancer prevention

The Ladies Club of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), a subsidiary of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has organized a breast cancer awareness program for staff of COCOBOD and market women in the central business district of Accra.

The program was aimed at raising awareness about breast cancer, encouraging regular screening, and promoting early detection.

In his brief remarks prior to the commencement of the campaign, the Director of Human Resources of COCOBOD, Mr. Francis Gyamfi Ocran, stressed the need for all to ensure regular screening. According to him, the consequence of breast cancer goes beyond individuals, adding that families are affected most, and this makes prevention, early detection, and a community support system vital.

Mr. Gyamfi reiterated the numerous efforts made by the Board over

the years in providing the needed logistics for breast cancer screening and other health-related issues. "Our commitment to breast cancer awareness goes beyond today.

We offer support to our employees through wellness programs and healthcare benefits, and this year through CHED, we have taken this further to provide free screening services to our neighbours" He said.

He encouraged all, especially women, to familiarize themselves with the symptoms of the disease as collective efforts are made to fight and work towards creating a world where breast cancer is no longer a threat.

Chief Pharmacist at the Cocoa clinic, Dr. Edward Amporful echoed the importance of breast screening and early detection. Dr. Amporful spoke on topics such as risk factors, symptoms, and preventive measures.

He stressed the significance of self-examination and advised that women should have regular checks at the end of their monthly menstrual cycle to help with early detection and increase the chances of successful treatment.

He also emphasized the importance of cocoa consumption as it contains antioxidants that help reduce the risk of breast cancer.

The market women present were elated and expressed joy over the free screening. Madam Ayisha Mohammed, a beneficiary of the screening exercise expressed her gratitude to COCOBOD for this initiative. "I am grateful that COCOBOD is doing this for free and I don't have to pay anything to get screened," she said.

This initiative exemplifies commitment to promoting health and well-being among staff and within the wider community.

CHED WINS INNOVATIVE MARKETPLACE AWARD



Management presenting a Citation to a representative of CHED for emerging as winners of the innovative market place competition.

The Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) has been adjudged winners of the competitive innovation marketplace held by Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in conjunction with Maddison Pine.

The competition which was held at the Rooftop, Cocoa House provided a platform for staff from the Divisions and Subsidiaries to brainstorm on innovative ideas required to promote good corporate governance to achieve an agile cocoa sector.

At a short ceremony, the winning team was recognized and rewarded for their innovative ideas on the use of Kobo technology, which impressed

the Board and also highlighted the potential for positive transformation within the cocoa sector.

The Kobo tool kit is an app which CHED intends to integrate into its operations to enable real-time data collection and accuracy. It uses mobile technology in its functions, helping in the verification of actual work executed on the field.

Already, the system has been very useful in facilitating data verification of work done by various service providers and staff.

The winning idea showcased the division's commitment to leveraging technology to enhance productivity

and to drive positive change in the cocoa supply chain. The recognition is a testament to the division's dedication to staying at the forefront of industry's advancements.

Addressing the winners, the Chief Executive of COCOBOD, Hon. Joseph Boahen Aidoo stated that the CHED's use of Kobo was the most impressive and described it as a very efficient tool to track field activities.

He congratulated the team and entreated them to share their experiences and knowledge with the other divisions to encourage what he termed as 'cross fertilization of ideas'.

The Board Chairman of COCOBOD, Mr. Peter Mac Manu advised the team not to get comfortable with their success but rather continue to come up with more new and innovative ideas to transform COCOBOD and the cocoa industry.

'Don't rest on your oars, come up with new ideas. Keep reading about the industry, what pertains to it and keep coming up with more innovative ways to improve it,' he urged.

The Executive Director of CHED, Rev. Edwin Afari, expressed his utmost gratitude to the Board for selecting them as the winners of the innovation marketplace contest.

He explained that Kobo will help COCOBOD save money, collect real-time data and track field work. He assured the Board that CHED will take up the task of sharing their experiences with other divisions as well as challenge themselves to do more.

The brains behind the winning idea were presented with certificates of recognition while the division received a magnificent citation eulogizing their sterling performance.

The winning team include Mr. Paul Osei, Mr. Samuel Degraft Mintah,, Mrs. Martha Nimako, Mr. Patrick Owiredu, Mr. Abdul Majid Mumuni, Mr. Edwin Dowuonah-Okai, Mr. Sylvester Amoo, Mrs. Margaret Banka and Mr. Oteng Okae Kissiedu.

THE MENACE OF ILLEGAL MINING IN COCOA PRODUCTION: PERSPECTIVES FROM COCOBOD OFFICIALS

By Sheila Irene Enchill, Public Affairs

The agricultural sector is the mainstay of Ghana's economy with cocoa being the highest foreign exchange earner for the country. The cocoa sector injects over 2 billion dollars annually into the country through export of cocoa beans and its related semi-processed derivatives.

In Ghana, most forest zones where cocoa is grown is endowed with large deposits of mineral resources such as gold which also contributes in no small way to foreign exchange generation annually.

Regrettably, the magnitude of mining activities witnessed in the past decade has raised concerns about the depletion of the forests and environment, and wreaking havoc on the production of agricultural food produce, including cocoa for local consumption and export.

Already, the menace of illegal mining activities has had resounding adverse consequences on our environment and economy causing international organizations and legislators to introduce tightened laws (Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 of The European Parliament) on the importation of agricultural produce from countries with high incidence of deforestation caused by galamsey.

Relevant agencies, civil society organizations and concerned individuals would have to rise up to tame this canker to avert the imminent doom that awaits our environment and economy. There is no better way than to make use of the available propositions and recommendations from our well-meaning technocrats who have tailor-made prescriptions to eliminate this societal vice.

This write-up is therefore a collation of opinions from COCOBOD officials, highlighting proposed strategies needed for implementation by the Board in collaboration with related state agencies to curb illegal mining activities, safeguard the sustainability of our environment and the economy for immediate and future benefits.

DR. FRANCIS BAAH, DIRECTOR RESEARCH

Dr. Baah opines that aside climate change which is a natural phenomenon affecting the agricultural sector in diverse ways, unbridled mining poses a larger threat to the cocoa sector. He however observed that illegal mining is a human induced threat to the sector that can be tamed. Dr Baah recommends public education on



the long-term benefits of cocoa farming which far outweigh the immediate monetary benefits which range between GH¢10,000 to GH¢20,000 per acre, usually paid by illegal mining prospectors to land owners.

'Looking at the cocoa sector which has over ten thousand employees. This should tell you the economic importance of cocoa farming. You have over 10 thousand workers supporting their families from income generated from cocoa trade. That is a great contribution to the growth of the economy. Cocoa farming is an enterprise that benefits millions of Ghanaians when extrapolated to the general economy.' He further explained.

He stressed that, more enlightenment on the consequences of forgoing regenerative natural sources of income over temporal sources of income, should be drummed down the conscience of landowners and the general public to deter them from activities of illegal mining.

'What you are giving out is 25 to 30 years of steady income for your household, it is an inheritance for your children's children that you are giving out. The cost of giving in to illegal mining has far reaching consequences, so if extension agents could shed light on this to farmers, it would deter them from readily giving out their farms and stand up to illegal miners who irrationally destroy lands and the environment.'

He further indicated that management cannot take the law into its hands, but as an institution that deals with farmers, it can engage in thorough Management Extension which aims at bringing out the benefits of an action to the attention of farmers who would be knowledgeable and not easily influenced to do otherwise.

'The benefits of a cocoa tree today is 30 years of future income, so if you eliminate

a tree you have lost 30 years of continuous stream of income to the household. The farm that you sold for GH¢20,000 you receive today, would be worth hundreds of thousands for years to come, a property to bequeath to future generations' he said.

This strategy according to him would be cost effective because CHED already has about 2000 extension officers in all 72 operational districts. What may be required is to re-enforce the matter during their engagements with farmers.

MR ALBERT YEBOAH, DIRECTOR AUDIT



'The issue of tackling the spread of illegal mining in Ghana, has to be handled from the business angle which has to do with the creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed masses'. This, is what Mr. Yeboah explained is his candid opinion in tackling galamsey in farming communities.

By using the business approach, Mr. Yeboah explained that subsidiaries of COCOBOD such as the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) has developed over 100 products such as wines, liquors, soaps and biscuits from cocoa and other related tree crops, which could be produced in commercial quantities, thus, creating jobs for factory hands, engineers, technicians and retailers.

'COCOBOD could play a significant role in curbing the galamsey menace, by empowering its subsidiary such as CRIG with resources to fund product development as well as establish factories to produce some of these products for consumption, but the secondary aim would be the factories serving as a source of employment for the youth who are more vulnerable to the lures of illegal mining contractors', he said.

He added that COCOBOD could establish factories as separate entities of the subsidiaries in the 7 cocoa producing regions to process and produce these

products. In view of the fact that the masses have not been presented with employment opportunities, they will resort to alternative livelihoods for survival which will not auger well to society and our environment. Some of these factories could be Public Private Partnerships to tie into the Government's one district one factory agenda to create jobs.

**MR SAKA-BOATENG
MD QUALITY CONTROL COMPANY LTD**



In terms of tackling the menace of illegal mining to the cocoa sector, Mr Saka-Boateng believes that management should first of all, get Government's buy in, that cocoa is a valuable asset to the economy and for that matter there is the need to protect cocoa landscapes.

There should be a collaboration between COCOBOD and other state agencies especially the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in this regard. He recommends that Management of COCOBOD should influence the shaping of land regulations and licensing pertaining to land tenure, to protect lands with cocoa trees.

**MR LAWRENCE ADU TWUM
E.D SEED PRODUCTION DIVISION**



Mr. Lawrence Adu Twum passionately emphasizes that the Seed Production Division has a vital role to play when it comes to the role of COCOBOD in tackling the 'galamsey' menace. These roles have to be tackled in two folds; where the first target is to set huge monetary compensations for mining operators to pay to land owners for the use of their lands for amounts commensurate to the cost of the damage of farmlands.

The second approach is the massive education of all stakeholders in the entire value chain not limiting education solely to cocoa farmers.

Mr Twum is of the view that there is the need to compute the actual producer price or cost of growing cocoa, land value and yields to get the actual cost of forgoing cocoa farming to mining.

If these amounts could be properly quantified and backed by the enactment of laws, operators would not be able to afford the demand and the weak operators will be off the business. The essence of working out the cost of harm to establish the value of cocoa production is prime.

For licensed miners, it is recommended that the cost of operating license should be increased to deter them from investing further into mining.

The second strategy is to tackle the education of the masses because education comes with empowerment. 'We need to let communities to be aware of the general effects of the communities to mining in terms of health related issues, biodiversity conservation, livelihood empowerment', he said.

'Once community leaders and opinion leaders understand the menace of illegal farming, they will be the front force of resistance to illegal mining. The education on the menace of illegal mining should be targeted at religious institutions, opinion leaders, youth and pupils who will intend serve as change agents to mitigate the proliferation of galamsey. Because most community stakeholders outnumber farmers and stand a better chance to combat this menace. The education should target informal stakeholder gathering and not limited to farmer rallies.' he added.

He stressed that education should be cross-sectorial, covering a wide range of community stakeholders from the security services, civil society, religious institutions etc. because it's a collective fight. He said livelihood education in farming communities and other livelihood empowerment ventures would be suitable avenues for alternative income sources.

Awareness creation about the menace is key, once people are aware, they would not encourage or be lured to do otherwise. COCOBOD must therefore embark on cross sectorial publicity campaigns against illegal mining in farming communities across Ghana to communicate the vices of galamsey through the media for the message to be consistently embedded on the minds of citizens.

**REV. EDWIN AFARI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHED**

Rev. Afari in this exercise referred to a dossier compiled by CHED on proposed strategies for COCOBOD to curb the operations of illegal miners in cocoa



growing communities. The dossier highlights the need for a massive sensitization and awareness campaign through which a collaboration with the Public Affairs Directorate of COCOBOD, the media and CHED would develop tailor-made anti galamsey messages for all cocoa growing areas to be constantly inundated with anti galamsey messages.

A feedback mechanism is needed to assess the impact of these messages to ensure that the desired effect is achieved. In areas where feedback is negative, the messages could be adjusted till the objectives are met.

Another proposed strategy is the creation of inter-departmental/divisional taskforce on galamsey, which should be modeled along the concept of the CODAPEC taskforce which should comprise the heads of the relevant security and government agencies in the districts as well as heads of COCOBOD divisions present in the district, traditional authorities and youth groups of affected communities.

It is recommended that this taskforce would be properly resourced and funded with monthly remunerations and serve as a complainant desk for gathering all intelligence to tackle the menace within their jurisdiction.

In addition to these recommendations, COCOBOD through its legal department could consider engaging the central Government to pass a law through parliament to make all cocoa growing areas a no-go area for galamsey and other mining operations. Provisions for strict punitive sanctions should be given to people who flout the law to serve as a deterrent.

It would be necessary for COCOBOD Management to re-examine the draft works of the Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) Department on the Economic Plants Protection Act, 1979 (AFRCD 47) that protects cocoa with penalties for anyone who cuts the cocoa tree. This law prescribes compensation for farmers to cover the productive years of cocoa, taking into consideration the total amount of money spent to nurture trees and the average yield per tree (1200 trees per ha).

COLLABORATION WILL BOOST THE JAPANESE CHOCOLATE INDUSTRY - TCHO HEAD



Mr. Brad Kintzer, Head of Research and Development, TCHO

The head of Research and Development at TCHO, Mr. Brad Kintzer says the collaboration between Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and Ezaki Glico of Japan and TCHO of California, USA will significantly enhance the growth of the Japanese chocolate industry.

According to him, his outfit has already commenced a project that, when completed, will require 25 metric tons of fine-flavour cocoa which has been cultivated, fermented, dried, processed and flavour analysed right from Tafo.

Mr. Kintzer said this when he led a high-profile delegation of Chocolate Researchers from Ezaki Glico of Japan and TCHO of California, USA to meet with the Management of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) at New Tafo-Akim.

The visit was aimed at strengthening collaboration between Ghana and Japan in the area of cocoa bean quality and flavour qualities for chocolate production.

Opening the meeting, the Executive Director of CRIG, Dr. Francis Padi welcomed the delegation and briefed them on the activities of his outfit and COCOBOD. He emphasized that cocoa farming and post-harvest quality management activities support sustainable cocoa production.

Dr Padi reiterated that CRIG has developed numerous varieties of desirable flavours through research, especially in areas of aromatic substances of cocoa and coffee as well as primary processing quality and development of by-products from cashew and shea.



Dr. Francis Padi, Executive Director, CRIG

He was optimistic that the collaboration would be of their mutual benefits to ensure quality cocoa beans and desirable flavours for the chocolate industry.

He also thanked GLICO/TCHO for funding the ongoing construction of the ultra-modern Fine Flavour Chocolate Laboratory at CRIG which has the capacity to train more farmers, staff of Quality Control Company Ltd (QCC) and Cocoa Health & Extension Division (CHED) on the effects of post-harvest practices on flavour development.

The delegation visited CRIG's facilities, including the Fine Flavour Research laboratory fermentry under construction, CSSVD Museum, the Dam site and some experimental farms at Tafo and Bunso.

Present at the meeting were, Dr. Richard Adu Acheampong, Deputy Executive Director at CRIG, Mr. Richard Danquah-Boateng, Director of General Services at COCOBOD, Shoji Yamasaki, Head of Research & Development of GLICO, Kentaro Obata, renowned Citrus Breeder at GLICO, Tokuro Shimizu, a Breeder of Kazusa, Dr. Daniel Boakye-Dankwa, Head of Accounts at CRIG and Dr. Abu Mustapha Dadzie, a Senior Breeder at CRIG. Other Research Scientists included Dr. Ebenezer Obeng-Bio and Mr. Stephen Yaw Opoku.

COCOBOD, GIZ-SCISP BEGIN SENSITISATION ON GHANA COCOA TRACEABILITY SYSTEM



Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) in collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ-SCIP) has begun a massive campaign to sensitise cocoa farmers in the Assin Fosu District in the Central Region on the Ghana Cocoa Traceability System (GCTS).

The exercise is part of Ghana's commitment to ensure compliance with changes in the market access requirements of the European Union (EU), which emphasises cocoa traceability and sustainable farming practices.

Addressing Cocoa Farmers at the Gold Coast Camp in Assin Fosu on the benefits of the traceability system, a Principal Technical Officer of the Social Science and Statistical Unit of Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), Mr. Dickson Agyapong disclosed that, farmers' compliance to the Ghana Cocoa Traceability System (GCTS) would help grant market access to COCOBOD

to enable them to prioritise ethical and sustainable sourcing of cocoa. He added that buyers of cocoa on the world market are willing to pay a premium for traceable cocoa which will give farmers the opportunity to tap into more lucrative market channels and also receive fair compensation for their produce.

Mr. Dickson further encouraged the farmers to continue to adopt more sustainable and environmentally friendly farming practices which will improve the quality of their cocoa beans and attract higher prices for a more improved and decent income for their produce. improve the quality of their cocoa beans and attract higher prices for a more improved and decent income for their produce.

He assured the farmers that COCOBOD will continue to provide more informed technical assistance and training programmes to support cocoa farmers in improving their agricultural practices.

These programs he added will help increase yields, reduce production costs, and enhance overall productivity, which can positively impact farmers' income.

"Management will continue to deploy good community extension agents to your doorsteps to provide you with the technical support to produce cocoa more sustainably for better farmer income," he emphasised.

The Central Regional Chief Farmer of the Cocoa, Coffee and Sheanut Farmers Association, Nana Kwesi Ofori commended COCOBOD for taking steps to sensitise stakeholders and promote compliance. He called on all the farmers to support this worthy course.

In all about 4500 participants including cocoa farmers, cocoa purchasing clerks, and transporters, among others, are expected to benefit from the sensitisation exercise in the Assin Fosu District.

The exercise is expected to help in increasing accountability and sustainability of the cocoa sector from the farm gate to the first purchase point.



COCOBOD MARKS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), in its effort to extend its focus beyond the production, processing and marketing of cocoa, is stepping into the forefront of advocacy, dedicating its resources and influence to shine a spotlight on breast health. This move underscores COCOBOD's commitment not only to the cocoa industry but also to the well-being of the communities it serves.

In recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, COCOBOD has initiated various awareness campaigns and collaborations aimed at educating its stakeholders and the public about the importance of breast health. As part of the campaign, COCOBOD has embarked on a social media campaign across all its platforms to promote breast health and to ensure that its stakeholders are well-informed about

the risks of breast cancer, symptoms, and preventive measures.

Additionally, COCOBOD in conjunction with its healthcare arm, Cocoa Clinic, is offering free breast cancer screenings across all branches of the clinic for employees, stakeholders, farmers and the general public. This strategic effort aims to raise awareness about breast cancer, promote the significance of early detection, and educate individuals on the importance of regular check-ups and healthy lifestyles to prevent cancer.

COCOBOD is also incorporating pink-themed elements into its corporate identity for the month, to visually signify its commitment to supporting breast cancer awareness. Employees across the divisions and subsidiaries will be wearing pink on dedicated days

to show their support for the fight against breast cancer and to celebrate and encourage survivors.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month serves as a reminder that collective efforts can make a significant impact in the fight against breast cancer and COCOBOD's commemoration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a testament to its commitment to social responsibility. Through a multifaceted approach, COCOBOD is not only tending to the well-being of farmers and other stakeholders but is also championing a cause that transcends the boundaries of agriculture.

The fight is a shared responsibility. Let's support it. Get screened now and stay healthy.



BE VOCAL, INQUISITIVE AND INNOVATIVE - CMC BOARD CHAIR ADVISES MANAGEMENT



Dr. Joseph Kobina Essibu, Board Chairman, CMC, delivering the keynote address

A two-day confab, organized by the Management of the Cocoa Marketing Company (Gh) Ltd. has ended at the Bunso Cocoa College in the Eastern Region, with a call on participants to be vocal, inquisitive and innovative, as the exchange of ideas would be the strategy through which CMC's plans for a better future will be generated.

Participants who were drawn from the Take-over Centres of Tema, Takoradi, Kumasi and the Head Office, were Head of Departments, Regional Managers and Unit Heads.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Joseph Kobina Essibu, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cocoa Marketing Company emphasised that, it is the collective contribution, unwavering effort and dedication to duty of the CMC staff which has formed the bedrock upon which the success story of the Company is trumpeted.

He noted that the world around CMC

is moving at a fast pace with its concomitant changes, and as a learning establishment, all efforts must be put in place to not merely keep pace but lead the charge.

"The world around us is moving at a breathtaking pace and it is incumbent upon us not merely to keep pace, but to lead the charge."

Dr. Essibu admonished the participants that their roles as the guardians of the future of CMC requires them to embrace positive changes with open arms, noting that it is change that fosters innovation and cultivates resilience.

He further said the trend ahead demands strategic agility and harmonious convergence of CMC's culture, with its evolving vision and the resolute commitment to driving excellence across every facet of the company's operations.

Dr. Essibu opined that in today's

interconnected world, success is not a solitary endeavour, but a collective effort, advising participants to pool and utilise their professional talents to streamline administrative structures to bring efficiency and efficacy, leading to the attainment of CMC's organisational goals.

He said although the challenges faced by CMC are formidable, the capacity of the participants to rise to the task is not in doubt.

"The challenges we face are formidable, but so are our collective capabilities. With our expertise, dedication and passion, we can surmount the challenges."

The Board Chairman implored participants to use the workshop as a platform to chart the course that will further put CMC on the journey that will undoubtedly yield immeasurable success for the staff, their dependants and the entire industry.

MAXIMIZING COCOA YIELDS: THE MAGIC OF PRUNING

By Agnes Annon & David Oduro Asare,
Public Affairs

Cocoa stands as Ghana's primary export, playing a pivotal role in generating export revenues and sustaining the livelihoods of countless cocoa farmers and stakeholders throughout the value chain.

Since Ghana's inclusion in the league of cocoa-producing nations over 14 decades ago, this crop has significantly influenced various sectors of the country's economy, contributing to the development of educational, health, and infrastructural initiatives.

Over the years, Ghana has not only become a global force in producing high-quality cocoa but has also secured the second position globally in annual cocoa production, cementing its international reputation.

Despite these achievements, the cocoa sector has faced challenges, particularly in maintaining stable production levels.

In response, Ghana has implemented several policy reforms to address the bottlenecks hindering cocoa production. Notably, starting in 2017, the sector initiated a series of policy measures known as "Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs)".

The PEPs have taken the form of a concerted effort to encourage farmers to adopt major agronomic practices geared towards improving cocoa yield per hectare. This comprehensive strategy includes interventions such as cocoa farm rehabilitation, mass spraying, pruning, hand pollination, and subsidized fertilizer application, among



A group of pruning gang wielding motorised slasher/pruners in a well ventilated cocoa farm

others, over the past seven years.

While the rehabilitation of dead farms promises long-term benefits and value, the combined impact of pruning and hand pollination has emerged as a particularly effective approach, providing short-term effects on yields. Despite being traditional agricultural best practices, the widespread application of pruning and hand pollination in cocoa farming was historically limited, possibly due to insufficient education on their substantial benefits.

In the 2018/19 period however, COCOBOD placed a significant emphasis on pruning, culminating in a pilot scheme aimed at pruning 14% of the country's viable cocoa stock. Supporting this initiative, the procurement and distribution of 100,000 multi-purpose motorized pruners led to a pilot exercise

with a success rate exceeding 100%.

Some experts attribute Ghana's record-breaking cocoa production of over one million metric tonnes in the 2020/2021 crop year to the successful integration of the twin productivity enhancement drivers: pruning and hand pollination.

This article delves into the practice of pruning, exploring its advantages and impact on cocoa production, making a compelling case for its widespread adoption by farmers.

Pruning is essentially farm hygiene exercise that involves carefully cutting dead, diseased, and excessive branches from cocoa trees ahead of their flowering season.

When done efficiently, pruning leads to a significant increase in flower development which results in increased

crop yield when pollinated. Pruning, albeit an existing cultural practice in cocoa farming, was not widely adopted by farmers until the introduction of the mass pruning initiative with a modern twist, combining the use of technology and innovation to demystify the process, increase crop yield and improve farmer income, with the aim to get farmers aboard the pruning train.

Pruning is hence acclaimed as the fundamental farm preparation exercise towards a bumper cocoa harvest.

COCOBOD advises farmers and farmer cooperatives to ensure that farms are pruned from February each year for maximum impact. When properly carried, the following competitive advantages will be witnessed:

1. **Enhanced Crop Yield**

As excess and/or diseased tree branches and pods are removed, it allows the cocoa tree to focus its energy on remaining healthier pods. The tree therefore channels a lot more nutrients to the remaining pods, resulting in abundant cocoa yields and ensuring a stable supply of cocoa to the global market.

2. **Quality Improvement**

With Ghana holding the reputation as the producer of the best quality cocoa beans in the world, pruning plays a vital role in the country's production of premium cocoa.

The removal of excess shade through pruning allows enough penetration of sunlight, facilitates proper development of pods and minimizes the risk of blackpod and other conditions such as moss growth. The end result of this is the production of quality cocoa beans.



3. **Disease Control**

Cocoa trees are susceptible to various diseases such as the black pod. Pruning promotes early detection and control of infected pods. By removing the infected branches, the spread of the disease is curtailed, ultimately safeguarding the trees from damage.

4. **Improved Farmer Livelihoods**

The increased yield and improved quality brought about by pruning, significantly increases farmer income, especially with the current increase in cocoa prices. A higher income ensures better living standards and may serve as an incentive for the younger generation to engage in cocoa farming.

5. **Promotes Sustainability**

Pruning extends the lifespan of cocoa trees by minimizing the need for deforestation. In recent times, there have been global demands for sustainable cocoa farming practices which include the cessation

of deforestation. Ghana's pruning approach aligns with global efforts to promote sustainability through the conservation and protection of natural resources and biodiversity.

Conclusion

Pruning, once an unassuming practice, now sits at the forefront of modern cocoa farming, ensuring Ghana's place as the leading producer of premium cocoa.

COCOBOD's inclusion of pruning in the Productivity Enhancement Programmes (PEPs), has proven to be a game changer in Ghana's cocoa industry, setting the country up for long-term success and prosperity of cocoa farmers and the industry as a whole.

In my next edition, I shall be drawing a link between pruning and hand pollination and make a case for its adoption by our farmers.





PROSTATE CANCER FIGHT: KNOWLEDGE IS KEY - CHED BOSS

The Executive Director of the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), Rev. Edwin Afari, has highlighted the important role knowledge plays in the fight against prostate cancer.

Rev. Afari was speaking at a Prostate Cancer Awareness campaign organized by CHED to screen male staff and educate them on Prostate Cancer and associated conditions. He expressed CHED's commitment to staff prostate health stating that as the motivation for bringing in prostate health experts to educate them.

"Our commitment to prostate health should send a powerful message to all of us that we are together in this, and being able to come together and learn at the feet of experts is of great value to us", he stated.

Rev. Afari advised the men to take preventive measures for their prostate health and watch out for warning signs to enable early detection and prevention of the cancer. He urged staff, to embrace the knowledge being shared as it serves as a platform for change.

"Knowledge is a catalyst for change and

so let's arm ourselves with information and empower ourselves so that we can inform others and help prevent Prostate Cancer".

Reinforcing the words of Rev. Afari, the Director of Human Resources at Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Mr. Francis Gyamfi Ocran, encouraged all to do more in creating awareness and becoming strong advocates for Prostate Cancer. According to him, the fight against Prostate Cancer is a collective one that requires the efforts of both men and women to minimize the risk of the cancer.

"Let's use our collective voice to encourage preventive measures, support research and foster a culture where we feel empowered to prioritize prostate health. We can create a future where no one person fights prostate health alone. We are all in it together to raise the needed awareness to compel men to get screened for Prostate Cancer. This is a fight that both sexes should fight" he said.

Mr. Gyamfi Ocran commended the innovative vision of CHED in driving awareness programmes in the organization, urging them to continue

in their exemplary work. He lauded them for spearheading the creation of Prostate Cancer Awareness in the industry, leading the way to break the silence surrounding prostate cancer by opening conversations around the subject.

As part of the programme, CHED in collaboration with prostate health experts, Medi-Moses, organized free screening for men to get their prostate checked. Dr. Prince Osei, who led the team, provided a comprehensive overview of the prostate, highlighting its functions and shedding light on various diseases associated with it.

He advised men to get their prostates checked regularly rather than wait for the start of symptoms before proceeding to get checked. The talk centred on the distinctions between prostate diseases, signs, prevention, risk factors as well as treatment options for prostate diseases including Prostate Cancer.

Staff were admonished to pay critical attention to their diet and to incorporate in it daily consumption of cocoa as it contains antioxidants that can help reduce the risk of cancer.

2022/23 NATIONAL SERVICE PERSONNEL OF COCOBOD EMBARK ON COCOA CONSUMPTION CAMPAIGN



effort to boost consumption among the citizenry” He added.

Mr. Larweh further stated that the campaign shouldn't end within the stipulated 3 days but rather individuals can take it upon themselves to be entrepreneurs and ambassadors in order to contribute their quota to the sustenance of the industry.

“The industry is wide to contain all of you as entrepreneurs and ambassadors, we have Golden Tree products, Prime cocoa, Gablin Foods etc. which you take advantage of to be your own boss” He emphasized.

About 350 service personnel participated in the market rush campaign.

The 2022/2023 National Service Personnel of Ghana Cocoa Board (NASPAC) has embarked on a three-day campaign to promote cocoa consumption in the central market of Accra.

The campaign aimed to stimulate the consumption of locally produced cocoa products, thereby contributing to an increase in the country's per capita cocoa consumption.

The campaign dubbed “Market Rush”, brought together all national service personnel across the industry.

According to the Deputy Public Affairs Manager of Ghana Cocoa Board, Mr. Benjamin Teye Larweh, COCOBOD is committed to ensuring that the general public is well-sensitized on the health and nutritional benefits of natural cocoa.

“Natural Cocoa has a lot of nutritional benefits, yet our market women and men, our trotro drivers and mates, our precious kayayi among others are not aware, therefore there is a need to increase the awareness drive”, He said.

“Market Rush forms part of our core mandate to rally behind the Boards



COCOA CLINIC WELLNESS CENTRE CHANGING THE FACE OF HEALTHCARE

By Rhoda Onyinah, Public Affairs



Two health assistants attending to a baby at the wellness centre

The Wellness Centre at Cocoa Clinic is on a sound trajectory to transform lives through healthy lifestyle choices.

With preventable diseases such as hypertension and diabetes coming up in recent studies as some of the commonest health challenges of staff at Ghana Cocoa Board, its subsidiaries and divisions, Management set up a Wellness Centre at the Cocoa Clinic to improve Health and Wellbeing.

Since its establishment in 2019, the Wellness Centre has been at the forefront of promoting fitness, healthy eating habits and other good lifestyle choices as a preventive measure for various ailments.

Medical Manager at the Wellness Clinic, Dr. Riches Esiapa says the establishment of the Wellness Centre has helped reduce patient traffic at the main clinic, giving patients quick access to urgent and various healthcare services. According to him, recording

average visits of fifteen (15) patients daily, medical staff cater for the needs of staff and other walk-in clients from across the country.

WHO CAN GO TO THE WELLNESS CENTRE?

For Dr. Esiapa, the Wellness Centre is open to everyone. But, it is ideal for all clients to go through the Records Office first, explain their reason for visiting the clinic so that, they can be appropriately registered and referred to the Centre as if they were taken through the Out Patients Department.

WHICH CASES DOES THE WELLNESS CENTRE HANDLE?

The Centre screens for non-communicable diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and high cholesterol. Common cancers like breast, cervical and prostate cancers are also screened. Others include, communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B & C, and HIV.

ESSENTIAL REGULAR CHECK-UPS YOU CAN DO AT THE WELLNESS CENTRE

The following are some of the services at the Wellness Centre;

- **Comprehensive Medical Examination:** Pre-employment, Exit (post-employment), Annual medical examinations.
 - **Blood Sugar Test:** This simple blood test measures your blood glucose level. It may be done before or after food but, preferably, in the morning, before food.
 - **Cholesterol test:** Too much of bad cholesterol, which is a type of fat present in the blood, could lead to heart disease or stroke. It is preferable to check it in the morning, before food.
 - **Blood pressure:** High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease. This should be done at least once in a year or more frequently, as suggested by a Physician.
 - **Mammogram:** Mammograms are X-rays that check for changes in the breasts that suggest the development of cancer. They are generally recommended for women above 40 years. In October every year, the Wellness Centre also offers free physical screening to the public for the detection of breast abnormalities.
 - **Cervical cancer screening:** This is a physical exam done to check the cervix (entrance of the womb) for signs of disease. It is advised for all women between 21 and 64.
 - **Prostate Test:** This is a blood screening test to check for early signs of prostate cancer. It is generally advised for men over 50 years.
 - **HIV Test:** The Centre runs an HIV Clinic in collaboration with the Kaneshie Polyclinic. The Wellness Centre counsels appropriately anyone who requires this test, conducts the test and liaises with Kaneshie Polyclinic for confirmation and treatment.
 - **Other tests include** Kidney function, liver function, and thyroid function tests. Screening for colon cancer can also be done at the Wellness Centre.
- Dr. Esiapa says, the Centre's main focus which is on preventive healthcare, through education and screening, is critical, as it helps to lower overall healthcare cost. He advises that, 'don't



The Centre currently collaborates with the Kaneshie Polyclinic for some of its services but this is about to change. An expansion plan for services is underway.

The planned extension of services also includes common vaccines for travelers such as Measles and Yellow Fever, as well as, an Antiretroviral Therapy Clinic which is in the works to enable the Clinic care for HIV patients fully.

The Centre recently started operating a Child Welfare Clinic in partnership with the Ghana Health Service through the Kaneshie Polyclinic.

The Wellness Centre is considered one of the successes of Cocoa Clinic as it celebrates its golden jubilee anniversary this year.

The Ghana Cocoa Board on 24th October 1973 established the Cocoa Clinic to cater to the healthcare needs of staff and cocoa farmers across the country.

Over the years, the clinic has grown beyond its initial target and now offer essential services to the public through its six branches across the country.

wait to get ill before you go to the hospital' and calls on all staff should take advantage of the Wellness Centre to know their numbers, referring to blood pressure, sugar level, weight etc.

'For COCOBOD staff for instance, what we advise is a scheduled group annual medical examination. The biggest advantage we get from this, is that, we get a good and holistic picture of what their medical situation is; so we can do an analysis, give a report and help manage the medical conditions we may detect.'

Dr. Esiape says the objective of the Wellness Centre is to create an avenue to ensure that staff and the public can easily and quickly access the clinic to screen for such ailments to know their status; for early intervention is critical and saves lives.

He further said, if persons are found to have these diseases, the centre offers counselling and refers them to the main clinic, either to General Physicians or Specialists, depending on the nature of illness.

'For example, if high blood pressure or diabetes is detected, you will be referred to the General Physicians for management. If prostate issues are detected, you will be referred to the urologist. If cervical changes are noticed, you will be referred to the gynaecologist.

Even if you feel disturbed, stressed, unhappy and so on, to the extent that, it affects your work, you can come to the Wellness Centre. We have experienced professionals who you can talk to but, if it requires specialist treatment, you will be referred to see the Mental Health Specialist.'

ADVOCACY FOR WELLNESS

According to Mrs. Felicia Ofosu-Dankyi, the Deputy Nurse Manager, and

Nurse-In-Charge at the Centre, weekly educational programmes are scheduled at the Out-Patient Department of the Clinic to educate and counsel visitors on preventive healthcare. Such topics include, Diabetes, Hypertension, Cervical Cancer, Life Styles Changes etc.

'Our educational programmes are yielding encouraging results. For example, we do cervical screening in February, Breast Cancer screening in October and we get many women coming in. The educational programmes are bringing them in and they are taking their health more seriously,' Mrs Ofosu-Dankyi said.

On a monthly basis, the centre records about four (4) new cases of HIV, who are then referred to the Kaneshie Polyclinic for further management.

Mrs. Ofosu Dankyi disclosed that while infected persons receive their anti-retroviral medication from the Polyclinic, the Wellness Centre offers further support, especially, in frequent engagement through phone calls and counselling.

She said fear of stigmatization has made it difficult for many infected persons to seek regular health care but at the Wellness Centre, HIV patients are taken through counselling and supported to boost their confidence to seek regular health care.

'HIV infections are prevalent but educational programmes on preventive measures have gone down due to budget cuts from most of the funding organizations that used to offer support. Here at the Wellness Centre, we still continue with the education and guide infected persons to live a healthy physical and emotional lifestyle', he disclosed.

EXPANDING THE SERVICES AT THE WELLNESS CENTRE





Ghana Cocoa Board
Poised to Maintain Premium Quality Cocoa