APRA

Agricultural Policy Research in Africa

Future Agricultures

APRA COUNTRY BROCHURE: GHANA (WORK STREAM 2) AGRARIAN CHANGE AND COMMERCIALISATION IN THE GHANAIAN COCOA SECTOR

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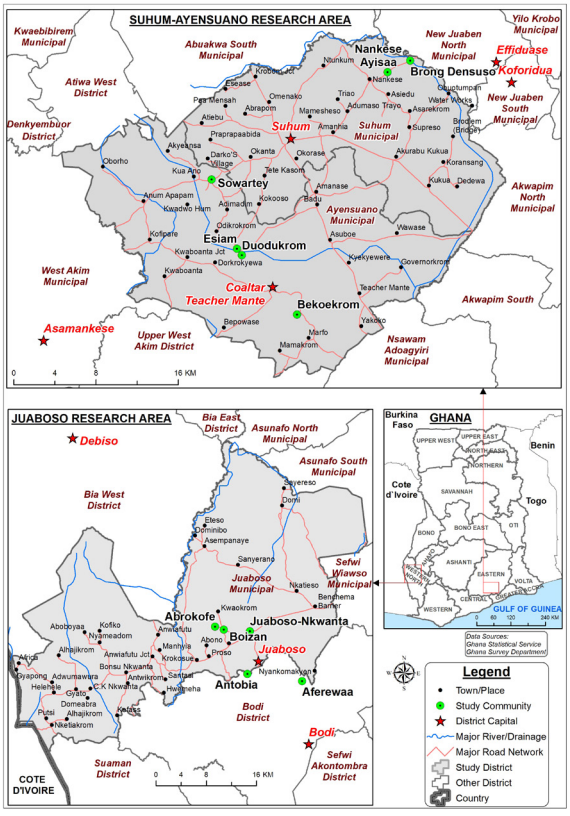
The Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) programme of the Future Agricultures Consortium (FAC) is a six-year research initiative (2016-2022) that is working to **identify the most effective and inclusive pathways to agricultural commercialisation** that empower women, reduce rural poverty, and improve food and nutrition security in sub-Saharan Africa.

What is agricultural commercialisation?

We define commercialisation as a process that occurs when farmers increasingly engage with the market, either to procure inputs and resources (such as fertiliser, seeds, hired labour, formal credit, and rented land), or to prepare and sell their produce. Commercialisation may occur through either external investment or market specialisation and farm consolidation, or a combination of the two. Commercialisation is successful if more people are 'stepping up', '*stepping out*', and '*stepping in*', and fewer people are '*hanging in*' or '*dropping out*' of productive agriculture.

What is APRA doing?

APRA researchers are examining how African farmers engage with four different types of commercial agriculture (estate/plantation, medium-scale commercial agriculture, contract farming, and smallholder commercialisation) and the effects this has on the livelihoods of rural people, particularly women and young people. The aim is to help inform future policy and investment decisions to promote inclusive forms of agricultural commercialisation in sub-Saharan Africa targeting six focal countries across East, West and Southern Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe).



Research objective

Comparing Ghana's Eastern and Western regions, this study aims to explore the historical pathways and dynamics of change in cocoa production, with reference to patterns of migration, accumulation, and dispossession. We will examine the different livelihood trajectories in relation to changes in cropping systems with regards to land, labour, natural resources, social relations, and outcomes for rural women and men.

Study questions

- How do development patterns in cocoa production differ across space and time in Ghana, and what accounts for these differences?
- What are the class and gender characteristics and profiles of cocoa farmers and how have these changed over time?
- What happens to initial investment and capital accumulation in cocoa? Does capital spread geographically, across sectors, or out of the agriculture sector altogether? Or does it decline and dissipate?
- How does the decline of forest land affect the cocoa sector and investments in cocoa? Is there a movement towards greater intensification on smaller land areas?
- What impact does cocoa cultivation have on food crop cultivation, and on relations between those who cultivate food crops and cocoa (and/or other cash crops) in the same household?

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- What impacts do the global cycles of boom and recession, and the opening of new areas for cocoa cultivation, have on cocoa production in Ghana?
- What political-economic factors have shaped the emergence, spread, and persistence of cocoa production in Ghana?

Research findings

1. What is happening in cocoa farming?

- As forest conditions decline, the general trend in cocoa is seeing a move towards smaller, intensive farms (who've higher expenditure per hectare on labour and inputs, which absorbs a large percentage of profits).
- The distinct strategies of cocoa cultivation vary, from high-input commercial farms to low-input social security for old age. Among the latter, the plantation is envisaged as capital that can be transacted under a sharecrop arrangement with a tenant to provide an income for old farmers who are not strong enough to engage in strenuous manual labour.
- Cocoa is still considered an important crop, due to a lack of more promising alternatives for small areas of land.
- Adoption of hybrid varieties and inputs are not correlated with yields:
  - Investments in labour are critical.
  - The costs of inputs are high.
  - Extension messages are not clearly understood by farmers.

2. What effects have resulted from these?

- Rates of impoverishment among farmers is increasing as farm productivity decreases due to diseases and falling real cocoa prices.
- Yields are low, and most farmers struggle to follow extension recommendations due to cost requirements.
- Sharecropping is being utilised as a strategy to deal with high production costs, which, in turn, causes land fragmentation and issues regarding economies of scale.
- There is increasing social differentiation among farmers, which is determined by the size of farms, the use of hybrid seeds, fertilisers, and agrochemicals, and yield outputs per hectare.
- Large proportions of families are moving out of cocoa and away from agriculture altogether, including high numbers of women – as land becomes scarcer and incomes from agriculture decline.

Conclusion

The future of cocoa in Ghana relies heavily on intensification and agroforestry groves, as these will enable increases in productivity, a reduction in disease burdens, greater availability of food from crops and other economic trees, and diversification into other livelihood activities. Enhanced provision of credit facilities to both relatively large and small farmers is also required, along with continuous research into approaches to increase production – not only via the use of more chemicals, but also by encouraging agro-ecological farming techniques.

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Policy recommendations

- Create cocoa production systems that minimise the use of costly agro-chemicals and better reflect the circumstances and capacities of farmers, including women and poorer farmers.
- Use climate change and ReDD+ initiatives to create opportunities for COCOBOD (Ghana Cocoa Board) and other state-led research institutions to create more diverse, eco-friendly cocoa agroforests that integrate cocoa with other income-generating forest products as an alternative to high input cocoa systems.
- Support and respect locally-evolved workable land tenure and labour practices to ensure access for women and young farmers.
- Increase access to financial capital for all categories of farmers while avoiding exploitative rents and political interferences.

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https://www.future-agricultures.org/apra/

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