



A cocoa farm in Côte d'Ivoire. Use of improved varieties has increased yields in neighbouring Cameroon. Photo Credit: C. Adjehi (ICRAF)

Cameroon's research, extension programme boosts cocoa yields

By Elias Ngalame

CAMEROON'S cocoa production rose by 12 percent in the 2021-2022 season and 14 percent in 2022-2023 to about 300,000 tonnes, according to the National Cocoa and Coffee Board (NCCB).

Sector players attribute the performance, the best over the past six production seasons, partly to the impact of AGROPOLE, a government programme that supports research facilities and extension services to smallholder cocoa farmers.

Better research aligned with local farmers' needs has, for instance, yielded improved seeds, enabling Cameroonian growers to access quality cocoa shoots and have quick and abundant harvests.

"Research is like the engine of innovation and development, especially in agriculture. We are happy improvement in research through the AGROPOLE programme has boosted cocoa production," said Etone Martin, coordinator of Community Action for Development (CAD), an NGO that supports farmers in the Southwest Region.

"We now see an increase in the number of female cocoa farmers." Use of improved varieties developed by the research facilities and pesticide supply in the past five years has seen cocoa yields increase.

Evaluating the performance of the AGROPOLE programme March 12, 2023, the Secretary General of the Ministry

of Agriculture in March said the support to cash crop production had partly contributed to resilience of the economy, which is projected to grow at 4.0 percent in 2023 from 3.5 percent in 2022.

The UN Resident coordinator in Cameroon, Matthias Z Naab, lauded the progress made on food and cash crop production in the past few years. He reiterated their readiness to support the government in the implementation of the National Development Strategy 2030 and emphasised the role of agriculture in achieving the development drive.

During the season under review, local grinders processed 62,341 tonnes of cocoa, a slight increase of 3.3 percent compared with the volume of cocoa

processed during the 2019-2020 season. For the National Cocoa and Coffee Board, this increase was facilitated by the commissioning of a fifth processing plant (Atlantic Cocoa), which launched operations alongside traditional processing companies like Sic Cacao, Neo Industry, Chococam, and Ferrero.

"Thanks to effective internal organisation and a preventive export levy policy, the farm gate prices paid to Cameroonians have remained much higher than the prices applicable in other producing countries," the Minister of Commerce, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, said.

Centre region benefited the most from those fair prices having accounted for 43.6 percent of the cocoa beans produced during the season under review.

The region confirmed its status of leader in cocoa production, ahead of the South West, which accounted for 31.6 percent of the cocoa produced during the season despite the socio-political crisis affecting its economy since late 2016. The Littoral region was third with 13.5 percent of the national production, followed by the South (5.2 percent), the East (3.1 percent), the West (2.9 percent), the North-West (0.1 percent) and Adamaoua (0.1 percent).



Abiam Delphine, a cocoa farmer in the East Region of Cameroon. Photo Credit: WWF

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