

## Executive Summary

In Côte d'Ivoire cocoa farming provides income for 1,000,000 smallholder farmers who grow their crop on about 2,000,000 hectares. Around 6 of the country's 24 million people live off cocoa related income – which makes cocoa a strategic crop in the effort to reduce poverty. However, the productivity of cocoa plantations has been in decline with plantations yielding below their capacity. Against this background, the PRO-PLANTEURS project financed by the German confectionary industry, the German government, the German civil society and retail industry and the Ivorian government in the form of the Conseil du Café-Cacao (CCC) have come together to implement a project that targets improving the livelihood of cocoa producing families living in Côte d'Ivoire. This baseline study has been commissioned to achieve two main results:

- 1) To establish a valid dataset of farmer's livelihood conditions disaggregated by gender and age.
- 2) To obtain guidance with regards to strategic management options of the PRO-PLANTEURS project.

### Methodology

800 interviews were conducted with 400 households from 17 cooperatives located in the three regions of the PRO-PLANTEURS project. Both quantitative data from questionnaires as well as qualitative data generated through focus group discussions and from observations in the field were triangulated to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the farmers' conditions. With this, base and target values were provided for 18 indicators on productivity, nutrition, gender, age structures and cooperatives.

### The productivity of cocoa plantations

Farmers produce 323kg/ha with an average possession of 5.81 hectares per interviewee. The average Asian production is 55% higher than in Côte d'Ivoire. The assumption is that the productivity of cocoa farms in Côte d'Ivoire would increase and consequently align with international standards if farmers had sufficient awareness and skills about good agricultural practices (GAP), and applied them consistently in their fields. It was observed that farmers who participated in prior GAP trainings do not implement the required practices. This means that the primary reason for not applying GAP is not a lack of awareness. Rather, causes might be found in the lack of (financial) resources. At the same time, farmers' yields are highly diversified, achieving 50% of their income from

diversified crops, showing that their effort is only partially focusing on cocoa production. Given their limited amount of resources and low adaptation of recommended farming practices, the promotion of a more concise and in depth approach to crop farming should be considered.

### The nutritional status of the households

With 4.5 different food groups per day, respondents achieve a sufficient food score as defined by FAO. Though they consume a lot of starchy roots (yam, cassava, plantain) they also eat sufficient amounts of other food groups to achieve a balanced diet. However, the research was conducted during the most abundant time of the year for food. It has been revealed that there are other periods of the year when households cannot afford to eat sufficient quality and quantity of food. It seems that the biggest obstacle to nutritional balance throughout the year is a lack of resources rather than awareness.

### Over-served gender dynamics

Traditionally women farm cocoa alongside their male family members and equally share in the workload. This is not reflected in formal structures: women make up only 12% of the cooperatives' staff members which is in proportional relation to their representation as official members of the cooperatives (14%). This corresponds to women owning only 15% of the land under production. Strengthening the formal role of women in cocoa production can start with targeted trainings on GAP. Also, their equal consideration for positions as lead and service farmers should be promoted. However, without addressing issues of gender biased land ownership, results will probably be limited.

### Generational influences in cocoa production

75% of cocoa farmers in the sample are older than 40 years of age. Access to land is difficult for young farmers who gain access only when their elders die. Alternative income generating activities for young farmers lie in providing services for established farmers. Providing services in a profitable manner requires a widespread observance of payment obligations which to date has not been achieved.

### The role of cooperatives

Cooperatives are well organised and their members are satisfied with their services which range from GAP trainings for cocoa and other crops to the provision of micro loans. Supporting cooperatives to further improve their capacities and enlarge their range of service appears to be a promising course of action.