

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20927) - SUSTAINABLE COCOA FARMING IN GHANA: THE IMPACT OF COOPERATIVES AND SUSTAINABILITY LABELS ON SMALLHOLDER FARMERS' LIVES

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Background and objectives

Cocoa production causes a long list of negative externalities, such as health problems and poverty among farmers, as well as deforestation and destruction of valuable ecosystems. To find solutions to these complex problems, it is necessary to consider social and environmental issues together in an interdisciplinary way. This research problematizes these causal links between global production networks (GPNs), the control of sustainability of Ghanaian cocoa production, and its final consumption. It examines the extent to which smallholder cocoa farmers benefit from membership in cooperatives, producing to certain standards, and how this affects their embeddedness in the cocoa GPN. Aspects of power and dependency are examined and how certain actors influence the production system.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Data is obtained from 210 quantitative surveys of smallholder producers involved in various cultivation systems, 44 qualitative interviews of different actors in Ghana and Europe, 6 ethnographic observations and the preparation of a 150-page field diary containing information from 37 informal conversations. This data will be analyzed to identify the embeddedness of cocoa producers in the existing GPN.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Preliminary results suggest that sustainability labels are not ineffective, but reach farmers still to a far too small extent. Power, trust and communication are unequally distributed between individual actors, which leads to imbalances that become a self-reinforcing process due to the lack of acceptance of responsibility by powerful actors.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Approaches such as providing information to consumers about the origin and production of cocoa can help to make the opaque parts of the GPN, the producing farmers and their situation visible. However, the extent to which individual producers and entire cooperatives have a voice in the sector is questionable. Therefore, this study focuses on the social, environmental, and economic impacts of this system in order to make recommendations for improving the embeddedness of smallholder cocoa farmers in the GPN.

Palavras-chave : Smallholder farmers, Global Production Networks (GPN), Human-environment relations, Cocoa, Ghana, Sustainable production