



The CocoaSoils Program (a Norwegian Government-NORAD funded initiative), a public-private consortium has been created to address the issues of decline in productivity in cocoa and improve the livelihoods of smallholder cocoa farmers, while avoiding deforestation. The program has two main arms: Research for Development (R4D) and Partnership for Delivery (P4D). The R4D focuses on developing the protocols, establishing trials as well as data collection and management, while the P4D focuses on disseminating the recommendations from these trials in order to empower farmers and improve their livelihoods. One of the unique selling points of this program is "Bringing together a new generation of farmers and researchers equipped with the latest farming innovations". In this edition of the Gazette, we focus on updates of the works of some students and Research Assistants on the Program.

CocoaSoils at Tropentag 2019

The annual interdisciplinary conference on research in tropical and subtropical agriculture, natural resource management and rural development (TROPENTAG) was held from September, 18 - 20 2019 in Kassel Germany. Under the theme 'Filling gaps and removing traps for sustainable resource development', the event demonstrated the importance of identifying and implementing sustainable initiatives in order to enhance food security and natural resource management. Tropentag 2019 summarizes recent disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches that address gaps from various fields, with different methodological approaches and regional foci.

This year's conference brought together a total of 726 participants from 74 countries engaged in agricultural research and rural development.

OVERVIEW:

- CocoaSoils at Tropentag 2019
- Field Trip - Mabang, Ghana
- Progress Updates - Ph.D. Thesis
- MSc Research Presentation
- Annual meeting - NWO-Wotro Cocoa project
- Announcements

It addressed issues of agriculture, resource management, environment, forestry, fisheries, food, nutrition and related sciences in the context of rural development, sustainable resource use and poverty alleviation worldwide. Discussions were held in plenary, as well as guided poster sessions and workshops to provide new ideas on enhancing the scientific and practical success in promoting sustainable resource management in sub and tropical regions.



Abigail Tettey at Tropentag 2019 (Photo Credit: IITA - Accra)

At this year's conference, two representatives from the CocoaSoils program participated in the poster exhibition and made presentations on some of their research findings under the project.

Abigail Tettey, the Research Assistant, working on the Core Trials in Ghana, participated in the poster exhibition and presented a paper on the "The Role of Agroforestry in Sustainable Intensification of Cocoa Growing Systems Across West Africa: A Review". Her presentation highlighted the extent of agroforestry in cocoa-growing systems, the multifunctional role of cocoa agroforestry and the existing challenges.

[Click here to see presentation.](#)

Urcil Kenfack, a Ph.D Candidate at the University of Wageningen, working on Decision Support Tools on the CocoaSoils program also made an oral presentation on the theme, "Towards Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) practices to increase Cocoa productivity in Cameroon". His presentation focused on an exploratory study aimed at investigating cocoa farmers' understanding of soil fertility management.

The findings indicate that cocoa farmers are not always aware of the importance of soil fertility management which they consider as less important compared to other cocoa farming practices for increasing yield. Both financial and non-financial reasons are stated by farmers to justify the non-use of soil fertility technology (fertilizers, manure, compost). He concluded that there is a need for raising awareness at farmers' level, to promote integrated cocoa farming practices, and develop profitable ISFM recommendations while taking measures that guarantee access to inputs and high return on investment.

[Click here for his presentation.](#)

The participation of both Abigail and Urcil at this year's conference is vital to the course of the CocoaSoils Program, as we continue to contribute to the discourse on Cocoa Agroforestry in Ghana and West Africa.

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Field trip - Mabang Ghana

In September 2019, Ekatherina Vasquez, the Research Assistant for Core Trials at Wageningen University visited Ghana to work together with teams from both IITA and Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG).

During her stay, she worked with the baseline survey team in Accra to support the ongoing data analysis activities. As part of her trip to the Core Trial site in Mabang, Ghana, she met with Dr. Amos Quaye, to discuss some ongoing activities and technical issues related to the trial.



A cross-section of participants at Tropentag 2019

Photo Credit: Tropentag photo gallery (<https://www.flickr.com/people/tropentag/>)



Participants interacting during coffee break

Photo Credit: Tropentag photo gallery

(<https://www.flickr.com/people/tropentag/>)



Ekatherina Vasquez at the Mabang Core Trial site

(Photo Credit: IITA - Accra)

At the site, she inspected the maize storage area where the harvested maize was being processed. She also visited the cocoa nursery and the irrigation plant. The seedlings in the nursery are in good condition and ready for planting, while part of the irrigation system has been built and would be completed soon.



Cocoa seedlings in the nursery ready for planting
(Photo Credit: IITA - Accra)



Harvested maize being processed
(Photo Credit: IITA - Accra)



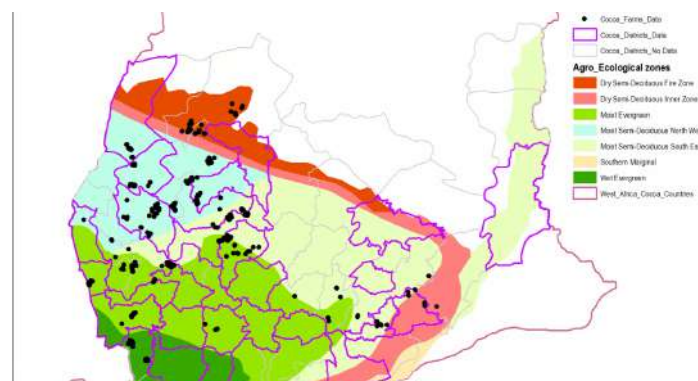
Irrigation system partly built
(Photo Credit: IITA - Accra)

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Progress Updates - Ph. D Thesis

Climate Change Effects on Cocoa Production and Its Potential Consequences for Forest Conservation

Paulina Ansa Asante, the Ph.D. candidate working on Climate Change Effects on Cocoa Production and Its Potential Consequences for Forest Conservation is stationed at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), where she is connecting with various public and private research institutions to collect relevant data on cocoa farming practices, yield, climate and soil data. A good set of data has been collected from different sources as well as primary data and this data cuts across the various agro-ecological zones (see map with plotted points) of the cocoa belt of Ghana.



Data points from fieldwork and secondary sources

There are some challenges with acquiring historical data, but this could be surmounted with visits to various purchasing clerks in the different districts from farmers' passbooks. Currently, data cleaning and preliminary analysis of the data collected is being undertaken to understand the data and identify gaps.

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MSc Research Presentation

Synergies and Trade-Offs between Private Sector Cocoa Initiatives and National Level Forest Policies in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

Jed Hull, an MSc student from Wageningen University based at UNEP-WCMC in Cambridge conducted a review of existing and potential synergies among private sector zero-deforestation commitments, national-level

goals and targets and other relevant initiatives on forests and biodiversity, regarding the cocoa sector in West Africa. He also did an initial identification of potential knowledge and data needs to support the “operationalization” of any synergies or address challenges. This work will be built upon to inform the analysis of the implications of different intensification scenarios to support these commitments during the project.

[Read here for full presentation.](#)



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Activities on the first day included a visit to cocoa experiments hosted by Barry Callebaut at its station in Tiassalé. The station also hosts a Core Trial of CocoaSoils which is funded and managed by Barry Callebaut. Under the NWO-Wotro project, Mondelez is experimenting with different forms of intercropping between cocoa and teak amongst others, while Ambra Tosto, a Ph.D. student at Wageningen University, is experimenting with seven pruning and two shading treatments.



On the second day, the progress of the four NWO-Wotro funded Ph.D. studies was presented on pruning, the nutrient in cocoa trees, service delivery and smallholder characteristics. Paulina Ansa-Asante and Lucette Adet, the two Ph.Ds. representing the CocoaSoils program made a pitch presentation on their research, while Dr. Kam-Rigne Laossi made a presentation on the updates of the Satellite Trials.

Day three included visits to the Ph.Ds' experiments on pruning by Ambra Tosto and fertilizer research by Eva Goudsmit at the CNRA research station in Divo. CNRA also showed hybrids and clones, and demonstrated pruning.

On the final day, the project leader together with Mondelez paid a visit to the CNRA headquarters in Abidjan to share findings of the workshop and to discuss the way forward. The open discussion between the parties complimented the successful collaboration of the NWO-Wotro funded project consortium. A model that has facilitated the establishment of the CocoaSoils program and could lead to more joint projects in the future.

Annual meeting NWO-Wotro funded cocoa project In Côte d'Ivoire

The third annual meeting of the NWO-Wotro (Netherlands Science Organisation for Global development) funded cocoa project has been hosted in Divo, Côte d'Ivoire by the Centre National de Recherche Agricole (CNRA), from October 7 – 10, 2019. The project partners included CNRA, IITA, Mondelez and Wageningen University. As part of this event, two Ph.D. students on the CocoaSoils Program, as well as the Program Coordinator were in attendance.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

FORUM 2020

Since the inception of the CocoaSoils program, an annual meeting with scientists, public and private sector partners and all stakeholders is organised to discuss the progress of the project, the challenges and the way forward.

The forum in January 2020 follows the previous [forum](#) in Accra, Ghana in January 2019 in which the objectives and plans of the program were shared and discussed.

At the next Annual Forum in January 2020, the objective is to

- Build common understanding around the CocoaSoils program
- Engage in partnerships around the CocoaSoils program to further strengthen agronomic cocoa research in West and Central Africa

Date: January 20 - 24, 2019

Venue: Hotel Mont Fébé, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Program Outline:

- Monday – Ad hoc meetings of CocoaSoils Partners
- Tuesday – Research Committee Meeting
- Wednesday – Field Trip
- Thursday – Open Forum
- Friday – P4D Committee Meeting

Kindly note that the Research and P4D Committee Meetings are for members by invitation

To be part of this exclusive meeting, click on the link below to register.



VACANCY

CocoaSoils is looking for a Coordinator of the Satellite Trials across West Africa

Dr Kam-Rigne Laossi has moved on to new pastures and is joining the Olam Cocoa Team. We thank him for the excellent work that he has done over the past year to establish the CocoaSoils' Satellite trials and look forward to working with him in his new role.

We are looking for a young, dynamic scientist to replace him in leading the CocoaSoils Satellite Trials across West Africa.

The position has been announced and applicants should apply through this [link](#) which gives more details as to the responsibilities.

Please share this announcement as widely as possible!

Upcoming Events

P4D Committee Meeting - Côte D'Ivoire

Date: November 13, 2019

Venue: Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

The CocoaSoils Annual Forum

Date: 20 - 24 January 2020

Venue: Yaoundé, Cameroon

CocoaSoils Discussion Forum

What are your burning questions about enhancing cocoa production, maintenance of soil fertility, the challenges facing smallholder cocoa farmers, etc?

The CocoaSoils team has access to a very wide range of scientific and business expertise through the many partner institutions and companies who are collaborating. Please pose your questions to the coordinator at R.Asare@cgiar.org and we are open to a discussion in the next edition of our newsletter.

The COCOASOILS GAZETTE is a quarterly Newsletter of the CocoaSoils Program, produced by IITA in collaboration with IDH and Wageningen University and Research.

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Do you have a story to share? Send it to: Sa.Akande@cgiar.org