

# **SECOND ANNUAL COCOASOILS FORUM**



**Hotel Mont Fébé, Yaounde Cameroon,  
23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020**

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## Introduction

The Second edition of the CocoaSoils Forum took place on January 23, 2020 at Hotel Mont Fébé in Yaoundé Cameroon. The forum was attended by more than 140 participants from different backgrounds, including private sector companies, research institutes, farmer organizations, public institutions and many more.

The purpose of the CocoaSoils Program is to develop Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) recommendations for sustainable intensification of cocoa production. To increase the range of impact, the annual CocoaSoils Forum convenes partners and key stakeholders across the CocoaSoils value chain. They explore and articulate how the CocoaSoils program can provide improved conditions for smallholder cocoa farmers to benefit from sustainably increased cocoa productivity and income generated through cocoa production.

## Opening and welcome

Jonas Mva Mva, Program Director Cocoa at IDH welcomed the participants as the Master of Ceremony and introduced the guests of honor.



Bernard Vanlauwe, Director R4D, Central Africa at IITA explained that the main objective of the CocoaSoils program is to increase cocoa production in a sustainable way and reducing deforestation to the barest minimum. However, this cannot be achieved without working together with other sectors. The CocoaSoils program aligns with Cameroon's national ambition to increase cocoa production. In line with this, this program helps the government of Cameroon in attaining these goals.

Daniel van Gilst, Senior Agriculture Advisor at NORAD, continued in explaining that the sustainable food system is dependent on biodiversity. Many households depend on agriculture and the question is how to improve production without compromising sustainability. Some of the objectives of this program is to increase cocoa production of farmers by 30% and therefore improve the livelihood of 90,000 cocoa farmers. Working together is what help us succeed. An important point is that the Satellite Trials will be further developed since these trials connect the farmers to the program recommendations. He concluded by looking forward to the continuation of the projects.



Noé Woïn, Director General at IRAD, emphasized that cocoa production represents Cameroon second source of revenue. Cameroon has about 600,000 farmers and more than 50% of the farmer population depend on cocoa for their livelihood. Cocoa is therefore a strategic commodity in which every effort must be taken to ensure sustainability within the sector. A partnership such as the CocoaSoils program is a good example for that and will enhance productivity and livelihood of cocoa producers.

Michael Ndoping, Managing Director at ONCC, continued in explaining that Cameroon is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest producer of cocoa in the world and the 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa. In 2014, the government instituted the increase production target which has not been met due to poor soil knowledge and management, among other reasons. Cameroon has the potential of improving production, but one major challenge is to connect research to farmers. This shows the importance of the CocoaSoils program to Cameroon.

Finally, Gabriel Mbairrobe, the Cameroonian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development officially opened the forum. In his opening speech the Minister lauded the efforts of the organizing partners IITA, IDH and the University of Wageningen and expressing his certainty that the CocoaSoils program together with other individual initiatives/programs of the partners will bring a new face to the cocoa sector in Cameroon. The Minister further expressed his appreciations for the program. He explained that the CocoaSoils program is based on two key aspects: It provides access to expertise that is not necessarily available locally, with a high level of complementarity, and it involves multidisciplinary research, as well as a diversity of stakeholders that are conducive to the development of integrated solutions. This broad partnership will result in improved cocoa intensification and productivity in Cameroon, and other participating countries, while maintaining the integrity of natural resources. He concluded by assuring that the Government of Cameroon will strongly support the CocoaSoils program, as its objectives are in line with Cameroon's agricultural priorities.

## Introduction to the CocoaSoils program

In plenary, Richard Asare, CocoaSoils Program Coordinator at IITA, gave an overview of the CocoaSoils program, and how it links to other initiatives in the cocoa sector such as, the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa in Cameroon, Improving livelihood of farmers, Cocoa and Forests Initiative, as well as improving Living Income.

The overall objective of the CocoaSoils program is to ensure a sustainable cocoa supply sector with increased productivity of cocoa farms (30%), efficient use of agricultural inputs and improved rural livelihoods (90,000) while avoiding deforestation. The CocoaSoils target groups are:

- Smallholder cocoa farmers will benefit through enhanced cocoa productivity, better income, and improved livelihoods;
- National research and extension agents will have necessary skills and state-of-the art knowledge and tools;
- Policymakers will be empowered to support the smallholder cocoa sector while protecting the environment;
- Society as a whole will reap the rewards of avoided deforestation.



The CocoaSoils program consists of two pillars: Research for Development (R4D) and Partnership for Delivery (P4D). The R4D pillar has the objective to support a sustainable cocoa supply sector with increased productivity of cocoa farms, efficient use of agricultural inputs and improved rural livelihoods while reducing deforestation. This pillar focuses on generating and deploying of Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) recommendations at the heart of Good Agricultural Practice. Core Trials and Satellite Trials are conducted together with farmers to bring the recommendations to their farms.

The P4D pillar provides a sample of affordable and low cost ISFM recommendations that guides cocoa farming principles and aligns with the soils' nutrient needs. These recommendations will lead to an investment capacity for a better input-output ratio and subsequently drive to zero deforestation in cocoa farming practices. The objectives of P4D are focused around agreements with private and/or governmental scaling partners, appropriate extension tools and training curricula for integration by private sector partners and extension agents, and engagement in policy action in support of the sustainable intensification of cocoa.

After explaining Richard Asare divided the participants in smaller groups to discuss the potential of the program for their respective organization.

## Introduction to Research for Development (R4D)

Ken Giller, Professor with the Plant Production Systems at Wageningen University & Research, introduced the R4D component of the CocoaSoils Program. He highlighted an overview of the research outputs for



the CocoaSoils program, that includes a set of integrated soil fertility management options, understanding of the physiological basis of cocoa nutrition, a decision support system for intensifying cocoa production, a forest and biodiversity analysis, a sustainability assessment tool, and an open knowledge and data sharing portal.

He further gave an introduction to the Living Income debate that is very present in the cocoa sector and how the CocoaSoils program relates to this. He showed a simulation that is based on the current data of current income levels and the Living Income gap in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire and what would happen if

yield or price would be increased. The simulation showed that by increasing yield, many more farmers would close the living income gap rather than by increasing yields. He hereby emphasized that CocoaSoils has a key role in research for sustainable intensification of cocoa production and farmer income. Also, the broad partnership of public and private partners is unique for building knowledge for the future.

Ken Giller continued with the 'Connecting the Dots' session by dividing participants in parallel groups to work in depth on various topic. These topics were divided as follows:

- Adapting cocoa production to climate change (Facilitated by Christian Bunn from CIAT with Ann Degrande from ICRAF)

- Green Cocoa Landscape Program - Reduce pressure on forests (facilitated by Joël Owona from IDH with Marieke Sassen from UNEP-WCMC)
- Increasing cocoa yields through ISFM as part of best management practices (facilitated by Leonard Rusinamhodzi from IITA with Alphonsine Nhiomog from Yara)
- Increasing cocoa smallholder incomes (Facilitated by Verina Ingram from CIFOR and Theresa Ampadu-Boakye from IITA)



In plenary the representatives of the above working groups briefed the audience on their group recommendations.

## Partnership for Delivery (P4D)

Jean-Paul Nlend-Nkott, the CocoaSoils P4D Coordinator at IITA, presented the P4D component of CocoaSoils in detail. He explained that Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) recommendations are a key driver to reverse the vicious trend of poor return on investment in cocoa farming. Increasing cocoa yields could contribute to halting forest degradation and deforestation to a more resilient cocoa livelihood with sustained forest conservation and management.

The linkage between P4D and R4D in the four focus countries of the program (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire,



Ghana, Nigeria) is created through the establishment of national Partnership Committees. Each of the four countries has one Partnership Committee that aims to validate recommendations developed by the central Research Committee and give guidance on program recommendations. Each Partnership Committee is composed out of representatives from the public and private sector, research institutes and farmer organizations.

Jean-Paul Nlend-Nkott introduced the 'Deep Dive on the national context' session. The participants divided themselves into four different groups that were facilitated by the chairs of each national Partnership Committee. In these breakout groups, the participants discussed the context of each committee in detail and shared feedback with the chair to improve their work plans for 2020.





After the group work, the facilitators of the sessions joined a panel discussion that was moderated by Theresa Ampadu-Boakye, Monitoring and Evaluation Expert from IITA. During the panel discussion, challenges, opportunities and future plans were discussed. The main challenges identified were at the level of institutionalizing the program’s recommendations within the national context. The key opportunities that were defined were at the level of using the program’s recommendations to address issues within the national cocoa sector such as old farms, low productivity level or poor farming practices. All the committees will further develop their roadmap for 2020 to disseminate the program recommendation in the country.

## Closure

Jonas Mva Mva concluded the day by announcing the winner of the poster session Urcil Kenfack Essoungong was adjudged the winner and was awarded with a bag of chocolate that was sponsored by Barry Callebaut as the chocolate sponsor of the day.

May-Guri Saethre, Deputy Director General, Research for Development (R4D) at IITA closed the event. She pointed out that the presence of the Minister in the forum is a strong indication of the importance of cocoa production in Cameroon for 25% of the producer population produce 2/3 of the total cocoa produced



She stated that, “the production of cocoa in this part of Africa is very important otherwise we will not have the minister opening the forum. 25% of the producer’s population produces 2/3 of the cocoa production, thus the need to promote intensification”. She added that the presence of over 40 institutions at this forum is an opportunity to create synergy as each participating institution indicates a role they can play.