



Report

Ghana Cocoa Platform Steering Committee Meeting

February 2023



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Participants

1. Mr. Eric Bani (Cocoa Health and Extension Division/Chairman of Ghana Cocoa Platform)
2. Dr. Amos Quaye (Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana/Core Trial Manager)
3. Mr. Prince Pobee (Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana/Secretary of Ghana Cocoa Platform)
4. Mr. Edward Kumah (Mondelēz International/Representative of Private Companies)
5. Mr. Peter Obeng (Farmer/Representative of Farmers)
6. Dr. Richard Asare (IITA)
7. Mr. Rich Kofi Kofituo (IITA)
8. Mr. Reginald Ofori Kyere (IITA)

Introduction

Partnership for Delivery (P4D) Committees under the erstwhile CocoaSoils Program have transitioned into Cocoa Platforms under CocoaSoils Use Case in Excellence in Agronomy (EiA). With advanced responsibilities, the platforms, which comprise committees made up of public and private sector companies, are mandated to support research activities, validate research results, and coordinate the dissemination of research recommendations to cocoa farmers. The Ghana platform comprises representatives of Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED), private companies, and farmers.

The Steering Committee of the Platform in Ghana held a planning meeting from 1st to 2nd February 2023 at Cactus Creek Hotel in Aburi, Eastern region. The meeting was held to discuss how to align the new consortium agreement with new research priorities and partnership expectations, the role of the cocoa platforms, and the processes for co-development and validation of a demand-led agronomy solution (STEPWISE tool). The committee also discussed the criteria for the validation of envisaged recommendations from the Core Trials (CTs) and Satellite Trials (STs) and partners contributions to scaling activities. The committee used the meeting to finalise the [Cocoa Platform workplan](#) for 2023.

Meeting Notes

Dr. Richard Asare, project lead of the Cocoa Platforms, opened the meeting by welcoming all members and expressed gratitude for their undivided and willing support of CocoaSoils Use Case and the EiA. He gave a [presentation](#) on the dynamics of CocoaSoils' transition into the EiA. He explained that CocoaSoils Use Case, like the erstwhile CocoaSoils Program, will collect data from the CTs and STs to look at Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would be validated for use by farmers. He emphasized that CocoaSoils' main output is the STEPWISE tool, which will serve as the knowledge product that will be used to disseminate ISFM and BMPs to cocoa farmers. Partnerships, he indicated, are equally as important under EiA as they were before the transition. What is missing, he explained, is a strong participation of all partners in dissemination activities and the active involvement of the national research centres in every aspect of the project — from trials to validation and dissemination of recommendations. He assured the committee that CocoaSoils will prioritise partnerships for effective dissemination of project outcomes to cocoa farmers.

Status of Donor Support and Partnerships

Dr. Asare informed the committee that NORAD is still contributing funds to support CocoaSoils activities under EIA. On partnerships, WCMC, IDH and ICRAF will not play active roles in the Use Case. CocoaSoils maintains the support of both public and private sector partners in the cocoa sector. In addition, there will not be a Cocoa Platform in Cameroon, even though research on STs and CTs will continue.

Implementation of Core Trials (CT) and Satellite Trials (STs)

Mr Edward Kumah, the sustainability manager at Mondelez and the representative of private companies on the platform asked if the project is certain ISFM and BMP recommendations can be developed from the STs. Dr Richard Asare explained that the main data for the STEPWISE tool will be collected from the CTs. Data from the Satellite Trials will provide interim recommendations that will be used to augment data from the CTs.

Mr. Eric Bani of CHED inquired how the project plans to ensure that data of the highest quality is collected from the STs to inform interim recommendations. Dr Richard Asare explained that the project is working closely with the extension agents of private partners to ensure that data uploaded to the ODK server meets quality standards. There are also quality checks by the data management team together with scientists and research assistants.

Mr. Prince Pobee from CRIG remarked that the platform must be well embedded in the activities of the CTs and STs to be able to vouch for and validate the data. He also emphasized that both trials must have periodic visits from selected members of the platform to ensure regular updates on trial issues, especially data collection and submission.

Dr Amos Quaye the Core Trial Manager in Ghana told the committee that the trial field at Mabang is experiencing persistent problems with irrigation due to installation problems and bureaucracy in getting funds to resolve the problem. He advised the project to hasten the signing of the new agreement with partners to ensure continuity of all CocoaSoils activities at CRIG. The committee agreed that the new agreement with CRIG must allocate funds for the installation of a functional irrigation system at the Mabang Core Trial site.

New Consortium Agreement

On the new consortium agreement with partners, the committee unanimously agreed that the new agreement must have a mandatory clause that will bind all partners to undertake scaling activities. Concerning new areas of research, the committee recommended research in agroforestry and biochar. The new agreement, according to the committee, must facilitate the engagement of national research partners in all aspects of the project to ensure their acceptance and dissemination of the outcomes. Dr Amos Quaye suggested that the new agreement must stipulate that proceeds from the sale of produce from CTs must be used as a revolving fund to maintain the CT sites.

Functions of the Cocoa Platform

One of the main activities on the agenda of the meeting was to define the functions of the Cocoa Platforms under the CocoaSoils Use Case. The committee outlined the following as the core functions of the platform in Ghana:

- Data Analysis: The Committee wants the four Core Trial Managers in Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria to be actively involved in the analysis of data collected from both the CTs and the STs.
Validation of recommendations: As intermediaries between the project and policy, the Platform will facilitate the validation of recommendations from the trials before they are integrated in the STEPWISE tool.
- Co-development of MVP/recommendations: The development of the STEPWISE tool must be done with a strong representation from the Cocoa Platform. Considering their unique role as intermediaries, the committee advised that the national scientists leading the trials must be given access to the data from the trials to conduct quality checks.

New Partnerships: The committee also advised the project to explore partnership opportunities with Cargill, Yonko Pa, and Solidaridad.

Scaling activities: The committee unanimously agreed that partners must continue to spearhead scaling activities. To improve partners' commitment to scaling activities, the committee advised that scaling must be made mandatory for all partners in the new consortium agreement. This includes both public and private sector partners. CocoaSoils Program relied predominantly on the scaling networks of private sector partners. CHED, Ghana's premier extension was not fully engaged under the CocoaSoils Program. Thus, the committee advised that CHED is brought on board as the main public sector scaling partner for the CocoaSoils Use Case. Considering that

CHED operates under Ghana Cocoa Board, Mr. Eric Bani asked Dr Richard Asare to write to Ghana Cocoa Board to deepen collaboration for continuous approval and support. It would be critical, he advised, for the project to engage the directors of the various institutions operating under Ghana Cocoa Board before the validating and scaling of the STEPWISE tool to garner support for the product.

Expanding the Platform: The Committee agreed to bring Kuapa Kokoo to join the Steering Committee of the Ghana Platform as one of the representatives of the private sector due to the strength of their cooperative and invaluable contribution to the STs.

Criteria for Validation of Recommendations from Trials

Public and private sector partner's validation of recommendations from the CTs is critical to the successful scaling of STEPWISE tool in Ghana. As a result, the committee was asked to contribute to the standards or requirements that could be used as criteria to validate recommendations that would be generated from the CTs and STs. The committee recommends that CTs and STs data from the different agroecological zones should be analysed to determine if the trials in the wet and dry areas are performing equally. It also wants the project to examine the performances of specific BMPs across the various agroecological zones to identify practices that impart positively on the girth and yield of cocoa.

Key highlights of the Meeting

Implementation of Core and Satellite Trials

- The main data for the STEPWISE tool will come from the CTs. Data from the Satellite Trials will be used to augment data from the CTs.
- Data from the STs will serve as interim recommendations until data from CTs is validated.
- The irrigation system at Mabang Core Trial site needs to be repaired.
- Recommendations:
 - The members of the cocoa platform must be well versed with activities at the CTs and STs to be able to vouch for the data when it is presented for validation.
 - Ensure that the CTs are well managed to obtain data that is useable and trusted.
 - The platforms must have access to the data to analyse the quality.
 - CRIG/Core Trial managers must join Core Trials Meetings

New Consortium Agreement: Recommendations

- Make it mandatory for partners to undertake dissemination activities. Include a clause that binds partners (including public sector partners) to scaling.
- NARES must contribute to all aspects of the project
- Indicate in the new agreement with CRIG that funds must be allocated for irrigation work at the Mabang Core Trial site
- Emphasize that proceeds from the sale of produce from CTs must be used as a revolving fund to maintain the CT sites.
- Include research in agroforestry and biochar in agreement with specific partners.

Cocoa Platform: Functions

- Data Analysis: The Cocoa Platforms must participate in the analysis of data collected from both the CTs and the STs.
- Validation of recommendations: The Cocoa Platforms will facilitate the validation of data from the trials and final recommendations before they are integrated in the STEPWISE tool
- Co-development of MVP/recommendations: The development of the STEPWISE tool must be done with a strong representation from the Cocoa Platforms.
- Recommendations:
 - The National Research Institutions leading the Core Trials in Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria must be given credentials to access data from the trials
 - Private companies such as Cargill, Yonko Pa, and Solidaridad must be engaged to play active roles in the partnership.
 - Add Kuapa Kokoo to the Steering Committee of the platform.

Scaling activities

- Make it mandatory for partners to undertake dissemination activities. Include a clause that binds partners (including public sector partners) to scaling.
- Seek the approval of Ghana Cocoa Board to get the Cocoa Health and Extension Division (CHED) to join CocoaSoils as a dissemination partner.

Criteria for Validation of Recommendation

- Analyse CT and ST data from the different Agroecological zones to determine if those in wet and dry areas are performing equally.
- Select one or two Best Management Practices and examine their performances across the various agroecological zones to identify practices that impart positively on the girth and yield of cocoa.

Conclusion

The maiden meeting of the Steering Committee of the Ghana Cocoa Platform highlighted the critical adjustments that must be made in the Consortium Agreement. The meeting also afforded the platform an opportunity to update members on the status of the CocoaSoils Use Case, define the functions of the Cocoa Platform, and plan activities for the year 2023.