



Minutes of CocoaSoils Cocoa Platform Meeting

AKURE, NIGERIA

AUGUST 2023



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Participants

1. Mr. Michael Brooks (Director of the Department of Extension, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/Chairman of CocoaSoils Cocoa Platform-Nigeria)
2. Dr. Moses Ogunlade (Focal Person and Core Trial Manager, Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria)
3. Ms. Onyena Cecilia (Cocoa Desk Officer, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)
4. Ms Fabunmi Mopelola (Sucden)
5. Dr. Taiwo Osun (Tulip Cocoa)
6. Mr. Adebayo Damilola (Olatunde International)
7. Olasehinde Ilesanmi (Olatunde International)
8. Mr. Samuel Ogbonnya (Ofi)
9. Ms. Agatha Ewolor (Ofi)
10. Dr. Kayode Oluyole (Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria)
11. Dr. Richard Asare (IITA)
12. Mr. Reginald Ofori Kyere (IITA)

Introduction

The CocoaSoils Cocoa Platform meeting was held in Nigeria on August 10, 2023 in Akure, Ondo State with public sector partners, Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria and Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and private sector partners, Ofi, Olatunde International, Tulip Cocoa, and Sucden. The aim of the meeting was to introduce partners to the current dynamics of CocoaSoils as a Use Case under CGIAR's Excellence in Agronomy Initiative (EiA), discuss the updated consortium agreement, agree on the role of the cocoa platforms including validation of envisaged recommendations from the Core and Satellite Trials and the co-development and validation of a demand-led agronomy solution (STEPWISE tool).

Meeting Notes

Dr. Richard Asare opened the meeting with a [presentation](#) on the dynamics of CocoaSoils' transition into EiA. He explained that CocoaSoils Use Case, is a continuation of the first cycle of the CocoaSoils Program and more. The research to develop Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) recommendations for cocoa 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. He explained that the STEPWISE tool will include climate smart agriculture, and farmer segmentation to provide tailored solutions to farmers across different levels and climate impact zones.

Dr Moses Ogunlade, the Focal person at Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria and the manager of the Core Trial in Owena briefed partners on the status of Core and Satellite Trials in Nigeria and highlighted the different treatments being applied on the Core Trials and Satellite Trials as well as recommendations envisaged from both trials. See his presentation [here](#).

Highlights from the Meeting

New Members on Cocoa Platform in Nigeria

Michael Brooks, Director of Agricultural Extension at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development was introduced to partners as the new chair of the platform in Nigeria. Mr. Brooks takes over from his predecessor, Engr Frank Kudla, who has been transferred to another department in the same ministry.

Cecilia Onyenna represented the Cocoa Desk Officer of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development at the meeting.

Training Manual

Partners described the CocoaSoils training manual as one of the best achievements of the project's first phase. Tulip Cocoa informed the committee that they are using the manual as their main extension tool to train the 18,000 farmers that they work with. The second version of the manual is highly anticipated. Partners want the processes for the development of the second version to be transparent, with clearer timelines. Inquiring about new information that would be included in the second version, Tulip's representative asked if it was possible to include the STEPWISE Investment Pathway in the second version of the manual. Partners indicated that it will be a good idea to have a second edition of the manual before the STEPWISE App.

Consortium Agreement

Sucden, Tulip, Olatunde provided the names of directors who will sign the Consortium Agreement.

Tulip

- Annemick Righarts
- Rajendra Menon

Olatunde International

- Ogunsua Adekola Samuel

Sucden

- Meghan Gillis

Fertilizers recommendations from Trials

Partners' interest in the fertilizer recommendations from the trials is very high. Mopelola Fabunmi (Sucden) and Agartha Ewolor (Ofi) inquired when the recommendations would be ready. Dr Ogunlade explained that data from at least 4 main seasons and 4 light seasons are needed to get the recommendations, and assured them that although the Core trials are still in their early stages, meaningful data will be provided under the CocoaSoils Use Case soon.

PhD Research in Nigeria

Partners expressed interest in Deo-Gratias Hougni's PhD thesis. Dr Richard Asare gave the assurance that the thesis will be shared with all the partners.

Data on Soil Test

Partners want access to the results of soil test from soil samples collected from the Satellite Trial sites in Nigeria. It was evident from the discussions that data on soils in the cocoa growing areas of Nigeria is an urgent industry need.

Validation of Recommendations from Core and Satellite Trials

It was agreed that partners will host validation trials for the ISFM recommendation using their extension agents and farmers. The site selection for the validation trials will be based on the protocol received from the CocoaSoils Science Committee and should include age and size of cocoa trees and tree density. Dr Moses Ogunlade explained that the validation trials will be preceded by a pre-validation stage where recommendations will be presented to partners for their inputs, which will be integrated into the protocol that will be developed for the recommendations.

Michael Brooks, Federal Director of Agriculture Extension and chairman of the Cocoa Platform in Nigeria suggested that soil type, availability of water and limited extension agents should be considered in the STEPWISE Investment Pathway.

Core and Satellite Trials

Partners expressed interest in visiting the Core Trial sites in Owena and Ibadan to familiarise themselves with the trials and observe the progress made. Assurance was given that arrangements will be made for field visits at the next meeting in November 2023.

Access to Data

Sucden, Tulip, and Olatunde International want access to data collected by their technicians from their Satellite Trials. Currently, only Ofi have access to their data on the server. Partners also requested the project's support to analyse these data.

Policy Dialogue

The CocoaSoils Cocoa platform's role will include facilitating engagement with policy makers. Dr Richard Asare explained that having the Director of Extension at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture of Nigeria as chair of the Cocoa Platform presents the opportunity to engage with policy makers in the country for formal endorsement of the STEPWISE Investment recommendations when they are ready.

Future Meetings

The meeting ended with a call for more interactions between partners in-country and with the project. The next meeting is scheduled for November 2023 to deliberate on preparation for the Annual Forum in January 2024.

Photos from the meeting



