

Chocs Away!!

Cocoa is big in West Africa – it produces over 60% of the world's cocoa, most of which comes from remote smallholder farms. The cocoa tree is a fundamental component of rural livelihoods in the region but in the current profitability of farming is low and young people are leaving rural areas.

In just two years project R8313 successfully established farmers as the force behind the promotion of sustainable cocoa production in Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire. The project team led by CABI worked with West African and UK based researchers as well as the Sustainable Tree Crops Programme regional programme. They worked with farmers to translate science into discovery and learning exercises, e.g. previously farmers had been told to regularly prune their cocoa although they were not told why. The farmers were facilitated to discover that pruning is an excellent method of controlling black pod disease which can take a heavy toll on the production of marketable cocoa beans

The project also piloted two approaches new to cocoa – farmer field research (FFR) and farmer video production. In FFR, trained farmers take the lead in research activities. They decide what the research subject should be and then implement most of the research in the field. The collaborating scientists functioned as 'resource persons', helping the farmers in systematic observation and data evaluation. Approximately 7500 farmers and 130 farmer facilitators were trained. Farmers and scientists alike were hugely enthusiastic about the approach, especially as they found



Farmer field school group in Ghana



Cocoa farmer and scientists observe outcome of treating cocoa tree with abiotic control agent to control black pod, Cameroon

they saved a lot of money through reducing pesticide use. As research promotion is quickly adapted to farmers' needs, knowledge is more readily adopted up by the farming community.

“We want to continue with the FFR and train more farmers so that others will learn this new technology and save costs and use less pesticide”

These trained farmers also play a key role in the farmer video production work. Videos capture farmers' innovations and practices, are spoken in local languages and are known to appeal hugely to large numbers of farmers who are in a similar situation. Farmers receive additional training in making and editing the videos, taking one topic at a time, and drawing on farmers' knowledge/experience – as well as the scientists'. These video episodes will become widely available, both through DVD/VCR and eventually through local/national television programmes, providing the chance to reach out to the millions of farmers growing cocoa in the region.



Cocoa farmers being trained in video production in Ghana

R8313: Implementation of Cocoa IPM in West Africa
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