Inclusive Partnerships and Innovation Platforms for Sustainable Tree Crops
Ghana & South Africa

This multi-year research project is an innovative combination of value chain and livelihood trajectory analysis, action research in learning platforms, and a landscape approach. It seeks to broaden the innovation space in value chain collaborations and enhance their capacity to provide food secure, equitable and sustainable solutions for smallholders.

Background
There are a number of initiatives that aim to increase farmers’ living income, but these initiatives tend to ignore factors like the heterogeneity among different cocoa farm families, intra-household social dynamics, and power dynamics in partnerships and value chain collaboration. As a result, innovations often do not fit farmers’ realities. Another concern is that farm families are often not approached as active agents, but rather as beneficiaries. This constrains them in making informed decisions about both commodity and food crop production and anticipate on challenges and opportunities. This research project aims to contribute to changing this situation through action research on partnerships between the private sector and smallholder tree crop farmers in Ghana (cocoa and oil palm). It is part of a wider programme involving smallholder tree crop (cocoa, oil palm, macadamia, avocado) farmers in Ghana and South Africa. The support from the Lindt Cocoa Foundation is used to organise learning platforms in Ghana for value chain actors and supporters involved in the cocoa and oil palm sector, and facilitate an exchange.

Objectives
The objective of the learning platforms is to facilitate effective linkages between field-based platforms, advanced platforms and public-private partnership (PPP), and inform existing initiatives better on the business case for inclusive value chain collaboration, food sovereignty, and multifunctional landscapes that help realise private sector objectives regarding sustainable sourcing.

The learning platforms aim to better inform smallholders about their role in value chains and the potential added value of engaging in value chain collaboration. The objective is to have smallholder tree-crop farmers better represented in existing high level and field-based partnerships and innovation platforms, both through stimulating their physical participation and by bringing in knowledge about different realities of farm families. This will empower smallholders and make them better equipped to negotiate terms of engagement.

Project/Research Elements
The key element for which the funding from the Lindt Cocoa Foundation is used, is setting up learning platforms in Ghana and carrying out a baseline survey that allows monitoring their impact. In these platforms, KIT facilitates joint learning by bringing in evidence-based and inclusive knowledge on:

1) different farm families livelihood trajectories and intra-household social dynamics
2) value chain governance and arrangements & effective upgrading strategies
3) relevant partnerships, innovation platforms and other types of collaboration within the value chain and beyond

About the Lindt Cocoa Foundation:
The Lindt Cocoa Foundation was found in 2013 and has the declared purpose of working to achieve social and ecological sustainability in the cultivation, production and processing of cocoa and other raw materials used in chocolate production.

Learn more:
www.lindtcocoafoundation.org
promising innovations that match with strategies and needs of different livelihood trajectories
experiences with other tree crops (both cash and food crops) and how they contribute to sustainable landscapes that combine the production of food, commodities and environmental services.

This knowledge is generated by an interdisciplinary team of researchers (post-doc, PhD candidates and MA/MSc), in interaction with change agents that represent different stakeholders and are in the position to facilitate change in already existing initiatives. Together with partners, KIT designs an innovative methodology for interactive learning among stakeholder groups in learning platforms, and shares the outcomes of the learning platform interactions. The aimed result is to develop and share break-through theory of the co-production and negotiation of knowledge in learning platforms.

A baseline study with preliminary classification of smallholder tree-crop farmers in Ghana is carried out and discussed in learning platforms. These insights, together with additional qualitative research in consecutive stages, inform how value chain collaboration with smallholder tree crop farmers in Ghana (cocoa, oil palm) can be better aligned with farm families’ needs and livelihood trajectories and allows monitoring the impact of learning platforms on farmers’ food sovereignty and the inclusiveness of their engagement in value chain collaboration. Evaluation is also done by setting up annual meetings of field-based and (sub)national learning platforms where validity of research results and viability of suggested innovation strategies are discussed with government, partners from business sector, research communities and farmer’s organisations.

Serving the Mission of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation

Trought the action-research based learning platforms, this project increases the understanding about cocoa farming families on one hand, and on the other hand transfers knowledge gained in research back to them. It therefore enables mutual learning about the improvements that can be made in value chain collaborations. This will contribute to both effective interventions for sustainable procurement strategies in Ghana and will improve the outreach and increase the impact of social programmes involving cocoa farming families.

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