

Climate Smart Cocoa to restrain deforestation

Ghana's forest landscape has one of the highest deforestation rates in Africa, up to 2.9% per year. This deforestation is mainly due to the expansion of cocoa farms that are growing to compensate for declining productivity. Other factors also contribute to it, such as illegal logging, agriculture and mining.

With the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices in cocoa production, the project has helped to contain forest conversion by increasing cocoa yields and improving farmers' livelihoods.



GHANA

Full cost: 170,000 euros
Duration: 3 years
Start: January 2018



A project implemented by:



And supported by:



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The site and its biodiversity

The Kakum Conservation Area comprises the Kakum National Park and the Assin Atandaso Forest Reserve in the Assin South District of Ghana's Central Region, covering 375 km² of tropical rainforest and raffia swamps.

It is home to many key mammal, bird and reptile species, including the Diana Cercopithecus (*Cercopithecus diana*, IUCN: VU), Bongo Antelope, Yellow-backed Duiker, the densest population of Forest Elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*, IUCN: EN) in Ghana (over 200), and endangered turtle species.

The park is also an important birding area and a leading destination for ecotourism, due to its world-renowned canopy walk, although very few benefits of tourism reach the local communities.

Major issues

100,000 people live in the Assin South district, one of the poorest districts in the region and in Southern Ghana.

More than 80% of the households are involved in agriculture, with the majority of people engaged in small-scale cocoa production, subsistence farming and palm oil production.

Limited livelihoods and low yields from cocoa cultivation force neighbouring communities to enter the park to undertake illegal activities such as poaching, hunting, illegal clearing, and logging.

Human-wildlife conflicts occur around the park due to elephants damaging agricultural crops.

To prevent these raids during the harvest season, farmers construct fences around their land impregnated with pepper as an effective and harmless repellent.

Committed partners

Established in 1996, the **Nature Conservation Research Center (NCRC)** is a leading conservation NGO registered in Ghana.

NCRC is a strong advocate for local ownership of conservation processes. The Center works with communities, traditional leaders, governments, civil society and the private sector to develop forest-dependent community-owned and managed conservation initiatives.

The Center has extensive experience in designing and developing community-based institutional platforms for the operation of such projects.

The project and the prospects for change

In the face of environmental and human pressures affecting the conservation area (including unsustainable land use and climate change), Climate Smart Cocoa farming offers an alternative for ensuring long-term sustainable production and local economic development while stabilizing the global supply chain.

The overall objective was to develop and test pilot projects that demonstrated how community-led management mechanisms at the landscape level and the use of differentiated approaches to natural resource management could positively impact biodiversity and increase incomes for local people.

This approach was catalyzed by the establishment of public-private partnerships.

The project aimed to limit deforestation caused by unsustainable cocoa growing practices through:

- Diversification of green value chains operated by farmers;
- The implementation of climate-smart cocoa practices;
- Establishing a learning platform to share best practices.



Main achievements (2018-2020)

Biodiversity Conservation

- A land sustainability certification (renamed LandScale) developed;
- Development of a biological, social and economic monitoring system for the territory;
- 4 CREMAs created with 31 CRMCS formed;
- 3 Conservation Funds created (funded by 244,000 GHS in total)
- 46,000 seedlings planted in agroforestry.

Socio-economic Development

- Development of a business plan for kombo nuts and development of sustainable harvesting methods;
- Quality tests conducted by two companies and agreements reached for the first purchase of 5,000 kg of nuts;
- 260 (63M, 197F) kombo nut collectors trained in best harvesting and drying practices;
- 2,416 (1540M/876F) cocoa farmers trained on Climate Smart Cocoa and 291 women farmers trained in market gardening;
- 2 partnership agreement for sustainable cocoa in agroforestry in the Kakum landscape signed with two chocolate companies.