

HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

Year: 2025

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English Title: **Household income of cocoa farmers in Ghana – Empowering women in cocoa production**

English Summary:

Cocoa in Ghana is important not only for the national economy, but also for 800,000 cocoa farmers and their households, making it a fundamental part of many rural livelihoods. Despite the critical role of cocoa as the backbone of Ghana's economy, the sector faces persistent challenges, including low productivity, access to inputs and resources, and persistently low farmer incomes.

Using a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data from 450 households with qualitative insights from 14 focus group discussions covering all seven cocoa regions in Ghana, this study examines the current level and pattern of cocoa farming household incomes, the factors that influence them, and the challenges cocoa farmers face in improving their incomes. The study also examines the strategies that farmers perceive as effective in improving their incomes.

The results show that 94% of the cocoa farmers surveyed, with an average annual net household income of GHS 24,348 (USD 1,983), fall below the Living Income Benchmark, which is calculated at an average of GHS 60,351. Female-headed households earn significantly less than their male counterparts and face the largest Living Income Gap. Medium-sized farms (> 2 hectares of productive cocoa land) outperform small farms with ≤ 2 hectares in terms of household income. Female-headed small farms earn the lowest income at GHS 12,617 (USD 1,027), while male-headed small farms earn significantly more at GHS 18,942 (USD 1,543). Male-headed medium farms have the highest annual income at GHS 29,265 (USD 2,383), followed by female-headed medium farms at GHS 23,608 (USD 1,923). These results highlight the critical influence of farm size and gender on economic outcomes. Factors such as women's limited access to land and lower cocoa productivity exacerbate these inequalities. Income from cocoa accounts for the largest share of household income, averaging 50%, followed by off-farm income at 30% and income from other agricultural activities, including crops and livestock, at 20%. The study identifies cocoa farm size, cocoa productivity, producer organization membership and income diversification as critical determinants of household income, Living Income Gap and economic resilience.

Farmers face significant challenges, particularly insufficient inputs and the prevalence of pests and diseases. These problems contribute to an overall surveyed low average cocoa yield of 327.52 kg/ha, which is well below the potential productivity level of about 1,500 kg/ha and significantly hinders income growth. Notably, the average yield for female-headed households is even lower at 274.44 kg/ha, compared to 342.30 kg/ha for male-headed households, highlighting gender disparities in productivity.

Women farmers face unique gender barriers, including limited access to land tenure and agricultural inputs. They identify insufficient inputs, pests and diseases, dying cocoa trees, and lack of work force as their main challenges. Targeted interventions - such as improving access to resources, promoting gender-inclusive policies, and strengthening and diversifying income streams - are essential to empowering women and closing productivity and income gaps.

The study highlights the urgent need to address low productivity and inadequate farm incomes to empower farmers, both women and men. Revitalizing Ghana's cocoa sector requires a holistic, multi-stakeholder commitment along the value chain, with a focus on effectively addressing gender inequalities. By equipping farmers with the tools and resources needed, the sector can unlock its full potential, drive rural development and enable all farmers to earn a Living Income and beyond.

Keywords: Cocoa, Ghana, household income, Living Income, women farmers

Original Title:

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