

HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

Year: 2014

Student's Name: Angela Deppeler

English Title:

Who benefits from certification?

Analysis of third-party audited certification schemes in the cocoa sector in Ghana

English Summary:

Currently, the cocoa sector in Ghana, one of the largest producer countries this commodity in the world, is changing. Under the pressure of production deficiencies and raising demand, the industry implements certification systems in order to enhance production in a sustainable way, not the least also in response to respective consumer demand.

This study's aim was thus to assess if third-party audited certification systems in the cocoa sector in Ghana are able to fulfill some of their claims regarding sustainable cocoa production. The results show a mixed picture, as the execution of certification policies in the field depends largely on the way the implementing organizations accomplish their work. Despite of differences among the labels, there are measurable improvements for farmers in a certified group. Most importantly, they are on average able to improve the yield of their farms, which contributes to a higher income. In their view, the return from the participation in the certification schemes is generally higher than their investment in it. Most respondents across all certification groups acknowledge improvements in their way of farming and consequently the output of it. However, as this study shows, benefits from certification are unevenly distributed. This has its roots in structures of certification groups that are ill functioning, as well as in unclear policies of implementation organizations as to whom gets which part of the premiums.

In addition, it is demonstrated that some parts of the rural population fall out of the system. This study investigated the contribution of hired laborers to cocoa production and concluded that they are particularly wanted for specific tasks such as weeding and spraying of cocoa farms. Working conditions for temporary workers are on the whole judged fairly well. Certification seems to have a limited effect on better conditions for laborers. However, their contribution to cocoa production seems not to be accounted for so far in certification schemes.

The study also took advantage from the analysis of benefit sharing systems under certification to outline potential lessons learnt for the implementation of programs aiming at curbing deforestation and degradation. The cocoa agroforestry system that dominates much of the Southern part of Ghana is an interesting opportunity in this respect. However, it is concluded that the implementation of such programs has to be oriented at the practical needs of farmers and an understanding of local social structures for an efficient implementation of distribution systems. The study used a blend of qualitative and quantitative approaches. In a first phase, mostly qualitative methodology was used, such as focus group interviews and semi-structured expert interviews. In the subsequent phase, a structured questionnaire was administered in eight communities where certification schemes are active, taking care into a selection of these communities in an independent way of the certification implementers. The overall conclusion is that in the current circumstances of cocoa production in Ghana, third-party audited certification systems are to be seen as a business case, rather than under the angle of fairness for the cocoa producing rural population.

Keywords: Smallholder farmers, cocoa, certification, benefit sharing, sustainability

Principal advisor(s): Dr Ingrid Fromm, Prof Dr Jürgen Blaser