

# **Industry-led sustainability certification or agroecological change in cocoa production? Stakeholder perspectives on the future of cocoa in Ghana**

## **Authors**

Dr. Franziska Ollendorf - Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries (Sus- LAND)

Dr. Katharina Löhner - Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries (Sus- LAND)

Dr. Stefan Sieber - Leibniz Centre for Agric. Landscape Res. (ZALF), Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries (Sus- LAND)

## **Abstract**

Departing from the persistence of major sustainability challenges in cocoa production such as severe poverty among cocoa producers and associated high rates of child labour and deforestation, we provide an empirical-based discussion of how sustainability certification shapes the prospects of a broader paradigm shift in Ghana's cocoa production towards a more holistic approach to sustainability which we capture with the concept of agroecology.

Sustainability certification in its current form has shown to fail to mitigate sustainability challenges and even counteracts with the goal of a healthy and sustainable future of cocoa production. Our results indicate that sustainability certification endangers social cohesion in cocoa producing communities by fragmenting them into beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and creating new disparities. Also, by privileging external top-down interventions over existing local knowledge and innovation capacities, and by prioritizing intensification over diversification strategies, sustainability certification establishes new structures in the local cocoa sector which go opposite to agroecological approaches to agricultural change. Based on qualitative data we collected in the Ghanaian cocoa sector in 2021, our analysis offers an empirical insight in how different stakeholders perceive such hidden dynamics and how those shape their visions about alternative future pathways of cocoa production. The discussion aims to contribute to the understanding of institutional and governmental barriers to sustainable agricultural change and new, more equitable realities.

## **Biography - Franziska Ollendorf**

Dr. Franziska Ollendorf is currently a guest researcher in the Sustainable Land Use in Developing Countries (Sus-LAND) group at the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF), Germany. Her research interests include CSR in global value chains, private food standards, the political economy

of cocoa, and the governance of agricultural change. She gained broad experience with (participatory) research on policy effects on rural livelihood systems in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Topic Areas**

Agroecology