



Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP)

Program Overview

The **Sustainable Tree Crop Program (STCP)** constitutes a coordinated and innovative effort made by farmers and producer organizations, the worldwide chocolate industry and trade, national governments, research institutes, the public sector, policymakers, donors and development agencies to facilitate the improvement of smallholder agricultural systems based on tree crops in West Africa. With over 50% of the foreign exchange derived in West Africa coming from cocoa alone, it is clear that there are numerous groups now involved and committed to the tree crop commodities.

Collectively, these groups, which typically bring different perspectives to the table, have shaped consensus around three common interests and concerns. They include: 1) promoting the production and marketing of quality cocoa, 2) improving market access and income for small-scale producers, and 3) creating systems that are environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically sustainable.

The goal of STCP is:

To improve the economic and social well being of smallholders and the environmental sustainability of tree crops farms.

To achieve the STCP goal, a public - private sector partnership was created - the STCP West African Development Alliance - to provide stakeholders with an organizational framework and policy environment under which they could improve the performance and efficiency of the system. Productivity of tree crop farms and enterprises are being raised, with emphasis on the rehabilitation and reclamation of deforested lands. Efficiency in the marketing chain is being improved so that it delivers fair prices to farmers and quality products to end-users. Only by lowering production and marketing costs will tree crops remain competitive and profitable for African farmers on world markets. Achieving this and at the same time improving the state of natural resources, including biodiversity, land, soil and water, is the formidable task being undertaken by STCP. On the social and labor front, STCP is working to prevent hazardous working conditions and eliminate the worst forms of child labor, thereby improving standards on farms and in communities.

If successful, the outcome of these efforts will be a more sustainable global economy for the focal tree crop systems, characterized by: increased rural incomes, reduced risk and greater stability in the supply of quality products to end users, increased demand for and use of tree crop products, better working conditions on farms, and an improved status of environmental resources for current and future generations of West Africans to pursue their interests.

STCP is a program that brings together all of these stakeholders and enables them to collaborate. To do this efficiently, a results framework with five strategic areas was adopted: 1) strengthening community-focused groups, 2) technology dissemination and research, 3) policy change and implementation, 4) market system and information system development and, and 5) labor and social systems. The general approach being taken within each strategic area is to build on the existing efforts and activities of relevant



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stakeholder groups, to add value to them, and to co-ordinate future collaborations. Currently, the primary tree crops targeted by STCP in West Africa are cocoa and cashew nuts. Additional tree crops may be considered within the context of diversification of cocoa or cashew production systems.

A regional program has been implemented which will enhance the synergies to be gained by working across institutions and countries to successfully develop sustainable tree crop production. The four largest African cocoa producers (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria) are included in the program and account for approximately two-thirds of total world production. The fifth member of the program is Guinea whose diversified agricultural economy includes cocoa, cashew and robusta coffee as major sub-sectors. Furthermore, an integrated and holistic approach is taken within STCP to link developments in research, technology delivery, market systems, information systems, policy change, and community or producer-focused services.

Currently, a series of STCP pilot projects are in the start-up phase in West Africa; three pilot project sites have been identified in Cote d'Ivoire, and one in each of the other four countries (Cameroon, Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria). The objective of these pilot activities are to compare, test, and validate different approaches and interventions to develop sustainable and integrated cocoa production systems, and to concurrently address child labor concerns in a coherent and systematic method. The ultimate goal of these pilot activities is improve the rural livelihood of cocoa producers in West Africa by improving their ability to respond to the demands of global markets.

To support the pilot activities, three “cross-cutting” regional projects have been developed in the following thematic areas: 1) Child Labor, 2) Technology Delivery, Research and Impact, and 3) Trade and Information Systems. These projects are being developed by organizations with the necessary expertise and capabilities in the respective areas.

Finally, a regional program management structure has been developed to support and link the pilot projects and regional activities. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) is hosting the STCP regional program and will manage it through the STCP Regional and National Coordination Units. The Child Labor Regional Project will be hosted and managed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) through its international program on the elimination of child labor (IPEC). The Donor Alliance Committee will ensure a broad-based public-private partnership to support STCP; a Donor Liaison office is assisting with development of communication tools and material to serve the Alliance. The STCP Steering Committee, consisting of 15 members from farmers groups, industry/trade, funding agencies, national network chairs and the program host institution is providing general oversight to the STCP program as a whole.