International Labour Organization

Rapid Assessment of Alternative or Additional Livelihood for Cocoa Farmers in the Western Region of Ghana

Final Report

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SUMMARY

The study sought to identify viable alternative or additional livelihood sources for cocoa families in some districts in the Western Region of Ghana using social survey research methods particularly focus group discussions.. Alternative livelihoods can be defined as livelihood activities that supplement people's basic income. These activities usually depend on people's spare time, their skills, resources and art. A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. In all three districts, the following illustrates the alternative livelihood and income generating activities that are available and can be tapped and formalized. They include cocoa bi-products production, palm oil processing, gari processing, vegetable farming, grasscutter rearing, mushroom production and bee keeping.

Income from alternative livelihoods could lead to two possibilities. The gradual replacement of the traditional livelihoods or part of the income generated by the alternative livelihood is re-invested in the traditional livelihood, such that coexistence of both approaches can be maintained. This coexistence can provide a buffer against climatic variations and economic shocks, thus conferring stability and sustainability to rural livelihoods. The review confirmed the long held knowledge that cocoa farming and its attendant income is seasonal. Most cocoa farmers earn appreciable income only during the cocoa harvest and sales period of October to December.

The target groups for whom this study is being undertaken earn marginal income in the course of the year. This obviously has implication for their lifestyle throughout the year. This seasonal income pattern impacts negatively on the ability o the farmers to acquire quality social service for themselves and their dependants in terms of access to food, health and education.

Another objective of the study was to assess the availability and viability of alternative or additional livelihood activities in the three districts of Juabeso, Bia and Aowin Suaman. The study found a number of alternative livelihood options which are available and viable in these communities. They include beekeeping, snail farming, grasscutter rearing and cocoa by-products production. The viability of these options are moderated by factors such as positive past experience, existence viable farmer groups, inherent local expertise, available technical expertise for backstopping, impact of the option on incomes, access to land, capital outlay required and farmers' willingness to participate.

Beekeeping, snail farming and grasscutter rearing and cocoa by-products production are available and viable alternative or additional livelihood activities in Juabeso, Bia and Aowin Suaman for farmers. Besides these, vegetable and paddy rice production in marshy areas are equally viable but may be constrained by access to land. For women farmers in particular, cocoa by-products production is very critical.

One of the objectives of the study was to identify good practices and their replicability in respect of alternative livelihoods. These practices are derived from previous interventions and from farmers' experiences with the projects. Focus group discussions guided by a checklist was designed to obtain information from farmers, agricultural extension agents of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD0 and Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), and Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) working in the districts. Questions were framed to address areas such as general farmers' constraints, farmers' knowledge about alternative livelihood, farmers' main sources of income and strategies for improved livelihood among others.

The study revealed the that alternative livelihood opportunities available to farmers include vegetable production, paddy rice farming, pineapple cultivation, bee keeping, grass cutter rearing, snail farming, oil palm processing, mushroom cultivation and fish farming. Good practices required to ensure viability and replicability include

extensive consultation with farmers and community leaders, use of farmer groups and link to markets among others.

During the study, it was observed that cocoa farmers do not have any additional land space for cocoa and any food crop cultivation. All the available land for farming has been utilised and this is affecting farmers negatively in the sense that they have to buy food stuffs for domestic consumption. It was realised that the farmers are eager to undertake alternative livelihood options to help them raise additional income to meet their financial commitments.

Farmer's willingness to participate was evaluated based on elements such as their readiness to meet consultant and his team and stay with them for hours, offer to organise into groups, inherent community-based knowledge and skills, linkage to markets and the availability of support systems among others. The farmers' individually and collectively exhibited attitudinal disposition which suggests that they were willing to participate in the alternative livelihood activities that the consultant discussed with them.

Preparation of soft soap from cocoa pod husks and prepared food vendoring are immediately critical for the income of women farmers. Beekeeping and grasscutter rearing will impinge positively on the men and the general household income.

The study has adduced evidence to the effect that certain alternative livelihood activities could be viable and contribute substantially to the incomes and livelihoods of poor cocoa-farming households in the Western Region of Ghana. Such impact would enable households hire the labour required for production activities reducing the likelihood of engaging children in hazardous activities on their cocoa farms.

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1. Introduction

This report is in four parts. The first part, SECTION 1 is a desk review of alternative livelihood sources for cocoa families to provide a list of possible alternative livelihood options in the target communities. The second part, SECTION 2 reports on the availability and viability of alternative and or additional livelihood activities in the target communities. SECTION 3 identifies good practices by past and current alternative livelihood activities in the target communities and discusses possibility for replication. The fourth part, SECTION 4 provides insights into the willingness and readiness of cocoa farmers to engage in the identified alternative livelihood options. The final part, SECTION 5 provides a list of recommendations on the most viable activities that IPEC beneficiaries could immediately engage in to improve their household income.

SECTION A

1.1 Objectives of the review and approach

The review sought to identify viable alternative or additional livelihood sources for cocoa families in some districts in the Western Region of Ghana. The study seeks to support families affected by the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa. Studies by the Ministry of Manpower Youth and Employment in 2008 (MMYE, 2008) showed that families involvement in the use f children in hazardous work was underpinned by the abject poverty that such families find themselves in.

To mitigate those circumstances of such families, remediation activities were embarked on in which family heads (especially women) were supported to engage in income-generating activities such that they could look after their wards (send them to school) and keep them off hazardous work. It is in the same light that the current study seeks to identify alternative or additional livelihood options available to cocoa farmers in the Western Region with the view to providing interventions that will impact on their incomes and livelihoods.

The intervention is motivated by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals 1 and 3 (*Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger – 1* and *promotion of gender equality and empowering of women -3*).

The review employed systematic literature review methods by seeking and assembling relevant and critical materials on the subject matter and using broad thematic approach, provide a synthesis of the core issues.

1.2 The context

There is evidence that that rural people in Africa do not normally specialise in livestock, crop or fish production to the total exclusion of other income generating activities. Rather, a majority of rural producers have historically diversified their productive activities to encompass a range of other productive areas. Motivations for such diversification are multifarious, linked with wide range of possible activities, and associated with both positive and negative outcomes (Hussein and Nelson, 1996).

According to the Ghana Living Standard Survey, many families in the 3 project districts, Juabeso, Bia and Aowin-Suaman live below $1 a day. Families here have inadequate resources to take care of their nutrition, medical, educational and other developmental needs of their children. Most families of children involved in WFCL are of cocoa households, with income from their cocoa farms as their main source of livelihood. In many cases such income is insufficient. Notwithstanding, the families are unable to generate income from other sources because of a number of factors. One such factor is the lack of information that will motivate “cocoa-based” families to explore other, possibly more viable, sources of livelihoods.

1.3 Alternative livelihoods

The mention of Alternative Livelihoods implicitly suggests several scenarios, namely; that prevailing livelihoods are either not producing enough benefits for the individuals or communities engaged in them, or that current activities are in contravention of existing legislations, or pose a danger to the sustainability of other resources. In the context of agriculture-dominated economies, the resources at risk may be land, forest, or water bodies. Alternative livelihoods are therefore thought of in the context of providing livelihoods that may replace or supplement existing livelihoods that are in danger as a result of resource constraints, or those livelihoods that do not generate sufficient incomes to enable those engaged in them live decent lives (Tropendos, 2005).

Alternative livelihoods can be defined as livelihood activities that supplement people's basic income. These activities usually depend on people's spare time, their skills, resources and art. A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

A common feature of alternative livelihoods is that their viability requires capital investment and trade-related infrastructure, which in turn depend on enabling policies and effective leadership. These attributes are also instrumental for an effective implementation of innovations for attaining sustainability of livelihoods based on land productivity. Such qualities are often deficient in many cocoa farming communities.

The first step to be taken on the path to sustainable alternative livelihood development is, therefore, to invest in societal changes, building capacity and creating an enabling environment that can support innovations. This would pave the way for emerging alternative livelihoods. In the development of alternative livelihoods, income enhancements as a result of their side-by-side implementation with the traditional venture in this case cocoa with improved land management can create the positive feedback in the communities and families.

Issues such as capacity building, transfer of appropriate management practices, and strengthening community-based organizations come to mind. Many focus on finding alternative livelihood options and diversifying livelihood activities. Understanding the concept of alternative livelihoods is important when working with farming communities. It is particularly important in the cocoa sector, where there has been significant over-farming by communities. There is indeed the need to reduce the pressure on the farmers and also on their dependence on the cocoa farms for survival, a situation that is largely responsible for their children being engaged in WFCL activities.

However, with increasing cocoa farmer populations, many are just focused on putting food on the table for themselves and their families only for a limited period of time in the year. Alternative livelihood initiatives provide opportunities to ensure strategic and formalized coping strategies. These are usually designed by men around male needs. However, women are also primarily involved in the livelihood strategies of the household and excluding them from project designs could be why some initiatives are failing. For instance, in most farming communities, women and children, if not actually farming, spend much of their time doing farming-related activities such as taking food stuff to the market, displaying and selling stuff. Increasing the success of alternative livelihood initiatives may require the facilitation of direct action initiatives by women, especially in situations when the poor and very poor farming communities have no access to other resources such as land and, therefore, have limited opportunities for alternative income sources.

Alternative livelihood activities should thus be considered a family activity, where women and children go with the men and are also full-time partners. Ideally, alternative livelihoods should be designed around the whole family. Also, it may be counterproductive to require the poor to pay membership fees related to livelihood development. Other forms of non-monetary contribution need to be systematically considered.

Interventions will need to critically look at the kind of support that can be provided for the development of these alternative livelihood activities. Two main levels of assistance will need to be looked into; financial and technical assistance. While community members are quick to mention financial assistance as the what is needed most to develop these activities, experience on the ground indicate that, technical assistance in the form of capacity building needs to take place first. There will be the need for different levels of capacity building. It is also important to assess the social capital that is needed to make alternative livelihoods sustainable.

In the context of the sustainable livelihoods framework, DFID defines social capital as the “social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives”. Networking and fostering connections among people with like interests can help develop social capital. Such networks increase trust among people and facilitate cooperation, strengthening communities to be able to work together to achieve common goals. At the same time, membership in more formalized groups can help increase the ability of individuals or smaller organizations to access services and benefit from government or other development institutions.

Given the nature of the communities, some of the income generating activities will have to be embarked upon using the concept of cooperatives or groups to ensure maximum benefit and complete community ownership. Community members especially in the areas of oil palm and cassava processing will have to be encouraged to come together as groups. These groups will need to be formalized as a registered body. Capacity building will then have to be provided to the community to ensure that they are equipped with the requisite management skills needed to embark on a profitable venture. In doing so, it is important to stress that these alternative livelihood ventures are not to be embarked on at the expense of cocoa production. That is why targeting the women in these ventures will be critical. Apart from the empowerment that comes with women participation, women involvement will ensure that the benefits that accrue go to support the whole family while the men continue to embark on the cocoa production activities.

It is important to note that most of the alternative food crops outlined above are harvested between May and September, followed by the sale of cocoa in November to January. The absolute income derived from the former is often small, but their importance has to be looked at in terms of timing and control over the revenues. Furthermore, opportunities for group marketing and for value-adding through the development of cottage industries exist.

However, like most communities in other cocoa growing areas, most families of children involved in WFCL have over the years come out with and adopted various coping strategies that they use to survive. During the lean season, coping strategies used depend on existing community resources and practices. By and large, however, most of their coping strategies are agro based and it is important that these be further looked into and formalized to create the level of improved livelihood that this project seeks to achieve.

1.4 Alternative livelihoods options

In all three districts, the following illustrates the alternative livelihood and income generating activities that are available and can be tapped and formalized.

- Cocoa bi-products production
- Palm oil processing
- Gari Processing
- Vegetable farming
- Grasscutter rearing
- Mushroom production
- Bee keeping

1.4.1 Cocoa bi-product processing

Given that the predominant crop and occupation of the people is cocoa, it is important to explore the alternative income that can come from the cocoa product itself. The farmers are primarily interested in selling the cocoa beans to the cocoa marketing companies.

Adomako (1975) showed that the processing of cocoa by-products can be done in the rural setting by organizing pods collection to a central point, train farmers to produce the products which have ready markets. Some of products include animal

feed, soft soap, cocoa pulp juice, alcohol, pectin, jam and marmalade and wine. Adomako et al (1996) and Adomako (1995) showed that the production of these products was profitable and does not require heavy or expensive machinery. Only basic tools and equipment may be required and these could be source from local artisans. Indeed, the equipment for the pilot production of these products at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana was provided by artisans at the *Suame Magazine* in Kumasi.

Many of the products (especially the soft soap and ash) are easily amenable to the skills of women farmers. The requisite training could easily be provided by staff of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana.

There is evidence that many farmers are aware of the income earning potentials the processing and production of cocoa by-products. Research has shown (Adomako, 1975; Adomako and Amaning, 1996) that the cocoa wastes such as the pod husk and sweating could be developed into alternative livelihood options for farmers. Small-scale or local industries can be set up to use these wastes to produce the various by-products mentioned earlier.

1.4.2 Oil Palm Processing

Vegetable oil production around the world amount to about 95 million tons per year, of which over 28 million tons are produced by the oil palm, the world's second largest oil crop after soybean. Palm oil is an important and versatile raw material for both food and non-food industries, which contributes to the economic development of the producing countries and to the diets of millions of people around the world.

Palm oil production is a basic source of income for many of the world's rural poor in South East Asia, Central and West Africa, and Central America. Not only does the palm represent a pillar of these nation's economies but it is a catalyst for rural development and political stability. Elsewhere, as in West African countries that

produce mainly for domestic and regional markets, smallholders produce up to 90% of the annual harvest.

In its Human Development Report 2007-2008, the United Nations Development Program says production of palm oil in West-Africa is largely sustainable, mainly because it is undertaken on a smallholder level. The United Nations Food and Agriculture program is encouraging small farmers across Africa to grow oil palm, because the crop offers opportunities to improve livelihoods and incomes for the poor of which these families of WFCL are a part and will be encouraged to pursue such alternatives to augment the meager incomes from cocoa as a main crop of livelihood.

Oil palm cultivation is highly recommended given that the main oil palm season is around March/April, close to the period when most cocoa farmers have no money. This income venture has proven to be good alternative to the targeted families and it will be good to explore ways of formalizing this venture. Oil palm has an already existing market since it forms part of the cooking of most tribes in Ghana and there is enough evidence to point to the fact that it has the potential of even becoming an export commodity for the country as whole. Its uses for both domestic and industrial consumption cannot be disputed. Palm oil can feed into the soap and alcohol industries among others. A start-up approach will be to encourage, the formation of groups and cooperatives.

To make oil palm processing a sustainable commercial venture capable of being an alternative livelihood enterprise, there will be the need to invest in a modern oil palm processor. The target groups would be encouraged to form cooperative and source for grants in support of this viable alternative economic livelihood.

1.4.3 Cassava/ Gari Processing

Cassava is a very popular crop that is grown in the midst of cocoa crops especially in the early planting periods. Almost all the farmers plant cassava as a staple food in the three districts.

In Ghana, over 70% of production is consumed locally. Cassava is propagated by stem cuttings and thrives in fairly bad weather and poor soils with little or no fertilizer application. It is cropped sole or in association (intercrop) with maize and vegetables. Cassava is available all year round although the labour requirement for uprooting in the dry season is more than during the wet season.

To produce *Gari* the peeled cassava is grated and the pulp is bagged and compressed to express the water while undergoing fermentation. The dewatered pulp is sieved and roasted. This reduces the bulk and weight and increases the shelf life. A well processed *Gari* can be stored for two years without adding preservatives. This product is easily transported to urban markets several kilometers away or as export commodity. Gari, which is produced from cassava, is also a very popular food product in Ghana especially among school going populations and lower income workers. It is anticipated that parents of children engaged in WFCL would be targeted and assisted to go into Gari processing using cassava as the raw material to ensure a sustained income all year round.

There are however some problems associated with cassava processing. These include:

- Lack of access to markets for fresh cassava.
- Unreliability of existing markets.
- Inability to access existing potential markets.

- Unavailability of appropriate technologies and technical know-how to meet the demands of existing potential markets.
- High production costs and low profit margins on food products.
- High unemployment rates especially during off-peak farming seasons.
- Absence of a conducive policy environment for industrial utilization of cassava products.

If effectively facilitated, this alternative livelihood venture can come up with viable small and medium-scale processing facilities for production of cassava-based products. This will also involve validation of processing technologies and quality assurance systems.

1.4.4 Vegetable Farming

In all three districts, vegetable farming, especially tomatoes and garden eggs, is another alternative income generating activity for the cocoa farmers. These vegetables are usually cultivated on small scale but there is enough produce to feed the local market in the districts and also other parts of the country. About 80% population of the districts depends on the mixed farming systems, rain-fed agriculture and mixed crop production. The farming systems have been characterized by the cultivation of traditional crops and adoption of old modes of agricultural practices along with low production and productivity of crops for centuries. Traditional rain-fed agriculture accounts for all of the cropped land. The determinant factors of the traditional farming system are the availability of rainfall and soil moisture with little or no modern agricultural input. These farmers cultivate mainly food crops, vegetable and of course the main cash crop of cocoa. Maize, cassava and vegetables cover a big chunk of the rain fed agriculture. The great majority of the vegetable farmers in these districts operate on small scale.

Despite much local diversity, they share a number of following important characteristics:

- Most small farmers operate on an independent basis, either as independent land owners or under rental arrangement allowing them to make production decisions.
- They depend mainly on family labour supply.
- Small-scale farmers are less likely to use capital for commercial inputs like fertilizers, pesticides and equipment.
- The small farmers tend to use credit for consumption needs rather than for purchasing farming inputs.

Vegetables are grown only nearer to the towns and mainly for local consumption, but their proportion in the cultivable land is negligible. If a sizeable proportion of cultivated land is transformed into the cultivation of out-of-season vegetables, it will boost up the livelihood of the target population and the farmers in general. The out-of-season vegetables can be grown along the streams in both districts because of the availability of water particularly during the rainy seasons. Onion, cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, tomato, garden eggs, ginger, pepper and beans can be grown extensively. Out-of-season vegetables have great potential as an alternative livelihood venture. There is a great need of commercialization and modernization of these crops, while currently it is being supplied only for the local consumption.

Vegetable farming has proven to be a good source of income for the farmers particularly the women who are also involved not only in the cultivation but in the marketing of these products. Vegetable traders are usually women, and they can earn more than their farming husbands. Apart from the income to be gained from the primary commodities, there is also the potential of setting up small agro processors that can eventually be turned into cottage industries to process the vegetable into value added products.

1.4.5 Mushroom production

Mushroom is the fleshy, spore-bearing *fruiting body* of a fungus, typically produced above ground on soil or on its food source. The standard for the name *mushroom* is the cultivated white button mushroom, *Agaricus bisporus.* Edible mushroom are

used extensively in cooking and are high in proteins and fiber and provide vitamins such as thiamine, biotin and ascorbic acid. They are also a source of minerals including selenium, potassium and phosphorus. They appeal stem from the fact that they are low in fats and sugars and help fight diseases (CRIG, 2010).

Because of health concerns about meat consumption, mushrooms have become bery popular in Ghana and command relatively high prices especially when out of season. Farmers can earn more from its cultivation I they could learn to produce it when it is out of the season. Mushroom production requires low capital investment that most farmers can afford.

1.4.6 Grasscutter production

Ghana's main sources of animal protein are fish, livestock and bush meat. However, livestock production is not sufficient to meet the national meat requirement. Ghana produces only 40,000 tons of meat annually, representing 20% of an estimated national requirement of 200,000 tons per year (Obimpeh, 1987). It is evident that the national herd of livestock is not adequate to meet the country's demand for meat. Therefore there is the need to develop other sources of acceptable meat in addition to conventional livestock.

The grasscutter (*Thryonomys swinderianus*) is an important source of meat and is acknowledged to be the preferred meat virtually throughout Ghana and the West African Sub-Region (Martin, 1985; Asibey, 1969; 1978; Falconer, 1992; Ntiamoa-Baidu, 1998; Vos, 1978; Baptist and Mensah, 1986). The meat is appreciated because of its culinary properties (Ajayi, 1971; Hartog and Vos, 1973; National Research Council, 1991; Anon., 1993) with demand consistently outstripping supply (National Research Council, 1991). The National Research Council (USA) includes the grasscutter in its list of "Micro-2 livestock: Little-Known Small Animals with a Promising Economic Future" (Addo, 1998).

The potentials of grasscutter farming as a means of poverty alleviation, as well as its contribution to keeping environmental health has long been recognized in Ghana (Yeboah and Adamu, 1995; Adu, 2002). However, the impact of grasscutter farming is yet to be felt in the national development agenda. And though grasscutter farming has been practiced in Ghana for some decades now, the enterprise still remains in the hands of smallholder farmers who are generally poor and have neither the institutional nor economic power to ensure that their technology needs are met by public sector research (Anandajayasekeram, 1999).

According to an FAO Document Repository on Wildlife utilization and food security in Africa, there is no doubt at all that domestication and farming of favourite “wild animal species” could provide viable complementary or alternative sources of animal protein. However, the key to its acceptance on a wide scale depends on the development of technical know-how and cheap methods of production.

The demand for grasscutter meat in Ghana is high with its accompanying price hikes, making the prospect of grasscutter rearing very bright and encouraging either as a full-time or part-time job. Asibey (1987) estimated that about 80% of the rural population in Ghana depends on game meat for their dietary protein supply, and that the most commonly consumed species of game meat by those living in rural areas is the grasscutter. Grasscutter meat is also a delicacy in big towns and cities in Ghana.

In the late 1960s the need to diversify Ghana’s sources of animal protein was reviewed. During that process, Ghana’s Department of Game and Wildlife singled out the grasscutter for scientific investigation as a potential source of meat. The popularity of the grasscutter meat among other reasons led to several studies on the animal during that period with the primary aim of domesticating the species for large-scale farming and production of the meat for human consumption (Ajayi, 1971).

Grasscutters or cane rats (Thryonomys spp.) are widely-distributed and valuable animals in West and Central Africa. Within the West African sub-region, grasscutter is the favourite bushmeat species and accounts for the greater proportion of bushmeat sold in markets (Falconer, 1992; Ntiamoa-Baidu, 1998). The grasscutter is available throughout the country. Its savannah habitat has expanded as a result of encroachment on forest lands by crop farmers. Studies by Baptist and Mensah (1986); Schrage and Yewadan (1999) showed that most of hitherto setbacks to its captive breeding can be overcome. Therefore, as part of resources to provide food security, job opportunities and income generation, (particularly for both rural and urban poor), early surveys (Asibey, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1971) as well as recent surveys (Ntiamoa-Baidu, 1998) have shown that most Ghanaians, irrespective of their educational, economic or social status, would eat 'bushmeat' (the common term for game animals in Ghana) as and when it is available.

Grasscutters or cane rats (*Thryonomys* spp) are widely distributed and valuable animals in West Africa. Until recently, grasscutters have generally been hunted in the wild but rearing them is relatively easy. Their meat is in high demand and attracts high prices. Rearing them requires little investment and are suitable for additional income generation for cocoa farmers (CRIG, 2010).

1.4.7 Beekeeping

Beekeeping is a very fascinating occupation. It can be practiced equally by men, women, grown up children and even by physically handicapped and old persons. The investment required is low, and the economic returns are comparatively very high. Beekeeping does not bring any pressure on agriculture land. It produces honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis from the flowers which otherwise dry up in nature and go waste. Beekeeping is a decentralized industry and does not displace persons from their villages. If conditions are favourable, level of beekeeping can be increased to semi-commercial or commercial level.

Though the honeybees are best known for the honey they produce, their economic role in nature is to pollinate hundreds and thousands of flowering plants and assure seed or fruit set. Honeybees thus play very important role in cross pollinating various agricultural and horticultural crops and increase their yield per unit area and improve their quality. Agricultural scientists in America and Europe have estimated that value of the increased crop yields due to honeybee pollination is several times more than the value of the honey and beeswax the honeybees produce.

Normally bees produce honey in the wild. Collecting honey from wild bee colonies is one of the ancient human activities. At some point, humans began to domesticate wild bees in artificial hives made from hollow logs, wooden boxes or pottery vessels. In recent times, beehives are constructed as wooden rectangular boxes. Honey is used in traditional ceremonies, in confectionary, curing tobacco, in wine making and more importantly in recent times, in traditional medicines formulations. Beekeeping is a potential income generating activity for farmers. Input costs are low as the materials required could be found in the immediate environment of the farmers (CRIG, 2010). What will be required is enhancing the capacity of the farmers via training. When organized into groups, such training can be undertaken by many agencies including the Technology Transfer Centre of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture district offices across Ghana.

1.5 Conclusion

Income from alternative livelihoods could lead to two possibilities: the gradual replacement of the traditional livelihoods or part of the income generated by the alternative livelihood is re-invested in the traditional livelihood, such that coexistence of both approaches can be maintained. This coexistence can provide a buffer against climatic variations and economic shocks, thus conferring stability and sustainability to rural livelihoods. The review confirmed the long held knowledge that

cocoa farming and its attendant income is seasonal. Most cocoa farmers earn appreciable income only during the cocoa harvest and sales period of October to December.

The target groups for whom this study is being undertaken earn marginal income in the course of the year. This obviously has implication for their lifestyle throughout the year. This seasonal income pattern impacts negatively on the ability o the farmers to acquire quality social service for themselves and their dependants in terms of access to food, health and education.

The next section is on the availability and viability of alternative livelihood activities in the target communities.

SECTION 2

2.1 Introduction

A livelihood is the means, activities, entitlements and assets by which people make a living, which is immediate and continuous, not necessarily for mine closure. It is also a framework that seeks to build the capacity of people to continuously make a living and improve their quality of life without jeopardizing the livelihood option of others, either now or in the future by coping and adaptive (Temeng and Abew, 2009).

A *livelihood* comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Chambers and Conway, 1992). Alternative livelihoods can be defined as activities that supplement people's basic income. These activities usually depend on people's spare time, their skills, resources and art.

The concept of alternative Livelihoods may suggest that current livelihoods are either adequate to meet the needs of people or communities or that activities people are engaged in may not be sustainable, especially from natural resources standpoint. Alternative livelihoods are therefore thought of in the context of providing livelihoods that may replace or supplement existing livelihoods that are in danger as a result of resource constraints, or those livelihoods that do not generate sufficient incomes to enable those engaged in them live decent lives (Tropendos, 2005).

There is indeed the need to reduce the pressure on the farmers and also on their dependence on the cocoa farms for survival, a situation that is largely responsible for their children being engaged in WFCL activities.

Using group interactive methods, the study sought to identify viable alternative and or additional livelihood activities in the cocoa communities in the three districts of Juabeso, Bia and Aowin-Suaman in the Western region of Ghana.

2.2 Methodology

The study employed survey research methodology which according to Denscombe (1998) refers to the act of obtaining data for mapping. The contents of surveys are social, systematic, structured, based around variables and the method of analysis relies on comparisons across groups (Marsh, 1982). Farmer groups in the three districts (Juabeso, Bia and Aowin-Suaman) were interviewed in a participatory mode using a checklist (Annex) in the context of focus group discussions. On arrival in each community, the elders were met, the consultant and his associates accompanied in some cases by extension staff of the Ghana Cocoa Board, explaining their mission. The farmer groups chose where the discussions were to take place. Invariably, the local school was a favorite choice in most cases.

2.3 Focus group discussions

Neuman (2003: 396) refers to a focus group as a special qualitative research technique in which people are informally interviewed in a group-discussion setting. The procedure is that a researcher gathers together six to twelve in a room with a moderator to discuss a few issues lasting about 90 minutes (ibid). Neuman (*op. cit*) suggests that group members should be homogenous, but not include close friends or relatives.

Open-ended interviews in a group setting according to Patton (1990) 'add depth, detail, and meaning to a very personal experience' (p.18). Other advantages are that the natural setting allows people to express opinions or ideas freely, the interpretation of quantitative survey results is facilitated, and also participants may query one another and explain their answers to each other's (Neuman, 2003).

The interviews were conducted in an informal participatory mode, a point that was emphasized in the introductory remarks by the consultant. It was emphasized that

the session was not a question and answer one, and that a point made by one could be commented on by others (Casley and Kumar, 1988). Questions did not follow a particular order but there was a checklist to ensure that all issues were covered. The consultant took notes in long hand assisted by an associate. The issue of control during discussions is vital (Casley and Kumar, 1988; Patton, 1990; Moser and Kalton, 1971), and the consultants were tactful in dealing with run-away contributors. The importance of having a procedure for the group interviews is emphasized by Casley and Kumar (1988) when they suggested that the quality and credibility of the findings can be improved if proper procedures are followed and if the information generated is cross-checked with that gathered through other means. Details of the focus group discussions are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Focus groups interviews carried out in Juabeso, Bia and Aowin Suaman districts of the Western Region, Ghana.

DISTRICT	NATURE OF GROUP	NO. INTERVIEWED	COMMUNITY
Juabeso	Women Cocoa Farmers	1	Nsonyameye
	Men Cocoa Farmers	1	Nsonyameye
	Mixed Group (Men and Women) of Cocoa Farmers	3	Nsonyameye, Mankura, Kwasi Addaekrom
Bia	Women Cocoa Farmers	1	Cashierkrom
	Mixed group (Men and women) Cocoa Farmers	3	Cashierkrom, Ntonsue, Dansokrom
Aowin Suaman	Mixed Group (Men and Women) of Cocoa Farmers	2	4 mile, Asuokrom

Consultant with associate interacting with farmers at Nsonyameye, Juabeso district

2.4 Outcome of interactions with farmers

2.4.1 Farmer problems

Though the focus of the engagement with the farmers was on alternative livelihood options, the farmers not unexpectedly, did not lose the opportunity to mention problems they face as cocoa farmers in their various communities. These include:

Poor access to institutional credit

Farmers not unexpectedly mentioned poor access to institutional credit as their main constraint. They indicated that without financial support it was difficult for them to hire needed labour and inputs. In the absence of institutional credit, they resort to

local money lenders who charge interest rates of 100 percent or higher. Farmers who obtain loans from the money lenders (they allegedly include purchasing clerks) often lose their farmers to them as they are unable to pay the cumulative interests. They however admitted that access to credit in the cocoa communities have improved in recent times with the presence of many *Susu* companies.

Prevalence of pests and diseases

Another key problem mentioned by all the farmer groups was the prevalence of pests and diseases and the parasite, *mistletoes*. They observed that since the national control of cocoa pests and diseases programme (CODAPEC), the burden of managing pests and diseases had lessen but they decried the inefficiencies associated with the programme. These include the naked pilfering of the chemicals by the spraying gangs, late delivery of inputs and poor coverage. They also indicated that the programme does not provide the full complement of the recommendations of the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) with respect to the blackpod disease and capsids (or mirids). The underlying cause of farmers' inability to manage cocoa pests and diseases outside the CODAPEC programme is the cost of the inputs (pesticides and its applicators).

High cost of hired labour

During peak activity periods such as land preparation and cocoa harvesting, most farmers have to hire additional labour. Such labour will set a farmer back by GHC 8-10 per manday of about 5 hours. Most of the farmers considered the wage to be on the high side. Farmers also mentioned the increasing difficulty in finding labour for farm operations. They said that this was particularly the case during land preparation and cocoa harvesting period. Farmers opined that the youth will offer their labour to cocoa cultivation if it pays well. The way forward is the promotion of Intensification of cocoa production activities such that returns to investments were higher enabling farmers to hire the labour they require for their farm operations.

Poor road network and other infrastructure

The poor state of feeder roads in the districts was of major concern to farmers. They contended that the absence of social amenities in the cocoa communities made that environment unattractive to young people hence the usual drift to the towns and cities.

2.5 Other critical issues

Investment on the farm

The planting of new cocoa, under-planting and rehabilitation of existing farms as well as fertilizer applications are the main investments farmers said they have made in recent times. These investments have been financed from increased incomes from cocoa, other crops and remittances from wards abroad. The increased income is due to higher price for their cocoa and increased yield due to new plantings and relatively higher maintenance regime. Farmers said that new extension officers of Ghana Cocoa Board who started operations in the communities two years ago have encouraged them to engage in good agricultural practices among others for enhanced output.

Access to resources

Many of the farmers met were owner-operators (that is, they own the cocoa and manage it themselves) or *abunu farmers* (they are farmers working on land that belongs to someone else with the understanding that when the cocoa comes of age, the cocoa *with the land* will be shared equally, each partner getting half), most did not have any legal document confirming their ownership of the land or the contract entered into. They however have no sense of insecurity on the land. They conceded that having title deeds was helpful but they were put off by cost and red tape associated with the documentation process. Most of the women indicated that they did not experience any difficulty in acquiring their cocoa farm which they inherited from their families. The situation is changing however; as the women said it was difficult to acquire land now in their communities for cocoa cultivation. This they

attributed in part to scarcity of land. Land scarcity is an issue that re-echoed throughout the interactions with the farmers in all the communities.

Capital remains a vital resource in cocoa production as it enhances farmers' ability to adopt research recommendations and manage the farm sustainably**.** Most of the farmers depend on their own income for the maintenance of their cocoa farms as they do not have access to any credit facility. However, some women obtained credit from purchasing clerks and money lenders for the maintenance of their cocoa farms and the upkeep of the homes.

Most of the women farmers complained about their inability to exploit their kinship ties (unlike men) to harness labour for their farm operations. Their reliance on family labour for cocoa farming activities is no longer an option for most women cocoa farmers. This is because more and more children are at school in recent times and most out of school youth are in the towns and cities in search of jobs. Consequently, most of the women employed hired labour for the maintenance of their cocoa farms.

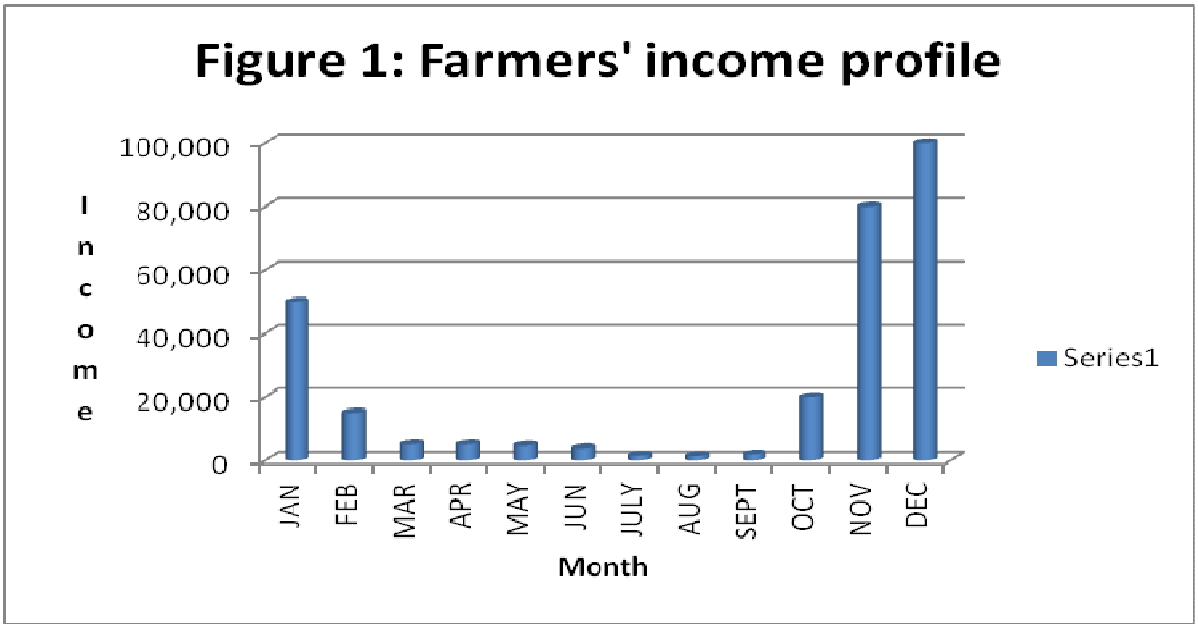
Income and expenditure

Most of the farmers obtain the bulk of their incomes from cocoa. They literally do not consider income from other activities as income at all. This may be due to the relatively small amounts of money that the other activities trickle in. Cocoa money is relatively *more* especially during the main cocoa season. Besides cocoa, farmers earn income from non-food crops, petty trading and receive remittances from wards who increasingly reside abroad. They do not consider their income to be adequate.

The main expenditure items of farmers are household maintenance, school fees, hospital bills, funerals and other social events. Indeed many farmers mentioned funerals and other social events such as wedding as sapping their incomes significantly. Very few farmers mentioned cocoa production activities as part of their expenditure items. However, most farmers spend some money on their cocoa

especially weeding and pesticides application. Sustainable cocoa production demands that farmers plan for the maintenance of their farms.

Figure 1 represents farmers' income in-flows over the year. This is closely related to cocoa harvests and incomes. July and august are particularly difficult months for farmers especially as they have to send their wards to school in September and the cocoa trees were often devoid of pods!



Fixed assets

Fixed assets that most farmers mentioned that they possess include their huts or farm houses, cutlass, felling axe, earth chisel and harvesting hook. Very few farmers had pruners (for removal of mistletoes), or mistblowers (or pesticides application) or knapsacks (for fungicides application). Farmers inability to own or access mistblowers in particular was curtailing their ability to control mirids (or capsids), the main pest of cocoa. They had to rely on the operations of *CODAPEC,* the free Government spraying programme which they indicated was of poor coverage and effectiveness.

Information sources

Many Non-Governmental agencies are active in the districts including CARE International and Rainforest Alliance (Agro-Eco Luis Bok Institute). They provide critical information on cocoa and other livelihood options for farmers. Their activities are supported by extension officers of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and Ghana Cocoa Board. Besides these, farmers rely on one another for information. They also mentioned the radio as being a significant information source for them. Whilst farmers agreed that their access to extension-based information had improved in recent times, frequency of contact between them and extension agents was still poor. They mentioned the poor state of roads in the districts as being responsible for extension agents' inability to meet them regularly.

Knowledge of topical issues

The main issue exploited was *child labour.* On child labour, many farmers were aware of concepts such as hazardous work and the relationship between child labour and child schooling. In the Juabeso and Bia districts, the consultant found that farmers who are part of the German International Development agency (GIZ) *Farmer Business School* training were well-versed on child labour issues. The business schools could provide a unique platform for the capacity buiding of farmers on the alternative livelihood options.

Alternative livelihood activities in the communities

The main alternative livelihood activities identified in the districts are as show in Table 2.1

Table 2.1: Alternative Livelihood Options and their viability

Alternative livelihood activity	District			Overall Viability
	JUABESO	BIA	AOWIN SUAMAN	
Bee keeping	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	HIGH
Snail farming	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	HIGH
Grasscutter rearing	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (M)	VERY HIGH
Oil palm processing	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	HIGH
Cocoa by-products production	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	VERY HIGH
Fish farming	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	MEDIUM
Food vendoring	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	VERY HIGH
Rabbit farming				
Goat / Sheep farming	YES (M)	YES (M)	NO	LOW
Vegetable production	YES (H)	YES (H)	YES (H)	HIGH
Pineapple production	YES (M)	YES (M)	YES (M)	LOW

Key: H=High viability / M=Medium viability

The viability of any alternative or additional livelihood activity was evaluated based on the following criteria derived from interactions with farmers, extension agents and staff of *Agro-eco* and *CARE International* who have experiences on the subject matter in the communities:

- *Positive past experience*

If farmers have some positive experience with the alternative livelihood activity themselves or heard about them from neighbours, it helps to project the activity positively amongst the farmers.

- *Existence of viable farmer groups*

Most of these activities have to be carried using farmer groups as platform for engagement. If such groups exist already, they already have the communal spirit and often provide the impetus for success. For instance, Agro-Eco have farmer groups trained in grasscutter and beekeeping production in Juabeso and Bia districts. The GIZ Farmer Business School groups could be used as platforms for training and capacity enhancement. If they are not there, such groups have to be nurtured.

- *Inherent local expertise*

Farmers learn easily if the new knowledge is related to their stock of knowledge. There are certain indigenous skills set in cocoa farming communities handed down from generations. If the alternative livelihood activity is not new to the community, its viability is enhanced. For instance, most of the women farmers were familiar with *soft soap* production from cocoa pod husks or the preparation of food for sale or the processing of palm fruits into palm oil.

- *Available Technical expertise for backstopping*

Farmers told of projects which come in to train them quickly, provide them the necessary inputs and then they were left to fend for themselves without any technical backstopping. Such projects obviously failed to make much impact on the farmers.

Whatever alternative livelihood activity is promoted, efforts should be made to provide farmers with all the technical and allied support they may require over time.

- *Short to medium term impact on incomes*

Alternative livelihood activities that make immediate to medium term impact on farmers' incomes were likely to be well received.

- *Access to land is not a limiting factor*

Access to land for cultivation appears to be a major limiting factor in farmers' efforts to earn more income by expanding their farms or planting new crops. Farmers spoke of shortage of food during most part of the year. They said that rice has been a staple in the last two decades whereas previously their diet was based on plantain, cocoyam, yams and maize. This is in part due to the demand by land owners that leased land be put to cocoa cultivation or the land owner gets the land back. Consequently, nearly all land is put to cocoa. Farmers said that the only land left is the protected forests and marshy areas around river beds and streams. This is perhaps why farmers spoke of paddy rice and vegetables production. Clearly, any alternative livelihood option which requires large tracts of land may not fly with farmers.

- *Low capital outlay*

Farmers are hard up financially in most parts of the year because of poor management of incomes. Poor savings habit means that during the months of October to January when cocoa money pours in literally, farmers spend lavishly on funerals and other social events. Education of wards is now farmers' priority and such investment leaves them with little money. Whilst farmers spoke of their readiness to embrace alternative livelihood options that may come on their way, any option that requires farmers' commitment of *substantial* cash may be of a bother to them.

- *Farmers' willingness to participate*

This is a very critical criterion. If the intervention does not place the farmers at its centre, it is bound to fail. The tacit endorsement of farmers of any alternative livelihood option is critical for its adoption and success.

2.6 Conclusions

Beekeeping, snail farming, grasscutter rearing and cocoa by-products production are available and viable alternative or additional livelihood activities in Juabeso, Bia and Aowin Suaman for farmers. Besides these, vegetable and paddy rice production in marshy areas are equally viable but may be constrained by access to land. For women farmers in particular, cocoa by-products production is very critical.

SECTION 3 reports on identified good practices and their replicability.

SECTION 3

3.1 Introduction

One of the objectives of the study was identify good practices and their replicability in respect of alternative livelihoods. These practices are derived from previous interventions and from farmers' experiences with the projects.

3.2 Outcomes

3.2.1 Farmers' Knowledge about alternative livelihood

The study revealed the following as the alternative livelihood opportunities available to farmers:

- Vegetable production
- Paddy rice farming
- Pineapple cultivation
- Bee keeping
- Grass cutter rearing
- snail farming
- Oil palm processing
- Mushroom cultivation
- Fish farming
- Production of soap and alcohol from cocoa by-products production.

It was realised during the study that some communities including Asuokrom and 4 miles in Aowin Suamn district have already started snail farming and mushroom cultivation with support from CARE International Ghana. Grass cutter rearing is also

on going in communities like Mafia, Saneagykrom, Oseikrom and Kanieanko in Bia District. The farmers are not able to explore the above mentioned alternative sources of livelihood because they are handicap in terms of knowledge and finance. The farmers need capacity building training and financial support to be able to explore these alternative livelihood opportunities available to them.

The farmers are ready to put themselves into groups, register the group and pay monthly dues for their operations. They are also willing to support resource persons with food and accommodation as their contribution.

3.2.2. Main sources of income

Cocoa constitutes the major source of income for the people. However, there are pockets of farmers who get additional income from petty trading, maize and oil palm farming. Generally the income level of the people has gone down because of the following:

- Farmers do not have the capacity to increase their farm size due to limited land
- High cost of school fees
- Buying of food stuff for domestic consumption due to absence of land for cultivation of food crops and
- Other social responsibilities such as funeral commitment.

3.2.3 Identifying income generating activities

The community members earn their living mainly through income from their cocoa farms. Community members are not satisfied with income from cocoa because the income is far below their expectation as against their high expenditure levels. Some of the reasons accounting for the low income from their cocoa farming activities include:

- Poor soil fertility

- Inability of government to spray their farms on time with the requisite chemicals
- High incidence of diseases and pests infestations.
- Unavailability of fertilizers when required
- Lack of approved cocoa pesticides on the market.

3.2.4 Good practices and their replicability

The *good practices* enumerated here are practices that will enhance the *viability* of any of the alternative or additional livelihood activities identified (see Baah, 2011). The *replicability* of these good practices in continuing or new communities that will embrace any of the livelihood activity will be dependent on the commitment of both farmers and any agency or intervention that seeks to improve the lot of farmers. The agency must have the long-term improvement of the living conditions of the farmers at heart. Any *hit and run* intervention strategy is unlikely to make any impact on farmers' incomes and livelihood. Any intervention must have s medium to long term perspective to have any chance of bring about real impact on the farmers.

Critical practices that underpin the viability and replicability of identified livelihood activities include:

- *Extensive consultation with farmers and community leaders*

The current study was *a rapid assessment* of alternative livelihood options that are available in the select districts of the Western region. When decisions are made as to which options to support, any activities MUST be preceded by extensive community engagement with leaders and farmer groups to come to common understanding of what the intended intervention was all about. It must be made abundantly clear to all what commitments each side is signing up to. This is a very critical step that should not be overlooked.

- *Use of farmer groups*

For nearly all the alternative livelihood options identified, group action is critical to its success. Groups provide critical platform for information sharing, social support for members and a catalyst for action. If existing farmer groups are available in the communities, they could be used. An assessment will have to be made of such group so that any deficiencies could be rectified. Where groups do not exist, it is vital that farmers are encouraged to come together. Such groups will have to be nurtured.

- *Extensive and continued support to farmer groups*

Farmer groups require continued training in group dynamics to stay as a coherent group. They also require the nurturing of their leaders to provide effective leading skills to the members. Training in group organisation and financial management is oten necessary.

- *Building on local knowledge*

The study (Baah, 2011) has revealed that some of the alternative livelihood activities may not be entirely new to the communities. There is hence inherent local knowledge system to be tapped. This should never be ignored. Farmers learn better when the new information is close to their store of knowledge. Recognition and use of local knowledge will enhance community ownership and success of the interventions planned.

- *Enhance farmer commitment*

Farmers invariable expect outsiders to solve all their problems for them. Any perception that the intervention *will do everything for them* is bound to wean off farmers commitment to the long-term success of the planned activities. Roles must be clearly spelt out. The use of a revolving fund and payment of group dues by group

members are some measures often adopted to enhance farmer commitment to the group cause.

- *Back-up technical backstopping*

Nothing frustrate farmers more that their given one-off training and have no avenue to back this up. This is a tragic mistake of many projects. After initial trainings, continued and periodic upgrading of farmers' information, knowledge and skills is required. This is best done by local experts including NGO staff and extension agents. They are readily available in the communities.

- *Hands-on training*

Farmers are always put off by abstract and theoretical training methods remote from their realities. Training methods must be *hands on* and experiential. The facilitators must be practical persons with experience in adult training methods. This is not the field for office or classroom bound academics.

- *Enhanced farmer access to inputs*

As much as possible, inputs must be procured or found locally. Farmers must be thought to use local materials to improvise. If external inputs are desired, farmers must be liked to such inputs sources. This will enhance and their enthusiasm and commitment.

- *Link to markets*

It is most frustrating for farmers to be led into the production of certain products or produce only for them to discover that there are no markets. Many examples abound in Ghana: Sunflower, and soyabeans.

3.3 Conclusion

During the study, it was observed that cocoa farmers do not have any additional land space for cocoa and any food crop cultivation. All the available land for farming has been utilised and this is affecting farmers negatively in the sense that they have to buy food stuffs for domestic consumption. It was realised that the farmers are eager to undertake alternative livelihood options to help them raise additional income to meet their financial commitments. Critical practices that underpin the viability and replicability of identified livelihood activities include e*xtensive* consultation with farmers and community leaders and use of farmer groups among others.

The next section reports of farmers' willingness and readiness to engage in the identified alternative livelihood activities.

SECTION 4

4.1 Introduction

A key objective of the study was to assess farmers' willingness to engage in additional or alternative livelihood in their communities. The study was also to provide insights into the factors that will enhance their participation

4.2 Assessment of farmer willingness and readiness to engage in alternative livelihood activities

The assessment is based largely on the consultant's 19 years experience working with cocoa farmers across Ghana and the insights gain. It is also based on the recent interactions with the farmers in the select communities as well as interviews with staff of agencies who have worked with these farmers in their communities. Such agencies include CARE International Ghana, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease Control Unit (CSSVDCU0 of Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and Agro-Eco Louis Bok Institute. Their insights and experiences were very helpful in the assessment. Community leaders including teachers, cocoa purchasing clerks ad chiefs all offered greater insights into the minds and attitudes of farmers towards these alternative livelihood options.

The assessment was influenced by the following elements:

- *Farmers' readiness to meet consultant and his team and stay with them for hours*

The meetings with the farmers were often unscheduled but they willingly accepted to meet the study team and spent on the average 3 hours discussing all issues pertaining to their engagement with alternative livelihood activities. Clearly the discussion struck accord with the farmers given their dire financial positions (even in November-December when these interactions took place). It is not unusual for cocoa farmers to be receptive of *strangers* in their midst. But dwindling numbers and clear signals to get away tell the stranger that his or her time is up and that the subject is of little concern to them. There were all the signs that the farmers wanted

to discuss the issue of alternative livelihood activities and that they were willing to engage in it.

- *Offer to organise into groups*

Farmer groups provide critical platform for information sharing, social support for members and a catalyst for action. If existing farmer groups are available in the communities, they could be used. An assessment will have to be made of such group so that any deficiencies could be rectified. Where groups do not exist, it is vital that farmers are encouraged to come together. Such groups will have to be nurtured. The farmers readily said that they were willing to come together for purpose of supporting one another. The litmus test remains exhibited group commitment including registration of the group, regular meetings, payment of dues and collective commitment to the group course. We have the experience of previous alternative livelihood activities in the communities indicating that farmer groups' formation and activism was very high and commendable. Farmers' ready offer to support even resource persons who come to assist them was a good pointer.

- *Inherent community-based knowledge and skills*

These farmers and communities are not starting from zero with respect to alternative livelihood activities. They have had some experiences. My assessment was that these experiences were largely positive. We have to build on these. Where there is already inherent knowledge store on a subject or activity in a community, it is easier for farmers to embrace same. This factor will enhance farmers' willingness to participate in the alternative livelihood activities.

- *Availability of support systems*

The visible presence of extension agents of MOFA and CSSVDCU as well as those of the NGOs mentioned earlier provide farmers with the confidence that they have people around to support them when they need it. Given the very poor state of the

roads in the districts, it was quite refreshing to find these enthusiastic young men on their motorbikes moving from one community to another to provide various support to farmers. Farmers' willingness to embrace the alternative livelihood activities was clearly influenced by the presence of these agents.

- *Link to markets*

It is most frustrating for farmers to be led into the production of certain products or produce only for them to discover that there are no markets. Many examples abound in Ghana: Sunflower, and soyabeans. For the farmers engage with beekeeping with the support of Agro-Eco, they are linked to the *Saltpond Honey Centre,* Herbal preparation firms and cooperatives. This is a very critical step that boosts farmers' willingness to participate in alternative livelihood activities.

- *Additional income*

The prospect of earning additional income to augment that from cocoa is very attractive to farmers. As detailed in earlier reports (Baah, 2011a and 2011b), farmers expenditure is not marched by their incomes. They will cling to anything that was likely to bring in additional income. They have seen the lives of those who earn additional income from oil palm processing, cocoa by-products production and even petty trading. They will like to be like them.

4. 3 List of recommendations

On the basis of the discussions held with all the stakeholders that the consultant engaged with in the course of the assignment, the following activities are the most viable that IPEC beneficiaries could immediately engage in to improve their household income (Table 4.1):

Table 4.1: List of Recommended alternative livelihood activities for farmers

ACTVITY	MEN ONLY	WOMEN ONLY	BOTH MEN AND WOMEN	DISTRICT
BEEKEEPING	NO	NO	YES	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN
GRASSCUTTER REARING	NO	NO	YES	JUABESO BIA AOWIN SUAMAN
SNAIL FARMING	NO	NO	YES	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN
COCOA BY-PRODUCTS PRODUCTION	NO	NO	YES	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN
VEGETABLE PRODUCTION	NO	NO	YES	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN

FOOD PREPARATION AND VENDORING	NOT APPLICABLE	YES	NO	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN
PETTY TRADING	NOT APPLICABLE	YES	NO	JUABESO BIA AOWIN-SUAMAN
FISH FARMING	YES	NOT APPLICABLE		JUABESO BIA

Preparation of soft soap from cocoa pod husks and prepared food vendoring are immediately critical for the income of women farmers. Beekeeping and grasscutter rearing will impinge positively on the men and the general household income.

4.4 Conclusion

Farmer willingness to participate in additional or alternative livelihood activities is influenced among others by the prospect of earning additional income, the presence of ready market for whatever products or produce it will bring, and awareness that there is technical support available when needed.

4.5 General recommendations and conclusions

On the basis of the interactions with farmers and other stakeholders in the course of this assignment and experience elsewhere, the following recommendations are offered for consideration to ensure the success of any planned interventions towards promotion of alternative or additional livelihood activities in the study cocoa communities:

1. This study was a *rapid* assessment of the availability and viability of alternative livelihood activities in the cocoa communities. The study has shown that some interventions have taken place in these districts before. The lessons learnt should be brought on board to enhance success.

2. Prior to the inception of any project or planned intervention, further interactions with farmers in target communities should be undertaken.

3. Staff of agencies such as COCOBOD, MOFA, CARE International Ghana and AGRO-ECO Louis Bok Institute in the districts who have worked with the farmers on the subject of additional livelihood activities could be involved in final sensitization activities before any planed interventions.

4. Technical back-up support systems must be in place. Farmers' complained about projects which come into their communities and disappear just as they came in. To enhance the long-term impact of any planned alternative livelihood on farmers' incomes, after-project support systems must be put in place.

5. Any planned intervention must avoid the ***Father Christmas syndrome***. This is referring to instances where projects provide all sorts of largesse only to vanish after a short while leaving farmers to literally gallop for breath.

The study has adduced evidence to the effect that certain alternative livelihood activities could be viable and contribute substantially to the incomes and livelihoods of poor cocoa-farming households in the Western Region of Ghana. Such impact would enable households hire the labour required for production activities reducing the likelihood of engaging children in hazardous activities on their cocoa farms.

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ANNEX: CHECKLIST FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH COCOA FARMER GROUPS

ISSUE	METHODS
General farmer constraints • What are your main constraints farmers? • How do you cope or manage these constraints? • What support, if any, do you receive from government / other agencies to address these constraints	Semi-structured interviews (SSI) Visualisations
Farmers' knowledge about alternative livelihood • What are the traditional alternative livelihood options available in your community? • To what extent are these alternative livelihoods accessed or used by farmers in the community? • What are the key ingredients required for farmers to access these alternative livelihood options? - Land - Labour - Capital - Market	
Main sources of income • What are your main sources of income? • What changes, if any, have taken place with respect to you income sources in the last decade? • If there have been changes in income sources, what is / are responsible for these changes?	

Identifying Income generating activities • How do people earn their living in the community? • What are the traditional income generating activities in the community? • How satisfied are people with these income generating activities? • What are the average yields per acre? • How does income from cocoa sustain farmers throughout the year? • Are there other sources of income that can be identified in the community? • What can be done to get people to start some of these activities? • What kind of capacity building assistance will be needed to do this? • How is the community going to get this needed assistance?	
Strategies for improved livelihoods • How does the community perceive their current living standards? • Is the community satisfied with their way of life? • What accounts for their current state of living? • Can the community do something about their current living standard? • What strategies can be identified to improve life in the community? • What activities or measures will the community put in place to improve the standard of living? • What other income generating activities can be identified and sustained in this community?	
Seasonal Coping Strategies • What periods in the year are community members generally well	

off? • How is this period linked to cocoa production and harvest? • How do people generally spend during the season of wealth? • What strategies are adopted to spread the wealth throughout the year? • What periods in the year are community members hard up? • What is the poverty season like in this community? • How long does the poverty season last? • How do people survive during the lean season? • What activities do people engage in during the lean season? • How can these lean season activities be expanded into major activities?	

List of alternative livelihood options from literature (Inputs / processing stages / challenges- how it fits into farmer cocoa-based activities / Gestation / land / labour / consent of land owners / capital / market / replication and scaling up / and other inputs)

- Cocoa bi-products production
- Palm oil processing
- Gari Processing
- Vegetable farming
- Grasscutter rearing
- Mushroom production
- Bee keeping
- Pottery?

Role of children of children in these alternative livelihood activities?

How these alternatives would contribute to the elimination of WFCL?