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Towards a hybridization of the cocoa sector governance in Cameroon to meet economic and environmental sustainability

The cocoa sector is facing new demands, mainly from European markets, to demonstrate the legality of its production, its sustainability and the neutrality of its impact on tropical forest. In Cameroon, despite the importance of this sector for the national economy, the deregulation of the sector over the last 25 years has not allowed the state to face these three challenges. There is currently no precise definition of what legal cocoa is. A national standard for sustainable cocoa is being adopted, but it is not very binding. And the desire to reduce the footprint of cocoa production on the forest and to produce cocoa without deforestation is a more recent concern, which is not yet reflected in public policy.

In such a context, the certification of cocoa according to private standards can be a successful approach to facilitate the production of legal, sustainable and deforestation-free cocoa. We tested this hypothesis by studying the impact of cocoa certification (UTZ-Rainforest Alliance) on the livelihoods of small-scale farmers (owning a cocoa plantation of between 0.5 ha and 5 ha), who contribute to almost 90% of Cameroon's production. Three production systems for smallholder cocoa farmers were compared: (1) shaded cocoa without certification; (2) shaded cocoa with certification; (3) cocoa on grasslands with certification.

Data collection was done through a review of scientific and technical documentation as well as quantitative and qualitative interviews with 63 farmers in the Central, South, South-West and Coastal regions between March and May 2019. This information was used to develop the operating accounts of these agents, which were then synthesized for the three stereotypes of producers:

1. Non-certified small producers have a net profit rate of 4% and a value added of 471,984 CFA francs per tonne. This mode of cocoa production is a low-profit-making activity and weakened by an increase in production costs, which is not compensated by an improvement in turnover.
2. Producers in shaded agroforests and engaged in certification receive support of around 80,000 CFA francs per year, which improves their financial performance. Their net profit rate is 24%. The added value is estimated at 486,102 CFA francs/tonne.
3. The farmers on grasslands and involved in certification have production costs that are much higher than those of cocoa farmers in the forest. This type of cocoa production is more capitalist since access to certain factors of production such as land or labor is based on market relations. The monetarization of certain costs weighs on the rate of net profit, which rises to 15%, but reinforces the value added, which stands at 660,544 CFA francs per tonne.

Certification therefore presents an important advantage for smallholders by offering a higher purchase price for cocoa and above all by improving production through targeted support in terms of training, equipment and inputs. Overall, it has replaced the state in providing actual support to small producers. In the short term, the desire to commit the sector to legal and sustainable production requires progress towards private certification. However, this approach still has major shortcomings, in terms of traceability or creating a two-tier production system in Cameroon's rural economies. There is an opportunity to think about new forms of governance where the state focuses on certain sovereign functions while other private actors are delegated certain tasks for which they have demonstrated their effectiveness.

KEYWORDS
Certification, value chain, deforestation

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