



Which cocoa agroforestry for which timber value chains? Listening to farmers of Côte d'Ivoire

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In the early 2000s, in continuity with the universal history of this commodity, the cocoa production centers of Côte d'Ivoire moved to new areas, with the last classified forests and secondary forests of the rural domain, particularly in the Man Region, becoming the country's new cacao belt. But in a break with the west-african history of exclusion of smallholders from the timber market, an informal timber economy is also developing in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in this Man region. What role can these farmers' strategies play in "sustainable" agroforestry, combining the cocoa and timber value chains? Our study starts with smallholders' practices and analyzes the modalities of timber reappropriation as well as their implications in terms of exhaustion or preservation of the wood resource. The fieldwork was carried out from February to May 2020 in three villages in the department of Man. Fifty semi-structured interviews were conducted with producers who are members of an agricultural cooperative (31), customary authorities (10), local and regional authorities (3), illegal sawyers and charcoal burners (4) and sawmills (2) established in the area. Twenty-eight botanical inventories were conducted in cocoa farms covering a total of 18 hectares. In coherence with previous field works in Ghana, the first major result is that farmers' agroforestry strategy highly prioritize revenues, not ecological services to cocoa. They retain trees for uses mainly unrelated to cocoa production. The second major result is that this strategy is really implemented as demonstrated by the significant presence of timber trees in cocoa farms in this region, owing to the development of local/informal timber industry. This practical and concrete self-reintegration of cocoa farmers into the timber markets proves to be a necessary condition for so-called "sustainable" cocoa, and as a corollary to a sustainable timber sector that is evolving and needs recognition.