Benefits and Challenges of Certification for Cocoa Producers and Laborers in Ghana

Context
Third-party audited certification is steadily growing in the cocoa sector in Ghana. Presently, around 15% of Ghana’s cocoa is produced under UTZ Certified, Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade or Organic certification (Potts et.al. 2014). There is a growing demand for cocoa while productivity is still low in the main cocoa producing countries. Industry faces public pressure because of child labor issues, producers’ livelihood conditions and/or ecological concerns. Cocoa producers are not a homogenous group; among them are landowners, sharecroppers and laborers.

Research questions
1. Are there differences in livelihood aspects between certified and non-certified producer groups?
2. What are the benefits and costs of certification in the perception of different producer groups?
3. What are the conditions for hired work and are there differences between certified and non-certified employers?
4. Can experiences from certification instruct the implementation of climate change measures?

Methodology
Focus group interviews with farmer groups (13)
Expert interviews (14)
Quantitative survey (228 interviews) with research assistants
Semi-structured interviews with community leaders (8)
Validation with local experts and researchers
Survey analysis using R software

Summary of results
- Certification schemes can have a positive influence on the income of cocoa producers, but this influence depends much on other factors such as educational background, age, persons in the household, access to land etc. Certification has significant influence on clean water provision, but not on access to health facilities or access to electricity.
- Certified farms produce higher yield on average (Fig. 1).
- The yield increase is attributed to trainings given by certification implementers.
- Farmers rate the return from certification higher than their investments to achieve it (Fig.2).
- Sharecroppers’ access to premiums is not clearly regulated according to the respondents.
- Premium distribution depends on the policy of the label and the implementation in the field.
- 82% of producers interviewed use hired labor in addition to own work force.
- Employees on conventional farms rate the working conditions less fair than those on certified farms (Fig.3).
- Cocoa producers under certification tend to have more trees on cocoa farms

Conclusions
- Certification schemes are appreciated by farmers because they can increase their farms’ productivity through improved practices they learn in trainings provided by the certification implementers.
- Benefits are acknowledged, but the systems are often deplored as not transparent.
- Laborers contribute largely to (certified) cocoa production, but have no access to services.
- For the current case of cocoa in Ghana, certification can be seen as a way for the industry to enhance sustainability and production, but more transparent and equitable distribution systems are needed.
- Training structures for certified cocoa producers are effective and thus useful for the implementation of climate change programs.