



## **Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP)** ***A Public-Private Partnership***

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### ***2. Pilot Phase Achievements***

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The **Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP)** is being implemented through four primary components during the Pilot Phase (Oct. 2002 – Sep. 2005). Achievements to date are summarized below.

#### **Technology and Knowledge Dissemination**

STCP has identified effective strategies building on the Farmer Field School approach to address integrated cocoa crop and pest management with relevant curricula and materials prepared, 139 trainers trained to date, field schools conducted training over 8,500 farmers, and impact being monitored and evaluated. Assisted farmer-to-farmer diffusion of knowledge is reaching an additional 17,000 farmers. This participatory training approach covers around 15 field school sessions through a whole cocoa cropping cycle. It encourages farmers to make their own discoveries about management practices, to reduce their dependence on costly inputs such as pesticides, and to improve their understanding of crop and pest interactions, thus allowing them to make sound production decisions. For example, field school plots produced over 30% more pods in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire and reduced pesticide use in Nigeria and Cameroon by 10-20%. The main practices adopted are pruning, shade management and sanitary harvests. In addition, farmer field research on pest management (i.e. on black pod disease and capsid) and rational use of pesticides is being implemented to enhance further learning by farmers in collaboration with researchers. Demonstration plots and associated nurseries have been established for the rehabilitation of exiting cocoa farms and the establishment of new farms on fallow land. To secure the sustainability of these efforts, the program is engaging and training both private and public institutions (i.e. farmer organizations and public extension). In addition, research on new solutions for key production constraints are being supported by STCP, i.e. the biological control of black pod disease, the characterization of the genetic diversity of cocoa germplasm, and the new establishment/rehabilitation of diversified cocoa agroforests.

#### **Grower and Business Support Services**

STCP is strengthening through training and technical support 15 cooperative-like structures reaching over 31,000 farmers directly in the 4 cocoa growing countries. Building on a detailed needs' assessment conducted at the start, significant efforts have gone into moving these farmer organizations gradually towards becoming viable farmer-owned enterprises that efficiently market cocoa and supply their members with necessary production inputs. For example in Cameroon, farmer organizations have developed a common vision towards becoming more entrepreneurial and transparent, and are now aligning themselves with 3 marketing cooperatives. In Nigeria, the Tonikoko Farmers Union has officially evolved into a cooperative union, hiring a manager and opening a Trade and Information Center. While continuing to strengthen 8 base cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire, a union of cooperatives has been established with the goal of greater access to finances and markets. With the goal to rapidly scale up the lessons through national institutions, a systematic training framework addressing good governance, financial management, and client service orientation is being developed. It will allow farmer organizations to evolve in manageable stages (i.e. taking on additional service responsibilities in tandem with the development of the necessary organizational capacity and capability). In addition, the program is assessing the need for sustainable structures that integrate

across individual farmer organizations to allow for economies-of-scale and for “umbrella” organizations to play a greater market-defining role.

### **Marketing and Information Systems**

This component of STCP is closely linked with the one above, which has been focusing on the strengthening of farmer organizations. The premise is that farmers who are organized effectively will be able to better engage with markets. By shortening the supply chain and increasing the transparency of transactions, they will be able to accrue some of the margins for their members. The primary focus of STCP to date has been on increasing efficiencies in-country linked to the specific pilot farmer organizations. Different marketing strategies (e.g. grouped auctions, negotiated sales to buying agents, exporters, or processors) are being tested in the 4 cocoa countries based on local opportunities and within the national policy environments. These efforts have already led to farmers receiving 5-15% better farm-gate prices for their cocoa. The development of appropriate market information and quality control systems is an integral part of this strategy. This is most advanced in Côte d’Ivoire where a software has been adapted to the needs of the cooperatives to facilitate accounting, monitoring of sales, and inventory control. Overall, this has led to greater confidence of farmers in their cooperatives and to cooperatives being able to access private sector funds to finance cocoa marketing. In addition, production based information systems are being tested for their value in both better management of the production base, as well as to enhance marketing, particularly where specific product characteristics are sought.

### **Social Issues**

Baseline surveys indicated that children may be exposed to hazardous forms of child labour while helping on cocoa farms. The role of STCP has been to integrate social messages (primarily on child labour and HIV/AIDS) into its capacity development efforts within the other components in conjunction with, and complementing, other specialized programs like those of ILO/WACAP and the International Cocoa Initiative. This has been particularly successfully done within the Farmer Field School curriculum and the strengthening of farmer organization activities. Just through the Farmer Field Schools, over 7,000 farmers have been sensitized on hazardous forms of child labour to date. Follow-up studies are showing that about 70% of the farmers have a good understanding of the issues, which would indicate that around 20,000 children are benefiting from this effort.

### **Conclusion**

An External Review of STCP (February, 2005) focusing on the cocoa activities highlights: “STCP’s most important accomplishment and innovation is the public-private partnership and its holistic approach to address complex challenges and issues that is its *raison d’être*, and from which all stakeholders derive value. This unique partnership has never before existed for the cocoa sector, which is the most important tree-based commodity in West Africa. The public-private partnerships foster collaboration between institutions, organizations and enterprises, who share the common vision of improving the livelihoods of smallholder tree crop farmers, while ensuring a sustained and robust supply of quality tree crop products. The flexibility of this innovation platform of public-private partners allows the different groups to work together based on a common understanding of the complementary roles, while being able to achieve their individual goals more effectively. As the Pilot Phase winds down, STCP has been asked by the its Development Alliance to develop a 5-year plan building on its successes to date and integrating broadly with national and regional agricultural development efforts.