



ASASE

**Helping Cocoa
Farmers Build
Climate Resilience
in Ghana**

Introduction

Cocoa farming is vital for the livelihoods of more than 800,000 Ghanaian households. Unfortunately, cocoa farming is also linked to high rates of deforestation. Since 2000, Ghana has lost 50 per cent of its natural forests, a significant portion of which has been attributed to the expansion of cocoa farming.

Deforestation is a primary contributor to the climate crisis. In Ghana, lower rainfall and rising temperatures are already causing marked reductions in cocoa yields. The result is even lower incomes and rising food insecurity for smallholder farmers.

In March 2021, ETG | Beyond Beans launched the Accessible Soils and Sustainable Environments (ASASE) project, funded by The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). ASASE is implemented by Beyond Beans, Meridia, Tropenbos Ghana and supported by the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources (Ghana). This project offers a model featuring different interventions on and off cocoa farms, thereby creating a holistic landscape approach. The activities include individual coaching on sustainable farming business skills, land titling and shade tree registration for 3,000 farmers, the distribution and planting of more than 600,000 multipurpose tree seedlings for on- and off-farm planting, and the reforestation of 100 hectares of degraded lands. Through these pillars, the project aims to produce a bottom-up approach with tangible, direct benefits for both participating farmers and the environment.







Cocoaching session

ASASE

The Accessible Soils and Sustainable Environments (ASASE) project is a model featuring six different interventions on and off cocoa farms. Together, the six elements represent a model which supports farmers in producing sustainable cocoa, mitigates the effects of climate change and ensures that cocoa becomes a crop that benefits rather than harms the environment.

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FarmSeal: Giving Farmer's Legal Rights to Their Land

In partnership with Meridia, a geospatial data company that puts smallholder farmers at the centre to make supply chains inclusive, transparent and sustainable, ETG | Beyond Beans is working to improve the long-term security of farmers' rights to their land.

Roughly 80 per cent of Ghana's land is governed through customary tenure arrangements. Research has shown a strong correlation between insecure land tenure and lower farm productivity, especially regarding long-term investments in farms and the implementation of agroforestry systems. When cocoa farmers have the legal rights to their land, they can invest without the fear of losing the returns on their

investment. On average, farmers with land tenure documentation show a 21.9 per cent increase in productivity and earn 15.5 per cent higher incomes.

By partnering with government and customary authorities and by utilising specialised GPS mapping software, ETG | Beyond Beans is working with farmers to define the boundaries of their farms. After doing so, we facilitate the provision of farmers with recognised land tenure documentation at affordable prices. Land tenure documents typically cost 2,300 GHS (EUR 180) per document, but thanks to RVO subsidies, the cost to farmers is only 116 GHS (EUR 10) per document.

"When I asked a farmer why he took part in the reforestation project, he gave me three main reasons: he wants to improve the land so future generations can benefit from it, the timber trees planted can provide an additional source of income for farmers, and ASASE shows farmers they can contribute to protecting the environment at the local level."

Kwadwo Mensah, Project Manager for Agroforestry and Environment at Beyond Beans in Ghana

80%

of land in Ghana is governed through customary tenure arrangements



TreeSeal: Ensuring Farmer's Legal Rights to Their Shade Trees

In addition to mapping and securing documentation to define farm boundaries, ETG | Beyond beans is working with Meridia to map individual multipurpose shade trees. Through this, certificates can be produced which ensure farmers have the legal rights to the trees that they plant and grow.

Despite the importance of shade trees on cocoa farms, farmers often fear planting or maintaining seedlings because they may lack legal ownership over them. This puts farmers at risk of exploitation from timber contractors, who are known to cut down shade trees without farmers' consent, destroying cocoa plantations in the process.

With GPS software, we are mapping the locations of all shade trees on participating farmers' land. We aim to provide 3,000 farmers with TreeSeal certificates demonstrating ownership of their farms.

"Having my FarmSeal makes me feel like a proper cocoa farmer. I can now sleep soundly knowing the landowners have signed my document."

Victor Aflaney Palance - Cocoa Farmer

Joana Afful receiving a FarmSeal certification from Amarens Felperlaan (RVO)





Cocoaching: Individual Farmer Coaching to Address Climate Change

Cocoaching is ETG | Beyond Beans' Farm Development Plan (FDP) methodology, providing individualised coaching to farmers to help them achieve higher yields through more sustainable agricultural practices.

Individualised coaching has the potential to build trusting relationships between ETG | Beyond Beans Field Officers and farmers, increase farmer motivation, and lead to higher adoption rates of Good Agricultural, Social and Environmental Practices. The programme has a strong focus on climate agroforestry, given its key role in climate change adaptation and mitigation for cocoa farms. Through ASASE, we are providing 3,000 farmers with individualised on-farm coaching. (Read more about our [Cocoaching Programme](#))



Cocoaching session



Forest Conservation through Community Resource Management Committees

Effective forest conservation requires local leadership, local ownership, and local responsibility over project activities. As such, ETG | Beyond Beans is facilitating the establishment of Community Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) in 25 forest-fringe communities. These groups lead conservation and reforestation efforts by implementing action plans and working to eradicate child labour on cocoa farms.

"We take advantage of every public forum to educate and sensitise the community on the need to exclude children from farming activities, especially during school hours. At first some farmers were against our sensitisation. But we had to explain the dangers associated with child labour."

Salifu Baba Adam, Chairman of the Obogu CRMC

In Subima, the CRMC stopped illegal mining activities on their agricultural land and through trainings and the supply of seedlings, trees have been planted on agricultural land, that was previously left bare.

"When I see how well my seedlings are doing, it gives me so much joy. I'm proud of what I have been able to achieve under the ASASE project. When my trees mature, they will bring me a good amount of money and that's all we want."

Kwaku Karikari, Cocoa Farmer, Fumso Ketewa

In collaboration with Tropenbos Ghana, ETG | Beyond Beans visits communities to discuss the value of CRMCs with local authorities. We then work with these authorities on the initial set-up of these committees. We also advise CRMCs on writing by-laws and activity planning. Our partnership with the Ghanaian Forestry Commission ensures that these groups are legally recognised.

Through these local structures, ETG | Beyond Beans is supporting the conservation of 100 hectares of forest lands in and around these communities.



Obed Aphoto received training in Climate Smart Cocoa and individual coaching to make a long-term development plan for his farm



“ASASE is transformative because it brings together six mutually reinforcing components that are aimed at the multidimensional challenge climate change imposes on cocoa farmers. For example, giving farmers access to TreeSeal certificates when distributing multipurpose shade trees is an effective way to incentivise farmers to plant and maintain the distributed trees. Without the TreeSeal certificate, farmers fear attracting loggers who might damage the farm and prevent farmers from benefiting from the future revenues from the planted trees. This comprehensive landscape approach is vital for effective sustainable development.”

We not only work on-farm, ASASE also invests in the restoration of degraded lands as well as the protection of standing forests. A degraded and deforested landscape leads to increased temperatures and less rainfall. By protecting and restoring these forests, farmers who depend on their biodiversity will benefit.”

Remi van Balen, Senior Programme Manager for Agroforestry and Environment at Beyond Beans



Reforestation of Degraded Lands

To maintain reforestation projects, efforts must be led by local communities. This is why we use CRMCs as a basis for effective long-term community action on reforestation. CRMCs are, therefore, the primary actors in maintaining and administering reforestation efforts.

To grow multipurpose tree seedlings, we are establishing community nurseries. Once matured, seedlings will be planted across former ‘galamsey’ sites (areas left over from unregulated gold mining operations that damage natural ecosystems and pollute waterways) and other degraded lands through approaches such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). Through PES schemes, farmers receive in-kind payments such as fertilisers and tools in return for their reforestation work. Our target for ASASE is to establish 30 community nurseries to grow 650,000 multipurpose tree seedlings for distribution. Of these, 100,000 will be for off-farm planting to reforest 100 hectares of degraded land across 25 communities.



“We want to make sure that our farmers get the legal rights to their land.”



VSLA-CHILD: Tackling the Roots of Child Labour in Cocoa Communities

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are community-based groups of 15-40 individuals (of which, at least 50 per cent must be women) who collectively save a portion of their incomes. Through this community savings pool, members can access small loans, which they use to invest in their farms and side businesses, leading to diversified income and greater financial security.

With ETG | Beyond Beans' VSLA-Child Household Intervention for Learning and Development (VSLA-CHILD) methodology, we integrate group trainings on women empowerment, shared

household decision-making, and child protection into VSLA sessions. These trainings can facilitate a greater understanding of gender issues, leading to grassroots changes towards greater social equality. (Read more about [VSLA-CHILD](#))

We have integrated VSLA-CHILD groups into the broader methodology of ASASE to address the intersectional nature of climate change, poverty, and gender. VSLA-CHILD is an effective intervention in ensuring that women are supported to the fullest extent. Over the course of the ASASE project, 80 VSLA-CHILD groups with 2,400 members will be established.



VSLA Cash Box

Progress so far



1,866

farmers have received Cocoaching (Target = 3,000 farmers)



3,000+

farmers trained in climate smart cocoa farming (Target Reached)



30

hectares reforested with 30,000 trees (Target = 100 hectares)



640,000

cocoa seedlings distributed



25

Community Resource Management Committees established to manage natural resources in their communities



80

Village Savings and Loan Associations established (Target Reached)



3,000

farmers mapped for land tenure documents



475

land tenure documents delivered



**BEYOND
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