



**Beyond Business As Usual**



**LEICESTER CASTLE**  
**BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
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**“What works? A review of the contribution academic knowledge can make to building a stronger and more resilient cocoa economy”**

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# Paper rationale

The global cocoa industry faces many significant challenges such as low price, low farmer returns, poor productivity, gender inequality, contaminants etc. and many of these issues are the subject of ongoing interventions.

There is also a lot of academic research being undertaken globally on such topics and scope for policymakers and researchers to learn from each other on many key topics.

This paper looks at some of the academic literature on the social context of some of these topics in order to investigate what we might be able to take from it and use in order to enhance the effectiveness of programmes of intervention.

What can academic research on the social context of cocoa contribute to good policymaking?

# Cocoa yields and farm management

These challenges are not new. The low productivity of cocoa farmers and low uptake of agricultural advice has been a long-standing source of frustration for many stakeholders.

There is evidence from 1914 that farmers in Ghana believed that “Attempts to control pests and diseases by thorough pruning, frequent harvesting, spraying, and burning or burying infected material, achieved little” (Clarence-Smith 2000: 189).

In the 1950s the colonial government tried to rehabilitate cocoa farms affected by swollen-shoot disease by giving the farmers cash to replant the trees but the farmers used the funds for other purposes. The government ended up having to undertake the replanting of trees themselves at great cost (Okali 1983; Hill 1986).

**Cocoa farmers do not respond well to top-down approaches.**

# Cocoa and culture

Of course, factors such as the age of the farmers, low incomes, lack of training, illiteracy etc. are key factors in the non-adoption of agricultural extension advice.

However, there is also a strong cultural component to farm management which is at odds with best agronomic practice but which needs to be engaged with in order for interventions to be successful.

e.g. Ghana and Black Pod; pruning in the Dominican Republic etc.

Not necessarily a barrier. Understanding this and integrating it into agricultural extension programmes could significantly enhance their success.

# Gender – what we know and what we don't know

A review of the academic literature on gender in cocoa reveals a lot of questions. For example, on productivity

- Hiscox & Goldstein (2014) state that female cocoa farmers in Ghana have levels of productivity 25-30% below those of male counterparts
- Vigneri & Holmes (2009) found no significant differences between women and men's cocoa yields in Ghana

However, there is a broad agreement in the literature that female cocoa farmers are less likely to use inputs such as fertiliser and insecticide e.g. Hiscox & Goldstein (2014) state that female cocoa farmers are 30-40% less likely than men to use inputs such as fertilizer.

# What are the constraints on women adopting fertiliser?

Kehinde et al (2016) study of gender differentials in fertiliser adoption among cocoa farmers in Nigeria shows an overall low adoption rate – 28.3% for women and 37.4% for men. For both sexes the **number of years of formal education** was a key factor behind adoption **BUT** there were also gender specific variations. For women, **membership of an association** was key. For men, the significant determinants of fertilizer adoption were **age, farm size and access to credit**.

The difficulty in managing a seasonal income and the difficulty of balancing food crop productivity and cocoa productivity (Kiewisch 2016)

The social context <http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/news/2017/04/28/he-oscar/>

**Given these big challenges, we are still a long way from achieving gender parity in cocoa.**

## Conclusion

- The challenges in contemporary cocoa production are significant. In order to address them, there is a clear need to move away from simply doing more of the same and using a one-size-fits-all approach. **Using participatory and collaborative methods of engaging with farmers may be a more productive way forward than top-down approaches.**
- On issues such as gender there is an imperative to act but this is going to require considerable investments and **quick solutions are not around the corner.**
- Consolidating the evidence base for interventions would make them more effective and on some topics there is a need for more research. However, and more fundamentally, we also **need to engage more with the research we already have.**



## References cited

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