

The Role of Innovation in Sustainable Cocoa Cultivation: Moving Beyond Mitigation and Adaptation

Abstract

Cocoa cultivation is both severely threatened by climate change and a potential contributor to climate change through deforestation. Based on a review of the literature and secondary documents, as well as field observations and interviews, this chapter examines different innovations in Ghana's cocoa sector, the ways in which they aim to address sustainable cocoa cultivation, and the challenges to their adoption. We find that cocoa farmers are generally open to innovation and new technology. Yet, while farmers respond positively to certain innovations, they do not fully adopt others. This uneven adoption, we argue, is not just a result of limited resources or poor extension services but stems from a failure to address the multiple challenges farmers face when introducing new innovations, including insecure land-use rights, youth disinterest, migration, and seemingly lucrative alternative land use. While promising innovations, such as agroforestry and smartphone applications for agricultural service delivery and training, are currently being implemented, such innovations, we conclude, will only lead to sustainable cocoa cultivation if these broader challenges are addressed, thereby moving beyond a narrower concern with yields and climate change mitigation and adaptation.