Women play integral roles in cocoa farms and communities, but participation of women in Farmer Field Schools in Côte d’Ivoire is far from equitable. The barriers to participation and productivity are significant, as women and men have different perceptions of roles and responsibilities in cocoa farms.

Women lack access to productive resources

Women and men differ in their opportunities to own land and control productive resources. Men are more likely to own land for cocoa farms and other crops, while women are more likely to run small-scale cocoa farms. Men are more likely to hire laborers, which increases their costs of production. Women have less disposable income than men to buy crop protection and planting materials. They generally use men’s second-hand tools and have less access to use tools properly.

When we asked men in Côte d’Ivoire about women’s role in cocoa, they said women help with the harvest and plant protection. But when we asked women, they said they are involved in nearly all production activities. And neither men nor women take women seriously as farmers.

Women are involved in almost all cocoa farming activities, but we need to recognize and reward their efforts, and help them build their confidence as farmers.

We need to extend rights and access for cooperative members to women and households more broadly. Cooperative membership is restricted to one member per household, which is usually the man.

Determine the causes and provide solutions

This study is based on a qualitative, participatory approach that included a desk review plus twelve focus groups and nine face-to-face interviews. The participants of the study were directly involved in identifying the problems and designing solutions.

Men sell cocoa and control the income.

Men are the primary financial agents of the cocoa value chain. They take decisions on cocoa purchase and control the income generated from cocoa sales. Women, on the other hand, are responsible for the family expenses.

Women are excluded from decision-making roles.

Women’s role in cocoa varies depending on whom you ask. It makes it hard to have sound strategies to improve productivity. When we asked men in Côte d’Ivoire about women’s role in cocoa, they said women help with the harvest and plant protection. But when we asked women, they said they are involved in nearly all production activities. And neither men nor women take women seriously as farmers.

Few female leaders are emerging in Aboisso and Duékoué.

A few female leaders in Aboisso and Duékoué are emerging, taking initiative to organize women into cooperatives and associations. Discussions with husbands in Aboisso show they are open to supporting projects targeting women. They recognize that women help them manage their plantations and diversify products they can sell.

In Aboisso and Duékoué, 3 and 5% of farmers are women. Women are excluded from decision-making roles and run small-scale farms.

Situational Analysis of Gender Integration at Production Level in the Cocoa Value Chain

The Nature of Cooperatives

Agricultural cooperatives are typically in the form of male-led, generally male-dominated entities, where women’s empowerment initiatives through traditional intervention are not designed with women in mind.

Increasing women’s participation in cooperatives is critical to support gender equality and improvement in cocoa production.

It takes investment and expertise, but it is possible to change these perceptions and norms. This study has found some reasons for optimism.

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