Sustainable Cocoa Value Chain in the Eyes of Indigenous Wisdom – A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Achieving a sustainable value chain requires collaborative efforts between cocoa farmers, chocolatiers, and chocolate companies, integrating indigenous wisdom with modern practices. This study explores the challenges and opportunities for value chain sustainability from the perspectives of indigenous knowledge from farmers, chocolatiers, and chocolate companies in West Africa.

BACKGROUND

Although cocoa originated in the Americas, 70% is grown in West Africa [2]. Although cocoa originated in the Americas, 70% is grown in West Africa [2]. The cocoa tree Theobroma cacao L. is native to the Amazon and grown in tropical rainforests in Central and South America [1].

METHODS & RESULTS

- **Knowledge of cocoa farming and handling:
  - **Farmers**
    - Adoption of new cocoa varieties
    - Box and heap fermentation
    - Income diversity
    - Cocoa pod upcycling
  - **Chocolatiers**
    - Community development
    - Sustainable farming practices
    - Economic empowerment
    - Preserving heritage

- **Categories - 15 questions:
  - Background
  - Processing and innovation
  - Sustainability
  - Growth and challenges

- **Semi-structured interview questions**
  - Farming and handling
  - Cocoa value chain
  - Climate impacts
  - Disease management
  - Need for more integrated youth in cocoa farming

**Figure 3:** Interview question categories and research participants

**Figure 4:** Byproducts from cocoa beans & chocolate

**Figure 5:** Farmers’ cacao pods to cocoa beans process

**Figure 6:** Chocolatiers and chocolate companies’ cocoa beans to chocolate bars process

- **Table 1:** Key sustainability themes identified

- **CONCLUSIONS**

This research project reveals cocoa and chocolate's deep significance in West Africa, USA. It serves as the economic backbone, supporting traditional and generating export income. The sustainability of this traditional practice is further complicated by the reluctance of educated youth to continue cocoa farming, inadequate government support, and the influence of modern trends.

**REFERENCES**
