

COCOA IS GHANA, GHANA IS COCOA

Background

The saying 'Cocoa is Ghana, Ghana is Cocoa' portrays the important role cocoa plays in the economy of Ghana. Cocoa is the second foreign exchange earner and the lives of many farmers and their families depend on it. Cocoa products like chocolate, pebbles, cocoa powder feature prominently on the menu in many homes, restaurants and hotels. Ghana is second only to the Ivory Coast in its production of cocoa but produces best quality cocoa beans. Cocoa is indeed Ghana and Ghana is Cocoa first arrived in Ghana in the early years of the nineteenth century. History has it that cocoa was first brought to Ghana by the Dutch missionaries but it was not until Tetteh Quarshie, a native of Osu in Accra, who had traveled to Fernando Po and worked there as a blacksmith, returned with Amelonado cocoa pods in 1879 that it began to spread. He established a farm at Akwapim Mampong in the Eastern Region from where enthusiastic farmers bought pods to plant, which resulted in the spread of cocoa to other parts of the Region. Tetteh Quarshie thus became a prominent cocoa farmer with his farm serving as a source of supply for cocoa planting materials until his death in 1892.

Cocoa cultivation assumed commercial dimensions after its introduction by Tetteh Quarshie and spread to other forest areas of the country. Currently, there are six cocoa growing areas namely: Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Volta, Central and Western regions.

Although, fruits mature throughout the year, usually two harvests are made the crop year begins in October, when purchases of the main crop begin, while the light crop season starts in June.

Harvesting cocoa consists of cutting the ripe pods from trees, breaking them open and extracting the seeds from the pods. These seeds are then allowed to ferment for 6 or 7 days with two turnings before drying in the sun. Beans are then bagged and shipped.

In recognition of the contribution of cocoa to the development of Ghana, the government in 1947, established the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), as the main government agency responsible for the development of the industry.

Mission:

The mission of the Board is to encourage and facilitate the production, processing and marketing of good quality cocoa, coffee and sheanut in all forms in the most efficient and cost effective manner, and maintain the best mutual industrial relations with its objectives.

The objectives of the Board are to:

- encourage the production of cocoa, coffee and sheanut.
- initiate programmes aimed at controlling pests and disease of cocoa, coffee and sheanut.

- undertake and encourage the processing of cocoa, coffee, sheanut and cocoa waster (cocoa by-products), with the aim of adding value for export and local consumption.
- undertake, promote and encourage scientific research aimed at improving the quality and yield of cocoa, coffee, sheanut and other tropical crops.
- regulate the marketing of cocoa, coffee and sheanut.
- secure the most favourable arrangements for the purchase, grading, sealing and certification, sale and export of cocoa, coffee and sheanut.
- purchase, market and export cocoa products and cocoa produced in Ghana which is graded under the Cocoa Industry (Regulations) Decree, 1968 NLCD 278, or any other enactment as suitable for export.
- assist in the development of the cocoa, coffee and sheanut industries of Ghana.

Functions:

The functions of COCOBOD centre on the production, research, extension, internal and external marketing, and quality control of cocoa. The functions can be classified into two main sectors: Pre-harvest and Post-harvest which are performed by specialized divisions of the Board.

Pre-harvest Sector:

The Pre-harvest Sector functions which are performed by the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG), the Seed Production Unit (SPU) and the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease Control Unit (CSSVDCU) deal with fundamental issue on actual cocoa production at the farm gate level.

Post-Harvest Sector:

The Post-harvest Sector functions are undertaken by the Quality Control Division (QCD) and the Cocoa Marketing Company (CMC) Limited.

The Post-harvest activities of COCOBOD start with quality control measures of QCD which farmers must observe to facilitate the acceptance of their produce at the buying centres by the licensed buying companies engaged in internal marketing of cocoa at the time.