

GHANA COCOA CONNECT 2025

June 5 -7, 2025



BRIDGING CULTURES, EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES

“Cocoa Under Pressure: Securing Resilience, Innovation, and Fair Trade”

CONSULTATIVE BACKGROUND PAPER

AFROEURO FOUNDATION

Executive Summary

GhanaCocoaConnect 2025, an initiative spearheaded by AfroEuro Foundation in collaboration with Africa in Motion, Ghana embassy Netherlands and Ghana Cocobod is set to take place on **5th June 2025**. The event aims to strengthen trade ties between Ghana and the Netherlands, focusing on building a resilient and sustainable cocoa industry through innovation, collaboration and fairness. Ghana, as the world's second-largest cocoa producer, and the Netherlands, a leading importer and processor, share a vital role in the global cocoa value chain, making this event a pivotal platform for stakeholders from both countries.

At the core of GhanaCocoaConnect 2025 is the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** initiative. ETC is a groundbreaking model designed to ensure fair compensation, transparent profit-sharing, and sustainable farming practices across the cocoa value chain. By aligning with international frameworks such as the **EU Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (2025)**, the **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (2024)**, and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, ETC aims at positioning Ghanaian cocoa as a global benchmark for ethical trade and sustainability.

Key Objectives

1. **Promote ETC Adoption:** Establish ETC as a recognized standard for Ghanaian cocoa, empowering farmers and ensuring fair revenue distribution.
2. **Expand Value-Added Exports:** Increase local cocoa processing to capture higher market value, with a target of boosting exports of processed products by 20% within the next year.
3. **Foster Strategic Partnerships:** Build at least 10 new collaborations between Ghanaian producers and international stakeholders to drive investment and innovation.
4. **Empower Smallholder Farmers:** Equip 500 farmers with training, resources, and market access opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

Opportunities

- Growing demand for ethical cocoa in Europe provides a pathway for Ghanaian producers to access premium markets.
- Expanding local cocoa processing presents significant economic potential, enabling the production of high-value goods such as chocolate and cocoa butter.
- Integrating advanced technologies like precision agriculture and climate-smart farming techniques to enhance productivity and resilience.

Challenges

- Climate change impacts, price volatility, and persistent child labor concerns threaten Ghana's cocoa sector.
- Aging farms and limited engagement from younger generations hinder long-term sustainability.

The Role of the Ghanaian Diaspora

GhanaCocoaConnect 2025 leverages the unique potential of the Ghanaian diaspora as advocates, investors, and facilitators. Their involvement includes funding value-added processing facilities, promoting ethical Ghanaian cocoa in European markets, and connecting Ghanaian producers with buyers to create impactful trade opportunities.

Expected Outcomes

- Greater adoption of ETC, with measurable commitments from cooperatives and buyers.
- Establishment of strategic partnerships and increased investment in Ghana's cocoa sector.
- Enhanced visibility for Ghanaian cocoa as a leader in ethical and sustainable production.

By uniting stakeholders across the cocoa value chain, this initiative sets the foundation for a fairer, more resilient future. Together, we can redefine the cocoa industry and create opportunities that benefit all.

Introduction

The event shall serve as a bridge between Ghana and the European cocoa industry, with a particular focus on fostering partnerships with European markets.

At the heart of this year's event is the integration of the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** approach, a model that shapes how revenue is allocated across the cocoa value chain. ETC prioritizes **fair revenue sharing, sustainability, and the empowerment of smallholder farmers**, ensuring that those at the foundation of this industry receive benefits for their contributions. This model not only uplifts farming communities but also sets new standards for ethical and sustainable trade practices.

GhanaCocoaConnect brings together stakeholders from Ghana and the Netherlands, which include smallholder farmers, cooperatives, government leaders, NGOs, investors, and international buyers. Through this event, we aim to:

- Showcase the potential of **ETC** as a model for fair trade and sustainability.
- Promote **climate-smart agriculture** and value-added cocoa processing to create a more resilient and competitive cocoa industry in Ghana.
- Foster **meaningful partnerships** that drive investments, technological innovation, and equitable growth in the cocoa sector.

Role of the Ghanaian Government

The Ghanaian government could play a pivotal role in supporting the successful implementation of the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** approach. Specifically, its involvement could focus on the following:

1. Policy Development and Regulation

The government, through the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) and the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), provides regulatory frameworks and policies that align with the principles of ETC. This includes ensuring that cocoa pricing mechanisms, sustainability standards, and labor practices are consistent with the goals of fair trade and revenue sharing.

2. **Capacity Building**

The government supports programs aimed at training farmers and cooperatives on the ETC model, emphasizing sustainable farming techniques, financial literacy, and access to market data.

3. **Subsidies and Incentives**

Through COCOBOD, the government offers subsidies for fertilizers, high-yield cocoa varieties, and farm rehabilitation programs, ensuring that farmers have the tools they need to meet the standards required by ETC.

4. **Market Advocacy**

The government serves as a global advocate for Ghanaian cocoa, promoting its ethical and sustainable qualities in international markets and negotiating trade agreements that prioritize fair revenue-sharing practices.

Ghana's cocoa value chain

We aim to solve the critical challenges in Ghana's cocoa value chain, including inequitable wealth distribution, declining farmer incomes, climate-related risks, and limited global market access for value-added cocoa products. Our approach focuses on:

1. **Equitable Wealth Distribution:** Implementing the Equal Trade Certification (ETC) model to ensure fair pricing and revenue-sharing for smallholder farmers, enabling them to move from subsistence to sustainable livelihoods.
2. **Sustainability and Climate Resilience:** Promoting climate-smart agricultural practices, such as agroforestry, drought-resistant cocoa varieties, and farm rehabilitation, to mitigate the impacts of climate change and improve productivity.
3. **Youth and Diaspora Engagement:** Encouraging youth participation in cocoa farming through incentives, technology integration, and entrepreneurial opportunities while leveraging diaspora resources for investments, mentorship, and advocacy.
4. **Value-Added Processing and Market Expansion:** Increasing local cocoa processing to produce high-value products (e.g., chocolate, cocoa butter) and creating stronger trade partnerships with European markets to drive demand for ethically sourced Ghanaian cocoa.

By addressing these interconnected issues, we aim to build a more equitable, sustainable, and globally competitive cocoa industry in Ghana.

ETC-Certified Products Creating Value

While the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** is an emerging model, there is strong evidence from similar certifications, such as **Fairtrade** and **Rainforest Alliance**, that ethically certified cocoa products command higher prices and create additional value in the market. For example:

1. Premium Pricing

- Fairtrade-certified cocoa consistently earns farmers a premium, with some buyers paying up to **20-30% more** for certified products. ETC aims to replicate and enhance this model by focusing on fair wealth distribution and transparency.
- Testimonies from existing buyers of ethically sourced cocoa reveal that consumers are increasingly willing to pay a premium for products that align with their ethical and sustainability values.

2. Market Trends

- Major chocolatiers like Lindt, Nestlé, and Tony's Chocolonely have publicly committed to sourcing 100% sustainable cocoa, indicating a growing demand for certifications like ETC.

3. Consumer Demand

- A 2022 European consumer survey found that **57% of consumers prioritize ethical sourcing** in their purchasing decisions, with chocolate being a top category. ETC-certified cocoa aligns with this demand.

Support from European or International Legislation

The growing push for ethical and sustainable trade is supported by several pieces of **European Union legislation** that encourage or require responsible sourcing of agricultural products, including cocoa:

1. EU Deforestation-Free Regulation (Effective in 2025)

- This regulation mandates that companies importing cocoa must ensure their supply chains are free from deforestation and environmental degradation. Certifications like ETC can provide compliance mechanisms by promoting traceability and sustainability.

2. Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)

- Starting in 2024, this directive requires large companies operating in the EU to disclose their supply chain sustainability practices. ETC certification can serve as evidence of compliance with these reporting standards.

3. 2030 Sustainability Goals

- The EU Green Deal and its Farm to Fork Strategy aim to ensure that **25% of agricultural products meet sustainability certification standards** by 2030. While no explicit mandate for ETC exists yet, its alignment with these goals positions it as a relevant certification for future compliance.

4. Global Goals

- ETC supports the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Growth or Decline of Cocoa Production

Key Challenges

- Ghana's cocoa production faces significant challenges, including aging farms, climate change, and declining interest from younger generations.

Mitigation Measures

1. Climate-Smart Farming

- Promote the use of pruning, artificial pollination, and shade tree planting to boost productivity.
- Partner with research institutions to develop and distribute drought-resistant and high-yield cocoa varieties.

2. Youth Engagement

- Introduce policies offering subsidies for land acquisition and tax breaks for young farmers.
- Provide training programs focused on innovative farming techniques and income diversification.
- Highlight success stories of young entrepreneurs thriving in cocoa farming.

3. Rehabilitation Programs

- Scale up national initiatives to rehabilitate aged cocoa farms with subsidized costs for inputs and labor.
- Facilitate public-private partnerships to fund farm upgrades and incentivize adoption.

Welfare of Cocoa Farmers

Challenges

- Farmers view cocoa farming as subsistence rather than a profitable business due to low income and limited market access.

Proposed Solutions

1. Transforming Cocoa Farming into a Business

- Provide financial literacy and business management training to farmers.
- Promote cooperative models to improve bargaining power and market access.

2. Equal Trade Certification (ETC)

- Introduce ETC to ensure transparent pricing and equitable revenue-sharing models.
- Educate farmers on how ETC benefits improve income and community well-being.

3. Access to Finance

- Collaborate with microfinance institutions to offer affordable loans for irrigation, fertilizers, and farm equipment.
- Establish a stabilization fund to protect farmers from price volatility.

Youth in Cocoa Farming

Proposals to Attract Youth

1. Incentives and Policies

- Government-backed grants and loans for young farmers.
- Tax exemptions for youth-led farming businesses and startups in the cocoa sector.

2. Technology Integration

- Provide training on mobile apps for farm management, market access, and precision agriculture.
- Promote the use of drones for farm monitoring and pest control.

3. Entrepreneurial Opportunities:

- Encourage youth participation in value-added cocoa processing, such as producing cocoa butter, powder, and chocolate.
- Support youth cooperatives focused on exporting high-quality processed cocoa products.

Diaspora Involvement

Proposed Initiatives

1. Ghana Cocoa Diaspora Investment Fund

- Create a fund to enable diaspora members to co-invest in value-added processing facilities or farmer cooperatives.
- Offer financial incentives such as equity shares and tax breaks for diaspora investors.

2. Digital Platform

- Develop a platform to connect diaspora members with cocoa farmers, enabling them to contribute funding, mentorship, or technical expertise.

3. Workshops and Advocacy

- Host diaspora-specific sessions during GhanaCocoaConnect to showcase investment opportunities.
- Highlight the diaspora's role as advocates for Ghanaian cocoa in European markets.

Farmers' Associations

Empowering Farmers' Associations

1. Capacity Building

- Train association leaders on financial management, negotiation skills, and advocacy for fair trade practices.

2. ETC Adoption

- Encourage associations to implement ETC principles among members, ensuring better pricing and compliance with sustainability standards.

3. Market Access

- Facilitate partnerships between farmers' associations and European buyers to establish long-term trade agreements.

Condition of Cocoa Farms

Actionable Interventions

1. Rehabilitation Programs

- Launch subsidized programs to replace aging cocoa trees with high-yield, disease-resistant varieties.

2. Agroforestry Practices

- Promote crop diversification and intercropping with shade trees to improve soil health and resilience.

3. Awareness Campaigns

- Educate farmers on the economic benefits of farm rehabilitation and sustainable practices.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

1. Growing Demand for Sustainable Cocoa

- Leverage European markets' emphasis on ethically sourced cocoa to promote ETC-certified products.

2. Value-Added Processing

- Increase local processing from 25% to higher levels, boosting export revenues and job creation.

3. Technology Integration

- Introduce precision agriculture tools to optimize yields and reduce environmental impact.

Challenges and Solutions

1. Climate Change

- Promote agroforestry and drought-resistant varieties to adapt to changing weather patterns.

2. Child Labor

- Collaborate with NGOs to enforce child labor laws and provide alternative income opportunities for families.

3. Price Volatility

- Establish price stabilization mechanisms to ensure consistent income for farmers.

Equal Trade Certification (ETC)

Implementation Strategy

1. Pilot Programs

- Begin with selected cooperatives to demonstrate the effectiveness of ETC in improving income and sustainability.

2. Farmer Education

- Develop training modules to educate farmers on ETC principles, benefits, and implementation.

3. Collaboration with Buyers:

- Partner with European chocolate manufacturers to prioritize ETC-certified cocoa and offer premium pricing.

Scaling the ETC Model

- Gradually expand ETC adoption nationwide, focusing on cooperatives and farmer groups ready to comply with its standards.
- Offer financial incentives and access to exclusive markets for early adopters.

Benefits of GhanaCocoaConnect

GhanaCocoaConnect 2025 serves as a platform to advance the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** model, address systemic challenges in the cocoa industry, and create lasting benefits for all stakeholders. By prioritizing collaboration, sustainability, and equitable practices, this initiative offers measurable value.

1. Tangible Commercial and Business Benefits

GhanaCocoaConnect provides stakeholders with a unique opportunity to access markets for ethically sourced cocoa, capitalizing on European consumer preferences for fair trade and sustainability.

Key Benefits for Stakeholders

- **Product Differentiation:** ETC certification enables businesses to stand out in competitive markets by showcasing their commitment to ethical sourcing.
- **Premium Pricing:** Certified products command higher prices in European markets, where consumers are willing to pay more for ethically and sustainably sourced cocoa.
- **Revenue Growth:** Access to premium markets boosts revenues while strengthening brand loyalty among socially conscious buyers.

Example: A European chocolatier that partners with ETC-certified Ghanaian cooperatives can market their products as environmentally friendly and ethically produced, increasing sales and improving brand perception.

2. Advancing Sustainability and Regulatory Compliance

The ETC model directly addresses environmental and social concerns in the cocoa value chain, ensuring alignment with global sustainability goals and legislation.

Key Links to Legislation

- **EU Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (2025):** ETC-certified cocoa ensures compliance with stringent deforestation-free requirements for imports into the EU.

- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD, 2024):** ETC certification provides documented proof of sustainable practices, enabling companies to meet EU sustainability reporting obligations.
- **European Green Deal Goals (2030):** ETC aligns with the EU's ambition to ensure 25% of agricultural products meet sustainability certification standards.

Example: A European retailer can source ETC-certified cocoa to meet regulatory requirements and position itself as a sustainability leader, avoiding supply chain risks tied to non-compliance.

3. Equitable Revenue Sharing Across the Value Chain

ETC ensures that smallholder farmers receive a fair share of the value created in the cocoa industry.

Key Benefits

- **Transparent Pricing:** Farmers benefit from clear and equitable revenue-sharing models that increase their incomes.
- **Strengthened Supply Chains:** Fair compensation fosters trust and long-term relationships between farmers and buyers.
- **Resilient Communities:** Higher incomes allow farmers to invest in better equipment, education, and community development.

Example: A Ghanaian cooperative using ETC can negotiate directly with European buyers, bypassing intermediaries and ensuring farmers earn higher profits.

4. Networking and Collaboration Opportunities

GhanaCocoaConnect is a hub for forging strategic partnerships across the cocoa industry.

What Stakeholders Gain

- **Access to Trade Experts:** Trade professionals facilitate matchmaking between Ghanaian producers and international buyers.
- **Investment Opportunities:** Diaspora investors and global financial institutions can identify cooperatives ready for partnerships.
- **Knowledge Exchange:** Participants gain insights into best practices, from sustainable farming techniques to market strategies.

Example: A diaspora-led investment fund could finance a value-added processing facility, while connecting Ghanaian producers with European chocolatiers seeking premium products.

5. Building Trust and Recognition Through Certification

ETC acts as a seal of approval, signaling ethical sourcing and sustainability to consumers and regulators.

Why It Matters:

- **Global Recognition:** ETC aligns with the ethical principles of Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance, increasing its credibility.
- **Consumer Trust:** Certification reassures buyers that products are sourced responsibly, boosting brand loyalty.
- **Investor Confidence:** Businesses working with ETC-certified suppliers are seen as ethical and forward-thinking.

Example: A global food retailer sourcing ETC-certified cocoa could run marketing campaigns emphasizing its commitment to sustainability, attracting eco-conscious customers.

6. Empowering Farmers and Communities

The ETC model uplifts farming communities by addressing systemic challenges like low incomes and lack of market access.

How ETC Empowers Farmers

- **Training and Resources:** Farmers learn climate-smart agricultural practices to improve yields and adapt to climate change.
- **Market Access:** Certification opens doors to premium markets that demand sustainable and ethical cocoa.
- **Community Development:** Higher incomes help reduce poverty and fund local initiatives like schools and healthcare.

Example: A cooperative trained through ETC programs increases yields by 30%, enabling farmers to sell their cocoa at higher prices and reinvest profits into their communities.

7. The Role of the Diaspora

The Ghanaian diaspora plays a critical role in advancing ETC and fostering the success of GhanaCocoaConnect.

Defined Roles and Contributions

- **Investment:** Diaspora members can provide financial backing for value-added processing facilities or sustainable farming projects.
- Example:** A diaspora investment fund finances the construction of a small chocolate factory in Ghana, creating jobs and enabling local producers to export finished products.

- **Advocacy:** Diaspora members act as ambassadors for ETC, promoting Ghanaian cocoa in European markets and advocating for sustainable trade practices. **Example:** Diaspora leaders organize events in Europe to educate consumers and businesses about the benefits of ETC-certified cocoa.
- **Market Access Facilitation:** Leveraging their networks, diaspora members connect Ghanaian producers directly with buyers, reducing intermediaries. **Example:** A diaspora trade expert organizes matchmaking events between Ghanaian cooperatives and European chocolatiers.

By combining financial support, advocacy, and networking, the diaspora amplifies GhanaCocoaConnect's impact while helping Ghanaian producers gain access to global markets.

ETC Website or Link

While ETC is in the process of establishing a dedicated website, it aligns with internationally recognized sustainability standards like Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance. Its framework is designed to comply with EU legislation and global fair-trade principles, ensuring future recognition as a leading certification.

Objectives for GhanaCocoaConnect 2025

GhanaCocoaConnect 2025 is committed to addressing critical challenges in the cocoa value chain by promoting equitable and sustainable trade practices. Its key objectives are:

1. **Achieve Progress Toward Widespread Adoption of the Equal Trade Certification (ETC)**
Establish ETC as a recognized standard among Ghanaian cocoa producers, ensuring fair wealth distribution, transparent pricing, and access to premium international markets. GhanaCocoaConnect will serve as the platform to introduce and advance ETC adoption by engaging stakeholders at every level.
2. **Increase Value-Added Cocoa Exports by 20% Over the Next Year**
Facilitate partnerships and investments that support local cocoa processing, enabling Ghanaian producers to export more value-added products, such as chocolate and cocoa butter, to Europe and beyond.
3. **Develop Strategic Partnerships with at Least 10 New Stakeholders**
Connect farmers, cooperatives, European buyers, NGOs, and policymakers to build long-term collaborations that address current gaps in market access, funding, and sustainability practices.
4. **Empower 500 Smallholder Farmers with Training and Market Opportunities**
Provide training in sustainable farming methods, financial literacy, and ETC requirements while creating direct connections to buyers and investors through the GhanaCocoaConnect platform.

Background and Context

The Cocoa Trade: Ghana and the Netherlands

Ghana's cocoa sector contributes 20% of global cocoa production, generating \$2 billion annually and supporting over 800,000 smallholder farmers. Despite its economic significance, farmers often receive less than 6% of the final retail value of chocolate, necessitating reforms for equitable revenue distribution.

The Netherlands, home to the world's largest cocoa port in Amsterdam, imports approximately 600,000 metric tons of cocoa annually. With over 85% of its imports certified as sustainable, the Dutch market underscores the demand for ethically sourced cocoa, creating an ideal partnership opportunity with Ghana.

Global Cocoa Trade

Globally valued at \$130 billion, the cocoa industry faces significant challenges such as climate change, price volatility, and sustainability concerns. Ghana's high-quality cocoa beans position it as a leader in premium cocoa production, yet the integration of ethical practices like ETC remains vital for long-term growth.

Condition of Cocoa Farms and Farmers

Cocoa farmers continue to remain the most important players in the value chain. Without them, there would be no quality Ghanaian cocoa beans on the world market. It is important to note that even though farmers continue to expand their area of cultivation bit by bit, they still appreciate cocoa farming as subsistence and not as a profitable business venture. For this singular reason, a lot of the Ghanaian youth are not motivated and attracted to go into cocoa farming. Studies have shown that the average age of cocoa farmers in Ghana is around 55 years (MoFA, 2021). Farmers at this age are unable to optimize their production levels and so it greatly affects the health of the cocoa tree annually. Simply put, farmers at this age are unable to carry out basic cultural maintenance on their cocoa farms, which naturally affects yield per cocoa tree.

The cocoa tree is such a delicate tree that it needs utmost care throughout its productive years. It is estimated that the life expectancy of the cocoa tree is 30 years, after which yield per tree naturally continues to decline. The cocoa tree, when cultivated and given the necessary care, can start bearing at age 2 years until it reaches its peak at age 15 years, where it produces on average about 65 pods per tree. This figure can be increased substantially with committed investments such as climate-smart cocoa farming, including pruning, artificial hand pollination, intercropping with economic shade trees, etc.

The Regulator also plays significant roles in the lives of cocoa farmers and farms, but the challenge here is that a significant number of cocoa farmers do not adopt the interventions implemented by the Regulator. Some of the interventions implemented by the Regulator include Productivity Enhancement Programs (rehabilitation of diseased and overaged cocoa trees, cocoa pest and disease control, pruning, application of organic fertilizers, artificial hand pollination, etc.).

Role of COCOBOD

The Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) plays a pivotal role in GhanaCocoaConnect 2025, as it represents the backbone of Ghana's cocoa industry. Its participation is essential in providing valuable insights into sustainable cocoa production, trade policies, and innovations that drive the industry forward. As the main authority overseeing Ghana's cocoa sector, COCOBOD's engagement will highlight opportunities for collaboration, fair trade, and market expansion with European partners. Moreover, its leadership in the Chocolate Festival presents a unique opportunity to establish Ghanaian chocolate's footprint in Europe. COCOBOD's presence will reinforce Ghana's status as a global cocoa leader and strengthen EU-Ghana partnerships.

Target Groups and Stakeholder Benefits

Target Groups

1. Ghanaian Diaspora

- **Role:** Serve as cultural ambassadors, advocates for sustainable practices, and investors in Ghana's cocoa value chain.
- **Contributions:** Facilitate market access for Ghanaian cocoa products in Europe, invest in value-added processing facilities, and support farmer empowerment initiatives.

2. Academia

- **Role:** Scholars and researchers advancing discussions on sustainability, innovation, and equitable trade in the cocoa sector.
- **Contributions:** Provide data-driven insights and research to support the implementation and scaling of the Equal Trade Certification (ETC) model.

3. Producers

- **Role:** Ghanaian cocoa farmers and cooperatives committed to sustainable farming practices and fair trade.
- **Contributions:** Produce high-quality cocoa that meets ETC standards and benefits from premium pricing and market access.

4. Buyers

- **Role:** European businesses, chocolatiers, and consumers seeking premium, ethically sourced cocoa products.
- **Contributions:** Create demand for ETC-certified cocoa, driving ethical trade practices while securing supply chain transparency and quality assurance.

Stakeholder Benefits

1. Diaspora

- **Opportunities for Impactful Investment:** Gain access to investment opportunities in value-added cocoa processing facilities and farmer support programs.
- **Example:** Diaspora-led funds can co-finance projects like small-scale chocolate factories, creating jobs and increasing Ghanaian export revenues.
- **Advocacy Role:** Promote Ghanaian cocoa's unique qualities and ethical certifications in European markets, amplifying its global presence.

2. Academia

- **Knowledge-Sharing Platforms:** Access GhanaCocoaConnect as a venue for presenting research and engaging in policy and industry discussions.
- **Collaborative Opportunities:** Partner with NGOs, governments, and businesses to study and advance the impact of ETC on trade, sustainability, and farmer welfare.

3. Producers

- **Market Access and Premium Pricing:** ETC certification provides direct access to high-value markets and ensures farmers receive fair compensation for their efforts.
- **Enhanced Knowledge and Resources:** Farmers gain access to climate-smart agricultural training, financial literacy programs, and technology-driven solutions to improve yields.

4. Buyers

- **Premium Products:** Secure ethically sourced, high-quality cocoa products that meet growing consumer demands for sustainability and transparency.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** ETC-certified cocoa helps buyers align with EU sustainability and deforestation-free regulations, ensuring continued market access.

Market Demand and Legislation Supporting ETC

1. Market Demand for Certified Cocoa Products

- Ethical certifications like Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance have proven consumer willingness to pay premiums for certified products.
- A 2022 European market survey found that **57% of consumers prioritize ethically sourced products**, particularly in the chocolate and confectionery sectors. ETC aligns with this growing consumer preference.

2. Support from European and International Legislation

- **EU Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (2025):** Requires cocoa imports to be traceable and free from deforestation, making ETC-certified products a valuable compliance tool.
- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD, 2024):** Mandates that businesses disclose sustainability practices across supply chains. ETC certification serves as evidence of compliance.
- **European Green Deal (2030 Goals):** Aims for 25% of agricultural products, including cocoa, to meet sustainability standards by 2030. ETC certification positions stakeholders to meet these goals and access premium markets.
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** ETC supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), increasing its relevance globally.

Testimonies and Evidence of ETC Value Creation

While ETC is an emerging model, similar certifications (e.g., Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance) demonstrate the added value of ethical certification:

- **Economic Benefits:** Farmers under Fairtrade certification report up to **30% higher income** due to premium pricing. ETC is designed to replicate and expand on these benefits.
- **Consumer Preferences:** Retailers offering certified products, such as ethically sourced chocolate, report stronger brand loyalty and increased sales.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Certification fosters stronger relationships between buyers and producers, reducing supply chain disruptions and ensuring consistent quality.

What is Expected from the Diaspora?

The Ghanaian diaspora is expected to play three key roles in the cocoa sector, which can be defined clearly as follows:

1. Investment

- Diaspora members are encouraged to invest in value-added cocoa processing facilities in Ghana, such as factories for producing cocoa butter, powder, or chocolate. These investments help create jobs, boost Ghana's export revenues, and allow Ghanaian cocoa to enter higher-value markets.
- **Example:** A diaspora cooperative fund could be created to co-finance the construction of a small-scale chocolate factory in Ghana, with shared ownership among diaspora investors.

2. Advocacy

- The diaspora can act as ambassadors for Ghanaian cocoa, promoting its premium quality, ethical sourcing, and sustainability attributes to European and international buyers, policymakers, and consumers.
- **Example:** A diaspora-led trade association could engage with European retailers and chocolatiers to prioritize Ghanaian cocoa products certified under the Equal Trade Certification (ETC).

3. Market Access Facilitation

- Leveraging their networks, diaspora members can help Ghanaian farmers and cooperatives establish direct connections with buyers, reducing intermediaries and ensuring farmers get fairer prices.
- **Example:** A diaspora professional in the Netherlands could organize trade missions or networking events to introduce Ghanaian cocoa producers to Dutch chocolatiers and importers.

Opportunities, Challenges, and Core Message

Core Message: Equal Trade Certification (ETC)

At the heart of GhanaCocoaConnect is the **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** initiative, a transformative model designed to ensure fair compensation, transparent profit-sharing, and sustainable farming practices within the cocoa value chain. By adopting ETC, Ghanaian cocoa farmers gain access to premium markets, equitable revenue-sharing mechanisms, and enhanced farming resources, while European businesses and consumers benefit from ethically sourced, high-quality cocoa products.

ETC aligns with key international frameworks and regulations, including:

- **EU Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (2025):** Ensures that cocoa imports meet strict environmental standards, making ETC-certified cocoa a critical compliance tool.
- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD, 2024):** Requires businesses to disclose sustainability practices; ETC certification provides verifiable evidence of responsible sourcing.
- **European Green Deal Goals (2030):** Aims for 25% of agricultural products, including cocoa, to meet sustainability standards, positioning ETC-certified products as essential for market access.
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** ETC directly supports SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

By promoting ETC, GhanaCocoaConnect not only addresses systemic issues in the cocoa sector but also positions Ghana as a global leader in ethical and sustainable cocoa production.

Opportunities and Challenges in the Cocoa Industry

Opportunities

1. Growing Demand for Ethical Cocoa in Europe

The European cocoa market is increasingly driven by consumer demand for ethical and sustainable products. A recent survey revealed that **57% of European consumers prioritize purchasing ethically sourced products**, particularly in the chocolate and confectionery sector. ETC-certified cocoa provides a pathway for Ghanaian producers to meet this demand, ensuring market competitiveness and premium pricing.

2. Expanding Local Cocoa Processing to Capture More Value

Currently, Ghana processes only **25% of its cocoa locally**, exporting the rest as raw beans. Expanding local processing capabilities, supported by ETC, enables Ghana to produce value-added products such as cocoa butter, powder, and chocolate, capturing more economic value and creating jobs.

Example: By leveraging diaspora investments and trade partnerships, Ghana can establish additional processing facilities, targeting premium European markets for high-quality finished products.

3. Integrating Advanced Technology to Enhance Productivity

Adoption of precision agriculture tools, such as mobile apps for farm management and drones for pest control, can significantly improve productivity and efficiency. ETC-certified cooperatives can access training and funding for these innovations, enhancing both yields and sustainability.

Challenges

1. Climate Change Impacts on Yields

Rising temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns threaten cocoa production, particularly in Ghana's key growing regions. ETC emphasizes **climate-smart agriculture**, including agroforestry, drought-resistant cocoa varieties, and sustainable farming practices, to mitigate these impacts and ensure resilience.

2. Persistent Child Labor Concerns in the Industry

The cocoa sector continues to face scrutiny over child labor practices. ETC certification includes rigorous compliance checks and enforcement mechanisms to eliminate child labor, ensuring socially responsible production and alignment with global ethical trade standards.

3. Price Volatility and Farmer Income

Cocoa farmers are often vulnerable to fluctuating global prices, which affect their incomes and livelihoods. ETC addresses this by ensuring **fair and transparent pricing mechanisms**, stabilizing incomes and providing a safety net for farmers.

Integrating the Core Message

Equal Trade Certification (ETC): A Solution to Challenges

ETC is not just a certification but a comprehensive framework addressing the root causes of challenges in the cocoa sector. By combining fair compensation, sustainability, and innovation, ETC offers a clear path to overcoming obstacles while unlocking new opportunities.

- **For Farmers:** ETC ensures higher and more stable incomes, training on climate-smart techniques, and access to premium markets.
- **For Businesses:** ETC-certified cocoa helps companies comply with stringent EU regulations and meet rising consumer demand for ethical products.
- **For Consumers:** ETC provides a guarantee of responsibly sourced cocoa, supporting fair trade and environmental sustainability.

Conclusion

The **Equal Trade Certification (ETC)** initiative is the core purpose of GhanaCocoaConnect, offering a bold vision for the future of Ghana's cocoa sector. By addressing challenges such as climate change, child labor, and price volatility while leveraging opportunities in ethical trade and technology, ETC positions Ghana as a leader in sustainable and equitable cocoa production.

Moving forward, GhanaCocoaConnect will prioritize the adoption and promotion of ETC, ensuring it is recognized as a gold standard in the global cocoa industry. Through collaboration, innovation, and strategic partnerships, stakeholders have a unique opportunity to shape the future of ethical cocoa trade.

Tentative Agenda for GhanaCocoaConnect 2025

1. Opening Ceremony

- **Welcome Address:** Delivered by representatives from AfroEuro Foundation, Africa in Motion, and the Ghanaian Embassy.
- **Objectives Overview:** Introduction to the event's purpose, with a focus on the Equal Trade Certification (ETC) initiative and its transformative potential.

2. Keynote Speeches

- **Topics**
 - Advancing Ethical Cocoa Trade: The Path to Equal Trade Certification.
 - Sustainable Agriculture for Climate Resilience in Cocoa Farming.
- Delivered by industry leaders, policymakers, and trade experts.

3. Panel Discussions

○ Topics

- Revenue-Sharing Models: Ensuring equitable wealth distribution in the cocoa value chain.
- Integrating Technology: The role of digital solutions and precision agriculture in improving productivity.
- Climate-Smart Practices: Addressing the impacts of climate change on cocoa production.

- Panelists will include farmers, diaspora investors, trade experts, and European buyers.

4. Workshops

○ Hands-On Training

- Climate-Smart Agriculture: Practical techniques for farmers to improve yields sustainably.
- Organic Farming: Understanding market trends and transitioning to organic production.
- Implementing ETC: Step-by-step guidance for cooperatives and producers on meeting certification standards.

- Sessions will include interactive Q&A and resource distribution.

5. Networking and Exhibitions

- **Exhibitions:** Showcase premium Ghanaian cocoa products, including processed goods like chocolate and cocoa butter.
- **Networking Zones:** Opportunities for stakeholders to build partnerships, explore trade agreements, and collaborate on projects.
- **Matchmaking Sessions:** Facilitated meetings between Ghanaian producers and European buyers, investors, and NGOs.

6. **Chocolate Festival – A Game-Changer for Ghana’s Cocoa Industry** – The European market has an increasing demand for high-quality chocolate. The **Chocolate Festival on June 6th** presents an extraordinary opportunity for COCOBOD to introduce and establish Ghanaian chocolate in Europe. This event will be a strategic avenue to open doors for trade, collaboration, and increased exports of Ghanaian chocolate and cocoa products to European consumers and businesses. This festival presents an extraordinary platform for COCOBOD to enhance its global reach, reinforce Ghana’s position as the leading cocoa producer, and explore new opportunities for trade and investment in the European Union. We strongly encourage COCOBOD to seize this opportunity to establish strategic contacts and expand the presence of Ghanaian chocolate in Europe.

7. Closing Session

- **Recap and Commitments:** Summarizing outcomes from the event and commitments from stakeholders.
- **Next Steps:** Outlining follow-up initiatives, such as pilots for ETC implementation and collaborative projects.

Defining Success for GhanaCocoaConnect 2025

For the Organizers (AfroEuro Foundation & Africa in Motion):

1. ETC Awareness and Adoption:

- At least **80% of attendees** leave with a clear understanding of ETC and its benefits.
- Commitments from at least **5 farmer cooperatives** or businesses to begin ETC adoption within the next year.

2. Strategic Partnerships:

- Establishment of at least **10 new partnerships** between Ghanaian producers and international stakeholders, including buyers, NGOs, and policymakers.

3. Media Coverage and Visibility:

- Achieve at least **10 published features** or media articles highlighting GhanaCocoaConnect and its goals.

For the Ghanaian Embassy (Sponsor Perspective):

1. Trade and Investment Growth:

- Facilitate interest in Ghanaian cocoa products from at least **3 major European buyers** or trade organizations.
- Promote Ghana's position as a leader in ethical and sustainable cocoa production.

2. Cultural and Economic Advocacy:

- Strengthen the embassy's role as an advocate for Ghana's cocoa sector, promoting fair trade and sustainable practices to international audiences.

3. Diplomatic Influence:

- Leverage the event to enhance Ghana's standing in European trade and policy discussions, aligning with EU sustainability goals.

Call to Action

GhanaCocoaConnect invites stakeholders to join this initiative aimed at contributing to the global cocoa industry through collaboration, innovation, and sustainable practices. This platform provides a unique opportunity to bridge cultures, explore new business opportunities, and empower Ghanaian cocoa farmers by promoting equitable trade practices, including the adoption of the Equal Trade Certification (ETC) model.

We encourage partners from across the cocoa value chain—farmers, cooperatives, European buyers, investors, and policymakers—to work together to create a sustainable future that benefits all stakeholders. By aligning efforts and leveraging collective expertise, GhanaCocoaConnect aims to drive meaningful impact and set new standards for ethical trade.

Conclusion

GhanaCocoaConnect 2025 represents a bold step toward adding value to the global cocoa industry. By prioritizing the adoption of the Equal Trade Certification (ETC) model, this initiative addresses critical challenges such as inequitable wealth distribution, climate change, child labor, and limited market access for smallholder farmers. It empowers stakeholders across the cocoa value chain with actionable solutions, aligning with global sustainability goals and positioning Ghana as a leader in ethical and sustainable cocoa production.

The event is not just about dialogue—it is a call to action. By bringing together farmers, cooperatives, European buyers, policymakers, NGOs, and the Ghanaian diaspora, GhanaCocoaConnect fosters collaboration and innovation to achieve measurable outcomes. These include increased value-added cocoa exports, strategic partnerships, and enhanced farmer incomes through fair trade practices.

For stakeholders, the benefits are clear. Businesses gain access to premium, ethically certified cocoa markets, comply with evolving EU regulations, and build consumer trust through sustainability efforts. Farmers secure higher incomes, advanced training, and stronger market connections, while the Ghanaian diaspora plays a pivotal role as advocates, investors, and facilitators.

Together, we can transform Ghana's cocoa industry into a global model of equitable and sustainable trade. Let this initiative serve as the foundation for long-term impact, ensuring that every stakeholder thrives in a cocoa sector defined by fairness, innovation, and opportunity.