

2025

GHANA COCOA CONNECT CONFERENCE

5-7 June, 2025
The Hague, Netherlands



Briefing

The cocoa sector looks confidently into the future during the Ghana Connect Conference 2025

The Ghana Cocoa Connect Conference 2025, held from June 5 to 7, 2025, in The Hague, brought together key players from the Ghanaian and international cocoa sectors under the theme:

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

The conference was organized by AFROEURO Foundation, in collaboration with Africa in Motion/Equal Trade Alliance, #SDGCafé, and the African Diaspora Policy Centre.

Over the course of three days, the conference provided Ghanaian and Dutch entrepreneurs and organizations with a platform for in-depth discussions on the future of cocoa in Ghana.

Day One: Innovation, Collaboration, and Resilience

Following a warm welcome by the Ghanaian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Professor Jos Walenkamp of The Hague University of Applied Sciences and the #SDGCafé outlined the conference objectives.

“Besides improving the economic situation of farmers and promoting sustainable cocoa cultivation, you will also be challenged in the coming days to consider the entire production chain - from cocoa bean to chocolate. How can we ensure that more revenue remains in Ghana itself, and what opportunities does the cocoa industry offer to Dutch entrepreneurs and the Ghanaian diaspora? By investing in sustainable cocoa farming based on equality and cooperation, we can create benefits for the entire sector,” Jos explained.





Next, James Kofi Kutsoati, Deputy Director of COCOBOD, the Ghana Cocoa Board, took the floor. He delivered a powerful speech addressing both the challenges and the vision for a thriving sector.

The tone was set: on the first day, it immediately became clear that the key themes for the cocoa sector are innovation, collaboration, and resilience. These themes resurfaced in various ways throughout the three days.

The Challenge: Diseased Trees and Low Incomes

Cocoa trees are very demanding plants. They thrive in warm, humid environments and require nutrient-rich soil.



The biggest problem in Ghana is that the cocoa trees are old and dying. Many trees are being lost to disease. Additionally, farmers receive very low prices for their cocoa beans. This makes it difficult, or practically impossible, to invest in new trees. Replacing old trees means no income for three years. Since 90% of cocoa farmers in Ghana live below the poverty line, replacement is not a realistic option. To restore plantations to health and productivity, a long-term approach is necessary, taking the entire supply chain into account.

This was the plea of the panel on the first day. Oscar Sottie (Wageningen University), James Kofi Kutsoati (COCOBOD), Mattijs Renden (NABC), and Tjalling Yme Wiarda (Business Consultant) discussed the urgency of structural reforms in the sector. Topics included climate change, aging cocoa trees, low yields, and an aging farming population, as well as the need to engage youth and better reward farmers.



Day Two: Youth, Investments, and Diaspora Energy

The discussion continued on the second day, focusing on investments and the role of youth. Organizations such as PUM Netherlands, RVO, and other Dutch institutions emphasized the need for targeted financing and partnerships. Then the youth took the stage. They brought much energy to the room. Led by Franchise 4 Development and supported by COCOBOD, young Ghanaian innovators were celebrated - they presented ideas on smart agriculture, entrepreneurship, and chocolate production.



Day Three: The Chocolate Festival

Of course, chocolate could not be missing at a cocoa conference. On the third day, the Ghana Chocolate Expo was an unforgettable showcase of local brands and products. It proved that Ghana has everything needed to become a key player in cocoa export.





Also inspiring was the presentation by Naomi Tuinstra of the Dutch Embassy in Ghana. She explained how the embassy is already supporting the sector's innovation efforts in various ways. This inspired further conversations about partnerships between Ghana and the diaspora in the Netherlands.



A Dual Engine: New Ideas for the Cocoa Sector

The many inspiring conversations during the conference led to several concrete proposals.

The Ghana Cocoa Board, COCOBOD, announced that it intends to revisit the revenue-sharing model: “The Equal Trade Revenue Sharing model is the conference’s most important takeaway. We are going to work on it,” said Deputy Director James Kofi Kutsoati during the closing session.

At the same time, enthusiasm arose among the Ghanaian diaspora for establishing a collective investment fund. This fund would assist Dutch companies in investing in Ghanaian cocoa farming through, for example, technology, training, and capacity building for cocoa farmers. Additionally, the fund would support them with the import, processing, and sale of Ghanaian cocoa products in Europe.

What makes the investment fund idea particularly special is that the principle of revenue sharing lies at its core. It aims to deliver benefits to the entire sector. In doing so, diaspora entrepreneurs demonstrate that fair and sustainable trade is truly possible.

This “dual engine”—a new revenue-sharing model and the collective investment fund—could set the cocoa industry in motion toward real change. The conference showed that with vision, commitment, and partnership, a fair future for cocoa farmers is within reach.



To Be Continued

The cocoa conference was a follow-up to the #SDGCafé held on February 11, 2025, where over 120 café guests gathered at VNO-NCW in The Hague to discuss sustainable trade with Africa. The conversation will continue at the next #SDGCafé in Brussels later this year. Additionally, based on the Café and conference outcomes, work is currently underway to establish a platform for Dutch entrepreneurs and diaspora members interested in investing in Africa. To be continued.



AfroEuro Foundation is a Non-Governmental Organisation established in 2003. The organisation seeks to build a positive image for African diaspora in Europe and mobilize the capacity and resources of African diasporans for economic development in Africa. With “Building Bridges” as its motto, AfroEuro builds and facilitates understanding and learnings between developed economies and Africa.

AfroEuro subscribes to the NEPAD principles and works in collaboration with African diaspora professionals and networks, governments, and youth towards Africa’s participation in global health, economy, commerce and trade. We also bridge the gap between the African diasporans and their hosts countries in Europe by promoting policy influence, empowerment, education, capacity building and knowledge transfer.



CONTACT US

Have questions or need more information about the GhanaCocoaConnect Conference? Reach out to us today!



Phone

+31 6 21967533



Email

info@afroeuro.org



Website

www.afroeuro.org



Office Address

Waldorpstraat 17, 2521 CA, The Hague

