

PERSPECTIVE FROM GOVERNMENTS FROM PRODUCING COUNTRIES

Sustainability standards and the role of Governments in their development and enforcement, how useful is a national platform in the move towards cocoa certification in the light of the Global Cocoa Agenda adopted at the World Cocoa Conference in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON COCOA CERTIFICATION

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From the theme assigned to this panel and in keeping with the terms of reference, my intervention shall be articulated around the following issues.

1-Sustainability versus Certification

2- The role of Government

3- National Cocoa Platform

4- The role of the ICCO

5- Recommendations.

1. SUSTAINABILITY versus CERTIFICATION

Cameroon as you all know is signatory of the 2010 International Cocoa Agreement. Cameroon also signed the Abidjan Declaration following the World Cocoa Conference in November 2011. The underlying objective of these instruments, is for all stakeholders to strive towards achieving a sustainable world cocoa economy, based on the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. Cameroon is therefore, very committed and supportive of all initiatives geared towards achieving sustainability in the cocoa value chain including Certification.

The International Cocoa Agreement provides a definition for sustainability in cocoa production. Certification in cocoa is also well defined. However, a lot of literature around use these words interchangeably as though they were synonymous.

As I said in my introductory remarks on Monday, certification is complex and controversial; with lots of unanswered questions.

For example, you can have a certified farm that is not sustainable and you can have a sustainable production system that is not certified. Yesterday, we heard about cooperatives that attained Certification but could not find a market; that is not sustainability.

There is the issue of pre-competitive certification and competitive Certification leading to market differentiation.

We also heard yesterday that not all certification schemes guarantee premiums or even markets for certified cocoa.

There is the issue of proliferation of certification bodies and standards as well as multiple certification schemes. Another issue that comes to mind is what is being certified?, the product, the producer or the exporter.

There is therefore need to strike a balance between costs and benefits, advantages and disadvantages, taking to consideration, immediate term, short term and long term perspectives.

There is also a need for balancing national standards, where they exist, against foreign standards, harmonization or streamlining of standards.

Yesterday, we had presentations from UNFSS and CEN. Again as I said in my opening remarks all these issues need to be addressed and clarified; otherwise, the farmer is placed in total confusion. What is Government's role?

2. THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Government as guarantor of the general interest or common good has multiple roles to play in this domain. These roles can be some summarized under the following headings. Regulation, facilitation, arbitration and promotion. In this respect, Government must be involved in standards setting, the protection and promotion of its origin and label.

In this endeavor certification can serve as a policy tool as well as a mechanism for transforming the cocoa sector and the rural economy in general.

Certification programs in collaboration with the Government, can help in the aggregation of dispersed small cocoa farmers. Cocoa farming is carried out by numerous farmers on small farms which make it difficult for meaningful intervention and other service delivery by the state or other partners.

In Cameroon with the entry into force of the OHADA uniform Act on Cooperatives, this issue will see some meaningful changes.

Cocoa production is seen as one of the principal vectors for rural transformation, income distribution and poverty alleviation in the rural cocoa growing areas. Government's objective is to produce 600.000 MT by 2020. Certification definitely as a means for improving production and productivity could play a major role to achieve this objective. Also certification standards must lead to the production of higher quality cocoa that can attract higher prices including premiums.

The development of National standards was raised. In Cameroon, National standards exist for marketable cocoa. There is a need to include production standards.

3. NATIONAL COCOA PLATFORMS

Within the framework of implementing the Abidjan Global Agenda., Cameroon has engaged in the process of setting up its Public/Private Partnership Platform. This Platform is going to serve as a forum for interaction, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of projects and other initiatives taking place within the cocoa sector. Certification of course will constitute a priority. In the same vain the CEN/ISO standards setting process is interesting in that it is all inclusive. If it can lead to the formulation of an internationally accepted baseline non competitive standard that allows producers to continue trading with the EU come 2020/ 2025, then we can be counted on board. Private standards will become really voluntary and competitive.

We are taking active part in the CEN/ISO process. The process should be accelerated because our origin has not been very attractive to existing certification schemes.

4. THE ROLE OF THE ICCO

ICCO should continue to serve as a forum to sensitize and provide expert knowledge to its members on the evolution of certification.

ICCO should also make the case for the harmonization of a baseline certification standard to guarantee market access to its members.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cameroon will want to advocate for more transparency in the marketing of certified cocoa with special emphasis on premiums earned and the format for distribution.

ICCO should continue with developing professionalization packages for transforming cocoa farming into bankable agro-businesses.

ICCO should take active participation in the CEN/ISO process.

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING