HOW CAN WE GET SUFFICIENT LAND UNDER PRODUCTION AND IMPROVE LAND TITLES?

World Cocoa Conference 2018

Gisèle Dutheuil, Director of Audace Institut Afrique (Cote d’Ivoire)
institut@audace-afrique.org / +(225) 57 88 82 91
www.audace-afrique.org
Few planters are owners of the lands that they exploit. Most of them are users, (tenants)

There is then a confusion of two separate issues that waste time and money.
1 The land owners issue: to be solved by land titles
1 The land users issue: to be solved by contracts

If we wish to improve planters’ land security, we must promote and improve the quality of contracts. Starting by promoting the written instead of the oral, improving the component of the contracts and mainly, managing their archiving.

In Africa, the issue is that, customary law regulates 60% of rural lands and even in Cote d’Ivoire it is 96%. In this context, where customary property is essential, it is difficult for the planter to know whether the person with whom he rents the lands is the true owner. At this level, there are a lot of frauds. This risky environment is favourable for conflicts and planters’ insecurity.

How to reduce the risk and favour investment?
New technologies could be very useful at this level, and also with accessible cost. I can confirm it because our institute, Audace Institut Afrique, realizes with the support of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, a field program in Cocoa loop in western Cote d’Ivoire. **The first step is to CLARIFY land rights in villages.** A GPS and a Smartphone help already, to make big qualitative leap in the village land governance. New technologies and traditional knowledge are a winning duo.

The old traditional chiefs are “living cadastres” and it is urgent to save their knowledge about village lands: Knowing who has created the village, who is the customary owner and who is a simple tenant. Demarcations done with GPS help to create, with free software, village maps through this knowledge. **It is in fact, a clear snapshot of the village with its sociological reality.** In this context, the planter clearly knows to whom he can rent the land. He knows easily who the customary owner is. The risk related to his investment is reduced.
Example of a village map
The next step is about the incentive for the creation of written contracts with all useful information for a peaceful using of the exploitation. The feeling of security is the background for confidence and investment.

1 The interest is that in this clarified environment, the owners who formerly, left their land vacant in order to avoid litigations are more encouraged giving their lands for leasing. This is then, a context that helps to extend the exploitation area without tackling forests.

2 Let's add that the planter is more encouraged to invest either in capital or with efforts in this land security environment. Furthermore, the time spent before for disputes, can be used now for the exploitation. He knows clearly his place within the village and his rights are recognised by everyone. This is the basis for social cohesion.

The clarity is then, necessary than the property. It is not only the property that ensures the business but the clarity of contracts. The real guarantee of the investment in rural area is the legitimacy in a clarified environment.

The good news is that the contractualization is simple and low-priced!