

# Chapter 8

## Chocolate Industry Sustainable Sourcing Practices



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**Abstract** As a buzzword, *sustainability* has come to signal all good things in the world with respect to responsible stewardship of its people, our fellow species, and the tremendous generousness of the very Earth we all stand on—whether in the indigenous spirit of the phrase “leave it better than you found it” or in corporate and developmental decision-making’s adoption of a triple bottom-line that minimizes harm and maximizes benefits from any economic, social, and environmental activity. For private corporations and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) trend, however, the shift toward finding any comparative or competitive advantage in decision-making for sustainability’s environmental and social bottom-lines has been slow if not just green washing. Moreover, within what progress has been made, the social pillar of sustainability has received the least amount of direct attention. It is often presumed to be addressed through economic proxies (like “improved livelihoods”). This chapter examines the discourse of corporate sustainability efforts for cocoa sourcing in Ghana through the social pillar of sustainability. Taking nothing away from the sincerity or insincerity of corporate sustainability efforts, this analysis reveals a disconnect of values, motivations, and benefits between corporate *sustainability for now* and local people’s *sustainability in perpetuity* that threatens the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) generally. Implications and recommendations are discussed as well.

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## 8.1 Introduction

Along with coffee, cocoa is one of the star raw materials in the food industry. A tropical agriculture product, cocoa is grown in more than 40 countries, with West African countries (Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana specifically) being global top-producers together with Indonesia, Brazil, and Ecuador. Moreover, chocolate (as one of the foremost products of cocoa, along with cocoa butter and cocoa powder) represents an important economic product and is associated with considerable cultural mythic and romantic significance. Chocolate can embody a sweetness that evokes deep emotions, even pride of culture.

Nonetheless, social, economic, ecological, and sustainable concerns can overshadow the enjoyment and production of chocolate from cocoa. Just 3 days ago (February 12, 2021 at the time of this writing), Balch (2021) reported that the world's top chocolatiers and cocoa grinders will be facing allegations of child slavery in court. Moreover, due to a lack of agriculture investments, younger generations can fail to see opportunities in the cocoa industry. In Ghana (and elsewhere), cocoa's heavy national regulation as a cash crop and controlling and inflexible market system limit smallholder entrepreneurship (Bello-Bravo & Amoah-Mensa, 2019). Environmentally, over-aged trees with pest infestation suffer from low yields. On average, cocoa trees live approximately 25 years. Still, in Africa harvests can continue to 40 years of age if disease, lack of industry investments and solutions, and inadequate social safety nets do not inhibit or prevent production first.

To meet increasing market demands, it is necessary to address these challenges with a clear objective to empower farmers around to secure their livelihoods economically, socially, and environmentally (Schweikert et al., 2018). Along the global value-added chain in cocoa-producing countries, private and multi-stakeholder initiatives are already engaged in creating economic wealth, fairness, social justice, and ecological sustainability. For instance, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), small and medium enterprises, and development organizations are participating in initiatives to promote the concepts of social responsibility and sustainability for tackling concerns within the cocoa industry. Sustainable standards, trading practices, and market transparency are some of the companies' identified investments and well-known by customers. For instance, stakeholders can promote Fairtrade, Organic/Bio, and Rainforest Alliance certification to support cocoa producer livelihoods and a sustainable use of resources.

A significant question across these efforts is whether the concept of sustainability is proposed and understood in the same way by all the stakeholders. In some cases, it seems that important commitments are understood and accepted by the

farmers and consumers, e.g., Fairtrade, Organic/Bio and Rainforest Alliance certification. Fairtrade focuses on social issues, minimizing costs for farmers, and providing an array of bonuses. Organic/Bio emphasizes friendly environmental and manufacturing practices that also result in better quality. Rainforest Alliance Certified status pursues biodiversity protection and respect for eco-systems, including but not limited to water and soil, social responsibility, market transparency, and farm management. All these approaches ensure or aim to ensure sustainability standards in agricultural production, including for cocoa.

Nevertheless, chocolate companies in Ghana (and West Africa more generally, and elsewhere) face gaps, limitations, and challenges around implementing sustainable practices, including meeting criteria for certification processes, especially across the entire value-chain. Like the child slavery lawsuit cited above, such legal actions also erode (rightly or wrongly) consumer and watchdog faith in the sincerity of corporate sustainability efforts. This chapter analyzes those efforts and their effectiveness in terms of its social impacts for local sustainability. For example, the cocoa sector in Ghana is,

... shaped as an hourglass: millions of farmers, 27 licensed buying companies (LBCs), one exporter (Cocoa Marketing Company), few processors (ADM, Cargill, Barry Callebaut) and manufacturers (Nestlé). The post-harvest production chain is placed for the largest part outside Ghana, with most cocoa exported as raw beans for processing elsewhere. The hourglass is completed with retailers, millions of consumers in consuming countries. Whereas West-Africa produces roughly 70% of world's cocoa, it consumes only 3% of its final product" (Laven & Boomsma, 2012, p. 10).

Laven and Boomsma (2012, pp. 7–8, bold in original) outlined the critical changes facing the cocoa sector in as follows:

1. Besides the still dominant drivers of volume, profit margin, and product quality, process quality concerns and differentiation have come to the fore. Global markets increasingly demand 'process quality' standards for delivering agricultural products to global markets. Issues like child labour, fair trade, and certification have led traders and industry to drive a number of innovations in the sector. But, comparing to developments in other commodities, the cocoa sector responds slowly to this trend; many of the innovations are still in early stages
2. Traders and industry perceive a risk for supplier failure. Increasingly, attention is paid to long-term sustainability of production (volume). **Productivity increases and rehabilitation (rather than expansion)** have come to the foreground. Donor organizations have jumped onto the bandwagon, since this agenda offers large potential to improve disposable revenue and livelihood conditions for cocoa farmers. Quality and volume increases without significant growth in productivity are increasingly seen as undesirable. However, the underdeveloped supply chain (including underdeveloped services, issues of land tenure and general livelihood conditions) has led to an array of interventions that reflect the lack of structure rather than provide a comprehensive answer. Many interventions rely on extensive training schemes of farmers, but are unable to organize the supply chain

3. The increasing **demand for ‘sustainable cocoa’ creates a competitive supply chain model all the way down to the farmer level**, while at the same time there is increasing attention for solutions in the pre-competitive domain (solutions that benefit the sector as a whole, which can only be achieved if the sector as a whole would drive them). In the cocoa sector it is not always transparent where the pre-competitive domain begins and where it ends.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (2016) outline specific targets to be achieved by 2030. National governments have recognized these goals, development organizations, universities, and other entities are working together to promote and accomplish developmental sustainability in all sectors, including cocoa and chocolate production (see Fig. 8.1), but are currently facing delays and even reversals due to COVID-19, especially around gender (Azcona et al., 2020; Bello-Bravo & Lutomia, 2020; Gates, 2020; Mukarram, 2020).

Because the private sector plays a major role in development, they also have a responsibility to achieve or adapt the 2030 SDGs appropriately. Still, they can face a different set of opportunities, gaps, challenges, and limitations while doing so. To address this, the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) brings together “cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, processors, supply chain managers, and other companies worldwide, representing more than 80 percent of the global cocoa market” to achieve a “thriving and sustainable cocoa sector, where farmers prosper, communities are empowered, and the planet is healthy” (WCF, 2020b). The WCF provides a global-level industry space for bringing the majority of stakeholders together to discuss sustainability strategies and implementation. In West Africa, cocoa producing countries like Ghana have begun participating in Cocoa Action and the Cocoa & Forest Initiative, which afford SDG-aligned sustainability platforms that “triple bottom-line” economic, social, and environmental parameters for development. Goals include the inclusion of farmer participation in trainings on sustainable agriculture practices, engaged entrepreneurship around manufacturing practices, increases in the quality and yield of raw materials while minimizing ecological impacts, and empowering farmers and communities through improved yields and better marketing and market prices (WCF, 2020a).

Some crucial challenges facing these efforts involve equitable distributions of benefits across the value-chain. For example, most cocoa postharvest processing and marketing channels are in the hands of international, rather than national, production facilities. This limitation extracts local benefits of cocoa and chocolate production to international entities. The situation is “complicated” by the private enterprise value to maximize profit; that is, international-based chocolate production in Ghana occurs precisely because it is more cost-effective for producers to process the raw cocoa in-country.

This situation does not (necessarily) support social and environmental sustainability locally. Afful et al. (2019) have specifically observed about Ghana that the *social* pillar of sustainability receives virtually no attention. Similarly, a meta-analysis of key terms in human development reports by Luetz and Walid (2019) supports this: “‘economic’ perspectives dominate ‘sustainability’ and ‘social’ perspectives by a factor of 2 and 4.67 respectively” (p. 301).

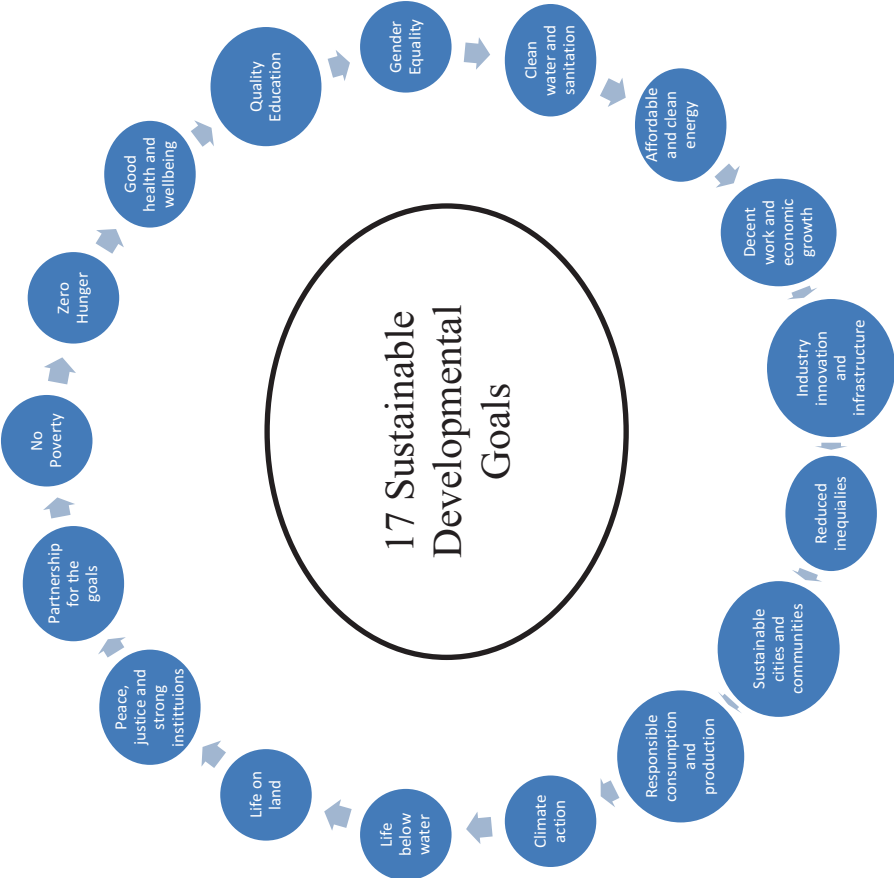


Fig. 8.1 Seventeen SDGs

## 8.2 Changing Economic, Social, and Environmental Approaches for Sustainable Cocoa in Ghana

Cocoa production is the main commodity crop in Ghana with exports representing approximately 95% of its total production (Tsiboe et al., 2018). Traditionally, cocoa production has relied on inexpensive labor and land. Like elsewhere in cocoa-producing countries, Ghana's challenges are similar; land pressures, price fluctuations, and low global market prices place at risk the livelihoods and food security of 800,000 smallholder farmers. Although considerable efforts have been made economically to bolster Ghanaian cocoa production (see Angelucci & Asante-Poku, 2013; Tsiboe et al., 2018), there is a lack of support for smallholder farmers, and the challenges faced by smaller-scale producers can create insurmountable barriers (Bello-Bravo & Amoa-Mensa, 2019).

Besides these economic challenges, existing and looming environmental (climate change) factors impinge (Maguire-Rajpaul et al., 2020). Again, the government of Ghana (and Côte d'Ivoire) in agreement with 34 leading chocolate companies created the Forest & Cocoa Initiative to preserve forests cocoa tree plantations. Stakeholders in the cocoa sector in Ghana, together with multinational chocolate companies, cocoa buyers, and the parastatal cocoa board (COCOBOD), have committed to respond to climate change impact. From 2001 to 2014, cocoa expansion in Ghana destroyed 700,000 hectares (25%) of forest (Higonnet et al., 2017). These losses have dire implications for biodiversity and regional climate change (Asare et al., 2014; Lawrence & Vandecar, 2015; Morel et al., 2019), as well as the livelihoods of the majority of cocoa smallholder farmers, with farms 2 ha or less (Hainmueller et al., 2011).

To contribute to the increase in Ghana's cocoa production, the government-owned cocoa marketing board COCOBOD has established some supporting agriculture measures, including increased farm gate prices, hybrid seeds, free pest- and diseasecontrol programs, insecticides, and fungicides (Angelucci & Asante-Poku, 2013). But that regulated expansion has contributed to large-scale deforestation, and some of these climate-change mitigation efforts may severely impact smallholder farms (Nasser et al., 2020). Moreover, smallholder cocoa farmers cannot afford to buy adequate planting inputs, which results in low yields. To identify a solution to this problem, COCOBOD has approved a National Cocoa Rehabilitation Programme, which provided 20 million no-cost cocoa seedlings to farmers in 2012 and replanted 20% of existing cocoa farms in 2014 (Laven & Boomsma, 2012; PeaceFMOOnline, 2014).

Limiting factors that impede farmers' adoption of ecologically friendly cultivation practices is the lack of incentives for farmers to commit to the use of certification (Angelucci & Asante-Poku, 2013; Maguire-Rajpaul et al., 2020) and inadequate support by COCOBOD in Ghana. Thus, the certification associated with sustainability may have had little impact (Steijn, 2016). The price received by the certified farmers is not significantly different from the one received by non-certified farmers, so farmers often prefer to adhere to traditional practices with low investment (Angelucci & Asante-Poku, 2013; Steijn, 2016).

### 8.3 Macropatterns in the Ghanaian Cocoa Sourcing Value-Chain

In Ghana, with a value-chain moving generally from South to North, chocolate is produced from raw materials grown (and initially fermented) by a large population of smallholder cocoa farmers, which is then processed postharvest (e.g., grinding the cocoa into chocolate liquor to produce cocoa butter and cocoa cake and the manufacture of chocolate itself) by a small number of international corporations. By definition, sustainability must include all three of these key steps in the value-chain (growing, grinding, and production) and their ancillary support/constraint structures (e.g., raw materials inputs, transportation, marketing, regulatory governance, and so on).

Overall, value-chains in Ghana (as elsewhere) experience two kinds of constraint outside of issues around input abundance or shortages: namely, intra-organizational optimization (to ensure maximal outputs from minimum input-cost) and extra-organizational regulations (e.g., COCOBOD, international agreements to adhere to sustainable practices, raw material production standards, health department or third-party certification, among others). In practice, however, this tidy distinction between these two types of constraint tend to blur: producers all along the value-chain will seek ways to optimize adherence to external regulation, while major firms in an industry can also be lead voices in the specification of regulatory requirements (or secure exemptions from them) (Neilson & Pritchard, 2009). This sort of “mixed” scenario may now be the emergent form for the global chocolate industry; “A key element of the global cocoa industry ... is the emergence of such a hybrid internal–external regulatory system that is increasingly performing many of the functions once considered the exclusive domain of state-based actors” (Fold & Neilson, 2016, p. 3).

#### 8.3.1 *Manufacturers*

With the advent of sustainability and the recognition of the necessity for developmental sustainability, specifically “upstream” elements of regulatory structures (whether mixed or not) within value-chains have emerged in such a way that the “end” of the value-chain “loops back” to influence earlier links. From the tail-end of the value-chain, for example, consumer-driven demands for “green,” “sustainable,” or “fair-trade” products—or products not made using child labor (Balch, 2021; Ferdowsi, 2010)—now shape at least appearances around the means of those products’ production. Quality control certification of products through branding as FairTrade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ Certified, and others aims to afford manufacturer and consumer confidence (Fold & Neilson, 2016).

The increasing consumer demand for sustainable cocoa, along with the apparent failure of national governments in addressing the issues in cocoa production, have led to the rise of private certification standards. Private certification standards, a form of private governance, are usually the result of cooperation between civil society and market actors. The benefit of private governance is usually a marketing advantage for market actors (through a visible certificate on the products) and a means for civil society actors to pressure market actors into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Cocoa is one of the supply chains that has undergone certification in recent decades. The benefits of becoming certified for a farmer relate to increasing yields, increasing profitability of cocoa farming, and improvements in farmer livelihoods (Steijn, 2016, p. 2).

Self-evidently, the advent and increasing spread of broadly fair-trade practices strategies (as a civil society-driven pressure to put in check some of the worst-practices policies and activities of corporations) have had an effect. Manufacturers in diverse industries like coffee, tea, cocoa and chocolate, many fruit and fruit derivatives, and even carbon, gold, and footballs (FairTrade, 2020) have moved to impact their economic bottom-line by adopting a more environmentally and socially responsible, and thus sustainable, corporate stance, whether sincerely or not. For cocoa sourcing specifically, “The evolution of chocolate manufacturers’ sustainable sourcing practices [has moved] from a focus on industry initiatives to a commitment to sustainability certification and now to companies increasingly moving toward own-supply chain programs” (Thorlakson, 2018, p. 1653). Thus, Hershey’s Cocoa for Good Strategy describes its goals as follows:

Hershey’s \$500 million Cocoa for Good program raises our ethical and social responsibility to our cocoa-producing communities by addressing issues like child labor, poverty, lack of education, and climate change. This program focuses on impacting farmers, families and their communities by raising incomes and the wellbeing of supplying cocoa farmers.

Our Cocoa For Good strategy uses 100 percent certification as the base for a broader set of investments and changes addressing poverty, malnourishment, environmental health, and income opportunity in rural farming communities in Cote d’Ivoire [sic] and Ghana.

We source exclusively from cocoa suppliers certified by organizations such as Fairtrade USA, and Rainforest Alliance. It ensures we’re only working with farmer groups empowered with the resources, administrative systems, and local infrastructures necessary to meet the high standards of certification.

We get to work directly with more professionalized farmer groups that allow farmers to voice their needs and speak up about their challenges from a more powerful, collective negotiating position. This creates more avenues for them to gain access to credit or inputs like fertilizers and crop protections through suppliers and their certifying organizations.

From there, our collaborations with NGOs and others building relationships on the ground in West Africa ensures cocoa farmers receive the tools they need to succeed. Our social investments are driving efforts such as:

Enhanced protection, detection and remediation of child labor. We are scaling our Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), the leading way to detect, remediate and eliminate child labor, across our entire West African cocoa sourcing supply chain by 2025. This includes engaging trusted members of farmers’ own communities in auditing



farmers' work practices and following up with them to find ways to help them lessen their reliance on the work of children (and keep children in school).

Education and skills training for adult workers to help address the shortages of skilled cocoa-field laborers that contribute to child labor issues.

Specialized guidance on environment- and productivity-related actions to boost farmer income. This includes consultation on things like how to produce more yield on the same plot of farm land, climate-smart farming techniques, agroforestry and crop diversification, as well as training farmers and their families on additional income-generating activities unrelated to farming (with a focus on empowering women to improve their livelihoods).

Improvements in West African children's nutrition, well-being and educational opportunities through investments in school and classroom development, many interrelated initiatives designed to address the root causes of child labor further.

Infrastructure improvements in villages and better pathways for farmers to voice their concerns to local community members who can help them access necessary resources or request new systems or tools that can better their circumstances (Hershey, 2020).

Reaching sustainable demands from a customer perspective and efforts like UNCTAD (Ferdowsi, 2010) to eliminate child labor, together with the SDGs in Ghana (United Nations, 2017) for developmental sustainability could influence some of the approaches taken by the global cocoa sector to implement sustainable initiatives. Cocoa suppliers rely on market strategies and demands from the chocolate manufacturers trying to satisfy the final customer. While each actor in the cocoa value-chain has a role to assure that sustainability is accomplished, farmers need incentives to follow all certification procedures. One limitation to certification adherence is the lack of direct access to cocoa processors and manufacturers to negotiate a fair price. Intermediaries impede farmer access.

Moreover, commitments like "We source exclusively from cocoa suppliers certified by organizations such as Fairtrade USA, and Rainforest Alliance," "We get to work directly with more professionalized farmer groups," and 100% certification "ensures we're only working with farmer groups empowered with the resources, administrative systems, and local infrastructures necessary to meet the high standards of certification" may limit or preclude access to private partnerships with (smallholder) farmers who (1) cannot afford certification, (2) may face educational or literacy issues that preclude navigating the bureaucracy to obtain certification (Bello-Bravo & Amoa-Mensa, 2019), or (3) lack access to professionalization skills for want of resources, opportunity, sexism, or elite capture by already strong economic actors.

Furthermore, the phrase "only working with farmer groups empowered with the resources, administrative systems, and local infrastructures necessary to meet the high standards of certification" does little to highlight how this also answers manufacturer (and grinder) concerns about the quantitative and qualitative consistency of cocoa bean inputs (Fold & Neilson, 2016), whatever any direct or indirect benefits to farmers. Nevertheless, while such private certification may act to encourage

corporate social responsibility programs and gestures (Steijn, 2016), it also helps to make involvement in the industry (as it now stands) attractive to corporate actors in the first place.

Getting “to work directly with more professionalized farmer groups” ostensibly has benefits both for the local (smallholder) farmer and the international corporation—a more professionally run farm should, in principle, operate more efficiently and more to the advantage of the farmer in terms for quantity and quality. However, like certification, professionalization imposes a barrier or gatekeeping on access to participation. The fact that certification overlaps with, or even is integral to, professionalization is a long-established idea (Jordan, 1948), and whatever the benefits for farmers, requiring them to professionalize effectively externalizes the cost of it for corporations. Whatever costs an international corporation might incur by working with non-professionalized farmers, costs that might be onerous enough to preclude such activity in the first place, the regulatory mechanisms of certification and professionalization held mitigate or negate those costs. Again, the emphasis is not that farmers never benefit from these requirements but, rather, that certification or professionalization requirements may contribute to (or, more likely, exacerbate already existing) socioeconomic inequities in supplier-communities.

### 8.3.2 *Grinders*

The above illustrates an instance of later-link value-chain players (manufacturers) applying or imposing constraints on earlier-link stakeholders (cocoa growers), but this occurs mid-chain as well. For example, until the 1990s, Malaysia was a major raw cocoa producer, but agricultural production and in-country grinding has shifted the role of the Malaysian cocoa industry primarily to the mid-chain (“grinding”) stage of chocolate production (Jeffery, 2014). While several factors contributed to this development (see Jeffery, 2014), because Malaysia is now a major importer of raw Indonesian cocoa beans, its industry becomes susceptible to value-chain impacts including but not limited to international trade constraints (e.g., ACFTA, the SDGs), export levies and policy changes, and cocoa bean demand and quality regulation in Indonesia (Dewanta, 2019; Fahmid et al., 2018; Hasibuan & Sayekti, 2018; Lubis & Nuryanti, 2011; Oktaviani et al., 2015; Sari, 2017; Shamsudin, 1998). Having thus specialized in the mid-link of cocoa preprocessing for subsequent (chocolate) manufacturing, much has since been written through an economic competitiveness lens about Malaysia’s cocoa industry (Jeffery, 2014; Sari, 2017) and much less about any non-economic emphases for sustainability (i.e., social and environmental concerns).

In Ghana, according to 2012–2013 data, approximately 225,000 tons of cocoa were ground in-country, while producing 835,000 tons of raw cocoa (compared to 460 k ground and 1445 k produced in Côte d’Ivoire) (ICCO, 2013); the volume in Ghana increased to 320 k tons in 2018–19 (Statista, 2020). Similarly, in 2012, approximately 60% of cocoa grinding was consolidated in three major companies in two countries: the United States (ADM, and

Cargill) and Switzerland (Barry Callebaut) (Euromonitor., 2012); since then, Cargill has purchased ADM, making it the leading raw cocoa grinder in the world (Cargill, 2015).

For Ghana, in terms of responses to “mixed” regulatory mechanisms for in-country grinding, multinational actors have been drawn in (in the typical way) to the grinder sector via both foreign-direct investment industrial policies in Ghana, including tax- and price-incentives, as well as transportation technology changes, changes in sector regulatory structures, and strategic adjustments by individual firms (Araujo Bonjean & Brun, 2016; Fold, 2002; Gilbert, 2009; Grumiller, 2018). This pattern itself mirrors national-scale Ghanaian efforts to attract foreign-direct investment opportunities (especially with the EU). However, in the words of Langan and Price (2016), “The conduct of European companies, in particular, is not something which may automatically lend itself to the normative objectives of sustainable development” (p. 564) and “may undermine pro-poor SDG objectives” (ibid). Moreover, as a national strategy, Ghana’s considerably higher electrical costs than neighboring Côte d’Ivoire make it generally less attractive (Grumiller, 2018), while farmer disincentives for production include “(1) levies and taxation on cocoa exports; (2) burdensome institutional framework regulating cocoa exports and lack of competition, and (3); excessive transport costs” (Angelucci & Asante-Poku, 2013, p. 3).

Notwithstanding the predominant emphasis above on economic elements (ostensibly as part of sustainability’s economic, social, and environmental triple-bottom line), the leading grinder, Cargill, does have a sustainable cocoa policy, Cocoa Promise:

#### The Cargill Cocoa Promise

We are committed to ensure a thriving and sustainable cocoa sector for generations to come.

The Cargill Cocoa Promise is our commitment to farmers and their communities, enabling them to achieve better incomes and living standards while growing cocoa sustainably.

Our ambition is to accelerate progress towards a transparent global cocoa supply chain, to enable cocoa farmers and their communities to strengthen their socioeconomic resilience, and to deliver a sustainable supply of cocoa and chocolate products from bean to end-product.

We will achieve this ambition by leveraging our global reach and experience, and by working together with our vast network of partner organizations and stakeholders. These include 200 local farmer organizations as well as NGOs, governments and industry partners.

#### The evolution of the Cargill Cocoa Promise

We established the Cargill Cocoa Promise in 2012 as a formal, future-looking and action-oriented framework for our global sustainability activities, building on 10 years of experience in the field with farmers and farmer organizations.

In 2017, we introduced our Sustainability Goals, building on the impact of the Cargill Cocoa Promise while aligning our ambitions with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs). This framework has allowed us to broaden our scope to encompass our indirect cocoa supply chain and how we source other ingredients used to produce chocolate.

In particular, Cocoa Promise outlines one iteration of Cargill's (2021b) five general sustainability goals:

farmer livelihoods: championing professional cocoa farming practices to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of cocoa farmers and their communities.

community wellbeing: enhancing the safety and wellbeing of children and families in cocoa farming areas.

protect our planet: promoting environmental best practices in our business and across our supply chain.

consumer confidence: helping consumers around the world choose more sustainable cocoa and chocolate products with confidence.

transformation, together: using the power of partnerships to accelerate and magnify our efforts to achieve sector transformation (Cargill, 2021b).

When Langan and Price (2016) express concerns that corporate activity “is not something which may automatically lend itself to the normative objectives of sustainable development” (p. 564) and “may in fact undermine pro-poor SDG objectives” (ibid), this seems to speak to the a misalignment of values or motivations in play between international corporations and local farmers. To examine only one example from the above, where Cargill (2021b) describes “farmer livelihoods” as “championing professional cocoa farming practices to strengthen the socio-economic resilience of cocoa farmers and their communities,” this professionalization (besides the critique already raised above) further specifically involves *resilience* and *entrepreneurship*.

#### Farmer Livelihoods

We help smallholder farmers navigate fluctuating socio-economic and environmental conditions by connecting them to skills and resources that increase their resilience.

#### The Context

Most cocoa farmers' livelihoods depend in large part on the income they make from selling cocoa beans. Yet their profitability is subject to a large number of factors, only some of which they can control.

Alongside external factors such as price fluctuations, crop failures, or civil unrest, many farmers struggle with ageing, minimally-productive trees and have limited access to the infrastructure, training and finance they need to run their farms as successful businesses.

We believe that the best way to ensure cocoa farmers can thrive while safeguarding the future of cocoa, is to strengthen the resilience and prosperity of cocoa farming households. Through the Cargill Cocoa Promise, we empower farmers to become true entrepreneurs who can maximize their profitability and manage their farms as businesses.

To learn more about Cargill's commitment to Farmer Prosperity, click here [the provided link at this point was dead at the time of this writing].

Cocoa farmers and the consumers of their raw product (i.e., grinders and manufacturers) do share a concern about “fluctuating socio-economic and environmental conditions” but for very different reasons. While grinders and manufacturers are concerned to ensure a consistent supply of raw materials from already-established and thus logistically and cost-effectively supported sources (Fold, 2002), the concerns for farmers are more existential. Fluctuating socioeconomic and environmental conditions can mean feeling like a failure who is unable to provide for their family, sinking to a level of poverty where obtaining even basic needs becomes impossible, being unable to live comfortably (much less well), and facing increased vulnerabilities to starvation, displacement, and death. Moreover, corporate “resilience” against these fluctuations is less of a necessity than cocoa farmers’ resilience, because corporate actors have alternatives (albeit possibly costly ones) when safeguards fail. For example, in terms of partnerships, Cargill partnered with 227 communities in Ghana and more than eight times that number in Indonesia (Cargill, 2020). Thus, if supply chains fail in one region, corporate resilience (like portfolio diversification in investment) provides a buffer or access to other supply chains. Cocoa farmers do not have that flexibility or mobility, except by emigration or becoming (economic) refugees.

Importantly, this notion of resilience borrows from a framing in personal psychology—as “positive adaptation, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity” (Herrman et al., 2011)—in order to describe a more collective form of resilience, *social resilience* (Hall & Lamont, 2013). Generally, this social resilience involves three capacities in social actors (coping, adaptive, and transformative), i.e., “the ability of social actors to cope with and overcome all kinds of adversities ... their ability to learn from past experiences and adjust themselves to future challenges in their everyday lives ... [and] their ability to craft sets of institutions that foster individual welfare and sustainable societal robustness towards future crises” (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 5), respectively.

However, these framings having a distinctively individualist orientation. Individualism maintains the “basic (nominalist) assumption that only individuals (entities with aims) exist, not social wholes (societies and social institutions) ... All versions of individualism share the denial that societies have aims or destinies” (Agassi, 2017, p. 1). Consequently, resilience (whether corporate or farmer) is an individual capacity, with or without support by other (social) individuals or institutions. This matters, because it makes resilience a personal, not a social or a collective, affair; it means that, to whatever extent another individual (corporate or farmer) involves themselves with capacity-building or assistance toward another’s resilience, there is no implicit social obligation or social contract to do so. As such, if fluctuations of socio-economic or environmental conditions threaten a community (in which Cargill is partnered), nothing exists to enforce any implicit or explicit social contract with that community. This is reflected in the global era’s mobility of capital, which in many sectors can no longer be brought (willingly or not) to the

bargaining table but can simply remove to another international location where whatever issue under dispute (often wages, benefits packages, and quality of life changes) remains off the table (Hyman, 1999; Munck, 2020; Schulze-Cleven, 2017).

Rather than building an individualistic capacity for resilience, a more socio-collective emphasis on solidarity would operate better to ensure sustainability locally and generally. Sustainability cannot and does not mean *sustainability for now* but represents a commitment *in perpetuity* to securing the flexible, adaptive, and transformative powers of communities, societies, and cultures (including the citizens and people who comprise them) against various socioeconomic and environmental fluctuations (Gunderson, 1999; Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

This overemphasis on individual capacities—and the under-emphasis on existing indigenous cultural traditions and strengths—as a solution to socioeconomic and environmental fluctuations arises as well in the advocacy not simply for entrepreneurship but a notion of “true entrepreneurship”; “Through the Cargill Cocoa Promise, we empower farmers to become *true entrepreneurs* who can maximize their profitability and manage their farms as businesses” (Cargill, 2021a, emphasis added). This assertion curiously implies the existence of some form of “false entrepreneur” or “false entrepreneurship” that requires explication.

Finn (1993), in his remarks analyzing the novels of Robert Stone, offers an early use (if not the first use) of the phrase without explaining its usage: “This note of religion tied to misplaced hope, false entrepreneurship, and cynicism recurs throughout [Stone’s novel]” (Finn, 1993, p. 14). The phrase nevertheless seems to imply some sort of distorted or corrupt understanding of entrepreneurship. More clearly, when attempting to frame a sense of *collective entrepreneurship* using the avowedly individualistic framework of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship themselves, Bijman and Doorneweert (2008) assert, “In the case that managers follow their own interests without taking the interests of the owners into account, they pursue false entrepreneurship” (p. 5). This usage resonates with notions like corruption, bribe-taking, and embezzlement—by which an individual places their self-interests above the proper functioning and values of a collective organization (Caiden & Caiden, 1977)—and thus other forms of illegal or illegitimate moneymaking enterprises and fraud (Kotelnikov, 2010). If, indeed, false entrepreneurship can be linked generically to corruption broadly understood, and false entrepreneurs being those who practice it, then Lessig (2013) further expands and comprehensively captures this notion of corruption in its institutional forms as

manifest when there is a systemic and strategic influence which is legal, or even currently ethical, that undermines the institution’s effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose, including, to the extent relative to its purpose, weakening either the public’s trust in that institution or the institution’s inherent trustworthiness (p. 553)

As in partnerships generally, where trust is an integral necessity (Bello-Bravo & Amoa-Mensa, 2019; Gambetta, 1988; Lutomia, 2019; Lutomia et al., 2020; Madela, 2020), it appears that “true entrepreneurship” signals Cargill’s desire for reliable, consistent, compliance-oriented, and above-board cocoa farmers. Reasonable as

this might be, this more resembles hierarchical patron-client or employer-employee relations than the relatively non-hierarchical relations characteristic of formal business partnerships (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). Moreover, while equitable relations can be possible between even steeply hierarchically related partners (Lutomia et al., 2020), these do not typically occur without deliberate effort. For example, in a case from Ghana, a Dutch confectioner exposed for using child labor successfully partnered with a Ghanaian NGO to remedy the fact (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013), but had not been willing to correct or avoid the issue prior to being exposed. This typifies those instances that concern Langan and Price (2016) that corporations cannot be relied on to behave in sustainable ways. Given the choice between maximizing profit and addressing social inequalities, there is an extreme bias in corporate culture toward maximizing profits (Makita & Tsuruta, 2017; Ullah et al., 2021).

Whatever “true entrepreneurship” involves in terms of personal characteristics or the quality of relations with Cargill, Cargill also frames true entrepreneurs as farmers “who can maximize their profitability and manage their farms as businesses” (Cargill, 2021a). As a reminder, however, the purpose of this chapter is to explore chocolate industry sustainable sourcing practices in Ghana, where sustainability not only embraces a triple-bottom line of economic, social, and environmental wellbeing as criteria for decision making but also is a project *in perpetuity* not *just for now*. For that reason, this unilateral values-statement by Cargill—that Ghanaian farmers should become true (loyal, trustworthy) entrepreneurs who maximize farm profitability by managing them as businesses—requires closer examination and validation.

This process or mandate for professionalization as true entrepreneur involves a transformation of character not limited to cocoa farmers in Ghana (Desai, 2017). It is not simply a change of behavior being advocated (i.e., how to farm more professionally) but a change of identity (i.e., into a “true entrepreneur”). For that reason only, it becomes necessary to turn briefly to an examination of the rationale for requesting (or demanding) this change of identity. More generally, this involves asking several interlocking questions: Why must Ghanaian *character*, not just behavior, change? Why is Ghanaian (traditional) character deemed insufficient for the project of sustainability? Besides that ostensibly professional farmers better ensure a steady and reliable supply network for grinders and manufacturers (and thus corporate sustainability) why must Ghanaian cocoa farmers become “true entrepreneurs” rather than simply businesspeople in their already locally familiar and traditional sense? Why must Ghanaian farmers conform to another culture’s model or get left behind as unprofessional? How is being an entrepreneur, rather than a Ghanaian farmer, supposed to support better Ghanaian cocoa farmers’ resilience and continuity (their sustainability)? If becoming “true entrepreneurs” affords them the ability to “manage their farms as businesses,” then what does “business” mean in this context, and why is what they doing previously as managers of their farms apparently not business? By assumption, maximizing farm profitability implies (self)-sustainability, but sustainability is not an individual holding; sustainability of *one*, like sustainability *for now*, is not sustainability.

It would seem tedious and querulous, however, to reprise the considerable length and breadth of existing literature that discloses the colonial-imperial roots of



neoliberal globalization and its consequential neo-colonialism, precisely along the very economic, social, and environmental lines that sustainability attempts to mitigate (Desai, 2016, 2017; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Ruccio, 2003; Spector, 2007; Vilas & Pérez, 2002). One would think that the historical need to articulate sustainability and the later SDGs as a check on a simultaneously accelerating and destructive rapacity worldwide under neoliberal globalization should give one pause before advocating its central tenets of profit maximization and “western” business strategies to others as sustainable. It should seem equally obvious that promoting the forms of modernist industrialization and individuality that have brought the entire globe to the prospect, if not the brink, of planetary self-destruction runs contrary to the very notion of sustainability in perpetuity itself. Rooted in modernism’s industrialism and individualism, entrepreneurship and the partnerships that emerged with them historically in the corporate sector pursue their own comparative advantage with no obligation to the wellbeing of partners (including the environment), except to the extent that each recognizes some reason to continue their interaction whatever the cost to all others (Hessels & Terjesen, 2010; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Sherer & Lee, 2002). Indeed, the central selling point of neoliberalism is that we are all, in principle, at liberty to pursue our own way in the world; the un-level playing field of the world, however, makes this un-tenable, un-just, and un-sustainable.

Moreover, these modernist-individualistic forms of action contrast fundamentally with more socially oriented modes of community existence, exemplified in Africa by the notion of Ubuntu (Gathogo, 2008; Hogue, 2017; Mangena, 2016), not just as a form of being-in-the-world but also as relevant for the domains of business, commerce, and management (Bidwell, 2010; Dolamo, 2013; Lutomia et al., 2017; Mangaliso, 2001). That indigenous (local) customs not only already exist in these domains opens the question why they should be supplanted by other forms (and who benefits from doing so), all the more so as these traditions represent modes of social activity of vastly older provenance than the less than three-century-old modernist-industrial forms. Whether this greater age and duration of traditional folkways correlates to more sustainable forms of business- and life-ways in perpetuity in Ghana and elsewhere can remain an open question despite many answers suggesting *yes* (Appiah-Opoku, 2007; Bello-Bravo, 2019; Bello-Bravo, Lutomia, Njoroge, & Pittendrigh, 2019; Frederick & Dzisi, 2008; Larson et al., 2010; Meghani, 2019; Mji et al., 2017; Nesper, 2018; Quan-Baffour, 2017; Twikirize & Spitzer, 2019; UNESCO, 2017). But, if left open, then so must the assumption that profit maximization, “western” business management strategies, true entrepreneurship, and the current order of globalization will (or even can) achieve sustainability or reverse the already destructive consequences of its activities also remain open, especially in light of many answers suggesting *no* (Corntassel, 2008; Dermody et al., 2020; Klein, 2015; White, 1967).

The analysis above does not necessarily impugn the motivations of private corporations even if the effects of their activities are harmful and unsustainable. Rather, one must ask after the tenability and coherence of the assumption that sustainability will result (1) when indigenous or local Ghanaian actors conform to the practices and assumptions of their patron benefactors and (2) more importantly, whether their



corporate benefactors will remain *in perpetuity* in the local region where they impose these social forms. A “partnership” where one partner can leave at will without consequences is not a (sustainable) partnership. In a stark contrast, Spencer and Gillen (1904) observed how the Arrernte people in Australia’s Alice Springs region could treat a person’s death (even from disease) as a *crime* against the entire social body itself, one that required a juridical process to get to the bottom of.

In this collective-social light, the individualistic assumption of an unhindered right to abandon a community at will without consequences is fundamentally contrary to these types of social-body cultural organizations. This type of individualism, as Fox (1993) draws from the criticism of it by nineteenth century US Congregationalist minister and theologian Charles Bushnell, meant not only “the quality of being a distinct person, but it also connoted a special potency, the power of individual beings *to disrupt and fragment social bonds*” (Fox, 1993, p. 648, italics added). Whatever the merit of this potency, it also disrupts communities, villages, and families, and places *identity* as the first and foremost property one possesses. While this autonomous, undetermined, unhindered, and socially disconnected libertarian-type of identity has a certain appeal, we should not forget how Blackstone’s remarks (1765–69)—at the very dawn of the modernist individualism that would co-emerge with the Industrial revolution—defined property as a “sole and despotic dominion . . . over the external things of the world, *in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe*” (ctd. in Rose, 1986, p. 1, fn 1, italics added). When Dermody et al. (2020) refer to capitalism as utopian, that aspiration is echoed in the unreachable heights that Blackstone’s definition of property asserts—an aspiration that is also despotic, refuses limitation, and takes account of no one else in its satisfaction.

To be sure, Blackstone’s definition is aspirational and his commentary acknowledges hundreds of counterexamples to this sole and despotic dominion limited by nothing (Rose, 1986). Nevertheless, this utopian and aspirational notion became integrally tied up with the peculiarly racially charged forms of (bourgeois) Euro-American identity that co-evolved with the emergence of modernist industrialism (Bernal, 1987; Dyer, 1997; Skott-Myhre, 2012; Townes, 2006)—a type or sense of identity that may have finally, ineluctably, crystalized self-evidently within the public imaginary in the United States and elsewhere following George Floyd’s murder (Barrie, 2020; Bowman, 2020; K.-Y. Taylor, 2020). Thus, Hardt and Negri (2009) can observe, “It is inevitable that identity should become the primary vehicle for struggle within and against the republic of property since identity itself is based on property and sovereignty” (p. 326).

As a principle and desire both for material goods and one’s own fundamental property of identity—and especially for the property of a White racial designation (Harris, 1993; Townes, 2006)—modernist individualism is inherently contrary to longer-term sustainability. Interpersonally, it adds to the already human tendency to treat people, including children, as resources to be bought, sold, and used (both figuratively and actually) (Andrews, 1986; Dillard, 2010; Ford, 2002; Miller, 1990). Applied as a mandate by the “global North” to Ghanaian farmers, it seeks to reintroduce three centuries of trouble:

Property is so profoundly entangled with race ... not only because in many parts of the world the history of property rights is deeply embedded in the sagas of slave property but also because the rights to own and dispose of property are racialized (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p. 326).

Moreover, not only in racial terms but also in terms of gender and age (whether very old or very young) (Skott-Myhre, 2012).

As such, that Ghanaian cocoa farmers should “become true entrepreneurs who can maximize their profitability and manage their farms as businesses” requires refashioning them in a knowable, predictable, and controllable *familiar* form. It is not managing their farms as businesses (as they already were) but managing farms as businesses in the way that makes sense to and is convenient for their corporate patrons. One might even say that this familiarity is more logistically cost-effective and cost-saving, assuming that US corporations are legally required to maximize profitability; however, this widely held idea is not the case. Corporations are *not* legally required to maximize profitability (see Stout, 2012 for a historical tracing of this myth’s development). Ironically, then, if it is false entrepreneurship when “managers follow their own interests without taking the interests of the owners into account” (Bijman & Doorneweert, 2008, p. 5), then it becomes a piece of legal, even ethical, institutional corruption per Lessig (2013) when corporate directors ensure themselves maximally profitable bonuses through short-term, quarter-based profit maximization at the expense of longer-term sustainability of the corporation itself.

This permissible (legal) and ethical (permitted) institutional corruption and false entrepreneurship “undermines the institution’s effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose or weakening its ability to achieve its purpose” (Lessig, 2013, p. 553), in this case turning from the actual purpose of *sustainability in perpetuity*, as Langan and Price (2016) worry, toward corporate *sustainability for now* and individual *sustainability for one* as an entrepreneur. And just as it may seem tedious and querulous to object to neocolonialism and neoliberal globalization, so may it seem eye-rolling to bring in a “psychology” to explain why, out of these legal and ethical corporate practices of false entrepreneurship, there would arise a call (if not a command) for “true entrepreneurship” among non-white peoples.

In the Euro-American imagination, Africa has been simultaneously the original cradle and childhood of humanity and a primitive, backward, atavistic, and uncivilized (Fanon, 1952; Said, 1978; Hunt & Thorp, 2018). Thus, Euro-American (and especially Anglophone) culture has its own kind of “dual consciousness” (Du Bois, 1903) or schizophrenia about its imagination of Africa: on the one hand, it is that place of naive, untutored, ignorant childhood that Euro-American culture has resolutely turned its back on and grown out of and, on the other, the only place where it is still possible to start anew and avoid making again the mistakes that led to its current (disastrous, climate-precarious) adulthood. As such, we witness false entrepreneurs requesting (or demanding) that Ghanaian cocoa farmers (and other people of color in the “Third World”) become the “true entrepreneurs” that they themselves failed to. Or, more cynically, one could say that Ghanaian cocoa farmers must be true entrepreneurs so that the false entrepreneurs can more easily go on exploiting them (Wily, 2012).

Despite the seeming grotesqueness or hopelessness of this, we should again note how much more like patron-client relations this looks (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Wolf, 1966), that patron-client relations can be, and have been, more economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable than alternatives at times (Ferrol-Schulte et al., 2014; Taylor, 2010), and that the emergence and success of this greater and longer-term sustainability hinges on a prevailing moral economy in which the “patron” and the “client” both uphold, or can be held accountable to one another for upholding, their mutual rights and responsibilities in that moral economy (Edelman, 2005; Fafchamps, 1992). An assumed parameter for this within preindustrial (or still largely preindustrial) regions is non-mobility, i.e., that it is not possible (or that there is a promise not to) abandon the relationship. The global mobility of capital now makes this impossibility impossible so that only a promise to stay might keep it in place.

This highlights the tenuous position that sustainability finds itself in, especially when corporate sustainability takes on false airs to cut costs (by moving operations to someplace else) out of an imaginary legal obligation to maximize profits. In his theory of justice, Rawls (1971) noted that participants within a social order can assent to an inequitable distribution of benefits so long as the share they receive is viewed by them as satisfactory. If that inequitable distribution of benefits becomes unsatisfactory, then disruptions occur and these are, by definition, not sustainable. As such, false entrepreneurship by any stakeholder becomes a critical element in unsustainable systems. Concerted efforts to identify and weed out client-side institutional corruption in Ghana, especially in the natural resource management sector where it is rampant (Asomah, 2019; Rahman, 2018), must equally focus on (otherwise legal and ethical) corporate-side institutional corruption as well.

### 8.3.3 *Producers*

Ghanaian cocoa farmers face many ironies in their attempts to secure a livelihood within a context of sustainability. As Radhakrishnan (2000) notes, although the so-called First World achieved its status and historical self-determination by unsustainably industrialized depredation of people and resources, the Third World is told they cannot similarly industrialize in the name of climate-change mitigation, thus precluding their historical self-determination. Concerns around deforestation particularly impose regulatory checks on cocoa farmers’ ability to expand their production by expanding their tree populations. Ironically and fortuitously, however, the infeasibility and failure of large-scale monoculture cocoa plantations have generally caused cocoa farming to revert to more ecologically sustainable smallholder farming as the predominant type (Fold & Neilson, 2016). The catch-22 for Ghanaian cocoa farmers is being told, “Grow cocoa, but not in the way you know how.”

Besides these “top-down” ironies, cocoa farmers also experience “bottom-up” challenges as well. The following explores in detail several of these challenges as faced by a Ghanaian village chief’s efforts to become a chocolate manufacturer. All

case-study discussion and details here derive from Bello-Bravo and Amoamensa (2019).

COCOBOD controls Ghana's cocoa market, a colonial-era holdover of the Cocoa Marketing Board (CMB), which served to centralize, control, and regulate the cocoa market (Brooks et al., 2007). In the 1990s, partial liberalization of the system allowed internal marketing and privatization of cocoa bean delivery to COCOBOD (Vigneri & Santos, 2009). Also, as noted above, various industry changes and Ghana's wooing of international companies to perform in-country grinding of cocoa (Araujo Bonjean & Brun, 2016; Fold, 2002; Gilbert, 2009; Grumiller, 2018) in principle created the potential for domestic grinding as well. Ghana eventually had to abandon a lending program for domestic grinders after most went bankrupt circa 2014–2015 (Grumiller, 2018).

For the case under discussion, an international NGO had previously provided chocolate-producing equipment to a chief's village and then abandoned the equipment when the NGO ran out of funding to continue its project. In collaboration with local farmers, the chief proposed utilizing the equipment to produce chocolate for sale locally and secured a \$1500 loan from a Ghanaian small-business NGO to purchase crop inputs for the farmers. Initially, it was necessary to pursue this loan through the NGO because the village and its chief did not otherwise have access to lines of credit through traditional banking. This is a typical dilemma, which is often worked around by soliciting funds from friends or family members, farmer societies, or (most disadvantageously) money-lenders (Roberts et al., 2017). One of the ironies faced by small-scale ventures is a lack of bona fides for obtaining loans; "those who [have] bank accounts [are] more likely to access credit because having a bank account serves as guarantee to lenders" (Roberts et al., 2017, p. 2097). Obtaining a no-interest loan with an open repayment period very much facilitated the village's project's ability to move forward.

Importantly, the chief's acquisition of crop inputs, which included seedlings, pesticide, and fertilizer, followed his adherence to a traditional cultural pattern. The village leader provides the agro-inputs (*abusa*) and the farmers use their own experience to decide on planting strategies (*abuna*). This points to an instance of moral economy where both stakeholders in a patron-client scenario honor their responsibilities to one another as part of enjoying their rights as well. Consistent with Rawls' (1971) theory of justice, at least meeting this basic *abusa* and *abuna* pattern establishes a sustainable local groundwork, whatever the later equitable or inequitable distribution of benefits. However, it was not at the point of producing (growing) the cocoa where significant problems arose for the venture.

One initial complication involved the logistical need (contrary to traditional practice) to transport the cocoa beans from the fields to the processing machinery location. By then, the Ghanaian NGO had taken on a management role in the project and was tasked with finding a solution to this logistical challenge. The problem was simple enough: no adequately large enough vehicle was available to transport the beans efficiently, only a motorcycle, and roads between the fields and the processing machinery in any case were unfit for larger vehicles. Short of borrowing and spending more money for more motorcycles, or acquiring a "side-car" to attach to the

motorcycle, little could be done. A further problem involved the refrigeration unit at the production facility being too small for up-scaled production. Nevertheless, the venture worked within these hobbling constraints and began producing batches of chocolate. With the village geographically at a high traffic crossroad, tourists and word-of-mouth helped advertise the local chocolate, which the chief also distributed freely to local children.

A more serious host of problems arose from wanting to produce chocolate at any scale larger than the immediate environs of the village. Officially, to operate as a business in Ghana requires registration, but like countless other areas of the world, people go on doing business informally without following registration requirements. This strategy remains feasible so long as the business keeps a low profile, most simply by not operating at scales larger than immediate communities. In cases where authorities catch wind of the business, it can be shut down, may officially register as a business, or make some kind of arrangement with officials—even anti-corruption regimes can spawn their own corruption (Brown & Cloke, 2004; Bukovansky, 2006; Rahman, 2018)—to look the other way. For the present case fortunately, a local ministry official was already supportive of the venture, such that arrangements were not necessary, although the official also stated, “Our ministry stands ready to help, but there are limited funds and only so many we can help” (Bello-Bravo & Amoa-Mensa, 2019, p. 15).

However, as a boutique chocolatier with a goal of more sustainably securing his village’s wellbeing, the village chief still aspired to market the chocolate more widely. Here again, the solution to this challenge seems simple—register as a business—but breaking into the highly regulated chocolate market through COCOBOD was not the first major challenge the venture faced. Not only did the cost of registration raise an additional financial barrier, the village chief was not print-literate and could neither fill out the registration forms nor navigate the bureaucracy to learn how. Here, the Ghanaian NGO became particularly essential to any prospect of success for the village’s livelihood improvements, as the NGO’s director was both print-literate and could research and navigate the business registration bureaucracy to complete the registration.

For the village chief, the concerns he most frequently expressed to the director of the NGO involved everyday details of the chocolate production, including plans for expansion of production. In this way,

the village chief foresees not only meeting the facility’s greater revenue flow goals but also a realization of his hope to provide local youths with opportunities for employment as well. Such expanded production will also ultimately require advertisement, a warehouse, and an official production office, as well as further consultancy with [the director of the NGO] to provide managerial and logistical expertise to facilitate that expansion (Bello-Bravo & Amoa-Mensa, 2019, p. 13).

In this vision, one sees not simply economic gain for the village chief but his attentiveness and sense of responsibility to the well-being of his village generally, which the villagers have entrusted to his care. Not surprisingly, the documentation necessary to complete the business registration did not exist in sufficient detail, and the NGO director had to estimate or improvise answers to fill out the forms. This

illustrates how “traditional” forms of business can poorly “fit” with agricultural bureaucracy regimes. As such, licensure and certification of the chocolate for broader-than-local markets created insuperable difficulties even for the NGO director. These difficulties included required testing for the certification and safety of the chocolate and site inspection and worker training-certification regulatory compliance and their accompanying costs, as discussed next.

**Health Certification of Village Chocolate** While Ghana’s Ministry of Health food health certification aims to protect the public from unsanitary or dangerous production-side pathogens, toxins, or defects, such requirements not only incur disproportionately onerous costs for smaller producers but also create “an identifiable class of merchants who have a shared sense of economic destinies ... [with] associational groupings designed primarily to protect the economic and commercial interests of their members” (Arthur, 2014, pp. 46–47). This gatekeeping mechanism applies to business licensure as well.

In general, meeting the certification testing requirements for the chocolate was a more bureaucratically than nutritionally difficult task. While testing was mandated to recur regularly, with fees and wastage of 12 samples of inventory per test, the director of the NGO also had to locate and identify a reputable, state-certified testing facility—ultimately at a Ghanaian university but with especially exorbitant testing fees. Further, the testing site’s slow turn-around time for results also created delays that negatively affected the venture’s production schedule. Timing also played a critical role in paying for the tests; the NGO director noted, “I was given a deadline to make payment for testing, which, if I delay and it expires, means I will have to restart the process again because it deals with laboratory booking” (Bello-Bravo & Amoah-Mensa, 2019, p. 15). These certification requirements, their expenses, and the production delays incurred by them cannot be simply chalked up to *if you want to play, you have to pay*. Part of the demand by corporate sustainability for professionalized entrepreneurs who maximize profitability and manage their farms like a business arises precisely to ensure timely and reliable stabilities at the head of the value-chain. Bureaucratic delays “up-stream” of producers (due to university-level testing inefficiencies) should be no less objectionable given their impacts.

**Site Inspection and Worker Certification** Just as the venture found a way to function despite transportation shortages to get harvested cocoa to the processing facility, the NGO director also managed to navigate the gatekeeping bureaucracies to register the business and obtain Ministry of Health certification for the venture’s chocolate. Whether any of these efforts would have proven sustainable in the long run became moot due to crippling certification requirements around site inspections and worker training. At the initial site inspection, the director of the NGO was told the site would need several expensive upgrades, including redesign and re-landscaping of the *exterior* of the production facility, and a further fumigation certificate to be obtained from another bureaucratic entity entirely; the Director noted, “All of this was revealed to me after I had already made the initial business



registration and signed for the rest of the required activities for [the business] to commence” (Bello-Bravo & Amoah-Mensa, 2019, p. 15). He also learned that any onsite employee processing cocoa would have to be trained and certified as well.

This detail affords one of the best examples in this case of traditional practices ill-fitting bureaucratic regimes. In Ghana, *nnoboa* are an indigenous form of collective agricultural workgroup, typically convened on an *ad hoc* basis to accomplish specific labor-intensive cocoa production activities, and usually populated by whoever is available (Laven, 2010); potentially, anyone in a village might show up. Similarly, at the production facility, no regular work schedules were set; rather, personnel convened in a *nnoboa*-like fashion to do work. Although this type of workgroup (by design) affords especially work-adaptive sets of flexible personnel, the bureaucratic demand that anyone who *might* show up must be trained and certified in cocoa processing is not only untenable (and cost-prohibitive) but also gratuitous, as local farmers already must be instructed by others who work in the facility how to work in the facility.

More critically, the bureaucratic demand that some portion of the local population cease agricultural work altogether to specialize in and contribute toward an optimized production of work-product, creates instabilities within the social body of a community contra-sustainability. Formal studies and historical on-the-ground evidence alike amply document the analogous destruction of agrarian England 250 years earlier, when industrialism began to move farmers into factories (Allen, 2009; Foster, 2003; Williams, 1983). As such, rather than labor specialization and bureaucratization, the implementation of a *nnoboa*-type approach to personnel provisioning for a modern, but ecologically sustainable chocolate manufacturing business in rural Ghana would more exactly meet a triple bottom-line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

As a last item in this section, intergenerational social structures can be affected by modernizing or optimizing changes in production. For example, among women in Ghana who grow and preprocess Shea nuts for subsequent manufacture as Shea butter, daughters frequently work with and learn the trade-skills from mothers and other adult women. While child labor as slavery is abhorrent (Balch, 2021), this cultural apprentice-like tradition—especially in educational contexts where girls and women have reduced or non-existent access to education generally compared to males (Bello-Bravo, Lutomia, & Pittendrigh, 2019)—helps to maintain the social reproduction of cultural life sustainably. Blanket prohibitions on *all* forms of child labor, without considering whether they negatively impact legitimate intergenerational forms of training and social reproduction, risk becoming that kind of policy that “may in fact undermine pro-poor SDG objectives” (Langan & Price, 2016, p. 564). Similarly to compliance regimes that make traditional forms of labor organization (*nnoboa*) subject to punitive fines, not taking culturally legitimate forms of local (indigenous) practice as part of social sustainability misses the mark of sustainability in perpetuity.

Ultimately, these site and labor regulations were too onerous and killed the venture (as of the time of this writing). It must also be noted that this outcome occurred

in an otherwise fortuitously well-positioned venture from the beginning: one with local cocoa farmers (in the chief's village) willing and able to produce cocoa for the venture, using free (abandoned but serviceable) equipment to grind cocoa and produce and store refrigerated chocolate, a zero-interest loan for agro-inputs, a supportive local official willing to turn a blind eye to the unregistered operation, and a Ghanaian NGO director willing to take on the managerial tasks of navigating an obscure bureaucracy well beyond the village chief's (or village's) capacity to navigate in order to fit the venture to existing certification and regulatory demands.

For other villages' aspirations to "improved livelihoods" that lack this fortunate head-start, such ventures must seem even less likely to succeed. While this may mean that a villages' hopes and aspirations for a better life for the community and its members may have no choice but to hitch their wagon to existing corporate (or other better-resourced) organizations, doing so at the expense of local (indigenous) practices that have long-sustained local communities socially may be the price to pay for sustainability for now. However, it still misses the mark of sustainability in perpetuity.

#### **8.4 Conclusion: Partnerships for Sustainable Sourcing: Voluntary Sustainability Certification, Small-producer Organizations, Other Stakeholders.**

Battilana and Dorado (2010) describe building sustainable hybrid organizations that can sustainably achieve the best (short-term) positive effects with the least (long-term) negative impacts. In the above case of attempted on-the-ground sustainability, the situation's hybridity arose from the partnership and advocacy structure (between the director of the NGO and the village chief) that sought, ultimately without success, to fit the village chief's aspirations and sense of responsibility to his village and its traditional social forms of cocoa production to an alien bureaucracy. It is clear that without this kind of sustainable hybrid organization for advocacy, the venture would not have succeeded to the extent that it did; it is clear that without such advocacy, the "voice" of traditional, socially sustainable and feasible farming practices (like *abusa*, *abuna*, and *nnoboa*) would not be recognized in their validity by certificatory and regulatory bureaucracies or corporate sustainability norms.

In the broadest sense, advocacy-type hybrid organizations for economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable social enterprises (Lyon & Al Faruq, 2018) for cocoa sourcing in Ghana are required to navigate and negotiate sustainability in perpetuity rather than sustainability for now. These include, but are not limited to, (1) support for voluntary, alternative, or more accessibly subsidized certification programs that meet qualitative criteria without externalizing the cost to growers (socially, economically, or environmentally), (2) support for smallholder-NGO cooperatives that expand markets while preserving and implementing perpetually sustainable best-practices for farming (whether indigenous or otherwise),



and (3) most generally, support for genuinely collaborative structures that bi-directionally leverage and learn from the strengths and knowledge of all affected stakeholders, not just the “stronger” or better-resourced partner.

While manifest efforts for sustainable cocoa sourcing in Ghana, well-intentioned or otherwise, might be identified as attempts to lean in this direction of partnership, the overt mandates from Ghanaian bureaucracy (as noted above) and the covert implications from corporate patrons (that partnership means “*only* working with farmer groups empowered with the resources, administrative systems, and local infrastructures necessary to meet the high standards of certification”) misses the bi-directionality of actual partnerships and thus sustainability itself. As Rawls (1971) noted, while people can accept an inequitable distribution of collaborative benefits so long as they find their own share satisfactory, it can still be asked: *is that actually sustainable and sustainability*, and *do people actually find it satisfactory*? If we sense the romantic contexts of chocolate as an element around the perimeter of partnership generally, then one might ask: what financial remedies might there (or should there) be when one partner leaves?

In general, the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of cocoa sourcing in Ghana would benefit—may even require—social enterprises and their advocacy “from below” (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) to avoid a discourse that understands sustainability solely through its corporate *sustainability for now* sense (i.e., the quantitative and qualitative *reliability* of value-chain raw inputs within a profit-driven contractual mechanism). Complementing this reasonable desire for input reliability with a commitment by cocoa-sourcing and –consuming entities to the community of farmers, even if that community temporarily or permanently loses their productive capacity or becomes less optimally profitable compared to elsewhere, would move corporate sustainability for now much more convincingly in the direction of cultural sustainability in perpetuity—especially when that commitment persists beyond the end of the stakeholders’ time together.

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