

Cargill's efforts to champion the role women play in cocoa-growing communities

Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate supports women's empowerment holistically and at scale through the Cargill Cocoa Promise, Cargill's commitment to farmers and their communities established in 2012. In cocoa communities, women provide nearly half the labor on farms. Yet, women earn less of the household's income, own less of the land, and have much lower access to training, markets, and finance. Empowering women is a key lever of change for communities. This is why Cargill continues to scale and expand its efforts to support women's empowerment in cocoa communities.

Taking a holistic approach to empowerment

To date Cargill works with 23,000 women cocoa farmers across its sourcing countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon, Brazil, and Indonesia. These are women cocoa producers who own the farms and production resources. There are however many other women who live in cocoa-growing households that are often unrecognized. These women contribute with their skills and labor in cocoa production, farming of other crops, other income-generating activities, and household chores. Cargill champions these women who play a critical role in cocoa-growing households and communities, ensuring they are recognized and improving their access to opportunities. Cargill works with strong partners to identify and address barriers to women's empowerment through different initiatives, including:

1. Driving awareness on gender equity in cocoa communities

Empowering women does not affect women alone. Cargill supports gender sensitization trainings to help create understanding of the importance of, and barriers to, empowering women. Around 170,000 farmers, both men and women, have taken part in gender sensitization training on the value of equality across all sourcing countries. Farmer training and coaching programs do not only teach farmers good agricultural practices, but also provide an opportunity for men and women to work together as equal contributors and learn about gender equality in the cocoa supply chain. Cargill also works with farmer organizations to develop gender action plans to support different women's empowerment initiatives, such as promoting women in leadership positions in cooperatives and gender dialogues in cocoa communities.



2. Empowering women as leaders, individually and within farmer organizations

Cargill is working with cocoa farmer organizations to provide support for women groups to start income generating activities in Côte d'Ivoire. Working with Empow'Her and IFC, Cargill developed a Gender Capacity Building initiative as part of the Coop Academy, Cargill's coop professionalization program. Women groups that are linked to selected farmer organizations participate in training and coaching sessions to develop their business, financial literacy, and leadership skills. Women participating in the training develop the skills they need to start or grow their own businesses contributing to income diversification of cocoa households. So far, 687 women have participated in the program linked to 10 farmer organizations. The plan is to expand the program to reach 1,500 more women linked to 20 more farmer organizations.



3. Increasing women's access to finance and markets

When women have access to affordable financial credit, they can take steps towards economic stability and independence by becoming income generators. Working with CARE, Cargill has introduced community-based savings and loan schemes, known as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), which enable women to save money and take out loans, which they can use to start and grow their own businesses, as well as taking care of personal needs such as paying school fees. The VSLAs provide members a platform to access informal financial services and training across various topics, including financial literacy, business management, and diversification through income-generating activities. To date, CARE and Cargill have established 376 VSLAs comprising 9,034 members (6,853 women) in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

This is all a part of Cargill's broader commitment to change how the cocoa industry functions. When women have access to better education, health and nutrition, their children learn, communities thrive, and crop yields increase. Cargill is making good progress to empower women, but gender inequalities still significantly limit the opportunities available to many women in cocoa communities. We want to scale up our approach to give women equal rights to economic resources, so they become income generators in their own right – as farmers, as small business owners, as entrepreneurs and as business leaders.

Some success factors from our gender programmes:

- *We have learned that entrepreneurship training is not enough to ensure that women can start their own business. There are other aspects that must be considered such as technical skills, traditional norms, access to land, agricultural inputs, finance, and markets. We have therefore adopted a holistic approach to address all challenges women face to start income generating activities.*
- *Cocoa cooperatives can play a key role in supporting women's economic empowerment. Cooperatives support women's associations to access the resources and services they need to start collective enterprises in on-farm and off-farm activities. These activities also represent a business opportunity for the cooperative and contribute to increase the income of cocoa households.*
- *We have found that programmes implemented in cocoa communities need to be gender-transformative and work to create systemic change at household and community levels. Explicit strategies are needed to also engage men and boys in the promotion of women's empowerment to improve attitudes, behaviors, and structures that support gender equality.*