MAY 2026

Rainforest Alliance and Nestlé Cocoa Plan

Monitoring and Evaluation Highlights 2017-2025

The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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INTRODUCTION

THE NESTLÉ COCOA PLAN

Nestlé is committed to building a more responsible cocoa supply chain, working with farmers, communities, and local and international organizations to develop and implement solutions for the many challenges that cocoa-farming communities face. Since 2009, the Nestlé Cocoa Plan has positively impacted more than 178,000 cocoa-farming families through training and support across its three pillars—Better Farming, Better Lives, Better Cocoa. In 2025, the company sourced 96.2 percent of its cocoa through the Nestlé Cocoa Plan.[1]

In January 2022, the innovative Nestlé Income Accelerator Program was launched, engaging more than 45,000 cocoa-farming families by 2026, by providing cash incentives and support aiming at closing the living income gap and reducing child labor risks.

RAINFOREST ALLIANCE AND NESTLÉ PARTNERSHIP

The Rainforest Alliance and Nestlé have partnered to promote sustainability in Nestlé's cocoa supply chain and in the cocoa sector more broadly. This partnership focuses on two key interventions:

1. **Certification**: The Rainforest Alliance provides third-party certification for 80 percent of Nestlé's cocoa volumes. There is significant overlap between certified farmers and those participating in the Nestlé Cocoa Plan.
2. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** To track the progress of the Nestlé Cocoa Plan and improve its interventions, Nestlé has partnered with the Rainforest Alliance since 2016 to monitor and evaluate Nestlé Cocoa Plan outcomes.

This report provides an executive summary of the data that has been collected as part of the Rainforest Alliance and Nestlé Cocoa Plan monitoring and evaluation partnership between 2017 and 2025.

DATA AND DATA COLLECTION

As part of this project, the Rainforest Alliance has visited nearly 15,000 cocoa-farming families in five of the 11 countries where the Nestlé Cocoa Plan is active.[2] We collect data through on-farm observations and interviews with the farmers from a representative sample of Nestlé cocoa farmers in each country.[3] The data that we collect as part of this project is independent of any certification decisions regarding a Rainforest Alliance Certificate Holder. However, data collected supports Nestlé's monitoring and evaluation efforts, providing insights into the sustainable practices established on farms and helping guide future project actions.

The data collection started in 2017 in Côte d'Ivoire and expanded to Ghana in 2021. In these countries, we collect data on general farm characteristics (household size, farm size, yield, etc.); good agricultural practices (GAPs), which include pruning, weeding, pest and disease management, and shade management; regenerative agriculture practices that improve soil health, reduce fertilizer use, increase biodiversity, and promote water use efficiency; and data related to farmer income (costs and revenue streams).

Over the past four years, we have expanded our monitoring and evaluation partnership with Nestlé to three countries in Latin America—Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico. In 2025, data in Latin America was only collected in Brazil.[4]

FIGURE 1

Overview of countries and number of farmers interviewed.

Country	Data collection timeline	Total years of data collection	Farmers interviewed
	2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025		
Cote d'Ivoire		9	11,399
Ghana		5	1,981
Brazil		4	712
Mexico*		3	348
Ecuador*		2	239

** Data for Ecuador and Mexico were not collected in 2025.*

Photo by Nice and Serious

SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS IN THIS REPORT

In this report we discuss our observations on three key topics:

1. **Good agricultural practices (GAPs):** GAPs are a key focus of the Nestlé Cocoa Plan; working with farmers on training and adoption of these practices. Farmers in Côte d'Ivoire have increased their adoption of GAPs between 2017 and 2025, with a slight decrease in adoption between 2024 and 2025. In Ghana, where cocoa-farming families face many challenges related to weather events and labor costs, GAP adoption uptake has been slower, but famers continue to show year-on-year improvement.

1. **Regenerative agriculture:** The Nestlé Cocoa Plan provides a foundation from which farmers can transition to regenerative agriculture practices. Many farmers are already adopting some regenerative practices, including the use of soil cover, weed management systems, and for more advanced farmers, integrated agroforestry production systems.

1. **Farmer income:** Despite rising cocoa prices in recent years, most cocoa farmers still struggle to earn a living income. Key drivers of cocoa-farming costs are labor and fertilizer. Cocoa farmers in West Africa rely most heavily on cocoa as their primary source of income, suggesting the need for additional interventions to both reduce costs and help farmers diversify household income streams.

CHAPTER 1: NESTLÉ COCOA PLAN FARMER PROFILE

The Nestlé Cocoa Plan is active in 11 countries globally.[5] In 2025, as part of our monitoring and evaluation campaigns, the Rainforest Alliance visited cocoa-farming families in three countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Brazil. Cocoa farm and family composition varied by country.

FARM CHARACTERISTICS

Globally, more than 90 percent of cocoa farmers are smallholder farmers, farming on less than five hectares (ha) of land.[6] This is reflected in the average size of the farms we visited, ranging from 2.8 to 3.8 hectares per farm in West Africa (see Table 1.1) . These farms are often located in rural areas, where farmers face challenges such as limited resources, poor infrastructure, and lack of job opportunities. Brazil, however, is an outlier when it comes to farm size. There, we observed significantly larger farms, averaging 18.4 hectares.

Average productivity levels also differ across origins. Brazil reports the highest yield with an average of 710 kg/ha and a median of 600 kg/ha, an increase of 10 percent from 2024, but still below peak production in 2023 (834 kg/ha average). Côte d'Ivoire similarly saw a 10 percent increase in average yield this year to 538 kg/ha and a median of 500 kg/ha. Yields in Ghana, on the other hand, remained stable at an average of 341 kg/ha and a median of 300 kg/ha.

A number of farm characteristics impact yield, such as cocoa tree density and age. Studies have shown that the optimum density for maximum yield is between 1,000 to 1,100 trees per hectare,[7,8] and cocoa trees are most productive between five and 25 years of age. In Brazil, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, age distribution is relatively balanced, yet a significant share of farmers (41–71 percent) have predominantly younger trees on their plots (see Table 1.2). This age distribution is reflected in yield outcomes: Brazil, which has the highest share of young cocoa trees, also reports the highest average yield (710 kg/ha), compared with Côte d'Ivoire (538 kg/ha) and Ghana (341 kg/ha).

Photo by Nu Image Communications

TABLE 1.1

Overview of key farm characteristics in the countries we work in (based on 2025 data).

Country	Avg. farm size (ha)	Avg. yield (kg/ha)	Median yield (kg/ha)	Female farmers	Avg. number of children per household	Household income from cocoa
Côte d'Ivoire	3.8	538	500	6%	4.2	82%
Ghana	2.8	341	300	35%	2.9	85%
Brazil	18.4	710	600	18%	1.3	70%

TABLE 1.2

Cocoa tree stock age.

Country	Avg. Yield (kg/ha)	Plot area coverage (%).				
		0%	1 - 25%	26 - 50%	51 - 75%	76 - 100%
Brazil	710	5%	10%	9%	5%	71%
Côte d'Ivoire	538	7%	29%	12%	11%	41%
Ghana	341	7%	20%	16%	12%	44%

This chart represents the estimated percent of plot area which is planted with cocoa tree stock below 25 years of age.

COCOA-FARMING FAMILIES

Cocoa-farming family characteristics also differ across countries. Cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire reported the highest number of children per household at 4.2, compared with 1.3 in Brazil.

In all of the countries we visited, women still make up a minority of farmers. Ghana had the highest percentage of female cocoa farmers (35 percent), followed by Brazil (18 percent), and Côte d'Ivoire (6 percent). The role of women in cocoa farming is often underrepresented in data collection. In both Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, women face barriers to land ownership and inheritance, which contributes to an underrepresentation of women on registered cocoa farmer lists.[9] However, even on male-headed farms, women are heavily involved in all key steps of the cocoa production process.[10] Increasing the share of female farmers and the visibility of their work is critical to the future of the cocoa sector, as an aging male farmer population threatens a decline in production without investment in the next generation.

Photo by Nu Image Communications

CHAPTER 2: GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

As part of the Nestlé Cocoa Plan's Better Farming pillar, Nestlé aims to support farmers with training and resources to improve yields and livelihoods. The Nestlé Cocoa Plan provides farmer training on GAPs, focusing on five principle cocoa farming practices: pruning, pest and disease control, weeding, shade management, and harvest management. These five GAPs were developed based on work conducted with the World Cocoa Foundation, and Nestlé has continued to develop this methodology. The Rainforest Alliance tracks and reports progress on the adoption of GAPs through on-farm observations and interviews with the cocoa farmers.

TRAINING

In West Africa, farmers reported high rates of training attendance in 2025, with 73 percent in Côte d'Ivoire and 88 percent in Ghana. Key topics covered included GAPs, such as Integrated Pest Management and pruning. In Brazil, 85 percent of farmers reported attending training, up from 45 percent in 2024. This reflects Nestlé's increased investments in farmer engagement in Brazil.

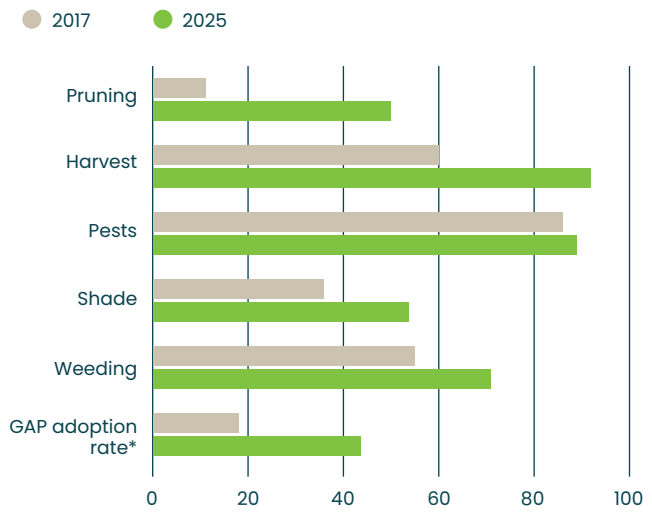
West Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

Between 2017 and 2025, the percentage of farmers adopting at least four GAPs, including pruning, increased from 18 percent to 44 percent (see Figure 2.1). Farmers improved across all GAP metrics, with the biggest gains in pruning (11 to 50 percent) and harvest practices (60 to 92 percent). Compared with 2024, overall GAP adoption rates fell slightly from 56 to 44 percent, mainly due to lower pruning uptake, though scores across other GAPs remained static.

FIGURE 2.1

GAPs adoption over time (% of farmers) - Côte d'Ivoire



The values shown for 2025 are weighted averages by IAP group (IAP or NCP only).
**Adoption of four or more GAPs, one of which must be pruning.*

Pruning is a key area of focus for Nestlé Cocoa Plan farmers, with farmers participating in the Income Accelerator Program receiving an additional cash incentive for practice adoption. In 2025, 85 percent of farmers in Côte d'Ivoire reported pruning their cocoa trees in the last 12 months. However, only 50 percent met the quality criteria to achieve pruning GAP adoption. Despite this gap between practice and performance, we have seen a significant improvement in pruning adoption in Côte d'Ivoire over the last eight years, rising from 11 percent to 50 percent between 2017 and 2025. This growth is partially due to the incentives provided by Nestlé as part of the Income Accelerator Program that allow farmers to hire pruning teams for extra support. Data shows that pruning rates are higher among Income Accelerator Program farmers (96 percent) compared with non-Accelerator farmers (78 percent), suggesting that the incentive payments are a motivating factor in practice uptake.[11] Pruning quality is evaluated using a good/medium/bad scale, based on the quality of five different pruning elements: chupons, secondary branches, dead branches, trunk, and crown. In 2025, the majority of farmers (60 to 80 percent) showed "good" quality trunk, crown, and chupons pruning, with lower rates of quality pruning (35 to 40 percent) on secondary and dead branches.

Another GAP that farmers in Côte d'Ivoire have improved since 2017 is the adoption of **shade management** practices. Nestlé supports farmers in Côte d'Ivoire by distributing seedlings for shade tree planting on cocoa farms. The adoption of good shade management practices (defined as farmers actively managing between 18 and 20 trees per hectare on their farms or planting additional trees) rose from 36 percent in 2017 to 54 percent in 2025. In 2025, farms in Côte d'Ivoire had an average of seven shade trees per hectare, consisting of three different strata levels. Additionally, 56 percent of farmers reported that they planted new shade trees in the past year. Income Accelerator Program farmers receive additional support in shade tree adoption, including receiving forest and fruit tree saplings and incentive payments for shade tree planting. Data suggests that these interventions make a difference—74 percent of Income Accelerator Program farmers reported planting shade trees in 2025, compared to 47 percent of non-Income Accelerator farmers.

Since 2017, farmers have also improved adoption rates of the other three key GAP practices—harvesting, weeding, and pest and disease management. However, **pest and disease** pressure remains high, and farmers mainly rely on agrochemicals (87 percent) for pest management. The most severe threats observed are from stem borers (82 percent) and mirids (81 percent). Data suggests that the main challenge is not practice adoption, but the quality of execution, correct targeting, and coordination at the community level.


Photo by Giuseppe Cipriani

Ghana

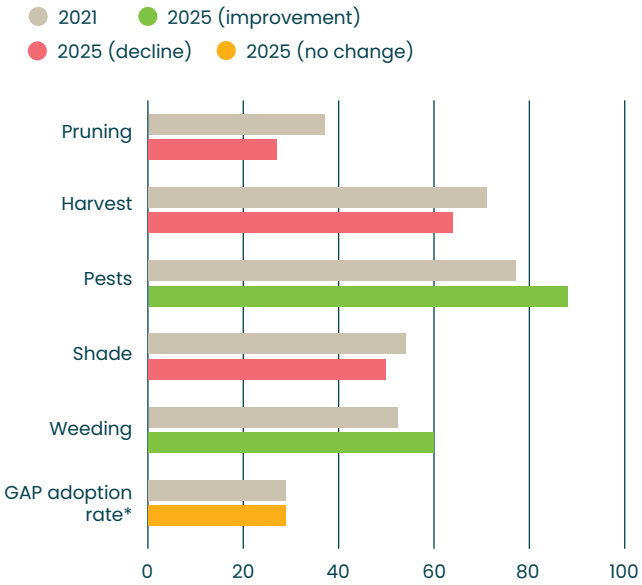
Over the first four years of data collection on GAPs by the Rainforest Alliance in Ghana, we have seen consistent progress in **pest and disease management** adoption (see Figure 2.2). While scores decreased slightly in 2025, pest and disease management remains the most commonly adopted GAP in Ghana. This is partly due to the high use of pesticides on Ghanian cocoa farms in response to heightened levels of pests and diseases. The two most commonly identified pests and diseases are mirids (96 percent) and black pod disease (74 percent).

Ghanian cocoa farmers show the lowest uptake of good **pruning** practices across all GAPs. While adoption decreased from 37 percent in 2021 to 27 percent in 2025, rates have rebounded from a low of 18 percent in 2023. Between 20 and 62 percent of farmers demonstrated "good" quality pruning in at least one pruning skill area. Income Accelerator Program farmers performed better than their peers, with 67 percent achieving Grade 1 or 2 for pruning quality, compared with 36 percent of non-Income Accelerator farmers. Approximately one-third of farmers indicated they did the pruning themselves, and 50 percent used pruning brigades—professional groups established through the Income Accelerator Program to prune cocoa plots. Encouraging increased use of pruning brigades is important, as data suggests that these brigades outperform casual paid labor in West Africa, driving better yields and pest outcomes.

Looking at other GAPs, adoption of **weed management** increased from 52 percent in 2021 to 60 percent in 2025, while uptake declined slightly for harvesting (71 to 64 percent) and **shade management** (54 to 50 percent). Several external factors may have limited adoption in recent years. Climate change has posed a significant challenge, with irregular rainfall, intense heat, and strong winds affecting cocoa production.[12] This unpredictable weather has caused cocoa flowers to burn or drop off before developing into pods, reducing yields. Economic pressures have also played a role.

FIGURE 2.2

GAPs adoption over time (% of farmers) - Ghana



The values shown for 2025 are weighted averages by IAP group (IAP or NCP only).
**Adoption of four or more GAPs, one of which must be pruning.*

Currency devaluation and fluctuations in cocoa prices[13] have restricted farmers' ability to invest in essential farm inputs and improved practices. At the same time, high labor costs remain a major barrier: Implementing GAPs often requires hired labor, which many farmers cannot afford. Survey data shows that labor accounts for nearly 84 percent of total production costs in Ghana. Together, these factors likely contribute to lower adoption rates, despite high levels of training participation.

Photo by Nu Image Communications

Photo by Nu Image Communications

Latin America

Since our expansion to Latin America four years ago, we have been collecting data on pruning, weeding, pest and disease management, harvesting management, and shade management. In 2025, data was only collected in Brazil.[14]

Pruning is widely practiced in Brazil, with 94 percent of farmers reporting that they prune their cocoa farms. Pruning quality in Brazil is relatively consistent across most pruning aspects, though there is room for improvement on the quality of secondary branch pruning. 58 percent of farmers report that they rely on hired help for pruning.

Approximately 40 percent of Brazilian farmers received a "good" quality score for **pest and disease management**, an increase over previous years. The most commonly reported pests and diseases were witches broom disease (81 percent) and black pod disease (63 percent).

Brazilian farmers demonstrated high rates (72 percent) of effective **weed management**, reflecting an improvement since 2023, though herbicide use remains high (61 percent).

Shade integration on cocoa farms in Latin America differs significantly by origin.[15,16] There are four common growing systems in Brazil—full sun, cabruca, consortium, and agroforestry—each with different shade conditions. The cabruca and agroforestry systems tend to have the highest density of shade trees on a cocoa plot. In the cabruca farming system, cocoa trees are planted under tropical native canopy shade cover. Data indicates that 60 percent of farmers dedicate 76–100 percent of their cocoa farms to agroforestry, with an average of 84 shade trees per hectare. There are national regulations around maintenance of conservation areas and field observations suggest that shade is often excessive or poorly structured on many farms, which can actually increase humidity and disease pressure. There is therefore a need to shift from passive shade tree retention to intentional, functional agroforestry design.

WHY GAP ADOPTION MATTERS

Helping farmers improve GAP uptake can improve cocoa productivity in the near-term and strengthen farmer resilience in the long-term. In Côte d'Ivoire, data suggests that farmers who met GAP adoption thresholds had higher yields than those who did not. Across the five GAP areas, the largest yield difference occurs between farmers who implement pest and disease management practices and those who do not. In Ghana, we observed a more mixed relationship between GAP adoption and yield, given the structural issues in the Ghanian cocoa sector noted above. Pruning and weeding adoption show a slight positive relationship with yield, while trends for other GAPs are less clear. In Brazil, there was a positive relationship between GAP adoption and higher yields for all practices except shade management, which could be due to some regions that utilize a mono-cropping production model. We saw the largest yield differences between farmers who adopt pruning and harvesting practices and those who do not. This initial trend data suggests that helping farmers embrace better farming practices brings benefits not only to farmers but also to cocoa companies as well, allowing them to source more cocoa from their current supply chain.

The KIT Institute has supported an ongoing independent evaluation of the Nestlé Income Accelerator Program since its launch in 2022. The Rainforest Alliance shares annual M&E data on GAP practice adoption with KIT to inform this analysis. See insights from the latest KIT evaluation report here.

CHAPTER 3: REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE ADOPTION

Helping farmers transition to regenerative agriculture practices plays a crucial role in Nestlé's long-term sustainability strategy. As of 2025, the company has sourced 27.6 percent of its key ingredients from farmers implementing regenerative practices.[17]

The transition to regenerative agriculture is a journey—one that requires time, investment, and collaboration across the entire supply chain. As part of this effort, Nestlé is working closely with farmers to promote practices that strengthen biodiversity, improve soil health, and protect water resources. Current training on GAPs, along with Nestlé Cocoa Plan verification and Rainforest Alliance certification audits, provides a strong foundation upon which these regenerative practices can be built. Looking ahead, scaling adoption will require continued investment, targeted support, and robust monitoring to ensure these practices take hold and deliver lasting impact.

Agroforestry is one of the most important regenerative practices in this transition. By integrating trees into farming systems, it helps regulate microclimates, improve soil moisture retention, and enhance soil structure—reducing vulnerability to erosion and climate change.[18,19] Other key practices include improving soil health, as well as Integrated Pest and Weed Management.

Rainforest Alliance monitoring and evaluation data helps Nestlé track the uptake of these practices and identify where additional support is needed, ensuring farmers are equipped to move forward on their journey toward regeneration.

SOIL HEALTH

Farms—and the ecosystems they are part of—are only as healthy as their soil. In the cocoa sector, declining soil fertility is closely linked to stagnating or decreasing yields.[20] This makes improving soil health and nutrition an urgent priority. Through regenerative practices, we work alongside cocoa farmers to restore vitality—supporting more resilient farms today while laying the groundwork for stronger harvests in the future. This remains an important focus of the Rainforest Alliance-Nestlé partnership as we continue to build on progress and drive lasting improvement.

Increasing soil cover using organic materials can help improve nutrient cycling (how nutrients move through the soil) and reduce the risk of erosion.[21] Across the farms we visited, most farmers were already achieving near-total soil cover—89 percent in Brazil, 92 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, and 85 percent in Ghana—primarily using crop residues (plant matter left over after harvests) or mulch (see Figure 3.1). However, the use of cover crops was rare across all countries (see Table 3.2).

Alongside soil cover, organic fertilizers can enhance soil health while reducing reliance on external inputs, particularly synthetic ones that carry greater environmental risks. Throughout all the countries we visited, many farmers are already using organic fertilizers (see Figure 3.3), though adoption varies widely—from 11 percent in Brazil to 67 percent in Ghana. In West Africa, the most common types include cocoa pods and poultry manure. In Brazil, lower use is linked to several factors, including limited use of cocoa pods, a lack of knowledge on how to make organic compost, and difficulty making or sourcing sufficient fertilizer volumes to cover larger farm areas.

FIGURE 3.1

Percentage of farmers covering 76-100% of soil using crop residue and/or mulch

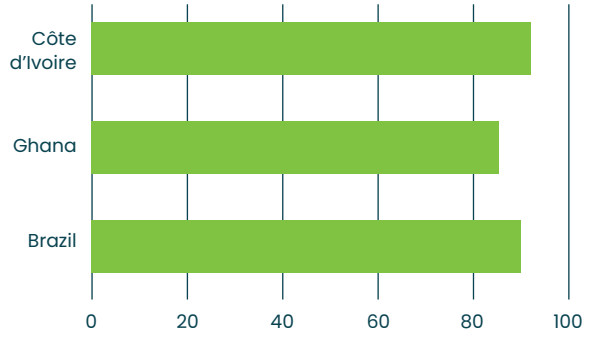


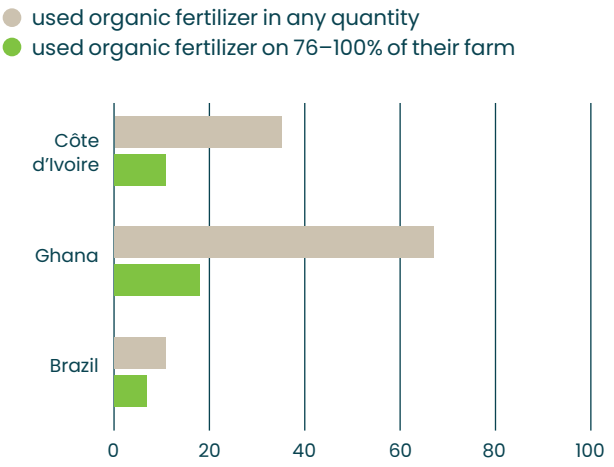
TABLE 3.2

Percentage of farmers using various methods of soil coverage

Country	Mulch	Cover Crops
Côte d'Ivoire	100%	1%
Ghana	100%	0%
Brazil	98%	2%

FIGURE 3.3

Percentage of farmers using organic fertilizer practices.



Our findings show that the barriers go beyond initial adoption. Farmers—both those already using organic fertilizers and those who are not—point to cost and technical know-how as key challenges to expanding their use. Compost made from cocoa pods could be more readily available and serve as an effective soil amendment for improving structure and boosting microbial activity. However, its lower nutrient content and slow release of nutrients compared to manure or synthetic fertilizers means producers cannot expect it to deliver the immediate nutrient provision that concentrated fertilizers supply. It takes time for farmers to see the benefits of compost application on soil biology, which may cause them to question whether the time and labor required to produce it are justified.

This highlights the need for farmer support programs that strike the right balance: reducing dependence on external inputs while promoting practical, effective organic solutions that reflect the realities farmers face—including cost, labor, and performance.

INTEGRATED PEST AND WEED MANAGEMENT

Another key part of the regenerative agriculture transition includes reducing, and ideally eliminating, the use of chemical pesticides (including herbicides and weedicides) due to their negative environmental impacts. While pesticides were still cited as the most common method to prevent pests and diseases in West Africa, 75 percent of farmers in Brazil use pruning as a key pest and disease management practice, outpacing agrochemical use (62 percent). Farmers across the three countries apply pesticides one to three times a year—on an as-needed basis in Brazil and on a calendar schedule in West Africa. Need-based applications are generally considered more effective as they respond to actual pest pressure and avoid unnecessary use.

Across the three countries, farmers use manual labor, motor tools, and herbicides to manage weeds. Motor tools were used by 82 percent of farmers in Brazil, compared with manual weeding (99 percent) in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. This indicates a different level of mechanization between the cocoa farmers in Brazil versus West Africa. The use of herbicides was limited in West Africa (33 percent Ghana and 36 percent Côte d'Ivoire) compared with Brazil (60 percent). Most farmers who use herbicides do so one or two times a year. The data suggests that agroforestry and pruning are strongly linked to better pest control, especially when combined with correct pesticide use. This points to the value of an integrated strategy that goes beyond agrochemical application to both control pests and reduce reliance on external inputs.

WHY REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE PRACTICE ADOPTION MATTERS

While regenerative agriculture practice adoption is still at an early stage on many Nestlé Cocoa Plan farms, Rainforest Alliance monitoring and evaluation data shows evidence of a positive relationship between some regenerative agriculture practices, yield, and income. In West Africa, several practices—such as tailoring fertilizer use to crop nutrient requirements, pruning, applying fertilizers effectively, and planting agroforestry trees—are linked to improved yields.

No single practice tells the full story. Instead, our findings show that yields and pest outcomes improve most when farmers adopt a combination of practices, with farms using three to four regenerative approaches seeing the strongest results. This suggests that supporting farmers to implement a small set of well-chosen practices together can deliver greater impact than pushing a single intervention at scale.

CHAPTER 4: INCOME

Cocoa farmers face significant structural challenges to earning a living income. To better understand the economic realities of the cocoa farmers participating in the Nestlé Cocoa Plan, we collected income data across Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Brazil.[23]

Household revenue is composed of cocoa revenue (cocoa production multiplied by cocoa price) and total non-cocoa family income. Net household income is calculated by subtracting the costs of production from the total household revenue. In this chapter, we take a closer look at each of these components to better understand the income structure of cocoa-farming families.

COCOA PRODUCTION COSTS

Production costs varied across the three countries. Production costs on a per hectare basis were highest in the more professionalized farms of Brazil, driven by high labor needs (62 percent of costs), followed by fertilizer inputs (30 percent). Per hectare costs were much lower in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, dominated by fertilizer costs (72 percent) in Côte d'Ivoire and labor costs (83 percent) in Ghana. Farmers also reported spending on herbicides, though these costs were relatively small compared to labor and fertilizer.

COCOA REVENUE

Cocoa revenue is determined by two key factors: how much cocoa farmers produce and the price they receive for it. Across regions, the price is set in very different ways. In Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, the "farmgate" price farmers receive for their cocoa (the price paid to the farmer before any intermediaries) is determined by their respective government cocoa body. The benefit of this approach is that it protects farmers from sudden drops in global market prices. However, it can also mean that farmers do not fully benefit when global prices rise.

For example, during the 2024-2025 season, farmers reported receiving 48.44 Cedi/kg (3.24 USD/k) in Ghana and 1,8 CFA/kg (2.88 USD/kg)—well below global cocoa prices, which peaked at around 11.55 USD/kg in December 2024.[24] Both governments raised the farmgate cocoa prices in October 2025 for the next season.[25,26] In Latin America, prices are determined through either fixed contracts or based on the daily cocoa price. As a result, the prices farmers receive tend to fluctuate more—offering the potential for higher returns, but with greater uncertainty.

COCOA VS NON-COCOA INCOME

The extent to which cocoa-farming families are dependent on cocoa as their main source of income also differs across countries. In West Africa, cocoa is the main source of income for families, contributing between 82 and 85 percent of family income. Similarly, in Brazil, larger cocoa farms contribute approximately 70 percent to household income. Other sources of income in these countries include revenue from additional crops and livestock, financial assistance, and various non-farm income streams.

WORKING TOWARDS A LIVING INCOME

Through the Nestlé Cocoa Plan, Nestlé is committed to improving the livelihoods of farmers in its supply chain. This includes increasing cocoa income through GAPs, helping farmers diversify their income streams, and investing in targeted interventions through their Income Accelerator Program to help the most vulnerable farmers move closer to a living income. Across countries, the path forward looks different—shaped by the realities farmers face on the ground.

In Côte d'Ivoire, improving farm economics will require reducing inefficient input use while expanding income sources. Practices like composting and better management of organic matter can help reduce long-term dependence on chemical fertilizers and improve soil health, but only when they are practical to implement at scale and do not add to farmers' labor burden. In Ghana, addressing structural labor shortages will be crucial. This can be done through labor sharing arrangements (organized by farmer groups), by investing in labor-saving equipment, and improving access to financing so farmers can hire seasonal workers when needed. In Brazil, cocoa farm management is often informal, with limited systematic recordkeeping on production, costs, and sales. Improving recordkeeping and financial management can help farmers better understand their revenue and costs, enabling more informed decisions about future investments.

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead, enhancing the resilience of cocoa farmers will become increasingly vital. As extreme weather events and changing production conditions put additional strain on yields and practice adoption, farmers will need continued support to build on what's working and transition toward more regenerative approaches that will help make them more resilient in the long term. To continue to support Nestlé Cocoa Plan farmers in achieving Better Farming, Better Lives, and Beter Cocoa, we recommend:

- **Continued support for GAP adoption**
  Nestlé's investments in farming, training, and technical support since 2017 have contributed to improved GAP uptake across origins. The business case for continued investment in GAP training is clear, as data suggests that GAP adoption contributes to increased yields and improved farmer incomes. There is room for additional support in West Africa on pruning uptake, as adoption rates lag relative to other GAPs. Rainforest Alliance monitoring and evaluation data helps identify the main gaps in best practice adoption to guide more targeted, high-impact interventions.

- **Leverage GAP uptake to accelerate the regenerative transition**
  While GAPs provide a strong foundation for productive farms, changing climate conditions call for more advanced regenerative approaches. Targeting farmers with high GAP adoption and providing them with additional support to take the next step—through practices such as organic fertilization, agroforestry, and Integrated Pest and Weed Management—can help strengthen resilience and reduce long-term risks.

- **Help farmers reduce costs and diversify income streams**
  Even with historically high cocoa prices, low yields, climate variability, and high costs continue to limit farm profitability. To improve farmer incomes, especially in West Africa, interventions should focus on both improving regenerative agriculture uptake to increase yields and support long-term higher revenues, while simultaneously providing targeted support to reduce key cost drivers such as labor in Ghana and fertilizer in Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, supporting farmers to diversify their income streams remains essential for long-term stability.

The Rainforest Alliance's tailored monitoring and evaluation program will continue to assist Nestlé in measuring progress towards its sustainability goals within its cocoa supply chain. Through our evaluation work, we help inform program design and guide future investments—ensuring that Nestlé Cocoa Plan interventions deliver meaningful outcomes for farmers and supply chain partners alike.

ENDNOTES

1 This percentage includes volumes of Rainforest Alliance Certified mass balance cocoa, verified Nestlé Cocoa Plan volumes, and farm data provided by suppliers.

2 Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Brazil, Ecuador, and Mexico

3 A representative sample is taken through a stratified random sampling based on the geographical area, farm size, and cooperative membership.

4 For security reasons, it has not been possible to collect field data in Ecuador in 2024 or 2025, and it was not a requirement of Nestlé for data to be collected in Mexico in 2025.

5 Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Indonesia.

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