# Ivory Coast cocoa farmers warn of collapse without urgent support



Cocoa farmers in Ivory Coast have issued a stark warning that without urgent financial support and fairer market conditions, the country’s cocoa yields could be “destroyed” by 2030. The West African nation is the world’s largest producer of cocoa, supplying global chocolate markets including the UK. However, farmers in regions such as Bafing-Tonkpi and cities like Man report dramatic declines in productivity, driven by a combination of environmental and economic challenges.

The Yeyasso farming cooperative, based in the western city of Man, encompasses some 5,000 cocoa producers. The cooperative reports that production has fallen by 30% in recent years, with many farmers switching to other crops such as rubber or palm in response. Biabate Posseni, 34, a farming lead with Yeyasso who provides training and oversight, attributed much of the decline to climate change. Speaking to the PA news agency, he explained, “When we wait for rain, rain doesn't come, and when we need sun, there is no sun and instead we get a lot of rain.”

Mr Posseni expressed deep concern for the future, warning that “By 2030, if nothing is done, we won't have any cocoa trees because, with climate change, all the cocoa trees will be destroyed.” He called for collective support to address the issue and sustain cocoa production.

Other farmers corroborated the effects of changing weather patterns. Vemo Bakayoko, a cocoa farmer in the Bogouine area, recounted how his two-hectare farm, which previously yielded 700 kilograms annually, produced fewer than 300 kilograms last year. He linked the increased incidence of heavy rains to the spread of black rot disease and described the unpredictability of conditions as a cause for fear. Similarly, Fabrice Flan, based in the village of Yapleu, saw his four-hectare farm devastated by swollen shoot disease in 2016, which caused a significant loss of income. “My farm was finished. And this is my only farm. This is my only source of revenue for me and my family,” he said.

The Ivorian government, regulators, and cooperatives have initiated various measures to confront the impact of climate change and disease on cocoa productivity, though resources remain limited. Thomas Adei, the regional agriculture minister for Ivory Coast, highlighted agroforestry as central to the government's approach, encouraging farmers to plant fruit and shade trees alongside cocoa to promote biodiversity and sustainability. Reflecting on past agricultural practices, Mr Adei noted that “In the 1960s, yields were growing and diseases were few,” but a relentless focus on increasing production had led to unsustainable farming and deforestation. He stated, “It was an abusive consumption of forest. It's had a very, very, very negative impact on cocoa productivity in Cote d'Ivoire.”

In response to new UK and European regulations banning commodities linked to deforestation, Ivorian authorities are developing systems to ensure compliance. Fadiga Mamadou Deye, head of the cafe-cocoa board for Bafing-Tonkpi, is leading a pilot project involving farmer identification cards that collect data on yields, tree numbers, and agroforestry efforts for each farm. While cooperatives certified by Fairtrade, such as Yeyasso, have joined the scheme, many smaller actors face financial and logistical barriers to participation. Mr Deye underscored the overall challenge, stating, “The major challenge is the sustainability of the sector. If most stakeholders in the value chain do not feel concerned about these challenges, it simply means that one day the cooperatives will disappear - vamoose.”

In addition to policy initiatives, Yeyasso has taken practical steps, including geo-mapping farms, establishing tree nurseries, and planting approximately 140,000 new cocoa, fruit, and shade trees. The cooperative is also participating in a pioneering supermarket supply chain initiative called the Shared Impact project, recently approved by the UK’s competition watchdog. This project aims to facilitate longer-term contracts between supermarkets and producers, which would reduce risk for farmers and provide greater financial stability.

Doumbia Abou Zeid, chairman of Yeyasso's board, explained the benefits of the initiative: “When you have longer term contracts, it's good for sustainability. With short-term contracts nothing is certain. At any time the job can stop and so, of course, [farmers] are demotivated and will then look for better opportunities outside the cocoa industry.” The project hopes to increase the proportion of Yeyasso’s cocoa sold on Fairtrade terms from 20% to 40%, doubling premium payments that support social and environmental programmes.

Marks & Spencer (M&S) is the first supermarket to adopt the Shared Impact model, working closely with Fairtrade and Yeyasso to demonstrate its effectiveness. Lucinda Langton, head of sustainability at M&S Food, remarked, “This new Shared Impact model offers us the opportunity to strengthen the resilience of our cocoa supply chains by better supporting our growers and producers in the way they farm and boosting their incomes.” Kerrina Thorogood, director of partnerships at the Fairtrade Foundation, highlighted the unique collaborative approach of the initiative: “Traditionally, companies worked on their own sustainability goals, but this fragmented approach limited impact. Fairtrade's groundbreaking Shared Impact initiative was created to scale up sustainability efforts by encouraging businesses to collaborate and pool sourcing for greater impact.”

The challenges facing Ivory Coast’s cocoa farmers are compounded by economic pressures, including years of low prices that have limited their ability to reinvest in farms. Despite the rising retail cost of chocolate products in markets like the UK, where some items cost 50% more this Easter, farmers often see minimal financial gains at the farm level. Without concerted efforts to address these intertwined environmental and market issues, the future of cocoa production in the world’s largest supplier remains uncertain.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/newgainapi/api/Report/DownloadReportByFileName?fileName=Cote+d%27Ivoire+-+Cocoa+Sector+Overview+-+2025_Accra_Cote+d%27Ivoire_IV2025-0001.pdf> - This report highlights the challenges facing cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire, including environmental issues and economic pressures, which can lead to reduced yields and sustainability concerns. It also discusses the impact of climate change and regulatory challenges.
* <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/farmers-and-workers/cocoa/> - Fairtrade emphasizes the struggles of cocoa farmers to earn a living income and highlights efforts to ensure more equitable trade practices. It underscores the role of cooperatives like Yeyasso in promoting sustainability.
* <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/economy/with-cocoa-prices-booming-nigeria-looks-to-cash-in> - This article discusses the global context of cocoa production, including rising prices and challenges faced by top producers like Ivory Coast and Ghana. It highlights Nigeria's ambitions to increase cocoa production amid global market fluctuations.
* <https://trase.earth/insights/exportations-de-cacao-de-cote-d-ivoire-et-deforestation> - Trase Earth provides insights into deforestation linked to cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire, emphasizing the need for sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impacts.
* <https://www.nestle.com/sustainability/sustainable-sourcing/cocoa> - Nestlé discusses its commitment to sustainable cocoa sourcing through programs like the Nestlé Cocoa Plan, which addresses economic and environmental challenges in cocoa production.