

Women in organic cocoa farming systems in Ghana: Empowered?

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Introduction

In 2011, the Agro Eco-Louis Bolk Institute formed the Tano-Biakoye Organic Cocoa Farmers Association in Atwima Mponua, a rural district in the forest zone of Ghana. The intention was to provide regular technical training and link farmers to markets that offer premium prices.

The main purpose of this paper is to show the extent to which women farmers have been (dis)empowered due to adoption of practices that lead to organic cocoa production.

The five domain (5D) areas of the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) developed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) were measured to determine:

- 1) the extent of women’s participation in household productive decisions,
- 2) the extent of women’s access to and use of resources and
- 3) the extent to which women contribute to community action

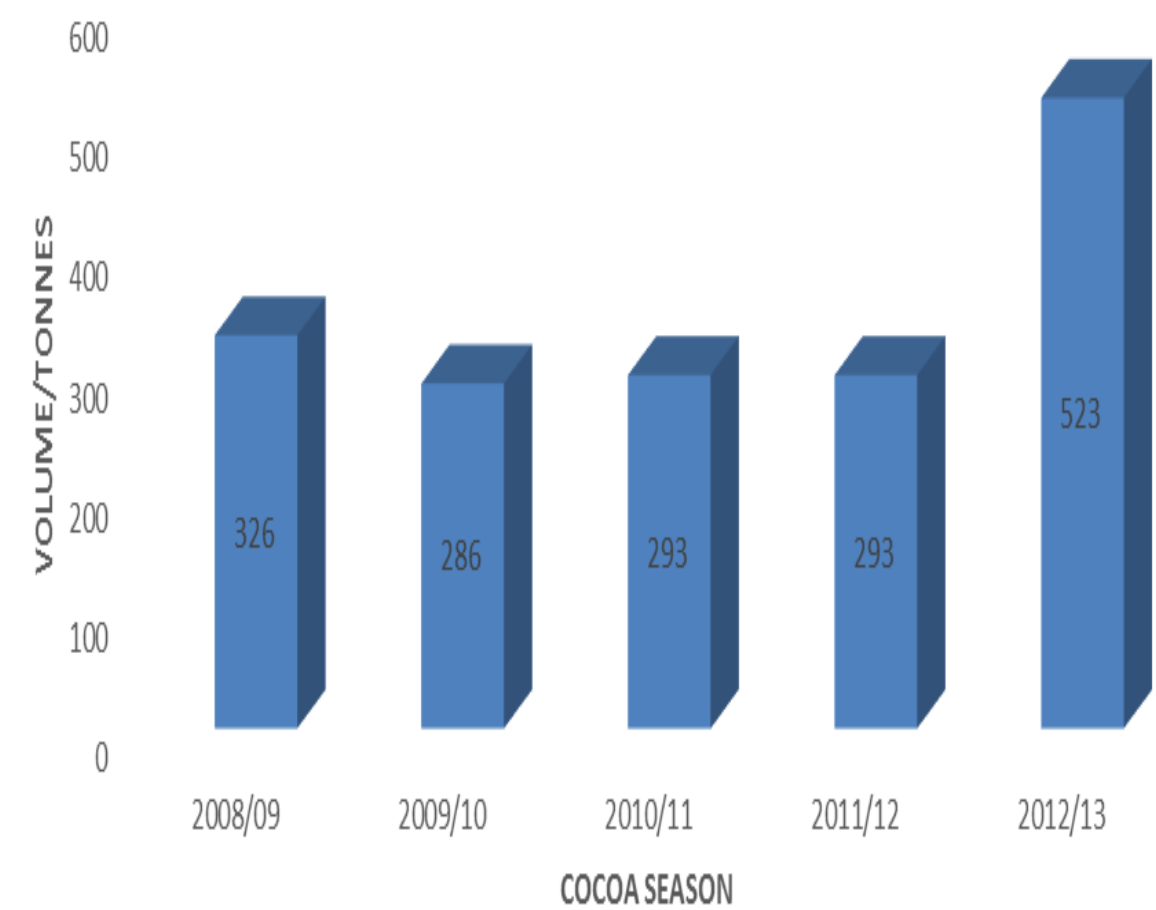


Figure 1: Trends in organic cocoa production in Ghana

Methods

1. **Sources of data:**
 - i. 2014-2016 survey of 176 females and 226 male cocoa farmers in Ashanti region conducted by ProEcoAfrica project (www.proecoafrika.net)
 - ii. 10 focus group discussions in five communities to understand input dealers and relevant governmental and non-governmental agencies
2. **Method of analysis:**
 - i. Descriptive statistics,
 - ii. The decision criterion for disempowerment using the WEAI is based on each gender group scoring less than 80 percent in the 10 sub-domains of the 5D areas.

Table 1: Socio economic background of female cocoa farmers

Variable	Organic		Conventional	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Marital status:				
Married	53	58	62	73
Unmarried	38	42	23	27
Status in household:				
Head	53	58	37	43
Other	38	42	43	57
Educational level:				
Literate	60	66	53	38
Illiterate	31	34	32	62
Age:				
Minimum	19		27	
Mean	53		52	
Maximum	84		76	
Standard deviation	13.78		10.39	
Size of farm (Hectares):				
Minimum	0.04		0.07	
Mean	1.3		1.1	
Maximum	12		6.0	
Standard deviation	1.38		0.96	
Owned land?				
Yes	60	66	84	99
No	31	34	1	1
Borrowed money (GH¢)?				
Yes	24	26.4	22	25.9
No	67	73.6	63	74.1
Member of farmer organisation?				
Yes	57	62.6	31	36.5
No	34	37.4	54	63.5



Results & Discussion

1. Female cocoa farmers largely consulted with males; the consultation limited timely procurement, asset ownership and autonomy.
2. Female cocoa farmers depended on males rather than markets for information and critical farm inputs
3. Relying on extended family labour and land were greater restrictions to female cocoa farmers while use of own income was less restrictive.
4. Female cocoa farmer participation in groups was less restricted, but high workloads restricted effectiveness and impact
5. Female cocoa farmers contributed to community action, but they hardly led in public discourse when there were men.

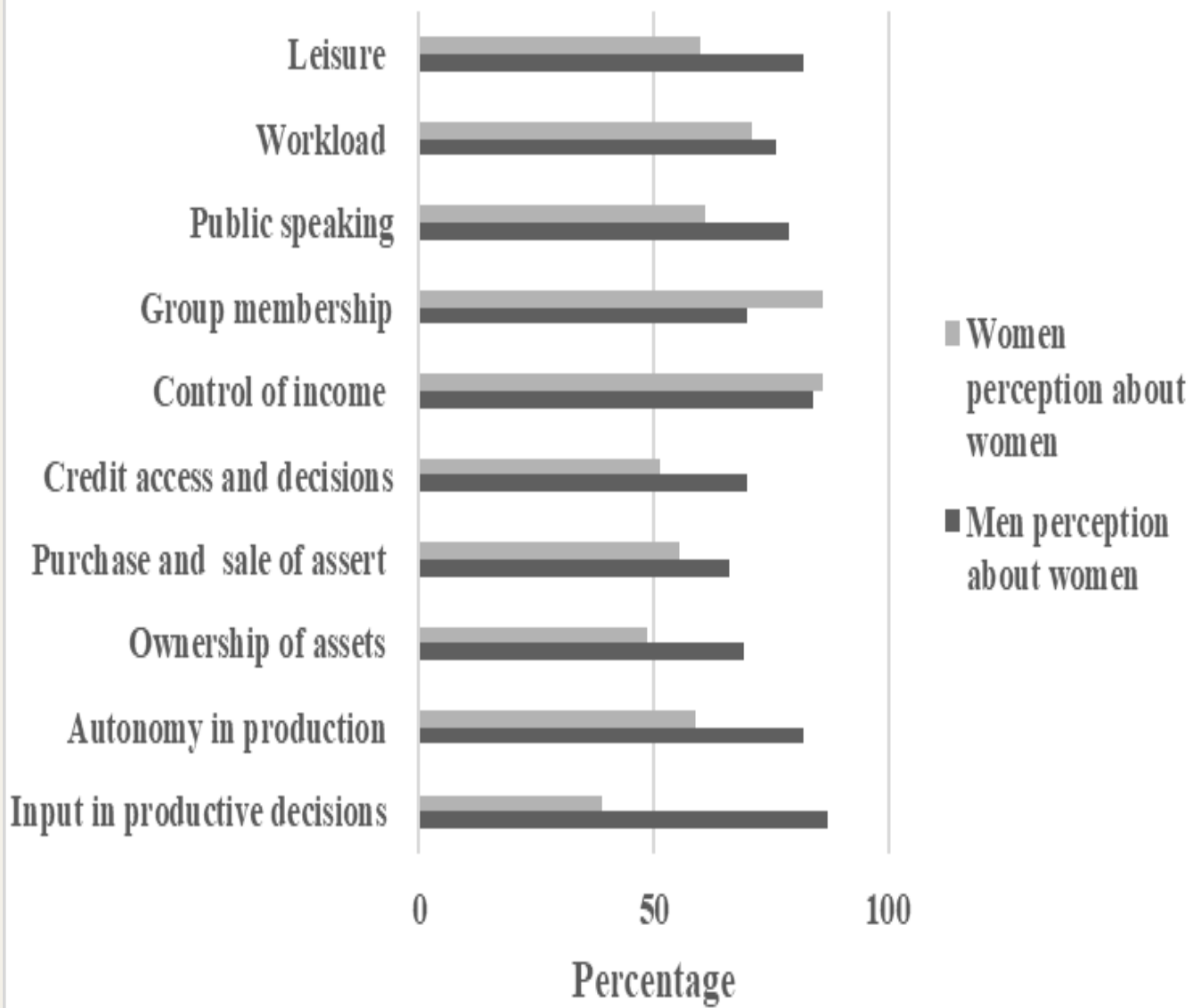


Fig 2: Perception on domains of WEAI by men and women cocoa farmers



Conclusions & Recommendations

- 1.Organic farming is still ‘new’. The need for advocacy, external support, and linkages to niche markets cannot be ignored.
2. Supporting group learning and strengthening negotiating skills for women is needed for sustainability.
3. We propose strengthening of local level stakeholders and private sector partnership to bring markets closer to communities and reduce women’s over-dependence on social structures.
4. Community-based business advisory and resource centres should be established to enhance regular expert consultation for women.
5. Farmers ‘organizations should be strengthened to ensure greater participation of women in leadership positions for more effective learning



Acknowledgements:

We are grateful to Dutch Humanist Institute for Cooperation (Hivos), Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), and Mercator Foundation Switzerland for the funding support through the ProEcoAfrica and OFSA projects, and to the project’s National Advisory Steering Committee for guidance.