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# Liberian cocoa: unlocking a niche market in Europe

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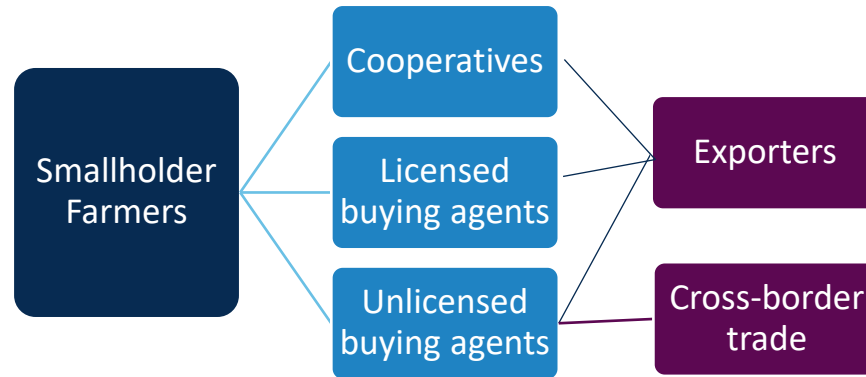
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# Liberian Cocoa : a currently small national sector...

- Around 40 000 cocoa farmers
- For around 20 000 t of cocoa production (FAO)
- In a largely informal and weakly structured sector with few cooperatives.

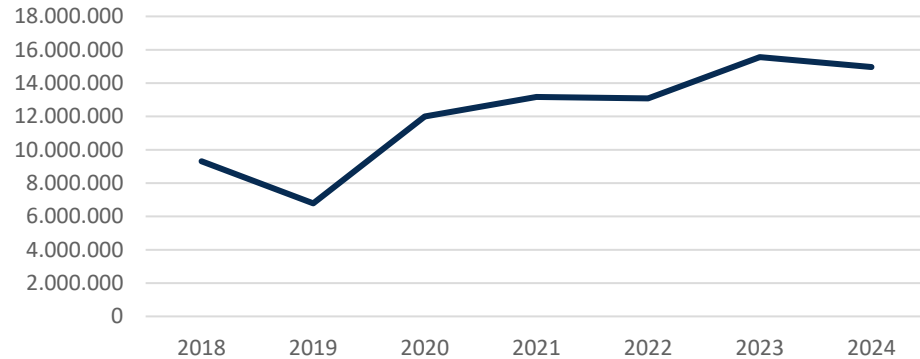


- Low yields (around 200t/ha)
- Low input-low output model
- Challenges related to pre- and post-harvesting capacities, drying, storage and transportation

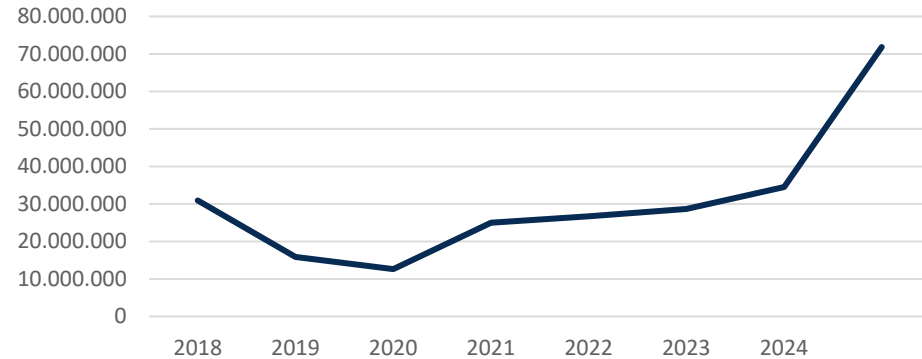
# ...with a with strong potential in Europe...

- Around 15 000 t of cocoa beans exported by Liberia to the EU (62% by value of national production in 2022)

Quantity of Liberian cocoa imported by the EU

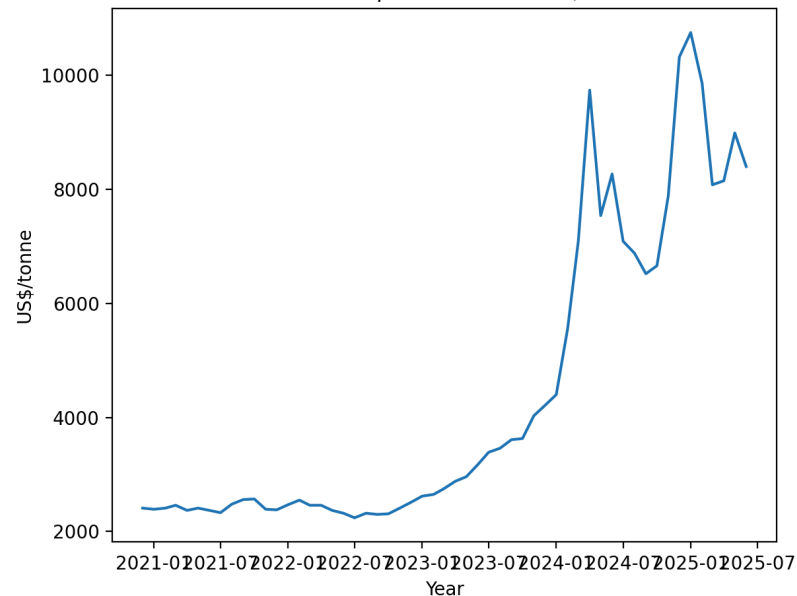


Import Value of Liberian cocoa to the EU

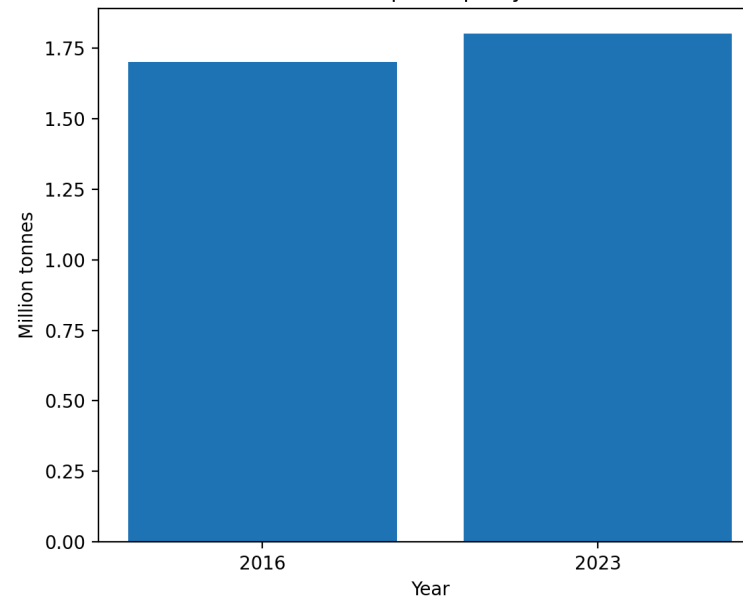


- But European consumer demand remains stable despite rising prices

Global cocoa prices (ICCO - US\$/tonne)



EU cocoa bean imports (proxy for demand)



Europe remaining the largest cocoa-consumer market in the world  
And the cocoa production of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire is decreasing

# ...as a niche market for « agroforest/deforestation-free »

## cocoa

- Liberia : the last remaining forests of the Upper Guinean Forest:  
In 2020, Liberia had 8.8 Mha of natural forest, extending over 92% of its land area (GFW)
- Cocoa is agroforest and organic cocoa “by default”
- Strong demand from the European consumer for sustainable cocoa :
  - living income for cocoa farmers
  - traceable cocoa
  - deforestation-free cocoa
  - legal cocoa
- The EU Deforestation Regulation aimed at boosting the demand for deforestation-free, sustainable products
- By requiring Mandatory **due diligence (DD)** obligations for **operators** placing commodities and products on the EU market or exporting from the EU : Only deforestation-free and legal products are allowed on the EU market
- But in 2024, it lost 160 kha of natural forest, equivalent to 100 Mt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

# Key challenges to overcome to achieve a sustainable sector

## Challenge 1 : Traceability

- Limited traceability in the private sector
- Multi-stakeholder commitment (Roadmap to a Sustainable Cocoa Sector) to 100% traceability by 2026 but little progress made
- Likely significant cross-border flows (both directions) but no reliable data
  - Due to price differences, transportation challenges
  - Concern for EUDR compliance due to gaps in chain of custody info, risk of mixing and jeopardises the integrity of the Ivorian national system
- No national public traceability system, no farm mapping or farmer registration initiatives
- But a real commitment from the Government (LACRA) to set up a national traceability system → on-going work with a system under development

# Key challenges to overcome to achieve a sustainable sector

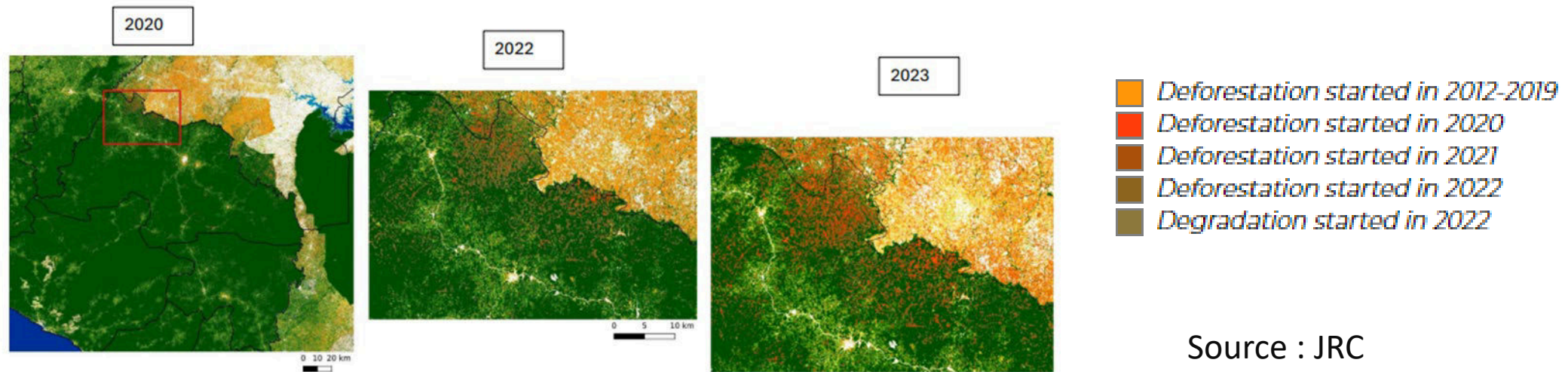
## Challenge 2 : Legality

- Potential for ambiguity, overlapping land rights claims
  - Plot mapping should be disconnected from the provision of land deeds
- The Liberian legal framework on child labour could be more detailed and enforcement measures have no deterrent effect.
- Lack of certification schemes and limited capacity of cooperatives mean there are very few tools to support legality verification
- Professionalising the sector would help clarify the legal framework

# Key challenges to overcome to achieve a sustainable sector

## Challenge 3 : Deforestation

- No national data on 2020 forest cover available
- No operational NFMS and limited institutional and financial capacity
- Considerable recent deforestation in the southeast, along the Ivorian border due to migration and crop-sharing arrangements



Source : JRC

# Deforestation: A Dual Environmental and Reputational Risk for the Country

- High rate of deforestation in the Southeast might jeopardise efforts to upgrade the production of cocoa (traceability efforts, yields efforts...)
- Private sector recognition of the issue: July 2025 commitment letter to engage in a traceability system and fight deforestation

Besides, we the exporters of cocoa from Liberia are committing today to support the fight against deforestation, especially in the South East and therefore shall reject from buying any cocoa bag that is coming from deforested areas after December 2020.



June 27, 2025

**Director General**  
Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA)  
Free Port of Monrovia, Bushrod Island, Monrovia-Liberia


**Dear Director General:**

We; the exporters of cocoa from Liberia, are committing today to join our forces for making the Liberian cocoa sector more sustainable. For that purpose, we shall commit to establish a joined traceability system where everyone will share some information regarding its sourcing in order to support LACRA and more generally the Government to structure the cocoa sector with more strength and transparency.

Besides, we the exporters of cocoa from Liberia are committing today to support the fight against deforestation, especially in the South East and therefore shall reject from buying any cocoa bag that is coming from deforested areas after December 2020.

To support us, we call the Government of Liberia to play also their role in the fight against deforestation and in creating the enabling environment for the business of sustainable cocoa to be flourishing in Liberia.

Kind regards

  
**Sheikh A. Turay - President**  
Liberia National Cocoa & Coffee Exporters Association  
(LINACEA)  
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CC: **Delegation of the European Union to Liberia**  
100 United Nations Drive, Mamba Point, Monrovia  
P.O. BOX 10-3049, Monrovia 1000, Liberia

CC: EU and the French Development Agency (AFD)

# Conclusion: Sustainability as an opportunity for Liberian cocoa to establish a foothold in the European cocoa market

Cocoa in the Southeast unlikely to be EUDR compliant or any kind of sustainability criteria/certification given recent deforestation

→ That does not mean that cocoa production cannot increase : Compliant Cocoa Clusters could be defined: **Previously deforested areas (before 2020) that become focal areas for sustainable and efficient cocoa production and where EUDR compliance efforts are focused**

Concentrate efforts in the old cocoa belt (Nimba, Lofa, and Bong):

- Modernize cooperatives, support productivity improvement
- Disincentivize cocoa production in the Southeast and
- Incentivize forest protection (Emission Reduction Payments) in the South-east

To support this effort : it would be necessary to:

- Further strengthen LACRA's efforts towards the implementation of a national traceability system;
- Rapidly establish a deforestation monitoring and alert system;
- Implement robust measures to effectively curb deforestation in the South-east

An illustration of a cocoa farm. In the foreground, a smiling man and woman are holding fans of banknotes. In the background, a circular inset shows two school children with backpacks waving. The scene is surrounded by cocoa trees with various colored pods (green, yellow, orange, red).

**Sustainable cocoa helps me  
give my family a good life  
now and in the future.**

**Thank you for you attention**

# Thank you!

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