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Soubré Landscape –

Quarterly report, April to June 2021

Soubré, Côte d'Ivoire

Content

Executive Summary

Earthworm's work in the Soubré region is transitioning from a focus on farmer resilience, through the Rurality program begun in 2016, to a broader, landscape approach based on the needs of the project area. Please refer to the Landscape Transformation Update in the end of this report for more information. As this transition continues through Q2 and Q3, 2021 this update reports our work from a Rurality perspective. Beginning with Q3, 2021 all reporting on the Soubré Landscape will be done with an updated Landscapes format.

As part of the Rurality initiative, Earthworm Foundation has oriented its actions in the Soubré region around two main axes which are:

Axis 1 – Resilience: Strengthen smallholder resilience through increased productivity, improved food security, diversification of income sources and technical training

Axis 2 – Environmental Protection: Protection of the environment through the preservation of classified forests, soils and rivers

This second quarter of 2021 is marked by the fund mobilization for palm nurseries and establishment of Village savings and functional loan associations (VSLAs) with women. These actions are presented under two axis:

For the first axis: Resilience

- Funds mobilization for oil palm seeds
- Village savings and functional loan associations (VSLAs) set up

For the second axis: Environmental Protection

- Tree nurseries rehabilitation
- Preparation phase for planting tree species on the forest reserve degraded area

Introduction

Rurality is an initiative of Earthworm Foundation (EF), an international non-profit organization that works with companies, rural communities and NGOs to preserve ecosystems and improve livelihoods, through a model of change innovative. Rurality aims to stimulate innovation at the level of farmers by empowering them to create and own the mechanisms that will strengthen their resilience. By creating value at the base of the supply chain, Rurality brings shared benefits to all stakeholders. With the continued contribution from our main partners this project will transfer into a Landscape approach through 2021 in order to address challenges in the key sourcing regions more holistically.

In 2021, EF member companies GODIVA, pladis and Profairtrade have continued to commit to supporting their suppliers to embark on a process of change and investing in transformation in sourcing regions through Rurality, and now, the wider Soubré Landscape initiative.

Since 2020, GODIVA has been committed to carrying out the actions of the two axes mentioned above, contributing to the transformation within the cocoa supply chain and benefiting both farmers and nature in the process. Joining in 2021 as a main partner, pladis also has committed to supporting our work in the region including the transformation to a Landscape Approach.

Background

The Rurality project in the region originally started out in 2016 with a focus on the oil palm supply chain with the support of Nestlé, Profairtrade and SIPEFCI. At this point the focus has expanded to include the cocoa supply chain with Godiva's and pladis' support. Our previous work in the region includes:

- 100% of Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB) supply in SIPEFCI RSPO Identity Preserved concession can be traced to farm. Of the farmers in the RSPO Identity Preserved supply:
    - 2442 Farmers (oil palm and cocoa) actively engaged directly by EF since start of project
    - This accounts for 70% of oil palm farmers reached in project area
    - 3353 Farmers have transparent access to commercial information (price, deductions, payment schedule, informative radio programmes, etc.) through the help of SIPEFCI
    - An additional 2413 Farmers implement Best Management Practices (BMP) through the help of third-party extension officers (NGOs or cooperatives). Of those farmers implementing BMP:
        - A 10 to 50 % gain in productivity (measured in yield) of main cash crop was achieved
        - 69 Farmers have diversified their source of income
        - A 10 to 50 % approximate increase in income was realized based on sampling
- 14 Stakeholder groups are actively participating in Rurality, from public and private sector, academia and CSOs
    - 5 Stakeholder groups have taken up Rurality solutions

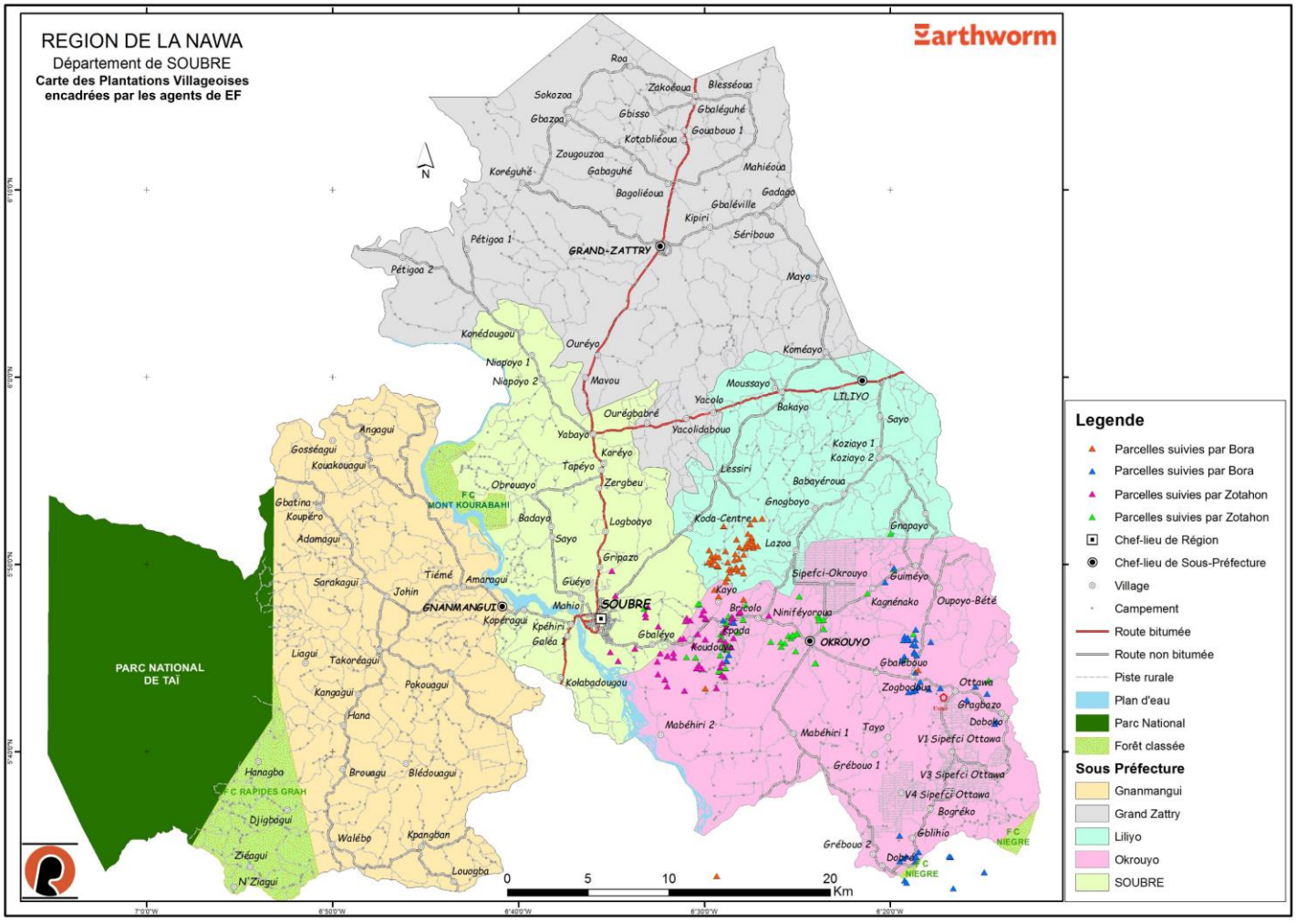
We continue to pursue some activities with palm growers:

- Ensure farmers continue to receive high quality germinated oil palm seeds;
- Opening of the germinated seeds account at the National Agronomic Research Center (CNRA) for the acquisition of high-yield plant material

Project Information Sheet

Location	Soubré, Nawa region, Ivory Coast			
Main partners	GODIVA (Associate Funder) pladis (Contributor)			
Secondary partners	Profairtrade (PFT) Société Internationale de Plantations et de Finance en Côte d'Ivoire (SIPEFCI)			
Start date	February 2016		**Commodity**	Cocoa
			Secondary commodity	Palm oil
Link in the supply chain	SIPEFCI was RSPO certified in 2018, provides Profairtrade, a supplier of Nutriswiss which in turn supplies Nestlé. COOPALM and COOPAGRIS cooperatives collect village planters and supply SIPEFCI. Godiva and pladis joined to support our work with cocoa farmers as part of our transition to the Landscape Approach.			
Rurality phase	Rural Dynamic Diagnostics (RDD): February – August 2016 Transformation Phase: November 2017 – to date Landscape transition: 2021			
Line-up	Regional lead: Eleonore N'gbesso (e.ngbesso@earthworm.org) Project officers: Zotahon Fréderick; Bora Didiata			
Number of farmers affected since the start of the Rurality project in 2016	2442			
Number of farmers who have benefited from Rurality since the start of 2021	945			
Annual targets 2021	Axis 1	120 ha	Collective oil palm nurseries	
	Axis 1	5	Village savings and functional loan associations (VSLAs)	
	Axis 1	1500	Economically resilient farmers	
	Axis 2	15 000	Native species plants produced	
	Axis 2	200 ha	Agroforestry carried out by farmers	
	Axis 2	25 ha	Degraded forest rehabilitated	
	Overall	3 000	Farmers who are directly benefitting from project	
Context	Soubré is the capital of the Nawa Region, which is an important global supplier for oil palm seeds and cacao. In terms of cocoa, the Nawa Region is known as the Ivorian cocoa loop because it produces nearly 40% of Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa, which in turn is the leading global producer of cocoa (source Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). The coexistence of these two important agriculture crops puts pressure on soils and other natural resources and expansion has come at detriment to vital natural spaces and protected areas. A major problem arises, namely how to regenerate man and nature. This becomes clear based on two important signs: • Niegre et Mont Kourabahi forest reserves > 80% forest cover loss • Intensive agricultural activities inside and at the periphery of forests Reserves Another detriment is that agricultural production in the area depends strongly on smallholders: Palm oil 60%, Cocoa 100%, Rubber 65%. Agricultural production in the area heavily depends on smallholders: Smallholders lack the skills to apply optimal farming practices leading to low productivity (25% less than industrial concessions) and depleting soil even further. This is a double-edged sword as smallholders continue to have a negative impact on soil nutrition, while also not meeting economic needs because of the low production output. EF is present in the landscape since 2014, supported by Godiva, Nestlé (former), PFT, and			

	SIPEF-CI to reinforce farmers resilience and restore the two forest reserves in the Soubré Landscape.
Map	Project map: Spatial distribution of the plantations identified within the framework of the RDD (see below)



Progress

Axis 1 – Resilience

Goal: Strengthen smallholder resilience through increased productivity, improved food security, diversification of income sources and technical training

Justification

Starting with the conclusion of the Rural Dynamic Diagnostics (RDD), the transformation phase of the SIPEF-CI Rurality Project was launched in November 2017, involving small palm oil farmers, cooperatives and other relevant local actors. In 2020, cocoa was also integrated into our activities and interventions. Smallholders play an important role in cocoa and palm oil supply chain, because it is often they that get mobilized to meet the growing demand for cocoa. However, these smallholders face several challenges in terms of rural livelihoods including financial interdependence and satisfaction of food needs. This leads us to conclude that our support is vital in order to improve resilience among smallholders.

Approach

In our approach to assist farmers to improve productivity and diversification of income sources we have focused on providing technical support. This was facilitated by our leader farmers who connected with other smallholders in their communities to duplicate their model of sustainable agriculture training. Training sessions on good farming practices, improved farm planning and sustainable mechanisms proved especially important in these exchanges between leader farmers and local smallholders. On top of this, we also organized workshops focusing on producing organic fertilizer from compost. During the individual as well as group trainings our local team was there for close monitoring in order to ensure farmers could smoothly adapt to new practices.

At the same time our outreach efforts created a platform for NGOs operating in the Nawa region. The platform is crucial because partnerships allow us to achieve the target to improve the resilience of 4,000 producers by 2022 (3,000 for 2020/2021 and a further 1,000 in 2022). This will ensure the agroecological transition, including implementation of agriculture diversification, good farming practices of smallholders, income diversification and food security.

To achieve this objective, we will strengthen the synergies between the different actors in the supply chains (cocoa, palm, rubber, food products). Our efforts will begin with a better articulation between the stakeholders. Subsequently, we will create an exchange platform to better plan the support provided to farmers and gradually reduce the number of extension workers engaging with farmers on the same land. Our strategy will also include training of coaches in order to scale our involvement in the region and also as another way to improve support for farmers.

Expected results
The specific results are linked to a synergy of actions of the different actors present in our area of intervention. This will help us achieve our target goal to improve the resilience of 1500 smallholders through the following focus areas:

- Improvement of the productivity of cocoa plantations;
- Improvement of living conditions and food security;
- Development of entrepreneurship among farmers;
- Get farmers to trace all their activities by keeping records and farm plans;
- Connect the planters to each other to allow knowledge exchange between seasoned farmers and less experienced ones.

Axis 1 – Resilience: Results obtained (period from April until June, 2021)

Tasks/ activities	Targets 2021	2nd Quarter Progress	Remarks
Mobilization of funds from palm producers for the acquisition of high-yield sprouted seeds at the CNRA	120 ha	30 ha	Preparation of the installation of collective nurseries in the 3rd quarter
Training and coaching of producers from the image box* on Best Management Practices (BMP) and Best Environmental Practices (BEP)	1 500	489	The objective is to get the farmer to know and adopt BMP and BEP in order to increase the productivity of their farms. For this quarter, sensitization was done with communities to deepen knowledge on forest reserves.
Training of cocoa producers by the relay producers of cocoa cooperatives in agricultural entrepreneurship and provision of the electronic format of version 2 of the agricultural entrepreneurship manual	3 000	226	The relay producers of SCOPACI replicated training on agricultural entrepreneurship to their farmers. (bringing together approximately 92,000 cocoa farmers)
Village Savings and functional Loans Association (VSLA) creation	5	1	In Obrouayo, the women (30) set up a VSLA and gather once a week (mobilization of funds, discuss and organize themselves).

*The image box is a tool used by our local team to teach BEP and BMP through pictures that give examples of the dos and don'ts

Impact indicators

Transformation goal 1: Progress since project start	
2 525	Producers who apply good agricultural practices in their plantation (2413 by third party + 112 by EF)
17	Supervisors of cooperatives and SIPEFCI trained in agricultural entrepreneurship
1 634	Oil palm and cocoa producers trained in agricultural entrepreneurship by co-operatives (palm oil and cocoa) and SIPEFCI supervisors
34	Relay producers of 2 cocoa cooperatives trained in agricultural entrepreneurship
4	Affected farmers have been followed in the diversification and sale of their food products
35	Farmers who have increased their sources of income through livestock management
1	Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) set up with **30 Women**
14	Oil palm and cocoa farmers interacting in moderated WhatsApp group on farm practices

Challenges and discussion

The main challenges we face are:

- ✓ How to involve all the actors in order to offer the appropriate skills to conduct transformation actions with smallholders?
- ✓ Mobilize smallholders to take charge of themselves by setting up support groups;
- ✓ How to optimize efficiency for increasing the number of resilient and entrepreneurial farmers?
- ✓ To popularize agriculture entrepreneurship among producers during advisory support tours in Q3 together with 4 cocoa cooperatives (44 agents). Expected result for 2021: 2000 farmers
- ✓ Illustrate the agricultural entrepreneurship manual for a final version that is more useful and suitable for the vast majority of farmers
- ✓ Gender inclusivity: Address the question of how to engage more women and to involve and properly support them. Our goal is to increase participation and plan targeted activities (social welfare, finance, diversification of source of income, local transformation).

Photos from ground activities – Axis 1:

Picture 1 Replication of training on image box by SCOPACI (cocoa cooperative) to farmer group

Picture 2 Hand over of the savings box to women in Obrouayo

Axis 2 – Environmental Protection

Goal: Farmers maintain and enhance the quality of their natural environment and key habitat areas

Rationale

The Rural Dynamic Diagnostics (RDD) undertaken at the beginning of the project showed that the natural environment is strongly deteriorated in many rural areas and that key habitat areas are very fragmented. This degradation is worsened by the scarcity of rains and the impacts of climate change. Already today, the production of smallholder farmers is negatively impacted by those circumstances. Awareness about disasters due to increased deforestation by oil palm, cocoa and rubber cultivation becomes therefore inevitable. This raise in awareness must lead to concrete actions to slow down deforestation and give way to the reforestation of degraded areas.

General approach

Our approach is targeted on the preservation of existing forests and the rehabilitation of degraded lands through the engagement of stakeholders and local actors. It consists of the promotion of agroforestry activities by building capacity of smallholder farmers on agroforestry practices, so that they are enabled to restore agricultural land and create a microclimate favorable to their activities. Together with all the stakeholders in the area, we continue to target joined actions for the preservation of existing forests. This includes ensuring awareness, increasing knowledge and involving the local populations in monitoring committees. At the same time, we will aim to restore degraded forests by reintroducing native species through tree nurseries. Finally, we will engage in the establishment of community forests with institutional and jurisdictional roots.

Targeted outcome

The specific results we seek to achieve for this goal are:

- ✓ Reduction of environmental pollution and the promotion of responsible agricultural practices;
- ✓ Implementation of agroforestry by setting up nurseries for local forest species
- ✓ Adoption by local communities of agroforestry systems on their farms, as well as the rehabilitation and preservation of forest patches and protected forest areas

Axis 2 – Environmental Protection: Results obtained (Period April until June, 2021)

Tasks / activities	2021 Targets	2nd Quarter progress	Remarks about progress
Indigenous trees nurseries set up	15 000	4 230	Reduction of number because the nurseries (Kossou and Taabo) around Mont Kourabahi forest reserve were sprayed with herbicide causing significant damage (see annex)
Mass sensitization of neighboring communities in the vicinity of Mont Kourabahi and Niégré forest reserves	12	7	People sensitization on the nurseries rehabilitation and monitoring for the implementation of agroforestry and forest rehabilitation
Identification of forest reserve degraded area for rehabilitation	25 ha	23 ha	The planting of tree species and rehabilitation done in July

Outcome indicators

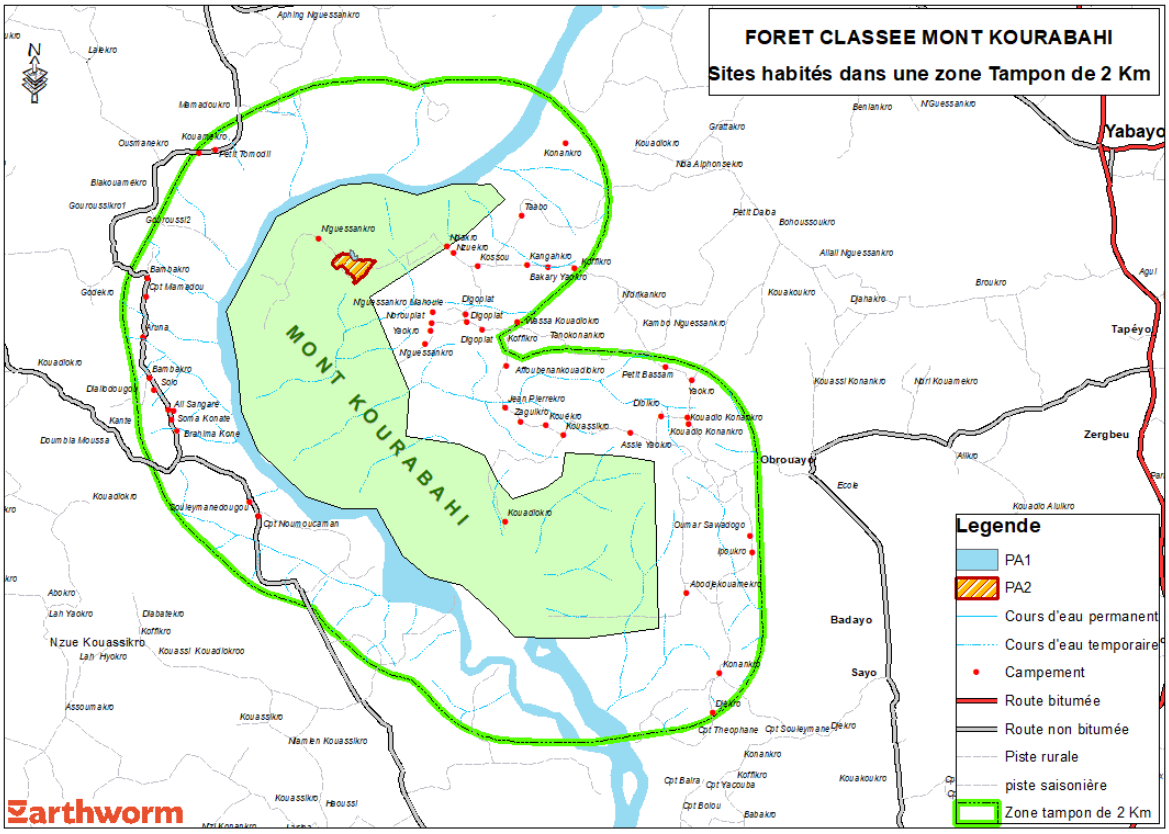
Transformation goal 2: Progress since project start	
27.8	Hectares of Fraké plants for agroforestry in Diakitekro
3.12	Hectares of Fraké, Gmélina, Akpi, Framiré plants for agroforestry in Dobré
0.13	Hectare of reforested teak planted over 0.2 hectare in Dobré
8	Cocoa farmers adopt agroforestry practices
377	Farmers in vicinity of two forest reserves are sensitized on forest rehabilitation and protection
2	Local committees for forest reserve rehabilitation and protection set up in local villages
2.3	Hectares of various forest species reforested on the Soubré dam site.

Challenges and discussion

The most recurring challenges are:

- ✓ Identify and continue mapping degraded area for rehabilitation
- ✓ Rehabilitate forest reserve with Local Forest and Water ministry
- ✓ Identify better ways to produce and maintain tree nurseries? (Communities or Local Forest and water ministry)
- ✓ Establishment of local framework for collaboration with the local SODEFOR/Forest and water ministry to produce nursery trees. The destruction of two tree nurseries (Kossou-Taabo) teach us to improve our community engagement.
- ✓ The introduction of shade trees on farms;
- ✓ The identification, establishment, monitoring and mapping of wetlands to protect natural habitats with current mapping activities;
- ✓ The delineation and preservation of forest patches on farms;
- ✓ Land cover map around the Mont Kourabahi Forest reserve

Photos from ground activities – Axis 2:



Picture 3 Mapping of degraded area to be reforested

Picture 4 Staking for planting tree species on the Mont Kourabahi Forest reserve degraded area

Next steps

Activities	Expected results
Lead discussion with women and Youth leaders in farmers' communities	Set up VSLAs, Youth committee for services (ecotourism and field activities) and social issue discussion group
Follow up nursery activities	Strengthen indigenous tree restoration in June/July
Farmers' cooperatives empowerment	Coaching of farmers for implementation of transformation activities (BMP, diversification, farm business tools, etc.)
Sensitization of cocoa farmers to introduce tree in their cocoa farm in and outside the forest reserve	Indigenous tree planting in cocoa farms in and outside forest reserves
Identification and cooperatives/companies/farms mapping	Identification of the different supply networks
Rapid social diagnostic around Mont Kourabahi forest reserve	Designing and adapting action plan for the implementation of sustainability strategies and operations
Restoration of degraded areas in forest reserve	Planting tree species on the identified degraded area
Train to train with Stakeholders' agents	Support and coaching farmers in the whole landscape

Partners

Local Partners involved in Rurality	Sector Representation of Partner
COOPAGRIS	**Palm tree cooperative**
COOPALM	**Palm tree cooperative**
IVOIRE COLOMBE	**Breeding structure**
CARE INTERNATIONAL	**NGO**
ASAPSU	**NGO**
ORASUR	**NGO**
SAVE THE CHILDREN	**NGO**
FARA CHILDRENS	**NGO**
UNHCR	**NGO**
DAARA	**NGO**
AFJCI	**NGO**
SODEFOR (CG San-Pédro, UG Soubré et UG Gueyo)	**Responsible for the management of classified forests in the Nawa Region**
GORY SCOOPS	**Cocoa cooperative**
SCOPACI	**Cocoa cooperative**
ECASO COOP CA	**Cocoa cooperative**
CNIBO	**Cocoa cooperative**
UEPAO	**Cocoa cooperative**
N'ZINA COOP CA	**Cocoa cooperative**
Regionale direction of MINEF (Soubré)	**Responsible for the forest rehabilitation and conservation**

Update: Landscape Transformation

During the more than 20 years that Earthworm Foundation (EF) has worked with businesses on responsible sourcing, a lot has been achieved through transformed business models and production practices. To date, the focus has primarily been placed on working with individual companies and their suppliers with some collaboration within specific industries. However, we believe that today's model needs to evolve in order to (1) successfully address the challenges we face today in transforming supply chains at scale and to (2) ensure solutions being implemented have a long-term impact.

The issue of deforestation is perhaps the most emblematic example of why it is necessary to evolve our approach. Despite numerous no-deforestation commitments from the biggest companies in several of the world's key commodity supply chains, forests are still being cut down at an alarming rate, and few companies have achieved their 2020 No-deforestation targets. Moreover, there are still many community-company conflicts active, smallholder farmers' livelihoods lack resilience, and labour conditions in many places continue to be poor. Many of these complex issues are interconnected. Child labour exists where farmers are poor and unclear community land rights drive deforestation. To address one of these issues, one needs to address all. With this in mind, a new path is needed, that goes beyond the bounds of individual supply chains, industries or issues and recognises that the critical challenges of our time can only be addressed in an integrated manner.

This is why we have chosen to ramp up the use of a landscape approach in our work. This means working **holistically** on sustainability and responsible sourcing across **clearly defined** sourcing areas, collaborating with key stakeholders from the private and public sector, farmer associations and civil society in each landscape. In particular, we believe it is critical to **leverage market connections** and work with all different commodity sectors in a landscape to drive transformation. Only by working together with other actors can progress be made.

In addition to the above, a landscape approach also means building local capacity. Any change that happens will only persist in time if there is **local ownership,** with local people empowered to manage the landscape in the long term. To achieve this, it is necessary to build relationships of trust by having **a permanent presence** on the ground. Moreover, to ensure that interventions are effective, **data-driven impact measurement** is used to assess what is working and what needs to be improved. Finally, as the landscape approach provides a bird's-eye view of the surrounding environment and actors, it facilitates identifying opportunities **to scale-up**.

In sum, we believe that a landscape approach is a critical pathway for regenerating lives and nature, build supply-chain and farmer resilience, and achieve the goals of responsible sourcing. This is why Earthworm, moving forward, will focus a lot of energy on working in a few critically important landscapes across the globe, fostering increased collaboration between members and supply chains in order to scale up our impact in these target areas.

From a practical point of view, this means that we will address the issues related to, for example, farmer resilience or labour rights holistically in each landscape and not only through a programmes-based approach. This provides opportunities for scaling up the activities of each programme by working across several commodities, with different sectors and actors. This evolution of our approach to sustainable sourcing will allow us to avoid blockage points we have experienced in the past and ultimately have more impact.

All activities in Soubré are characterized under the landscape umbrella going forward and this will be reflected in our reporting. The work streams are combined together and the format of the reporting will change from a Rurality format to a Landscape format. This will logically align the goals of development of the local agricultural economy, respect of human rights and the protection of the landscapes' forests and natural resources. While we do not yet have all the structures in place to fully integrate the different programmes, the next report (Q3 2021) on the Soubré Landscape is a first step in this direction and give a first glimpse of what we will be creating in the coming months.

Annex

On Thursday, May 20, 2021, we carried out an inspection visit following information that the Kossou tree nursery had been intentionally sprayed with pesticides by an unknown person. The visit was carried out after EF received a call from the secretary of the Kossou village chief two days earlier to inform us of the tragedy and that the tree saplings were dying. The following day we received another call to inform us of the same. Our visit confirmed the allegations and the findings were alarming.

According to the testimony taken from the chief and his secretary a villager going to the fields saw two individuals on the site on Thursday May 13, 2021. One of the technicians working locally confirmed that on that day as well as the following one they were at the nursery for maintenance. According to the technician they had not noticed any significant changes and none of the plants showed signs of wilting. However, two days later the damage was visible with over 90% of saplings having died from herbicide spraying.

Once receiving notice of the incident, the chief brought the villagers together to find out who might have sprayed the saplings with the intention to kill them, but as of now we do not know who did this. The chief and his secretary are determined to follow up on this and have asked for forgiveness for the criminal act caused by someone within their community.

In response to the incident EF has decided to follow up as follows:

- Rehabilitate the nursery as best as possible
- Source healthy saplings from other tree nurseries to stay on schedule for replanting in July
- Increase sensitization on forest restoration and protection among communities in the area
- Seek the community's buy-in and approval of our field activities

Picture 5 Damaged plants of Kossou-Taabo nursery, sprayed with herbicide, 20th May 2021

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