

# Growing cashew nuts in Ghana – land access, food security and poverty alleviation

Briefing for policy and practice

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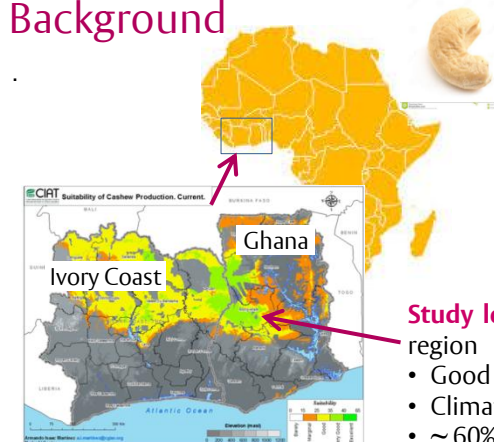
Cultivation of cashew nuts in Ghana is expanding rapidly and is bringing benefits (more income) and potential problems (conflict over land access and threats to food security). Key recommendations to protect food security and alleviate poverty:

- maximise yield quality and quantity from existing cashew trees
- use and sale of by-products, spacing between trees for food crops
- increase power of local farmers in negotiating prices
- community dialogue over land use
- investment, access to credit and education



Cashew nuts growing on a tree - this extraordinary nut grows outside the fruit, called a cashew apple.

## Background



### Cashew cultivation in Africa:

- 1,000,000 tonnes of cashews are exported from Africa per year
- 90% exported raw to India and Vietnam where it is processed and exported to Europe and the US.

### Cashew exports from Ghana:

1991 ..... 15 tonnes  
2008 ..... 61,590 tonnes

### Study location: a rural community in Brong-Ahafo region

- Good climate and soil for cashews
- Climate change could increase suitability
- ~ 60% of land now used for cashews

This participatory research study involved 60 people from the Jaman North district of the Brong-Ahafo region and key stakeholders working at national and international levels. A diverse group of men, women and young people participated.



Raw Cashew Nuts being dried in Brong-Ahafo region, ready for export.

## The effects of cashew cultivation



Increases **income**... for

- housing
- food
- education
- healthcare

*“Now that the cashew work is there, we get food to eat every day. We also get books and pens now at school.”*



Decreases land for food crops... so ↓ **food security?**

*“Right now, we get income to support ourselves, but in the future we will run out of food crops since we would have used all the land for cashew cultivation.”*



Increases **conflict** over land

*“Previously, we can inherit the lands that our grandfathers farmed on. But now that is not possible since nobody will allow his cashew plantations to be inherited by external relatives.”*

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## Increasing income

The additional income from cashew cultivation is being used to improve housing, food quality and supply, education and healthcare. However, other indicators of quality of life, such as access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation and access to healthcare have not kept pace with these improvements.

## Threat to food security and conflicts over land

Concerns were expressed by the community about the rapid expansion of cashew cultivation and its detrimental effect on food security and access to land for future generations.

Women and young people across sub-Saharan Africa are responsible for food production and often have usufruct land rights, which gives them access to land but not ownership. So any reduction in the land available for food crops is likely to have the most impact on women and young people. However, some women are cultivating cashew on their own farms and benefiting from this additional source of income. Investment in their children's nutrition, health and education may help to prevent poverty.

The expansion of cashew plantations on family lands is leading to increased land disputes, with wealthier farmers encroaching on the land of poorer farmers and exacerbating both gender and class inequalities.



Renovating homes with the income from cashew production

# Key messages for policy and practice

## MAXIMISE

- Increase quantity & quality of cashew from existing trees
- Space cashew trees at 30m for continued intercropping with food
- Create strong farmers' groups to ensure good deal in price negotiations

## DIVERSIFY

- Use and sell cashew apples for juice and animal feed
- Beekeeping on cashew plantations
- Ensure dialogue between the generations about land use

## INVEST

- Good quality education
- Access to credit
- Investment in agriculture and rural development
- Adapt to climate change



Young people's participatory map of the rural community

## Maximise yields and diversify livelihoods

Increasing the quality and quantity of cashews produced through adopting good agricultural practices, use of beekeeping, the use and sale of by-products (such as juice from cashew apples) and adequate spacing of cashew trees to allow for continued intercropping with food crops, could increase income, decrease pressure on land, strengthen food security and diversify livelihoods.

## Create strong farmers' groups at local and national level

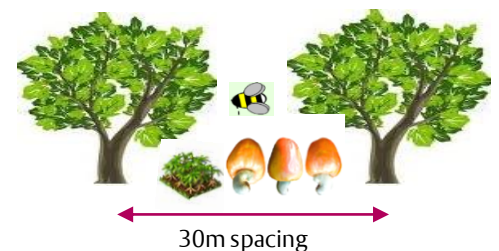
Cashew farmers in the region felt they were losing out to intermediaries and export buyer companies who pushed cashew prices down. Farmers are also vulnerable to price fluctuations on the global market. Organising strong groups of farmers at the local and national level would give farmers more power to negotiate a good deal with export companies, processors and traders.

## Dialogue within community on land use

Awareness-raising among chiefs, elders, family heads, famers and young people could help to ensure adequate land is allocated to food production in the future and reduce land disputes. This could also help to protect the land inheritance of young people and other marginalised groups.

## Credit, investment and education

Access to credit, affordable inputs, the ability to hire labour, information about good agricultural practices, investment in rural development and quality education are key to increase cashew and food crop yields, spread risks and alleviate poverty in rural communities in Ghana. The research also reveals a need for more information about climate-related pressures and efforts to help farmers respond and adapt to changing environmental conditions.



**i** Find out more:

**Dr Ruth Evans**, Department of Geography and Environmental Science  
[www.reading.ac.uk/ges/Aboutus/Staff/r-evans.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/ges/Aboutus/Staff/r-evans.aspx)

Watch the **video** :

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqZLmwkN3LM&feature=youtu.be>

**Report** available from:

[www.walker-institute.ac.uk/publications/research\\_notes/WalkerInResNote6.pdf](http://www.walker-institute.ac.uk/publications/research_notes/WalkerInResNote6.pdf)