

Innovations to enable effective buyer-farmer engagement in commodity sectors: a case study from Indonesia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Firms that buy commodities from sectors dominated by smallholder farmers often need to support farmers, to raise productivity, improve quality, and ensure that production practices are sustainable. Providing blanket support to large numbers of smallholders is costly. It can result in firm's investment being spread too thinly to be effective. Commodity buyers need to find smart ways of identifying and engaging with smallholders to ensure that support is targeted, manageable, affordable, and effective.

This case study examines the experience of the Sustainable Cocoa Production Program (SCPP), which worked through a public-private development partnership (PPDP) to improve production and build sustainable supply chains in Indonesia's cocoa industry as it faced global and domestic challenges. Seven development organisations and eleven private cocoa buyers contributed approximately USD 55m to the PPDP. SECO and Swisscontact were, respectively, the 'lynchpin' funder and implementing organisation throughout.

SCPP focused on establishing, strengthening, and sustaining four key market functions: farmer training, traceability, planting material, and finance. It trained 160,000 farmers, enabled the integration of 79,000 cocoa farmers into sustainable, certified supply chains, generating USD 927,000 of certification premiums, and increased smallholder yields by 52% and raised their incomes by 75%.

SCPP identified and developed two innovations that aimed to enable commodity-buying firms to identify and engage with farmers in a more focused, efficient, and effective manner: FarmNetX and Transformative Coaching.

FarmNetX is a decision-making tool to help sustainability managers improve the performance of their traceable supply chains by increasing the adoption of innovations and recommended practices among their primary producers. It supports data-driven strategies to transform traceable networks into trusted, innovation networks. It works by identifying key influencers in their farmer networks so that sustainability managers can focus their investments to upgrade these influencers, instead of the whole network.

Transformative Coaching (TC) helps firms improve their farmer coaching outcomes. It is a participatory coaching approach that recognises that farming is often family business and inseparable from the household. Farmers, their spouses, and other adult members of the household receive coaching. TC combines a performance coaching method called GROW (Goal, Reality, Option, and Way Forward) and a participatory method called GALS (Gender Action Learning System).

SCPP's experience in promoting innovations to enable firms to consolidate and manage their supply chains, offers lessons that are applicable to other commodity sectors that rely on smallholder production.

- The combination of FarmNetX, to understand and harness farmer networks, with TC, to provide farmer support more effectively, presents a opportunity to enhance the efficiency of efforts to improve adoption rates among farmers.
- Opportunities are missed to use simple data analyses and metrics that can generate insightful information for decision making.
- With an incremental investment, commodity-buying firms can tap into the wealth of their existing farmer data and use it for more targeted, effective, and efficient supply chain upgrading.

- TC demonstrated that behaviour change among farmers could be more effectively induced when the underlying motivation and vision of households are addressed.
- A separation between procurement and sustainability departments can lead to missed opportunities to improve results for farmers and for the supply chain.
- Staff managing commodity supply chains have limited opportunities or capacity for analysis and experimentation.
- Commodity buyers can enlist specialised advisory services to fill this gap or build capacity in-house.

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BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Cocoa Production Program (SCPP) aimed to increase the income of smallholder cocoa farmers by improving the competitiveness of the cocoa sector. It focused on improving production (i.e. farming good practices and technology transfer), sustainable supply chain (i.e. certification, traceability, supply chain management and market access), and sector-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing. SCPP worked to establish and strengthen four main market functions: farmer training, traceability, planting material, and finance¹. Implemented by Swisscontact, SCPP commenced in 2012 and operated as a public-private development partnership². SCPP managed a total of USD 55m, comprising contributions from seven development organisations (USD 43m) and eleven private cocoa buyers (USD 13m), making it one of the largest partnerships between donors and businesses in the commodity sector.

When global cocoa prices plummeted in 2017, many smallholder farmers began to move away from cocoa. As cocoa's profitability declined relative to other crops, farmers diverted their investments to other crops or left the sector for better opportunities in non-agricultural sectors. Consequently, farmers' adoption of good agricultural practices (GAP) did not progress as expected and yields stagnated. Up to 10% of farmers who had successfully accomplished certification dropped out from the certification scheme.

Large cocoa buyers responded by gradually consolidating their supply chains. Two factors drove buyers' quest to make their supply chains more efficient and resilient. First, investing in large numbers of farmers, a supply chain expansion strategy, was no longer appropriate or viable. They wanted to select those farmers that were most committed to cultivating cocoa, to focus their investment on fewer farmers with the best potential for higher performance. Second, buyers were looking for new approaches and tools for engaging cocoa farmers more effectively, to increasing their rates of GAP adoption and yield, and build loyalty.

SCPP identified and developed two innovations that aimed to enable cocoa-buying firms to identify and engage with farmers in a more focused, efficient, and effective manner: FarmNetX and Transformative Coaching.

¹ For further detail on the cocoa sector services supported by SCPP, see Springfield Centre (2021a).

² For further detail on public-private development partnerships, see Springfield Centre (2021b).

FarmNetX

In 2018, SCPP set out to understand how knowledge and practices are diffused through farmer networks. Working with University of Sydney, SCPP applied Social Network Analysis (SNA) in understanding the diffusion of innovations³ in the cocoa sector. The SNA was then translated into practical tools for sociometric survey and sociometric analysis that were tested and refined through field trials. A key consideration was that the tools would be simple enough to be administered by non-researchers and affordable enough to be used for routine commercial purposes. By the end of 2018, the set of tools, called FarmNetX, were ready for roll out.

FarmNetX is a decision-making tool to help sustainability managers improve the performance of their traceable supply chains by increasing the adoption of innovations and recommended practices among their primary producers. It supports data-driven strategies to transform traceable networks into trusted, innovation networks.

FarmNetX works by identifying key influencers in their farmer networks so that sustainability managers can focus their investments to upgrade these influencers, instead of the whole network. In turn, these influencers then disseminate the new practices to fellow farmers, increasing their adoption rate. Influencers are used as a conduit to convey know-how to their followers. This approach is more efficient than the traditional extension approaches, because it leverages prevailing social trust structures and bonds as opposed to establishing new ones, such as forming new groups or organising new collective actions – a process that requires a lot of time and resources. FarmNetX consist of 4 steps (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Steps in FarmNetX



1. **Adoption scoring.** Farmers' adoption levels of recommended practices (e.g. GAP or CoC – Code of Conduct) are assessed using firms' existing adoption frameworks and data collected for internal supply chain management and/or sustainability standards. If these do not yet exist, then a new framework can be developed (see Table 1) and data collection for adoption scoring can be incorporated in the sociometric survey (see Step 2). To show the adoption pattern in the network (see Figure 2), the frequencies of adoption scores are then charted using a histogram and grouped into four categories, according to Roger's adoption curve: 16% early adopters, 34% early majority, 34% late majority, and 16% laggards.

Table 1 Example of a simplified adoption framework⁴

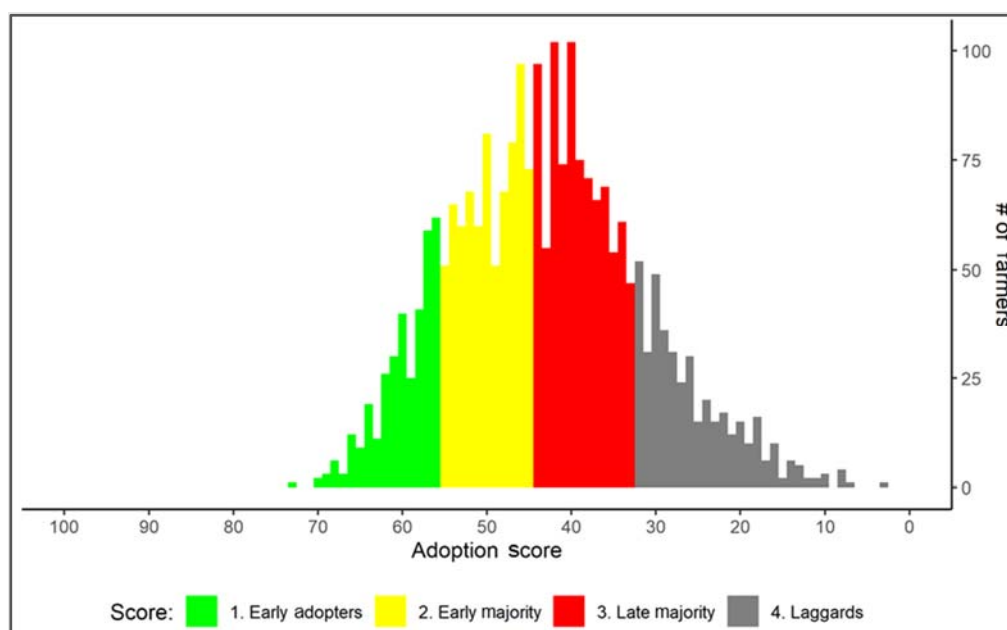
| Criteria | Indicators | Scoring criteria | Weighting | Score |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|--|-----------|-------|
| Environmental practices | 1. No deforestation | 10 = Not cleared forest to plant or replant in the last 2 years 0 = Otherwise | 10% | |
| | 2. No water pollution | 10 = No waste disposal into rivers 0 = Otherwise | 10% | |

³ Diffusion of Innovations, coined by Everett Rogers in 1962, is a theory that seeks to explain how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread.

⁴ The indicators for adoption scoring can be binomial (either 0 or 10) or discrete variable (integers from 0 to 10). As the overall adoption level is progressing, the indicators can be replaced by new ones to reflect more advanced practices to be adopted, or the scoring criteria be made stricter. Similarly, the weighting can be adjusted to reflect priority aspects.

| Criteria | Indicators | Scoring criteria | Weighting | Score |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|-------------|--------------|
| Replanting practices | 3. Seedling quality | 10 = top-grafted seedlings purchased from certified nurseries 5 = top-grafted seedlings are self-made or purchased from non-certified nurseries 0 = seedlings are not top grafted | 5% | |
| | 4. Annual replanting rate | 10 = 100 top-grafted seedlings replanted per year 1-9 = number of top grafted seedlings replanted per year divided by 100, result rounded down 0 = no replanting | 25% | |
| Diversification | 5. Shade trees | 10 = 20 shade trees or more are planted 1-9 = number of shade trees planted divided by 20, result rounded down 0 = no shade tree planted | 5% | |
| | 6. Additional incomes | 10 = above IDR 10 million or USD 709 ⁵ supplementary incomes from other crops / livestock grown in the plantation 1-9 = Supplementary incomes divided by 10 million, result rounded down 0 = No additional income | 10% | |
| Soil management | 7. Soil covering | 10 = Organic mulch, cover crop and/or green manure is used 0 = Otherwise | 5% | |
| | 8. Organic waste handling | 10 = Organic waste from the field composted on site 0 = Otherwise | 10% | |
| Pesticide use | 9. Banned pesticides | 10 = No use of banned pesticides 0 = Use of banned pesticides | 10% | |
| | 10. Recording pesticide use | 10 = The type, dosage, and application time of pesticides are completely recorded on paper 5 = Partial recording 0 = Otherwise | 10% | |
| TOTAL | | | 100% | 0-100 |

Figure 2 Example of a histogram of adoption scores



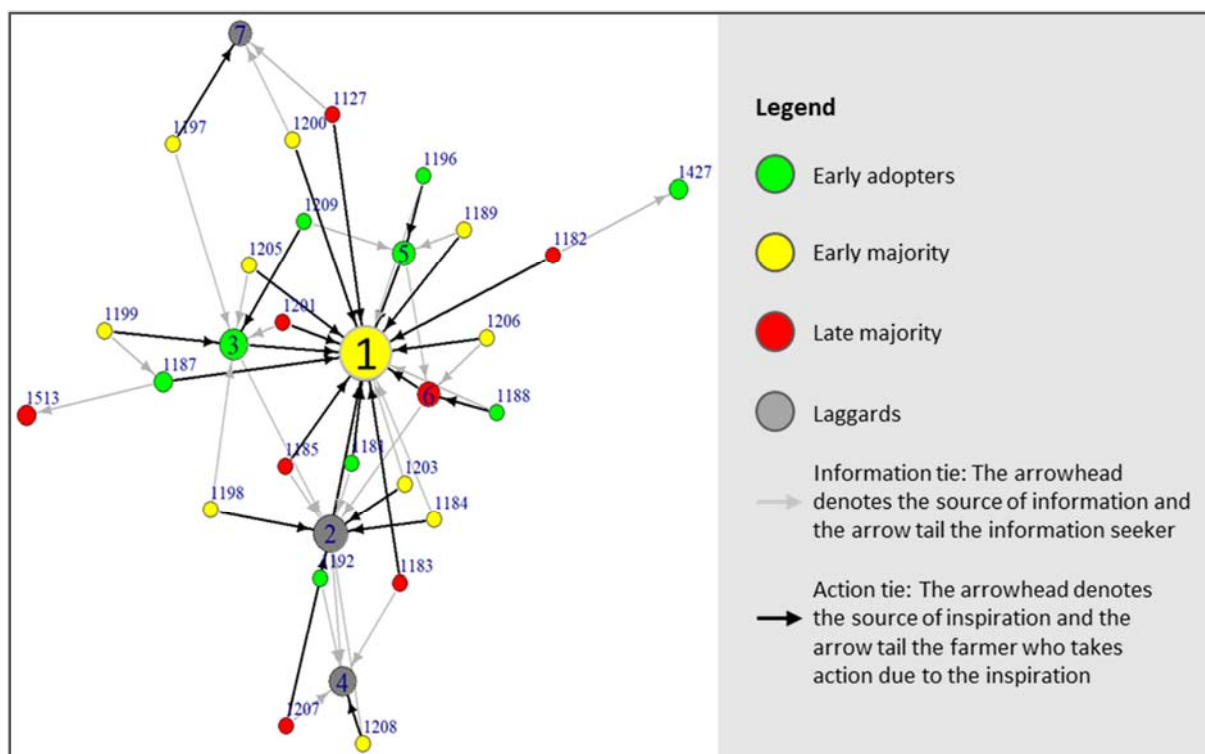
⁵ For this calculation an exchange rate of USD 1 = IDR 14,105 was used. (Source: <https://www.statista.com/>, 2020 annual exchange rate).

2. **Sociometric surveys** collect data on the relationships between people or organisations. Two key sociometric questions are used in FarmNetX:
 - (a) Whom do you talk to about farming?
 - (b) If there are new farming ideas or practices you tried recently, who influenced you to try those new practices?

The first question learns about farmers' preferred sources of information in their own social network. The second question identifies any sources of information that have induced a change in behaviour. The sociometric survey should be kept as succinct and simple as possible so that it can be incorporated into existing, routine data collection functions in the supply chain, such as farm inspections or internal audits. If that is not possible, it can be administered as a stand-alone survey combined with the adoption scoring.

3. **Sociometric analysis** measures⁶ the pattern of relationships (or ties) among individuals (or nodes) in the network. As the relationships to be measured contain information flow or influence behaviour, they are described as directional ties. Useful network measures include:
 - (a) Indegrees: The number of individuals that cite a particular node as being a source of information or inspiration for behaviour change (high indegrees = influencers).
 - (b) Outdegrees: The number of individuals who are approached by a particular node seeking information or inspiration for behaviour change (high outdegrees = avid information seeker).
 - (c) Betweenness: The number of times a node acts as a bridge along the shortest paths between two other nodes (high betweenness = brokers).

Figure 3 Example of a sociogram focusing on adoption levels



⁶ There are different network measures and indicators. Of relevance are the centrality measures which identify the most critical nodes in a network based on certain criteria.

4. **Data display.** Results are displayed using sociograms either at village or sub-district level, depending on the size of the network. Nodes or individuals of particular interest are highlighted (see Figure 3), such as those with strong influence and high adoption scores (influencers) or very low ones (potential blockers), or those with high adoption scores but weak influence scores (potential influencers). For instance:
- (a) Node 1 is a strong influencer with 20 indegrees. Out of the total 26 nodes in the network, 20 (or 77%) cite node 1 as a source of information or inspiration. Other influencers are nodes 2, 3, and 4 with 9, 6, and 5 indegrees, respectively.
 - (b) Most ties to node 1 are action ties (16 out of 20), indicating that node 1 effectively induces behaviour changes in other nodes. In contrast, nodes 2, 3, and 4 have more information ties than action ties.
 - (c) Nodes 2 and 3 have the highest betweenness and thus play a vital role as brokers that influence the information flows between nodes in the network.

Initial results

SCPP piloted FarmNetX with three commodity-buying firms in the cocoa and coffee sectors. The pilots confirmed the typical bell curve pattern for rates of adoption. Farmers are not a homogenous group. They range from those who are risk taking – perhaps due to better assets endowment and or commitment to a commodity as primary source of income (early adopters) – to those who are risk averse and content with traditional practices (laggards), perhaps due to economic vulnerability or to a diversified livelihood strategy, where the commodity is not a priority for them.

Understanding which farmers belong to which group can help supply chain managers design specific interventions tailored to specific groups, instead of using a blanket-coverage extension approach. Moreover, FarmNetX not only helped identify these different groups, but also specific individuals within these groups that could be targeted for specific support (see Figure 4 and next section).

Figure 4 Example of farmer targeting recommendations based on adoption level and degree of influence

| | Farmers' adoption level | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------------|---|
| Farmers' position in the network | Early adopters (16%) | Early majority (34%) | Late majority (34%) | Laggards (16%) |
| Influencers (10%) High indegrees (e.g. ≥4), central to the network | Positive norm setters. Place to seed the next level of innovations. | Priority farmers for improving adoption in the network. Intensive coaching to increase adoption level could have transformational effect for their followers. | | Negative norm setters. Increase adoption level to reduce risks. Prune from network over time if needed. |
| Brokers (5%) High betweenness, connect influencers to followers | | | | |
| Followers (80%) Low indegrees & betweenness, reached via influencers & brokers | Potential influencers. Increase their influence using e.g. demo plots. | Bulk of the network. Strengthen their connections to their influencers through farmer field days, transforming information ties to action ties. Low investment needed. | | |
| Isolates (5%) No ties to other farmers in their networks | | Difficult to reach. High investment to increase adoption level. Monitor their supply loyalty. | | |

Not all influencers were part of the supply chains. Some farmers and smallholder nurseries were found to be influential in farmer networks but not known by firms' field staff. Ideally, these 'outsider' influencers would need to be integrated into the supply chain so that their influencing role can be used to disseminate innovation among their followers.

Farmers with strong influence could have either positive or negative effect in their network. In general, the adoption score of influencers roughly correlated with the average adoption score of their immediate followers. Influencers appeared to be setting the norm for their network. The opposite seemed to be the case for negative influencers or blockers. Positive influencers can be used to seed the next level of innovations; negative influencers or blockers need to be mitigated in some way. This could include 'pruning' them out of the networks or connecting their followers to more positive influencers.

Some influencers were trusted sources of information, but less influential in triggering behaviour change among their followers. Such influencers typically had more information ties than action ties (see Figure 3). This means that other farmers sought information from these influencers, but the information received had not yet inspired them to change their practices, most likely because the adoption levels of these influencers were low or because they were poor communicators. This type of influencer can benefit from coaching support. By improving their adoption level and how they convey information, their positive influence on their networks could be further harnessed.

The primary targets for intensive coaching are influencers and brokers in the early and late majorities. By focusing on these priority farmers – 5-10% of the network – innovations could be disseminated to their direct followers, who constitute 60-70% of the network.

The bulk of the network can then be encouraged to follow the steps of their influencers through farmer field days. While coaching programmes are resource intensive and can cover a limited number of participants, farmer field days are a low-investment tool to raise followers' awareness, knowledge, and benefits of recommended practices, demonstrated by the influencers and brokers.

The application of FarmNetX also uncovered hidden gems in farmer networks. Some farmers had impressive adoption scores but weak influence over the network. These were, for example, female farmers who were not part of farmer groups or had limited interactions with surrounding female farmers. These potential influencers can be empowered and given avenues to exert greater influence in their networks using demonstration plots combined with farmer field days.

TRANSFORMATIVE COACHING

In 2018, cocoa buyers embarked on a journey to find a more effective way to increase the adoption rate of farmers. Firms began to shift from generic training for all cocoa farmers to one-on-one mentoring for select farmers addressing specific topics.

However, the method of coaching was ‘top down’. Coaches assessed the condition of farmers’ cocoa farms and cultivation practices and then provided a list of recommendations for improvement, which farmers then needed to implement (i.e. a farm improvement plan). Coaches would check on progress during subsequent visits or coaching sessions and discuss with farmers any constraints to putting the recommendations into practice. This was found to be complicated, time consuming and did not lead to the desired behaviour change.

SCPP developed and tested Transformative Coaching (TC) to help cocoa firms improve their coaching outcomes. TC is a bespoke, participatory coaching approach that recognises that cocoa farming is a family business and inseparable from the household. Farmers, their spouses, and other adult members of the household receive coaching. TC emphasises the role of women in co-managing cocoa, since they play a vital role in farming activities and decision making within the household.

TC combines a performance coaching method called GROW⁷ (Goal, Reality, Option, and Way Forward) and a participatory method called GALS⁸ (Gender Action Learning System). GALS uses drawing as method to help coached farmers articulate and visualise their ideas and plans. SCPP streamlined GALS from two-week process down to two or three coaching sessions, each lasting three hours, to ensure that TC remained cost effective for cocoa firms to adopt and continue using.

Table 2 The combination of GROW framework and GALS methodology into Transformative Coaching

| GROW framework | GALS methodology |
|----------------|--|
| Goal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulate the vision or aspirations of each household member and integrate them into one vision. This can be something in the distant future, such as sending children to college, or something immediate, such as having enough nutritious food on the table every day. |
| Reality | <p>Map the existing conditions of the household using a ‘happy family tree’, which lists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the household including those that have migrated to other places. Activities carried out separately and jointly by men and women (income generating and non-income generating, e.g. daily household chores). Expenses incurred separately by men and women, but also jointly such as for household daily needs. Assets and decision making over the assets by men and women. Estimated value of different income sources and expenses, to identify the main ones. |
| Option | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List existing and potential options that would help the household achieve their vision. Existing options can include reducing expenses or re-allocating resources to different purposes. Potential options might include investing in cocoa replanting or getting an additional job. After the preferred options are selected, opportunities and challenges relating to them are identified. For example, if investing in replanting is chosen, family savings or access to a loan represent opportunities for the household to pursue that option. Conversely, unseasonable weather conditions represent a challenge to investing in replanting. |

⁷ GROW coaching method was inspired by The Inner Game of Tennis written by Timothy Gallwey. It has been used extensively in corporate coaching from the late 1980s and 1990s.

⁸ GALS was developed by Linda Mayoux in Uganda under a programme of Oxfam Novib called WEMAN (Women’s Empowerment Mainstreaming and Networking).

| GROW framework | GALS methodology |
|--------------------|--|
| Way forward | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To achieve the family vision, intermediary targets are defined for the next year. The targets need to be concrete and SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timebound). ▪ These are further broken down into quarters, with an action plan specifying the activities that need to be undertaken by each family member. ▪ The family vision, annual targets, and quarterly action plans constitute the vision journey, in which the farm improvement plan is integral. |

Following the FarmNetX pilot, SCPP had tested Transformative Coaching in partnership with one multinational cocoa buyer during 2019-2020. The FarmNetX pilot generated a list of 43 candidates for TC, i.e. farmers with strong influence in their networks and high adoption scores. Afterwards, SCPP validated the pre-selection with the cocoa buyer's field staff, reduced the list to 18 finalists, and visited each of these finalists to explain the one-on-one coaching programme and acquire their consent.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 struck in 2020 and movement restrictions disrupted some pilot activities. The first session of TC in February-March 2020 was delivered in person, while the follow-up sessions in April 2020 onwards were substituted by phone calls and text messaging. Some planned activities, such as farmer field days on coachees' demo farms, were cancelled or downsized. Post-coaching performance data, e.g. on adoption scores, yields, and sales volumes, could not be collected.

Nevertheless, there are early indicators that Transformative Coaching will produce results in future.

Initial results

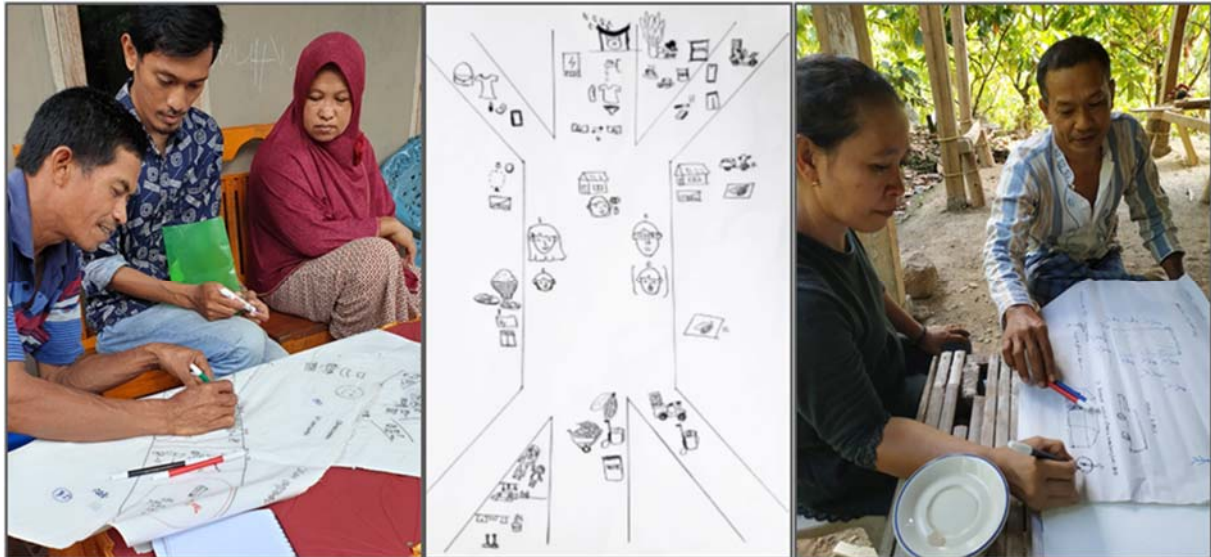
Positive feedback from coaches. TC not only addressed technical matters of cocoa cultivation, but also subtle yet powerful aspects of behaviour change, namely the vision and motivation of farmers and their families. Focusing on these underlying factors meant that farmers were more inclined to own and drive implementation of the farm improvement plans that they formulated during coaching. This made monitoring of progress easier. Coaches felt more confident by being able to build closer, more trusting relationships with farmers, and appreciated helping farmers articulate their visions, devise plans on how to achieve it, and supporting them through the journey.

Positive feedback from coached farmers. Coached farmers overwhelmingly rated TC much better than the previous top-down mentoring. They reported feeling more empowered and motivated, because they could see the connection between doing cocoa farming better and achieving their dream, such as making a religious pilgrimage, sending children to college, purchasing livestock, land, and motorbikes, or renovating their house. They took the initiative to contact their coaches when they faced issues or had questions in implementing their farm improvement plans. TC helped husbands and wives improve their joint household financial management, for example by identifying and reducing non-essential purchases (e.g. cigarettes) and allocating more money to replanting using certified top-grafted seedlings, pruning equipment, and fertiliser – to increase yields and income. The division of tasks between men and women for farming and household activities became more balanced. Women spent more time tending the garden, while men took over some of the household tasks.

Quality of farm improvement plan. The vision journeys (see Figure 5), including cocoa farm improvement plans, developed by coached farmers were assessed by SCPP to determine whether they were likely to enhance the adoption of recommended practices and have transformative impacts on cocoa farms. For example, total replanting achieves a very high transformative effect. SCPP found that about 30% of farm improvement plans integrated side-grafting and partial replanting, which would have a high transformative effect over two to four years. Around 70% of the farm improvement plans

were likely to have a low or very low transformative effect, however, because the initial farm improvement plans had a timeframe of one year, so most coached farmers focused on practices that could rapidly improve yield, such as pruning and application of fertilisers.

Figure 5 TC session, happy family tree, and vision journey



Triggering replanting and seedling nursery business. Early in the coaching process, the lack of quality seedlings was identified as a primary constraint. Following the coaching, coachees were brought on a field trip to nurseries in a neighbouring district. As a result, more than half of the farmers ordered sufficient seedlings to replace 40% of their total tree stock, and two set up a new nursery business. SCPP co-funded 38% of the costs, with the coachees resourcing the balance through in-kind labour and building materials. Producing on a total area of 123sqm, the new nurseries can sell roughly 13,000 seedlings per a year.

Early impacts on the networks. The coachees that purchased seedlings were influencers in their network. Consequently, their immediate followers ordered additional seedlings from nurseries in the neighbouring district. The total number of new seedlings purchased represented around 5% of the planting stock in the network, which is a sustainable annual rate of plant replacement. The willingness to invest in replanting reflected farmers' confidence in the prospects of cocoa.

LESSONS

SCPP's experience in promoting innovations to enable firms to consolidate their supply chains, manage them more efficiently and make them more resilient, offers lessons that might be applicable to other commodity sectors that rely on smallholder production.

The combination of FarmNetX, to understand and harness farmer networks, with TC, to provide farmer support more effectively, presents a real opportunity to enhance the efficiency of efforts to improve GAP or CoC adoption rates among farmers. The pilot data demonstrated that by focusing on 5-10% of farmers (i.e. influencers and brokers), buyers could reach 60-70% of farmers in their networks.

Opportunities are missed to use simple data analyses and metrics that can generate insightful information for decision making. Easily calculated metrics, which can be reviewed on a regular basis, include:

- Return on investment of farmer support: The increase in supply volume or change in adoption rate divided by the costs of farmer training or coaching.
- Investment per farmer: Training cost per farmer; number of farmers per field agronomist; or the minimum supply volume in a network required to make a field agronomist worthwhile.
- Farmers' incentive to upgrade: The actual costs of GAP/CoC adoption by farmers compared to the actual additional benefits they receive because of upgrading.

With an incremental investment, commodity-buying firms can tap into the wealth of their existing farmer data and use it for more targeted, effective, and efficient supply chain upgrading. FarmNetX pilots showed that by adding two key questions into the farm inspection function – as part of traceability requirements – network structures and prevailing influencing relationships could be revealed.

TC demonstrated that behaviour change among farmers could be more effectively induced when the underlying motivation and vision of households are addressed. The more clearly family aspirations were formulated, the stronger was the motivation to achieve them. Adopting new farming practices to improve yields was not treated as a goal in itself, but a means to an end, whereby a farming households could realise their aspirations. Cocoa was not positioned as the only source of income the household needed to focus on, but as a key one among many different incomes. This helped build financial resilience in the face of fluctuating cocoa prices and encouraged farmers to maintain cocoa within their portfolio of income sources even during periods of low prices. In addition, a more balanced distribution of tasks, resources and decision making between men and women contributed positively to farm management and investment.

A separation between procurement and sustainability departments can lead to missed opportunities to improve results for farmers and for the supply chain. Field staff in charge of supporting farmers primarily saw their engagement as a philanthropic activity and not a commercial one. For them, good performance was perceived to be reaching as many farmers as possible. As FarmNetX analysis has shown scale does not equate to effectiveness. Conversely, procurement staff, who are most concerned with securing reliable supplies, typically do not see farmer engagement and support as part of their role, when SCPP's experience demonstrates that it is an integral part of successful supply chain development and management.

Staff managing commodity supply chains have limited opportunities or capacity for analysis and experimentation. Stepping back, asking evaluative questions (e.g. was this the right method to use?) and testing innovative approaches, requires a 'safe space' that is not always available to staff.

Commodity buyers can enlist specialised advisory services to fill this gap or build capacity in-house. Development organisations can support this temporarily but ultimately these practices and tools are part of good supply chain management, enabling continuous monitoring and refinement of supply chain upgrading investments, and need to be incorporated into firms' management information systems.

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