

Building Market Linkages in the Post-Conflict Liberian Cocoa Sector

Dr. Michael Wilcox

Assistant Professor

Department of Agricultural Economics

University of Tennessee

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Liberian cocoa production has a long history. Though overshadowed by plantation rubber, smallholder cocoa is the second most important Liberian export (3.5%) and a vital source of income for thousands of smallholder farmers in Liberia.

Given Liberia's current path of transition, it is imperative to examine the institutions that impact the cocoa sector and conduct an objective examination of the current marketing chain. This seminar will discuss findings from a recent survey conducted by UT, the Sustainable Tree Crop Program – Liberia and the Liberian Ministry of Agriculture. The survey was designed to obtain a baseline of rural household and agricultural production and marketing data to analyze with respect to the potential rehabilitation of Liberia's cocoa production capacity and reorganization of the marketing chain. The goal of the project is to find ways to improve the welfare of agents throughout the Liberian cocoa supply chain and investigate the potential of this sector as an engine for poverty alleviation, job creation and overall economic development.

About Dr. Wilcox...

Dr. Wilcox is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Tennessee. He is engaged in applied research and extension education programming in rural economic development. He is currently working with the Sustainable Tree Crop Program in Liberia on agricultural marketing issues. Closer to home, Dr. Wilcox is involved in a wide range of projects in the areas of biofuels, workforce development, entrepreneurship and migration.

Dr. Wilcox received his PhD in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University in 2006. He served as a US Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon from 1993-1995 after graduating with a BS in Biological Sciences from Cornell University in 1992. He received his MS in Fisheries from Auburn University in 1998. He taught for three years at the Harris AgriScience and Technology Center in Bloomfield, Connecticut.