

Adjustment in research focus

E-mail to Sietze on the 20th of March 2010

Dear Sietze,

It's already the end of the first week here in Ghana. I have been to the research location, met Dr. Nsiah and had first impressions of the farming and processing activities. On the bases of this first impression, I am confident of being able to describe the activities within the project; organic and fair trade certification schemes and also the value chain aspect.

I have already received a good reception and support from Dr. Nsiah and his colleagues so that is positive for my research.

Regarding our agreement during the last meeting, the focus of the research have changed. By this, I mean to shift more to describing the Organic and fair trade certifications scheme of the chain. Through my first interview with Dr. Nsiah, I have learnt that most farmers are organic by default due to the fact the farmers may not have had enough funds to purchase chemical fertilizers for three consecutive years and therefore can qualify to be certified as organic. So in such a situation, I would like to see what is actually termed as a 'conventional' farmer and how he/she differs from an organic one. Because I think they may both be equally contributing to agro-biodiversity conservation or hampering it since the use of agricultural inputs in small scale farming are at their barest minimum in the area.

Secondly, I will also describe the value chain; ownership, management and coordination, etc. It is quite a linear chain with a specific number of farmers supplying to one processor who in turn is serving a specific end market.

Coming to the part on how agro-biodiversity is conserved at farm level will be my main task henceforth. Getting information from farmers on how they perceive and manage agro-biodiversity is going to be my major focus. .

On that note, my role is to report on the project; what is happening on the farm and processing and how this affects the community and farming and livelihoods in the area.

The normative characterization and impact analysis in my proposal are left out!

Summary of farmers' interviews (with comments by Betty Adjei)

A total of 20 smallholder farmers participating in the FPOPP were interviewed from the three main communities involved in the project.

All interviews were conducted on the farms so that observation of farming practices could also be done at the same time. Of the 20 farmer interviews, 2 were female farmers but a total of 3 female farmer farms were visited. Notably, most farmers are men which is an expected trend in cash crop farming. Out the 129 approved organic farmers currently supplying to the project, only 16 of these are female farmers.

Not that there was any clear systematic/consistent or noticeable/convincing difference between male and female farmers' farms. However, a few farms mostly belonging to older farmers and women were scantily intercropped with either citrus trees or pineapple suckers or both. Why?

All 20 farmers interviewed are registered under the Fearless Planet Organic Palm Oil Project. These farmers are supplying their palm fruit produce to Dr. Bronner's processing plant located in Asuom; the central point of the value chain.

In total an estimated 200 farmers are registered under Fearless Planet's Organic Palm Oil Project. Not all farmers are however allowed to supply to the processor for various reasons. First of all some of the farmers are still in the transition phase from conventional to organic. Others have been sanctioned for noncompliance while others have pulled out of the project. Farmers who have pulled out of the project say that they extra effort invested in complying with organic regulations does not reflect in the price at which the fruits are sold.

During an informal discussion with a conventional farmer from Bomsu, he said;

"When this people (field officers) came to register us, I wasn't around so my wife registered herself. They want us to remove rubbers (litter and plastic),

But I have a cocoa farm and an oil palm farm next to each other so the extension officer told me that they have remove some of the oil palm (create a buffer). I would be left with half an acre which is very small. If they don't want the fruits that are sprayed, who should I sell them to?

One thing too is that, sometimes when you call to bring you palm fruits, the crammer people say that you cannot deliver. Then we have to find some other place to sell it"

A significant trend noticed among farmers during the field research was that a good portion of the farmers interviewed were not full time farmers. Most held other 'day' jobs or positions. Some were school teachers, chiefs/community elders, the village pharmacist, masons and so on. Others turned to farming after retiring from military service or quit other jobs to become farmers. Most give the reason that they can find financial and livelihood security through farming either for their pension or in seeing their sons and daughters through higher education.

Farming on part-time basis is a common phenomenon in the region to the extent that MOFA extension officers and the local project coordinators who had secure jobs with relatively secure salaries were also actively engaged in farms.

General description of farming practises in Asuom, Abaam and Bomsu

Out of the farmer interviews, it came to the notice of the research that most farmers keep multiple farms. They cultivate different crops on separate fields and most of the times at different locations. In general, farmers grow both cash and food crops. Correspondingly, cash crops take up the most acreage. The cash crops found in the area are; oil palm, citrus, and cocoa. Food crops cultivated are cassava and plantain. Maize is cultivated but this was not observed during the fieldwork period since it was not in season yet. It is difficult to assign an average figure that represents farm sizes. Farm sizes vary sporadically between the different cultivated crops but also within the same types of crops cultivated by different farmers. For example, oil palm plots are

noticeably larger than food crop farms in general but comparing two oil palm plots from two different farmers shows a significant variation in their respective farm sizes. Farms can be 1.5 hectares or up till 20 hectares in the area, all these still classified as small scale farms.

The segmentation of land in this cases is mainly due to the fact that most farmers conduct their activities on family land which is highly segmented so that all family members have access to land for cultivating food crops, cash crops and for putting up their settlements. After distributing the available land among the members of the family, everyone is usually left with very small portions.

It is not well defined what **varieties of oil palm** that farmers cultivate on their farms although all farmers have intentions to planting the *Tenera* variety. As farmers replace trees on existing farms with seedling from their own farms, they re-establish the *Dura* variety. This is because the hybrid nature of the *Tenera* does not transfer its characteristics to offspring.???? Consequently, the farms mature into a combination of *Dura*, *Tenera* and *Psifera* varieties.

Differences and similarities: organic and conventional farming

Farmers as suppliers in a buyer-driven chain

One farmer said; "We made a contract agreement on 160 GHC but now they have changed the price to 150 GHC. I think they're trying to cheat us but we accept it like that".

Even though the terms of the contract for pricing were undoubtedly explained and discussed with the farmers, they find it hard to comprehend that the organic and fair-trade price can still fluctuate as equally as the mainstream market price. The IMO organic and Fair for Life regulation specifies a 10% margin above the prevailing market price in the area. So in that case, if market prices fall by a certain percentage/value, the IMO price will also fall by that same percentage but still stay a corresponding 10% above the current market price at any given time.

This is what happened at one time during the research period. The farmers protested and refused to deliver to the processing plant but for a few days only. This was merely a scare tactic, in the middle of a peak season and abundant supply of fruits, they could not deny true fact that Dr. Bronner's was the best offer they could get in town. They also know that outside of the project, their fruits cannot be sold as organic since the certification is exclusive property of Dr. Bronner's.

Agro-biodiversity on farms

Oil palm is a typical plantation crop that is almost always monocropped. Farmers can only intercrop oil palm plots during its first few years after transplanting. First of all, it requires a lot of sunlight for adequate growth and development and farmers therefore have to clear the vegetation including mature trees on the plot before establishing oil palm. This eventually might lead to deforestation if practised on a large scale or mismanaged. Secondly, oil palm farms form a considerable amount of overhead canopy and very little sunlight reaches the farm floor. Due to this, no crops or plants can be grown in between the palm trees. Local flora are also largely absent if the farm is weeded according to production requirements. There is consequently a certain degree of loss to local biodiversity with exponential effects depending on the scale of the farm.

As mentioned before, farmers cultivate a **variety of crops**???? for domestic consumption and cash crops for income generation. This is the main manifestation of agro-biodiversity in Asuom and its surrounding communities. The research set out to identify how farmers and the rural community of Asuom access international markets and at the same time manage local agro-biodiversity. The farmers for one, have not abandoned other farming to engage in oil palm

production alone (even though prices are highly lucrative) but they still continue to keep the same diversity of crops as before.

During interviews, some farmers were asked if they would totally switch to oil palm production due to the good prices Dr. Bronner's pays for their fruits. The research found out that most farmers are against focusing their activities around one crop. They gave examples of when in the past cocoa prices were low and they could rely on oil palm for additional income and on their food crops for food security. This is undoubtedly an interesting and intelligent coping strategy of farmers and their rural communities.

There is a remarkable amount of heterogeneity noticed among farmers. First of all there were a recognisable number of immigrant farmers who had settled in the area and are actively involved in the cultivation of oil palm. Most of these farmers have moved from areas of Ghana where the soil and climatic conditions for farming are not as favourable as in the forest belt of the Eastern Region. As can be expected, the farmers have also adapted their methods of farming and living similar to what they are used to back home.

The FPOPP: enabling factors and requirements for farmers to participate

The benefits of the FPOPP as identified by the farmers

All farmers interviewed mentioned that, since they were previously not assured of any market for their palm fruits, they had little motivation to maintain their farms or to carry out the required activities on their palm trees. With the Dr. Bronner's constant demand for their produce and the attractive price they pay, there is a better reward for their activities.

"I farm together with my mother since I completed J.H.S (Junior High School). We have an oil palm farm together but we did not weed regularly because there was no market. Formally, I used to supply to the black market women who came here looking for our nuts. Their price is usually good but they used various methods of weighing. With a bucket or by estimate which is not always correct".

Evans Asirifi: farmer from Bomsu

The remaining majority of oil palm farmers that are not involved in the FPOPP continue to face the same problems of not being motivated to perform farm maintenance due to the inexistence of lucrative market demand for their palm fruits. Nonetheless, the FPOPP is a step in the right direction for oil palm farmers in Asuom and surrounding communities. Yet still, a lot has to be done by the involved stakeholders in order to bring further improvement in income generation from oil palm cultivation

The farmers who are participating in the project did not express any significant change in their farming methods and practices. They still continue to cultivate different crops for their various livelihood needs. Participation in the organic palm oil project covers only the oil palm plots and sometimes only one or two of their total oil palm plots. Some farmers have only plot certified as organic under the project. This is done for security reasons so as to be able to supply through conventional channels for income security and financial security. Farmers also acknowledge this as the main reason why they cultivate a diversity of food and cash crops. This practice has been going on as long as most farmers can remember. From observations and interviews, there was no single farmer that did not cultivate at least two different crops.

Farmers wholeheartedly acknowledge the benefits they receive from the project. They also congratulate Fearless Planet for setting up the scheme and Dr. Bronner's for its continuing involvement as the driver of the chain. It is the only such project on palm oil in the area operating

according to organic and fair trade regulations. Not only do farmers appreciate the good price for their produce, they also point out the difference in payment period between Dr. Bronner's and other market channels as GOPDC and others. Whereas it might take 2 weeks to a month for GOPDC to pay farmers for delivering their fruits, Dr. Bronner's writes farmers a cheque on the spot when they bring their fruits to the processing plant.

Apart from the financial advantages, the farmers also pointed out the advancements they have made in adopting 'modern' farming practises and maintenance activities on the farm. This owes largely to the trainings received from extension officers at early stages of the project. Some have recorded increase in yield per harvest since joining the organic scheme and relate this to the mulch and compost they applied around the trees.

A few farmers stressed the labour intensiveness of organic farming practices. They weigh the labour inputs against the price and express their dissatisfaction. Formally they were organic by default but sold under conventional prices

In their opinion about their role in the chain, farmers appreciate the role they play. That is supplying their palm fruit produce to a selective buyer. Their unique position also gives them a say in the running of the chain. Through their cooperatives, they share their opinions on prices and also deliberate on the use of the premiums they receive through fair trade

Farmers' opinions on further recommendations

One of the goals set by the research was to compile the opinions of farmers on the project regarding their role in the chain. Additionally, the research wanted to see if participating in such a bounded (boundaries created by organic and fair trade regulations) scheme affected the agrobiodiversity of in farming in the communities and also to identify how the broader community has benefited from the project.

Upon talking to the farmers and hearing the benefits they have derived from the project so far, the research also asked what further opinion they had regarding improving the chain.

Farmers wanted the Dr. Bronner's to expand their capacity so that more farmers could benefit from the scheme. The participating farmers said they would like to see their fellow farmers in the community also registered into the organic production scheme.

Farmers, processor and other interviewees, mentioned other recommendations such building school blocks, community health centres and boreholes for potable drinking water. Interestingly the recommendations differed from one community to the other. For example, the people of Abaam mainly wanted to the use the fair trade premium to build a health centre whilst those in Bomsu wanted a borehole.

Summary of interview with ICS Coordinator (Dr. Adjei-Nsiah)

Concerning the cultivation of oil palm in the area, there are two types of farmers; GOPDC out grower farmers and private smallholder farmers. The GOPDC set up its plantation in the area and contracts farmers to produce to fill its quota. Apart from the contracted farmers, there are also smallholders who supply to the plantation on casual basis without a contract.

The GOPDC in its set up plan, facilitated smallholders oil palm farmers to produce oil palm for processing. Meaning they supplied seedlings, inputs and extension training to the participating farmers. They also constructed feeder roads into the community of the farmers to ease transportation and accessibility.

The GOPDC was set up as part of the governments plans to diversify agriculture in the country. This was a result of cocoa being the major and only cash crops Ghana depended on for generation of foreign exchange. The diversification was begun in the 1970's.

The state acquired almost 5000 hectares of land in the Eastern Region alone for the cultivation of oil palm. Most of these concessions are now owned by the GOPDC.

The plantation was one of the 16 other plantations set up in the Eastern Region alone by Kwame Nkrumah in the 1960's. Most of these plantations however collapsed due to mismanagement and a lack of an end market for the produce.

Formally a state owned plantation, the GOPDC was privatized under the structural adjustment plan (SAP) in the 80's resulting from advice from the World Bank and IMF. It is now a share company with major ownership held by a Belgian multinational with plantations and processing plants across West and Central Africa.

The intensification of oil palm oil started in Ghana in the 17th century and continued throughout the 18th century. During those times, West Africa was the largest producer and exporter of oil palm fruits to Europe. The fruits were shipped to Europe and to be processed and refined; no value addition occurred on African soil. In the years proceeding that, Malaysia overtook West Africa as the biggest producer and consequently income from oil palm to Ghana decreased. Cocoa was then introduced as an alternative to oil palm. After the drought in 1983 which caused major bush fires and destruction to cocoa farms, farmers replanted their cocoa farm with oil palm.

On agro-biodiversity and sustainable livelihoods

Comparatively, cocoa supports biodiversity than oil palm does. Due to the fact that cocoa requires shade trees which in turn house other flora and fauna. Oil palm needs a lot of sunlight right from the nursery so farmers have to clear all existing vegetation.

That is the main reason why the FPOPP supports the organic production of oil which is relatively a more sustainable method oil palm production. Previously (and most probably still), farmers had very little information on the essence of conserving flora and fauna on their farms. There was close to zero attention paid to biodiversity. Farmers preferably used herbicides and weedicides to clear their farms. This is because the prescribed manual weeding farming had to do three times a year on a sizable cash crop farms is a tedious task.

With the accumulation of diseases on cash crops farms (specifically cocoa), the state also promoted and disseminated the use of agro-chemicals to control diseases.

The intensification of oil palm in the Kwaebibirem District has had evident adverse effects on the livelihoods of the community. A very good example is that of Kwae, what used to be a farming village with diverse crops has been turned into an oil palm plantation settlement. The land on which the community used to farm has been sold to the GOPDC by the village chief and the land has been transformed into plantations. Most people living there who used to be farmers are now working as labourers on the plantations. They have been reduced to mere casual employees on the plantations farms. They no longer have access to land to produce neither food nor cash crops. This has affected the food security in the village. Aside observations made, two interviews were conducted in the community; the main occupations in the village is working as labourers for GOPDC or traders supplying food to the village.

There are other incidents of such cases that have occurred in other countries noticeably Ivory Coast.

Land tenure systems in the area

The prevailing land tenure systems in the area are;

1. Through inheritance: blood relations can inherit land titles from their parents and other relatives. Being part of the family entitles one to a portion of the family for farming and settlement. In the Akan inheritance systems, the matrilineal systems of inheritance is practised. Meaning children can only inherit property and land through their mother's blood line whereas in other parts of Ghana, the patrilineal systems is practised.
2. free hold: land which is acquired through purchasing is known as free hold. In the district, very few number of farmers are owning land through this system. Land is not readily available for sale.
3. the lease hold systems is the 3rd land ownership system in the area and relatively more common than the free hold system. Interested parties can lease unoccupied land for a period of either 50 or 99 years after which new contract have to be drawn if the interest still persist. In the lease hold system, tenants are required to sharecrop with the landlord on a 1:3 ratio. Either that or they can share contracts whereby the produce have to be divided on 50:50 bases after 5 years of land acquisition and onwards.

Opinion on recommendations for the Dr. Bronner's and Palm OIL in Kwaebibirem as a whole.

On the first hand, there are no records of existing projects such as the FPOPP. The only similar initiative is that of the governments President's Special Initiative (PSI) which has been set up by the previous president of Ghana and being carried on by the current one as well.

According to Dr. Adjei-Nsiah of the ARS, the PSI was a brilliant idea only that it failed in the implementation phase.

The initiatives failed because those in charge of implementing the project were only interested in setting it up in their respective hometowns. No matter if the initiatives were feasible in that specific geographical area or not. For example when the former president of Ghana proposed oil palm intensification in the Eastern Region for example, project implementation officials set up the nurseries in the Western Region of Ghana. Even though the Western Region of Ghana is lies in the forest belt of Ghana, there is relatively low intensification of oil palm there as compared to the Eastern Region. Therefore there was little demand for hybrid oil palm varieties in their commercial and the project did not succeed.

The general impression from such projects is that the government is therefore incapable of carrying out successful implementation programs so subsequent initiatives should be given to private persons and this is expected to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of similar projects in the future. The current PSI initiatives on oil palm in the Kwaebibirem District have all been privatised.

So what should the role of the government be in such areas that can be regarded as crucial for the development of the nation?

"The government should assume a more supportive role and act as a facilitator to the development of oil palm in the area. Rather than being directly involved because the government is not capable of carrying out this kind of project as Fearless Planet and Dr. Bronner's"

Dr. Adjei-Nsiah
 Researcher at ARS and ICS manager for Dr. Bronner's

The government should instead step up its role as a support body to private initiatives that want to bring development to certain sectors of agriculture such as that of oil palm. It should increase its role in financial support, credit and loans, capacity building, the dissemination of extension knowledge and promote private entrepreneurs to go into the production and cultivation and processing of oil palm. But most of all the government should do this using concepts of sustainable agriculture; be it organic or low input agriculture.

This is because the case of Kwae can be seen as a worst case scenario which should be prevented.

Additionally, the government should promote women cooperatives and strengthen their organisations. The processing of oil palm is primarily done by women and to streamline the development of women through such small scale processing initiatives, there needs to be more attention paid to capacity building of the women groups.

Interview/discussions with field officers

Project started in 2006 by Dr. Orgle, who was coordinating for Fearless planet. Dr. Orgle is now preparing organic in Nungua. Project manager was Danielle Gold from Fearless Planet. Project switched to organic in 2007 with Dr. Nsiah from ARS. Aaron Ampofoh (IMO) is the current manager of the project in place of D. Gold.

In 2009 the project ownership was transferred from Fearless Planet to Dr. Bronner's. In the meantime between 2009 and the present date, Dr. Bronner's is working to create a sub-company known as SerendiPalm. SerendiPalm will independently run Dr. Bronner's organic palm oil chain in Ghana.

Roles of the extension officers

Extension officers play one of the most crucial roles in this chain. They should be recognized as the bridge between farmers and the rest of the chain. These extension officers also known as 'field officers' within the chain, undertake a wide diversity of tasks to make sure operations run smoothly between farmers the processor. Their day-to-day activities include arranging logistics and the delivery of fruits to the processors. This is especially important during peak seasons when fruits are in abundance. During these times the field officers have to schedule deliveries in such a way that all registered farmers still get the chance to bring their fruits to the processor and not only a few farmers are favoured. Field officers often have to verify that produce from farmers are truly organic, that farmers are not harvesting from unregistered fields and selling the fruits as organic. They have the task of identifying and rejecting fruits that are not of the *Tenera* variety. Apart from their daily activities, field officers have to carry out periodic internal inspections regarding the organic certificate by which the chain operates. There are currently 4 field officers responsible for inspecting over 170 farmers (including transition and sanctioned farmers).

From observations, the researcher can conclude that these field officers are the stakeholders upon which success or failure of the chain rests. The officers have immense experience and knowledge of the area. They were in the communities long before Dr. Bronner's or Fearless Planet came to the area and they are in continuous contact with farmers and have built relationships with people in the communities. In the opinion of this research such close relationships with communities are an important requirement in setting up similar rural community development projects.

The process of registering and certifying farmers

Register farmers into the project. From C0 → C1 → C2 → CO

If farmers are registered, they have to pass through internal and external inspection before his/her field can be accepted to join the suppliers of organic palm fruits. The extension officers are responsible carrying out the internal inspection.

Registration → internal inspection → training → screening → external inspection (twice) → approval!

Extension officers are mainly responsible for coordinating the project at the field level of farmers. Be it making announcements for cooperative meetings to conducting spot checks of farmers that

are in doubt. The extension officers also set up the cooperatives at the beginning of the project. They also supervise farmers' activities on the farm within organic regulation, e.g. composting, spreading of manure, creating of buffers.

Trainings conducted by field officers

1. Organic regulations
2. Farm sanitation
3. Keeping of records
4. Farm maintenance
5. Business management of the farm, e.g. setting up of annual goals and budgets.

Average yields and turnovers of farmers in Asuom, Abaam and Bomsu

In Asuom and Abaam yields and farming is relatively advanced as compared to Bomsu. They learnt quite a lot of from the plantations farms in the area (GOPDC). They also do a lot of farm maintenance and use of mulching, cover crops, etc. this has shown quite substantially in their yield.

Average farmers in Bomsu cultivate 4 acres of oil palm which can be harvested 5 times in the peak season (1.2 tons/harvest). In the lean season farmers harvest approx 8 times (0.4 tons/harvest).

Agro-biodiversity: the field officers' point of view

Agro-biodiversity in the area has changed in the past 14 years (when the extension officer arrived in the area). The places that now have oil palm established were initially cultivated with rice. The rice cultivation in the area was introduced mainly by Liberian immigrants (could also be from Northerners). The intensification of rice has ceased as the Liberians returned to their country. The Northerners have also switched to oil palm since it's a form of social security.

Observation

1. I am missing a thorough description of farming practices in the area
2. Whether project farmers also cultivate other types of oil palm aside from the organic
3. What is their view on conserving oil palm resources and how do their activities contribute to this
4. What is the perception of the processors on the organic palm oil? Is there any significant difference between the traditional processing methods and the organic, why? What about taste etc
5. What is the farmers understanding of organic farming?

Interview questionnaires

Farmer interviews

Introduction of the research and researcher

Date of interview:

Name of farmer:

Community:

Number in household:

Farm size and crops cultivated:

1. Farming and practices of the farmer

- a. Give a description of farming methods and practices of the community as a whole. Give an indication if your farming methods differ from that of the community.
- b. What aspects of your local knowledge and experience can you still apply in this project and what has changed?
- c. What kind of planting materials do you use and where do you acquire them/, i.e. own seedlings or purchased from nurseries?
- d. How do ensure that the soil on your farm continues to support the crops you plant year after year?
- e. What are the resources you use in cultivating oil palm? Have these changed in correspondence to the organic oil palm project?
- f. Do you hire any labour on your farms, permanent or part time?

2. Household and living conditions

- a. Describe your role and stake in the oil palm project and what kind of role you play in the value chain.
- b. How important is oil palm production to you, your family and livelihood?
- c. Are any other members of your household involved in the project?
- d. Has the cultivation of oil palm affected the food crops you cultivate/cultivated? If so, by how much? For example how much of your income do you spend on food provisions?
- e.

3. The Organic Palm Oil Project of Asuom

- a. Within this project, what rules do you have to abide by and are you aware why you may be doing this?
- b. What is the support you received through the project? Trainings, starting capital, equipment, etc.
- c. How has it had an influence on your farming?
- d. Would you recommend such projects to be expanded in this community and other communities and why?

4. Agro-biodiversity in Oil Palm Production

- a. How do you farm now that is different from what you used to in the past (10-20years)? Which varieties of food and cash crops did you grow then that are no longer cultivated.
- b. Why do you think the above has happened?
- c. In your opinion, has the organic influenced agriculture in the community?

Informal interviews: Extension officers

Main points to discuss

1. Describe the project and its activities from your perspective
2. The role of the extension officer in agriculture and farming in the area.
3. Contribution to the Asuom organic palm oil project
 - Trainings carried out
 - Continued assistance to farmers and processors
4. Their opinion on the changes to oil palm cultivation in the
5. Extension officers can give a more comprehensive explanation of what agro-biodiversity in the area is and how it has been preserved for the last years.
6. Does this project and contribute to the preservation of local agro-biodiversity in oil palm production and agriculture as a whole.

1st Interview: Dr. Adjei-Nsiah (18th March 2010)

Preliminary interview to attain an overview of the project, the right people to talk to and what to look for in the field. It is important to know where in the field to start the research. These and other useful background knowledge I hope to achieve during the first interview.

1. Introduction: interviewer and research subject
 - a. Rationale behind the research assignment and TAD project.
 - b. Objective for conducting the research
 - c. Dr. Nsiah's expected contribution/commitment to the field work
 - Mainly, he should introduce me to the research area and the important stakeholders involved
 - It would be appreciated if he would link me to the extension officer in charge of the farmer trainings.
2. What is the current state of project? In terms of:
 - a. Coverage area, number of communities involved, beneficiaries?
 - b. Who are the key institutions/partners involved in supporting and keeping the project running?
3. Lastly, is there available any past reports of the project which I may look into?

Answers;

3 communities, Asuom, Abaam, Bomso.

1 processor/cooperative.

139 farmer certified

114 farmers recruited waiting to be inspected in March and those qualified will be certified as organic.

Approx, 71 farmers from Abaam, which is the largest community, 24 from Asuom, and 44 from Bomso.

Communities producing oil palm, citrus and cocoa but mainly oil palm.

In all certified farms are in total of 1025 acres. Approx 2563 tonnes per year of oil palm produced which comes from about a 1000 hectares. All year round oil palm production in the area with a peak season February and May each year.

Dr, Bronners = owner of the project, certifications, etc.

Fearless planet = pulling out of the project at the moment

2 field project staff employed by the project

2 extension officers from MOFA

Dr. Nsiah: private consultant to the project.

GOPDC: out grower form

Most farmers are organic by default.

Improve soil fertility, farm maintenance.

Organic is mainly affecting that farmers use limited inputs for cultivation, maintain soil fertility and cause limited damage to the environment.

2nd interview Dr. Adjei-Nsiah (29th April 2010)

This interview was conducted with the ICS coordinator of the FPOPP who is also an agronomist at the Agricultural Research Centre of Ghana in Kade. This was the last interview conducted during the fieldwork and it was aimed at verifying the data that was gathered, gaining in depth explanations to issues that were raised and thirdly to understand some institutional arrangements in the district notable on land tenure systems.

- 1. Could you tell when oil palm began to be intensified in the area? And who were leading institutions that brought about the change?**
- 2. How is the chain of GOPDC and the private processors organized?**
- 3. Can I confirm that only the hybrid tenera is intensified in this area?**
- 4. Can you say there are clear patterns in the way the communities organize their livelihoods? Do you see an effort to conserve agrobiodiversity as one of those patterns?**
- 5. Additionally, express the added value of the cooperative association within which the women farmers operate.**
- 6. Is the FPOPP the only such chain in the area, region or country?**
- 7. What are the land tenure systems at play in this district?**
- 8. Who should play the leading roles in up-scaling and expanding such a project?**

Describe the product, its end market and the chain. In Asuom and surroundings the palm oil has various destined end markets plus that of Dr. Bronner's. Find out the other market channels especially that of GOPDC.

Are there different types of oil palm produce here?, for example the red (wild) palm oil, or the one from Tenera?

Who are the main people employed in this 'industry' ?

Elaborate on the role of women played at all levels of the chain.

Write on the types of varieties cultivated in the area. The productivity of the varieties and its coverage in the area.

Describe the various types of chains taken place in the Asuom, explain the differences between FPOPP, that of GOPDC and the private women initiatives.

Identify locally embedded conservation practices and how these go hand in hand with international certification schemes.

Read on the CBD and the 2010 Year of Biodiversity.

Outline the existing arrangements that makes it possible for farmers to participate in such a systems.

- Land: the difference between immigrant and local farmers' farming systems.
- Investment capital: is there room for expansion and up-scaling and what are the constraints that might such intentions?

Findings

The Value Chain

The Fearless Planet Organic Palm Oil Project (FPOPP) is the only such project in the area combining organic, fair trade and cooperate social responsibility (CSR) in their operations. Even though there are a remarkable number of companies and small scale enterprises undertaking the production of palm oil, none in the district is operates under such a scheme as that of Dr. Bronners'.

Three different demand channels for farmers' palm fruits in the area. A secure end market is the important aspect in bringing development

Comparing to other value chains in the district, the FPOPP is an efficient and rather effective value chain. Most, and close to all participating stakeholders expressed satisfaction at how activities are managed within the chain. Especially farmers, who praise the value chain mainly due to the steady and secure market for their palm fruits and for the prompt payments they receive upon delivery of their fruits to the crammer.

Field officers also hail Fearless Planet and Dr. Bronner's for developing the capacity of the farmers and building upon their existing farm practises. The field officers cite this because, the project approach has been to register existing farms (technically conventional but most farms are organic by default) that would be converted to organic. Farmers therefore were spared from the headache of investing into establishing new farms. Also, farmer who had multiple oil palm plots (most of the farmers in the communities have 2, 3 and more oil palm plots) could choose to register the farms of their choice. They could therefore be sure of finding a market for their produce.

Apart from these the project has also facilitated farmers in forming cooperatives that undertake a diversity of activities within their respective communities. For one thing, the cooperatives have formed vigilante groups that monitor fellow farmers in order to keep everybody in line with the organic regulations. If a certain percentage of farmers in a village are found to be breaking organic protocol, the whole community is likely to be chucked out of the scheme altogether. Cooperative heads together selected field officers regularly deliberate over the use of the fair trade premiums received through IMO's Fair for Life programme.

Farming in the Kwaebibirem District

Little difference between registered/certified and non certified farmers.

Farming systems are predominantly the same in the three communities and surroundings.

The demand for the local variety of oil palm is very limited and not evident in the communities visited. On the contrary, most farmers prefer to grow hybrid variety for its higher yield and processors prefer to buy the tenera because of higher oil content and therefore higher amount of volume of oil can be extracted. There are still local varieties found on farms but this results from farmers trying to seed the hybrid tenera which of course cannot by produce offspring that are true to type.

Livelihoods in the Kwaebibirem District

Communities engage in a diversity of activities to sustain their livelihoods. Farming is hardly a the sole income generation activity for any farmer.

Agro-biodiversity

Efforts to conserve agro-biodiversity are an integral part of the chain. Farmers have received trainings from field officers on how to manage soil water and nutrients as well preserving the diverse flora and fauna found underneath oil palm trees. The farmers have not only been shown how this is done but have also been assisted on carrying these activities out on their own separate farms. Evidence that these were indeed carried out was seen during farm visits.

For example, farmers actively gather palm fronds during harvest season, chop them into pieces and spread them at various points around their plots. The intention being to compost the leaves that will fix nutrients back to the soil. Additionally, most farmers have planted cover crops and legumes that fix nitrogen into the soil. The main cover crop seen was *peuraria*. The participating farmers have also been advised not to clear-weed their plots to expose their soil to destructive effects such as erosion. 'Brushing' which means weeding up to level between 10-20cm above the soil surface was recommended to the farmers by the field officers and ICS management. This method of weeding checks against, erosion, evaporation of soil water, serves as mulch and sustains living organisms in the soil.

Albeit the fact that the conservation of agro-biodiversity is intrinsic to the chain, it is strictly a top-down approach. The research initially set out to discover ways in which agro-biodiversity conservation was an embedded part of sustaining local agriculture. The researcher made the assumption at the start that, efforts of conservation would ideally be bottom-up. Ideally because such a scenario if true would be the more sustainable option regarding biodiversity in agriculture.

Nonetheless, the concept of agro-biodiversity was one of the requirements in order for the chain to be certified as organic by IMO. Dr. Bronner's wanting to be certified, is consequently making sure that farmers conform to the prescribed set of regulations of which some aspects of agro-biodiversity; the conservation of local flora and fauna and the preservation of soil water and nutrients are part of the package. It can therefore be concluded that farmers are not the main drivers of agro-biodiversity conservation but it is rather IMO. Primarily because if the regulations of IMO were dropped and the policing vigilance of the field officers and the external inspector were redundant, very few efforts towards sustainable agriculture would actually be taking place. The researcher is less than happy to report such findings because this has deep negative consequences for biodiversity in a place where the intensification of oil palm is at such an endemic scale.

Interview with Dr. Bronner's: Gero Leson

1. Is small scale production of oil palm under organic and FT schemes the only way Ghana can compete on the global market?
2. Who are currently the main partners involved in the project, their roles and how have these roles changed since the beginning of the project in 2005?
3. What is the participation of GTZ in the project?
4. What is your opinion on how smallholder farmers perceive working in or joining organic and fair trade schemes?
5. How do you see the future of Dr. Bronner's in Asuom. How would your roles change in the future if they change at all?
6. How does your work with rural communities and small holders in Ghana differ from other regions Dr. Bronner's is involved with?
7. What are the key factors that this project depends on for success, failure or sustainability?

Plan of Work for Fieldwork

Data collection should spread out over a 3 week period where I would be permanent in the field. Within this period I wish to conduct;

Interviews with farmers: approx 20 farmers

Interview with processor: 1 processor

Interview with Dr. Bronner's: 1 field agent

Interview with the external consultant: Dr. Adjei-Nsiah

Focus group discussions: approx 4 discussions in the different communities involved

Date	Task	Location	Involved party	remarks
1/04/2010	Interviews in Asuom	Asuom		5-6 farmers
30/03/2010	Interviews in Abaam	Abaam		5-6 farmers
31/03/2010	Interviews in Abodom	Abodom		5-6 farmers
29/03/2010	Interviews in Bomsu	Bomsu		5-6 farmers
31/03/2010	Interview with Crammer	Asuom		
	Picture for column	Any of the 3 villages	Most likely a female farmer	
	Focus group discussions AS	Asuom		If possible the key informants in the community and the leaders of co-ops
	Focus group discussions AB	Abaam		
	Focus group discussions BS	Bomsu		
9/04/2010	Interview with Dr. Nsiah	Kade		

All interview are semi-structured and outline the important aspect of the project. On the organic scheme and also on agro-biodiversity.