



Cocoa Nutrition Innovation Program

Company Learning Brief: ECOM & Lindt

1. Why is nutrition important for ECOM and Lindt?

ECOM's vision of creating prosperity in rural communities includes increasing on farm productivity, creating diversified incomes and building assets. At the most basic level, asset building includes ensuring the health and nourishment of farmers and their families. Nutrition and food security are essential to a healthy labour force, and as such nutrition programming is built into ongoing health and agriculture programs. ECOM is intentionally building nutrition into its sustainability programs and has used the Cocoa Nutrition Innovation Program (CNIP) as an avenue for experimenting and learning about this process.

The [Lindt & Sprüngli Farming Program](#) (present in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Madagascar and Papua New Guinea) currently develops, tests and implements such holistic solutions in different origins. All activities are ultimately targeted at increasing the [net income of farmers, their families, and communities](#).

The overall approach is structured in four different levels of activity:

1. Sustainable intensification of cocoa cultivation
2. Creation of additional income sources
3. Stabilization of cash flow and secure income
4. Community infrastructure



2. Description of Project

ECOM implemented the nutrition program as part of the Lindt & Sprüngli Farming Program, an existing program which trains farmers on cocoa agriculture and income diversification activities. This broader program includes 60,000 farmers located in several districts in Ghana who are reached and served by ECOM field trainers. The ECOM nutrition intervention under the CNIP has reached out to a subset of these farmers, a total of 1500 throughout 2018 and 2019 in an effort to trial and test the nutrition training and associated livelihood activities. The program specifically targeted females with 80% participation from women.

The program included two components:

1. Nutrition behaviour change communications trainings on dietary diversity and hygiene for an hour, once a week for seven weeks.
2. Reinforcement activities focused on vegetable production and animal rearing.

3. What has ECOM learned from implementing nutrition programs under the CNIP?

Throughout the implementation of the program ECOM employed a Quality Improvement (QI) approach, which assisted in improving facilitation skills of the trainers. After each training week a QI meeting was held, with trainers able to look at metrics from the previous week (e.g. attendance, engagement, ability to foster participation etc.) and make subsequent improvements. This approach was experimentally employed by ECOM through technical support under the CNIP, and real progress in terms of trainer capacity was noted. ▶▶

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During the first pilot implementation cycle, ECOM used its traditional model of cascading the training from the management team, to the field officer at the district level and finally to the field trainer at the community level. Given the technical nature of the content, the cascading process proved to be inefficient at building field trainer capacity. In subsequent cycles, the entire team was trained together, allowing for greater capacity to be built across all levels.

Under the CNIP, ECOM has had the ability to re-view this approach, and use QI processes which strengthen not on the nutrition training but their training mechanisms and methods in general. Finding the right modalities in the training and its delivery is essential to the scale up of further activities.

ECOM has found that as a result of the vegetable production trainings, several farmers have adopted this practice and have set up their own gardens following techniques they used on the demo plots established as part of the program. It is this through this practice and approach that ECOM has identified the most viable pathway to sustainability and scale.

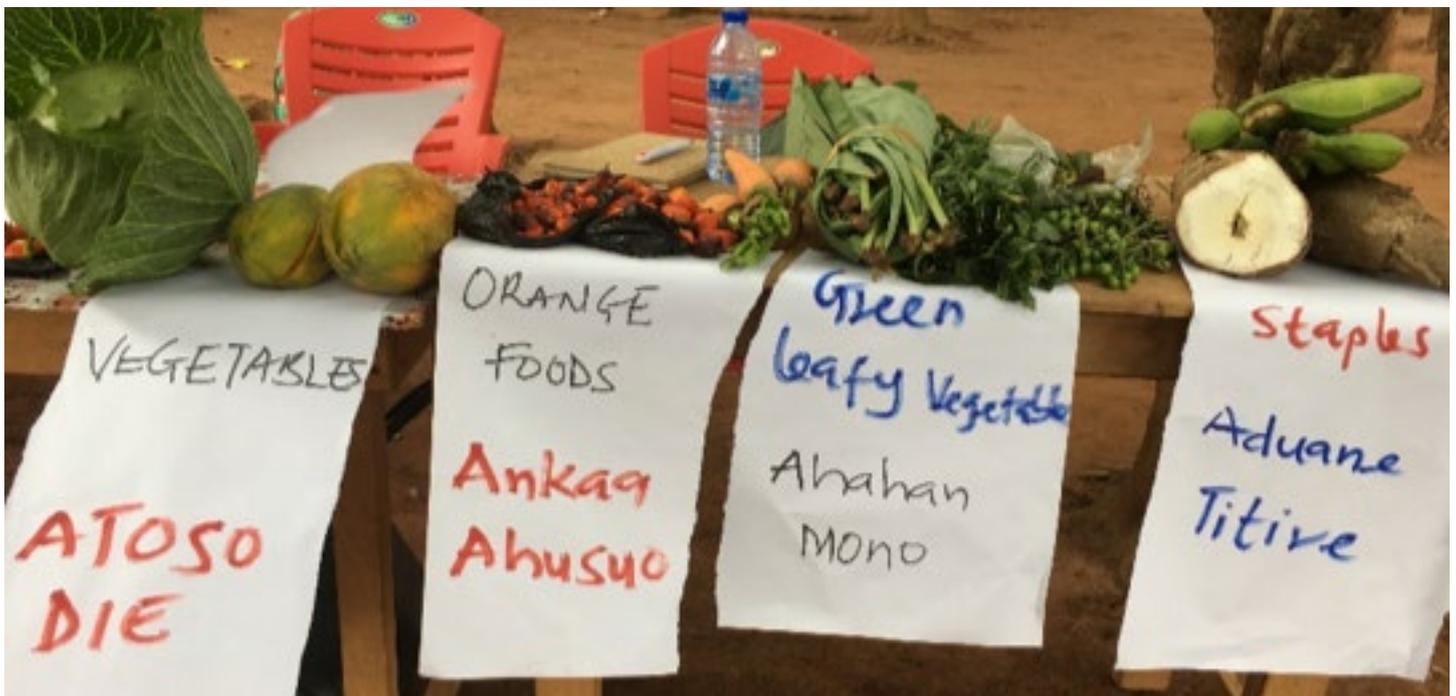


Photo: Demonstration of different varieties of food groups grown by farmers during ECOM/Lindt learning event



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4. What does ECOM recommend for sustainable scaling?

The CNIP has provided industry partners with the opportunity to reflect on how to integrate programming from a nutrition perspective within existing structures.

Under the CNIP, the production of nutritious foods has been supported and explored, but producers relied on the uptake of products in local, rural markets. Building a pathway to sustainability means going a bit further and supporting the farmer in the needed logistics, identifying markets, aggregators, and exporters. ECOM is currently exploring how to build a pipeline of off-takers of the horticultural products in an effort to **support a market-led approach**.

Finally, in terms of scalability, the in-house capacity has been built at ECOM to deliver nutrition programming and/or make ongoing programming more nutrition sensitive. **Efforts are already underway to see if the approaches explored as part of CNIP can be applicable in another country or commodity context.**

‘The key to sustainability is finding the ‘sweet spot’. Horticultural production should improve the farmers’ food security and nutrition but also incomes. It has to make economic sense to the farmer as well as to balance in building a market-led approach to the nutrition program.’

*- Ana Herrera, Head Client Management,
Sustainable Management Services, ECOM*

