

**PARTNERSHIP FARMING AND COCOA CULTIVATION IN RURAL CAMEROON:  
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**Abstract**

Agriculture as an economic activity remains indispensable to human populations in Africa. The increase in the population of Cameroon over the years implies that more people will engage in agriculture in general and within the cocoa sector in particular. Through its diversified farming systems, partnership farming as an age old practice provides an opportunity to three main categories of migrant workers namely: those who do not have farms to cultivate cocoa; labourers who do not want to own farms; and migrant labourers who need immediate revenue, is a phenomenon which has been considered uninteresting to researchers. This study on partnership farming and cocoa cultivation in the Bomboko area of Cameroon was concerned with describing the nature of partnership farming in the area with focus on micro relations between farm owners and workers contrary to all other studies which were limited to relations between firms and agents. As an exploratory study, a qualitative approach was possible through the application of observation and interview guide as instruments. The study revealed that partnership farming perpetuates the cycle of borrowing and is generally exploitative in nature but not in the Marxist sense. It allows for social learning where activities are internalised and thus become objects of discussion, comparison and classification such that group reflections are Cocoa-bound within rural communities as well as the development of a specific language and labelling for actors with ritualization and sacralisation of activities.

**Keywords:** Partnership farming, Cocoa cultivation, Two-party, Patron, Workers, Bomboko, Rural Cameroon

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**INTRODUCTION**

Agriculture as an economic activity remains indispensable to families or human populations in Africa. It remains the backbone of economic development, sustaining livelihoods in the continent in general and Cameroon in particular. In different parts of Africa, people engage in the production of crops through diversified farming systems, social relations and human adaptations triggered by differences in geography. In this regard the role of agriculture in Africa cannot be underestimated as it provides employment, contributes to the gross domestic product, food sufficiency and security and also provides raw materials for agro-based industries. Farming in Africa employs 60-75% of the continent's able-bodied persons (Amungwa 2013; Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021) who live in the rural areas and concentrate on their farms to enhance their livelihoods and that of their communities. Agriculture has contributed to significant growth, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the improvement of livelihoods in African countries. In Ghana alone, Lowe (2017) reports that the cocoa sector employed approximately 4 million farm families spread over six of the ten regions; and over 1,293 are employed in the major processing companies (Goodman, 2017; Abbadi, 2019). In Kenya, 53.8% of the labour force was employed in the agriculture sector (Kamer, 2022) with a 22.43% GDP in 2021 (O'Neill, 2022). In different parts of Africa, farmers engage in varying agricultural activities such as horticulture, market gardening, fruit farming, fish farming (aquaculture), food crop cultivation as well as perennial crop cultivation. Agriculture is carried out on an industrial scale especially for countries that cultivate annuals and perennials like tomatoes, ginger, yams,

millet, maize, potatoes, Rice, plantain etc. In Ghana, Nigeria, Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, for instance, the main crops cultivated on either industrial or large scale include the traditional commercial crops such as cocoa, coffee, rubber, cotton, sorghum, banana, etc. which are largely for export (Lowe, 2017; Goodman, 2017; Abbadi *et al.*, 2019; Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021). In Cameroon, the cultivation of Cocoa and the production of the cocoa beans are practiced on a small scale by individual farmers or farm families who own portions of cultivable land (Bate, 2018; Bate, Kimengsi and Amawa, 2019). The initial practice of African countries in pre-colonial times was producing for subsistence and not for markets (Ellis 1996; Amazee 2003; Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021). Since most of the world's poor (70%) and three quarters of the world's malnourished children live in rural areas (Amungwa 2013), agriculture would however lead to desired transformation in livelihood of families. In Cameroon, agriculture constitutes the main activity in rural areas though practiced in semi urban areas. More still, two thirds of its active population is involved in agriculture which includes crop production, livestock production, and fishing farming. (Amin, 2008; Ball, 2016). Within Cameroon, the family farm system is where mixed farming is practiced and farms generally vary in sizes (about 2 to 3 hectares). The management of such farms is the responsibility of the family head who in turn manages the farm activity. The crops planted here are annuals depending on the nature of the soils and geography. Apart from mixed farming, traditional commercial crop cultivation is practised on a large scale and managed by individuals or cooperation, employing a large number of people. Some of the farmers in Cameroon also practice mixed farming where perennials such as coffee, cotton, rubber and cocoa are cultivated on the same piece of land (Ashu, 2016). Cocoa on its part is managed by individual farmers who own

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the farms but cultivated on a small scale. Among the commonly cultivated cash crops, cocoa cultivation is wide spread and is on the increase in South, Southwest, and Centre Regions of Cameroon (Gockowski and Sonwa, 2008). In the South West Region of Cameroon, family farms are organised around the family head who in turn manages the farm activity. Moreover, the economic downturn between 1980-90, the liberalisation of the economy in the mid 90s, increase in population from 12.3 million in 1987 (Mva and Gockowski, 2001), to 27.9 million in 2022 (MLA, 2023), triggered the migration of people from different parts of Cameroon to the rural and semi urban areas of the South West Region due to its fertile soils and favourable climatic conditions. This led to pressure on community forests and family farms. Also, the modernisation policy reform instituted in Cameroon in 2000 to raise productivity level from 137,000 to 300,000 tons as well as to increase small farm holdings into large farm holdings from 1 or 3 hectares to 4 hectares and above per household by 2015 (Fule, 2013) motivated the youthful population to engage in the cultivation of cocoa. More still, the ministry of Agriculture and its associated projects such as 'Fonds de développement du Cacao et Café' (FODEC), Projet d'Appui à l'Insertion des Jeunes en Agriculture (PAIJA), and Projet Semencier Cacao-Café (PSCC), through their diversified services, provided additional motivation to farmers.

In the Bomboko area, the fertile volcanic soils attracted migrants who in turn outnumber the natives (Duguma; 2008). Bova-Bomboko alone has less than 10% of the indigenous residents (Laird *et al.*, 2007; Ashu, 2016). Despite working in the farms, the migrants are of three categories: those who do not have farms to cultivate cocoa; labourers who do not want to own farms; and migrant labourers who need immediate revenue (Laird *et al.*, 2007; Ashu, 2016). These categories are however not mutually exclusive. There is a tremendous increase in the amount of farmland for cultivation of cocoa through the selective thinning of the forest. The farms are about three to five hectares large and according to Duguma *et al.* (2008) an individual can have more than one farm. The rural farmer, who has large portions of land or many farms, may hire out sections or the whole farm to the migrant labourer to work. In this regard, both agree to work together by legitimising the activity through a contract, hence the phenomenon of partnership or contractual farming. Partnership farming according to Eaton and Shepherd (2001) refers to "the contracting of crops" and to Minot (2011) "agricultural production carried out according to prior agreement in which the farmer commits to producing a given crop in a given way and the buyer commits to purchasing it." It was a common phenomenon in Latin America referred to as "the Latifundio", in Ghana this phenomenon has been termed "nnoboa" (organised rural groups) (Gockowski, 2002). In Greece the term "hectmoroi" was used to indicate sixth partner in sharecropping. In Cameroon, the phenomenon is carried out in areas where traditional commercial crop (cocoa) cultivation is practised. It is a contractual relationship between a farmer (labourer) and the owner of the cocoa farm(s). Partnership farming is common in the Bomboko area of Meme Division in the South West region of Cameroon though often considered uninteresting by researchers.

### Statement of the problem

The increase in the population of Cameroon over the years implies that more people will engage in agriculture in general

and within the cocoa sector in particular. In this regard, there has been a shift from cultivating family farms, which usually measure either one or two hectares to cultivating about four hectares and above. More to this, one farmer will have about two or three farm holdings (Duguma, 2008; Modi and Venkatachalam, 2021).). The issue of effectiveness and efficiency towards production sets in as the farmer is faced with the problem of pests and fungal (black pod) diseases accentuated by high humidity (Egbe *et al.*, 2012; Mukete, 2018). Despite being an old practice, partnership farming phenomenon became an appropriate practise for achieving success. This phenomenon, though very evident in the cocoa producing areas of Cameroon, has often been considered uninteresting that is why it has attracted little or no attention from researchers. Researchers have often concentrated and focus their attention on Cocoa cultivation and Agro forestry such as Gockowski *et al.* (2008), Sonwa (2008), Laird *et al.* 2007; Essougong *et al.*, (2020). Others like Amungwa (2013), Koge, (2001), Egbe *et al.* 2012; Mbi, 2019 have carried out studies on extension farming in different parts of Cameroon. Laird *et al.* (2007) took keen interest on cocoa farming in Bova Bomboko with focus on evaluating firstly, the extent of farmer dependence on chemical inputs; secondly, the multiple products (non-timber and timber) found on cocoa farms, and by extension the retention of biological diversity on farms".

The researchers mentioned above have not been able to explore and unravel the social relations between farmers. Although studied elsewhere, it has not received any attention in Cameroon It is in this regard that there is no literature which pertains to this phenomenon of partnership farming in Cameroon to show what it is all about. Tandap (2009), makes mention of partnership farming in her literature by indicating that it is a common phenomenon in Munyenge and its satellite settlements. More still, Mva and Gockowski (2001) have shown that sharecropping arrangements were commonly reported in the South West province, where 49% of households indicated their use. In both cases, neither the qualitative nor the quantitative dimensions of the phenomenon were explored. Despite being studied in different parts of developing and developed countries, such studies and literature on partnership farming were limited to business relations between agribusiness firms and large-scale or small-scale crop producers (Eaton and Shepherd, 2001; Da Sylva, 2005; Minot, 2011; Otsuka, Nokano and Takahashi, 2015; Puspitaningrum and Gayatri, 2016; Rankin *et al.*, 2016; Trotsenko and Slukin, 2020; Dustmurodov *et al.*, 2020; Igbinnosa, 2020; Manyise and Dentoni, 2021). It is in this regard that the researcher has decided to study the very peculiar yet widespread phenomenon in the Bomboko Area which has often been taken for granted. Therefore, exploring the phenomenon, describing its nature, its structure, social relations as well as processes involved remain critical to this study. This paper therefore seeks to describe and analyse the practice of partnership farming in the Bomboko Area, Meme Division, and South West Region. Specifically, the paper is concerned with identifying farmers involved in Partnership Farming (P.F.) in the Bomboko Area; describing the structure of P.F in the area, and attempt a description of the activities and practices involved in P.F.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Partnership farming has gained currency in most debates on agribusiness in the developed and developing countries. Much of this discussion has centered on relationship between

smallholders or large-scale farmers and firms (Otsuka, Nokano and Takahashi, 2015; Puspitaningrum and Gayatri, 2016; Rankin *et al.*, 2016; Trotsenko and Slukin, 2020; Dustmurodov *et al.*, 2020; Igbinnosa, 2020; Manyise and Dentoni, 2021). Wherever it is being practiced, partnership farming presents a difference in typology depending on the crops cultivated and the firms involved. The relationship between the actors is contractual. It is in this direction that related literature will be reviewed.

### Definition and Origin of partnership farming

Partnership refers to a relationship where two or more persons carry on a business with a view to make a profit (Stevens, 2011; Desmond and Montgomery, 2022). This partnership includes a structure which is “an agreement to share the profits and losses of a business” (ibid). Contractual farming is a partnership because it involves voluntary approaches agreed upon with one or more organizations or individuals (Desmond and Montgomery, 2022). Membership into this association is not spell bound but a voluntary association that involves two or more persons for the purpose of making profits between the partners and also sharing losses. Considering farming as a business, partnership has also been extended thereto. In other words, partnership farming is seen as agricultural production carried out based on prior agreement in which the farmer commits to producing a given product under certain conditions and the buyer commits to purchasing it (Minot, 2011; Eaton and Shepherd (2001). This agreement is between one or more farmers and a contractor for the production and supply of agricultural products under forward agreements, frequently at predetermined prices” (Bijman, 2008). Moreover, Eaton and Shepherd (2001) and Desmond and Montgomery, (2022), hold that partnership farming has to do with the contracting of crops. The contracting of crops cannot be done only at the level of firms and small scale or large-scale producers to the exclusion of individual farmers. The social organization of work within rural communities is more or less inclusive. In this regard, agricultural systems are being organized into tightly aligned chains and networks (Bijman, 2008; Lowe, 2017) that allow for greater accessibility to farmers over different periods. Partnership or contractual farming is increasingly common in developed and developing countries (Otsuka *et al.*, 2015). Tracing the origin of the phenomenon in both developed and developing countries reveal different results. Eaton and Shepherd (2001) have argued that partnership farming- the contracting of crops can be traced to a deep historical past. Though a common practice, they argue that it was widespread in ancient Greece where it served the purpose of payment of debts, tithes, and rents. “During the first century, China also recorded various forms of sharecropping” (ibid). The various opinions concerning the origin are as diverse as the authors though all seem to situate the origin of the phenomenon within the context of crops that were on high demand be it either at home or abroad. Ramsundar and Shubhabrata (2014) posit that contract farming is not new as it was prevalent in the indigo plantations during the British era.

In his literature, Da Sylva (2005) contends that the phenomenon can be traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century as first used in U.S.A for processing crops such as sugar beets, and peaches, used for vegetables in U.S.A, and by seed industry in Europe in decades before the Second World War. Rehber 2007; Prowse 2012), in Taiwan for sugar production under the Japanese colonial rule and Latin American countries supplying

US markets with fruits and fiber (Da Sylva, 2005) where Ramsundar and Shubhabrata confirmed that it was introduced in Taiwan in 1895 for the first time by Japanese government while in India, the Pepsi company introduced partnership farming for the cultivation of tomato and potato in Hosiarpur taluk of Rajasthan in 1927 (Ramsundar and Shubhabrata, 2014). According to Bijman (2008) contract farming existed a long time ago especially for perishable agricultural products delivered to processing industries. He argues further that it became more important in the agriculture and food sector in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in developing and developed countries triggered by “changes in international competition, consumer demand technology, and governmental policies (ibid). Partnership farming since then according to Prowse (2012) has been expanding. In this regard Rehber (2007) in Prowse (2012) has showed that contract farming accounts for about 15% of output in developed countries. To this end it accounted for 39% of total value of U S agricultural production in 2001, and “for 38% of the production of dairy, poultry and sugar in Germany, resulted in over 75% and 23% in broiler production in Japan and South Korea respectively (Young and Hobbs, 2002; Prowse, 2012).

In developing countries, partnership farming is also at the increase wherein contracts are increasingly being used. Da Sylva (2005) recounts that, Brazil witnessed 75% of poultry production through contracts. In Vietnam 10% of the cotton and fresh milk, 50% of tea were purchased through contracts by firms (Da Sylva, 2005). Prowse confirms that despite being experienced in other parts of the world, contract/ partnership farming has been on the increase in sub-Saharan Africa. In Mozambique almost 12% of the rural population, according to Swinnen and Maertens (2007), is involved in partnership farming growing cotton. Eaton and Shepherd (2001) are not indifferent to the existence of the phenomenon in developing countries. It is in this regard that they argue that farmers at Gezira- central Sudan were contracted to grow cotton as part of a larger land tenancy agreement during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This provided the ground work on which partnership farming later evolved (ibid).

### Motivations in partnership farming

In either case (be it developed or developing countries), partnership farming has been triggered mostly by the rise of supermarkets in food retailing in developing countries especially in Asia and Latin America (Eaton and Shepherd 2001; Bijman, 2008; Desmond and Montgomery, 2022). Bijman (2008) argues that partnership farming is driven essentially by two factors namely- 1) from the contractor who is interested in improving the supply of homogenous products to increase capacity utilization of specific assets; and 2) by the state, to promote critical commodity chains or interested suppliers intending to expand commodity chains. By this notion, we notice that focus is on the expansion of commodity chains with little attention on the relationship or the interaction between the farmers and the firms. Moreover, individual farmers who do not belong to the groups are automatically excluded from the network hence, exclusion from participating in contracts. To this end Otsuka *et al.*, (2005), remark that, large scale farmers participate in contracts more often than small scale farmers in the USA. Minot (2011); Akanbi *et al.*, (2019) move away from this line of thought and argue that partnership farming is triggered by crops that have a high rate of perish-ability, and secondly by others that are technically

difficult to produce. The production of cocoa is a technically difficult process hence requires partnership. Partnerships were opportunities for mutual benefits and sharing of knowledge by different parties (Trotsenko and Slukin, 2020). To show this difficulty further, Laird *et al.* (2007); Mukete (2018) and Essougong *et al.*, (2020) have noted in their literature that cocoa farmers face a lot of pests and diseases such as myriads, ants and fungal diseases. Black pod disease is common around the Mount Cameroon due to the long periods of high humidity. Laird *et al.* (2007), Egbe *et al.* (2012), Mukete (2018) posit that fungal diseases cause 80% of yield loss if farms are not treated with fungicides. These drivers of partnership farming vary with the type of crop as well as geography. This has utterly influenced the classification of partnership farming contract schemes in developed and developing countries.

### Classification of contracts

Providing a classificatory scheme for partnership farming has been a matter of extensive debate among scholars. However, Bijman, 2008; Da Sylva, 2005), are credited as originators of a widely used classificatory scheme of contracts. These contracts include: market specification contracts, resource providing, and production management contracts. In the first, the transaction between the growers and the buyers is agreed on terms of what to be produced (Lowe, 2017; Desmond and Montgomery, 2022). Da Sylva (2005), explains that product and quality attributes as well as commitment for further sales (timing, location, and price) remain very important. The second is where inputs are added to the former farming type, in-kind credit is offered through the provision of key in-puts, and third, the growers agree to follow precise technological guidance on how to produce" (Da Sylva, 2005). Bijman (2008) argues that contracts are formal or informal, verbal or written. In sub-Saharan Africa, Bijman (2008) presents a more controversial view by stating that there is no tradition of written contracts in Africa. To him traditional agreements were used and respected. But times have changed so thinking of the whole region as not involved in written contracts may not be applicable to the present dispensation. Knowledge is embedded in social structures and marked by historical processes where social organizations encounter progress. Minot (2011) agrees with Mighell and Jones (1963) on their contract classificatory scheme but argues that it represents only one of the major ways in which contracts are classified. As such, the classification is based on the type of commitment made in the contract between the buyer and the seller. The two other ways are: first, according to the degree of formality of the contract itself where it is either oral or formal written document (Minot, 2011); second, the way the price is determined and paid which involves three levels namely: fixed price contracts, through formula price and by split-payment contracts where buyer makes two or three payments to the farmer- one during planting and the other during the harvest period (Minot 2011). Singh (2002); Puspitaningrum and Gayatri (2019) argue further that contracts can be total, partial, and procurement contracts. The discussion reveals a variety classificatory scheme on contracts. They seem to vary across countries and regions of the world due to difference in farming systems. Otsuka *et al.* (2015); Akanbi *et al.*, (2019) posit that there exist variations in the content of contract farming systems. However, there are two types namely: production contracts and marketing contracts. With production contracts, farmers typically provide land, labour and equipment whereas the contractor provides inputs on credit and technical assistance in

return for the delivery of agreed quality and quantity of product usually at pre-determined price (Otsuka *et al.*, 2015; Akanbi *et al.*, 2019). Here the contractor controls farm management decisions under this contract (ibid). Marketing contracts highlight that "the autonomy of production which is largely left to growers and the contract terms specify the quantity and quality of the designated commodity to be transacted at a future date either at a predetermined price or based a pricing formula which takes into account future market prices" (Otsuka *et al.*, 2015). This however implies that, the marketing contracts are concerned only with the conditions of the delivery of products, while the production contracts are concerned with the provision of inputs and technical services. These variations are in contracts between producers and firms. But we also have contracts vary in relation to the type of crop. In the South West Region of Cameroon where sharecropping is practiced, contracts here are between individual farmers and farm owners (Gockowski and Mva, 2009).

### Terms and specifications in partnerships

The various contractual agreements between producers and buyers are certainly not void of terms of reference. Standards are set by both the producers and the buyers to guide the relationship and establish trust and the appropriation of incentives (Rankin *et al.*, 2016). The terms may vary. Bijman (2008) contends that the terms of the contract will depend on market quality, timing, grade, size. Inspection or pricing is determined by the grower and the processor before production is undertaken". The method of production of commodity, timing and location of delivery, (Minot, 2011; Ashu, 2016), use of inputs and pricing formula specifications (Otsuka *et al.*, 2015), as well as the characteristics of the commodity such as variety, colour, size, humidity content, etc (Minot 2011), are very important aspects to be considered when contracts are being formulated for engagements. The timing, quality, grade, size, etc as outlined by these scholars remain equally important but one must not fail to the issue of the type of crop. Contract specifications for certain crops like cocoa, coffee, cannot be the same as those for vegetables, beans, maize and other perishables.

The setting up of standards in contracts is one thing but what remains relevant is whether both parties respect the engagements made in the contract. In this regard, regardless of typology, the acceptance and adoption of a particular governance method that respects accessibility, the pooling of resources, quality, and quantity, time and location specificity remain quite important (Da Sylva, 2008; Rankin *et al.*, 2016). Governance on its own, we think may not produce the actual results to benefit both parties but both will require a certain level of commitment which will result in compliance with the terms of the contract. Like Minot (2011) and Rankin *et al.* (2016) will argue that the buyer drafts the contract and educates the farmer on terms of the contract, monitoring compliance with the contract as well develop a strategy for enforcing the contract, remain critically important. In other words, it now becomes possible for both parties to commit themselves to the partnership in terms of production and purchasing conditions. Miyata *et al.*, (2009) have argued that firms monitor farmers to ensure that standards of quality and safety of products to be supplied to supermarkets are met. In this regard, providing technical assistance to contract farmers with a focus on the use of inputs and management practices all geared towards quality (ibid).

## Benefits of partnerships

Respecting engagements will be beneficial for farmers and buyers though the benefits might not be the same for all farmers. Farmers become more equipped when they are provided inputs as well as technological skills through education and training thereby increasing productivity and income. Successful farming skills generally raise the income of those who join them (Minot, 2011; Trotsenko and Slukin, 2020). In this way farmers who participate in these schemes have a higher welfare and a stable income (Minot, 2011; Ashu, 2016). In their study on partnership farming in Senegal, Swinnen and Maertens (2007) remark that incomes are higher for contract farmers than for estate workers, and households involved in agricultural labour in the region are initially more likely experience poverty than the small-scale farmers, where increase in income levels will enable them improve on their livelihoods.

Minot (2011) presents a skeptical view of the benefits of contract farming after compiling a set of seven case studies of contract farming in sub-Saharan Africa. They argue that income from contract farming increased for a moderate (30–40%) to a high (50–60%) proportion of participants. They contend further that this income was not enough to live on wherein farmers had to rely on other farm and non-farm income. Singh (2002), Miyata *et al.*, (2009), hold a controversial position in their study by indicating that, despite problems like social differentiation, violation of terms of agreement, environmental un-sustainability, etc, most of the farmers have seen income rise and are satisfied with the contract arrangements. Despite the income raised by contract farming, Poter and Philips-Horwards (1997), Minot (2008), Balgah and Ngwa, (2016) hold that such incomes focus on social problems that it may cause which also include lack of control over production, imbalance of power, income inequality and intra household conflict. With the plethora of dysfunctions and difficulties, it becomes very difficult for the producers to invest and raise additional incomes. This accentuates further the level of inequality and social distance between the actors. From the above discussion, Partnership farming has been utterly expressed by multiplicity scholars. From definitions, practices, types of contractual arrangements, contract models, to the discussion on the benefits of the phenomenon, the authors have taken a similar trend which is partnership farming organized around organized groups, be they small scale farmers or large-scale producers and agribusiness firms. Whether the discussions were centred on developed or developing countries, the trend was similar. Focus was on macro relations. They fail to see that there exist independent farmers who own farms but coordinate their own affairs with farmers who do not own farms as well as those who are migrant labourers who need immediate revenue. In other words, partnerships in farming are not limited only to relations between groups of farmers and firms but also between farm owners and individuals. Such relations have not been explored. It is the nature of the phenomenon and the interaction of these micro-relations that the research intends to explore especially as it operates in the Bomboko Area of Cameroon, to be able to yield the expected results.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is one which looks at the phenomenon of partnership farming in relation to farming systems. It probes

into the nature of partnership farming by looking at the micro relations between the farmer and those who own farms thereby offering a thick description into the research problem. Looking at the farming systems, the researcher will draw from sociology of agriculture which analyses contractual relations through the use of models. Since these models are varied and wide, the researcher's little analysis will be specific or limited to the Informal Model of contractual farming arrangements. The informal model is a construction based on the contractual relations between two groups notably the individual entrepreneur or small companies, who hitherto make, simple informal production contracts with farmers. According to Eaton and Shepherd (2001) such contracts are verbal and done on seasonal basis. Informal arrangements according to Strohm and Hoeffler (2006) vary between casual oral agreements and regularly repeated marketing transaction but are characterised by the absence of written contracts as well as binding or specifying documents. Since crops here require a certain level of processing which may be minimal or otherwise, inputs in most cases are restricted to seeds. Farmers tend to receive technical advice which is limited to grading of products as well as quality control.

According to this model, despite the relations existing between the sponsor or the individual entrepreneur and the farmer, it becomes possible in some cases that non-contracted agencies purchase produce from farmers directly. In this way farmers breach contracts and engage in side selling. For fear of losing financial investments, Eaton and Shepherd (2001) argue that such investments from developers is minimal leading to a risk of default by both the farmer and the promoter. In terms of exchange or marketing of the produce, sponsors, who may be individual entrepreneurs, purchase the produce. In order to maintain quality, this model holds that after purchase of the crop by the entrepreneur, the crops are then graded and packaged for sale to retail trade (Eaton and Shepherd, 2001). Proponents of the informal model hold that; the success of informal initiatives depends on availability and quality of external extension services. Embedded services when available are provided on credit which is basically inputs. There also exists vertical coordination as well as vertical integration. As the research focus is on describing the nature of partnership farming, the analysis will employ the above concepts and themes, and see how they apply to the farming system in the Bomboko area. They will be relevant in an attempt to revisit and reform agricultural practices in rural areas that produce cocoa in Cameroon. The researcher will also draw from the practices involved since every occupation is guided by rituals. These rituals in the study area may be performed during contracts as well as during on/off farm activities. Despite being formulated on grounds of informal contractual arrangements based on vegetables and staple foods cultivation, this model suits the nature of contractual arrangements on cocoa plantations in the Bomboko area which is predominantly rural. From the practices involved, the researcher posits that the model will provide the basis for the interpretation for the on/off farm activities performed by individual farmers as they participate in contract farming. Since the operational structure of projects change over time, the informal model will provide explanations on the transformations inherent in the system.

## METHODOLOGY

We used methods that will enable us achieve the objectives of this study. In this regard, the target population, the sample size,

data collection techniques, field procedures, and data analysis were carried out.

### Study area

This study was carried out in the Bomboko area. The area is found in Mbonge Sub Division, Meme Division, South West Region of Cameroon. The Bomboko area is situated between longitude 9° to 9° 13'' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 4°12'' to 4°29'' North of the Equator (Ashu, 2016; Mukete, 2018). The area lies in the north-western part of the slopes of Mount Cameroon. It is bounded in the West by the Atlantic Ocean, in the East by Mount Cameroon, in the South by parts of Muyuka and Mbonge sub divisions, and in the South east by the forests of Ndiian Division. The vegetation is the thick evergreen equatorial rainforest rich in flora and fauna with an equatorial climate with high rainfall and high temperatures. The area is characterized by two seasons namely the dry season that extends from November to March, and the rainy season which extends from April to October with rains reaching about 2300mm per year (Ashu, 2016; Mukete, 2018). The soils are rich in humus and in some areas mixed with clay. The volcanic soils favour the cultivation of multiplicity crops and other farm activities (Egbe *et al.*, 2012; Ashu, 2016). The Bomboko Area is made up of nineteen rural communities which are all located along the slopes of Mount Cameroon (Egbe *et al.*, 2012; Ashu, 2016; Mukete, 2018). Farming remains the main income generating activity in the area. Crops cultivated in the area include coco-yams, yams, egusi, beans, maize, oranges, and other fruit trees. Banana, plantain, pepper, and oil palm cultivation are on the increase in the area but the cultivation of cocoa is widespread. The area is noted for the huge production of cocoa from individuals of diverse ethnic origins. In this area, a farmer may have two or more cocoa farms (Egbe *et al.*, 2012; Ashu, 2016).

### Sample and Sampling techniques

The study is exploratory in nature and the approach used is qualitative. The rationale for using the qualitative approach is based on its descriptive nature. A community was selected through simple random sampling especially the ballot method. In order to select the study unit through this method, the nineteen villages that constitute the Bomboko area were each written on nineteen pieces of papers which were later folded and thoroughly mixed in a dish with Munyenge Mabonje selected to become the study site. The snow-ball sampling approach was used during the interviews for the key informants. In this way, the required information from respondents was collected such that one informant led the researcher to another targeted farmer. Due to the nature of work in the area the researcher used incidental sampling method to obtain information from the farm owners and the workers. To this end, the farmers interviewed were made up of 10 farm owners and 18 workers.

### Data collection

The techniques selected for the study include: interviews, and observation. Interviews were conducted using the interview guide made up of open-questions that were designed to get responses from the respondents. There were three main guides with one targeting the farm owners, one for the workers and one for key informants. The first two guides were divided into four main sections namely: identification of unit of farm,

activities, the contract and its performance, and socio-demographics while the interview guide for the key informants. With regard to observation, the observation guide was used. Both participant and non-participant observation approaches were used. The voices of the respondents were recorded in a tape recorder. At the end of the interview arrangements were made with some of the respondent to visit their farms in order to observe the farms and the activities which they consented. The workers and the key informants were also interviewed using the same procedure but for the fact that the researcher interviewed some of the workers at the ovens when drying their produce. Some of the interviews extended even into the night since respondents left homes very early in the morning and returned in the evening.

### Data analysis

The information from each interview was recorded in a tape recorder. At the end of the day all interviews and observations were stored in spreadsheets upon return. All interviews were later transcribed verbatim in order in which they were carried out in the field, first with farm owners, workers second, and last were the key informants. The data was later summarized and recorded in spreadsheets for which a thematic analysis was done.

## RESULTS

### *Socio-demographic Profile of Partnership Farming*

Workers in partnership farming in the area vary by marital status. Most workers (1/2) were singles. The remainder was made up of 1 engaged, 7 married cases and two were divorced. In all it could be seen most of the workers (61%) were not married. All patrons were married with no divorce cases recorded. It was observed in the field that all patrons were living in their personal houses whereas the party men were either on rent at the patron's building or were on rent elsewhere. From table 1, it was realized that farm owners vary by age with the most dominant age group which lies between 40 to 48 years of age; 14% of the farm owners have age range of 49 to 57 years; and a 29 % of farm owners were aged between 58 to 66 years. Workers of "two-party" were identified as made up of only males (18) and the mean year for a worker that was established is 35.6 years. This measure, though a representative of all, showed that some workers, (up to ½) had ages (25-35 years) which were below the mean age for a worker (35.6 years). Some (½) of the workers had ages above the mean year with an age range of 36- 47 years old. This shows that workers of "two-party" are of the working age group. To highlight further, party men are in their 30s and 40s. The maximum level of education among patrons as seen on table 1, 3/7<sup>th</sup> of them were holders of the Ordinary Level Certificate and Certificat d'Aptitude Professionel (CAP). A similar trend was recorded for holders of the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). However, 1/7 of the farm owners had not attained any level of education but "Standard 3". This indicates that farm owners are not very literate. It was also found among the workers that they vary by level of education. We noted that 2/3 of the workers were secondary school drop outs (4) and holders of First School Leaving Certificate (8). On the other hand, only 4 of the workers were identified to have attained Ordinary Level (O/L General and CAP) and just one had the Advanced Level (A/L). Going by level of education, results revealed that farm owners are not very literate.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of interviewed respondents (Workers and Farm Owners)

Variables	Category	Workers (N=18)	
		N	%
Marital status	Divorced	2	11.11
	Married	7	38.89
	Single	8	44.44
	Engaged	1	5.56
Age	Total	18	100
	25- 35	9	50
	36-47	9	50
Region of origin	Total	18	100
	Southwest	5	27.78
	North west	12	66.67
	West	1	5.56
Level of education	Total	18	100
	FSLC	8	44.44
	Secondary school dropout	4	22.22
	Ordinary Level/ CAP	4	22.22
	Advanced Level	2	11.11

Variable	Category	Farm Owners (N=07)	
		N	%
Marital status	Married	7	100
	Total	7	100
Age (years)	40-48	4	57.14
	49-57	1	14.29
	58-66	2	28.57
	Total	07	100
Region of origin	Southwest	3	42.86
	North west	4	57.14
	Total	07	100
Level of education	Below FSLC	1	14.29
	FSLC	3	42.86
	Ordinary Level/ CAP	3	42.86

Source: Field work, 2023

Table 2. Ethnic origin of workers (“party men”) and Farm Owners (“patrons”)

Workers (Party men)			Farm owners (patrons)		
Group of origin	Region of origin	N	Group of origin	Region of origin	N
Bafangji	North west	1	Banyang	South west	1
Wum	North west	2	Ejagham	South west	1
Bafut	North west	2	Oroko	Southwest	1
Batibo	North west	3	Batibo	North west	1
Mankon	Northwest	1	Meta	North west	1
Meta	North west	1	Modele	North west	1
Njinikom	North west	1	Mukuru	North west	1
Tikari	North west	1	Total		7
Akwaya	South west	1			
Bangwa	South west	1			
Ejagham	South west	1			
Ngolo	South west	1			
Oroko	South west	1			
Bachan Mbouda	West	1			
Total		18			

Source: Field work

Comparatively, the workers were more literate than their employers (farm owners). Farm owners (patrons) were found to be of Batibo, Banyang, Ejagham, Meta, Modele, Mukuru and Oroko tribes. However, three of the tribes (Banyang, Ejagham and Oroko) were from the south West Region while the remainder (Batibo, Meta, Modele, and Mukuru) are from the North West. There is a plurality of cultures with the farm owners not necessarily being the members of the indigenous population. Workers involved in “two party” system of farming in the Bomboko area vary by tribe and by region of origin. It was realised that workers of the two-party system in the cocoa production had three main origin- Northwest region with a total of 5/9<sup>th</sup> of population, Southwest region with a

proportion of 4/9<sup>th</sup>, and the West region with just 1/9<sup>th</sup> of the total. This distribution clearly shows that the dominant workers in “two party” within the Bomboko area are from the Northwest region of the country. Workers in partnership farming from the Northwest region within the area vary by tribe and include the Batibo (16.7%), Bafut (11.1%), Wum (11.1%), Meta, Njinikom, Tikari, Bafangji and Mankon all consisting of 5% each of the Northwest total population; those from the Southwest region include the Ngolo, Bangwa, Ejagham and Oroko tribes, with each consisting 6% and the Akwaya consisting of 4% of the Southwest population. Meanwhile, all (6%) the workers of the west region come from Bachan Mbouda.

## Identification of Farm Unit

- a. Farm sizes:** There is a variation in the sizes of cocoa farms within the area. Farm sizes in the area range between one to twelve hectares. However, a greater proportion of the farmers (4) own farms which range between four and eight hectares; meanwhile 2 of the owners have very large farm sizes of between eight and twelve hectares. Other farmers (1) cultivate relatively small cocoa farms below four hectares. With such large farm sizes, the owners can succeed in the farm operations when labour is employed.
- b. Crops cultivated:** Different crops are cultivated within the area. They are both cash crops and food crops and fruits. The main cash crop in the area is cocoa, with all the people involved in its cultivation. Different crops are cultivated within the area. They are both cash crops and food crops and fruits. The main cash crop in the area is cocoa, with all the people involved in its cultivation. Apart from cocoa other crops cultivated include plantains, cocoyam, oranges, plums, pear and banana as arranged in a decreasing order of intensity. This therefore reveals that cocoa is the main cash crop cultivated in the area.

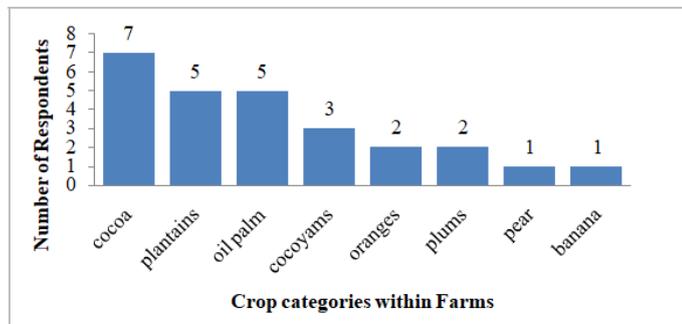


Figure 1. Crops produced in the area farms; Source: Field work

- c. Distance to farms:** The distances covered by farmers to their farms show a great variation. It was realized that three of farmers covered a distance ranging from 5-8Km to arrive at their farms. A smaller number of farmers (1) cover between 2 to 4 kilometers to their farms. 3/7 of farms were located at close proximity to settlements. The rest have to cover long distances to farm. This invariably means that more workers will work in farms that are either very close to settlements or those that are far off. The distance covered by farmers range from less than a kilometer to 8 kilometers.
- d. Duration of partnership:** The partnerships were contracted between 1964 and 2016 with the highest number partnerships being registered between 2014 and 2016 making for 3/5 of the total. However, the number of persons in partnership remained stable from 1964 but stated increasing from 2011. The increase in the price of cocoa in 2011/2012 cocoa season may account for this increase. It was during this period that younger persons (4) at ages between 40-48 years (table 4. planted more farms which are now given on hire.
- e. Production cycle:** Figure 2 shows respondents' views pertaining to periods of production and monthly yields. This however constitute the cocoa production cycle. It was found that cocoa production extends from January to December but fluctuates over the months. The recorded higher amount of cocoa yields within a cocoa year or period was identified to be highest in the months of July, September, November, and December. The periods which show lower amounts as recorded, were the months of

January, March, April and October. Within the year, the months of February and August were identified to be the period when production is at its minimum. The cocoa produced during February and March according to the respondents is often referred to as "Mongo" which to them means food money.

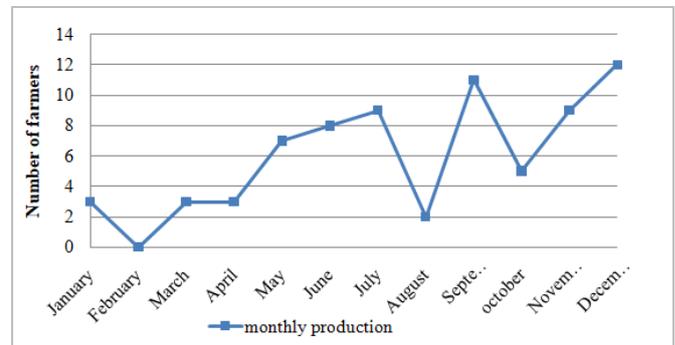


Figure 2. Peak monthly cocoa production periods, Source: Field work

- f. Income from sales:** Tables 3 and 4 present the income made from sales by owners and workers of cocoa farms per year. Annual income of the owners and workers vary significantly. Some of the owners (3) registered annual incomes below two million CFA and 2/7 recorded annual incomes between two to 6 million FCFA.

Table 3. Cash made from sale by Farm owners (FCFA)

Cash made from sales (FCFA)	Number of farm owners	%
Below 2 million	3	42.86
2 – 6 million	2	28.57
6.1- 8 million	2	28.57
Total	7	100

Source: Field work

Table 4: Cash made from sale by Workers (FCFA)

Cash made from sales (FCFA)	Number of workers	%
250, 000- 1,500,000	8	44.44
1,500,001 – 2,750,000	2	11.11
2,750,001 – 4,000,000	3	16.67
I don't know	5	27.77
Total	18	100

Source: Field work

Another 2/7 have income range from 6.1 million to 8 million FRS. This means that most (4/7) of the farm owners had very high incomes ranging from 2-8 million FCFA. Workers on their part had different results. Most of the workers (8) have incomes that are less than 1.5 million FCFA. However, the highest income for workers was between 2.7 million and 4 million. In this regard patrons registered very high annual incomes from sales than the workers.

## The Partnerships

**Farmers involved and the structure of partnership farming (two-party):** This study reveals that Partnership Farming in the Bomboko area operates essentially under a system referred to as "two-party". Those involved are farm owners (patrons) and workers (party men). Majority (5/6) of the farm owners are males with women representing the remainder. One fifth of the owners live in urban and semi-urban areas but make regular visits to the farms. The workers are all males with women performing some of the on-farm activities. From the results it

can be deduced that P.F in the Bomboko area is limited to the relationship between the patrons and the party men. One also finds that the performance of main activities in partnership is the sole responsibility of the males. There is therefore division of labour between the sexes as far as occupations are concerned. It also shows that few women own farms and are not involved in cocoa cultivation. One also finds within P.F. a structure. The main actors or persons are the farm owners and the workers. The farm owner (patron) hires out the farm to the worker (party man) on lease. During the contracting ceremony there are signatories to the contracts. When contracts are verbal, the witness (es) listen(s) to the terms arrived at, observe(s), and participate(s) in the contracting exercise. The secretary recruited from among the patron's family members, listens, writes, and reads out the terms arrived at when contracting is done. This role is absent when contracts are verbal. The main structure of the contracting process in the area is as represented below

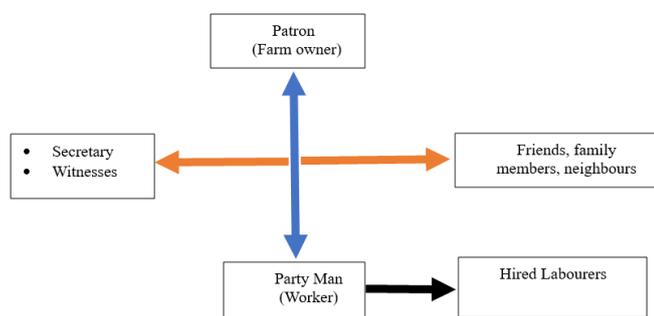


Figure 4. Structure of P.F in the Bomboko area

One also finds a situation where exploitation takes place during the period of contract practice. This exploitative tendency is inherent even in the terms of the contract. The study reveals that the party man alone takes the risk of respecting seventeen terms spelt out during the contract ceremony. The party man takes care of all on-farm activities such as clearing, pruning, spraying, harvesting of ripe pods, breaking of pods, cutting and transportation of wood, drying of fresh cocoa beans, and transportation of dried cocoa beans to the patron's residence or to the buying agent's cocoa store. Exploitation is further perpetuated as the patron requires the party man to provide several "plastics" of beer ranging from 6-36 bottles before and during the contract ceremony. The party man in addition to this, provides "chop farm" (initial fee) ranging from 50.000 FCFA to 150.000 FCFA. 'chuku chuku', 'waka bush', and a fee to the "writer" and witnesses.

The patron also makes much money out of his dominant position. An approximate amount between 170.000 Fcfa and 254.000 FCFA is paid by the party man before being admitted into the farm unit. The study shows that the patron is so powerful that he has to be paid for having started his farm when compared to what the party man gets at the end.

The party man is exploited more and more as he collects farm inputs from the patron. Such inputs be they materials or cash advances are provided and collected through a phenomenon herein referred to as "ten born ten" or "ten born five". This literally refers to interest rates levied on inputs which are at 100% and 50% interest rates respectively. These rates are collected from the party man after sale of cocoa produce. For example if a sachet of fungicide sold at 500 Fcfa in the market is given out to the worker at 1.000 Fcfa. When the party man borrows 200.000 FCFA from the patron or buying agent, he

pays 400.000 FCFA at the end. This however makes the entire activity too cumbersome on the party man who is difficult to break even.

**Duration:** The earliest partnership dates back to 1964 while the most recent was contracted in 2016. People enter into contracts between the months of December and January so that the worker can begin work early if success in the farm activity must be achieved. Early partnerships enable the worker to meet up with the on-farm activities in order to increase yields. Before contacting into the present farm units, two thirds of the workers have had working experience ranging from 3 to 24 years. The phenomenon of partnership farming has been practiced in the area for 41 years.

**Nature of Contract:** Partnership contracts were either written or arranged verbally. During this study, eleven out of the twenty-five contracts were written while fourteen were verbal contracts. Seven of the contacts had no specific duration and no terms indicating the duration of contract. The parties in this case act arbitrarily. Written contracts were made in copies indicating the name of the farm owner, identity card number, residence, place of issue and date, place and date of where the partnership contract was entered into. The same document also indicates the name of the worker, place of birth, identity Card number, and place and date when the identity Card was issued, the terms that were arrived at, signature of both the patron and the party-man. The names and signatures of witnesses and the secretary are included in the document. From observation of the contracts and participation in contract ceremonies, contract terms do not specify quality standards for the products but for dry beans. More still, 3/5 of the agreements were made in two copies while 2/5 was single copies. In the case where there are two copies, one copy is given to the patron and a copy to the party man but if made in a single copy, such a copy is given to the patron only. Patrons according to respondents, modify the nature of the contract, especially when made in single copy without the consent of the party man who is not very literate.

**Reasons for Contracting:** For every partnership the main actors are farm owners also referred to as patrons, and workers who hired the farms also called party men. Patrons and party men advance different reasons for entering into partnerships.

- Large farm sizes and multiple farms:** patrons have farms that range 1-3 "numbers" (four to twelve hectares) which have fully matured cocoa trees. Moreover, within the farms patrons also cultivate other crops which are consumed locally. These patrons have multiple farms which were taken on lease, planted by them or inherited and such farms are not found at the same location. In this regard, they cannot do all work alone. To avoid stress from working many farms, they employ people to work with them.
- Profit motive:** By hiring out the farms to party men, patrons hold that there will be efficiency as the party man will concentrate on a particular section of the farm. In this way profit was made by increase in yields. The patrons also had much time to engage in other on-farm activities and off-farm activities such as the cultivation of other crops and village leadership, business, or participation in community projects respectively.
- Age:** The older people put in a lot of energy in cutting down the forest, tilling the soil and planting the cocoa trees. Much energy was used in weeding/clearing the farms. Through these activities, their strength has diminished and

cannot do all the work. In this regard they employ the services of a party man to manage the farm activity. Coupled with age, these patrons also have large farm sizes and multiple farms. More to this, they need to trek from 40minutes to 120minutes to get to their farms which are not very appealing to their ages. Hired labour is also difficult to find but in case where it was available, it was expensive and time consuming.

**d) Giving others the opportunity to make a living from the farms.** By doing this, the patrons argue that they were reducing the number of idle persons within the community and curbing crime.

Workers (Party men) enter into partnership for a number of reasons. The reasons were as follows:

1. **Poverty:** The prospective party men are poor and also come from poor families that were unable to provide for them. Poverty prevented them from being educated wherein they become very desperate and needed to make life better. Partnership farming was seen as the only way out, that is there was no other option.
2. **Need to raise money for investment.** Party men hold that partnership contract gives them the opportunity to raise money to engage in investment especially as the money is paid in bloc. They use the opportunity to purchase their own farms with the intention of also becoming patrons in the near future. The money raised was used by the party men to have their own farms on lease.
3. **For subsistence and sustenance.** Having the urge to make life better and coming out of poverty, prospective party men saw partnership farming as the only way of being provided with the necessities of life and also managing to stay alive. In this way they decided not to be idle but occupy themselves to care for their health needs, pay rents, educate their children, which to all the respondent was the first priority, and have money to drink palm wine and beer.
4. **Employment:** Since most of the party men were uneducated (2/3), it was not possible, according to them, to compete for public service jobs (white collar work). The educated [(1/3)(5)] have ages above 32 which is the required maximum age for recruitment into the public service. To this effect the prospective party man got into contracts as a means to overcome joblessness, to work in order to open a carpentry workshop. By being employed in this way they were able to live independent lives.
5. **Diverse motives:** Party men were also motivated by others and by their personal instincts. To this end, two of the party men were motivated by their friends who lived ostentatious lives. They have not had the opportunity of handling huge amounts of money which they saw from friends. Others were motivated by their newly cultivated farmlands which were not yet producing. Party men were also self-motivated by their like and love for farming.

### Process of contracting

**The Contract:** There are many ways in which the patrons identified the party men. The following ways were identified by the patrons:

- In some cases the workers approached the patrons and solicited for farms. When the visits were made, the prospective party men provided drinks to the patrons to be. The patron on his/her part examines and investigates the life of the requesting individual.

- In others, this was through hired labour. During such moments the owner evaluates the nature of the persons work, his character, how apt the person is and his relationship with other workers.
- Patrons also advertised their farms. This was done when patrons met at palm wine and beer spots. Within such circles, the patron makes clear his intentions to all and sundry giving out information on the nature of the farm, the number of bags that were produced within a year, the size of the farm and location. Prospective party men who receive the information then react by making visits to the patron.
- The owner's friends who have knowledge of those persons who need farms to hire on party basis also inform them of potential yet available applicants.
- Workers were also identified when they supplied dried cocoa beans to the farm owners who are also buying agents. These farm owners were highly impressed first by the quality of the beans which were very dry, and secondly by the number of bags produced and supplied to their cocoa stores.

The workers on their part identified the patrons through the following media or contact points:

- **Friends:** when people met their friends such friend made known their intentions to hire farms on party basis. In some cases they specify whether they need large farms or very small farms. They also provided information on their working experiences. When these friends met with farm owners who requested for workers, the requests were also delivered and negotiation made to invite the prospective worker over. The friends also delivered information to the prospective worker about a potential leasor. The worker then visited the farm owner.
- **Drinking spots:** Drinking spots were regular places where people exchange information about people who are looking for farms on party basis. Farm owners also made advertisements at drinking spots. Worker (prospective workers) and migrants visit these contact points and make their request and intention to work on party basis. These points therefore served as pools where information on employment was got.
- **Through hired labour:** Migrants who had no farms to work on "two-party" were often hired out by farm owners and by party men. When hired out by the owners, their work was appreciated and farm owners requested if they could manage section(s) of their farm. At this level they went into further negotiations and contracting of partnerships.
- **Transfer of lease:** One sixth of the workers had worked with the previous owners of farms on lease. When the former owners sold to new owners, the lease was transferred.
- **At motor cycle parks.** Riders within the community interact with different persons be they farm owners, workers and among themselves. Information concerning farms to be hired out circulates among them and the people they interact with. Prospective party men made use of the information and met with potential farm owners.
- **Family relations:** For the two farms which were family farms, the worker was individual member of the family. The farm owners preferred working with their kinsmen which according to respondents was a way of preventing

money from going out of the house. When the owner had information that certain family members were interested in party farming they enquire from where in the consented. The owners resorted to terminating contracts with former party men.

- **Performance in other contracts:** Another medium of contact with the owner was linked to proper handling of farms especially those farms which are found along the road or foot paths by the workers. Such farms were a form of advertisement on their own as farm owners easily noticed and evaluated the quality of work done on such farm units. In this regard owners invited workers and asked them if they could manage bigger farms.

### Negotiating

Negotiations differ from one worker to another. Usually, the worker visits the farm owner and makes his request. Discussions are held during such visits and both agree to work together. Some workers meet owner in the farm such as when they are hired for daily paid work. In this case the farm owner requests whether the labourer can manage a section of his farm. Prospective workers meet with patrons at drinking spots for extra bottle of beer or a cup of palm wine before making their request when they realize that the worker is hardworking. In this case, the farm owners decided to provide larger farms to the worker or solicit for one where they can work. The farm owners also met with the worker during family meeting and proposed to work with them on party basis. All contract negotiations except for family relations are preceded by entertainment. This entertainment consists of twelve bottles of beer which were provided by the prospective party man. The twelve bottles of drink otherwise referred to as one plastic, serve as consultation fee to the farm owner. During the negotiations the worker pays an initial fee ranging from 50,000 FCFA to 150,000 FCFA. This money is paid by worker before work begins in the said farm unit or worker is asked to pay the said amount during the peak period of cocoa production.

### Terms of the Contract

The following terms were observed to be common of all contracts which go by the local term "agreement".

1. Workers have to keep the farm clean twice a year;
2. Pruning, clearing and spraying program must be respected;
3. They must not use or spray any dangerous chemical in the farms;
4. Sale of chemicals (fungicides and pesticides) by the worker is prohibited;
5. They have to prevent black pod disease. When this condition is not met the workers either pay for the damages to the patron or lose his share of the produce for that year;
6. When worker sells produce without the knowledge or consent of the patron otherwise referred to as side selling, he loses his share of the produce for the entire year;
7. Farm expenses are shared equally;
8. The owner must be informed before any activity is carried out in the farm;
9. The first two years of work are considered probational (trial or apprenticeship) for the workers;
10. All chemicals used by the party man are at his own expense or shared by both parties if patrons receive 'chop farm';
11. The worker is responsible for any labour hired during the period of lease;

12. Duration of contract range between one and two years;
13. Fifty percent of the party men said they paid for the cost transport of purchase, own charges and breaking of pods;
14. An initial fee known as "chop farm" 'feeding farm' or 'cook farm' is paid by the party man. This chop farm ranges from 30,000 FRS to 150,000 FRS per year for two years;
15. Party men are not expected to harvest food crops from the farm. In case they do they must replant;
16. Both the patron and the party man must be present during the sale of dried cocoa beans except with consent of the other party;
17. Produce shall be shared on equal basis between the worker and the farm owner, hence the concept of "two party" (in Pidgin English) or equal share;
18. If no investment project is undertaken after two or three years of work, the party man will be dismissed (removed) from the farms.

### Language of Contracting

During the contracting of partnerships, there is the use of a special terminology which is herein referred to as the language of contracting. This language is used by all actors involved in the phenomenon and is known within the area where partnership farming is practiced. Here, interest will be in a linguistic analysis in labeling of actors and the terminology of contracting.

### Labeling of actors

- i. **Patron:** This is an identification label for those who own farms and can give the farms out on hire. During the contracting process, the leaser becomes the patron wherein the workers hardly mention the actual name of the owner. A patron may have one or more farms with many workers.
- ii. **Party Man:** This label denotes an individual who does not own a cocoa farm but hires one from an owner. He is the lessee and works under the instructions and dictates of the patron. Cultivation of cocoa strictly depends on terms (which are seventeen in number) reached between the parties in a social ceremony.
- iii. **Witnesses:** A witness during a contract ceremony indicates an individual present during the formalization of the contract whether the contract is written or verbal. In the case of written contracts, the witnesses countersign the contract agreement for which they receive compensation. The witnesses also listen to the contract terms as being dictated by the patron without making any contribution or argument against the terms.
- iv. **The Writer:** This label connotes the secretary. The writer is the main official during the contract ceremony. He or she carefully listens to the terms arrived at during the negotiations. The terms are written in one or two copies. The writer reads out the terms for any corrections to be made by the contracting parties who may not even be literate. Corrected copies of the contract are handed to both parties upon receipt of compensation by the writer in cash or in kind (usually bottles of drink) and both. The term used for contracting process is "agreement". In this regard, all written agreements begin with the caption "AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN Mr. (s)..... AND .....ON----- AT-----".

### Terminology of contracting

- a) **Two-party**: “Party” here refers to persons. Two refers to number or quantity. Two-party will therefore refer to the fact that two persons are involved. One-party definitely means one person is involved. The term is used in relation to the act of sharing. Two-party is a Pidgin English expression for a system of farming where a farm owner (patron), enters into a partnership with an individual who may be a migrant worker or prospective worker (party man) who does not have a farm of his own. In this partnership, both parties work together and share proceeds equally. The patron provides chemicals (insecticides and fungicides) and other inputs to the workers which are paid back when proceeds are shared. The formalisation of the partnership takes place in the presence of witnesses, “the writer”, friends and contracting parties. To hire the farm, the party man pays an initial fee called “cook farm” or “chop farm” which may range from 30.000 FCFA to 150.000 FCFA, 6 bottles to 36 bottles of beer, inspection fee, to the patron. These fees serve as compensation to the farm owner for years spent in opening and clearing the farms. The amount depends on the size of the farm, production capacity, and relationship with the owner, and distance from place of residence. Proceeds from “two-party” are shared equally between the parties. This practice is common in the cocoa producing areas of the South West especially in the Bomboko area.
- b) **“Chop farm”**: Another name for “chop farm” as used in the Bomboko area is “cook farm”. Semantically, “chop” will refer to food. “Cook” means to prepare food wherein “farm” here connotes a piece of land where crops are cultivated. “Chop farm” or “cook farm” refers to prepared food consumed during the preparatory phase of cultivation. These local terms coined within the cocoa producing Bomboko area refer to an initial fee that is paid to the farm owner (patron) as compensation for the expenses incurred and energy used when opening the farms. As mentioned earlier, the amount of money as compensation depends on farm size, production capacity, and relationship with the owner, and distance. Large farms with very high yields requires large chop farm. Patrons will collect a low amount of chop farm for distant farms. Relations of farm owners may not necessarily pay “chop farm”. “chop farm” is paid for a probationary period of one or two years. The said amount is paid during the contract ceremony or during peak periods where it is deducted from his share of the proceeds. In some cases, patrons who collect chop farm share the burden of on-farm activity expenses with the party man.
- c) **“Waka Bush”, “Chuku Chuku”**: These two terms are often used interchangeably. “Waka Bush” is a Pidgin English expression for movement in the farm whereas; “Chuku Chuku” is a Pidgin English word for thorns and thistles. Every party man pays the fee to compensate those who went with the party man to the site and assisted in demarcating the area to be cultivated by him. In doing this, it is believed that the people were pricked by thorns as they moved round so must be compensated.
- d) **“Weighman committee”**: To weigh here refer to the process of weighing and recording the statistics. Weighman indicates those persons involved in the weight-taking process. A committee in this sense refers to the total number of persons in relation to entertainment during the process. Literally, this refers to entertainment that is

provided after offering assistance to parties concerned. The entertainment is usually beer.

- e) **“Number”**: “number” here indicates quantity or size in terms of surface area. Literally this term is used to describe the total surface area of a farm land. A piece of farm land that is described as “one number” literally means the area is equal to four hectares. For example, a person who says he/she has four “numbers” of land means he/she has sixteen hectares.
- f) **“Plastic”**: This is a term used to describe twelve bottles of beer in a crate. In this regard a plastic of drinks refers to 12 bottles of that drink

### Contract Ceremony

**Actors in the ceremony**: The following persons were present during contract ceremonies:

Patron (farm owners) to sign the written document or observe the ceremony in case of verbal contract a secretary, farm owner’s wife, prospective party man’s friend, neighbors, parent (if available) and, in some cases a current party man. The main persons involved in the contracting are the patron and the party man. All written agreements have witnesses. During the contract ceremonies most (4/5) of the secretaries were recruited from among the witnesses or patrons wives or relatives of the patrons. This ceremony is a predominantly male ceremony. We observed that while 51 persons were men, only 13 were women.

**Ceremony**: Contract ceremonies take place at the residence of the farm owners. It takes place in the presence of both parties (the farm owner referred to as ‘patron’ and worker referred to as party man) and witnesses. The ceremony begins after early contracts between the worker and farm owners have been made to negotiate on the terms. During the ceremony the farm owner (patron) proposes the terms of contract ‘two party’ where contracts are written, the secretary listens to the patron writes out the terms and reads them out. If there is agreement, the patron and party man counter sign the copy (ies) of the agreement followed by signatures and name of witnesses. From observations during contract ceremonies, the prospective party man accepts the conditions provided by the patron without hesitations or contestation. In other words, the terms were simply dictated by the patron. The secretary and witnesses request a sum of many to be paid as fees to them. The secretary receives amount ranging from 2500 FCFA to 10,000 FCFA while witnesses may receive from one thousand francs to four thousand francs. Another form of compensation is by providing drinks to the secretary (2-4 bottles of beer) and witnesses (1-2 bottles). The contract ceremonies are also punctuated by request made by the patron from the party men. The party man also provides “chop farm” (initial fee) alongside other items like rain boots, cutlass and a sharp file. These elements serve as compensation for the energy used by the patron in cutting down the forest and cultivating the crops. This is because it is argued that the worker is only coming in to start enjoying the fruit of the farmer’s labour as such, he has to compensate the owner for that. This compensation depends on the size of the farm, maturity of the cocoa trees, and the production capacity of the farms and in some cases the distance of farm land from place of residence.

The farm owner (patron) invites some of his workers and two or three neighbors to introduce the new party man to them.

He/she then provides all participants with a bottle of beer each while the remainder is taken out of the ceremonial ground into the patron's room. In some cases, the owner opens the first bottle of beer and pours out its content to the ground as libration. After being compensated in cash and in kind, the secretary hands a copy of the agreement to the "party man" and another to the "patron"

In the course of the refreshment or drinking, the prospective worker is educated about what awaits him. He would be cautioned on climatic conditions and other obstacles that may stifle his activity. He is also encouraged to work hard. During the ceremony, many things are said all to encourage the employee. Typically, pronouncements are: "work well for both of us to enjoy" "hard work pays", "in case of bad work you will go but my farm still remain", "Work hard and build your life." The owner also cautions the party man to realize projects of his choice within first two or three years or be sacked from the job. These statements are made in the course of the contract ceremony to encourage the newly admitted worker to concentrate in performing his activities. They guide occupational practice and are part of the initiation rites into the occupational function.

The majority of the contract (13 out of 18) were accompanied by ceremonies few (5) had no ceremonies. Beer however becomes the main object used during the partnership contract rituals which constitute the initiation rites. During the ceremony, 4/5 of the beer is provided by the party man. After signing the document, the patron requests for the following additional items purportedly to seal the contract document:

- 4 crates of beer;
- An inspection fee ("chuku chuku" pidgin word for thorns) for those persons who were witnesses during the visit to the farm. This is paid in the form of beer;
- Refreshment in the form of beer (between 1 and 3 crates of beer);
- Other activities include prayer, visit to the site, payment of inspection fee (waka bush, Chuku chuku). Food and chemicals are collected from the owner. Cash advances are also collected. The party man is also introduced to the buying agent who will be supplying insecticides and fungicides. The initial fee is either paid instantly or proposed to be paid during the peak production period (ppp). From here onward the party is asked to start man work immediately.

The "chop farm" that is paid is actually the hiring fee from the party man

From observation the burden of the activities lies essentially on the worker. The responsibility is not shared. Five respondents argued that if the partnership was a two-party both party man and patron will be highly involved in the activities.

### Farming Activities

**On-farm activities:** Cocoa production in the Bomboko area is through a plethora of activities carried out in the farms. These on-farm activities are performed by the workers. The activities consist of steps which are as segmented below:

- **Preparation of farm:** This is the initial process towards cocoa cultivation in the area. It begins when a carved area

purchased by the farmer is prepared by the farmer clearing the forest and cutting down the forest trees. The clearing of the forest is done using cutlasses. This activity was done by the farmer himself, through hired paid jobs or by reciprocal labour groups often referred by the farmers as "Njangi groups".

- **Planting:** Once the piece of land has been prepared, the farmer does pecking of the land using split bamboo pieces or sticks. Pecking is done such that distance between pecks range between three to four meters arranged in rows and columns. Cocoa seedlings are planted at each peck for the entire piece of land. The seedlings are purchased or nursed by the farmer himself before being transported to the site. Being an area where mixed farming is practiced. The farm owner also dig holes between the pegs where plantain suckers were later planted. After the slackening process cocoyams, yams, vegetables and other consumables were planted on the piece of land.
- **Tending:** The fragile nature of the newly planted seedlings motivates the farmer to prevent any damage. Due to this perception, there is weeding, clearing of the grass. Ringing of the young trees may also be done from time to time until the trees attain maturity and can now be hired out or further cultivated by the owner if he so desire. Pruning is done to allow for greater illumination and for fruiting. The fruits are sprayed using fungicides and pesticides at different intervals. The photograph below shows how a farmer sprays the pods
- **Harvesting:** Ripe pods are harvested by men as hired laborers or by the party man himself. The pods gathers into heaps at different points in the farming hired workers as the case may be. Harvesting is done using spears, cutlass and bags or basket. Dry pods are also removed from the cocoa stems. Ripe pods are harvested either monthly or after every six weeks. But the entire process (activity) depends on the individual farmer since they have different schedules.
- **Processing for sale:** processing here begins with the breaking of the pods to collect the seeds. This is an entirely female activity hence males who engage in breaking of pods are jeered at and labeled as being too crafty. Breaking of the pods begins with the payment of "chop money" (a Pidgin English expression for feeding fee) ranging from one thousand francs to one thousand five hundred francs to each woman invited to participate in the breaking activity. Fresh seeds are measured in agreed containers on a fixed price. Every woman transports her quantity of fresh cocoa beans seed to nearby ovens or at an oven in that same parcel of land. Fermentation is done between five and six days. During this period the party man hires out the services of an engine saw operator who cuts and splits wood into sizes that are portable. The wood is used in drying the beans at the ovens. The drying process, depending on the quantity, may take several days and the party man may still use hired laborers or friends to assist in the drying. Dried beans are later put into jute bags and transported to the house of the farm owner or the buying agent's cocoa store for sale. (see picture on drying at the oven).

**Cycle of Activities:** The activities carried out by farmers are not haphazard but follow a definite pattern in order to achieve meaningful success. Such activities were routine through a cycle. The cycle begins with ringing of the cocoa trees to avoid moisture around the stems and encourage flowering or cherele

development. Clearing of the farms is closely followed by “washing of the stem” where insecticides, in some cases mixed with fertilizers in spraying cans and used to spray the cocoa stem, branches and leaves. This is done by all farmers who said that it helps to kill dangerous insects, ants, caterpillars and snakes to prepare the farm for structured pruning. Next in the cycle is the spraying of pods using pesticides and fungicides. The pesticides kill capsids while the fungicide prevents black pod disease. Spraying is done at intervals of two to three weeks depending on the type of fungicide. Fungicides application is done about 6 to 8 times per year. During spraying the party man carries out maintenance pruning which is the removal of “waka straight” (choupons) or new shoots which prevent proper view of the pods. In case where the pods are ripe, they are harvested using spears, cutlasses, bags and baskets. When the farms are large, the party man hires labour and harvesting may take several days. Harvesting is scarcely done in August because, according to the respondents, the rains are usually too heavy and there is high humidity causing black pod disease. Harvesting during this month aggravates the situation in that the pods are shaken and some are wounded by cutlasses thereby exposes the pods to risk of being infected by black pod disease. Next in the cycle of activities is the process of gathering the harvested pods. The pods are put into large heaps using bags for transportation. These heaps are made at different points on the farm. The pods undergo breaking by women using short knives at agreed prices per measurement container. The extracted beans are transported to the ovens for fermentation. Fermentation may take 5 to 6 days after which the beans are dried. Dried beans are transported to the patron’s house or buying agents’ cocoa store for sale. Transportation of dried beans is on their heads. From here the party man ends the cocoa season with the washing of the stems and the cycle goes on and on at every year.

**Inputs:** While the farm owners provided inputs such as insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and cash advances to the workers (party men) the party men also had roles to play. Their own inputs included:

- **Labour:** The worker took charge of all on- farm activities alone. He hired labour when need arose in order to meet up with the challenges
- **Farm tools:** These tools include cutlass, spear, ladder, baskets, bags, ropes, needles, spraying tanks.

Farm wears which consist of rain boots rain coats, cloths, helmets, glasses and gloves; food; personal effects. A worker who is not in possession of these inputs collected from the patrons wherein payment was done during the peak season and the said amount to be deducted from his share of proceeds. Farm owners who also cultivated other sections of the farm used the same inputs as the workers. At some instance inputs were collected from buying agents by the farm owner who then trades with the party man at exorbitant prices.

**Off-farm activities:** Apart from engaging in cocoa cultivation and production, patrons and party men are involved in some other activities. The off-farm activities they engage in are economic, social, cultural, political and entertainment (recreational). Within the economic domain, they purchase and sell petroleum products such as kerosene, petrol, diesel, engine oil, hydraulic, and brake fluids. Patron and workers also purchase and sell fruits like oranges, plums, pear, melon and pineapple. Purchase and sell spices and non timber forest

products like eru, bush mangoes and Njansang. Those who sell at provision stores sell articles such as chemicals, household equipment, cement, corrugated iron sheets, beer, soft drinks, and food items. 1/6 is involved in motor cycle riding business referred to as “bendskin” in Pidgin English. The riders transport people and goods within and out of the community as the most preferred means of transport. Motorcycles are also used in transporting dried cocoa beans from the farms to the house or cocoa stores for sale. Money generated from the businesses assisted the farmers involved as they can purchase chemicals, feed themselves and provide for their welfare needs. The economic activities with a tendency toward providing required finances to the farmers supported them during the off-season when things become relatively difficult and life threatening. Four of the respondents were engaged in carpentry and electrical installations repairs. The carpenters have personal workshops and also construct semi-permanent houses for people. This prevents them from borrowing money during the dry season when production of cocoa beans is almost non-existing. These activities like carpentry, motorcycle riding business, purchase and sales of articles, petroleum products cited above, are done alongside on-farm activities. Other economic activities include servicing of the farm equipments. Those who are members of local saving group save and borrow money which ejected into their business or to solve pressing problems such as illnesses and funeral rites. The money is given out on a certain interest rates. 5/7 of the farm owners purchased and sold dried cocoa beans.

Moreover, 14 of the party men and 6 out of the 7 farm owners belong to ethnic association. The role of this association and churches cannot be underestimated as they serve as a melting pot for people of different origins and contact points for the visiting migrant labourers. Despite being cultural groups, these associations also play an economic role. Members engage in reciprocal saving within the ethnic association. A member of a church, church group or an ethnic association is easily integrated into these systems and the community than other migrants who do not want to interact with their kinsmen. 5/6 of the farm owners and 2/5 of the workers attended farmer’s field schools. They argued that it was important for them to improve on their skills and increase yields. Those farmers who go through the farmer field schools became certified cocoa farmers. Attending work parties (reciprocal work) referred to as ‘Njangi’ work in Pidgin English is common among party men. These work parties are concerned with pruning and clearing of farms of their individual members to select the member whose farm will be visited is done through the ballot method where numbers are written on pieces of papers and each member picks one paper, and unfolds it. Such work parties become important circles socializing individuals especially visiting migrants who have not gained good knowledge on the practice of the activities. They also act as points for reinforcing roles and cautioning the new workers. The workers also associate with friends and share with them.

In terms of politics, 3/5 of the farm owners are involved. They are found in leadership position either as church elders, church group leaders, and village traditional council members or as tribal heads within the study community. They coordinate water and electricity projects and also belong to political parties. As members of traditional council, they assist in resolving conflicts, curbing crimes and also punishing defaulters. Party men on their part concentrate on their farms though 1/10 of them participated in party politics. Community relations were common among party men, patrons and member

of the community. This however took place as party men shared and interacted with their friends. They also kept their compounds clean and got involved with community work. When such activities were organised, an announcement was made by the chair person or quarter head. The community work entails digging of pipes lines for portable water, cleaning of selected sites like streams and major roads leading to other villages or to farms. At individual level, the men assist their spouses in carrying out some domestic chores like cleaning of dishes, cooking food, and cleaning of the house and farm wears. Workers (2/5) also spent their time at funeral grounds. Entertainments and recreational activities were an integral part in the life of the community or study area. 15/18 respondents (5/6) were interested in sports. They visit football pitches either to watch football or play. Some of the workers actively participated at the inter-quarter football competitions organized by certain members of the community. 2/5 of the farm owners visited football pitches and/or played draft or cards at their homes. Party men (2) were also engaged in games like playing of cards and draft. They went to film halls to view movies. Music was also an activity that the workers occupied themselves with wherein they concentrated on writing new songs or rehearsing old ones. They have developed much interest in music and want to be musicians. Another activity common to both party men and patrons was their constant visits to drinking spots where either palm wine or beer was sold. In this regard, while 3 of the 7 farms owners visited drinking spots; party men (12/18) made regular visits to drinking spots. Just like associations and churches, drinking spots played incredible roles within the community. They acted as points of publicity for the farm owners and source of information for the migrants on job placements. These are points where farmers exchanged ideas and experiences on farming operations and innovative techniques as well as discuss local events and politics. New relationships are contracted as people exchanged beer or palm wine among themselves. In a nutshell, drinking spots within the area played a multiplicity of functions (especially solidarity and socialization). Off farm activities remain an important aspect for party men's integration, business, socialization and solidarity thereby reducing stress from tedious work and relaxing the mind.

### Sales and sharing of yields

Partnership farming in the area exhibits a distinct process where yields were sold and proceeds shared between the farm owners and the workers. The produce after being dried in the oven and transported to either the owner's house or cocoa store, was sold to a buying agent who provided cash advances and other inputs to the farm owner. In some cases, the buying agent was still the patron who supplied the farm inputs directly to party man, trading at exorbitant yet cut-throat prices. The cocoa beans are put into jute bags and hung on the scales. The weight of each bag were written after being read by the farmer, owner or buying agents and confirmed by whoever is asked to. Before being weighed the beans are arranged and put into jute bags by individuals brought in by worker or those passing along the road, and neighbors who noticed that such an activity was taking place thereof. The total weight of the produce is calculated and three kg are subtracted from each bag for dirt, humidity and for transport to the main firm. The weight of each bag was 68 kg whereas the net weight payable stood at 65kg per bag. Once the price per kilogram was known by both, the net weight payable was multiplied by the price per

kilogram. The buying agents at this level subtracted the cost of inputs and advances collected by the farm owner or worker. From the sales amount the balance is paid to the farm owner.

The farm owner on his/her part now shares the cash into two equal amounts that is 50% to each party. In a situation or case where advances or other inputs were supplied to the worker (party man), all were deducted from the worker's share of the 50% and the balance given to him. The produce must be weighed in the presence of the farm owner, worker, and observers/participants. Traditionally, all weighing and sale of produce is preceded by entertainment referred to as "weigh-man committee". Here, the buying agents, the farm owner and worker purchase from 6 bottles to 12 bottles of beer and all the persons present during the activity receive a bottle each. However, the sale of produce depended on the farm owner who at some instances sold to the highest bidder. In this regard, the owner may have collected advances and chemicals (fungicides, pesticides and insecticides) from the buying agent but could not sell the produce to them due to the current purchasing price. The farm owner also decides on when to sell produce. To this effect, the produce is kept in his/her house and sold when he wanted. One can notice that the entire burden of "two party" lies essentially on the party man as he does all the works alone (on farm activities), but come to be assisted only during the weighing of proceeds where he provided entertainment to observers and participant as well. Two respondents commented in regard to this assertion that "cocoa work dey like elephant" in Pidgin English. Another commented that "the entire partnership activity is no longer two-party but one- party because the party man does all the work alone. They also said "it is a form of slavery".

### Benefits from partnering

Partnership farming carried out in the area is such that some farmers made profit from it while it was not profitable for others. Among the farm owners, partnership farming was profitable since they made huge gains from their activity. Cash made from sales by the owners (4) range between 2 to 8 million francs yearly. These gains are those made from cocoa sales. Farm owners who are buying agents, made additional profit from the chemicals they supplied to the workers at exorbitant prices. With such profits, they can live well with their families and come out of poverty. These profits enable the farm owners to engage in other businesses like the sale of fuel, trading and saving money in financial institutions. The activity further generated more money to the farm owners to sponsor their children in school. Profits were also used for investment as they purchased new farm lands and cultivated more cocoa. All the farm owners from observation lived in their personal residents and also constructed new buildings as well as renovated old ones. To increase their investment further, 2/3 of the farmers have taken other farms on rent. In this way they hired out these additional farms to other workers and in some cases added sections of the farm to those current party men who fulfilled contract terms. From the profit they make it was possible for the farm owners to assist extended family members by providing for their well being, assist some in educating terms and solve family problem that arise therein. In this way they contribute to the welfare of the extended family members. Among the workers, opinions were diverse. Slightly more than 1/3 of the party men held that partnership farming is not profitable at all because "It is difficult for one to carry out any investment unless one is involved in "margo margo" (fraudulent activities) as some respondents

commented. The respondents said that “*margo margo*” sets in because farm owners provided chemicals at very exorbitant prices, party-men incurred the burden of on-farm activities alone by hiring labour at their expense. Workers also engaged in fraudulent activities due to the fact that farm owners purchased produce and used the proceeds to invest in their own businesses only to pay later. 5 out of the 18 respondents declared that they were forced to illegally collect and sell dried cocoa beans without the knowledge of the farm owners. All these were done in a bit to survive, meet their personal needs, and pay for hired work in order to continue work in the farms. The party men also saw partnership farming as a new form of slavery. A respondent commented in pidgin English that

*“two party dey like old days slavery weh slave master them put rope for slave their neck for go work for plantation and bring them back for house weh dey no give them water or chop, na so two party dey”.*

There are no possibilities for investment since money from sales was always paid in bits. Embarking on a project was thus a difficult and farfetched dream. Indeed, they say it is only a means to survive. To 2/3 of the party men, the activity was however considered profitable. This was so because the money came in block at the end of the year. Twelve of the respondents registered income below two million francs while 6 had income ranging between two and six million Frs. per year. When party men received this amount in block they invest in their own businesses. They were involved in trading of fruits, spices and also buy motorcycles. Two of the respondents bought motor cycles and engaged in ridding business. Through this means they raised money to take care of themselves and purchase chemicals for next season as preparation for next cocoa season. It was observed that small beer drinking spots and provision stores were set up during cocoa season but respondent argued that such “under bed” beer parlours die out at off seasons. Partnership farming according to the 2/3 was also profitable because they got money that enabled them to live well and also had left over to drink beer or palm wine. In this regard once the party can eat good food and drink beer or palm wine the activity is considered profitable.

These considerations come in when the party man compares himself to his past experiences. Beneficial because they can at least have money to educate and sponsor children in school and also provide support to extended family members. The party men were formerly very idle persons who were desperate and, in some cases, had never seen or handled large amounts of money. In this regard they believe that partnership farming has improved their lives when compared to when they were idle. To this end they purchased motor cycles, paid house rents, provided for personal needs and were able to cultivate their own farm. Through this activity they solved pressing problems especially health problems, relational problems and financial difficulties.

It was also profitable to these party men in that the activity served as collateral for obtaining loans. These loans were given out by either the patrons or by other buying agents when they know the worker works very hard always had high yields. High interest rates characterized such loans which at some point, depending on the patron or buying agent, were given out through a process referred to as “ten born ten” or ten born five”. This literally means that the party man collects a loan for a 100% interest or 50% interest rate. For example, a party man

who collects two hundred thousand francs from a buying agents or patron ends up paying four hundred thousand francs or three hundred thousand francs respectively. This mode of farming according to the party men is said to be profitable only to those who work hard, who can endure, are intelligent and are disciplined. Making profit from partnership farming according to the respondents, also depends on the farm owner and on the nature of the farm, a respondent said that there are good patrons and bad ones. Patrons who support the party men by providing chemicals at affordable rates and share some of the burdens of on-farm activities are only providing the leveling ground for the party man to make a living and build their own lives from the activity. Those patrons who lend money or provided chemicals at “cut-throat” rates exploit farmers and perpetuate suffering and “slavery” as one respondent once commented. On the other hand, small farm sizes or large farms with lots of spaces and dead or old cocoa tree may not have high yield which overtly reduces income. The nature of this farm requires much money and work put in by party man who may not reap any benefit. Among the party men who said the activity was profitable, two of them argued that when a farmer keeps record of his activities for the whole year and calculates the hours put to work and decides to pay his self, many of them will run away. To them it was profitable because the money came in block wherein, they were unable to think of the many sorrowful days when they worked without food or money. Among the workers who argue that partnership farming is profitable one has constructed personal house; three have personal farms and are engaged in business.

### **Fulfilling Contract Terms**

Patrons and party men have different ways of ensuring that contract terms are fulfilled to the latter. Patrons on their part do this by working in partnership with the party man. To achieve this objective the patron ensures he meets with the demands of the party man. Patron may assist in some on farm activities like pruning and harvesting. In this way he provides moral support to the party man. The party man at certain instance was allowed to harvest food crops from the farm to feed himself. In this way relationship between them becomes very cordial. It was observed that party men also assisted patrons during pruning and ‘washing’ of the cocoa stems thanks to their strong ties. Patrons also inspect the farms very often. By doing this the patron evaluates work being done within the farm. In this regard, he calls the attention of the party man to order when need arises. Such regular visits to the farm permitted the party man to respect the terms so that any dysfunction in their relationship that may require negative sanctions are avoided. As worker continues to work in the farms, the patron assesses their character and defines ways of interacting with them. Recalcitrant workers are cautioned by the patron. It is at this level that patrons declare whether contracts can be renewed or terminated. They also ensure a constant supply of chemicals (fungicides and insecticides) to the workers or respect his own part of the bargain.

The party men on their part also fulfill contract terms. They work every day in the farm and manage farm as if it were theirs. One respondent said that “in order to have a child of your own, you need to take care of someone else’s child. Therefore, constant visits to the farm gives an opportunity for the worker identify areas that need intensive work and to keep the farm clean by removing chupons, sun ripe and dry cocoa pods that may contaminate pods on the cocoa stems. Workers

make sure they work very hard and behave well during the execution of their activities. These are the indicators where they can be appreciated by patrons. Such values also act as prerequisite to renewing the contracts subsequently. Working hard here entails proper pruning, effective application of fungicides and insecticides, proper fermentation and drying of the cocoa beans. Some workers bring in their relatives to work with them. This enables them to meet up with the on-farm activities and ensure everything is done well. It was observed in the farms visited that party men do not have containers to collect water from rainfall. They move to nearby farms or nearby streams to get water for spraying. Family members present reduce this stress. The workers also work with farm owners as if they were family or friends, but also being very vigilant or careful in relation to this relationship which exist between them. One respondent said that some patrons illegally sell produce without the knowledge of the party man. The relationship is sustained by preventing such actions since actors are very deep into the relations.

### When terms are met

When the terms of the contract are fulfilled, the patrons allow the party men to work continuously or as long as they want to. Contracts are renewed wherein the worker pays another “feeding farm” (initial fee) but this time no ceremony takes place. In this way, both will be happy and the farm owner may appreciate the work done by the party man sometimes by adding another portion of the same farm or given a larger one. Also, they are allowed to work as long as they want. Among those allowed to continue work, 2/5 renewed the partnership contracts, 1/5 of them still paid “feeding farm.” In addition to this 1/5 of the farm owners solved some of the problems of those party men who met the terms of the contract (care for the welfare of their workers). Farm owners here show a paternalistic attitude. From observation when conditions are met, the farm owner treats the worker as a family member thereby assuming the paternalistic attitude towards the worker. Some of these “good workers” even live at the residence of the owner in solving some of his immediate problems by allowing the party man have easy access to cash advances and the possibility of borrowing money from a buying agent. However, we notice a peculiar form of “patron-client” relationship.

### Failure to Meet Terms

When partnership conditions are not met, the worker is asked to leave the farm and pays for damages in case of black pod disease. He loses his share of the sales from the produce for the entire year if he illegally sells dried cocoa beans without the knowledge of the patron; a process also referred to as side selling. This act leads to termination of the contract without any compensation for the whole year. The party man is also reported to the forces of law and order or to the traditional council for defaulting. Confidence and trust are destroyed; the patron suspends the activity of the party man indefinitely and gives out the farm to someone else. The worker will also be punished by paying a certain number of “plastic” of beer and also pay for the produce to the patron. He may also be charged a certain amount of money ranging from one hundred thousand to three hundred and fifty thousand francs (150,000 – 350,000 FCFA). Some of the party men are also accommodated to the end of the year before being asked to leave the farms and premises of the patron as the case may be.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the course of this study startling revelations were noted which are peculiar to partnership farming practised in the Bomboko area. In a study on the socio-economic impact of cocoa production in the Munyenge area and its satellite settlements, Tandap (2009:63) showed that partnership farming (two-party) system was peculiar in the South West Region of Cameroon which has been able to employ labour since colonial times. My modest contribution is that I have been able to describe it and look at the social relations between the farm owners (patrons) and the workers (party men) relationship, workers and hired labourers and the social character of the phenomenon. New things found, the social relations between the parties and the social character of the phenomenon are discussed under major headings in line with the objectives.

### Importance of partnership farming

Partnership Farming phenomenon carried out in the Bomboko area as a major economic activity has been of paramount importance to farm owners, workers and the community. The multiple farms cultivated by farm owners have created opportunities for employment in the farming sector. There is labour deficiency where people are not being able to make for labour. There is therefore movement of labour from where unemployment is at high concentration to that of low concentration of employment. People move from distant areas to find jobs within the domain of partnership farming where it is practiced. For instance, we have people move from the North West and West regions to the South West region and Bomboko area in particular to find employment. Partnership Farming seemingly becomes a big solution to labour and employs persons of different social categories (Heliawaty *et al.*, 2021).

Invariably linked to the imminent provision of employment and a solution to labour is the fact that Partnership Farming reduces a tendency towards deviance and distortion of social order. Partnership Farming is a producer of value including the production of especially cocoa beans and the money. It contributes to the economy even though at a small scale especially within the context where people move from urban areas to rural areas (Ashu *et al.*, 2023). In this modest way, this phenomenon creates the necessary ground for equilibrium in population concentration by reducing migration from rural to urban areas. As people move from one region to the other, it becomes possible that ethnic values and traditions are transmitted along the same lines. There is a mix of cultures as these cultural paraphernalia meet with practices of receiving communities. This eventually leads to accommodation of others and cosmopolitanism (Yenshu, 2006). Partnership Farming also contributes to welfare. Farm owners make profit from the activity. Similarly, workers who work hard and can endure also make profits and can take care of their social, economic, and welfare needs. Moreover, it acts as a strategy to assist people who are poor to improve on their livelihood and those of their families. Individuals who find life frustrating can find hope in Partnership Farming

### Practices and Activities in “Two-Party”

Social relations are contracted during negotiations but in most cases are constructed during the ceremonies. They are overt at the level of contracting. Contracts are accompanied by social

ceremonies with their own language and rituals. The social ceremonies are at the source of socialising. During the ceremonies human relations which are sometimes unequal are brought into contact. Primarily, the inequality begins with the labeling of the actors wherein the farm owner is labeled as “patron” while the worker is labeled “party man”. The party man remains subjected to the dictates and authority of the patron in the contracting process and during his tenancy. The study reveals that peculiar to partnership farming in the area is the fact that all social ceremonies are accompanied by entertainment in exclusively alcoholic drinks usually beer and palm wine. The ceremonies are accompanied by rituals although in a cosmopolitan context people now have rituals such as libations. This is accompanied by oral expressions such as “*May God guide you through out your period of work*”, “*let us work well and have profit without problems*”

Prayers in most cases are part of the rituals. We can deduce that rituals constitute an essential part of partnership farming in the area and guide occupational function and practice. Such rituals constitute performance rituals and initiation rituals which provide moral and psychological support as the parties engage in partnership activities. From the ceremonies social relations are created, strengthened, and cemented. The research shows that the entire partnering process is not just a dry contract where people get into and go when compared to the *Latifundio* in Latin America and the *Nnobo* in Ghana. It is a convivial ceremony so that people who come out to work should feel at home. In this way partnership farming offers an opportunity for people to be integrated into the community without a feeling of rejection or isolation. Here we find partnership farming being embedded in the culture. That is the economy embedded in the local culture, cultures that are transmitted from culture of entertainment and local cultures of blessings which add some religiosity and solemnity to the activity. This in effect constitutes the roots of the economy and for there to be development, it should be situated within the local cultures.

In this regard, contrary to Singh (2002) and Bijman (2008) who argued that contracts were only partial, total or procurement contracts, and Osuka *et al.*, (2005) who feel that contracts are essentially production and marketing contracts, we affirm that contracts are also social contracts. The contract is formalized during the ceremony but not legalized. Actors do not enter into contracts in the presence of legal officials (public officials) but locally where the terms are respected by both parties. This is very true of rural areas in Cameroon in general. The farm owner /worker relationship is built on trust where both parties respect the engagement. In this way we also find a subtle yet perfect introduction and development of the culture of trust into the economy. The farm owner is not afraid that the party man can sell his property or default. This confirms the assertion by Fufchamps (2006) and Bijman (2008) that the tradition of written contracts in Sub-Saharan Africa does not exist. Instead, traditional agreements were the most used and respected. In this way contracts were formalized but not written. The fact that contracts are entered into in December and January confirms Eaton and Shepherd’s (2001) claim in their informal model of contract farming that contract, as the case may be, either verbal or written are done on seasonal basis. Contracting according to this study is characterized by relations of domination in the Marxist sense where property owners exploit workers who have only their labour to sell. This study however reveals that “two-party” is not strictly exploitative in the Marxist sense but a lease. In spite of the

draconian conditions, some serious, hard working, enduring, and disciplined party men still meet the conditions.

Unlike those workers who depend on selling out their labour to the employer and solely depending on them, the party men under Partnership Farming live independent lives. He determines what to be done, when to do it, and how it will be done. The party man engages in reciprocal farming activities and hires out his skill to other farmers in order to raise additional income for sustenance and welfare. It is possible that the party man can engage in other economic activities such as transportation business, sell at drinking spots, purchase and sale of fruits, cosmetics and other articles that provide him additional income also as a means of improving on their livelihoods (Ashu *et al.*, 2023). This affirms Minot’s (2011) argument that successful farming skills however raise the incomes of persons who join them as well as the affirmation by Swinnen and Maertens (2007) that “incremental income is more likely to lift them out of poverty”. Singh (2002) and Miyata *et al.* (2009) report that, within the Punjab state in India, most of the farmers have seen an esteemable rise in income which keeps them satisfied with the contract arrangements. It can be deduced that partnership farming in the area is a panacea to difficult conditions and poverty faced by the migrant labourer who becomes visibly satisfied with the Partnership arrangement. This accounts for the fact that some migrants have been in this activity for over 20 years. Party men also interact with their fellow party men and patrons. They also eat crops from the farms.

### Activities

Farm activities are carried out by both the patron and the party man in different aspects. Patrons hire out sections or the entire farm to the worker. Since they have many farms, they work in some. Both parties are involved in two main types of activities namely on-farm activities and off-farm activities. The study revealed that on-farm activities such as clearing, pruning, spraying, harvesting of ripe pods, breaking of pods, fermentation, cutting and transportation of wood, drying of fresh cocoa beans, and transportation of dried cocoa beans to the patron’s residence or to the buying agent’s cocoa store are performed by the party man alone who has to grapple with time. This explains why the farm owners keep themselves away from stress and energy dissipation as they did when opening the farms. One can deduce that partnership farming especially the “two-party” type, is a way of shifting the stress, strain, difficult, and challenging farm operations to the party man (Ashu, 2016). To grapple with this condition and ensure greater productivity, theorists have explained that there is vertical integration. Minot (2011) affirms that the activities within this respect are time consuming and challenging hence the necessity for vertical integration. In this way the worker hires labour to compliment his when the tasks are enormous. This phenomenon of hiring workers is common during the wet season particularly during the months of July, August, and September. From the findings of this study, farmers rarely harvest their produce in August due to fungal disease prevalence. Laird *et al.*, (2007), Egbe *et al.*, (2012), Mukete (2018) affirm that black pod disease is common around the Mount Cameroon region because of high humidity where farmers experience 80% of yield loss if farms are not treated with fungicides”.

The on-farm activities are carried out by the party man alone which does not reflect or respect the principle or notion of equal sharing inherent in “two-party” type of farming. Farm inputs are paid for by the party man to facilitate his on-farm activities. Patrons and party men engage in other activities out of the farm that are economic, social, cultural, community activities, and entertainment and recreational. Through recreation and entertainment migrant labourers integrate into the community through sharing at drinking spots where they create new relationships and can find jobs. This is also where the social distances between the farm owner and the worker and between worker and other community members are reduced. These are also locations for social learning where the different farmers exchange ideas and experiences on farming operations. Although the interactions are of short duration, relationships created may be lifelong. Here one also finds a situation where social bonds are strengthened (Ashu *et al.*, 2023). Social solidarity is enhanced wherein the migrant worker is integrated into community life resulting in a differentiated and a hybrid nature of the communities (Kalimullin and Kalimullina, 2018; Heliawaty *et al.*, 2021). From the study, associations and churches also play an important role in the life of the worker (migrant), a relationship no current debate has been able to mention in relation to partnership farming. These associations act as reception points for people coming into the community from different ethnic groups. These associations and denominations, provide the migrant with information on available opportunities for farms on two-party. This shows that associations and churches are agents of socialization where the ordinary migrant and prospective party man goes through a civilizing process. This explains why majority (4/5) of the party men are members of different denominations.

The research also reveals that 2/5 of the patrons were found as project coordinators and in leadership positions within the community and their churches. Those who own farms are also the ones in the traditional council, in leadership positions in the church and in home town associations. This is a concentration of different types of power and forms of what Bourdieu (1988) calls capital. The position of the patron is evidently the possession of economic capital by way of his possession of landed property and other off-farm businesses. These are the basis of the person's power in other spheres, for example membership in town council, headship in hometown associations, designation as chief of tribal group, general recognition that represent political and symbolic capital but are lagging in cultural capital. We also find a situation where P.F provides the opportunity for workers to engage in business (income generating) activities (Heliawaty *et al.*, 2021, Manyise and Dentoni, 2021). Through this activity coupled with on-farm activities P.F produces a special kind of businessmen but who are also labourers. While the patron concentrates on trading by purchasing inputs and lending them out to party men at exorbitant interest rates (usually 100% or 50%), the worker engages in other economic activities that raise their incomes. These additional incomes are used in purchasing fungicides, hiring labour, and providing for welfare needs to confirm with Heliawaty *et al.* (2021). In the Marxist sense, the worker spends the whole day working for the factory owner but within the Bomboko area P.F is not coercive. Workers make profits from their off-farm activities and can break even. The results reveal that workers who do not engage in income generating activities hardly have high incomes. That is why they engage in hiring out their labour to other farmers and

borrow extensively from patrons and buying agents. The study showed that all produce is sold to buying agents and proceeds are shared between the parties. All sales and sharing activities were accompanied by a social ceremony and entertainment referred to as “weigh man committee”. This ceremony involves a set of actors who are different from those at the initial phase of contracting. The entertainment is provided to observers, participants, and those passing by. Every activity requires compensation either in cash or in kind especially a drink. The study also reveals that the workers were engaged in illegal collection of dried produce which was later sold to some buying agents. This act referred to as stealing or side selling as revealed by the study was a means used by the worker in order to circumvent with the draconian conditions and the lopsided nature of the contracts, a situation confirmed by Minot (2011), Heliawaty *et al.* (2021) who stated that side selling was a common problem in contract farming where contracted outputs are sold to other buyers with a neglect of partners.

## Conclusion

Partnership farming in the Bomboko area is characterized by a generational divide and an economic divide. It is one dealing with a middle age overlap. Contracting is structured in a relationship where the main actors during partnerships (two-party) are the patron and the party man although other actors are involved. Partnerships are essentially undertaken through social and cultural ceremonies. The ceremonies are convivial ceremonies where people do not just engage in contracts but where social relations are created. These ceremonies are also embedded in local cultures of entertainment and ritualisation to add religiosity and solemnity to the activity. These partnerships are routinised through a cycle of activities. Rituals are an essential part of every activity during the contracting process. Although contract ceremony is formalized it is not legalized but still binding. During the contract ceremonies, human relations which are sometimes unequal are brought into contact. The actors are labeled where farm owners are labeled as patrons and the workers are labeled party men. This inequality leads to domination where the patrons who own the farms and other businesses, also control the home town associations and community politics (leadership positions). Political and social relations are such that one party holds more power over the other. Imbalance of power and inequality is a consequence of asserts and obligations held by each party. The contracts arrived at during partnership farming, are not only total, partial, procurement, and production contracts but are also social contracts. Despite the lopsided nature of the contracts and the draconian working conditions, workers still break even. Partnership farming is also a producer of a specific category of businessmen and entrepreneurs. The farm owners gain entrepreneurial skills as they trade between the buying agents or large firms and the workers. Partnership (two-party) farming also serves as a school for the training of party men who need to go through the seventeen terms in order to succeed. In other words, they are places for social learning. This however requires hard work, discipline, intelligence, and endurance.

“Two-party” is not strictly exploitative in the Marxist sense but offers a relative opportunity for prospective party men to make a living out of hard work and discipline. “Two-party” perpetuates the cycle of borrowing among the workers reasons for which most workers experience average incomes. Success has only been achieved when the actors in partnership are

disciplined, enduring and hard working. Off-farm activities also raise incomes for the workers who remain apparently satisfied with the partnership. The involvement of non-literate and educated unemployed persons in “two-party” as well as in farmer field schools organized by extension services or firms provides them with a status, a reputation, and a level of fulfillment. Activities are internalised and become objects of discussion, comparison and classification within rural communities. When farmers gather at drinking spots or interaction groups, discussions are over-powered by their activities. Female farmers would, in their common groups discuss issues related to their cocoyam farms, groundnuts and vegetables. Those involved in breaking of pods share their experiences and make projections for the future. Men who are cocoa farmers, irrespective of age-set, have their discussions centred on the cocoa activities and processes. Wherever men gather, ‘reflections are cocoa-bound’. Within this schema, farm owners, migrant labourers and those who work hard are easily identified and classified. Partnership farming as practiced in rural areas indicates the fact that rural economy is embedded in a culture of trust.

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