

## **Social Entrepreneur Secures Future of Ghana's Organic Cocoa Industry**

By Kofi Thompson

Those who worry about the future of Ghana's cocoa industry, need no longer do so.

After a recent article I wrote about the need to secure the future of Ghana's cocoa industry by switching to growing cocoa organically (entitled: Exporting Organic Cocoa & Mangoes Can Create Wealth In Rural Ghana), it was brought to my attention that indeed the Ghana Cocoa Board is actually taking active steps to secure the industry's future - by collaborating with private-sector players to lay the foundation for eventually transforming Ghana into a producer of certified organic cocoa beans.

The importance of the cocoa industry to the Ghanaian economy cannot be gainsaid.

Cocoa has sustained Ghana since Tetteh Quarshie first brought it from Fernando Po in Equatorial Guinea at around 1879.

Indeed, cocoa secured Ghana's future after it became an independent nation in 1957 - by providing the bulk of the funds needed for its development.

The cultivation of cocoa still provides a living for millions in rural Ghana - and those employed in the provision of ancillary services that support the industry, such as warehousing and the transport sector.

As consumers in the wealthy nations that purchase Ghana's cocoa beans in countries such as: Switzerland; Germany; the UK; Scandinavia; Japan; China; Malaysia and elsewhere switch to eating organically produced food for health reasons, to have a future, Ghana must switch to producing organic cocoa beans - to maintain its position as a producer of some of the highest quality cocoa beans in the world.

It is gratifying to note that the business model to secure the future of Ghana's cocoa industry is being provided by a unique private-sector collaboration between a Ghanaian social entrepreneur Mr. Yayra Glover and his Swiss partners Max Felchlin AG.

Through close collaboration with the Ghana Cocoa Board, Yayra Glover and his Swiss partners Max Felchlin AG, have made it possible to produce certified and traceable organic cocoa beans in Ghana for export - just what buyers in export markets overseas for cocoa beans now seek.

Working in the Suhum-Craboar-Coaltar district in Ghana's Eastern Region, the cocoa beans they purchase, which are even above fair-trade standards in their production by 4000-plus smallholder farmers, can be traced to the particular farm it was produced in. Fantastic.

I have no doubt that future generations of Ghanaians will credit the unsung hero, social entrepreneur Yayra Glover, with providing the business model that ensured a continued future for Ghana as a source of high quality cocoa beans.

It is by supporting innovative businesspeople such as the Yayra Glovers of our nation that our leaders can ensure Ghana's prosperity.

To show the significance of Yayra Glover in securing the future of Ghana's position as a leading source of high quality cocoa beans in overseas export markets, I shall end this piece by quoting the words of a leading Swiss importer of superior quality cocoa beans, his partners Max Felchlin AG:

"We have been processing cocoa from West Africa for many years now, exclusively from Ghana. Up to now, it has been impossible to obtain the raw material directly in the country.

However, we are now closing this last gap in transparency through the Yayra Glover Project and are now able to precisely specify and guarantee the origin of our cocoa.

Max Felchlin AG defines traceable origin as follows:

- We know who grows the cocoa beans that we buy.
- We maintain contacts with the cocoa farmers and local partners and visit them regularly.
- We are fully aware of the local working and production conditions.
- We pay prices for the high quality of the raw material that are always above the Fairtrade level.
- We are committed to ensure that the cocoa can be produced in a way that is socially acceptable for the farmers and their families but that is also in harmony with nature.
- Our commitment is long-term and should also ensure a part of the income for future generations of cocoa farmers." End of quotation.

The late Hon. Baah-Wiredu (may the soul of that decent and principled gentleman rest in peace), then serving as President Kufuor's finance minister, was the one who lured Yayra Glover back to Ghana from Switzerland - when President Kufuor met with the Ghanaian community in Switzerland, during a state visit to that nation in 2007.

One hopes that President Mahama will take an interest in his work too - and ensure that only Ghanaians (using Yayra Glover's fairtrade business model) are allowed to buy and export organic cocoa beans: so that the wealth they create stays here.

In providing it with the business model to ensure its survival, Yayra Glover is indeed a saviour of Ghana's cocoa industry no less - whose unique role in Ghana's cocoa industry is just as significant as that of Tetteh Quarshie: the industry's innovative initiator.