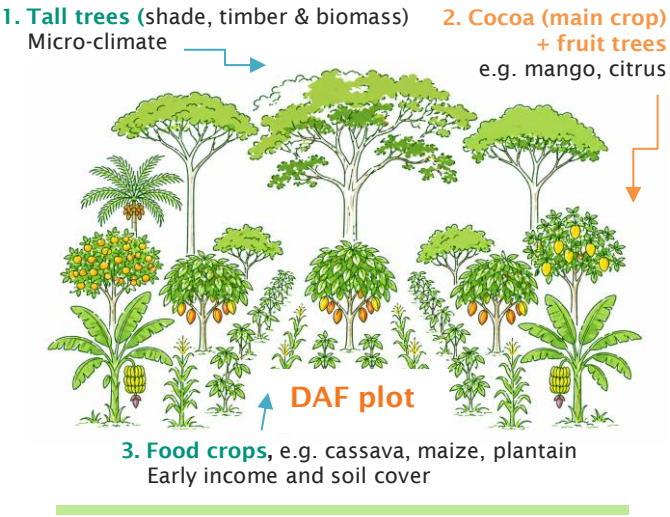
Dynamic agroforestry in cocoa farming systems

Farmers' experiences from Ghana

Dynamic agroforestry (DAF) combines trees, cocoa and food crops in evolving plots. Within Fairtrade it is seen as a pathway to link ecological regeneration with resilient livelihoods.



In Ghana, through the GAIM project (2023-26), 3 Fairtrade cooperatives support cocoa farmers to adopt and implement DAF through stakeholder engagement, training and collective organisation, with a focus on women and youth.



Core principles: no burning, no chemicals, permanent soil cover, high plant diversity and a layered crop structure

The DAF model under GAIM

Design elements

- Structured plot layout guided by core principles
- Targeted conversion of aged cocoa farms
- Gradual transition, starting small (DAF islands)

Implementation process

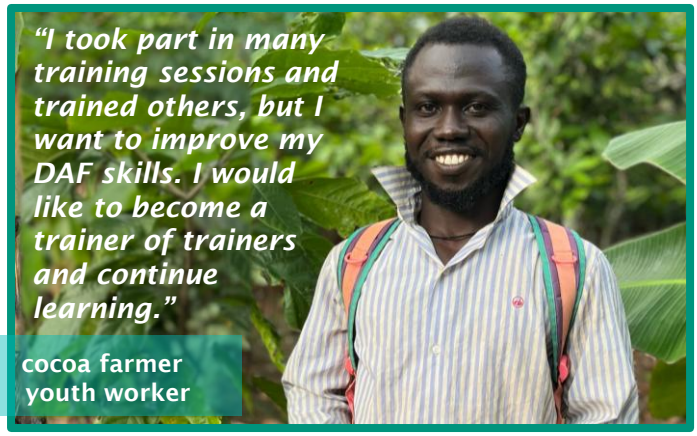
Engagement:
- Coordination with cooperatives
- Community awareness-raising

Training:
- Technical (plot design/management)
- Empowerment and leadership for women & youth

Installation and maintenance:
- Voluntary, inclusive participation
- Free access to seeds and seedlings
- Field support from youth brigades & field officers

Follow-up:
- Ongoing support, demonstration, peer exchange
- Continuous learning and adaptation





Farmers' experiences in the early years

Livelihoods and production:
- Food production reduces household expenses
- Additional income between cocoa seasons

Farm and learning:
- Improved soil cover and cooler, shaded fields
- More organized, productive and "alive" plots
- Learning-by-doing builds new knowledge and changes how farmers see farming

"we return to farming as done by our elders (sankofa) and then move forward."

Results

First results:
- 667 farmers trained, of which 281 women and 95 youth
- 104 hectares converted to DAF
- 80% of households reduce food expenditure

What GAIM contributes to:
- Diversification beyond cocoa
- Building long-term resilience through trees
- Entry pathways adapted to farmers' needs
- Reduced entry barriers through access to inputs
- Strengthened knowledge, confidence and inclusion

Dynamic agroforestry works when farmers can learn, adapt and build gradually, with support that stays close to their reality

This factsheet was produced as part of the capitalisation study in support of the agroecological transition of cocoa farming in Ghana, 2026