

WORKING CONDITIONS AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION OF MIGRANT
FARMHANDS ON COCOA FARMS: IMPLICATIONS ON COCOA PRODUCTION IN
JUABOSO DISTRICT OF THE WESTERN NORTH REGION OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how working conditions and access to social protection for migrant farmhands affect cocoa production in the Juaboso District of the Western North Region of Ghana. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected from 395 migrant farmhands and supplemented by interviews with migrant farmers, cocoa farmers, and stakeholders. Using the Neoclassical economic theory of Migration, the Social Protection Framework, and the Bargaining Power Theory as a theoretical base, the findings showed that most migrant workers were internal migrants with low formal education, long working hours, insecure wage arrangements, and frequent additional unpaid tasks that undermined well-being. Awareness of and access to formal social protection were limited, and migrants relied largely on informal support. Statistical analysis indicated that the belief that tangible improvements to work and living conditions would enhance productivity was the only significant predictor of perceived productivity; broader measures of social protection and community support were not significant predictors in the model. Community-level differences were pronounced, with better-resourced areas exhibiting higher perceived productivity. The results confirmed aspects of the Job Characteristics Model; task significance alone did not produce higher outputs when autonomy, feedback, and material supports were absent. Push and pull factors explained movement, but not post-migration bargaining power or welfare. The study extended theory by introducing a “material support” condition necessary for job-enrichment effects in informal agricultural settings. Policy recommendations included formalizing contracts, expanding targeted social protection outreach, and prioritizing direct material improvements to working conditions to sustain cocoa productivity.