CropGPT

2026

Cocoa: Ghana Risks

Iran Conflict & Fertiliser Crisis

CropGPT

Iran Crisis: Cocoa Ghana

" I got some of the fertilizer, but it wasn't enough"

Farmer, Ghana, April 5th 2026

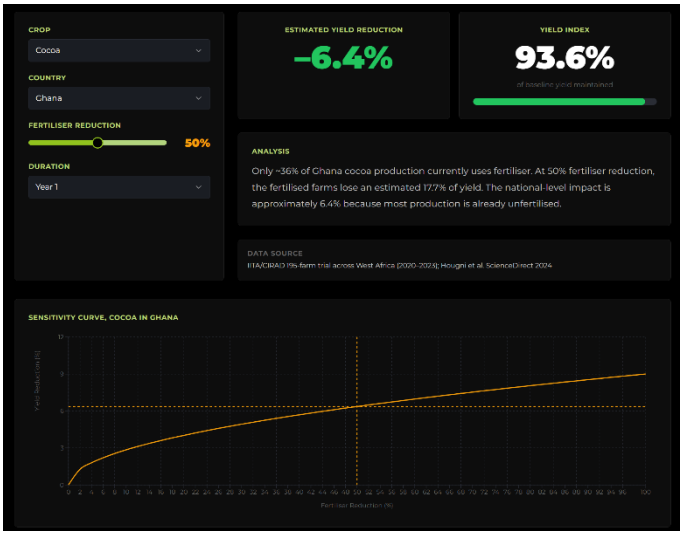
Summary

Ghanaian cocoa farmers we surveyed report difficulty securing fertilizer this season. Most who were asked said they had not been able to get all they needed. This mirrors the pattern found in our Ivory Coast survey and could have consequences for 2027 cocoa supplies.

As with Ivory Coast, Ghanaian cocoa farmers do not use Nitrogen based fertilizers (which is what is most impacted by the Iran Crisis). Our research shows only 25 to 33% of Ghana's cocoa farmers use inorganic fertilizer, and the products they buy are phosphate-potassium blends such as Asaase Wura (0-22-18) and Cocofeed (0-30-20), which contain zero or near-zero nitrogen. The rest of the farmers either use organic inputs such as poultry manure or nothing at all (an estimated 55% to 70% use no fertilizer of any kind).

For this reason, the Iran crisis is not having a direct impact on cocoa production in Ghana, as it is not exposed to the Nitrogen fertilizer crisis. However, there are indirect issues for cocoa production, related to the crisis, which could impact 2027 supplies.

This is our initial farmer survey for Ghana and will be followed by our second survey and monthly farm visits.



Survey, Impacts and Risks

We have conducted a survey of cocoa farmers across Ghana's cocoa belt. The results are consistent with our Ivory Coast findings: farmers are struggling to access the fertilizer they need.

The impact of this on yield will not occur until later this year and may not affect supply until 2027. Separately we have modelled the **potential impacts** on Cocoa and released a yield calculator.

The risk of these impacts occurring are more complex and dealt with below.

Survey Findings

Interviews were conducted with cocoa farmers across Ghana's producing regions. Many interviews were conducted in Twi, and transcription quality varied. The findings below reflect what farmers clearly stated.

The dominant fertilizer products mentioned are NPK and Asaase Wura (a branded cocoa P-K fertilizer). Some farmers also report using poultry manure. One farmer (Razak) reported using no fertilizer at all. These products are consistent with our wider research, which shows all Ghanaian cocoa fertilizers are phosphate-potassium blends with zero or near-zero nitrogen content.

Key findings from the farmer interviews:

- Most farmers who were asked could not secure all the fertilizer they needed this season.
- When asked about the Iran conflict, most farmers believed it would affect the fertilizer market, though none could explain the specific mechanism.
- Savannah (NPK user) said the war would make it "hard for you to get that fertilizer" and that "for cocoa farm in this area, it will be hard."

As with Ivory Coast, the phosphate fertilizers used in Ghana do not come via the Strait of Hormuz and do not use Nitrogen. However, they do use Sulphuric acid, which requires Sulphur. Around 44% of the world's seaborne Sulphur comes from the Strait of Hormuz. The dominant supplier of cocoa fertilizer to West Africa, OCP Morocco, imports approximately 3.7 million tonnes of Gulf sulphur to produce the P-K blends these farmers buy.

Research Context

The following is drawn from published research and is not from the farmer surveys above.

Ghana's cocoa sector faces a number of structural challenges that compound any fertilizer disruption. COCOBOD, the state cocoa board, historically provided subsidised or free fertilizer to cocoa farmers through the Hi-Tech Programme, distributing approximately 100,000 MT per year.

This programme was suspended in 2023-24 due to a financial crisis at COCOBOD, with only $600M of a $1.2B budget secured. The Mahama government reintroduced the Free Cocoa Fertiliser Programme in 2025, but coverage and reach remain uncertain.

Published adoption data shows 25 to 33% of Ghanaian cocoa farmers use mineral fertilizer nationally, though this varies widely by district (9% in Juaboso to 68% in Western Region). The sector at national level operates at approximately 25% of its mineral fertilizer requirement. 82% to 100% of Ghanaian cocoa farms are below the critical phosphorus threshold, meaning the soils are severely nutrient-depleted.

An estimated quarter of Ivory Coast and Ghana's cocoa trees are over 30 years old, past their optimal productive life, with standard diseases and poor health in the region. These pre-existing stresses mean that the removal of fertilizer inputs could accelerate production decline.

Supply Chain Context

The supply chain dynamics for Ghana are essentially the same as Ivory Coast. The Hormuz disruption is compounded by other market activities, including China imposing a near-total phosphate export ban, and Russian quota constraints tightening nitrogen availability.

Ghana is approximately 26 to 33 days from Hormuz by sea. Pre-disruption vessels loaded before late February are arriving now or have arrived in recent weeks. This means that the physical impact of the delays has not yet fully materialised and will be starting in April.

Once that pipeline of delivery empties, physical availability will tighten on top of the existing price pressure on inputs the farmers need.

The latest ceasefire is a positive development but will not solve the issue. Idled Gulf production facilities cannot restart overnight, shipping capacity that rerouted does not immediately return, and the month of delay cannot be resolved in a weekend.

Yield Risk Assessment

Only around 25 to 33% of Ghanaian cocoa farmers buy inorganic fertilizer, and none of that is directly impacted by the Iran Crisis. Therefore the risks for cocoa are far less than other regions and almost identical to those if Ivory Coast

However, the farmer surveys indicate that those who do use fertilizer are struggling to secure sufficient supply this season.

Our Ivory Coast survey found that the primary constraint is liquidity rather than physical availability. The Ghana transcripts are consistent with this.

If the 25% to 33% of farmers normally using fertilizer stop completely or dramatically reduce their application, this will have an impact on production.

A 50% reduction in fertilizer use across this group would result in an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 tonnes of lost cocoa production.

The second surveys and farm visits, conducted every month, will provide updates on the scale of the problem and stronger farmer-reported evidence for Ghana specifically.

NOTE: Under-fertilization suppresses pod development, increases susceptibility to disease including black pod and swollen shoot, and degrades tree resilience going into the following season. The consequences of this season's input failure could have long term consequences.