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Thematic Fact Sheet

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FOOD SECURITY FACT SHEET

When the Land Goes, the Food Goes

How competing land use for mining is eroding the farming base of Asutifi North and Atwima Mponua Districts— and what it means for Ghana's food supply

RESCONI . AUGUST 2026.

ABOUT THIS FACT SHEET

Every Figure in this fact sheet is drawn from the RESCONI final study report, *Support to Promote Community Resilience and Rights in Competing Land Use for Mining, Agriculture and Forest Utilization in Ghana* (November 2023), and is referenced to the sections, tables or figures it came from. The study surveyed 528 respondents across 20 communities in the Asutifi North District (AND) in Ahafo Region and the Atwima Mponua District (AMD) in the Ashanti Region of Ghana in March–April 2023, at a 95% confidence level. **The study did not carry a dedicated food-security survey module** — the findings here are compiled from its farming-livelihood, cocoa, land-use and illegal-mining discussions, together with the secondary sources the report cites on national food-security risks. Charts have been redrawn from the report's own figures and from cocoa production statistics supplied by the Ghana Cocoa Board.

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1. Almost everyone here is a farmer

Smallholder, subsistence-oriented farming underpins food security in both districts. It is not one livelihood among several — it is the livelihood, on plots of a few acres.

KEY FACTS

- **94.22%** of households in Asutifi North and **95.30%** in Atwima Mponua are farming households.
- More than **90%** of respondents are engaged in farming — 91% and 94% respectively.
- Agriculture employs not less than **60%** of the districts' workforce.
- **86.64%** (AND) and **89.24%** (AMD) of farmers practice crop farming only.
- **29.61%** of farmers work on plots of just **3–6 acres**; 15–20 acre farms are the rarest of all.
- Female farm sizes in both districts were **generally under 10 acres** — the disparity is sharper in Asutifi North.
- Cocoa yields sit **well below** the achievable range of **1,000–1,900 kg/ha**.

Subsistence first, cocoa for cash

Three land-based livelihoods were identified: farming, illegal mining and logging. Farming dominates both districts. The report characterises it as smallholder production, mostly for subsistence with few commercial purposes, using traditional methods — alongside commercial farming to a lesser degree for export crops, principally cocoa. Subsistence agriculture, the report states, is what ensures food security and self-sufficiency for these rural communities.

A well-functioning farming sector does more than feed the household that runs it: it increases the **availability, accessibility and affordability** of food for rural and urban populations alike across the project areas.

The soils n the study areas support farming. Forest ochrosols in the study area are well drained, fertile and deep enough to carry a wide range of cash, food and tree crops — cocoa, coffee, oil palm, ginger, maize, cassava, cocoyam, yam, plantain, sugarcane, citrus, cowpeas, cola and avocado amongst them. The land is not marginal. That is precisely what make its degradation consequential.

What is farmed

The districts grow cocoa, plantain, cocoyam, cassava, maize, pepper, tomatoes, okro and garden eggs. Cocoa is the most cultivated crop in both, and the report notes that cocoa cultivation provides over **67%** of household income for cocoa-farming households.

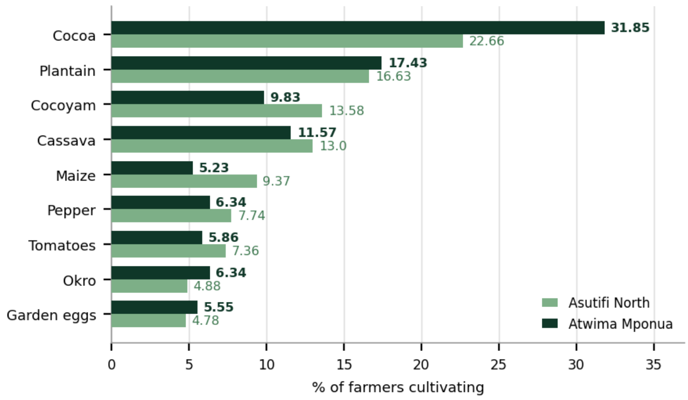

Figure 1. Percentage of farmers cultivating each crop, by district. **Source:** RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.7, p. 25.

Farm sizes

Area/Acre(s)	Asutifi North District (AND)	Atwima Mponua District (AMD)
0–3 acres	23.81%	14.96%
3–6 acres	**29.25%**	**30.34%**
6–10 acres	20.75%	26.92%
10–15 acres	13.27%	14.96%
15–20 acres	5.78%	6.84%
20+ acres	7.14%	5.98%

Table 1. *Distribution of farm sizes, from the plotted data. Across both districts 29.61% of farmers work 3–6 acres and 23.28% work 6–10 acres.* **Source:** *RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.5, p. 23.*

Protein on the plate

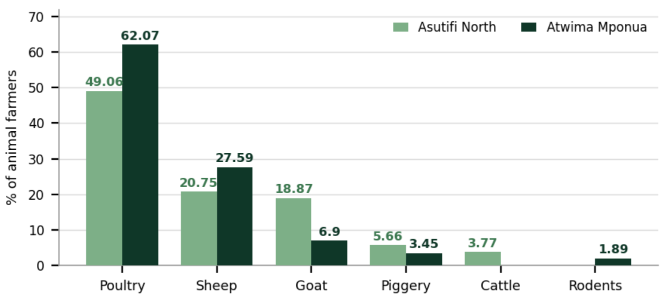

Figure 2. *Percentage of animal farmers rearing each animal, by district. Poultry dominates in both, followed by sheep and goats.* **Source:** *RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.8, p. 26.*

Households already spread their risk

Farmers are not passive in the face of this risk. The report records livelihood diversification through **intercropping** — cocoa combined with plantain, cocoyam, maize or vegetables — and through **agroforestry**, integrating trees into crop and livestock systems. These strategies help households manage the risk of price shocks, pests and crop disease while adding food and income streams. They are an existing resilience mechanism worth building on, not inventing.

2. How farmland becomes a mining pit

Land is not being seized. It is being handed over — often for a single bulk payment — and it does not come back.

The conveyance route

About **90%** of respondents in Asutifi North and **95%** in Atwima Mponua had assigned an interest in their land to another party. Most of that land goes to crop production. However a substantial minority does not.

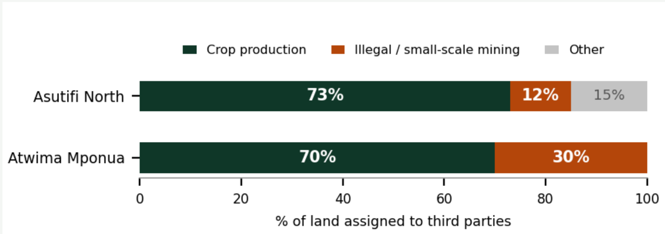

Figure 3. *End use of land assigned to third parties.* **Source:** *RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 4.1; Figures 2.29 and 2.30, pp. 48–49.*

The report records that respondents in Achiase, Adobewura and Ahwianfutu in Atwima Mponua had given portions of their land to illegal miners in exchange for a one-off bulk payment. Land sizes assigned ranged from 1 to 25 acres, with 3 acres being the most common parcel in both districts.

> **30%**
>
> of land assigned to third parties in Atwima Mponua ended up under illegal or small-scale mining — against 12% in Asutifi North. **The report warns that if this trajectory remains unchecked it could cause a drastic decline in the total tonnage of cocoa produced in these districts.**

Degradation is effectively irreversible and permanent

Mined-out areas were observed during field visits to Gambia No.2, Obengkrom and Ntotroso in Asutifi North, and to Ahwianfutu,Ampemkrom and Ntoboroso in Atwima Mponua. The report is direct about the consequence: these activities are a threat to food security, because once the land is degraded its potential to support agricultural productivity is lost. Reclamation, it notes, is capital intensive, time consuming and locality specific — which is why avoiding degradation in the first place matters more than repairing it afterwards.

Other pressures on food security

Mining is not the only constraint. The report records that food-producing farmers also face:

- **Limited access to credit**, restricting investment in inputs, tools and land improvement.
- **Poor storage facilities**, driving avoidable post-harvest losses.
- **Poor rural roads**, limiting market access and raising the cost of getting food to buyers.
- **Pests and diseases** affecting crop yield and quality.
- **Price volatility** for both food and cash crops, adding income instability to smallholder households.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.2.1.

What the production figures show

The Ghana Cocoa Board supplied RESCONI with eleven crop years of production data for the two cocoa districts covering the study area. Kasapin, in the Ahafo Region, held between 15,000 and 18,000 tonnes for most of the decade — then fell to **9,956 tonnes** in 2021/22, roughly **45% below** the previous year's 18,155 tonnes. Nyinahin, in the Ashanti Region, moved the other way, recovering to 13,092 tonnes.

COCOBOD notes that cocoa district demarcations differ from administrative district boundaries: Nyinahin and Kasapin cocoa districts serve as proxies for the Atwima Mponua and Asutifi North administrative districts respectively.

Nationally, the sector regulator reports that more than **19,000 hectares** of productive cocoa farms across two regions were ravaged by illegal gold miners between 2019 and 2020.

Farming inside forest reserves

Pressure runs in the other direction too. While more than 90% of respondents farm outside protected areas, **7.23%** of farms in Asutifi North and **5.7%** in Atwima Mponua sit inside forest reserves — concentrated in Agravi (24%), Obengkrom (20%) and Alhajikrom (16%) in Asutifi North, and Ahwiafutu (27.78%) and Kasotie (16.67%) in Atwima Mponua. Whether these are admitted farms under the Forest Act or illegal extensions was beyond the study's scope.

Yields are already falling

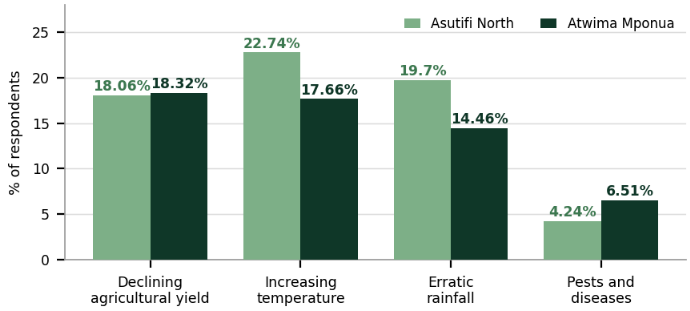

Figure 4. *Perceived effects of deforestation and forest degradation. Declining agricultural yield is among the most cited effects in both districts.* **Source:** *RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.19, p. 37.*

The demographic squeeze

The farming population is ageing. About **53.71%** of respondents in Asutifi North and **55.75%** in Atwima Mponua are aged 40–59; in Atwima Mponua only **11.5%** are aged 20–39, and **14.60%** are over 70. An ageing workforce on shrinking, degraded plots is a food supply question as much as an agricultural one.

3. What is at stake, and what must change

Three ways mining takes food off the table

It takes the land. Once topsoil is stripped and pits are left open, the land's capacity to carry crops is gone. The report cites a warning that illegal mining extends beyond water bodies to farmlands and topsoil, making farming nearly impossible and posing a huge threat to national food security.

It takes the water. Chemical use in illegal mining renders water sources unsuitable for agricultural as well as domestic use. The Chief Executive of COCOBOD is quoted saying that illegal mining operators in cocoa communities are making farming very expensive and adversely affecting the water resources used for irrigation.

It contaminates the crop. Soil contamination from illegal mining has serious implications for food crops and human health when consumed.

RESCONI research team with the MoFA Directorate. **Source:** *Report Plate 2.5.*

45%

of the fall in cocoa production in the Kasapin cocoa district in one crop year — 18,155 tonnes in 2020/21 to 9,956 tonnes in 2021/22 (Ghana Cocoa Board). **Reclaiming mined-out land is capital intensive, time consuming and locality specific, which is why the report treats avoided degradation as the central lever.**

These illegal mining activities are not environmentally sustainable, and a threat to food security — once the land is degraded, its potential to support agricultural productivity is lost.

Paraphrased from RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 4.1.

The national frame

Agriculture accounts for **18.5%** of Ghana's GDP, with food crops, cocoa and forestry making up **81.2%** of sectoral output. Ghana's cocoa is grown by nearly **800,000 households**, most of them smallholders. What happens to smallholder land here is not a local matter — agriculture is the base on which household food, export earnings and rural employment all rest.

National commentary cited in the report warns that unchecked illegal mining — destroying both water bodies and farmland topsoil — **could push Ghana toward a critical food-insecurity threshold.**

Occupy Ghana, reported in Ankrah (2022), cited at Section 4.1 of the source report.

What RESCONI recommends

The strategic recommendations set the land-use framework; the agricultural measures beside them are what District Assemblies, MoFA and COCOBOD can act on directly.

Strategic level and land use *(Sections 4.1, 5.1 & 5.2)*

- Address competing land use within a **national land use plan** that protects productive farmland from conversion to illegal mining.
- Adopt the **Integrated Forestry and Mining & Management Approach (IFAMMA)** to restore degraded forestlands and mined-out areas.
- Redefine **artisanal mining permits** to require the consent of Traditional Authorities before any grant.
- Use **collaborative inter-sectoral strategies**, institutional strengthening, policy harmonisation and legal enforcement to mitigate mining's impact on cocoa production.
- Build a **web-based reporting solution** with CSOs to report illegal felling and mining to law enforcement.

Agricultural and rural investment

- Invest in **rural infrastructure — irrigation, storage facilities and roads** — to cut post-harvest losses and improve market access for food crops.
- Expand **agricultural credit and extension services** so smallholders can adopt climate-smart and productivity-enhancing practices.
- Promote **agroforestry and intercropping**, building on the diversification households already practise, to buffer price shocks, pests and climate variability.
- Target **youth-focused agricultural livelihood programmes** to secure the next generation of food producers.
- Promote **sustainable farming practices** — good agricultural practice, soil conservation, integrated pest management and organic fertilizers.

REFERENCES

1. Resource Conservation Initiative (RESCONI). *Support to Promote Community Resilience and Rights in Competing Land Use for Mining, Agriculture and Forest Utilization in Ghana* — Final Study Report: RESCONI, November 2023. Sections 1.6, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3.1–2.3.6, 2.5.1, 2.6.2, 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2; Figures 2.1 (p. 20), 2.3 (p. 21), 2.4 (p. 22), 2.5 (p. 23), 2.7 (p. 25), 2.8 (p. 26), 2.9 (p. 26), 2.10 (p. 27), 2.19 (p. 37), 2.29 (p. 48) and 2.30 (p. 49); Appendix 1, p. 79.
2. Cocoa production statistics for the Nyinahin (Ashanti Region) and Kasapin (Ahafo Region) cocoa districts, 2011/12 to 2021/22 crop years, supplied to RESCONI by the Ghana Cocoa Board (letter dated 18 September 2023) and reproduced at Appendix 1 of the source report. COCOBOD advises that cocoa district demarcations differ from administrative district demarcations and that these two cocoa districts serve as proxies for the two administrative districts.
3. Secondary figures quoted within the source report are cited there to Ghana Statistical Service (2020, 2021), GLSS (2019), Vigneri (2005), Barrientos (2008), ICI (2017), Worlanyo et al. (2022), Ankrah (2022) on national food-insecurity risk, and Sabutey (2023) quoting the Chief Executive of COCOBOD.