



## Thematic Fact Sheet

# RESOURCE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE



# KEY FINDINGS FACT SHEET

## Thirteen Things the Study Established

The headline findings of RESCONI's study on competing land use for mining, agriculture and forest utilization in the Asutifi North and Atwima Mponua Districts — and what follows from them

RESCONI . AUGUST 2026.

## ABOUT THIS FACTS SHEET

This summary presents the thirteen principal findings established in 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), each referenced to the sections, tables or figures it came from. It draws on a survey of 528 respondents across twenty communities, a thirty-year land cover change analysis, laboratory analysis of water samples at the KNUST Central Laboratory, climatic data from the Ghana Meteorological Agency, and institutional engagement with six categories of stakeholders. The study covered two districts in two regions and its findings must not be generalised nationally.

### HEAD OFFICE

No. 12 - 13 PAMA House  
105 Westland Boulevard West Legon  
Accra - Ghana  
GE-314-0597

### REGISTERED ADDRESS

RESOURCE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE  
P. O. Box 12811  
Kumasi

### PHONE

+233 (0) 24 460 3904  
+233-(0) 24 218 4162  
+233-(0) 24 608 5656  
**EMAIL:** [info@resconi.org](mailto:info@resconi.org)



# 1. Livelihoods, land and what is happening to both

This is a farming landscape carrying a mining problem. The first six findings establish who lives on this land, how, and what is displacing them.

**528**

respondents across 20 communities

**>90%**

of respondents are farmers

**100%**

of artisanal mining in Atwima Mponua were illegal

**6,000%**

above the WHO turbidity threshold

**95–99%**

say forest cover has dwindled

**87–95%**

report land-use conflict

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Executive Summary, pp. x–xi.

## 1 Farming is the dominant economic activity

94.22% of respondents in Asutifi North and 95.30% in Atwima Mponua came from farming households. Fewer than 6% came from mining households. [Figure 2.3, p. 21](#) · see [Livelihoods fact sheet](#)

## 2 Three livelihoods, overwhelmingly smallholder

Farming, illegal mining and logging. More than 90% farmers mostly smallholders producing for subsistence using traditional methods, with commercial cocoa to a lesser degree. Only **1%** log, reflecting the capital-intensive, formal nature of timber operations. [Figure 2.4, p. 22](#)

## 3 Mining occupies little land but does great damage

Mining sites account for just **7%** and **5%** of land use, yet drive adverse environmental impacts — and the report finds this on the ascendancy, threatening environmental sustainability and local socio-economic development. [Section 2.1.2; Executive Summary](#)

## 4 Cocoa anchors the local economy

Cocoa production was identified as the key economic activity establishing the nexus between production and livelihood, providing over **67%** of income in cocoa-farming households and contributing to **Ghana's foreign exchange earnings**. [Section 2.3 · see Livelihoods fact sheet](#)

## 5 Mining has degraded the ecosystems and livelihoods

Mining in the study communities has caused **deforestation, soil erosion, water pollution and habitat destruction**, with significant adverse impact on ecosystems, ecosystem services and livelihoods. [Section 2.4; Executive Summary](#)

## 6 Climate Change is already affecting production

Increased temperature, erratic rainfall and drought negatively affected agricultural production. Annual average relative humidity showed consistent marginal decline — read as a positive, since high humidity is associated with fruit rot disease. [Section 1.6; Executive Summary](#)

## What people live on

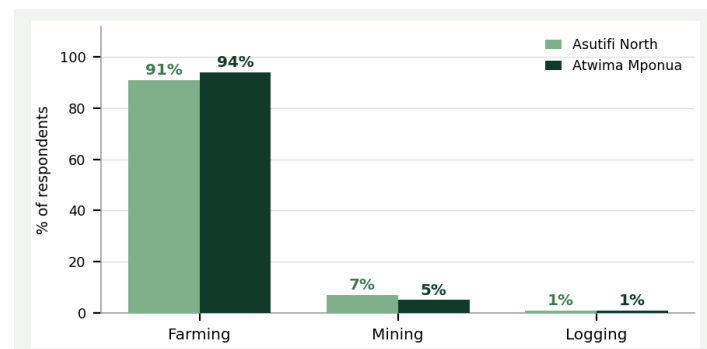


Figure 1. Forest and land-based livelihood activities by district. Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.4, p. 22.

## What the land has lost

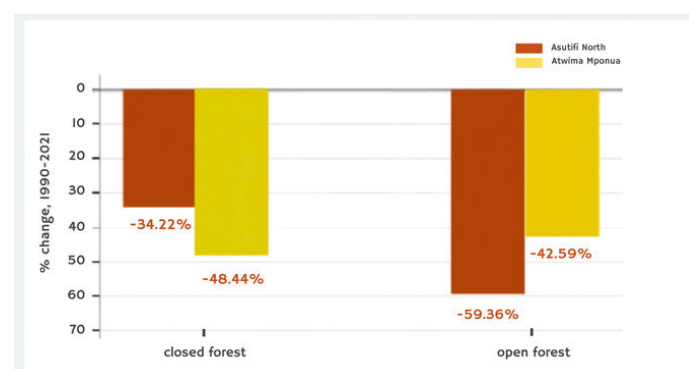


Figure 2. Change in forest cover, 1990–2021, from the thirty-year land cover change analysis. Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 4.1; Tables 2.1 and 2.2, p. 43.

**59.36%**

decline in open forest in Asutifi North between 1990 and 2021. The report reads this trajectory as possibly indicating a failure of management, programmes and initiatives aimed at arresting deforestation.



Plate 1. Community engagement, Ahwianfutu — one of twenty study communities.



Plate 2. Water sampling on the sediment-laden River Desiri.



Plate 3. National Validation Workshop, Fumesua-Kumasi, November 2023.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Plates 2.3, 3.1 and 2.10; Sections 2.8 and 3.1.

## 2. Water, forest cover and the governance gaps

The remaining seven findings move from what communities reported to what was measured — and to the policy environment that allowed it.

### 1 Laboratory evidence confirmed river contamination

Water from River Desiri showed turbidity **6,000% above** the WHO threshold, chromium **240% above** and lead **280% above**, against the undisturbed Apapramasu Stream running almost parallel in the same reserve. It failed the requirements of WHO and GS 175-1:2013.

Table 3.2, p. 59 · see *Water Quality and Health fact sheets*

### 2 Forests carry livelihoods and regulate climate

Forests supply timber, non-timber forest products, provide employment and income, medicine and game, and play a vital role in carbon sequestration and climate regulation, and support **emerging ecotourism**. Unsustained logging, illegal mining, agricultural expansion and fuelwood harvesting are eroding all these tangible and intangible benefits.

Sections 2.5 and 2.5.4 · see *Livelihoods fact sheet*

### 3 Communities name illegal logging and galamsey first

Roughly **95%** of respondents in Asutifi North District and **99%** of respondents and Atwima Mponua District collectively confirmed dwindling forest cover, attributing it to illegal logging (22.64%), galamsey (16.98%), improper land management (15.09%), forest fires (13.21%), population growth and agricultural expansion (11.32%) and **lack of proper enforcement and governance (10.94%)**.

Figure 2.16, p. 35 · see *National Security fact sheet*

### 4 Thirty years of measured forest loss

Closed forest fell **34.22%** and open forest **59.36%** in Asutifi North; closed forest fell **48.44%** and open forest **42.59%** in Atwima Mponua — while **cropland expanded more than thirtyfold** in both

Section 4.1; Tables 2.1 and 2.2, p. 43 · see *Land Use Cover fact sheet*

### 5 The three sectors must be balanced, not traded off

The report finds an urgent need to balance farming, mining and forest resource utilization — requiring effective forest resource use that holds together **environmental sustainability, social inclusiveness and economic development**.

Section 4.1; Executive Summary

### 6 Land is leaving cocoa for illegal mining

Interest in land given out to other parties was for illegal small-scale mining — **12%** in Asutifi North and **30%** in Atwima Mponua — reducing arable land for cocoa and threatening productivity.

Section 4.1; Figure 2.32, p. 50 · see *National Security fact sheet*

### 7 The governing policies overlap and contradict

The Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012), Minerals and Mining Policy (2014), Ghana Cocoa Sector Development Strategy II (2017/18–2026/27) and National Climate Change Policy (2013) all seek a sustainable environment for cocoa and livelihoods — but **overlaps and inconsistencies must be addressed** before the sectors can reach their intended state.

Section 4.1 · see *National Security fact sheet*

## Why forest cover is falling

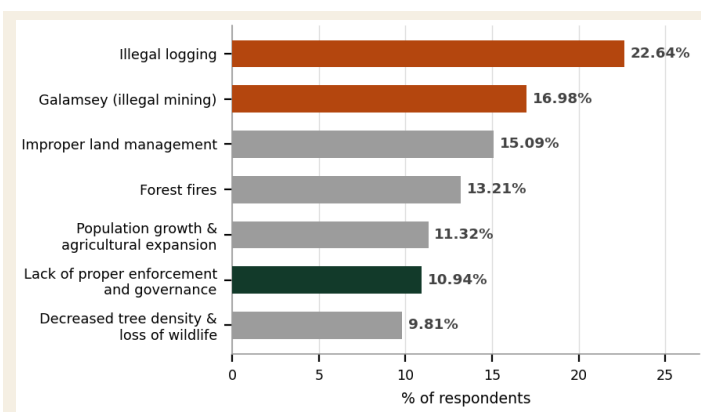


Figure 3. Reasons given for dwindling forest cover; weak enforcement in dark green.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.16, p. 35.

## How far above the safe limit

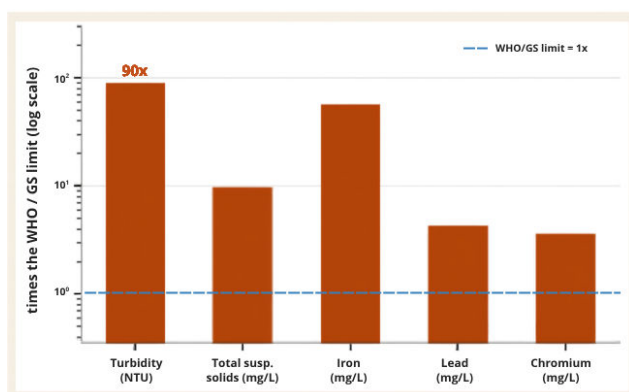


Figure 4. Worst reading in River Desiri for each parameter as a multiple of the WHO/GS limit for potable water. Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Table 3.2, p. 59.

Water from River Desiri is of poor quality and does not meet the physicochemical and heavy-metal requirements stipulated by WHO, GS 175-1:2013 and the WRC benchmark — with a strong correlation to sediment runoff and chemical discharge from illegal mining along the river floodplain.

Paraphrased from RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 3.3, Discussion.

# 3. What RESCONI concludes, and recommends

## The conclusion in one line

Competing interests from mining, agriculture and forest utilization **should be addressed holistically within the context of a national land use plan** — one in which District Assemblies have functional roles alongside regulatory agencies, Traditional Authorities, the private sector and all other stakeholders in the sustainable exploitation of Ghana's natural resources.

### Three things a workable balance requires

**1**

Stronger  
environmental  
protection

**2**

Genuine  
community  
involvement in  
resource-use  
decisions

**3**

Coordinated **policy**  
implementation  
across government  
and stakeholders

## The approach RESCONI proposes

The report recommends a human and environment-centred approach to the threats from illegal forest exploitation and mining: the **Integrated Forestry and Mining & Management Approach (IFAMMA)**.

IFAMMA rests on the principle that any factor producing an undesirable outcome must itself change to yield the desired consequences. It operates on short, medium and long-term horizons and is context-based — designed to enhance degraded forestlands and mined-out areas while reducing the threats posed to human health and the environment.

*The success of addressing any illegal activity within the project landscape is heavily dependent on community perception, stakeholder views and expert inputs — with collaboration with the Traditional Authorities viewed favourably by communities and stakeholders as a viable solution.*

*Paraphrased from RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 5.1.*

## On coordination

The report's preferred coordination strategy is the **inter-agency approach**, with each actor's role clearly defined so no stakeholder unduly influences delivery. Collaboration with **Traditional Authorities** is viewed favourably as key to local participation and long-run commitment — reaffirming a leadership role that has eroded under current arrangements.

## Recommendations (Section 5.2)

- **Policy and a national land use plan.** Address competing interests holistically, with District Assemblies working alongside regulators, traditional authorities and the private sector.
- **Leadership and capacity building for Traditional Authorities.** Develop leadership and adaptive management skills through training with the National House of Chiefs, so chiefs can confront illegal entry into their communities.
- **Redefine artisanal mining permits** to require the consent and approval of Traditional Authorities before any grant by a statutory regulator.
- **Reward Environmental Champions.** Government and NGOs should develop mechanisms to identify and reward good conduct among traditional authorities, the local populace and other actors.
- **Equip communities to monitor.** Train local people in monitoring forest and mining operations, and develop a toolkit ensuring regulatory compliance for use at district and community levels.
- **Build a web-based reporting solution** with CSOs to identify illegal felling and mining and report it to institutional stakeholders and law enforcement.
- **Collaboration among stakeholders** — government agencies, MMDAs, local communities, NGOs, the private sector, academia and research institutions — in the collective search for solutions.
- **Promote sustainable farming practices** — good agricultural practices, agroecology principles, soil conservation, integrated pest management and organic fertilizers.
- **Further research** into the distinct migration dynamics of the study districts in relation to cocoa farming, mining and environmental sustainability.



## 2 districts,

2 regions, 20 communities, 528 respondents. **The report is explicit that findings from this scope must not be generalised nationally — but anticipates they will serve as a basis for further research and innovative solutions.**

## 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. All thirteen findings are drawn from the Executive Summary, pp. x–xi, and cross-referenced to Sections 1.6, 2.1–2.5, 3.3, 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2; Figures 2.3 (p. 21), 2.4 (p. 22), 2.16 (p. 35), 2.32 (p. 50); Tables 2.1 and 2.2 (p. 43) and Table 3.2 (p. 59).
2. Laboratory analysis by the KNUST Central Laboratory on four water samples collected 5 April 2023. Thirty-year land cover change analysis (1990–2021) produced by Statera Company Limited (July 2023) with data from RMSC, KNUST and Ecometrica (Forest 2020 Project), 2022. Climatic data from the Ghana Meteorological Agency (GMet, 2023). Reference standards: WHO guideline values; GS 175-1:2013; GS 1212:2019; WRC raw water requirements.
3. Policy instruments referenced in Finding 13: Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012); Minerals and Mining Policy (2014); Ghana Cocoa Sector Development Strategy II (2017/18–2026/27); National Climate Change Policy; Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703).
4. This summary is one of a series. RESCONI's thematic fact sheets treat Water Quality, Health, National Security and Livelihoods in greater depth, and the Project Fact Sheet covers the study's scope and methodology.