



Kofi Mensah wakes before dawn in Sefwi. He walks through rows of cocoa trees his father planted decades ago. The pods are fewer now. Some trees are diseased. Illegal miners circle nearby lands like vultures. Fertilizer prices have risen. Labour is expensive. Rainfall no longer behaves normally.

Still, he harvests.

He dries the beans carefully. He bags them. He waits for the buying clerk. The cocoa is weighed, graded, sealed, loaded, and transported.

Days pass. Then weeks. The cocoa has moved. But Kofi's money has not.

His child's school fees are due. His wife owes at the local market. The spraying gang must be paid. The church contribution is pending. The farm labourers are angry.

Yet somewhere inside Ghana's cocoa chain, trucks are still moving. Depots are still operating. Cocoa is still reaching the ports.

That is the real tragedy unfolding quietly inside Ghana's cocoa sector.

It is not the absence of cocoa itself. It is the absence of liquidity flowing smoothly through the system.

The recent GH¢30 million stock-backed financing facility secured by Produce Buying Company (PBC) must therefore be understood for what it truly is: not merely a financing arrangement, but a distress flare fired from the foundations of Ghana's cocoa economy.

When an institution publicly speaks about "restoring trust at the grassroots," it means confidence has already been damaged.

And confidence is everything in cocoa.

The average cocoa farmer does not think in terms of syndicated loans, liquidity restructuring, or working capital constraints. He thinks in one simple language:

"After I sell, will I be paid?"

That question alone determines the stability of Ghana's cocoa economy.

Because once farmers begin doubting payment certainty, dangerous alternatives emerge quickly. Side-selling expands quietly. Smuggling networks become more attractive. Informal buyers begin filling liquidity gaps. Illegal market actors move into the vacuum. Eventually, some farmers begin questioning whether cocoa farming itself is still worth the struggle.

The evidence increasingly suggests that Ghana's cocoa sector is not suffering from operational paralysis alone. It is experiencing synchronized financial stress beneath the surface.

And the timeline matters.

The sharpest deterioration of PBC's finances and market position occurred largely during the Akufo-Addo administration between 2017 and 2024. During that period, PBC's market share reportedly collapsed from over 30 percent to near operational insignificance. Financing pressures intensified. Debt accumulated. Liquidity weakened. Creditor pressure mounted steadily underneath the surface.

Why?

Because the cocoa sector increasingly became trapped inside a debt-heavy financing architecture burdened by rising operational costs, delayed reimbursements, syndicated loan pressures, procurement liabilities, declining cocoa production, and weakening cashflow synchronization across the purchasing chain.

The company itself admitted that the decline was financing-driven and linked to poor managerial decisions, not operational incapacity.

That distinction is critical.

The cocoa still existed. The infrastructure still existed. The depots still existed. Trucks still moved. Cocoa still reached the ports. But underneath the visible operations, the money stopped circulating smoothly enough to sustain confidence across the chain.

Then came the near-collapse phase.

But the response under the succeeding Mahama administration has been notably different in tone and direction.

Instead of merely defending the crisis politically, the current approach appears focused on stabilization, restructuring, and confidence restoration.

The GH¢30 million stock-backed facility itself reflects that shift.

It represents a liquidity intervention aimed at restoring farmer payments. It represents an operational restructuring effort designed to stabilize purchases. Above all, it represents an attempt to rebuild confidence before deeper instability spreads across the cocoa chain.

One possible pathway is for government and COCOBOD to allocate PBC a structured share of projected national cocoa purchasing contracts. The profits generated from those contracts can then gradually stabilize operations, rebuild market confidence, and reduce creditor pressure over time.

That would transform recovery from endless bailout dependency into production-backed restructuring.

Because the painful truth is this:

If cocoa farmers lose confidence in the official purchasing chain, Ghana will not merely lose cocoa revenues.

It will lose trust at the roots of one of its most strategic national industries.

And once trust collapses at the grassroots, it does not return easily.

By: Kay Codjoe