

Zero deforestation cocoa in West Africa: Interaction between public and private governance

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In March 2017, twelve of the world's leading cocoa and chocolate companies made a collective commitment to end the deforestation associated with the global cocoa supply chain. The majority of the world's supply of cocoa comes from West Africa, where smallholder cocoa farming causes environmental degradation due to deforestation, and where socioeconomic progress for smallholders is difficult to achieve. In this talk, I will present empirical research that explores how new forms of private governance promoting zero deforestation cocoa interact with existing political processes to reduce deforestation in the domestic contexts of key cocoa-producing countries. The recent business commitments to zero deforestation cocoa marks one of the latest forms of transnational business governance, whereby state actors regulating the environmental and social externalities of business operating within their domestic jurisdictions must redefine the sharing of regulatory power with new forms of private authority. In West Africa's major cocoa producer countries, the private sector's commitment to reduce deforestation is situated in the government-led attempt to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+). The findings show that a co-dependent relationship is evolving between corporate and state-led efforts to reduce deforestation, where the success of zero deforestation cocoa relies on synergistic public-private interaction.