



project results

STRENGTHENING THE COCOA AND RUBBER VALUE CHAINS IN IVORY COAST



Market access



Management system



Beneficiary organisation

OCEAN SA is an aggregating organisation co-founded in 2013 as a subsidiary of Cocosource, a Swiss trading company, to purchase and export cocoa, rubber, and cashew nuts. It sources from approximately 15,000 smallholder farmers through partnerships with 15 supplying cooperatives, including ECAM (*Entreprise Coopérative des Agriculteurs de Méagui*), SOCOOPACDI (*Société Coopérative des Producteurs de Café-Cacao de Divo*), CAMAYE (*Coopérative Agricole Mawoube de Yêrê Yêrê*), and SCOPACI (*Société Coopérative des Producteurs Agricoles de Côte d'Ivoire*). OCEAN works closely with these cooperatives, helping them with risk monitoring and providing support to better control and manage their operations.

The challenge

This aligns with OCEAN's vision of using business as a lever for sustainable development, building on its existing Fairtrade, UTZ-RFA (Rainforest Alliance), and Organic certifications. **With the adoption of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), traceability to farm-level origin becomes mandatory for traders and manufacturers placing products on the European market.** Unlike other in-scope commodities such as coffee, cocoa, and palm oil, sustainability initiatives in the rubber sector remain significantly less developed. Given that smallholders account for an estimated 90% of global rubber production, ensuring supply chain transparency is a priority for OCEAN to maintain access to sustainability-focused European markets. In addition to its work with rubber farmers, OCEAN works closely with large cocoa cooperatives certified under standards such as FLO/Fairtrade (Fairtrade Labelling Organisations), FFL (Fair for Life), UTZ-RFA, and Organic, or combinations thereof. However, EU regulatory requirements and customer expectations call for additional steps to strengthen traceability and relationship management with cocoa suppliers and farmers.

The proposed solution

Building on existing long-term partnerships with cooperatives aggregating thousands of smallholder farmers, local rubber and cocoa purchases offer strong potential to improve supply chain traceability and ensure EUDR compliance for the Ivorian rubber and cocoa smallholder sector. To achieve this, **a structured traceability framework must be developed and applied for the smallholder rubber supply chain**, defining traceability requirements (actors, roles, material flows, required data points, and periodicity), standardised documentation for all actors, an internal verification process, and key traceability risks with mitigation measures. In parallel, business operations should be digitalised via an internal management system to aggregate existing traceability data across the cocoa supply base, ensuring precise data collection.

The expected outcomes of the project were:

- 1 The development and validation of a **Smallholder Rubber Traceability Protocol**.
- 2 The full farm-level **polygon mapping for 539 rubber farmers** with land plots of approximately 1,225 hectares.
- 3 The development of an internal **Management Information System (MIS) integrated with cocoa polygon and land-use data**.

PRIORITY TOPICS

Environment and climate change



IMPACT INVESTOR

alterfin

BENEFICIARY ORGANISATION

Ocean

Ivory Coast

NUMBER OF FARMERS REACHED

2,508

AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN

Cocoa, rubber

START DATE

September 2023

END DATE

October 2024

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

€ 34,384

Including € 21,935 (64%)
financed by SSNUP



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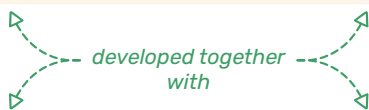


key results



Smallholder Rubber Traceability Protocol co-built

Mapping of existing processes, design workshops, document development, and stakeholder review sessions



ECAM Cooperative

3,500 farmer members

Ivorian cooperative,
supplier of OCEAN

ASAF

(Asia Africa Rubber Industry)

Ivorian rubber processor,
client of OCEAN

+ also benefited to

CAMAYE Cooperative

1,267 farmer members

Ivorian cooperative,
supplier of OCEAN

SDGs supported by the project



1. No poverty

1.5 Building the resilience of vulnerable people

2. Zero hunger

2.3 Improving agricultural productivity and increasing smallholder farmers' income



ECAM staff trained on traceability and cartographic data collection (polygon mapping) for rubber farmers' plots



539

smallholder farmers' plots

polygon mapped representing 1,102 hectares of land



CFA 16,766,000 of premium paid to farmers following traceability implementation

Equivalent to
approximately EUR 25,600
or EUR 233 per farmer



2,508

smallholder farmers integrated
in OCEAN's MIS



lessons learnt

✓ Protocols co-designed with chain users are more likely to scale

A protocol developed jointly with the actors who will use it, grounded in their real operational practices and constraints, gains the credibility and practical fit needed for adoption beyond its original scope. This allows traceability systems to scale organically across a sector, as new actors can adopt an already-proven tool without requiring a bespoke design effort for each new entrant.

✓ Untrained field staff can produce unreliable traceability data

Without dedicated training on cartographic data collection and traceability system use, field staff cannot reliably capture and feed accurate data into an information management system, leaving the entire traceability chain built on unreliable foundations. Investing in capacity building upfront therefore isn't a one-off cost but a precondition for traceability systems to function as intended, ensuring the data collected can be trusted by buyers and used for compliance purposes.

✓ Weight variations along the supply chain undermine traceability accuracy

Cup lump rubber loses significant weight as it moves through storage and transportation stages before reaching the final customer, creating discrepancies between weightings recorded at different points in the supply chain and inconsistencies in total weight sums on tickets. Without a standardised procedure to account for these natural losses, traceability systems risk flagging false discrepancies or, conversely, masking genuine volume diversions, underscoring the need to build expected weight-loss margins into verification protocols from the outset.

Outlook

Between 2023 and 2024, Ocean secured more than EUR 8 million in impact investment from several sources. This sustained and diversified backing from several impact investors reflects increasing confidence in OCEAN's traceability infrastructure and compliance trajectory, positioning the company to access additional financing as it scales its traceable rubber and cocoa volumes and advances toward full EUDR compliance.

