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## REVIEWER'S REPORT

**Manuscript No.: IJAR-58096**

**Title: Character Association, Components of Bean Yield and Compositional Description of Some Early-bearing Cacao (*Theobroma cacao* L.) Hybrids in Nigeria.**

**Recommendation:**

- Accept as it is .....
- Accept after minor revision.....
- Accept after major revision .....**
- Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		x		
Techn. Quality		x		
Clarity			x	
Significance		x		

**Reviewer's ID: JPR-171**

### *Detailed Reviewer's Report*

This study evaluates nine early-bearing cacao hybrids in Nigeria for yield-related traits and nutritional composition. The work addresses an important topic for cacao breeding. However, the manuscript requires major revisions. First, the sample size is very small (nine hybrids, with only five sampled stands per replicate), limiting the robustness of the statistical conclusions. The high R<sup>2</sup> value (97.89%) from stepwise regression appears inflated given the small dataset and raises concerns about overfitting. Second, the methodology is insufficiently described: the fermentation protocol lacks critical details (temperature, duration of turning intervals), and the calculation of pod index uses a conversion factor (0.4) without justification. Third, the correlation matrix (Table 2) is not shown in the manuscript, making the reported correlation coefficients unverifiable. Fourth, the discussion frequently compares findings to outdated references (e.g., ICCO 2012, CRIN 2011) without engaging with recent literature. Fifth, the conclusion overclaims that these hybrids are “recommended” without supporting evidence from multi-location or multi-season trials. Sixth, the paper contains numerous formatting and typographical errors (e.g., “phyto-chemical” as a single term, inconsistent table headings). The authors must provide full correlation tables, improve methodological clarity, use up-to-date references, and temper conclusions. A major revision is required.