



INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON COCOA CERTIFICATION

THE MULTIPLICITY OF STANDARDS IN THE COCOA MARKET: FINDING A WAY FORWARD

- FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT -

24-27 June 2013 in Douala, Cameroon

Introduction

Cocoa certification has been at the centre of intense debate in the international cocoa community ever since the subject was first introduced. From being considered as a niche market only five years ago, the share of Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, UTZ and organic certified cocoa has surged to about 15% of the market nowadays. Certification is often perceived as a consumer-driven process, leading many producers to be suspicious about its benefits for them.

However, it must be acknowledged that the cocoa and chocolate industry is under increasing pressure to demonstrate to consumers that the raw materials it uses to manufacture chocolate comply with specific ethical and sustainability requirements. Given the volume of cocoa traded globally and the complexity of the cocoa value chain, this represents a considerable challenge.

It is widely recognized that certification can be an effective instrument in supplementing other efforts being made to achieve long term sustainability in the cocoa sector. However, despite massive efforts to increase the understanding of the issues involved in certification, fundamental differences still exist between farmers and certifiers. There is also great uncertainty as to whether certification provides a clear benefit to cocoa farmers. There are legitimate questions being asked about certain ongoing practices in certification schemes, while at the same time as many falsehoods and misperceptions are being used in the argument against these schemes.



The International Cocoa Council commissioned a study on the costs, advantages and disadvantages of cocoa certification in 2012. The study recognized that, although certification philosophies vary among the different schemes, they have in common the ideal of improving the livelihoods of cocoa farmers and the sustainability of the cocoa value chain. The study demonstrates that after a few years, co-operatives and their farmers may benefit financially from certification, with most of the increased farmer revenue originating from higher yields. However, there are certain disadvantages, including the apparent inability of smallholder farmers to afford the high costs of certification in the first years of the scheme and the difficulties faced by some farmers in forming groups that help in raising cash for initial investment and in establishing and maintaining the mandatory internal control systems.

Hence it is important first to give the opportunity to both sides of the argument to put their cases comprehensively, and to answer questions from each other and from other stakeholders. The aim is to adopt a consensual approach in

finding ways in which to narrow these differences, and move the certification process forward. This is the rationale and the background to the workshop.

Objectives

The **objectives** of the workshop are to bring together all stakeholders involved in cocoa certification and other standards with a view to building consensus on the model, the process and the best ways to supplement and improve upon existing certification schemes. With the help of key experts, the workshop will draw upon resources from across the spectrum of stakeholders and all along the cocoa value chain, in order to make certain that the benefits of the initiative are commensurate with the investments required for certification. The recommendations from the workshop will form the basis for implementing certification so that it yields an improvement in the livelihoods of farmers.

The **output** expected from the workshop could include a set of recommendations on the best approach to be taken by relevant stakeholders on the broad certification concept, criteria and indicators, processes, reporting, validation and the certification methodology to be adopted as a template for its eventual implementation in the cocoa sector.

Who Should Attend?

Key officials from relevant governments of producing and consuming countries, farmers, cooperative members, executives from cocoa and chocolate companies, representatives from the certification bodies, civil society and research organizations, universities and other relevant institutions.

Presentations and Discussions

The workshop organizer will arrange for prominent local and foreign guest speakers / experts to present specific topics on cocoa certification. Among **the subjects likely to be discussed** at the workshop are:

- (i) Review of the various certification schemes and sustainability standards in place or under preparation;
- (ii) Study of the demand trends for certified cocoa and chocolate products;
- (iii) Discussion of the ICCO study on the costs, advantages and disadvantages of cocoa certification;
- (iv) Perspective of certification bodies; review of the concept, model, process involved in cocoa certification: criteria and indicators, data collection, measurement of indicators, reporting, documentation, monitoring and validation;
- (v) Standards differentiation and convergence ;
- (vi) Perspectives of cocoa farmers and cooperatives;
- (vii) Perspectives from the trade and chocolate industry;
- (viii) Expert advice from researchers and experienced practitioners from the supply chain;
- (ix) The workshop will explore opportunities to work with existing standards and/or options to enable the creation of national and/or international standards, including harmonization of existing standards as well as the role of governments and intergovernmental regulations;
- (x) Other equally pertinent issues relate to the three pillars of sustainability, using certification as one of the many available tools to improve the livelihoods of cocoa farmers in producing countries in the longer term, in the context of formulating national plans based on the platform provided by the Global Cocoa Agenda adopted at the World Cocoa Conference in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in 2012.

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