



Press release

on the 4th General Assembly of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa

Swiss Cocoa Platform faces the future on a firm footing after a 5-year build-up phase

Some things have been achieved, but much work still lies ahead. This is the conclusion of the members' meeting of the Swiss Cocoa Platform, which coincided with the fifth anniversary of this joint initiative of business, civil society and the federal government. In an exchange with guests from the countries of origin of cocoa, the more than 70 members of the association spoke out in favour of further strengthening cooperation and successively expanding efforts to improve the incomes of cocoa farmers and for climate protection.

The annual meeting of the Cocoa Platform, which took place today at the Kulturhof Schloss Köniz, allowed for an interim assessment of the multi-stakeholder initiative launched five years ago. The increase from 41 to 74 members, the development of 14 innovative partnership projects and the increase in sustainable imports from 50 to 71 per cent since 2017 are evidence of a dynamic network that is revitalising cooperation between chocolate manufacturers, raw material traders, retailers, the scientific community, NGOs and the federal government. However, the exchange among the association members and guests from Ghana and Peru clearly shows that sustainable value chains which aim to effectively address the challenges of poverty, child labour, climate and biodiversity need intensified cooperation within and outside the platform.

The perspective of the cocoa-producing countries

Close cooperation with partners in the countries of origin is of central importance. In West Africa in particular, many cocoa farmers are still a long way from earning a living income. The effects of climate change are also omnipresent. Solutions require not only to support individual farming families but must also aim to improve the entire environment in the countries of origin. This can only succeed if the perspective of the cocoa farmers is understood and taken into account in the solutions. At today's Annual General Meeting, several well-known personalities from the partner countries Ghana and Peru took part in the discussions with the Swiss network.

Nelson Adubofour, who as General Secretary of the Fairtrade partner cooperative Kuapa Kokoo represents 100,000 farmers in Ghana, put it in a nutshell: "We are looking for cooperation on equal footing. To achieve this, it is important that we see the farmers not

just as recipients of aid, but as partners in the search for and implementation of appropriate solutions in the fight against poverty, climate change and child labour." Nelson Adubofour points to hopeful examples such as the dynamic agroforestry approach within the SANKOFA project, which was developed participatively with the farmers and is now being applied more and more widely within the cooperative.

Stakeholders take stock

The multi-stakeholder initiative thrives on the interaction and dialogue between the stakeholder groups. "Even if the perspectives and interests differ, the representatives from business, civil society and the federal government see a clear added value in the platform with a roadmap that makes a concrete contribution to the UN Development Agenda 2030," sums up Filippo Veglio, who has been acting as the independent president of the association for two years.

Urs Furrer, director of the industry association Chocosuisse, says on behalf of the companies: "Today, Swiss companies are doing a lot in the area of sustainability. But the problems in the countries of origin exceed our possibilities for intervention. This is where the Cocoa Platform offers concrete added value. In cooperation with the various partners, the commitments of our companies can be strengthened."

Since the founding of the platform, the Swiss Confederation, through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO, has also played an important role in the platform's work. Ambassador Dominique Paravicini, the Federal Council's Delegate for Trade Agreements, emphasises: "We see our role in strengthening cooperation among the actors and facilitating additional investments in poverty reduction and climate protection. The experience of the start-up phase gives cause for optimism. Together with the private sector, SECO was able to implement 14 projects in a total of eight countries with a budget of CHF 30 million, reaching around 90,000 farmers. After the summer break, a future programme will build on the positive experiences and successively expand investments in the countries of origin by increasingly promoting projects in which several members join forces.

The NGO sector is also part of the partnership approach. Kathrin Amacker, President of the Foundation Board of Fairtrade Max Havelaar and Key Note Speaker at today's Annual General Meeting emphasises: "Today we can celebrate an initiative that has developed into a true multi-stakeholder platform of the Swiss cocoa sector. A platform that provides space for discussion, collaboration and innovation." However, Amacker continues, "critical reflections should not be neglected in the future. In view of the major challenges in the value chain, the platform still needs to develop further in this respect."

Annual report 2021 informs about progress and challenges

The [annual report 2021](#) presented at the Annual General Meeting highlights the most important developments in the past year.

- As every year, information is provided on the development of sustainable imports into Switzerland. In 2021, 71% of the cocoa imported into Switzerland came from sustainable production. This is a small drop after last year's big jump from 55% to 74%, but in view of the interim target of 80% by 2025, it is still part of the fundamentally positive trend towards even more sustainable sourcing. By 2030, the intention is for all cocoa imports to be traceably based on sustainable production.
- In 2021, members continued to actively participate in the development and implementation of innovative solutions with systemic impact. By the end of 2021, 88,112 farmers, 26% of them women, had been reached through the fourteen value chain projects in the Platform's two calls for proposals from 2018 and 2019. Linkage
- Collaboration with European partners, the German Sustainable Cocoa Initiative (GISCO), the Belgian Beyond Chocolate platform and the Dutch Sustainable Cocoa Initiative (DISCO) was further strengthened. For example, joint working groups were established in 2021 on the topics of living income, child labour, climate and forest, as well as transparency and traceability.

BOX: About the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa

The Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa is a multi-stakeholder initiative, bringing together more than 70 members from along the global cocoa value chain: chocolate manufacturers, traders, retailers, NGOs, research institutions as well as the Swiss Government, represented by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Together, the members represent more than 90% of Switzerland's cocoa imports.

Launched in 2017, the platform is financed by member fees as well as by public-private partnerships. This enables the implementation of projects that drive real innovation in the sector and create tangible impact, thus linking the high-quality reputation of Swiss chocolate with sustainability.

This collaborative approach makes the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa a flagship project lighthouse project on how specific challenges in value chains can be addressed and serves as a beacon for other commodity sectors.

[Booklet about SWISSCO](#)

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