

Press release

European platforms for sustainable cocoa sign Memorandum of Understanding

Bundled commitment for sustainable cocoa in Europe

Berlin/Bern/Brussels, 29 June 2020 – The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO) and the Belgian platform Beyond Chocolate have committed to joining forces for a more sustainable cocoa value chain. They did this by signing a Memorandum of Understanding¹.

The three initiatives bring together a large part of the national cocoa and chocolate industry, retailers, civil society organizations, research institutions and representatives of the respective national government. By cooperating, the platforms want to accelerate efforts to combat the key issues in the cocoa industry. These include the eradication of the worst forms of child labor, achieving a living income for the cocoa farmers and their families, improving the transparency and traceability in the cocoa supply chain and stopping the deforestation linked to cocoa production. The three countries account for about 19 percent of the global cocoa imports, mainly sourced from West Africa, and 11 percent of the global cocoa consumption².

In January 2018, the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and the Swiss Platform already signed an MoU. The current agreement also includes the multi-stakeholder initiative Beyond Chocolate, which has been established in Belgium in December 2018. One of the agreement's cornerstones is the harmonized monitoring system. The three platforms have agreed on common indicators to monitor and report on the four main challenges in the cocoa sector: child labor, poverty of farmers, cocoa traceability, and deforestation. The coordination of these challenges at a European level will improve transparency and enable a better strategic priority setting.

¹ A cooperation agreement

² Source: International Cocoa Organization (ICCO), QBCS, Vol. XLVI No. 1, Table 19 and 40; year of reference: import 2018/19, consumption 2018/19

Wolf Kropp-Büttner, Chairman of the Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, said: “The three cocoa platforms together build the basis of a coordinated European approach towards a sustainable cocoa value chain. We have all important actors on board, we are in active dialogue with policy level, and – even when on a lower level – as well with the producing countries. To monitor impact and make results available in a transparent way allows learnings and improvement.”

Ernst A. Brugger, President of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa, said: “Today, we have reached another level of strength to promote sustainability in the cocoa sector. By growing our collaboration in Europe, we can multiply our efforts for the benefit of cocoa farmers and the environment in countries of origin.”

Philippe de Selliers, Chairman of the Steering Committee of Beyond Chocolate, said: “The three European consuming country platforms will now continue to work together, exchange knowledge and learn from each other. This will help us accelerate the joint efforts that benefit all farming households involved.”

The next concrete step is the further development of the common monitoring system. For this, the three initiatives already developed common key performance indicators for the strategic challenges. A priority topic is also the due diligence of human rights in the cocoa supply chain. The three European initiatives will discuss strategies and impacting measures in a workshop and will bring these up on an international level. Furthermore, the platforms will organize several joint learning events and activities on issues related to a sustainable cocoa value chain.

About the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa:

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, represented by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), the German sweets and confectionary industry, the German retail grocery trade, and civil society. Jointly, the multi-stakeholder initiative aims to improve the livelihood of cocoa farmers and their families as well as to increase the proportion of certified cocoa according to sustainability standards. To achieve these objectives, the members of GISCO closely liaise with the governments of cocoa producing countries. Currently, GISCO has about 80 members and is open to other interested parties. See here for more information: www.kakaoforum.de

About the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa:

The Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa brings together actors from the cocoa and chocolate industry, the public sector, non-governmental organisations, and research institutes. The members of the Cocoa Platform actively engage to promote sustainability in the cocoa value chain.

See here for more information: www.kakaoplattform.ch/en

About Beyond Chocolate:

Beyond Chocolate is the Partnership for a sustainable Belgian chocolate industry. Partners in the initiative are working to end deforestation, stimulate education for future generations and provide a living income for cocoa growers. The Partnership was signed by nearly 50 stakeholders from the chocolate industry, public sector, NGO's, retail sector, universities, trade unions, impact investors, labels and member organizations labels.

See here for more information: www.beyondchocolate.be

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