

A man in a yellow t-shirt is crouching in a lush cocoa plantation. He is looking intently at a cocoa pod that is attached to the trunk of a tree. The scene is filled with green leaves and branches, creating a dense and vibrant background. The lighting is natural, highlighting the textures of the leaves and the man's clothing.

2024 Partnership Meeting Summary

Aligning for Global Action
Amsterdam, Netherlands



World Cocoa
Foundation

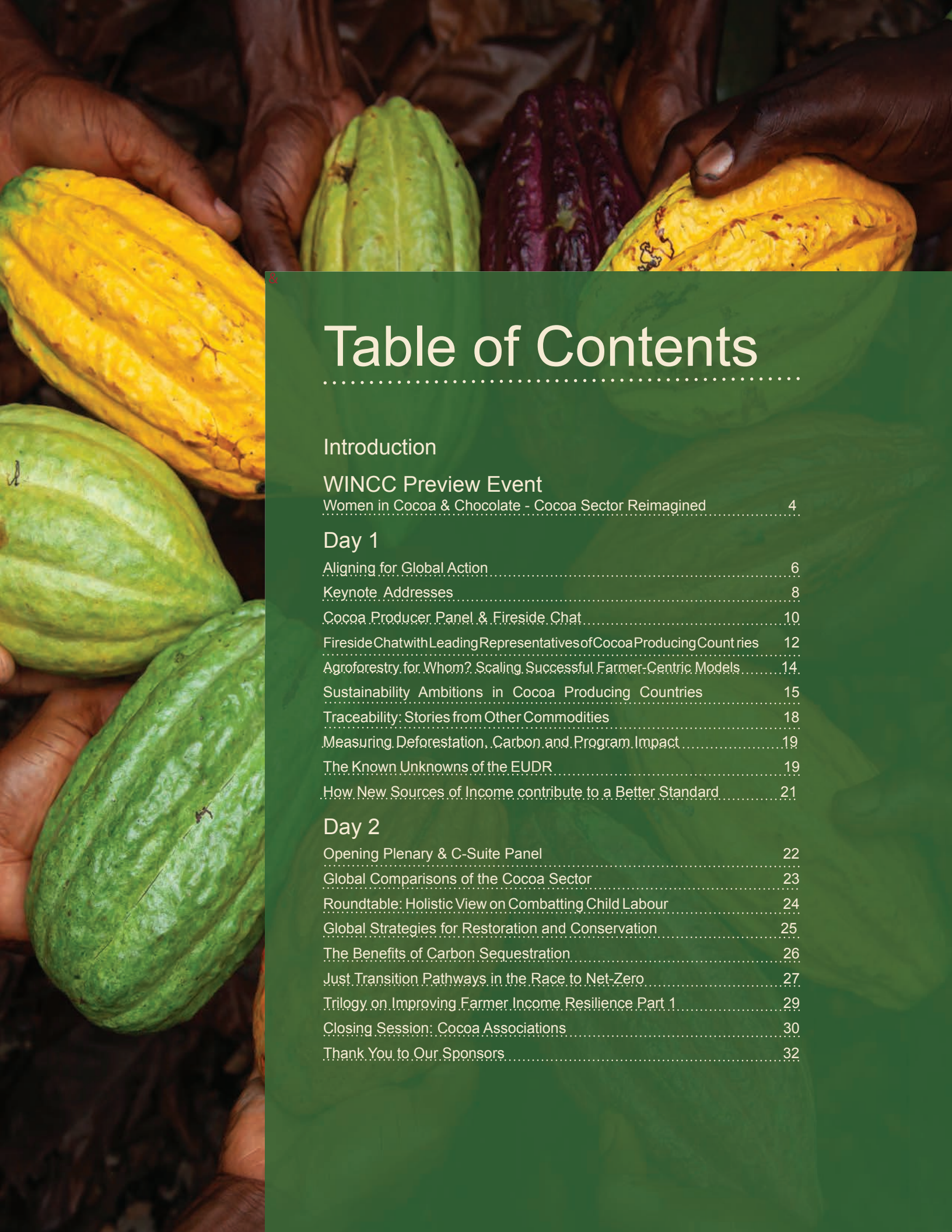


Table of Contents

Introduction

WINCC Preview Event

Women in Cocoa & Chocolate - Cocoa Sector Reimagined 4

Day 1

Aligning for Global Action 6

Keynote Addresses 8

Cocoa Producer Panel & Fireside Chat 10

Fireside Chat with Leading Representatives of Cocoa Producing Countries 12

Agroforestry for Whom? Scaling Successful Farmer-Centric Models 14

Sustainability Ambitions in Cocoa Producing Countries 15

Traceability: Stories from Other Commodities 18

Measuring Deforestation, Carbon and Program Impact 19

The Known Unknowns of the EUDR 19

How New Sources of Income contribute to a Better Standard 21

Day 2

Opening Plenary & C-Suite Panel 22

Global Comparisons of the Cocoa Sector 23

Roundtable: Holistic View on Combatting Child Labour 24

Global Strategies for Restoration and Conservation 25

The Benefits of Carbon Sequestration 26

Just Transition Pathways in the Race to Net-Zero 27

Trilogy on Improving Farmer Income Resilience Part 1 29

Closing Session: Cocoa Associations 30

Thank You to Our Sponsors 32

Introduction

The global cocoa sector stands at an inflection point, as sustainability efforts, regulatory reforms and supply and demand dynamics combine in complex ways. It was in this context that the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) held our 2024 Partnership Meeting on February 6-7, 2024, in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

The meeting convened more than 500 sustainability leaders from 10 countries representing the private sector, farmer organizations, governments, civil society and academia to explore this year's theme: Aligning for Global Impact. Given the pressing issues facing the sector and the need for broad collaboration, we are proud that our agenda has brought 72 presenters and hundreds of decision-makers together, demonstrating once again that our Partnership Meeting is the leading global forum for cocoa sustainability.

WCF President Chris Vincent outlined WCF's new strategy for driving progress through partnerships across WCF's three focus areas: improving farmer income, combatting child labour and reversing deforestation. This includes an aim to launch distinctive new collaborative programmes, similar to the Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) but that will be addressing farmer income and combatting child labour.

Panellists explored topics like how agroforestry and other income tools can truly benefit cocoa farmers; how companies across the sector will comply with EUDR starting in 2025; how to overcome traceability and other measurement challenges; the perspective of policymakers in origin countries; what cocoa stakeholders can learn from other commodities; and much more. In addition to the challenges, the event celebrated progress in certain areas. For instance, speakers from the European Parliament and European Commission shared how the legislative agenda on deforestation and human rights is progressing. And the industry is further building on the unprecedented public private partnership CFI with new initiatives like priority landscapes approaches and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) accounting methodologies.

"Never before have the interconnections between producing and consuming countries been more critical," said Chris Vincent as he addressed the diverse set of attendees and the theme of aligning for global impact. "Despite soaring cocoa prices, 2024 poses formidable challenges for farmers, with adverse weather conditions and disease affecting yields in West Africa. Our plenary sessions and breakouts explored how to achieve alignment to deliver the results we are all seeking to achieve."

We look forward to continued partnership in advance of our 2025 Partnership Meeting taking place in March 2025 in São Paulo, Brazil.



WINCC Preview Event: Women in Cocoa & Chocolate - Cocoa Sector Reimagined - A sustainable cocoa eco-system through representative decision

MODERATOR

Caroline Lubbers
Network Director
Women In Cocoa &
Chocolate Network
(WINCC)

SPEAKERS

Liliana Jiménez Molina
Cocoa Farmer
María del Campo'

Ana Portocarrero
Gender Advisor
KIT Royal Tropical
Institute

Alejandra Sarasty
CEO
Cordillera Chocolates

Leticia Yankee
Cocoa Producer &
Director
Cocoa Mmaa

Did you ever 'scan' the room you were in to see who is present? Have you ever noticed that decision makers often don't represent the stakeholders? A more sustainable and prosperous supply chain requires more representative decision making. The gender gap in supply chains today, especially in the cocoa sector, is an indicator of the value and power inequality. It is also a basic gap recognized as part of the new EU directives on human rights. No impact on this gap, means no progress on sustainability. Shaping a more representative and sustainable sector with more representative decision making is a necessary vehicle for a more sustainable sector. The Women In Cocoa and Chocolate (WINCC) Network event during the Amsterdam Cocoa Week brought a wide variety of women together from all over the globe and value chain.

Caroline Lubbers updated the women present on the latest developments of the network and its focus areas. In order to reach a sustainable and prosperous cocoa eco-system, WINCC is creating the conditions for people to be aware, to act, and hold each other accountable for decision-making in impact areas to be representative. Through the Mentorship Program, the Speakers Academy and events WINCC is creating action & access. WINCC encourages the women in the sector to give their input for Speakers Academy and for mentorships, to join the WINCC LinkedIn group, participate in WINCC events and to use the "Scanning the room" slide where possible to spread the word.

Ana Portocarrero guided the women through an exercise to 'Scan the room' asking them to imagine entering a conference on sustainable cocoa and looking around. They recognize some faces, see new faces and miss some faces. Scanning the room means: developing one's own awareness towards the presence or absence of people and interests in a space where those people and interests should be represented. Scanning the room means looking at a panel and asking, is everybody represented on the panel? Are local communities represented as much as corporations? Are the decisions being made bringing benefits to all people involved? How does this shape the design and influence the results of the process, project or initiative? This led to a lively discussion of women sharing their experiences from different continents and places within the cocoa value chain.

After this inspiring session, three inspiring women took to the stage to share their different experiences on representative decision making in their daily environment. Leticia Yankee shared her experience in Ghana where women need to be more acknowledged in the decision-making process. Outside of the cooperative, decision-making is not inclusive and there is still a lot to be gained. 'Women's issues must be taken seriously: consider women's issues priority because cocoa cannot be sustainable without the participation of women'. On the other side of the world, Liliana Jiménez Molina is representing the model 'María del Campo', as a Colombian cocoa farmer, passionate about cocoa and chocolate who personifies female empowerment, promoting the well-being of producer families and promoting sustainable Colombian cocoa. Since María del Campo personifies female empowerment in many ways, she finds inclusive decision making crucial for women to really participate in the cocoa value chain. She actively inspires women to achieve this by believing in themselves and finding role models to work on their own self-esteem and leadership. Alejandra Sarasty recently launched a hugely ambitious program that aims to generate a long-term transformation for women transformation for women cocoa producers. The very strong focus on women empowerment has had great success. Getting women involved into the decision-making process however has not been easy. The awareness is still needed and classical role patterns are dominant and hard to break through. However, inclusive decision is the way to go, and by training and growing women, they will gradually participate in leadership including the decision-making process.



Day 1: Plenary Sessions

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director ESG,
ACT

SPEAKER

Chris Vincent
President, World
Cocoa Foundation

ALIGNING FOR GLOBAL IMPACT



WCF President Chris Vincent opened the conference in the historic port city of Amsterdam, which he said was tied to the world's largest import volume of cocoa. He especially welcomed Christine McGrath of Mondelez to her first Partnership Meeting as the new WCF Chair. He said the attendees shared the ambition of creating a thriving and equitable cocoa sector.

Vincent listed some of the main events planned for the two-day meeting and said the conference theme of "Aligning for Global Action" highlighted the critical interconnection between cocoa-

producing and cocoa consuming countries. He said that with impending legislation such as the EUDR and the EU Due Diligence directive, the impact of consuming country legislation was shaping the sustainability debate. With many participants involved in the implementation of programs in the producing countries, he stressed the importance of global alignment between regulatory bodies and producing country governments, farmers groups, industry and civil society. The plenary and breakout sessions would explore ways to secure this alignment and deliver transformative results.

Vincent listed significant changes within WCF since the last partnership meeting in Brussels in October 2022 and discussed how the new strategy unveiled at that meeting was being translated into action. The first strategic move, he said, was assembling a dynamic senior leadership team to align with the WCF's global aspirations. He mentioned Dougal Freeman, the new COO and VP of Operations, Mariette Verbruggen, the new VP of Corporate Affairs and Peter Kogler, the new VP of Programs. He also welcomed Bert Kramer as new Finance Director, and Mawuli Coffie who recently joined as Country Director in Ghana to work alongside Youssouf Ndjore, the Country Director in Côte d'Ivoire.

To execute the new strategy, the WCF would focus on two key functions. Firstly, to commit to creating and leading collaborative programs that deliver systemic change, exemplified by the groundbreaking Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) and CocoaAction Brazil. These programs were true partnerships between WCF members, producing country governments and funders. They were aligned with producing countries' own sustainability priorities and long-term cocoa development plans and addressed the root causes in each of the three focus areas in the WCF's vision - deforestation, child labor and farmer income. Each focus area was complex, with multiple root causes that required multi-dimensional solutions. As a result, WCF would create and lead programs that target systemic issues that World Cocoa Foundation is best positioned to tackle, acknowledging that other organizations may be better positioned to address different challenges.

Secondly, WCF's emphasis would grow as a convener, extending beyond historical boundaries, fostering collaboration and partnership, not just between WCF members, but across all stakeholders invested in delivering results. WCF's resources would concentrate on a limited number of critical initiatives to maximize impact – such as the development of an industry-wide deforestation dataset and supporting the implementation of the African Regional Standard.



PLATINUM SPONSOR ADDRESS

Amber Johnson, Global Vice President of Cocoa Enterprise at Mars Wrigley, thanked Chris Vincent and WCF organizing the 2024 Partnership Meeting as it was one of the few opportunities the sector has to share challenges and learnings. It is also a time to reflect on what is needed to accelerate the transformation towards a cocoa sector that is better for the people and the planet.

Johnson continued that without cocoa, Mars would not be able to make the beloved products such as M&Ms, Snickers, Mars Bars, and more. This year's Partnership Meeting theme, "Aligning for Global Action," recognizes that members of the WCF are aligned in the recognition of the challenges that face the sector: cycles of poverty, income inequality, climate change, deforestation, gender inequality, and the need for more progress.

Johnson said the sector has made progress addressing deforestation and mapping farms, but there continues to be a shared concern and continued investments around the challenges that remain. Today, Johnson reflected, is an opportunity to address those challenges such as achieving living income for farmers across the entire sector in a sustained way.

Johnson continued by saying that all could agree that the sector can do more to scale up our impact. Given these realities, it's imperative that the sector look to one another and collectively lean in to drive uncommon collaborations that will make a bigger impact, combatting the challenges facing this complex yet vibrant supply chain.

Johnson stressed that the essence of sustainability lies in transcending competition. She explained, "It is not about us, it's about the millions of people across the entire supply chain and their well-being and that of our shared environment which should be

SPEAKER

Amber Johnson
Global VP,
Cocoa Enterprise
Mars Wrigley
WCF Board Member



Day 1: Plenary Sessions

SPEAKER
Pascal Grotenhuis
Dutch Vice Minister
of Foreign Affairs

the compass guiding our collaborative journey towards a more sustainable future.”

Finally, Johnson said it was time for a collective call to action, encouraging all to come together collectively and actively to transform words into tangible action, create meaningful impact that once and for all can actually be sustained. She said that meeting this moment required more innovation, more partnership, more trust, and more determination than ever.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: A WELCOME FROM THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT

Pascal Grotenhuis greeted the participants and extended a very special welcome to all representatives from producing countries that had travelled to Amsterdam. She said global action was needed to transform the cocoa sector, but global action without coordination or joint strategies, without uncommon partnerships would get the sector nowhere and alignment is needed.

She continued that things are changing for the better and going in the right direction. The Dutch government is pleased to see that Living Income has become the central sustainability issue in the cocoa sector. She explained this is important as issues like child labour, access to healthcare, deforestation, can only be solved if farmers incomes significantly increases.



For the Netherlands, a living income for cocoa farmers is the centerpiece and first steppingstone to tackling other issues. If a business cannot be profitable, how can it ever be sustainable? However, despite all the efforts, the world has still not seen a measurable, significant, and consistent increase in farmers income. The sector is too far behind achieving this goal.

Grotenhuis reminded the audience that the Netherlands is the largest cocoa bean importer in the world, and a major re-exporter of cocoa products such as cocoa powder and cocoa butter. She said she was thrilled and proud this year's Partnership Meeting was taking place in Amsterdam, with a full week of dialogue, tasting and inspiration under the umbrella of Amsterdam Cocoa Week. The Netherlands' position in the world, also means that the Netherlands has the responsibility to pull its weight when it comes to a sustainable cocoa value chain.

The Netherlands supports EU legislation on deforestation and social due diligence, and recognizes that accompanying measures to support production countries are essential for successful implementation and a positive impact for small holder farmers. Grotenhuis stressed that only together can the cocoa sector create a trade system that works for all. This is why the Dutch government supports the



Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana Cocoa Initiative towards a joint economic pact with industry partners.

Grotenhuis added that the Dutch government works with partners such as IDH, Solidaridad, the Dutch Development Bank FMO and many others. They support local farmer organizations to create an environment where cocoa farmers can thrive.

Grotenhuis ended her speech by bring up that by 2030 all UN nations needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure that all farmers make a living income. If the world wants to realize the 2030 goals, we all need to change the way business is done now and the world needs to do it together. Purchasing practices need to change so that farmers can make a living income, value needs to distribute fairly along the value chain, and if the upcoming EU legislation creates challenges, Grotenhuis challenged the audience to use the upcoming legislation as the momentum for change, by preparing now to be ready in time and use the opportunities that will come with the EUDR.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Andrey Kuleshov began his presentation by explaining that the Common Fund for Commodities was created to secure fair and equitable consumption of commodities worldwide. It was started in the 1980s and the current slogan is "Making commodities work for everyone."

He continued by explaining that commodities are infinitely divisible. Money and commodities have been intertwined for millennia. This money function of commodities, especially in the Netherlands, has been the foundation for building today's global financial system.

The global financial system has developed since the time we relied solely on commodities, it developed the concept of "credit" and "financing." This has led to a shift away from the system relying solely on commodities, and it has also led to money being separated from commodities.

Kuleshov explained that in today's world, credit is rising which makes the financial system less stable. The stability of the financial system depends on the mastery of the policymakers to keep it stable. Additionally, according to Kuleshov, it does appear that there will be a greater role for commodities moving forward since commodities are collateral, and collateral is money.

Kuleshov shared a diagram from the National Bureau of Economic Research that illustrated how commodities, which are included in the global financial indexes are becoming more volatile with the financial markets while commodities, which are not in the indexes, are not.

The financialization of commodities remains a widely suspected phenomenon. The debate has centered on whether financialization has caused greater volatility, and a lot of research says it doesn't but that it can amplify the volatility that comes from small changes in the physical fundamentals amplified through the circuits of financial markets and delivered back to the commodity sector. Interdependence of the commodity markets with financial markets can be expected to increase, and if/when financial markets suffer from greater volatility, cocoa will not be immune, no commodity will be immune, from an increase in volatility.

At this point, Kuleshov pivoted the presentation back to his organization, Common Fund for Commodities, a development finance institution, and how they invest in developing countries and equitable commodity value chains. This led him to ask if the audience thought if is commodity market volatility neutral and benign? He postulated that no it is not.

SPEAKER
Andrey Kuleshov
Global Economist
Common Fund for
Commodities

Day 1: Plenary Sessions

MODERATOR

Kristy Leissle
Founder & CEO
African Cocoa
Marketplace Inc

Whoever is most vulnerable to commodity market volatility, whoever is least secure in their income, will pay the highest price for mitigating the volatility that comes from the top of the global commodity value chain all the way down to the bottom. In a commodity like cocoa where the primary production is done by the poor and vulnerable people in developing countries, Kuleshov postulated that the cost of market volatility accumulates at the very base of the pyramid with the very primary producers of commodities, and this makes it a development issue.

SPEAKERS

Nana Sarpong Goaso
Asunafo North
Cooperative Farmers
Union, Ghana

In conclusion, the commodity markets and the financial markets are interdependent and volatile, and volatility is toxic for the sustainability of global commodity value chains. But you cannot aggregate the commodity value chain without finance which leads us to impact finance.

Guilherme Moura
Brazilian Confederation
of Agriculture and
Livestock

Kuleshov used the last few minutes to explain how the Common Fund for Commodities aims to put SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) at the heart of transforming global agriculture.

COCOA PRODUCER PANEL

Yluminada Ortega
Cacao Florencia Ortega
Dominican Republic

Kristy Leissle opened the panel by saying that there were ideological gaps in the cocoa value chain, making it difficult for producers to make themselves understood. It was important to involve growers in the process. The panel was organized around key points, such as the cocoa value chain, deforestation, sustainability, traceability, and the health of the cocoa producer.

Ousmane Traoré
ECAKOOG Cocoa
Producers Association in
Côte d'Ivoire

Ousmane Traoré, who has had 25 years of experience in cocoa farming and chairs the board of a cooperative in southern Côte d'Ivoire, said that to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers it was essential to set a guaranteed fixed price. The government and the Conseil Café-Cacao were still raising awareness and running information sessions for producers, but the question was what the grower gains by complying with the new EUDR regulations.

Guilherme Moura, president of the Brazilian Cocoa Chamber of Commerce and a fifth-generation cocoa farmer, said to improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers they must be guaranteed a decent wage and efforts to achieve this must focus on technology. For him, good productivity leads to diversification of the farmer's resources, given that cocoa is subject to the vagaries of the market. To achieve these objectives, there needed to be open collaboration between the players in the cocoa sector, producers, and manufacturers. Regarding the international traceability system, it should be noted that in Brazil 28 percent of national cocoa production comes from agroforestry. This implied the restoration of degraded areas, and with over 90,000 cocoa farmers spread across Brazil, traceability was a serious challenge.

Yluminada Ortega of Cacao Florencia Ortega in the Dominican Republic said that to improve producers' living conditions, they need to have access to appropriate training to enable them to meet the challenges facing the sector. European regulations on deforestation apply, but there is a need for continuity in raising awareness. Nana Sarpong Goaso, president of Fairtrade Ghana with around 30 years' experience in cocoa farming, said improving the living conditions of cocoa farmers must start with establishing a fair price, which guarantees a sustainable industry. He also emphasized the need for better healthcare programs.

FIRESIDE CHAT: NET ZERO

Joost Gorter framed the session around the complexities of net zero commitments, particularly in the context of forest conservation. He acknowledged the intricacies involved but expressed confidence that practical solutions could be found.

Roselyn Fosuah Adjei acknowledged the concern about how the issue could be overcomplicated because of the complexity of the issues, but said the true complexity often lay in how it was communicated, not the actions themselves. She highlighted Ghana as an example, explaining that the country had been navigating carbon markets since 2008 and had developed a robust framework designed to address deforestation systematically, with a focus on collaboration across various sectors. She detailed Ghana's approach, explaining its emphasis on jurisdictional programs that encompassed large geographical areas. This, she noted, created a streamlined pathway for companies to become involved. Ghana had proactively tackled many of the technical and logistical aspects, making it easier for companies to focus on contributing to real, on-the-ground change. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of equitable benefit-sharing, ensuring that all stakeholders involved in protecting forests reaped the rewards fairly.

She expressed a hint of frustration at the disproportionate focus on planting trees while existing forests continue to be lost. She portrayed it as a leaky bucket, questioning why companies were enthusiastic about planting trees but seemed less motivated to prioritize the protection of mature forests. She stressed the need for a balanced approach that included both protection and the planting of new trees. She said one hurdle to tackling the issue was the excessive use of confusing terms like 'net zero', calling for a shift toward action-oriented language that resonated with the public.

Adriaan Korthuis agreed that over-reliance on acronyms and technical jargon often obscured the core mission. He said that when businesses and countries collaborated directly on protecting forests and restoring landscapes, they should focus on the environmental and social impact instead of fixating on complex accounting systems or claiming carbon neutrality.

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director ESG,
ACT

SPEAKERS

Roselyn Fosuah Adjei
Forestry Commission
of Ghana

Peter Koelger
Vice President,
Programmes
World Cocoa
Foundation

Adriaan Korthuis
Co-Founder &
Managing Partner,
Climate Focus



Day 1: Plenary Sessions

Korthuis's message was to avoid framing efforts in terms of offsets or carbon neutrality. Instead, emphasize contributions toward protecting communities and forests. He suggested that this approach was not only simpler but also offered a more compelling story that companies could use to connect with their consumers

Peter Koegler echoed these sentiments but cautioned against abandoning quantifiable indicators altogether. He emphasized the need for a balance, suggesting that while numerous complex metrics exist, focusing on selecting a few impact indicators could provide clarity and track meaningful progress. He explained that documenting changes from a concrete baseline to a defined target added credibility and simplified communication. Fosuah Adjei agreed, stressing that while the concept of net-zero had its place, action must always take precedence. She said the primary obstacle had been excessive focus on definitions and goal-shifting, rather than scoring actual "goals" in terms of making a difference on the ground. She stressed the need to assess progress and stay flexible to adapt to the dynamic reality of climate action. She spoke about collaborative models working in Ghana, relating how Ghana had seen fruitful collaboration with numerous private companies, especially in the cocoa sector. However, she noted that companies often sought a degree of attribution, a desire to quantify their specific contribution to emissions reductions or forest restoration efforts. This, she said, stemmed from a natural desire to communicate their concrete positive impact.



Fosuah Adjei acknowledged the challenge of pinpointing the carbon impact of a company's actions within the intricate mosaic of Ghana's landscape. With its multitude of smallholder farms, measuring impact on a one- or two-hectare scale became impractical. She proposed that the solution lay in aggregation, which is where Ghana's jurisdictional approach excels. By working within a large jurisdictional landscape that encompassed cocoa farms, other food crops, and forestry systems, it became possible to identify win-win scenarios with well-defined governance principles.

On re-defining attribution, she suggested exploring a new way of thinking about company contributions and attribution. Rather than focusing solely on quantifying emissions reductions in direct relation to Company A or Company B, the focus could be on the collective impact of all contributions within the landscape. She explained that a metric system could be developed based on financial commitments, clearly linking them to the overall progress achieved in emissions reductions or forest restoration. She acknowledged that a 'take-over' model, where a single company assumes responsibility for an entire area, remained a possibility but was unlikely due to the structure of the cocoa industry.



Koegler said the World Cocoa Foundation could play a crucial role in facilitating this type of collaboration. He envisioned the WCF bringing together companies and governments to establish a shared vision, define landscapes for collaboration, set clear goals, and collectively secure funding to achieve desired outcomes.

Korter asked Korthuis to assess how this jurisdictional landscape approach could attract additional financing from the wider climate market. Korthuis acknowledged the innovative nature of the jurisdictional proposal, explaining how it differed from the traditional way carbon markets had operated. He explained that the conventional approach involved first measuring and certifying units of emission reductions, which a buyer could then claim in its entirety. Ghana's model, however, explored a different form of attribution where the focus was on quantifying and valuing the collective impact of all contributions.

He praised this new model, noting that carbon markets offered an effective way to quantify environmental impact and assess the cost-effectiveness of interventions. However, he emphasized that the most crucial aspect was how collaborative efforts, and their achievements were communicated to stakeholders, clients, and the broader public. He said that the current focus on net-zero commitments and carbon neutrality could often be short-lived. In contrast, a narrative centered on collaboration, on working alongside governments and local stakeholders, held the promise of greater longevity and impact.

Korthuis said that while anyone could claim "net zero" in isolation, the true test of commitment lay in actual progress achieved through collaboration. He pointed out the futility of reaching such targets while global deforestation rates continued to rise, and the planet's temperature remained on an alarming trajectory. He stressed that combating climate change was a collective effort that extended far beyond individual companies or organizations.

Koegler highlighted the numerous social and environmental benefits which came from collaborative approaches. While acknowledging the importance of carbon accounting, he said the returns on investment in jurisdictional programs extended far beyond carbon alone. Improved yields for farmers, restored watersheds, and enhanced biodiversity were just some of the positive outcomes that resonated deeply with consumers and helped enhance a company's reputation.

Fosuah Adjei acknowledged the potential educational challenge but framed it as an immense opportunity. She expressed confidence that, with the right messaging, consumers could be brought up to speed on the complexities of climate action. She also pointed out that many companies were already shifting their focus, choosing to finance tangible initiatives on the ground rather than rely solely on offsets or abstract targets. She stressed the importance of highlighting the progress made and the lives transformed through collaborative climate programs.

Korthuis noted that this discussion was not unique to the world of cocoa. Similar debates about international collaboration and impactful action were happening in sectors ranging from dairy and beef to coffee and rice. He expressed hope that the jurisdictional model and emphasis on collaboration pioneered in the cocoa sector could provide a blueprint and source of inspiration for other global industries.

Koegler praised the Cocoa & Forest Initiative (CFI) as a groundbreaking example of public-private partnership, bringing together entire sectors and producing countries around common goals. He emphasized the opportunity of allowing such programs to be presented to external funders as a proven and impactful model

Day 1: Plenary Sessions

MODERATOR

Michel Arrion
Executive Director
International Cocoa
Organization (ICCO)

SPEAKERS

Joseph Boahen Aidoo
Chief Executive,
Ghana Cocoa Board

Yves Brahima Koné,
Executive Director,
Conseil du Café
Cacao, Côte d'Ivoire

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH LEADING REPRESENTATIVES OF COCOA PRODUCING COUNTRIES

Asked by Michel Arrion to discuss the fall in cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire, Yves Brahima Koné said that unquestionably climate change was the single biggest factor behind the decline. He described the devastation inflicted by extreme weather events, especially coastal flooding that wiped out entire cocoa plantations and compounded the challenges already posed by aging plantations and limited productivity.

Joseph Aidoo also pointed to climate change as a destructive force, and said Ghana also faced the unique challenge of battling the Cocoa Swollen Shoot Virus Disease (CSSVD), causing vast losses in production potential. He said unpredictable weather patterns disrupted the delicate balance needed by cocoa trees to thrive, and that stressed trees could become more susceptible to diseases like CSSVD.

Koné stressed the importance of exploring a broad range of solutions to boost production. To find the best path forward, he proposed a collaborative effort, calling for a meeting with industry experts to determine a comprehensive strategy that included a strong emphasis on rehabilitating existing but underperforming plantations and exploring ways to increase overall productivity. He believed that with focused investment and attention, production on existing farms could be significantly revitalized.

Aidoo supported getting the most out of existing cocoa farms and the concept of “vertical production” to maximize the number of cocoa pods produced by each tree. He stressed the inherent environmental benefits of cocoa trees, such as their role in carbon sequestration and biodiversity and argued that cocoa farming should be supported as a tool for combating deforestation, not seen as a cause of it. He backed land-use policies that prioritized rehabilitation and discouraged expansion into vulnerable forest areas.

Arrion raised the issue of how farmers could be incentivized to remain dedicated to cocoa production and how governments and industry partners could help to keep cocoa farming attractive. He suggested that offering better farm gate prices, the direct price paid to farmers, might be a key factor. Koné agreed on the need to improve prices, and noted the paradox that although cocoa cultivation had been a cornerstone of Ivorian culture and identity for generations, this had not translated into a sustainable livelihood due to unpredictable price fluctuations. He criticized the current over-reliance on volatile market prices, arguing that it left farmers vulnerable and hindered efforts to make cocoa farming an attractive long-term prospect. In an intriguing turn, he suggested revisiting the old quota systems used to regulate the market, believing they might offer a better balance of stability for both producers and consumers.

Aidoo described the need for a fundamental “moral and ethical” shift in how to approach the farmer. He said income should not be left entirely to the whims of volatile markets, where short-term profiteering can overshadow the long-term health of the sector. Although he acknowledged that the current high prices due to supply shortages offered temporary relief, he said long-term solutions were urgently needed to ensure a fair income for farmers regardless of market fluctuations. Aidoo cited the example of the Living Income Differential (LID) initiative, demonstrating the power of collaborative action by countries like Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in driving change toward fairer pricing.

Arrion asked whether the two countries were prepared to meet the standards set by the upcoming EU regulations designed to ensure traceability and combat deforestation within the cocoa sector, which emphasizing the shared goals of environmental responsibility and ethical sourcing. How would the costs of compliance be covered?

Koné said Côte d'Ivoire had already taken significant proactive steps toward improving its cocoa sector management. He detailed specific measures including issuing identification cards to farmers, implementing traceability systems designed to track the supply chain, and ensuring better overall oversight of cocoa exports to prevent illegal beans from entering the market. However, he noted that compliance systems were extremely expensive to implement and maintain.

This created a substantial financial burden that now fell entirely on the shoulders of Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa producers, who were already facing immense pressures from climate change and volatile markets. While he supported the noble goals of the EU regulations, the financial strain they were imposing created an additional challenge for Ivorian cocoa farmers. He urged the EU and other international players to consider the impact on the ground and find ways to share the responsibility of making these systems sustainable.

Aidoo agreed with the importance of the EU's focus on deforestation and ethical sourcing within the cocoa sector. He said protecting the environment was a responsibility all stakeholders must share, and Ghana was committed to playing its part and working collaboratively. But he said the EU regulations placed a heavy burden of proving traceability on small-scale farmers, an expectation that was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to meet due to their limited resources, education on technological systems, and technical capabilities. Governments had to play a leading role in fulfilling such requirements, he said. He noted Ghana's efforts to develop a national traceability system but insisted that the broader market, including international buyers, needed to step up and share the economic responsibility to ensure the system's success and fairness to farmers. He urged the EU to put fair farmer income at the core of their regulations and work with producing countries to find collaborative solutions that benefited everyone while prioritizing the wellbeing of those at the heart of the cocoa supply chain.

Arrion said the recurring issues that emerged in the discussion were: “Are you ready?” in terms of meeting challenges, and “Who will pay?” for the costs associated with climate adaptation, fairer markets, and new compliance regulations. He emphasized the need for dialogue and collaboration among governments, producers, and global market players. The path forward had to prioritize finding sustainable solutions that support cocoa farmers while ensuring the protection of forests and ethical production practices.

AGROFORESTRY FOR WHOM? SCALING SUCCESSFUL FARMER-CENTRIC MODELS

The panel focused on the importance of agroforestry in combating climate change and supporting sustainable agriculture. It examined the challenges faced by farmers in adopting agroforestry and discussed possible solutions, including the role of various stakeholders in promoting agroforestry. Speakers emphasized the need for collective action and strategic planning and the key role of companies in addressing the low rate of adoption of agroforestry by farmers. It was important to preserve and increase biomass on farms, help farmers understand the intrinsic value of agroforestry practices and find ways to measure agroforestry adoption over the long term.

Kwame Obeng said internal and external factors influenced the adoption of agroforestry practices. External factors included shocks, political, economic and social issues and the nature of the agroforestry intervention. Internal factors included livelihood, assets (human, physical, natural, financial, and social), farmer perception, and decision-making within households.



Day 1: Breakout Sessions

MODERATOR

Charlette Ouattara
Cocoa & Forests
Initiative Manager,
Côte d'Ivoire
World Cocoa
Foundation

He said companies had a role in promoting agroforestry, such as working with farmer cooperatives and setting up community land-raises and youth teams. Challenges included the lack of information-sharing among companies, the short-term nature of project funding, and the lack of alignment between company and government proposals. He cited a need for collaborative action, including establishing a landscape agroforestry partnership and a national agroforestry strategy.

SPEAKERS

Benjamin Assare
Project Manager
Fairtrade Africa

Juliette Cody, lead for climate and nature at Barry Callebaut, said her organization believed agroforestry supported resilience and protection, and it had clear climate change and education commitments. It had operated an intensified agroforestry program since 2022 focused on West Africa and South Africa. She emphasized the importance of creating an environment that worked for agroforestry, secured by land tenure and tree tenure, but she said agroforestry for farmers involved compromise and there was no perfect agroforestry model. It was important that farmers found intrinsic value in the practice and that there were ways to measure its long-term adoption.

Juliette Cody
Global Lead for
Climate & Nature
Barry Callebaut

Benjamin Assare discussed the Sankofa project in Ghana, which was addressing challenges related to pests and changes in the environment by implementing dynamic agriculture systems. He spoke of the benefits of the Dynamic Agroforestry (DAO) system, which involves cultivating a variety of crops and trees together and created a healthier environment for crops like cocoa. To address some obstacles to implementing the system, such as labor issues, high cost of seedlings, and initial acceptance by farmers, the project had adopted strategies like training local youths, grafting local plants, and setting up marketing strategies for farmers. Assare said the project had been a success. About 500 farmers had adopted the system, about 3.2 million hectares of land had been cultivated.

Olivier Erol
Cocoa Sector Lead
PUR

Olivier Erol spoke about PUR's work in designing, implementing, and monitoring nature-based projects with the aim of restoring ecosystems, empowering communities, and strengthening supply chain resilience. He emphasized the importance of engaging communities and aligning farmers with the goals of the project. Key elements of the approach include ensuring revenue diversity, addressing language needs, raising awareness and having a long-term strategy to manage farmers. Erol stressed the importance of a robust monitoring system and a set of activities linked to livelihoods to incentivize farmers, and outlined Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) which reward beneficiaries of the project.

Rose Goslinga
Co-Founder &
President
PULA

Rose Goslinga discussed the work of her company, GivaBank, primarily an insurance business with a focus on data collection. She said the company had been in operation for 9 years and insured over \$2 million of agricultural investments in crops and livestock, serving about 11 million farmers. With a field team of over 300,000, it works with insurers and reinsurers globally. The clients were mostly Africa-centered, including governments and cocoa companies. A significant part of GivaBank involved collecting data through crop cutting experiments, a method developed in the 1970s by India to measure yields. The bank has collected over 25,000 data points across all states and people in Ghana in the last two years.

Kwame Obeng-Hinneh
Senior Project Officer
Tropenbos Ghana

SUSTAINABILITY AMBITIONS IN COCOA PRODUCING COUNTRIES

The moderator, Joost Gorter, asked each of the panelists to outline their country's approach to sustainability, saying it was important to take into account their different perspectives before addressing common challenges and strategies.

Nene Akwetey-Kodjoe discussed a project in Nigeria aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and expanding trade in response to sustainability challenges. He highlighted the importance of balancing market and government roles in sustainability initiatives.

Michael Ekow from the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) focused on the country's strategies toward sustainable cocoa production. He said Ghana focused on the critical role of smallholder farmers, the country's predominant producers, in achieving sustainability. COCOBOD played a central role in managing the cocoa industry, ensuring the purchase, sale, and overall welfare of the cocoa farmers.

Ekow stressed Ghana's commitment to a sustainable cocoa industry that benefits both the environment and smallholder farmers. He said the drive to empower farmers, enhance productivity through sustainable practices, and ensure traceability and transparency reflected Ghana's holistic approach to addressing the sustainability challenges.

Mme Assande, speaking for Côte d'Ivoire's Conseil Café-Cacao (CCC), provided an overview of the country's efforts toward sustainable cocoa production. She highlighted the implementation of the ARS 1000 standard, focusing on sustainable and traceable cocoa. The key initiatives included the establishment of a national traceability system, promotion of agroforestry, and the adoption of the ARS 1000 standard in June 2021. These efforts aimed to address challenges such as child labor, deforestation, and improving farmer incomes, showcasing Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to sustainable cocoa production to meet market demands.



Meg Phillips detailed the contributions of Koltiva, a global technology firm founded in Indonesia in 2013, to the digitalization of supply chains for Agri businesses, impacting over a million farmers across 60 countries. She discussed Indonesia's cocoa industry dynamics, noting its decline in production but its increase in cocoa processing. Phillips stressed the critical role of smallholder farmers in the cocoa sector, the private sector's commitment to sustainable sourcing, and the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder platforms, like the Cocoa Sustainability Partnership, in advocating for policies that benefit farmers. Highlighting the importance of considering entire landscapes for sustainability, she cited Koltiva's involvement in initiatives like those in the Leuser Ecosystem in Sumatra, aimed at fostering cross-sector collaboration for sustainable development. Phillips urged leveraging international regulations, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation, to synchronize sector-wide efforts toward sustainability at a landscape level. A comprehensive approach involving government support, private sector engagement, and international collaboration was pivotal.

Wendy Arenas looked at the evolving landscape of the cocoa industry in Africa due to the shift from voluntary to regulatory measures aimed at combating deforestation. She highlighted the importance of monitoring deforestation across various commodities, with a special focus on cocoa, and pointed out the need for inclusive discussions that involved the producing countries affected by the regulations. Arenas criticized the current regulatory approach for not adequately engaging with producing countries and overlooking the challenges faced by small farmers. She advocated for a transition phase for implementing new regulations, saying there was a need for flexibility and a recognition of the efforts by countries committed to halting deforestation. She called for open dialogue between global regulators, such as the EU, and stakeholders to ensure a balanced approach that respected environmental goals while considering the practicalities and capacities of countries to comply with the new standards.

The session, moderated by Gorter, showed the multifaceted approaches toward sustainability in the cocoa industry in presentations reflecting views from Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Indonesia, and included a critical examination of regulatory impacts on deforestation. Each country showcased unique strategies to address sustainability. They ranged from enhancing agricultural productivity and trade in Nigeria, fostering sustainable cocoa production in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, to leveraging technology for sustainable supply chain management in Indonesia. The discussions made clear the critical role of smallholder farmers, the necessity for balanced market-government collaboration, and the importance of embracing digital solutions and international standards for traceability and sustainability. Arenas's critique of the evolving regulatory landscape highlighted the need for inclusive dialogue and flexibility in implementing measures to combat deforestation, emphasizing a holistic, collaborative approach that respected the capacities and contributions of cocoa-producing countries. This session illustrated the complexity of achieving sustainability in the cocoa sector, stressing the importance of multi-stakeholder

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director
ESG, ACT

SPEAKERS

Nene Akwetey-Kodjoe
Chief of Party
Traceability and
Resilience in
Agriculture and Cocoa
Ecosystems (TRACE),
Nigeria

Michael Ekow Amoah
Deputy Director
of Research and
Development
Ghana Cocoa Broad

Wendy Arenas
Executive Director
Alisos

Joasiane Flean
epouse Assande
Deputy Director,
Standards &
Certifications
Coffee-Cocoa Council
(CCC), Côte d'Ivoire

Gustavo Marun
Founder & CEO
Hoganas Chocolate,
Ecuador

Meg Phillips
Sector Lead for Cocoa
Koltiva

Day 1: Breakout Sessions

MODERATOR

Tim McCoy
Director, Cocoa Partnerships
Hershey's

SPEAKERS

Lieven Callewaert
President
Roundtable on Responsible Soy

Eileen Gordon
Secretary General
European Coffee Federation

Justin Sherrard
Global Strategist
Animal Protein
Rabobank

Norma Tregurtha
Director of Engagement and Markets
Bonsucro

Inke van der Sluijs
Director Market Transformation
RSPO

TRACEABILITY: STORIES FROM OTHER COMMODITIES

The session featured a diverse panel of experts representing various sectors including coffee, palm oil, sugar, beef, and soy. Tim McCoy stressed the significance of traceability in complying with the EUDR, particularly for commodities like coffee, soy and cocoa. Each panelist discussed their sector's experiences related to enacting the EUDR.

Eileen Gordon from the European Coffee Federation discussed the complexities of the coffee supply chain, emphasizing the similarities it has with cocoa but also its unique challenges in ensuring traceability due to the involvement of numerous intermediaries. She urged collaboration within the coffee sector and across commodities to address these challenges.

Inke van der Sluijs assessed the challenges faced by the palm oil industry, many of which were similar to cocoa, but also highlighted its unique difficulties in achieving traceability, especially in the first mile of the supply chain, due to its liquid state. She spoke of the platform that RSPO is developing aimed at enhancing traceability and ensuring compliance with EUDR.

Norma Tregurtha of Bonsucro, a sustainable sugarcane platform, said that while sugarcane was not currently on the list of commodities under the EUDR, it was important to prepare for it as sugarcane would likely be included soon. She highlighted sugarcane as the biggest commodity by biomass, emphasizing the impact that the legislation will have on countries. Bonsucro's metric-based approach to member sustainability required companies to meet performance thresholds. Tregurtha said their approach had resolved the issues of traceability within the first mile and they were currently looking into how to take it a step further and transmit data from the first mile to provide carbon impact claims

Justin Sherrard outlined the work of the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (GRSB) and discussed the unique challenges in tracing beef due to its complex supply chain and the distribution of multiple products through many supply chains from a single animal. He said the vast majority of beef within the EU is sourced locally and already goes through the livestock passport system, which is different from other commodities. He raised questions about whether traceability systems should merely meet EUDR requirements or go further to promote broader sustainability goals.

Lieven Callewaert of the Round Table on Responsible Soy Association (RTRS) discussed the challenges and initiatives in the soy industry, emphasizing that though the EUDR administrative burden was the same across commodities, the impact on the ground would vary greatly depending on the production differences, especially for soy's large volumes. He discussed how RTRS is contributing to sustainability within the sector including the standard they developed for sustainable soy with 108 indicators and agreed with the need to go beyond EUDR



compliance to address broader sustainability issues.

During the Q&A session, panelists addressed questions regarding the role of data in supporting smallholders, the estimated number of Due Diligence statements across sectors, and the allocation of costs for digitalizing the first mile of the supply chain. They also discussed the implications of EUDR on international trade and the need for collaborative efforts to address traceability challenges effectively. Overall, speakers agreed that all commodities had a common agenda to meet EUDR, but perhaps different pathways of getting there. They agreed there was much to learn from each other across commodities and a need to address sustainability issues beyond the EUDR.

MEASURING DEFORESTATION, CARBON AND PROGRAM IMPACT

Speakers covered various topics, including measuring deforestation using satellite data, linking forest protection to farmers' income security, using spatial data for EU compliance, first-mile traceability, and the challenges of data linkage and reporting requirements. They emphasized the importance of aligning data sources and addressing the drivers of deforestation while considering the diverse needs of households. They raised the challenges faced by households in investing time and money without direct benefits or decreased risks.

Sebastian Van Der Hoek highlighted the importance of credibility in data systems and the need for a common framework or set of reference data for risk assessment. He emphasized the inefficiencies caused by separate companies independently mapping farms and suggested a more collective approach led by national efforts to document farmers. This approach would improve efficiency and enhance the credibility of the system.

Other speakers discussed the use of remote sensing technology to calculate deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions and stressed the need for accessible data and collaboration among stakeholders to improve data sets for assessing risks and promoting sustainability. They touched on the complexities of accounting for greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and the need for collective action to address traceability and forest definition challenges. It was essential for companies to define when to focus on competition and when to focus on collaboration in the drive toward sustainability. It was also important to make a compelling business case for sustainability initiatives if there were to be meaningful change within the industry

MODERATORS

Brigitte Campfens
Director of Sustainability
KPMG N.V.

SPEAKERS

Adeline Dontenville
Programme Manager
Sustainable Cocoa for the International Partnerships Facility
European Forest Institute

Alexi Ernstoff
Senior Sustainability Consultant
Quantis

Sebastian Van Der Hoek
Forest Advisor
Cargill

Yuca Waarts
Senior Researcher
Sustainable Value Chains
Wageningen University

Niels Wielaard
CEO & Founder
Satelligence

THE KNOWN UNKNOWN OF THE EUDR

The discussion covered the impact of the EUDR on the cocoa sector, the role of certification in meeting EUDR obligations, support provided by the European Commission to stakeholders, and the unique challenges faced by countries like Liberia. The panelists also discussed the need for collaboration, data sharing, and collective investment in forest protection and agroforestry support. They emphasized the importance of including small groups of farmers in due diligence systems and the potential unintended consequences on smallholders and smaller origins from the EUDR, which starts to apply from the end of 2024

Day 1: Breakout Sessions

MODERATOR

Matthijs Van der Meer
Senior Manager EU
Affairs & Sustainability
European Cocoa
Association

SPEAKERS

Kerry Daroci
Cocoa Lead
Rainforest Alliance

Zoe Druilhe
Policy Officer
Coffee, Cocoa & Cotton
EU Commission

Andrew Gilboy
President
Liberia Organic Cocoa
& Agricultural Company

Ruchira Joshi
Global Director
Agri-commodities
IDH

Audrey Lagauche
Cocoa Sustainability
Director, Touton

Ruchira Joshi of the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) highlighted the challenge of including small groups of farmers in due diligence systems. She said collaborations like the Green Funds Sustainable Cocoa Initiative must translate into practical action. Noting the uncertainties of the EUDR, both in terms of implementation and impact, she stressed the importance of all stakeholders' participation, warning of a greater potential for unintended consequences among smallholders and SMEs compared to larger entities. She said well-organized, significant origin countries with robust production, such as Brazil and Vietnam, were relatively well-prepared to meet the EUDR requirements and said countries like Uganda, Rwanda, and Kenya were in the "sweet middle," which might face unintended consequences.

Audrey Lagauche, Cocoa Sustainability Director of Touton, said the agro-industrial group was preparing for the EUDR on two levels. Internal preparation involved adding resources, investing in tools, changing processes, and building farm capacity to work with groups and farmers in 38 different countries. Sector Preparation involved getting ready as a sector to resolve the technical and operational challenges.

Addressing challenges faced on the ground, Lagauche said Touton was starting from scratch in some areas, but had been working on sustainability and traceability systems in the sector. She mentioned the challenge of integrating and being ready for open-source data information and services proposed by service providers. The quality of these services depended on the producing factories and there was a lot of technical gray area.

Zoe Druilhe, the European Commission's International Partnerships Policy Officer for Cocoa and Coffee, outlined steps the EC was taking to prepare for the EUDR, including the launch of the Team Europe Initiative and the development of a cocoa initiative that addresses the environmental pillar of sustainability. She said they were facilitating the application of the regulations through outreach, communication, and dialogue and developing tools such as the information system, Expo to Beyond the Forests, and guidance documents looking at risk assessment, legality, and agricultural use. She reported on past and existing efforts by the EU to promote partnerships to secure sustainable cocoa.

Kerry Darochi said the Rainforest Alliance had been very supportive of EUDR, which aligned with its mission to end deforestation, and it viewed certification as a tool to support companies in meeting some of their obligations under EUDR. She acknowledged there was some uncertainty about the impact for farmers, who rely on customers, companies, and NGOs to understand their EUDR obligations. The Rainforest Alliance was exploring ways to scale up support for farmers. On the issue of demonstrating compliance with national registration, Kerry said legality was a baseline for certification and certification bodies must audit relevant laws. The Rainforest Alliance was working to ensure companies had the necessary data.

Andrew Gilboy, President of the Liberia Organic Cocoa & Agricultural Company, described Liberia's position as a minuscule producer of cocoa, being extremely poor, and having ample unused arable land and a large reserve of national forest that needs protection. The primary driver for deforestation in Liberia was food, not cocoa, he said.



He said despite Liberia's poor roads, communications and education levels, there were great opportunities for cocoa and other agricultural development if the concept of EUDR could be introduced and understood. He asked how the EUDR could be used to promote the prohibition of continued deforestation, especially in countries that are not exporting cocoa to the European Union or are unlikely to do so soon.

HOW CAN ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME CONTRIBUTE TO A BETTER STANDARD OF LIVING

The panelists described various experiences working with farmers to improve their incomes through enhanced access to new and innovative sources to secure a greater level of stability and reliability for them and their families.

Hilary Barry explained how LadyAgri's philosophy of investing in women made a good business case and that such initiatives had thrived over the last 10 years. The work has been built on providing women with three things – technical assistance to turn them into entrepreneurs, access to finance, especially microfinance, and access to markets by ensuring logistics, product quality, and standards. In addition, there was a philanthropic fund that raised funding for the women who are involved in the project. One goal was to enhance the liquidity of the family throughout the year: it helped families build resilience by supplementing the injection of cash during the cocoa season, which provides the family's major income, with other food crops which were worked by the women.

Anian Schreiber, who had previous experience bringing solar power to rural areas in West Africa, said his Swiss-based company KOA now worked to maximize the income cocoa farmers could glean from their product, using resources that were already there. The key was to look at the infrastructure needs to assess how to grow from a few farmers to an industrial scale. KOA developed an aggregation system that enabled the supply of cocoa pulp from 100-150 farmers in a day to medium size factories where the pulp was processed. It built teams locally to handle the process and organically grew over the year. The farmers earned an additional income which was paid directly to them on top of the value of sales of cocoa beans. KOA was also employing local community members and farmers, providing jobs in the communities for youth and women.

Pablo Ramirez said Cocoa 4 Development was implementing a nationwide project in Colombia funded by the US government under which the farmers it worked with had been able to achieve a living income with about 70% coming from sources other than cocoa. The farmers made extra income by being contracted as labor for other people's farm operations and growing other crops. Farmers who had significantly increased yields on their own farms spent more time engaging in pruning and weeding which made them more labor-smart. Farm processes were improved and there was adequate labor to ensure an enhanced yield. The cultivation of additional crops like plantains ensured food to eat and created an additional cash source. Another innovative way to generate an additional source of income was to use payment for ecosystem services generated by the farmers. He said research had shown that women were better at managing farms and KOA helped women in its projects to be financially capable..

Martha Ataa-Asantewa Kakra said farmers were already aware of the benefits of diversification, but not all farmers were the same and there were reasons some did not transition from being a sharecropper to a full-blown cocoa farmer. Kakra, who grew up on a smallholder farm in Ghana and is now a research consultant with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) in the Netherlands, said although men were usually concerned with what happened on a cocoa farm, women and children were the ones who undertook diversification activities and generated the additional income. Farmers were motivated to take up diversification opportunities if it suited their way of life and they had the resources to do so. Most cocoa farmers did need additional income, she said, and to achieve a living income they needed to be labor-smart.

MODERATOR

Louisa Cox
Senior Director
Global Public Affairs
Mars

SPEAKERS

Hilary Barry
Founder & Secretary
General
LadyAgri Impact
Investment Hub

Martha Ataa-Asantewa
Kakra
Associate Consultant
Amsterdam Institute
of Social Science
Research

Pablo Ramirez
Chief of Party
Colombian Cacao &
Complementary Crops
for Development (C4D)

Leandro Ramos
Executive Director
CocoaAction Brazil
CIAPRA Cacau+
Program

Anian Schreiber
CEO, KOA

Day 2: Plenary Sessions

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director
ESG, ACT

SPEAKERS

Kojo Amoo-Gottfried
Managing Director
Cocoa & Chocolate NA
and Indulgence, Cargill
WCF Vice Chair

Christine McGrath
SVP and Chief Impact
& Sustainability Officer
Mondelēz International
WCF Chair

Judith Sargentini
Independent Chair
Dutch Initiative on
Sustainable Cocoa
(DISCO)

OPENING SESSION

Christine McGrath, SVP and Chief Impact and Sustainability Officer, Mondelēz International and WCF Chair, greeted participants and said that on Day One of the Partnership Meeting attendees had held back from discussing the real issues and challenged everyone to “push the conversation and challenge the status quo.” She emphasized the importance of the EUDR but urged a broader discussion on its implementation. She expressed excitement about working with WCF partners toward a refreshed vision for a thriving and equitable cocoa sector. Collaboration would be key in addressing complex issues like child labor. She highlighted the Public-Private Partnership work through the Cocoa & Forests Initiative to restore forests and end deforestation as an example of necessary pre-competitive approaches.

Kojo Amoo-Gottfried of Cargill, reflecting on his childhood experiences on cocoa farms, said that what kept him in cocoa was the engagement and collaboration of stakeholders to tackle complex issues and said the WCF was crucial in this endeavor. He discussed targets and programs toward reducing GHG emissions and improving farmer livelihoods by 2030. He stressed the need for a targeted approach based on household circumstances to increase resilience. He mentioned collaboration with IDH (the Sustainable Trade Initiative) on a digital application to provide data-driven recommendations for farmers to raise their income and urged companies to share transparent data to contribute to these efforts. “Let optimism and hope be our guide” toward ensuring a better future for farmers, he said.

Judith Sargentini of DISCO spoke of the Netherlands’ importance in the cocoa sector, with 20-25% of cocoa traded there. She outlined DISCO’s three impact goals for cocoa coming through the country: 1) an end to cocoa-related deforestation and degradation, 2) necessary action to end child labor by 2025, and 3) enabling farmer families to make a living income by 2030. She stressed the urgency for members to achieve these goals. While supply chains had become more traceable and companies were increasingly complying with child labor laws, progress on livable income remained limited. DISCO’s focus areas included international collaboration, partner accountability, and procurement practices to improve market conditions for cocoa farmers.

C-SUITE PANEL

The session focused on the role of the Chief Sustainability Officer in driving sustainability.

Barry Parkin said that when he started his career about 40 years ago the CSO role did not exist and when he took over the role a decade ago his first task was to work out with the company and the board what it would take to be a truly sustainable company. He said first steps were to establish the impacts he wanted drive across the value chain and how to achieve that. It was crucial to align all the internal stakeholders, especially at the top of the organization. He said he spent about six or seven years working with the owners and Board to get their full support on how to tackle sustainability, leading to what was called at Mars “The Compass.” Key elements of this were: Strong financial performance, Quality growth, Trusted partnerships with all stakeholders, and Positive social Impact. Ultimately the task was to build partnerships across the industry with WCF and other stakeholders including governments. A key breakthrough for Mars was to get the owners to care about those four things equally, which allowed the team to drive all four across the organization.

Roel van Poppel, who in contrast to Parkin was in only the fifth week in the CSO job at ofi, said he understood the role of a CSO to be more of a facilitator and a convenor of parties, both internally and externally. He believed that the industry should speak a common language in how sustainability performance was measured. He said sustainability was at the heart of what ofi, a global agri-business, does. It had linked financial results and personal incentives to concrete sustainability objectives and included concrete numeric sustainability objectives in its incentive schemes. This reinforced the common commitment to driving sustainability in the supply chains.

Parkin and van Poppel agreed it was important to embed commitment to sustainability at all levels and not just at the top to ensure there was a common purpose and it was understood how everyone could contribute to it. Parkin said procurement was a key function in this effort. There had been a need to reimagine and redesign the supply chain and this required a radical change. Continuous improvement was not enough. Van Poppel said it was crucial that everyone knew they had a role to play in building sustainability, starting with smallholder farmers and throughout the supply chain and across all functions of the organization.

Asked how one could impact the supply chain, which is resistant to change, Parkin pointed to the example of palm oil, where radical simplification had opened the way for introducing due diligence mechanisms that helped tackle deforestation and improve social conditions. He and van Poppel said such radical changes were also needed with cocoa. Parkin said Mars would only be willing to work with suppliers who shared its values, vision, and goals. In this way some would win more business and others would lose business. Both men said sustainability was affordable. Van Poppel said that about 75% of consumers in Europe were willing to pay higher prices for more sustainable products, and Parkin said although consumers value sustainability they were more likely to shop on price.

The speakers agreed there was an urgent need to address climate change and Parkin said countries and companies needed to cooperate to create an agenda for reforestation.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS OF THE COCOA SECTOR

Musdhalifah Machmud said that in Indonesia there was strong collaboration between the private-public sector and the cocoa farming sector. The main problems were the ageing of plantations, the proliferation of pests and the ageing of farmers. The latter had prompted programs to encourage young people to take up cocoa farming. Given the EU regulations on deforestation, the government was working directly with EU regulatory bodies to raise awareness among producers of the need to grow mixed crops, particularly food crops combined with cocoa. She said the regulations had impacted many Indonesian products, including wood, palm oil and rubber, and a Malaysia-Indonesia-European Union Task Force had been set up to address the issue in the region. The EU restrictions were strict and hard to apply entirely and national standards tailored to specific conditions were not accepted by the EU. Indonesia had invited the EU to visit and look at conditions on the ground.

Abou Dosso said the Côte d’Ivoire government had had a partnership with the European Union for several years and a framework had been set up with the EU to gather feedback from cocoa-producing countries to integrate them into the new regulations. He said the EU had sought the opinions of state bodies on the various sustainability initiatives, but he said ultimately those views were not taken into consideration. Cocoa prices were dictated by the market and could not be changed by regulation, he said. He added that concern over the EU regulations centered on due diligence and minimum wage. The producer himself was not a salaried employee, and he employs laborers, and it’s difficult for a cocoa producer to pay his laborers the Minimum Categorical Wage as stipulated in EU regulations, he said. Local conditions had to be considered. Producer countries had to create standards according to their own realities and propose them to the EU. The Ivorian government had started meetings with the EU to discuss this. The key issue in all these negotiations was the price paid to cocoa producers.

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director
ESG, ACT

SPEAKERS

Barry Parkin
Chief Procurement &
Sustainability Officer
Mars Wrigley
Former WCF Chairman

Roel Van Poppel
Chief Sustainability
Officer, ofi

MODERATOR

Joost Gorter
Master of Ceremony
Global Director
ESG, ACT

SPEAKERS

Abou Dosso
Ambassador to the EU
Côte d’Ivoire

Musdhalifah Machmud
Special Envoy of the
President of Indonesia
on Food Security and
Poverty Alleviation
Republic of Indonesia



Day 2: Plenary & Breakout Sessions

MODERATOR

Fuzz Kito
Co-Director
Be Slavery Free

SPEAKERS

Maria Claudia Falcão
Coordenadora
do Programa de
Princípios e Direitos
Fundamentais no
Trabalho, ILO

Magloire Kra
Member & Chairman
CAGCAC Cooperative
Côte d'Ivoire

Jimena Llopis
Associate Director
at CUBIC,
Save the Children

Joyce Poku-Marboah
Senior Project
Manager, Child
& Forced Labour
Rainforest Alliance

Rachel Philips Rigby
Senior Program
Director, Verité

ROUNDTABLE: HOLISTIC VIEW ON COMBATTING CHILD LABOUR

The session focused on the integration of policy-making, programming, and advocacy to combat child labor in cocoa farming, which remains an ongoing struggle after two decades of efforts.

Jimena Llopis from Save the Children said behavioral science aimed to understand how we think and make decisions, contrasting with standard economic theory, which assumes humans are rational individuals maximizing their own growth. It considers cognitive biases, emotions and cultural influences. Insights from behavioral science had shown promising results in tackling child labor in Indonesia and Côte d'Ivoire, she said, although there was still a lot to be done.

In Indonesia, it was found that parents were unaware of the dangers of child labor and believed that children were safe under adult supervision. A documentary featuring real-life stories of parents who experienced child labour decreased the intention to assign children to labor by 33%. In Côte d'Ivoire, cocoa farms were seen as formative for children, and there existed a familial contract where parents provided for their children's education and jobs in exchange for their labour. Collaboration among a researcher, community members and children led to the setup of community spaces for activities with parents and children.

Maria Claudia Falcão emphasized the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach to address child labor issues and gave the example of such an initiative called COCOA 2030 in Brazil, which led to significant progress in promoting decent work conditions in supply chains. Despite significant efforts and policies, the problem persisted in Brazil with almost two million children still in child labour.

Verité's Rachel Philips Rigby stressed the importance of stakeholder engagement in due diligence on child labour risks in supply chains. She highlighted the risk of forced labor in cocoa and outlined a project called FLIP that trains multi-stakeholder actors to understand and address this risk.

Joyce Poku-Marboah of the Rainbow Alliance called for a holistic vision to combat child labour, addressing the issue comprehensively, considering key aspects of the problem and implementing strategies across sectors with the collaboration of different stakeholders. The government's role would be to formulate appropriate policies on education and social protection, including the provision of rehabilitation services for exploited children and law enforcement. She said companies and supply chain actors must implement human resource development (HRD) systems, including grievance mechanisms. They must establish complaint tracking mechanisms in workplaces, supply chains and communities to detect and address child labor and other human rights abuses and enforce laws and regulations. Poku-Marboah said there must be continuous awareness-raising on the issue for a long period to bring about a change in mentality. A cadre of well-informed young people needed to be established to demand accountability. The voices of farmers had to be amplified through strong cooperatives, involving the farmers in discussions.

Magloire Kra, a producer in Côte d'Ivoire, said all cocoa-producing parents loved their children. For him, the work by young people involved in cocoa farming was just a transfer of knowledge. The child labour that everyone talks about; however, was child trafficking, and that was the problem that must be tackled. A commitment to pay a fair price to producers could help solve the problem and this would have to be backed by guarantees from the highest levels of the industry.

GLOBAL STRATEGIES FOR RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION

Moderator Sophie Hickman, Director of Programs at Proforest Initiative, UK, said cocoa was a key component in the livelihoods of more than 40 million people and on average each person managed less than five hectares, so any large-scale restoration or conservation program linked to cocoa must involve smallholder farmers. Along with other crops grown in the same area, like timber, palm oil and rubber, cocoa was partly responsible for the loss of about 2.4 million hectares of tropical forest between 2001 and 2015, she said in introductory remarks.

Arturo Travor stressed the need for partnerships and collaboration from all interested parties and said it was vital to work at scale. For any successful conservation project it was vital to have a comprehensive and relevant baseline assessment, to enable sound goals and action plans, and efficient landscape performance monitoring to ensure reliable information. Rainforest Alliance, he said, worked on three pillars: human well-being – looking at living income, child labor, education and health; governance – looking at issues such as land tenure and land conflict; and production – looking at what crops and commodities were being produced, and going beyond supply chain issues.

Pedro Amaral of Mars said companies should to have a clear and accountable deforestation commitment that applied to cocoa and beyond. He cited Mars' "3m" approach – management, monitoring and mapping of supply chains – to get accurate farm-level and other data. By engaging suppliers, the company had managed to ensure the volumes received were not only polygon mapped but they also met the demand for being free of links to deforestation.

Tiffany Talsma, of the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), part of the global research partnership CGIAR, discussed CIAT's conservation work in Ghana. She said 2023 data showed that cocoa trees were now grown on approximately 26,000 hectares of protected area. She expressed concern about losing cocoa trees grown in forests, and especially forests in protected areas, which meant losing not only the forests but also supplies of clean water filtered by the forests. CIAT had started an initiative using an ecosystem services heat map across the cocoa producing areas of Ghana that had helped to identify some of the high value conservation areas.

Neils Haak, Director of Sustainable Coffee Partnerships for Conservation International, discussed sustainability in the coffee sector. Haak spoke of the Sustainable Coffee Challenge set up in 2015, a coalition of about 150 partners from across the coffee sector, including producers, retailers, traders, civil society, certification bodies, and research organizations aiming to make coffee the world's first sustainable agricultural product. Tackling deforestation and conservation, issues included monitoring ecosystems, including pollinators, and addressing water scarcity that impacted both coffee production and processing. A major challenge was the decrease in yield and quality, resulting in volatility and lack of economic stability for farmers.

Amaral highlighted Mars' ambitious deforestation-free commitment and urged other players in the cocoa supply chain to adopt similar pledges. He proposed a four-pronged approach encompassing deforestation prevention, emissions reduction strategies, carbon removal initiatives, and productivity enhancements to address the complex challenges.

Travor stressed the importance of involving local communities in the data collection and decision-making processes. He said most emissions reduction efforts focused on farm emissions and did not sufficiently recognize the benefits of off-farm conservation and restoration initiatives.

MODERATOR

Sophie Higman
Director of
Programmes
Proforest UK

SPEAKERS

Pedro Amaral
Associate Director
Head of Cocoa Climate
Sustainability
Mars Wrigley

Niels Haak
Director Sustainable
Coffee Partnerships
Conservation
International

Tiffany Talsma
Team Lead, Data
Driven Sustainability
Alliance of Biodiversity
International and CIAT

Arturo Travor
Global business
Development
& Innovation
Initiatives Lead
LandScale

Day 2: Breakout Sessions

MODERATOR

Peter Koegler
Vice President
of Programmes
World Cocoa
Foundation

SPEAKERS

Arine de Bordes
Regional Manager
Forliance

Alejandro Gil
Leader of
Sustainability
Compañía Nacional de
Chocolates/Cordillera
Chocolates

Marjolijn Hekelaar
Partnerships Manager
for Partnerships in
West and Central
Africa, Acorn

Adriaan Korthuis
Co-founder &
Managing Partner
Climate Focus

Saskia Reus-Makkink
Founder
Climate Circle

During the session, participants questioned the feasibility of implementing a single global strategy for conservation and restoration across diverse cocoa-growing regions with unique challenges and contexts. A few panelists suggested a more nuanced approach that focuses on identifying global ingredients such as best practices and principles and adapting them to the specific needs and realities of each local landscape. Such a global framework could provide valuable guidance and share best practices while respecting the importance of tailoring solutions.



THE BENEFITS OF CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND OFFSETTING THE COCOA SUPPLY CHAIN

Korthuis, who has worked for 25 years in carbon markets, said that they have the potential to bring significant funding to projects that might not otherwise be available. He said carbon markets had accelerated the creation of renewable energy and waste processing projects in countries like China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. The focus of carbon finance had shifted toward land use, restoring landscapes, protecting forests and making agriculture more sustainable. The success of carbon markets was due to the concept of a carbon credit, a unit that quantifies the benefits of a project and allows for comparison between different projects. However, Korthuis acknowledged the darker side of the market, known as greenwashing, where companies buy carbon credits to appear environmentally friendly without making significant changes to their own emissions, and said this had led to a credibility crisis in the market.

However, he expressed confidence in the future of carbon markets and cited ongoing efforts to improve their credibility, such as reforming calculation methods and involving more stakeholders in project design. He mentioned the emergence of biodiversity credits and the potential of carbon markets to contribute to projects in cocoa-producing countries. Korthuis said the alternative to carbon markets was regulation and public money. He stressed that while waiting for Western countries to live up to their promises to pay for climate damage and support sustainable development, carbon markets served as a way to mobilize private finance. He praised Colombia for including carbon markets in its national climate policies, saying this example should be followed by many other countries.

Arine de Bordes discussed Forliance's role as a carbon project developer, including working with projects that have a financing gap to see if carbon credit can make the project happen. She explained the process of creating a carbon project, which includes meeting minimal requirements, considering afforestation and reforestation projects, working with standards and methodologies, and dealing with different kinds of projects. She emphasized the importance of land ownership and the concept of additionality in carbon projects. De Bordes also touched on the trend of companies moving from a climate neutrality claim to a net-zero target, which often requires removal credits. She said that more companies were investing in seed capital for such projects, which helped finance the project and allowed them to receive carbon credits at an attractive price.

Peter Koegler and de Bordes discussed the ongoing debate on biodiversity credits and how nature-based carbon credits take this into account, making them more expensive than renewable energy credits. De Bordes said that while the carbon credit market had faced challenges, it was bottom-up driven and had a significant impact worldwide on nature. She said that while policies would change, the market would not go away.

Marjolijn Hekelaar explained that Acorn was part of Rabobank, a cooperative bank traditionally made for and by farmers. Rabobank has identified creating sustainable food systems as a key area that needs to be developed. Acorn was created to tackle the challenges of combating global climate change, ensuring global food security and fighting land degradation. Acorn incentivized farmers to transition into agroforestry by giving them access to the voluntary carbon market through equal benefit sharing. It created high-quality carbon removal units that are sold on the voluntary carbon market for companies in both an insetting and offsetting strategy.

Hekelaar also mentioned the Smallholder Agroforestry Finance Facility (SAF), a loan fund her company is launching. This fund uses the sales of the Carbon Removal Units (CRUs) to pay back the initial investments of the farmer package used for tree planting. She stressed the importance of creating resilience for farmers by helping them become less susceptible to climate shocks like droughts or floods and price shocks by diversifying into different fruit and nut-bearing trees.

Saskia Reus-Makkink, discussing her work in nature conservation and restoration, mentioned two groups of investors: one interested in soil health and biodiversity, and another comfortable with carbon finance due to prior investments in the solar industry or energy sector. She emphasized the importance of soil health, biodiversity, water retention, and carbon sequestration and discussed the impact on job creation, livelihoods, and the community around the investment. Reus-Makkink encouraged collaboration among financiers to speed up the process and bundle forces.

Alejandro Gil said his company, Compañía Nacional de Chocolates (CNC), part of Colombia's Nutresa Group, was highly rated as a sustainable company. It had worked with carbon markets and had conducted a study that found that, largely because of the timber trees in the agroforestry system, the carbon footprint of cocoa in Colombia was negative, meaning removals were higher than emissions. Gil said thanks to CNC's work with Rabobank and Solidaridad thousands of farmers were now receiving incomes from carbon sequestration. He said the analysis of the sustainability impact of any value chain or commodity had to consider both sequestration and emissions. This approach helped identify which practices should be promoted and which should be replaced.

JUST TRANSITION PATHWAYS IN THE RACE TO NET-ZERO

Kristy Leissle of African Cocoa Marketplace, opening the discussion, said the goal was to ensure environmental sustainability without compromising the livelihoods of those dependent on cocoa farming.

Ryan McNeil of Nestlé underscored the vital role of sustainable agricultural practices in achieving net-zero emissions within the cocoa industry and said collaboration was needed from all stakeholders. He highlighted innovation and technology as key drivers for enhancing yield, reducing environmental impacts, and bolstering resilience against climate change. It was imperative to secure cocoa farmers a fair income and support them through training, financial assistance, and market access for sustainably produced cocoa. He also advocated for increasing consumer awareness and demand for ethically produced cocoa as a significant lever for promoting sustainable practices industry-wide.

MODERATOR

Kristy Leissle
Founder & CEO
African Cocoa
Marketplace Inc

SPEAKERS

Richard Hardy
Senior Investment
Officer
Blue Orchard

Tatiana Kurancheva
Commodities
Programme
Institute for Human
Rights & Business

Ryan McNeill
R&D Sustainability
Lead Global
confectionery category
Nestlé

Kwabena Assan Mends
Cocoa Farmer
Ghana

Day 2: Plenary Sessions

Tatiana Kurancheva highlighted agriculture's significant environmental impact and vulnerability to climate change, with a special focus on the cocoa sector's challenges, like temperature fluctuations, deforestation, and soil erosion. She outlined the steps companies should take to support fair transitions effectively, including developing, implementing, and measuring the impact of just these transition strategies, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that integrated stakeholder engagement, strategic planning, and impact assessment to achieve environmental sustainability, social equity, and corporate responsibility.

Kwabena Assan Mends, the founder and CEO of Emfed Farms in Ghana, shared his approach to aiding smallholder cocoa farmers, particularly those unable to afford the initial costs of farm labor. By taking on farm management activities such as weeding, pruning, and harvesting through contracts with these farmers, Emfed Farms had managed to significantly increase yields from 200 to 1200 kg per hectare since 2012, targeting vulnerable groups like the elderly and widows. Emfed's strategy included recycling cocoa husks into compost to enhance yields, promoting biodiversity and reducing inorganic fertilizer use. His organization championed the planting of drought-resistant shade trees to bolster crop resilience and ecosystem health, focusing on intensifying production on existing land rather than expanding into new areas. His initiative exemplified a holistic approach to improving smallholder cocoa farmers' livelihoods, emphasizing environmental sustainability and the positive impact of practical, sustainable farming practices.

As Investment Director at Blue Orchard in Zurich, Richard Hardy, focuses on managing \$4 billion to promote financial inclusion in emerging markets. Blue Orchard, initially focused on microfinance, has diversified into financial tools supporting populations vulnerable to climate change, including investments in insurtech and agritech. Hardy uses Blue Orchard's resources to bridge capital gaps in emerging markets, particularly in agriculture insurance, where there's a significant lack of coverage. By investing in microfinance and developing insurance products for smallholder farmers, including those in cocoa farming, Blue Orchard leverages digital transformation to address climate change risks. He highlighted the importance of innovative financial tools in promoting sustainable agriculture and ensuring a just transition in the face of climate change.

Summing up the session, Leissle stressed the urgency of implementing fair transition pathways that balanced ecological integrity with economic and social well-being. She listed as action points:

- Develop detailed roadmaps for achieving net-zero emissions in the cocoa sector.
- Increase investment in sustainable agriculture training and resources for cocoa farmers.
- Enhance collaboration among industry players, governments, NGOs, and communities to support a just transition.

TRILOGY ON IMPROVING FARMER INCOME RESILIENCE

Michel Arrión said that this was the first of three sessions, each held at a different event, addressing the issue of farmer income resilience within the cocoa value chain. This session discussed the current challenges faced by cocoa farmers in terms of income generation and explored potential solutions to improve their financial stability. Opening the discussion, Arrión noted that creating a living income had become a dominant topic within the cocoa community, and that while child labour and deforestation were symptoms of poverty, low incomes were the root cause of the problems in the cocoa value chain.

Alex Assanvo expressed a positive view on the way the community was addressing the incomes issue, saying it was good to have it central to the agenda and that the introduction of the LID had been a key stepping stone from the old world of volatility to a stage where sustainability was paramount. "Today it is clear we cannot deliver on sustainability without addressing the income issue," he said. The goal was for farmers to earn enough that they could be excited to invest in their farm. Establishing a good price was important, he said, although it would not in itself solve all the problems. "Price is the starting point," he said. He supported diversification, but only as long it was the farmer's business-based choice, and not a practice imposed from outside.

Stephanie Daniels took a wide view, saying there was a paradigm shift in the way people were viewing world commodity markets. They had become a very effective system for moving fungible goods around the world but were not addressing key shared goals, like preserving forests, protecting children and ensuring rural families thrive. Price was one element, but it was necessary to consider all the levers and drivers of rural family incomes. The cocoa industry had an important role in creating long-term shared values – it should look not so much at risk-mitigation but at the power of trade to have a greater impact, especially for the more vulnerable people in the chain. She said it should not be the goal that all cocoa farmers make a living income, because in some cases they simply cannot make a living off cocoa alone. But the conditions of trade should enable farmers to be able to thrive and earn a living. Daniels cited areas where the industry could make an impact – on the terms of trade like price, imposition of quality and yields, and said a long-term transparent relationship between companies and farming communities was critical. "The normal commodity practice of tendering every year, looking for cost savings, I think that's really changing, and that's really, really hopeful," she said. "We know that's a huge shift in the way you're doing your business. It brings cost, but hopefully it can also bring value and it certainly brings risk-sharing for the most vulnerable." Companies

needed to provide more transparency, more specificity on volumes they can buy and price terms. Daniels also briefly spoke of the responsibilities of the public sector to provide social safety nets, education and other services and the role of international finance and consumer country governments to provide long-term investment.

Solomon Boateng, who said his Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union represented 100,000 cocoa farmer in Ghana, discussed major uncertainty and volatility in prices and the importance of diversification and addressing the need for market access for the additional products farmers were producing. He said in Ghana there was a critical labor shortage as workers were moving to mining.

MODERATOR

Michel Arrión
Executive Director ·
International Cocoa
Organization

SPEAKERS

Alex Assanvo
Executive Secretary
Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana
Cocoa Initiative

Solomon Boateng,
Executive Secretary
Ghana's Kuapa Kokoo
Farmers Union

Angela Chavez
Head of Sustainable
Sourcing, Hershey's

Stephanie Daniels,
Senior Program
Director
Sustainable Food Lab



Day 2: Closing Session

MODERATOR
 Joost Gorter
 Master of Ceremony
 Global Director
 ESG, ACT

SPEAKERS
 Aldo Cristiano
 President
 CAOBISCO

Paul Davis
 President
 European Cocoa
 Association

Christine McGrath
 SVP and Chief Impact
 & Sustainability Officer
 Mondelez International

Brian McKeon
 Senior Vice President
 of Public Policy
 National Confectioners
 Association

Obed Owusu-Addai
 Co-Founder and
 Managing Campaigner
 EcoCare

SPEAKERS
 Chris Vincent
 President
 World Cocoa
 Foundation

Angela Chavez said Hershey's view was that it could only continue to make chocolate in the future if it could be assured that the people who grow cocoa can prosper. Noting that 40 percent of cocoa production costs were labor costs, she detailed initiatives Hershey had taken to ensure living incomes among its farmers.

CLOSING SESSION: COCOA ASSOCIATIONS

Obed Owusu-Addai spoke strongly in favor of national traceability systems to track cocoa beans to the field and the need to support the private sector and EU in creating them. On addressing child labour, it was vital to have multi-sectoral systems with government, the private sector and traditional authorities at the table. On the living incomes, he said the private sector must look beyond just the market price and ensure companies institutionalized good purchasing practices that benefited the producers as well as farmers.

Christine McGrath said that although there were big pressures on cocoa companies, with impending new EU regulations and pressures for due diligence, which might prompt them to focus on protecting their own interests, at the same time they understood that challenges could not be solved alone. Continued collaboration, sharing best practices with other companies as well as all partners, was essential. Taking up this point, Aldo Cristiano noted that the issue of systemic change had been prominent in the Amsterdam conference and said this could only be achieved collectively. Such collaboration would come not just on a public stage but also through more discreet discussions.

Paul Davis addressed the EU Regulation on Deforestation-free products (EUDR) being applied at the end of 2024 and said all understood where the legislation was leading. There was a tight schedule but he was confident it would be met. He summed up the objective of the legislation as "the obligation on operators to ensure that the Union citizens are not complicit in deforestation." Brian McKeon said there had been more questions than answers about the implementation of EUDR during the Amsterdam meeting, and said the United States was watching the outcome and at this stage not taking similar action.

Aldo Cristiano recalled instances of close collaboration among companies in the cocoa industry in the past, mentioning particularly the 2017 Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI). He called it the flagship initiative of the industry, with more than 30 companies "going in exactly the same direction" creating visible results on the ground. He spoke positively of the EUDR, which had initially been seen as a "nightmare" by many companies alarmed by its traceability and other conditions. There were still uncertainties to be clarified, but it was a vital initiative to "remove the stigma of deforestation" from cocoa products. The rate of development in mapping, traceability and other measures was "astounding," he said.

Obed disagreed with an earlier speaker who warned that price growth would increase deforestation by encouraging more forest areas to be cultivated. This was not a threat in places like Ghana or Côte d'Ivoire where cocoa was well-established, although it could be in other countries where new areas may be opened up.

CLOSING ADDRESS

Chris Vincent wrapped up the conference, saying the next WCF Partnership meeting would be held in São Paulo, Brazil in early March 2025.

He stressed four principles of the WCF's approach – "aligning, convening, collaboration and partnership," and said all were critically important. "The building blocks are important, but what is really important is that they deliver change and results. The ultimate result is a thriving and equitable cocoa sector," he said.

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Join us in mid-March for the 2025 Partnership Meeting in São Paulo,

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