

**EUROPEAN COCOA ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS INTERNATIONAL
WORKING PRACTICES STUDY AND UK TASKFORCE**

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The European Cocoa Association is concerned by the recent allegations regarding working practices in cocoa production in the Ivory Coast. We are confident that the vast majority of smallholders in the Ivory Coast are law abiding with a well-developed code of conduct and we are concerned about the potential impact of these allegations on their livelihood. Nonetheless, such claims raise a grave issue. From the offset, we wish to confirm that our association remains committed to sustainable development in cocoa producing countries and condemns practices such as child trafficking and forced or exploitative child labour. ECA members conform to ethical practices in their respective operations, including those in the Ivory Coast, where they apply working standards in line with or above ILO standards

In addressing the issue of child labour in West Africa, the ECA believes it is crucial as a first step to update the current information on the scale of the problem.

The ECA thus welcomes the study on work practices in cocoa production, to take place in five countries in West Africa, including Ivory Coast and Ghana, the main producing countries. The study - funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and industry contributions - will be co-ordinated by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

Over a million farms across the Ivory Coast produce an average of one tonne of cocoa beans every year. These small shipments are subsequently transported, stored and finally processed in large quantities. As a result, the cocoa bean supply chain encompasses vast numbers of people and organisations of many different sizes and purposes. In light of the complexity of the "cocoa chain", the ECA believes that any response to child labour issues in West Africa will require the commitment of governments (legislation and implementation) as well as co-operation between industry and investors.

In addition, the ECA has met a broad range of actors over recent months from the cocoa industry, NGOs, aid agencies as well as government representatives in Europe and in West Africa. Our association has also requested a seat on the taskforce led by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which will review the effectiveness of existing measures and examine the scope for further action by governments and the industry to prevent and eradicate child labour, in accordance with relevant international conventions. The FCO taskforce will include representatives from the Governments of Ghana and the Côte d'Ivoire, representatives of interested NGOs, the cocoa industry, trade unions and a representative of the ICCO.

Note to the editor

The European Cocoa Association represents companies from across the entire cocoa industry. Its members are involved in the cocoa bean trade, in warehousing and other related logistical activities. A number of ECA member companies grind and process cocoa beans into cocoa liquor from which cocoa powder and cocoa butter are produced. Members of the ECA also produce industrial chocolate. Altogether, the founding members of the ECA represent 75% of the cocoa industry in Europe.

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