

8th ECA European Cocoa Forum

13th - 15th September 2022, Rome, Italy

Speakers' profiles



Ms. AKA Euphrasie
Country Director & Regional
Representative for West and
Central Africa,
International Cocoa Initiative

- Speaker Topic V -

A lawyer by training and holder of a Master's degree in Communication, Management & Marketing, Ms. Euphrasie Aka has nearly 20 years of experience in the sustainable development of cocoa farming. She has solid experience in the promotion of children's rights and in the fight against child labour.

She served as Communications and Administration Officer and Acting Executive Director of the Sustainable Tree Crops Programme (STCP), a programme of the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). Within this agricultural development programme, Ms. Aka was also in charge of child labour-related issues, and she actively contributed to raising collective awareness about the reality of child labour in cocoa farming.

This experience led to her being recruited as Country Director of iMFACT (Mars Partnership for African Cocoa Communities of Tomorrow,) to improve the living and working conditions of cocoa producing communities.

Since 2012, Ms. Aka is Country Director and Regional Representative for West and Central Africa for the International Cocoa Initiative, a leading organisation in the promotion of children's rights in cocoa farming communities, where she manages a team of 130 people.



Mr. ASSANVO Alex
Executive Secretary,
Initiative Cacao,
Côte d'Ivoire – Ghana

- Speaker Topic V -

Mr. Alex Assanvo heads Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana Cocoa Initiative: the cooperation on cocoa that commenced in 2017, between the two Presidents of the two countries, which led to the introduction of the \$400-per-tonne Living Income Differential in 2019 to tackle extreme cocoa farmer poverty.

Until his appointment as the first-ever Executive Secretary of the Initiative Cacao Côte d'Ivoire-Ghana, Mr. Assanvo was the Director of Corporate Affairs for Europe & Africa at Mars.

He kicked off his international development career with the German development agency, GIZ, as a Rural Development expert.

In 2006, he held the position as Head for Africa and the Strategic Lead for cocoa and cotton at Fairtrade Labelling International (FLO), in Germany. Afterwards, Mr. Assanvo joined the sustainability team at Kraft Foods, now Mondelez International, as its Cocoa Development Manager (Zürich).



Ms. ATADIKA Selassie
Chef,
MIDUNU

- Keynote speaker Topic V -

After over a decade spent engaged in humanitarian work with the United Nations and years of self-teaching in the culinary arts, Ms. Selassie Atadika completed course work at the Culinary Institute of America.

Her company Midunu, a nomadic and private dining enterprise in Accra, embodies 'New African Cuisine'. It celebrates culinary heritage where culture, community and cuisine intersect with environment, sustainability and economy by employing local, seasonal, and underutilized ingredients.

Chef Selassie Atadika uses chocolate as a base to feature the flavors and essence of Africa. She launched The Midunu Institute which looks to document and preserve the continent's culinary heritage.

She was a finalist in the 2019 Basque Culinary World Prize, voted #73 in the Best Chef Awards 2020 and 2021 recipient of the La Liste New Destination Champion Award for Africa.



Mr. BELWARD Alan
Acting Director,
Joint Research Centre,
EU Commission

- Speaker Topic IV -

Mr. Alan Belward works at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Italy where he is Acting Director and head of the Food Security Unit in the Directorate for Sustainable Resources.

Mr. Belward has served on numerous international science panels including the Global Climate Observing System, the European Space Agency's Sentinel-2 Mission Advisory Group and the NASA and USGS' Landsat Science Team.

He has a BSc in Plant Biology from Newcastle University, as well as MPhil and PhD degrees from Cranfield University's School of Agriculture Food and Environment.

Mr Belward is a Fellow of the UK's Royal Society of Biology.



Mr. BEN-BELHASSEN Boubaker
Director,
Markets and Trade Division,
UN Food & Agriculture Organisation

- Speaker Topic II -

Mr. Boubaker Ben-Belhassen is Director of the FAO Markets and Trade Division. He previously worked as a Research Associate at the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) at the University of Missouri, USA.

His areas of specialization include commodity markets, price and policy analysis, projections and food security issues.

Mr. Ben-Belhassen is also the Secretary of FAO's Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP). The Division he leads is responsible for high-profile reports, including Food Outlook, Crop Prospects and Food Situation, OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook, and The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO).

He holds a Ph.D. and an M.S. in agricultural economics and an M.A. in economics.



Mr. BOONE Peter
CEO,
Barry Callebaut

- Speaker Topic V -

Mr. Peter Boone is Chief Executive Officer of Barry Callebaut and was appointed to that role in 2021. He has been a member of the Executive Committee of Barry Callebaut since 2012.

Mr. Boone joined Barry Callebaut as Chief Innovation Officer. He assumed additional responsibilities for Quality Assurance in 2013, and for Sustainability in 2015. In 2017, he took over the position of President & CEO Americas.

Mr. Boone started his career at the Information Services division of ITT Corp. In 1996, he joined Unilever as a Strategy Analyst (Rotterdam) and held other positions, such as Global Vice President Brand Development and Vice President Marketing at the Unilever Headquarters in Rotterdam and as Vice President Marketing & Sales Latin America Foods Solution, based in São Paulo.

From 2010 to 2012, Mr. Boone worked with Unilever as Chief Marketing Officer responsible for the marketing of all brands in all categories in Australia and New Zealand. He was also a member of the regional Executive Board.

Mr. Boone studied Business Administration at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.



Mr. CARAZO Felipe
Head,
Public Sector Engagement,
Tropical Forest Alliance

- Speaker Topic IV -

Mr. Felipe Carazo brings along more than 20 years of experience developing and overseeing programs and initiatives addressing policy, governance, financial instruments, impact metrics, capacity building, private-public partnerships, south-south cooperation, resource management, rural development, human wellbeing, integrated landscape management and climate change.

He currently serves as Head of Public Sector Engagement for the Tropical Forest Alliance house in the World Economic Forum. In his role, he has served as creative strategist for the Alliance to shape multi-stakeholder engagement processes that connect, influence and mainstream good practices into public led policy discussions and processes.

Previously, Mr. Carazo served as Executive Director of Fundecor, a 'think tank' that has been instrumental for his native country, Costa Rica, to develop and implement sound forest positive practices.

While leading Fundecor, he served as top-level advisor to the Government of Costa Rica. He has also worked at The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Mr. Carazo holds a bachelor's Degree in Biology from the Universidad de Costa Rica and a Master's Degree in environmental management from the Nicholas School of Environment, Duke University (USA), with a mayor in Resource Economics and Policy.



Mr. DAVIS Paul
ECA President;
Head Cocoa,
Sucden Group

- Moderator Topic II -

Mr. Paul Davis joined SUCDEN in 2016 and has been the Head of Cocoa since. Prior to that, he held various management positions in cocoa trading companies in London and Geneva.

In parallel, Mr. Davis currently serves as President of the European Cocoa Association, as a Board Director of the World Cocoa Foundation and as a Council Member of the Federation of Cocoa Commerce.

Mr. Davis commenced in the cocoa trade in 1987, qualifying as a floor trader for Pacol Ltd., part of the Gill and Duffus Group that merged into ED&F Man.

He served as Managing Director from 1997 until 2006 of ED&F Man Cocoa Ltd.

Between 2006 and 2011, Mr. Davis served in Connecticut and London for Tropix Capital LLP, and subsequently as Global Head of Cocoa for the Noble Group.

Mr. Davis served as a trade member of the Council of the Federation of Cocoa Commerce from 1999 to 2006, and as Chairman from 2006 until 2009, and was elected for a second term to the Council in 2018, where he still serves.

Mr. Davis currently also serves as a member of the Cocoa Advisory Group to ICE.



Ms. DONTENVILLE Adeline
Sustainable Cocoa
Programme manager,
European Forest Institute

- Speaker Topic IV -

Ms. Adeline Dontenville is programme manager for Sustainable Cocoa for the International Partnerships Facility of the European Forest Institute (EFI).

Ms. Dontenville coordinates EFI's support to the EU Sustainable Cocoa Initiative in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon, focusing on standards and tools to enhance cocoa traceability, supply-chain transparency and zero-deforestation cocoa production.

Ms. Dontenville also leads the Facility's global work on land-use finance and supports tropical forest countries in mobilizing public and private investments impacting forests.

Prior to EFI, Ms. Dontenville held various positions at the French Development Agency and at the European Commission.

Ms. Dontenville is a graduate from Sciences Po in EU Affairs and holds an MA in Risk Analysis from King's College London.



Mrs. ENTZMINGER Catherine
Director General,
European Cocoa
Association

- Opening speech -

Mrs. Catherine Entzminger is the Director General of the European Cocoa Association and has been deeply involved in the management of the ECA since 2010.

Before joining the cocoa sector, Mrs. Entzminger worked at the European Parliament in Brussels as a Political Advisor. Previously, she worked for many years at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg as co-secretary of various committees. She also worked for the Alsace Region and headed the European and international cooperation department.

She started a career as a lobbyist within the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and at Hill & Knowlton in Brussels.

Mrs. Entzminger holds a Master's degree in European Studies (University of Reading, UK), as well as an MPhil in Political Sciences (University Paris X).



Dr. GAINUSA-BOGDAN Alina
Head Research Scientist,
Climate42

- Speaker Topic IV -

Dr. Alina Gainusa-Bogdan is Climate42's lead research scientist. She specialises in climate sciences and holds a PhD from the 'Laboratoire des sciences du climat et de l'environnement' in Paris.

Her research with Climate 42 has been focused on the effects of different aspects of the climate on the production of cocoa in West Africa.

Alina leads the multidisciplinary research team which includes climate monitoring and seasonal predictions over West Africa, agronomic research into the effects of the climate on plant physiology and production as well as other factors that affect production, such as hydric stress, plant resilience to drought, and pests and diseases such as the black pod disease.



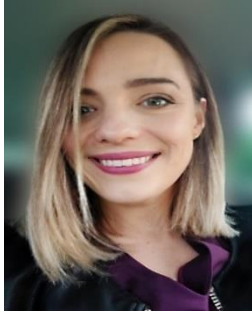
Mr. GILLER Ken
Professor, Plant Production Systems,
Wageningen University & Research

- Speaker Topic III -

Mr. Ken Giller is Professor of Plant Production Systems at Wageningen University. His research focuses on smallholder farming systems in sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular problems of soil fertility with emphasis on the temporal and spatial dynamics of resources. Professor Giller holds a Senior Honorary Research Fellowship at the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre (Cambridge).

He (co)-leads various initiatives such as CocoaSoils and N2Africa - Putting Nitrogen Fixation to Work for Smallholder Farmers. He is co-chair of the Thematic Network 7 on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems of the UN SDSN and a member of the Unilever Sustainable Sourcing Advisory Board.

Mr. Giller joined Wageningen University in 2001 after holding professorships at Wye College, University of London, and the University of Zimbabwe.



Ms. GRIGONE Giedre
Team Lead,
Euromonitor International

- Speaker Topic III -

Ms. Giedre Grigone is a Senior Consultant with Euromonitor International, responsible for the delivery of actionable strategic research to high level employees at leading global companies.

Ms. Grigone primarily specialises in market entry, trade development and opportunity mapping analysis for governments, trade associations and private clients.

She has managed many global scale research projects for various food commodities from the B2B perspective.



Ms. HARNAL Julia
Vice-President,
Public Affairs Agricultural Solutions,
BASF

- Speaker Topic I -

Since 2006, Ms. Julia Harnal has been working at BASF in Germany, where she held various positions, including Staff to the Board, Marketing Director, Senior Project Manager Sales Excellence, Head of Marketing Crop Protection, Vice-President Global Sustainability & Governmental Affairs Agricultural Solutions.

Since 2020, Ms. Harnal has been Vice-President Public Affairs Agricultural Solutions.



Mr. IBRAHIM Musah
Cocoa Farmer & Purchasing Clerk,
Ghana

- Speaker Topic V -

Mr. Musah Ibrahim is a son of a cocoa farmer. His father owns large acres of cocoa farms in the Otaakrom community in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

Ibrahim's passion for accountancy and numbers encouraged him to pursue a Business Administration Degree at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

With knowledge from his father, Ibrahim ventured into cocoa farming, cultivating his own cocoa trees and for the past four years, he has been able to harvest several bags of cocoa. He is also a purchasing Clerk.

Musah believes Ghana's cocoa value chain has a lot of potential which can positively change the livelihoods of cocoa communities.



Mr. KOKKEN Michiel
Global Head,
Scientific and Regulatory Affairs,
OFI Cocoa

- Speaker Topic I -

Mr. Michiel Kokken holds a Master in Food Science at Wageningen University and joined ADM Cocoa in June 2006 occupying various roles in process engineering, laboratory management, quality management before joining the senior quality management team overseeing quality and food safety management for Europe and global project lead for quality and food safety related projects.

Most recently, Mr. Kokken took on the role of scientific and regulatory affairs for the cocoa product category within OFI. Part of this role is also best practices with regards to regulatory compliance and food safety programs within the plants, as well as in the supply chain.



Mr. MALEDY Omer
Executive Secretary,
CICC – Cameroon

- Speaker Topic I -

Mr. Omer Maledy has 35 years of experience in the cocoa and coffee sectors. He has been Executive Secretary of the Cocoa and Coffee Interprofessional Council in Cameroon (CCIC) since 2012.

In particular, Mr. Maledy has set up programs in various countries to rejuvenate the production force in the cocoa sector (New Generation); to promote domestic consumption of cocoa products (Festicacao); to improve the quality of cocoa and traceability in the sector (Cacao d'Excellence).

He is currently also Advisor and Consultant to various organizations.



Mr. MANLEY Gerry
ECA Board Member;
Managing Director & CEO,
OFI Cocoa

- Moderator Topic IV -

Gerard A. Manley (Gerry) is the Chief Executive Officer of OFI's cocoa platform and the Chief Sustainability Officer.

He started his career at Holco Trading Company (part of ED&F Man) in 1983. While there, he held Directorships in the UK, Poland, and Malaysia, and was involved in managing the product trading operations.

Mr. Manley then joined Olam Group (now ofi) in the Singapore headquarters in 1998. In 2003, he went on to establish the Group's European operations (London).

Mr. Manley is an active Board of the European Cocoa Association and the World Cocoa Foundation. Latterly, he was also Chairman of the Federation of Cocoa Commerce and served on the boards of the Cocoa Association of Asia and the London Cocoa Terminal Market.

He has an MBA from City University in London and a bachelor's degree with Honors in Geography.



Mr. OWEN-Griffiths Andrew
Head of Unit
F3-Plants and Organics,
DG SANTE, EU Commission
- Speaker Topic I -

Mr. Andrew Owen-Griffiths currently works for the European Commission's Health and Food Safety DG where he is Head of the Unit "Plants and Organics" and responsible for the review of the Sustainable Use of pesticides legislation and pesticide use reduction targets.

His team also conducts audits on contaminants, organics, quality label schemes and plant health.

He has previously worked for both the public and private sector in Food Safety in the UK and Dubai.



Mr. PARKMAN Jonathan
Joint Head of Agriculture,
Marex Financial
- Speaker Topic II -

Mr. Jonathan Parkman has been involved in many aspects of the soft commodity business during the last 40 years. He began his career at Gill and Duffus in London trading cocoa beans and products in 1978 before moving to Gill and Duffus, New York in 1985 to run the cocoa trading desk.

He returned to the UK in 1988 to join one of the principal cocoa bean shippers out of Asia, Karintina, as Director and Head of Trading.

He joined Credit Lyonnais Rouse as Head of Agricultural Commodity Research specialising in Cocoa, Coffee and Sugar in 2000 before becoming Director and Head of Agri Commodity Brokerage at Fortis Commodity Derivatives in March 2005.

In October 2010, Mr. Parkman joined Marex Spectron where he remains today as Head of Agriculture.



Mr. POELMA Harold
ECA President;
President,
Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate
**- Moderator Topic I &
Speaker Topic V -**

Mr. Harold Poelma joined Cargill in 1987 and has held various management positions in Cargill's refined vegetable oils business, Cargill's oilseeds processing division and grain trading division in Europe and the United States.

He has worked in the cocoa industry for Cargill since 2001 where he became managing director of Cargill's cocoa activities in Europe, Africa and Asia in June 2006.

As from June 2012, Mr. Poelma was Managing Director for Cargill Refined Oils Europe (CROE) until he was appointed as president for the global Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate activities in 2016 until today.

In June 2020, he was appointed as President of the European Cocoa Association.

Mr. Poelma has a Master's degree in industrial engineering & management science from the University of Technology in Eindhoven.



Mr. POIRRIER Patrick
ECA Vice-President;
Vice-President Cocoa,
Cémoi

- Moderator Topic III -

Mr. Patrick Poirrier created and led the Ivory Coast subsidiary of CÉMOI in 1996. He then went on to become Industrial Manager for the CÉMOI Group, and later Chief Operating Officer.

From 2005 to 2021, he was the CEO of the company. He is now Vice-President Cocoa.

In 2014, in addition to his latest responsibilities as President of the Group, he was nominated President of CAOBISCO (Association of Chocolate, Biscuit and Confectionery Industries of Europe).

Additionally, Mr Poirrier is today the Vice-President of the European Cocoa Association, and Administrator of the World Cocoa Foundation.



Ms. REICH Hermine
Senior Scientific Officer,
Pesticides Residues & Plant Health
Unit, EFSA

- Speaker Topic I -

Ms. Hermine Reich's background is food chemistry and food technology.

She started her career in the Austrian Food Safety Agency (AGES), where she worked for 15 years on different aspects of pesticide assessments.

Since 2006, she is working for EFSA, dealing with dietary risk assessment of pesticide residues in the framework of MRL applications and the development of risk assessment methodologies



Mr. ROSE David
Director,
LACS Training

- Master of Ceremony -

Mr. David Rose has over 20 years' experience in providing tailored communication services for governments, the corporate sector, advocacy associations, EU and international institutions, and NGOs. As a moderator, Mr. Rose regularly leads international-level conferences and debates across a wide range of topics, including climate, environment, industrial, health, social and digital policy.

In parallel, Mr. Rose also regularly chairs EU-level working groups and stakeholder dialogues. He advises organisations on internal and external communications and events, as well as providing tailor-made executive training on public speaking, presentations, facilitation, moderation and negotiation.

He was Master of Ceremony for the previous ECA Forums in Dubrovnik (2016) and Lisbon (2019).



Dr. SAKRABANI Ruben
Associate Professor,
Soil Chemistry,
Cranfield University – UK

- Speaker Topic III -

Dr. Ruben Sakrabani is an Associate Professor in Soil Chemistry at Cranfield University. He is also the Lead Academic for Cranfield Doctoral Network in Environment & Agrifood. He is a Chartered Chemist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Dr. Sakrabani has more than 20 years of experience in determining nutrient dynamics in soils associated with application of organic amendments. His work explores the resource efficiency and reliability of organic amendments as alternative sources of fertilisers to reduce demand on inorganic fertilisers. His work explores the use of new approaches where prediction of nutrient release from organic amendments can be exploited in order to maximise resource efficiency and promote sustainable intensification of agriculture.

As a chemist, his expertise also lies in the fate and transport of heavy metals and micropollutants that may be present in organic amendments when applied to soils and how this can influence efficacy of soil microbes to mineralise nutrients that are locked up. His expertise in cocoa relates to use of organic amendments to improve soil carbon sequestration and he has been working in cocoa farms in Indonesia.

He has published in over 60 peer reviewed journals and is currently the Associate Editor of Soil Use and Management.



Ms. SCHOMAKER Astrid
Director,
Green Diplomacy & Multilateralism,
DG ENV, EU Commission

- Speaker Topic IV -

Ms. Astrid Schomaker is Director for Green Diplomacy and Multilateralism at the European Commission's Directorate General for the Environment since 2016.

Her portfolio includes international relations, international resource efficiency, and environment policy strategy, including the alignment of environment policy with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

A lawyer by training, she joined the European Commission in 1992 where she held various posts in the external affairs department, before moving to the Environment Department in 2004 where she lead work on a variety of issues including, chemicals, oceans and water industry as well as overall coordination and communication.



Mr. SCHROETER Hagen
Chief Science Officer,
Mars Edge

- Speaker Topic III -

Dr. Hagen Schroeter is the Chief Science Officer at Mars Edge, a segment of Mars, Incorporated dedicated to translating scientific insights and the outcomes of health and nutrition research into evidence-based consumer products and services. He is also a member of the Mars, Incorporated Science Leadership Team, as well as an Adjunct Research Professor in the Department of Nutrition at the University of California, Davis.

Dr. Schroeter's main interests focus on human health and nutrition, personalized nutrition, and data-enabled innovation in the development of consumer-relevant solutions for nutrition and wellbeing. He leads Mars' biomedical investigations into the role of dietary flavanols, procyanidins and other bioactive food constituents in human nutrition and primary disease prevention as well as Mars' scientific contributions to the Cocoa Supplement and Multivitamin Outcomes Study (COSMOS).

Dr. Schroeter authored and co-authored more than 60 peer-reviewed scientific papers on flavanols and the efficacy and safety of bioactive food constituents in the fields of nutrition, medicine, medicinal- and analytical chemistry, and biochemistry.



Mr. SMIT Bas
Global Vice-President Marketing,
Barry Callebaut

- Speaker Topic III -

Mr. Bas Smit is the CMO of the Barry Callebaut Group. He is responsible for leading and driving Barry Callebaut from a B2B to an innovative B2H company, – Consumer and Customer centric. Mr. Smit believes to build businesses, define destinations and drive change, the answers are in the world around us. He is known for his ability to redefine the rules of a game and to create a winning culture.

The last few years he has been the architect of various breakthrough innovations: Ruby Chocolate (2017); WholeFruit Chocolate (2019). In 2021, 'ELIX' the first nutraceutical fruit drink - supported by a proven health claim - was introduced. Another key focus area for Mr. Smit is to shape Barry Callebaut's customer journeys, to drive the digital transformation and Data Driven Commerce.

During his career with Barry Callebaut and Unilever, Mr. Smit gained about 25 years of experience leading multicultural Customer Development and Marketing teams in Benelux, Western Europe and D&E.

Mr. Smit holds a Master of Science degree in Operational Research and Statistics of the University of Technology in Eindhoven. He studied Mathematics and Econometrics at the Technical University in Karlsruhe and finally achieved a Post Doctorate in Brand Management at the University of Groningen.



Mr. TCHAGBA Laurent
Minister of Waters and Forests,
Côte d'Ivoire

- Keynote speaker Topic IV -

Mr. Laurent Tchagba, Minister of Water and Forests is a high-level hydrological engineer. After completing his degree in hydrological engineering at the École Normale Supérieure des Travaux Publics, he obtained a Master of Advanced Studies (DEA) in Applied Geology, with a specialisation in Water Resources, from the University of Paris. He later trained in Isotope Hydrology at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

Between 1981 and 1990, at the Ministry of Public Works, Mr. Tchagba first worked as Assistant to the Head of the Southern Hydrological Sector at the Water Directorate within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (1981-1983). From 1986 to 1988 he acted as Head of the Southern Hydrological Sector at the Water Directorate of the Ministry of Public Works and Construction, where he later covered the post of Head of Department for the Exploitation of the National Hydrometric Network (1988-1990).

Between 1990 and 2019, he took the role of Head of Mission, Head of Cabinet and Director of Cabinet within multiple ministries and at the helm of some public companies (Managing Director of the Guichet Unique Automobile, Managing Director of Côte d'Ivoire Logistique, and President of the FDFP Committee).

At political level, Mr. Tchagba became MEP representing the Abidjan district of Attécoubé in 2016 and was re-elected in March 2021. He joined the Government in 2018 as Minister of Hydraulics and was reappointed in the same capacity in April 2021 in the Patrick Achi 2 Government. He was appointed Minister of Water and Forests in April 2022 and has served in this capacity since that date.



Ms. THORNTON Pamela
Commodity Trader/Consultancy,
Nightingale investment
management

- Speaker Topic II -

Ms. Pamela Thornton is an experienced physical cocoa and coffee trader with an in-depth understanding of the entire supply chain.

Her work has included setting up and managing export operations for large trade houses in many origins (West Africa, Asia and Latin America) in order to supply leading global chocolate manufacturers and coffee roasters.

For 10 years, she worked as an asset manager identifying agronomic, economic and political factors that could impact the value of commodity investments over the medium and long term. Since 2018, she has been engaged on various consultancy assignments that include troubleshooting non-performance at origin; recovering debt; feasibility studies on construction of factories etc.

Ms. Thornton is a former Chairperson of the Cocoa Merchants' Association of America, and a long-time and current member of both ICE's Cocoa & Coffee Committees and various panels of the International Cocoa Organization.



Mr. VILLELA DIAS Cristiano
CEO Biolnnovatech/Scientific
Director, Cocoa Innovation Center-
Brazil

- Speaker Topic III -

Biologist, Ph.D. in Genetics and Molecular Biology, Mr. Cristiano Villela Dias created the Cocoa Innovation Center, a laboratory 100% dedicated to the cocoa and chocolate chain in Brazil.

Mr. Villela Dias is also Executive Director of Biolnnovatech, a consulting company focused on the implementation of projects related to cocoa farming, Scientific Director of the Cocoa Innovation Center, and President of the National Committee for Quality and Special Cocoa in Brazil.



Mr. WATERIDGE Steve
Head of Research,
Tropical Research Services

- Speaker Topic II -

Mr. Steve Wateridge is the Head of Research at Tropical Research Services, and widely recognized as a leading world expert in tropical commodity products. Prior to joining Tropical Research Services, he was the senior Cocoa and Coffee Analyst at Ospraie Services Group.

Previously, Mr. Wateridge was employed at ED&F Man as the Head of Cocoa and Coffee Research, and the Head of Cocoa Research. He also served as an Economist at Rowntrees PLC.

Mr. Wateridge was appointed Chairman of the Cocoa Promotion Committee of the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) in 2004 as well as of the Expert Working Group on Stocks in 2009.

Mr. Wateridge earned an MSc in Economics, as well as a BA in Economics and Politics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.



Mr. MERITAN Regis
Senior Expert, Head of Sector
"Agricultural Growth",
DG INTPA, EU Commission

- Speaker Topic V -

Mr. Regis Meritan is a Senior Expert at the European Commission, Directorate General for International Partnerships. He is heading the Sector "Agriculture Growth" in the Unit Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries. He is an Agro-economist and holds a PhD in Food Science from the Institut National Agronomique, Paris.

Prior to this, until 2014, he was the Economic Advisor of the European Union Delegation to Tunisia. He had been previously posted in African countries and in the Middle East, dealing with agriculture programmes and policies and humanitarian issues since 1990. He has authored articles and publications on agricultural policies and economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. He has also experience of private sector in agro-industry in France.