

*Press release*

**German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa places the progress of PRO-PLANTEURS in the forefront at event at ISM 2020 in Cologne**

**PRO-PLANTEURS targets an improved income of cocoa farmers**

**Berlin/Cologne, 05/02/2020** – Five years ago the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa initiated the project PRO-PLANTEURS jointly with the German government and the Ivorian government. Through specific measures within its four components – Strengthening farmer organizations, Improved cocoa production, Improving nutrition through diversification, Joint learning – the project aims to improve the livelihoods of 20,000 cocoa farming families in the south-eastern part of Côte d'Ivoire and to contribute to the conservation of natural resources. What is the current state of the project today? This question was answered by an event at the International Sweets and Biscuits Fair (ISM) in Cologne at the beginning of February 2020. Different project participants took a positive view, especially the close cooperation with the government of Côte d'Ivoire was underlined as a key success factor for the project.

**Progress of the project PRO-PLANTEURS**

PRO-PLANTEURS already succeeded in implementing most planned activities. 35 cooperatives are professionalized with an immediate impact on their creditworthiness and thereby their investments. 16 small-scale projects help more than 2,100 women to earn an own income from diversified agriculture and animal husbandry. Women trained as rural advisors, Animatrices Rurales, by the project have sensitized 16,000 families to better nutrition and enabled them to improve their nutritional situation and thus their general state of health. 14,200 farmers have been trained in the cultivation of other food crops. Trainings in Good Agricultural Practices and the distribution of almost 50,000 shade trees for 1,500 hectares of cultivated land so far are intended to improve cocoa yields and at the same time contribute to the conservation of natural resources.

The trend in farmers' incomes is also upgoing. Despite the sharp drop in the world market price for cocoa in the 2017/18 season, it still increased slightly. However, the income of most cocoa farmers is still significantly below a level to secure their livelihood. Concrete figures on income improvement within PRO-PLANTEURS will be provided by the ongoing effects study.

### **Follow-up phase in preparation**

Currently the follow-up phase of the project is under preparation. One focus will be on the income improvement of the farmers. The project will be expanded to 50 cooperatives with a total of 30,000 farmers. The members of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) can participate within PRO-PLANTEURS II with their own projects for additional financing - a so-called matching fund. These projects are intended to address the urgent problems within the cocoa sector and thus make a positive contribution to the twelve single targets of GISCO. PRO-PLANTEURS will be the only project in the cocoa sector in which the Ivorian government will contribute financially. This was also emphasized once again by Félicien Diby, the representative of the national cocoa authority Conseil du Café-Cacao (CCC).

"The adjusted target for the second phase of the project will focus even stronger on increasing the income of farming households, as possible, towards a living income," said the chairman of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, Wolf Kropp-Büttner. This is derived from the objectives of GISCO. The improvement in income should be based on diversifying the sources of income, strengthening women's own income and increasing the efficiency of cocoa cultivation while conserving natural resources.

Uwe Feiler, Parliamentary Secretary of State at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture said: "With the PRO-PLANTEURS joint project, we have, in close cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire, created a milestone for more sustainability in cocoa farming. Feiler called for the existing good cooperation to be used to achieve even more. The follow-up phase of the project should serve this purpose.

Project manager Judith Steffens emphasized the importance of professionalization for the cooperatives as well as for the small-scale producers. Due to this, the cooperatives, for example, were able to take out loans of more than 650,000 Euros by that make investments. Before 2018 this was impossible because they could not meet the requirements for creditworthiness. The cocoa yield per hectare of cultivated land also improved, currently by up to 30 percent. Quite a few cooperatives, that are involved in PRO-PLANTEURS, aim to increase their efficiency by joining forces for joint purchases or marketing.

Félicien Diby highlighted an important aspect of the project for the Conseil du Café-Cacao. He said that the project helped producers to develop and implement a better understanding of their own business activities: "PRO-PLANTEURS has helped us, Côte d'Ivoire, to turn our vision of a professional and sustainable cocoa production into reality". Ramatou So, now

the director of the cooperative CIPA-COOP-CA from Agboville confirmed this: "I started out as an accountant in the cooperative. Especially the coaching helped me a lot to perform my current management task well. I would like to thank PRO-PLANTEURS for this," said So. "We now have a structured, well-documented financial administration. There is no more expenditure without proof."

Achim Drewes from Nestlé and Jelena Radeljić from Ludwig Weinrich spoke on behalf of the participating members of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa from the chocolate industry. Both companies see their participation in the project as a great added value for their sustainability activities. For Nestlé, as a major player that operates its own supply chain program for cocoa, this is a useful addition to its own project work, such as strengthening cooperatives and nutritional training, as well as close exchange with the other project participants on site; for Weinrich, a middle-sized family business, it is an opportunity to make a targeted commitment to more sustainability on site.

Friedel Hütz-Adams from Südwind-Institut, as a representative of civil society in the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, pointed out that the term "certified cocoa" is not automatically synonymous with "sustainable" in the sense of "problems solved". "It is still a long way towards a living income for farmers, even with certified cocoa", Hütz-Adams said.

The second project phase of PRO-PLANTEURS therefore places even greater emphasis on improving income towards a living income. After all, poverty is a major cause of child labor. In order to identify and combat abusive child labor, control instruments such as the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS) help. Nestlé, for example, already applies this system in all cooperatives with which it works together.

Sebastian Lesch, Head of Division at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), spoke of great recognition of the project by the Ministry of Development. Nevertheless, he said that there was still a long way to go to achieve a cocoa value chain free of child labor and other human rights violations and deforestation. "We are therefore focusing on a Smart Mix, also at EU level," said Lesch. "This approach combines voluntary and mandatory measures." Within the framework of Germany's EU Council Presidency from the second half of 2020, the intention is to take this further. In addition, the BMZ supports the development of voluntary partnership agreements with cocoa-producing countries.

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**Picture Caption:**

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) discussed together with project participants, also from Côte d'Ivoire, about the project's progress of PRO-PLANTEURS, that is undertaken jointly with the German government and the Ivorian government.

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**About the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa:**

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, represented by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), the German sweets and confectionary industry, the German retail grocery trade, and civil society. Jointly, the multi-stakeholder initiative aims to improve the livelihood of cocoa farmers and their families as well as to increase the proportion of certified cocoa according to sustainability standards. To achieve these objectives, the members of GISCO closely liaise with the governments of cocoa producing countries. Currently, GISCO has more than 70 members and is open to other interested parties. For more information, please visit the GISCO website: [www.kakaoforum.de](http://www.kakaoforum.de)

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