

Press Release

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) discusses the issue of human rights in international supply chains

Human Rights are the Key Cornerstone of Successful Development

- **Experts discuss about “Human Rights and International Supply Chains – with the Example of Cocoa” at the ANUGA trade fair for food and beverages in Cologne, Germany**
- **Private partners bear responsibility and should coordinate their activities**
- **Governments have to perform their duties**
- **Cocoa is still attractive, but producers face various challenges**

Cologne/Berlin, 11/10/2017 – “Progress in development is particularly effective when it comes along with respect for human rights, improved governance and strengthened efficiency of public institutions.” With these words, Dr. Stefan Schmitz, Head of Directorate at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), described the triad of a successful political concept for more sustainability and protection of human rights. Speakers from the private sector, politics and civil society substantiated this at the event of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) on October 10, 2017 at the ANUGA trade fair for food and beverages in Cologne, Germany. Schmitz also emphasized in his welcoming speech that multi-stakeholder approaches are key to sustainable solutions. “The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa is a great example for this”, Schmitz said.

Wolf Kropp-Büttner, GISCO Chairman, pointed to poverty, child labor and gender issues as the three main human rights challenges in the cocoa supply chain. In light of the continuing poverty of many cocoa farmer families – particularly in West Africa – and the drastic drop of cocoa prices earlier this year, Wolf Kropp-Büttner clarified: “In increasingly complex causal relations, progress can only be achieved jointly and needs to be coordinated beyond national borders and with everyone who is involved in the supply chain.” This is the reason why GISCO was founded as a joint initiative of the cocoa, chocolate and confectionery industry, the grocery retail, civil society and the German Federal Government.

Anna Laven of the KIT Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam (Netherlands) presented latest and previously unreleased studies to explain the situation of farmer households in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. According to these studies, cocoa is the main source of income in many households. Most importantly, as a one-time income of significant amount, cocoa usually provides the only opportunity to realize larger purchases or expenses like tuition fees. A guaranteed cocoa price offers planning reliability to the farmers. But even among designated cocoa producers, cocoa contributes a maximum of two thirds (60-67%) to the total income. Generally, the income of farmer families is not spread evenly throughout the year. The period from June to September is particularly difficult, also under the aspect of balanced nutrition: It is not a harvest season, so that families would need to buy expensive additional food.

Irene Maria Plank, Head of Directorate "Economy and Human Rights" at the Federal Foreign Office, presented the National Action Plan (NAP), the instrument for the implementation of the UN Guidelines on Business and Human Rights on the national level. "More and more citizens expect that the production of goods complies with demands for an eco-friendly and human globalization", Irene Maria Plank said. It is particularly important to the German Federal Government to help small- and medium-sized companies with the implementation of these guidelines. "'Made in Germany' should stand for quality – also in the area of human rights", Plank underlined. The Federal Government will continue to raise awareness about the National Action Plan (NAP) in the following months.

The practical implications and responsibilities faced by German businesses were vividly described by Alana Enge, Sustainable Food Products Advisor at REWE Group, from the perspective of the grocery retail industry. By contrast, Marina Morari, General Manager Community Development at Barry Callebaut Sourcing AG, represented the viewpoint of a globally operating corporation in the cocoa and chocolate sector. "The REWE Group already fulfils many of the requirements of the National Action Plan", Alana Enge said. The REWE Group continuously analyzes risks of violation of social and labor standards in the supply chains of critical raw materials. When it identifies social risks, the REWE Group defines requirements, e.g. via its own guidelines or in the framework of the PRO PLANET process, and implements them through audits and certifications, within sectorial initiatives or on-site projects. REWE is also actively involved in sustainable cocoa farming through the GISCO project PRO-PLANTEURS.

Marina Morari presented “Forever Chocolate”, Barry Callebaut’s plan to make sustainable chocolate the norm by 2025. “It’s a highly ambitious goal and we will need to scale up beyond our own supply chain to make it happen. For that, we require a movement of industry, societal stakeholders and governments“, Marina Morari said.

Christian Mieles, Director of the German Association of the Grocery Retail (BVLH), emphasized the active commitment of the retail companies: “Looking at their international purchases – especially for the private label sector – companies can already demonstrate several years of multi-faceted effort to protect social and labor standards in their supply chains, also for products containing cocoa”, Mieles said.

Edward Akapire, Head of Region West Africa Network at Fairtrade Africa, used his on-site experience to introduce the viewpoint of cocoa farmers to the discussion. “With its work, Fairtrade is committed to improving living conditions, eliminating child labor and to strengthening the role of women”, Edward Akapire said. “Human rights must not become a matter of compliance with standards. Respecting human rights must turn into conscious action and should be a fundamental concern for everyone. Adequate and fair prices are part of this. They are important to overcome poverty. Poverty is the main reason for human rights violations on the regional level”, Akapire continued.

Friedrich Wacker, Head of Directorate „International Cooperation, World Nutrition“ at the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL), summarized the debate in his conclusion. “Since the foundation of GISCO several years ago, we have achieved significant progress in improving the social, ecological and economic conditions in cocoa production. Nevertheless, we still face various challenges: The great willingness of actors in the supply chain to put more emphasis on human rights and sustainability is an encouraging signal”, Friedrich Wacker said.

Wolf Kropp-Büttner has an optimistic outlook as well: “We see increasing transparency and cooperation among actors. I consider that as a commitment to the effective and extensive realization of sustainability.”



Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao

German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa



Caption:

The topic “Human Rights and International Supply Chains – with the Example of Cocoa” was discussed by leading experts from economy, politics and civil society at the ANUGA trade fair in Cologne, at the invitation of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa. From left to right: Marina Morari (Barry Callebaut), Edward Akapire (Fairtrade Africa), Barbara Scherle (facilitator), Anna Laven (KIT), Irene Maria Plank (Federal Foreign Office), Christian Mieles (German Association of the Grocery Retail).

Photo: GISCO/A. Hagedorn

About the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa:

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) is a joint initiative of the Federal Government, civil society, industry and retail and brings together relevant actors from Germany with those of producing countries and international initiatives. The goal of GISCO is to improve living conditions of cocoa farmers, to protect and preserve natural resources and biodiversity in the producing countries as well as to increase the proportion of sustainable cocoa. GISCO currently has more than 70 members and is open to other interested parties.

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