



Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao
German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa



PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

May 26-27, 2025 | General Meeting of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa | Bonn
„On Track for Change?“ – Strategies and Partnerships for a Living Income



Board election on May 26

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa held its 13th general meeting at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity in Bonn. During the internal part of the meeting, the members elected the new Board of the association.

Member Group A – Federal Government

- Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Regional Identity, represented by Dr. Artur Ickstadt (appointed member)
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, represented by Jens Busma (appointed member)

Member Group B – German Cocoa, Chocolate & Confectionary Industry

- Aldo Cristiano, Ferrero
- Dr. Torben Erbrath, BDSI (appointed member)

Member Group C – German Food Retail

- Florian Schütze, Schwarz Group
- Christian Mieles, BVLH (appointed member)

Member Group D – Civil Society

- Evelyn Bahn, INKOTA-netzwerk



From left to right: Christian Mieles, Dr. Torben Erbrath, Florian Schütze, Lisa Kirfel-Rühle, Evelyn Bahn, Aldo Cristiano (not on the picture: Dr. Artur Ickstadt)

We congratulate all board members on their election!



Welcome: Aldo Cristiano, Chairman of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa

Aldo Cristiano welcomed the participants of the 13th General Meeting at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Regional Identity. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of cooperation for sustainable cocoa production and the involvement of partners from Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Cristiano also praised the strategies and partnerships for securing a living income, to which GISCO has been particularly committed over the past year, and gave a brief overview of the successes achieved so far in the PRO-PLANTEURS project. A quarter of the households have already achieved a living income.

Nevertheless, there is still a need to continue acting, to find new forms of cooperation and to scale up measures in order to achieve the goal of a living income for all cocoa farmers. In conclusion, Mr. Cristiano thanked all members for their commitment and made an appeal to continue the good cooperation and deepen the dialogue in order to develop sustainable solutions.





Opening:

Live link-up with Federal Minister Reem Alabali-Radovan

Reem Alabali-Radovan, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, welcomed the members via live link. She praised the commitment of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and emphasized the economic importance of the cocoa sector for producing countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana as well as the existential dependence of many smallholder farmers on cocoa cultivation.

The Minister emphasized that despite important progress, major challenges remain - including deforestation, child labor and insufficient income in the cocoa sector. She referred to the role of the BMZ, which is working on solutions together with partners such as GISCO, for example as part of the roadmap process and through projects such as PRO-PLANTEURS.

Federal Minister Alabali-Radovan paid particular attention to the EU regulation on deforestation-free products (EUDR). This is an important lever for strengthening environmental and human rights standards along global supply chains. In this context, she also referred to the coalition agreement between the SPD and CDU, which names the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) as a key instrument for promoting sustainable development.





Opening:

Video Message Federal Minister Alois Rainer

In his video message, **Federal Minister for Food, Agriculture and Regional Identity Alois Rainer** praised the successes of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa since it was founded in 2012. In particular, he emphasized that around 86% of the cocoa processed by the member companies was already certified according to sustainability standards in 2022 - a visible success.

At the same time, the Minister emphasized the importance of GISCO for the future: It is important to further strengthen the commitment to ecological and social responsibility - especially through projects such as PRO-PLANTEURS and the professionalization of cooperatives in order to sustainably improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers.





Panel Discussion: Living Income in the Current Context

Alida N'Takpe-Coulibaly, *SCOOP-RASSO Cooperative* | Mamadou Gbongué, *Conseil du Café-Cacao* | Jonathan Parkman, *Marex*

Alida N'Takpe-Coulibaly (SCOOP-RASSO), **Mamadou Gbongué** (Conseil du Café-Cacao, Côte d'Ivoire) and **Jonathan Parkman** (Marex) discussed concrete ways to achieve a living income in the cocoa sector - from the perspective of producers, state control and global trade.



It became clear that the current high world market prices offer an important opportunity to promote more sustainable cocoa cultivation. This requires stable yields, for example by renewing ageing farms, switching to more productive cultivation methods and targeted volume management. The Ivorian government is setting a new regulatory framework with the African Regional Standard (ARS 1000), which, together with the EU regulation for deforestation-free products, is intended to set the course for a sustainable cocoa sector. However, the question of how compliance with the standards and the necessary investments in future-oriented cocoa cultivation are to be financed remains unanswered.

The panelists emphasized that without clear responsibility and coordinated action by all actors along the supply chain, a living income for cocoa farmers remains unattainable.



Living Income Roadmaps

On the occasion of the annual topic “Living Income” in the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and the roadmaps published on this topic, four Board members commented on developments in this area on behalf of their member groups.



Lisa Kirfel-Rühle (Stakeholder group A) welcomed the measurable objectives and progress reports from members and emphasized the relevance of the 10-point plan as a “roadmap” for the German government. The potential of the roadmaps could unfold even more if all members pulled together. There should also be a focus on purchasing practices and on ensuring a price that covers production costs.

Dr. Torben Erbrath (Stakeholder group B) considered the work on Living Income Commitments to be a success, even if the methodology and common strategy for achieving Living Income remains unclear. He emphasized the relevance of certification as a building block and cooperation with European partners (ISCOs). In addition, the discussion must change: In view of high cocoa prices, GISCO should focus more on the situation in regulated markets. Whether the obligation to submit roadmaps is necessary should be discussed again.



Christian Mieles (Stakeholder group C) reported that the roadmaps have led to better cooperation and greater exchange within the companies and at GISCO level. In addition, almost 100 percent of the cocoa in private label products in the retail sector is now certified. The main challenge is to develop measures that are supported by all stakeholders.

Evelyn Bahn (Stakeholder group D) welcomed the courageous commitment of the members to get involved in their companies and initiate the discussion on Living Income. In addition, the instruments developed should be valued and continued, as without them the discussion of recent years would not have taken place. For the future, it is particularly relevant to get into action and therefore important to change purchasing practices, promote cooperation along the vertical supply chain and work together at ISCO level in particular in order to better address large companies.





Station talks on the Living Income Roadmaps

In six different groups, the members had the opportunity to discuss the Living Income Roadmaps. Feedback on the roadmap process was collected and the extent to which the Living Income Roadmaps contribute to achieving the goal of a living income (specific objective 1) was discussed.

Overall, the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa is still at a relatively early stage with regard to Goal 1. However, the first step has been taken and all members have made an important contribution on the common path towards this goal by developing their individual commitments.

The next step is now to implement the various strategies and regularly measure progress. Another result was that networking and cooperation in smaller groups is particularly important for the development of concrete measures.

It was also emphasized that partner governments and the producer level must be given greater attention in order to achieve individual goal 1.





Working Group: Procurement Practices

Mark de Waard, *Dutch Initiative for Sustainable Cocoa (DISCO)*

Verena Aichele, *dm-drogeriemarkt*

As an introduction to the discussion, **Mark de Waard** reported on the experiences of the Dutch platform with the development of DISCO principles on sustainable sourcing. The European ISCOs have also made a statement at the World Cocoa Conference 2024 to coordinate their efforts on sustainable sourcing more closely and will develop common principles and next steps by September.

Verena Aichele gave an exciting insight into a cocoa project in Sierra Leone that will take up the topic of sustainable procurement in practice. The working group also called on companies to take part in PRO-PLANTEURS III. PRO-PLANTEURS offers an ideal opportunity to test approaches to sustainable procurement on a smaller scale and guarantees close support from the project team on site.





Working Group: Support measures for local producers

Alida N'Takpe-Coulibaly, *SCOOP-RASSO Cooperative*

Mamadou Gbongué, *Conseil du Café-Cacao*

Yelly Bintou Niamen-Ndeli, *PRO-PLANTEURS*

In this working group, **Alida N'Takpe-Coulibaly**, **Mamadou Gbongué** and **Yelly Bintou Niamen-Ndeli** reported on the various challenges facing local producers. Currently, these mainly consist of the increasingly severe consequences of climate change, such as longer periods of drought and the resulting lower harvests, but also the swollen shoot virus. These circumstances sometimes prevent cocoa farmers from earning a living income.

During the discussion, it became clear that quantity and price have a major influence on income, but that procurement practices should also be designed to provide support. It is also relevant to invest in research into the swollen shoot virus in order to enable early detection and establish control measures. There should also be a greater focus on diversification and producers should be provided with appropriate support and training measures.

Future topics for GISCO also include health care for producers, traceability, agroforestry, professionalization and infrastructure.





Working Group: Beyond Certification

The Beyond Certification working group addressed the question of how joint, complementary approaches to certification can be developed among members in order to achieve effective progress on the specific objective 1 on Living Income.

During the discussion, it became clear that there is still a need for more uniform solutions, that more favorable framework conditions need to be created and that communication to consumers on the topic of certification also plays an important role. A central point of discussion was the adaptation of standards and requirements for a Living Income in order to offer a scalable instrument. This would require higher investment and corresponding market demand, but could be tested with members of GISCO.

Participants also emphasized the potential of existing resources and experiences from the PRO-PLANTEURS project and advocated greater exchange both within and between stakeholder groups for concrete action. Deeper cooperation and greater harmonization with other ISCOs would also promote synergies. Politicians also need to be sensitized in order to improve the possibilities within the framework of antitrust law.

The next steps could be to use formats such as task forces to test approaches in practice with stakeholders along the supply chain, develop mandatory requirements for Living Income together with standard organizations and process results from pilot projects.

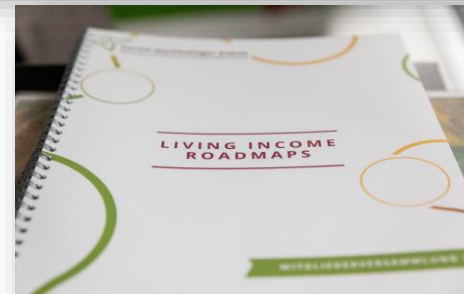
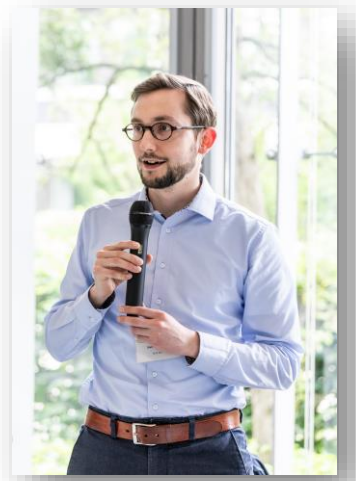




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