

Photo documentation

14. German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa General Assembly | 20 & 21 May 2026 | Berlin

Shaping the future together: Resilient cocoa supply chains for people and the environment





Board Elections on 20 May 2026

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) held its 14th General Assembly at the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Berlin. During the internal session on 20 May 2026, the members re-elected the Association's Executive Board:

Member Group A

- Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Homeland (BMLEH), represented by **Dieter Goertz** (appointed member)
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), represented by **Ina von Frantzius** (appointed member)

Member Group B

- **Aldo Cristiano**, Ferrero
- **Dr. Torben Erbrath**, Association of the German Confectionery Industry, (appointed member)

Member Group C

- **Florian Schütze**, Schwarz Gruppe
- **Christian Mieles**, Bundesverband des Deutschen Lebensmittelhandels (BVLH), (appointed member)

Member Group D

- **Evelyn Bahn**, INKOTA-netzwerk

Treasurer

- **Dr. Torben Erbrath**, Bundesverband der Deutschen Süßwarenindustrie (BDSI)

We congratulate all board members on their election!



Executive Board of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), from left to right: Dr. Torben Erbrath, Lisa Kirfel-Rühle, Florian Schütze, Aldo Cristiano, Evelyn Bahn, Christian Mieles (Not pictured: Ina von Frantzius, Dieter Goertz)



Opening Remarks

Aldo Cristiano, Chair of the Executive Board of GISCO

Aldo Cristiano welcomed the participants to the 14th General Assembly of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) and emphasized the importance of collaboration across the entire cocoa supply chain. He particularly highlighted the perspectives and contributions of partners from cocoa-producing countries. The broad participation of companies, government ministries, retailers, civil society, academia, and stakeholders from both producer and consumer countries demonstrates that sustainable development in the cocoa sector can only be achieved through joint efforts.

A central focus of his address was the GISCO's two-year theme, "Living Income." Mr. Cristiano reflected positively on the progress made over the past year, highlighting the discussions and processes initiated around roadmaps, commitments, and sustainable sourcing practices. At the same time, he stressed that further concrete action is needed to build resilient cocoa supply chains. In particular, he underlined the importance of developing joint solutions within the retail sector and creating an enabling political and economic environment.

Living income therefore remains a key priority for GISCO, while agroforestry is becoming increasingly important. Agroforestry systems make a significant contribution to ecological stability and climate change adaptation, thereby helping to secure farmers' incomes over the long term.

In closing, Mr. Cristiano thanked all members for their continued commitment and encouraged them to further strengthen dialogue and work together to advance sustainable solutions for the cocoa sector.



Opening Remarks by the Chair of GISCO, Aldo Cristiano



Opening remarks by BMZ and BMLEH

Reem Alabali-Radovan, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and **Martina Enghardt-Kopf**, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Homeland (BMLEH), welcomed the members via video message.

In their remarks, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Reem Alabali-Radovan (BMZ) and Parliamentary State Secretary Martina Enghardt-Kopf (BMLEH) emphasised the importance of a joint transformation of the cocoa sector.

Reem Alabali-Radovan stressed that sustainable cocoa farming must be economically viable for smallholder farmers. Fair prices, responsible purchasing practices, and investments in climate-resilient farming methods are essential to address the challenges posed by climate change and plant diseases. She also acknowledged existing corporate initiatives and called for the continued expansion of sector-wide voluntary commitments.

Martina Enghardt-Kopf highlighted that sustainable supply chains can only be achieved through the cooperation of all actors along the value chain. She commended the work of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), which has contributed to the sustainable development of the cocoa sector for over ten years through joint voluntary commitments and concrete on-the-ground measures. Furthermore, she emphasised close cooperation with the BMZ, the joint 10-point plan, and the extension of the International Cocoa Agreement as key foundations for a future-oriented and resilient cocoa economy.



Video Message by the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Reem Alabali-Radovan



Video Message by the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Homeland Martina Enghardt-Kopf



Living Income meets environmental protection

Panel Discussion: Living income meets environmental protection: How can an economically viable system change in the cocoa sector succeed?

Wendy Arenas, ALISOS | **José Andres Morales Barreto, Comicacao** | **Nicko Debenham, Sustainability Solutions** | **Alina Tremmel, Lidl International**

The panel discussion addressed current developments and structural challenges in the cocoa sector. The focus was on rising cocoa prices as well as the interlinkages between income, biodiversity, and sustainable supply chains.

It became clear that higher incomes for producers can have positive effects on both the environment and quality of life, however, they do not in themselves lead to systemic transformation. Stable, predictable, and long-term pricing structures are essential, including in order to attract younger generations to the cocoa sector.

Alina Tremmel presented Lidl's new commitment to the Fairtrade "Grow Further" programme.



Alina Tremmel (LIDL International)



Nicko Debenham (Sustainability Solutions)



*José Andrés Morales Barreto (Comicacao),
Wendy Arenas (Alisos)*

She emphasised that work on a joint Living Income commitment with the other retail companies represented in GISCO remains of strategic importance for Lidl in order to create a "level playing field" across the sector.

It was further highlighted that the perspectives of producers must be more strongly incorporated to ensure acceptance and effectiveness. This is linked to the demand for shared responsibility along the entire supply chain.

In conclusion, it was stressed that systemic transformation can only succeed through the interaction of all stakeholders: improved incomes, income diversification, the involvement of producing countries, and the development of resilient and biodiversity-friendly farming systems.



From the Sustainability Working Group to the Task Forces



Lisa Köhl (Aldi Süd KG)

Lisa Köhl (Aldi Süd KG) presented the work of the Environmental Task Force, and **Sandra Brück** (Fairtrade Deutschland e.V.) reported on the current status of the Living Income Task Force. Both task forces focus on political dialogue as well as respectively the implementation of living income and agroforestry strategies. In particular, they address how policy frameworks can be improved and how concrete implementation approaches within the membership can be strengthened.

The Living Income Task Force focuses its political dialogue on farmgate prices in West Africa, stabilisation funds, and the resilience of cocoa production systems. In addition, challenges in implementing living income strategies and sustainable sourcing practices were discussed, including the lack of harmonised income measurement methodologies and difficulties in scaling existing approaches. Initial ideas include dedicated formats for buyers, shared resources for income assessments, and exchanges on successful measures.

The Environmental Task Force focuses on agroforestry systems and their role in building resilient supply chains. Key topics identified for political dialogue include economic incentives for agroforestry as well as land and resource tenure rights. In addition, the task force discussed challenges related to the practical implementation and financing of agroforestry approaches.

Potential next steps include strengthened exchange on best practice examples, the development of case studies, and intensified South-South cooperation between Latin America and West Africa.



Sandra Brück (Fairtrade Deutschland e.V.)



GISCO as a source of impetus for your Organisation

In small groups, members discussed the effectiveness of existing GISCO formats for the implementation of Living Income and agroforestry strategies in their organisations. In-person meetings were assessed as particularly effective, mainly due to the direct exchange, stronger engagement of stakeholders from producing countries, and better integration of new members.

Dialogue formats also received strong approval. Going forward, they should be further strengthened along the supply chain and with the involvement of civil society and representatives from producing countries. Participants also called for more intensive exchange on implementation experiences, best practices, and “fail forward” approaches. High-quality facilitation with a clear results orientation was identified as a key area for improvement.

Member-specific working groups were generally viewed positively, however, participants called for more transparent feedback loops between the retail working group and the task forces in order to avoid parallel workstreams, as well as for broader member engagement.



Bettina Renner (Secretary)



Juliane Lutze (Secretary) with member representatives

In addition, stronger sector-specific exchange within the industry group was suggested. Roadmaps are considered an important steering instrument for strengthening accountability and anchoring the topics within companies. At the same time, clearer and more realistic targets as well as cross-ISCO (European Initiatives for Sustainable Cocoa) coordination were called for.

Furthermore, proposals included intensified South-South exchange between West Africa and Latin America, an improved website, a matching fund, and a mentoring programme for new members.

In the area of Living Income, a “smart mix” approach and more targeted engagement of buyers were emphasized. For agroforestry systems, a cross-commodity exchange was proposed. The aim is to clarify which market actors can absorb additional agroforestry products and how GISCO members can contribute to the development of corresponding markets.



Meet the Experts

In the “Meet the Experts” format, participants had the opportunity to further explore topics from the panel discussion and engage in smaller group conversations with experts. The sessions provided space for technical exchange, questions, and discussion of current challenges in the cocoa sector.

Nicko Debenham (Sustainability Solutions) discussed the impacts of European regulations such as the EUDR and CSDDD and examined the extent to which these may support Living Income and agroforestry systems or potentially hinder existing progress.

Alina Tremmel (Lidl Stiftung & Fairtrade) presented experiences from the implementation of the Living Income programme “Grow Further” as well as the conversion of private label supply chains.

Dr. Johannes Agbahey (Pro-Planteurs) and **Karidja Konaté** (GISCO Côte d'Ivoire) reported on the current situation in Côte d'Ivoire and provided insights into collaboration with GISCO members on the ground.

José Andrés Morales Barreto (Comicao & WWF) spoke about agroforestry systems, deforestation-free cocoa, and the associated socio-economic benefits for producers.

Wendy Arenas highlighted cooperation and priorities of producing countries in Latin America, as well as the political dialogue in the region.

Dr. Kristy Leissle discussed postcolonial continuities in the cocoa sector, linking back to discussions held at the previous evening event.





Colonial Continuities in the Cocoa Sector



Dr. Kristy Leissle

Inspired by Dr Kristy Leissle, members explored colonial continuities in the global cocoa trade under the title “Why Chocolate is a Colonial Story” and their impact on market structures that persist to this day. Andrea Durry from the Chocolate Museum in Cologne additionally presented colonial representations in chocolate marketing and explained how the museum’s educational work addresses colonialism and related racism.



Andrea Durry (Chocolate Museum Cologne)



Impressions







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