

Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa

Press release

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Joining forces for sustainable cocoa

The Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa was launched today. The objective is to join forces and promote sustainability in the cocoa business. Chocosuisse, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and non-governmental organisations, such as Swisscontact and Helvetas, are behind the initiative.

Swiss chocolate has an excellent reputation. That this small alpine country without its own cocoa production could become a major producer of chocolate is due to the fact that many ground-breaking technologies were invented in Switzerland. The conching machine, which was used to make a really refined chocolate for the first time, is just one example. Today the Swiss chocolate industry wants to live up to its pioneering role and has therefore launched an initiative to promote sustainability in the cocoa business.

In order to reach this goal, the sector's association Chocosuisse, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and Swiss non-governmental organisations have created the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa. The ten strategic objectives drawn up for that purpose were presented this morning. Chocosuisse, SECO and numerous companies, non-governmental organisations and research institutes have signed a Declaration of Intent to confirm their intention of cooperating actively to reach said objectives.

Measurable contribution to sustainability goals

The newly elected president of the sector's association, the CVP councillor of state Beat Vonlanthen from Fribourg, explained: "Both Chocosuisse and our member companies have been committed to sustainably source cocoa for years now, but there is still a lot to do. By inviting other actors to help reach our goals, we allow for common responsibility."

A key element of the Declaration of Intent is the measurable mid-term goal that by the year 2025 80% of the imported cocoa products will come from sustainable production. Another objective is to promote the dialogue between the local authorities and organisations in the producing countries. The latter should also receive support and be encouraged to improve the cocoa farmers' and their families' situation.

The SECO has been strongly involved in launching this platform: SECO director Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch declares: "The development cooperation with partner countries such as Ghana, Indonesia, Columbia or Peru can be magnified by cooperating more closely with the private sector." As one of Switzerland's more important economic sectors the chocolate industry also plays a pioneering role, since it purposefully accepts the UN's sustainability goals and wants to make a measurable contribution to the Agenda 2030, she continues. "I hope that other sectors will soon follow this example."

Cooperation of all relevant actors

The two widely recognised Swiss development organisations, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and Swisscontact, have also contributed to the platform's creation. Through a participatory process, representatives from other non-governmental organisations and federal authorities as well as experts from companies and research institutes helped check and refine the aspired objectives and measures.

The president of the politically and religiously independent development organisation Helvetas, Mr Elmar Ledergerber, says: "Various Swiss development organisations have been working with Swiss chocolate manufacturers for years to guarantee a secure income and establish transparent value-added chains for the families of small farmers. This work has just received an extra boost thanks to this new, broadly set up multi-stakeholder initiative."

Aims and organisation of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa

The cocoa platform's aim is to considerably improve the living conditions of cocoa producers and to create an attractive cocoa sector for the current and future generations. Its activities will focus on the following areas:

- The area **Common Projects and Promotion of Innovation** supports the development and realisation of joint initiatives. A first step will be to set up expert groups around following topics: climate resilience and biodiversity, traceability of cocoa butter, funding instruments, and measures to reduce the cadmium level in cocoa beans.
- **International Alignment and Stakeholder Dialogue:** The effective reinforcement of sustainability along the cocoa value added chain requires intensive cooperation across the borders both with actors in producing countries and in international bodies.
- The task of the **Information and Knowledge centre** is to monitor and report on the accomplishment of jointly set goals. Another focal point is the exchange of knowledge and elaborating Best Practice guidelines.

The Cocoa Platform will be an independent association, with representatives from all relevant actors, as of January 2018. Until then, a transitory executive committee, with representatives from the chocolate sector, trade, research institutes, development organisations and the Swiss confederation, is responsible for the strategic leadership.

Appendices:

- Declaration of Intent
- Project Outline of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa
- Pictures of speakers and the Declaration of Intent signing ceremony

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