

Anecaacao

TRADITION & INNOVATION

**CHOKAO 2024
TOTAL SUCCESS!**

ecacao
del de Excepcionales de Cacao - Ecuador

CHOKAO

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In this edition, we highlight the Chokao 2024 Awards Gala, the fair that, for the third consecutive year, brought together the entire cocoa and chocolate sector of Ecuador. Led by ANECACAO's executives, we celebrated an event filled with joy, recognition, and a shared commitment to the future of Ecuadorian cacao.



Tsunami in Cocoa



*Iván Ontaneda B.
President of the Board
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After 30 years in the cocoa industry, I've had the opportunity to witness and navigate through numerous challenges. However, this year has been particularly complex to comprehend but has left us with valuable lessons. We started like a ship caught in the middle of a storm, where many of us took in water and had to learn to navigate 25- to 30-meter waves. It was a tough journey, and we continue to learn from it. The crisis equation combined every possible factor, creating a perfect storm for the cocoa sector.

The deficit in Africa, the perception of a global supply shortage, and a speculative surge in the New York and London markets have exposed many players along the value chain, especially exporters, who were forced to honor their contracts despite liquidity shortages. This situation has compelled us to rethink strategies and forge partnerships between Ecuadorian companies and international buyers.

The remainder of the year has continued to be challenging; while we are no longer facing 30-meter waves, the 15- and 20-meter ones have been teaching us about the new dynamics of the cocoa and chocolate industries as we strive to keep the sector moving forward.

Ecuadorian producers have benefited from very good prices, which is positive for agriculture, investment in production, and the well-being of farming families. However, the export sector has borne the brunt of this volatility. As intermediaries, we've had to face this scenario with limitations, making daily efforts to maintain liquidity and flow in the market.

Structurally, the sector has grown with a clear strategic vision, both in production and in private initiatives. This has positioned us for growth and garnered international

recognition. ANECACAO has played a crucial role by leading and uniting the various stakeholders to capitalize on current opportunities—not just in the short term but also in the medium and long term.

We must ensure that this price surge is not a mirage. Ultimately, price is a variable controlled neither by producers, exporters, nor governments. Our enduring challenge is to increase productivity so Ecuador becomes a country of higher yields per hectare annually. Achieving this requires supporting small-scale farmers with technology and knowledge-sharing, ensuring Ecuadorian cocoa excels not only in productivity but also in consistent, superior quality in the global market.

This is the task at hand, and we are committed to its success. There is still much to do, but we are clear about the direction our nation's cocoa sector must take, adhering to international market norms and regulations.

Currently, we face another challenge: a new climate scenario, another uncontrollable variable. Last year, we contended with El Niño, now we are experiencing very dry conditions due to La Niña, impacting all crops, including cocoa. We hope these changes do not cause significant damage to Ecuador's cocoa production and quality.

Despite these challenges and fluctuations, cocoa remains a noble product that brings smiles, passion, and motivation to rise each day and work towards a better country. It is gratifying to see cocoa contribute to Ecuador's economy, generating foreign exchange and creating jobs, even in tough circumstances.

As true cocoa farmers, we remain optimistic. Chocolate and cocoa inspire joy and happiness, and that enduring smile will always guide us forward.



Julien Simonis

Cacao of Excellence Program Manager, led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT

In this interview, Simonis shares his vision on the challenges and opportunities in high-quality cocoa, highlighting Ecuador's role as a global benchmark for fine aroma cocoa.



Group of 10 South American winners at the Chococo Awards

Could you tell us about your relationship with cacao before joining the Cacao of Excellence Program and how it has influenced your vision for this Program?

Before joining the Cacao of Excellence Program, I spent many years immersed in cacao quality and sensory analysis with Puratos, as well as working as a technical consultant across the industry. This work gave me a deep appreciation for the complexity of cacao, from cultivation to its transformation into fine chocolate. Being part of the Technical Committee since 2017 allowed me to witness the extraordinary potential of diverse origins and the unique stories behind producers' work. These experiences shaped my vision for the program: celebrating cacao excellence, providing a platform to connect producers with international markets, and increasing farmers' incomes through high-quality cacao.

As the program manager, what do you see as the greatest challenges and opportunities in preserving cacao diversity and quality worldwide?

One of the greatest challenges is balancing the growing demand for cacao with the need to maintain genetic, sensory, and cultural diversity. As the industry expands, there is a risk of prioritizing volume over quality and uniformity over uniqueness. Climate change also poses significant threats to cacao-producing regions.

However, there are immense opportunities. Through programs like the Alliance of Bioversity International

and CIAT's Cacao of Excellence, we can raise awareness about the value of diversity and quality, offering incentives to producers to preserve traditional varieties and adopt post-harvest practices that enhance flavor profiles. Collaboration across the supply chain—from producers to consumers—can create a sustainable ecosystem that values excellence over quantity.

Could you share what you consider essential factors in the post-harvest process to achieve an exceptional flavor profile in chocolate?

Post-harvest practices are critical to unlocking the full sensory potential of cacao. Three key factors stand out:

1. **Fermentation:** Proper fermentation is essential for developing precursor compounds that contribute to rich, complex flavors. Consistent monitoring and adjustments are crucial, depending on the bean variety and environmental conditions.
2. **Drying:** Controlled drying prevents spoilage and ensures the preservation of flavors developed during fermentation.
3. **Attention to Detail:** Every stage requires meticulous care. Producers who experiment and adapt these processes to their unique terroir often achieve extraordinary results.

Ultimately, exceptional flavor profiles begin with understanding the intrinsic qualities of the cacao variety and committing to nurturing them throughout the post-harvest process.

From your perspective, why do you think today's consumers increasingly value cacao's sensory profiles, and what factors have driven this appreciation?

Consumers are increasingly informed and curious about the origins of their food, seeking authentic and meaningful experiences. In the case of cacao, this has translated into growing appreciation for nuanced flavors and origin stories.

The driving factors include:

- **Artisanal chocolatiers:** Their focus on highlighting unique cacao origins has educated consumers about the diversity of flavor profiles.
- **Sustainability trends:** Consumers value ethically sourced products, and high-quality cacao is often associated with more transparent supply chains.
- **Global food culture:** A broader interest in gastronomy and sensory exploration has naturally extended to cacao and chocolate.

This trend underscores the importance of programs like Cacao of Excellence, showcasing the diversity and quality that resonate with evolving consumer preferences.

What are the best spaces, channels, or target markets for positioning cacao with exceptional sensory profiles, and what recommendations do you have for producing countries seeking to reach these markets?

Premium cacao with exceptional sensory profiles is best positioned through channels that value craftsmanship and storytelling. These include:

- **Specialty chocolate markets:** Artisanal chocolatiers and premium chocolate brands are ideal partners for showcasing unique origins.
- **Gastronomía y alta cocina:** La colaboración con chefs y sumilleres introduce el cacao como ingrediente culinario más allá del chocolate.

- **International trade events:** Platforms like the Chokao Fair, Salon du Chocolat, Chococoa, and Eurochocolate offer excellent visibility and direct buyer engagement.

For producing countries, I recommend focusing on storytelling, traceability, and fostering relationships with value-added markets. Educational initiatives for producers about global trends can also help align their offerings with market demands.

Ecuador is known for its fine flavor cacao. Could you tell us about collaborations or projects you've worked on with the Ecuadorian cacao sector and their impact?

In 2024, we collaborated with CLAC-Fair Trade and FairTrade to strengthen quality and flavor analysis capacity in three Ecuadorian cooperatives within the CLAC ecosystem. Representatives from these cooperatives received



Chocolate tasting at Eurochocolate 2023



Conducting laboratory training sessions

specialized training in Rome on cacao quality and flavor profile evaluation, with the goal of applying their new knowledge within their organizations.

Over the past three years, we also conducted a high-quality cacao market analysis funded by the UN Food and Agriculture Investment Center. This initiative focused on developing investment recommendations, with Ecuador as a key country. A comprehensive report will be published soon.

We firmly believe that projects like these can drive the right investments to enhance the capacity of Ecuadorian cacao producers, empowering them to improve and sustain the quality of their cacao.

Cacao of Excellence remains committed to building on these achievements to continue fostering capacity development regionally and nationally in Ecuador. This effort will involve collaboration with key stakeholders in the country, including ANECACAO.

How do you see ANECACAO's role in promoting Ecuadorian cacao excellence?

ANECACAO serves as a crucial bridge between producers, exporters, and global markets. By collaborating with the Cacao of Excellence Program, it can amplify the recognition of Ecuadorian cacao's quality, flavor diversity, and sustainability, ensuring that Ecuador maintains its leadership in the world of high-quality cacao. Together, these efforts can empower producers and strengthen Ecuador's reputation globally.

What strengths do you see in Ecuadorian cacao, and how can the country maximize its opportunities in the global market?

Ecuador's strengths lie in its unmatched genetic diversity, rich tradition of high-quality cacao, and a robust network of committed producers and institutions.

To maximize its opportunities, the country should:

- **Promote Origin Stories:** Highlight the unique qualities of Ecuadorian cacao and the dedication of its producers.
- **Enhance Quality Standards:** Continued investment in training and infrastructure can ensure consistent quality.
- **Expand Value-Added Opportunities:** Encouraging more local processing can create additional revenue streams and greater control over branding.

By focusing on these areas, Ecuador can further solidify its reputation as a global supplier of exceptional and flavorful cacao.

The key to success

GLOBAL COCOA

Driving the quality and sustainability of ecuadorian cocoa to the world



Strategic Sourcing and Collaborative Relationships

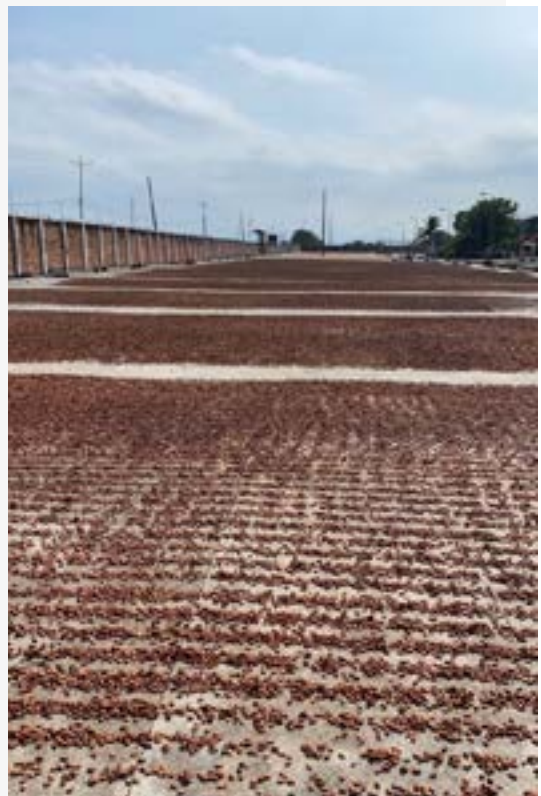
Global Cocoa sources cocoa from approximately 2,000 farmers and intermediary traders, strategically located in key cocoa-growing regions such as Los Ríos, Esmeraldas, Manabí, and Guayas. This sourcing model ensures product quality while promoting sustainable practices.

Acosta emphasized the evolution in their relationship with producers: “We have transitioned from a transactional to a collaborative relationship. We implement training programs, financing, and technical assistance that not only improve productivity but also enhance the quality of life in farming communities.” These relationships benefit not only the farmers but also strengthen Global Cocoa’s reputation as a company committed to ethical and sustainable trade.

We spoke with Christopher Acosta, Vice President of Global-Cocoa S.A., to learn how the company has evolved toward a sustainable and ethical model.

In Ecuador’s competitive cocoa sector, Global Cocoa has established itself as one of the country’s leading exporters. Since its inception, the company has had a clear vision: positioning Ecuadorian cocoa as a premium product in international markets while simultaneously fostering the development of agricultural communities.

“The initial goal was to create a leading cocoa export company committed to quality and improving the living conditions of local producers,” stated Christopher Acosta, Vice President of the company. This steadfast purpose has evolved to embrace a more comprehensive approach to sustainability. “Now, we focus on meeting global standards such as Rainforest Alliance and ECA regulations, aiming to establish ourselves as leaders in ethical and responsible trade worldwide.”



Innovation in the Global Market

In response to international market demands, Global Cocoa has diversified its product offerings. The company now exports not only cocoa beans but also derivatives such as semi-finished products and finished chocolates. "This diversification allows us to adapt to global market demands, strengthen our alliances with farmers, and increase resilience against price fluctuations and climate challenges," Acosta explained.

Sustainability is another fundamental pillar of the company. Through initiatives like agroforestry, carbon emission reductions, and responsible use of natural resources, Global Cocoa has made a significant impact in its production communities. Additionally, with its Smart Planet plan, the company aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2026.

Responsible Leadership

Global Cocoa continues to exemplify how a commitment to quality and sustainability can transform an industry. The company not only seeks to maintain Ecuador's position as a leader in fine flavor cocoa but also ensures a legacy of responsible and collaborative practices that benefit every link in the value chain.

"Cocoa trade isn't just about numbers; it's about the impact we generate in communities and the environment. Investing in sustainability and long-term relationships ensures product quality and builds a fairer and more prosperous future for everyone," Acosta concluded.



Looking Ahead

For Acosta, the future of the cocoa industry is clear: "We envision a sector more oriented toward sustainability, innovation, and collaboration. In this landscape, Global Cocoa will play a central role, leading initiatives that benefit both producers and international markets."





Interview with Michel Arrion
Executive Director of ICCO

Traceability, Sustainability, and Challenges: The Road to EUDR Compliance in the Cocoa Sector

We spoke with Michel Arrion, Executive Director of the ICCO, about the impact of a possible EUDR extension for the cocoa-producing countries.

How do you assess the impact of the extension on the readiness of cacao-producing countries to comply with the regulation?

We welcome the limited extension (by one year probably) of the date of entry into force of the Regulation. It will give more time to some stakeholders to adapt to the EUDR. Many NGOs, as well as several important companies from the private sector were against the extension. But our exporting members were in favor of such a postponement

by one year minimum. We are confident that by the end of 2025, most stakeholders will be ready to meet the requirements of the EUDR, in particular the traceability of products.

In what way might the extension affect the dynamics of the cocoa market, considering that some companies have stocked up in advance?

We are not aware of stock piles of cocoa products. On the contrary, the world stocks are rather low. ICCO is assessing the level of stocks on a yearly basis. The next assessment will be done in January 2025, for a situation on 30 September 2024. Stocks in origin countries, even from

a previous crop year will be subject to the new EUDR, as the date of importation determines the applicability of the legislation.

Looking toward 2025, what changes do you anticipate in the structure of the cocoa market concerning sustainability and traceability?

We are expecting that most origin countries will be compliant with the EU Regulation, that all farmers and plantations will be geo-located, and that the global value chains will be able to maintain traceability across all various transactions, from the farmer to the final step and the consumer. But that concerns environmental sustainability only. We also want to see economic sustainability with

the farmers achieving a living income, and the costs of EUDR-Compliance being justly distributed along the chain, among all economic operators. That is not guaranteed yet and we will be working with our members towards the achievement of this objective of fair distribution of costs.

With the gradual introduction of the regulation, what key metrics should companies monitor to ensure compliance and competitiveness in the market?

At pre-competitive level, the obligations of compliance should become a collective effort for all the economic operators, with a transparent system of traceability, and collectively owned data. Moreover, cocoa companies will

probably have to review their contractual arrangements with their suppliers and customers, to incorporate the obligations set by the legislation into their contracts.

What kind of collaboration between ICCO and Ecuador's cocoa companies is being considered to help overcome the challenges posed by this regulation?

We are an intergovernmental organization and our first partners are our member countries. We are also engaging with private companies and we always recommend our members to set up public / private partnerships

when formulating and implementing National Cocoa Development Plans (NCDPs). We are at the disposal of companies to develop synergies and collaboration, but always within the framework of the NCDP.

What recommendations would you offer to cocoa-producing countries and trading companies that are adapting to the new regulatory requirements?

I think that we need a very inclusive approach, avoiding top down solutions, and giving priority to the producers;

traceability starts at farm level.

What is your projection for cocoa prices, supply, and demand for the upcoming year?

We are anticipating a situation where world cocoa supply (at global level) will be slightly below the industrial demand (the grinders) , with some tensions on stocks and prices;

we anticipate therefore that the prices will remain high, around the current level.

Is ICCO developing any strategies or support plans to contribute to the sustainability of producing countries? What recommendations would you give to Ecuador's cocoa sector?

For us the overarching objective is a good farmgate price. If farmers are well paid, sustainability will follow. We are happy to see that Ecuadorian farmers receive a very good share (up to 90%) of the international price. Moreover, the

costs of compliance with the EUDR should be borne by all stakeholders of the value chain, in an equitable manner.

ACLIMATAR

The Tool That Turns Climate Into Opportunities for Cacao Farmers



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Program Leaders

We interviewed the leaders of ACLIMATAR. Here's what they revealed about how the tool is strengthening climate resilience in cacao farming.

How does ACLIMATAR specifically benefit cocoa producers in regions vulnerable to climate change, such as Ecuador, Colombia and West Africa?

ACLIMATAR makes complex climate data accessible to cocoa producers and extensionists, linking climate projections to actionable advice. It thereby provides a strategic perspective how to take into account climate change when making decisions around farm management and investments and allows building to build up resilience strategically.

The tool integrates insights from more than 10 years of climate adaptation research at the Biodiversity Alliance and CIAT and in different regions, combined with updated data from global climate models. Going beyond analysis, we decided to build up an entire support system, thereby increasing the usability of ACLIMATAR and provide users with the information they need to convert insights gained into action on the ground. You find user tutorials, short workshop templates and even an entire learning course on climate adaptation in perennial cropping systems. On entering the tool, users will be asked to select

their crop and location of interest, to then access downscaled climate data on past changes, current trends and future projection, analysing indicators such as precipitation, temperature and crop-specific hazards, alongside projected agro-climatic suitability in the region. The information then can be either exported as a pdf report to take to producers or farm workshops or it can be saved online in your profile. Here, it is important to stress that the platform had been primarily developed for farm extensionists or at least producers with some technical background, as the insights will require certain contextualization regarding the farm specific management situation. In a nutshell, ACLIMATAR helps to understand past trends and upcoming risks regarding climate, all along accessing actionable advice to increase your farm's climate resilience. And the best: the platform is free of charge thanks to the generous support of our funders.

What is the level of accuracy of ACLIMATAR's forecasts, and are there new projects to increase their level of accuracy?

First, it is important to stress that ACLIMATAR provides projections and trend analysis for climatic developments over multiple decades, not forecasts about imminent climate events. We did not create a crystal ball but provide a reasonable outlook of expected changes in agro-climatic suitability, taking into account current levels of greenhouse gas emissions and initiatives to reduce them. More technically speaking, ACLIMATAR uses data for the coming decades from CMIP5 and CMIP6 (the most recent climate models of the IPCC), downscaled to a 5x5 km grid. However, it is important to stress that the climate models from one generation to another show rather marginal changes when looking at these localized data. Though data is important, even more important is then to act on it and start working on the ground and in the region, combining local perceptions from the farmers and past climate data with future outlook to include this important determinants in strategic planning and farm management and implement farm practices that help contribute to increased climate resilience.

What types of climate risks does the cocoa crop currently face in the regions where ACLIMATAR provides data, and how does the platform assess them in order to offer concrete solutions?

Temperature increase is definitely one of the major drivers in many regions, as well as the variability in temperatures within the season. However, some regions might also expect slight temperature decreases. Extreme weather events will become more frequent, with many regions suffering from more frequent droughts or less distributed but more intense rain events. In the analysis, ACLIMATAR mainly focusses on two changes: on the one hand, it looks at shifts in agro-climatic zones, to determine the degree of impact to be expected from climate change in the region. On the other hand, also crop-specific hazards are studied, such as the number of waterlogging days, number of drought days, aridity indices and crop heat risk. We even take into account human heat risk, to account for worker's health. Texts and practices shown are then adjusted accordingly, prioritizing those practices that are considered most relevant for the degree of impact and the climate risks that have been identified. Currently, we do not assess risk of wind or flooding, as these depend heavily on local conditions; however we did include some of the mitigation practices, such as wind breaks or drainage.

QR code aclimatar



<https://adaptation.aclimatar.org/>



In the case of cocoa, what are the main adaptation practices recommended by ACLIMATAR to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure the sustainability of plantations?

When suggesting adaptation practices, we aim to take an integrative vision on the cropping cycle, catering for practices from the nursery stage (managing water supply, insolation, impact from wind) to establishment (proper root development, adequate fertilization, use of cover crops and temporary shade), to production (where crop handling, drainage, fertilization, pest and disease management are some of the focus areas) to post harvest handling (with adjusting timing of harvesting and ensuring proper fermentation, drying and storage).

In general, many of the recommended practices are about being more conscious about and adjusting timing (e.g. for applying of fertilizer, harvesting, pest and disease handling) in regards to climatic conditions, or working towards a microclimate that is more favourable for productivity and quality (pruning and tree architecture, ground cover, shade, water management in the farming system, etc.). Additionally, also the choice and combination of varieties, as well as planting design are important, given that the decisions that we take today will determine our performance for the next 10 or 20 years. In region where we project more severe suitability loss, we also suggest looking at diversification, where possible.

How does ACLIMATAR use historical, current and future temperature and precipitation data to help cocoa farmers make more informed decisions regarding agricultural planning?

Climate change is not something happening in the distant future but instead is affecting us already in our day to day operations. Droughts are becoming more frequent, frequency of flooding increases or the amount of rain that used to be distributed over an entire month now may be concentrated in two or three days. Often, producers already observe these local changes and try to adjust their management accordingly. ACLIMATAR now helps to put these localized observations into perspective, comparing the perceived changes with past changes and current tendencies, to then complement this with an outlook towards the future. Whilst in annual systems like maize or beans I can reassess my variety choice and planting design on a yearly basis, systems like cocoa, tea or coffee depend on taking into account the longer term vision.

ACLIMATAR brings in this planning perspective, making localized climate data accessible to farm extensionists, companies and producers. Thereby, the projected future viability and climate factors can be factored in when making investment decisions in present days. And, we can gradually build up the climate resilience needed for the future climate in our region.

Could you share some examples of successful adaptation by cocoa farmers using ACLIMATAR?

Sure! In Ghana, COCOBOD as national cocoa promotion agency is using the underlying data and zoning of ACLIMATAR from previous projects with the World Cocoa Foundation, amongst others, to integrate strategic adaptation and climate resilience in their cocoa extension work. The Rainforest Alliance is using the tool for their work on climate adaptation and trainings with country officers, certificate holders and farmers in West Africa. Moreover, several impact investors plan to use the tool and related data for better risk monitoring of investments. And in Central America the version of ACLIMATAR on coffee is used by the Hans R. Neumann Foundation (HRNS) in their training programmes on climate resilient coffee farming (coffee&climate). All this, to work towards more climate resilient producers in the region.

What is the projection of the tool in the future?

Looking forward, we are working to increase the uptake of the tool by the different producers' organizations and accompany its recurring use, to make a relevant impact on the ground. Here, we are always open to provide assistance e.g. when planning workshops and are open to feedback on the practices, to build a global community of cocoa stakeholders committing to climate resilient production. For Latin America, climate data for Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru is now available; however, the list of adaptation practices is still being finalized. If you require a preliminary version, please do not hesitate to contact us. Going global, we are also interested in expanding the tool's coverage to new regions and are currently looking actively for funding partners.

ACLIMATAR has been developed as part of CGIAR's Excellence in Agronomy initiative and in collaboration with the Rainforest Alliance. An initial version of the platform was fruit of the collaboration between CIAT, HRNS, Rikolto and the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF)



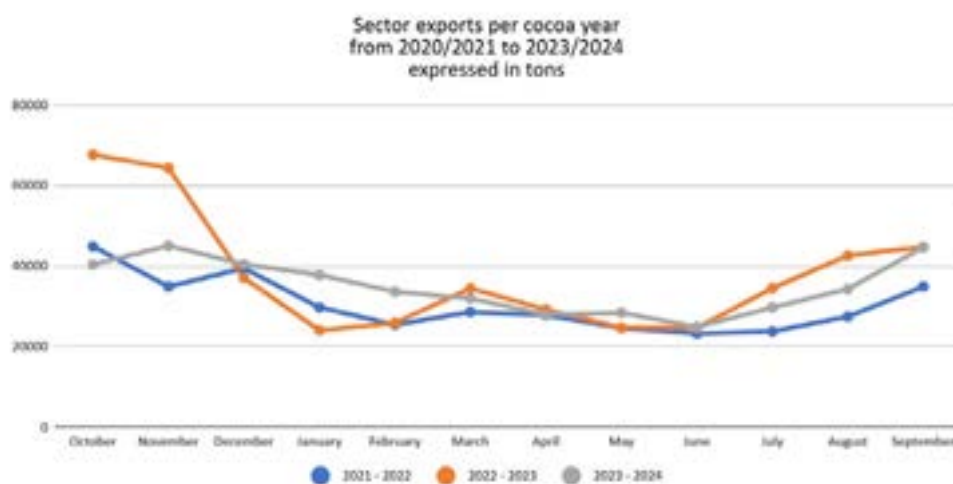


Results cocoa year 2023/2024

Cocoa sector exports statistics

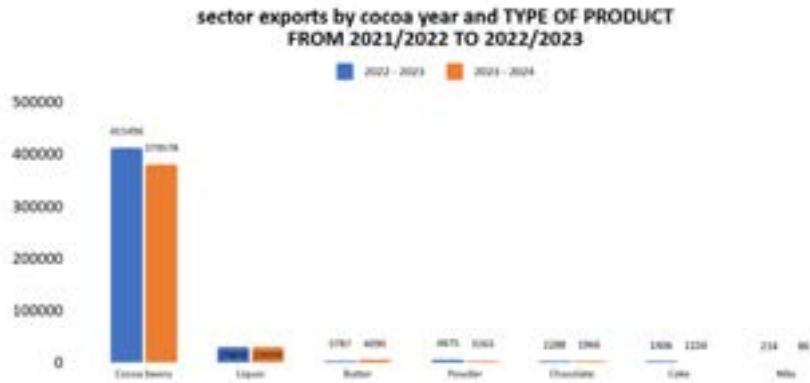
The last cocoa year, which started from October 2023 to September 2024, has demonstrated the strength of the Ecuadorian cocoa sector in facing the international price increase and the impact of the El Niño phenomenon. As a result, a total of 419.233 tons of cocoa beans, as well as semi-finished and finished products, were exported during this period. This 7,63% decrease compared to the 2022/2023 period had an effect on the cocoa beans and processed products exported, in which a total of 379.578 tons of cocoa beans and 39.654 tons of processed products were sent abroad and showed a variation of -7,76% and -6,42%, respectively.

Taking this into account, the following document presents the export performance of the sector during this period, in terms of volume, as well as the main products and destinations.



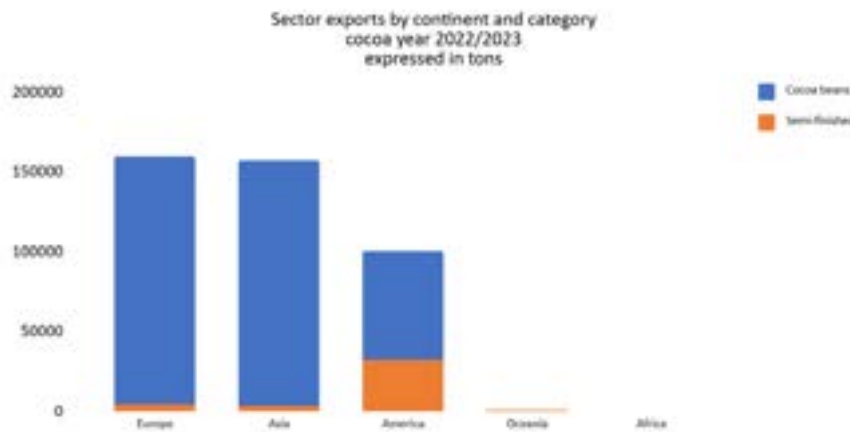
Source: Anecacao 2024

During this period, exports generated an average monthly flow of 34.936 tons, with November and December being the months with the highest shipments, exporting 45.027 and 40.444 tons respectively. This represented a decrease of 19.284 tons in November and an increase of 3.383 tons in December compared to the previous year. In monetary terms, exports during this period exceeded \$2.664 million.



Source: Anecacao 2024

Regarding the most representative export products this year, cocoa beans led with 90,54% of total shipments. On the other hand, semi-finished and finished cocoa products (liquor, butter, powder, nibs, cake, and chocolates) represented 9,46% of total exports. Overall, nearly all products experienced a decrease in export volumes, except for cocoa powder, which had an 8,01% increase.



Source: Anecacao 2024

In terms of export destinations, Europe and Asia were the most representative continents, with 38,19% and 37,58%, respectively, while the Americas had an 24,01%, Oceania with 0,23%, and Africa with 0,0003%. In the case of cocoa beans, Europe had the highest level of exports, with 156.005 tons shipped, this is a 139,23% increase compared with the previous year. For semi-finished products, the Americas were the leading continent, with around 31.686 tons exported and a growth of 21,91%. Regarding countries main destinations, for cocoa beans are Malaysia, Indonesia, the United States, the Netherlands, and Germany; while for semi-finished and finished cocoa products, the primary destinations are the United States, Chile, Mexico, Canada, and Japan.

For the new cocoa year 2024/25, as long as weather conditions remain stable, exports are expected to overcome this year's levels and reach 438.000 tons.

The innovation of Cacao in Esmeraldas



By Rey G. Looor S., Ph.D.
National Cacao and Coffee Program
INAP

The recent release of the INIAP-EETP-803 and INIAP-EETP-804 cacao clones by the National Institute of Agricultural Research (INIAP) marks a milestone for cacao production in Esmeraldas. These clones were developed after more than 20 years of research and are specifically adapted to the agroclimatic conditions of the province. This effort promises to increase local crop productivity while bolstering the international recognition of Ecuadorian cocoa.

Developing these clones was a significant challenge for the INIAP team, which worked to identify genotypes capable of producing more than two tons of dry cacao per hectare per year under rainfed conditions. This research considered factors such as precipitation, temperature, soil type, and sunlight specific to Esmeraldas. The process extended beyond local trials to include experimental testing in diverse agroclimatic zones across the country, including the coast, foothills, and Amazon. The results confirmed that one clone performs exceptionally well in Esmeraldas, while the other showed favorable commercial potential for this and other coastal regions.

One of the most innovative aspects of INIAP's current improvement program is its comprehensive focus on quality. Over the past two decades, INIAP has implemented advanced genetic improvement techniques, with a multidisciplinary team of researchers specializing in agronomy, biotechnology, nutrition, and pathology collaborating at every stage of cacao development

and production. This joint effort ensures that the INIAP-EETP-803 and INIAP-EETP-804 clones are not only productive but also resilient to drought conditions and environmental challenges unique to the region.

Since their release in September, both clones have generated significant interest among Esmeraldas producers, many of whom have already observed their productive benefits. To support adoption, INIAP has established three clonal gardens in collaboration with the Union of Fine Aroma Cocoa Producers of Esmeraldas. Non-exclusive licenses have also been granted, enabling the propagation and commercialization of the clones throughout the province. In addition to their productivity, these clones stand out for their synergy with sustainable agricultural practices, as they require minimal use of synthetic agricultural inputs, reducing environmental impact and ensuring environmentally friendly cultivation.

Both clones are designed for the fine aroma cocoa market, creating opportunities for Esmeraldas producers to access international niche markets that value quality and the unique profile of Ecuadorian cocoa. INIAP has expressed confidence that these clones will positively impact the agricultural economy of the province by boosting production and enhancing the competitiveness of Ecuadorian cocoa in the global market. This initiative requires the support of all actors in the cocoa commercialization chain, including public and private institutions, to develop specialized markets for this exceptional product.



INIAP continues to work on new improvement projects, some focused on Ecuador's Amazon region, aiming to expand its portfolio of improved materials adapted to the specific microclimates of the country. The release of these new clones represents a significant advancement for Ecuadorian cocoa and reaffirms INIAP's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and support for producers, who form the foundation of one of the country's most iconic agricultural industries.



Photos by INIAP Social Communication Unit



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Updates



Chokao 2024

An Analysis of the Success of Ecuador's Largest Cocoa and Chocolate Fair and Its Projections for 2025



Merlyn Casanova Loor
Executive Director of
Anecacao

Chokao, the most important fair for Ecuador's cocoa and chocolate industry, successfully celebrated its third edition, solidifying its position as a key event for the sector. From September 10 to 12, 2024, over 100 brands and 65 exhibiting companies gathered at the Universidad Espíritu Santo (UEES) Convention Center in Samborondón.

The event's success stood out for its ability to integrate and represent all stakeholders in the cocoa and chocolate value chain. The high turnout of both national and international visitors reflected the growing interest in Ecuadorian cocoa and chocolate, products with increasing global demand.

One of Chokao 2024's main pillars was business generation. At the "Cacao al Mundo" business roundtable, 41 meetings were held between 12 buyers and 8 exporters, resulting in commercial estimates of \$1.7 million. Meanwhile, the "Aromas del Campo" segment brought together 10 buyers and 15 sellers in 29 meetings, achieving estimated results of \$1.68

million. Buyers from countries such as Italy, Canada, Germany, Belgium, the United States, and Russia participated in these spaces, reaffirming Ecuador's position as a key supplier of high-quality cocoa.

With 90 stands, the fair provided a platform for new initiatives and commercial opportunities, in line with the sector's commitment to sustainable development and the promotion of Ecuadorian cocoa's quality and diversity. More than 5,000 people attended Chokao, cementing its status as a regional benchmark event.

Chokao's seminars were another highlight. Over 200 attendees participated in conferences addressing the global cocoa market's situation, the challenges of production in Africa, and growth opportunities for Ecuadorian cocoa.

In collaboration with the Ecuadorian Gastronomic Academy, the "Cacao Challenge" competition was held. Winners



Over 5,000 people attended Chokao, solidifying its position as a landmark event in the region.





**"Cacao Challenge" was one of the
standout features of the third edition**

Juan Sarango and Kelly Ramírez represented Ecuador in the prestigious Paco Torreblanca competition in Spain, showcasing the creativity and quality of Ecuadorian chocolate-making. Similarly, the "Cacao de Excelencia" competition selected the nine best cocoa samples to represent Ecuador at the 2025 Cacao of Excellence. First place went to Freddy Salazar from Esmeraldas, recognized for the exceptional quality of his cocoa.

Looking forward, the fair will return to the UEES Convention Center from September 16 to 18, 2025. Among the planned innovations, the fair aims to expand awareness and use of cocoa by introducing an artistic expression area, including sculptures and paintings inspired by cocoa. Additionally, the Chokao seminar, "Where Cocoa Knowledge and Opportunities Meet," will focus on innovation and technology, prioritizing the formalization and empowerment of small producers to manage their farms as true businesses.

The message for next year is clear: strengthening the cocoa sector's foundation is essential to ensuring its long-term sustainability. With these initiatives, Chokao 2025 promises to be an even more impactful event, offering new development and growth opportunities for all actors in this value chain.

See you at Chokao 2025!



Chokao 2025 promises to be an even more impactful event.



**Michele Nardella, from ICCO, discussed the
topic of cocoa prices**



LATAM Airlines Ecuador Connects Cocoa with the World



Through its national and international routes, the airline promotes Ecuador as a cocoa-producing country, connecting it to new markets.

The world's best fine and aromatic cocoa, an essential ingredient in crafting select gourmet chocolates, originates in Ecuador. This is attributed to its unique geographical location, traversed by the equator, the Andes Mountains, and the Amazon rainforest. These factors provide extended annual sunlight and access to pure water sources, creating ideal growing conditions.

According to official data from the Ministry of Agriculture, over 150,000 families rely on cocoa for their livelihoods. Ensuring its quality is a state policy. This global recognition often attracts international buyers who seek direct business relationships with associated producers.

In this context, LATAM Airlines Ecuador plays a key role in exporting this cultural and commercial wealth. As a leading regional airline, LATAM operates more than 280 domestic flights weekly across nine Ecuadorian routes connecting major cities. It also offers over 100 international flights through five routes abroad. This connectivity links Ecuador with global markets, facilitating access for visitors and experts. This connectivity links Ecuador with global markets

On routes to Quito, Manta, Cuenca, Coca, Loja, Guayaquil, San Cristóbal, and Santa Cruz, the airline also promotes cultural tourism centered on cocoa. Travelers from around the world can immerse themselves in the history, traditions, and innovations surrounding Ecuador's award-winning cocoa.

LATAM Airlines Ecuador's domestic routes also provide access to cocoa-producing regions such as Los Ríos and Esmeraldas, located 268.2 km and 187.6 km from Quito Airport, respectively. Another prominent destination is Manta in Manabí, reachable via direct flights from the capital. These areas offer plantation tours, insights into cocoa production processes, and the opportunity to taste chocolate.

Furthermore, the airline's international routes enable Ecuador to participate in key events across Europe, Asia, and North America, where fine aromatic cocoa is showcased, solidifying the country's reputation as a global leader in production.

Together, LATAM Airlines Ecuador, the Ecuadorian government, and cocoa farmers work to strengthen the nation's leadership in exporting and promoting the unique qualities of this product—a symbol of Ecuador's prosperity and heritage.



ANECACAO at the CMAA
Centennial Celebration

Anecacao Events

100 years of CMAA

ANECACAO executives and members participated in the centennial celebration of the Cocoa Merchants Association of America (CMAA) at Gotham Hall, New York. The CMAA, the leading cocoa traders' association in the United States, promotes trade, imports, and education on the complexities of the global supply chain, strengthening the international cocoa industry.



ANECACAO at the RECA Meeting
in Chile

FAO Meeting (Chile)

On October 1 and 2, 2024, ANECACAO participated in the meeting of the Agro-Food Trade Experts Network (RECA) in Santiago, Chile. Organized by the FAO, IDB, and IICA, the event addressed topics such as "Sustainability Standards and Agricultural Trade Barriers," highlighting the European Union's EUDR regulations. ANECACAO emphasized the importance of adapting the cocoa sector to meet these standards and maintain global competitiveness.

Al Invest Meeting

ANECACAO participated in the “Sustainable Cocoa Dialogues” event organized by AL INVEST Verde, GIZ, and the European Union in Ecuador. With over 100 attendees from 10 countries, discussions focused on the challenges posed by European regulations such as the EUDR. Cristian Noboa, our Technical Manager, represented the Ecuador Cocoa Coalition in the forum on supplier requirements, reaffirming the commitment to sustainable cocoa.



Signing of intention letter with Fortaleza del Valle

ANECACAO and Corporación Fortaleza del Valle signed a letter of intent to promote the integration of young people into Ecuador’s cocoa sector. This agreement, in collaboration with Rikolto, seeks to strengthen skills in sustainable cocoa production and create employment and business opportunities, reaffirming their commitment to the sector’s development.

First meeting of the cocoa coalition committee

ANECACAO held the first meeting of the Executive Committee of the Ecuador Cocoa Coalition, focused on strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of Ecuadorian cocoa. A tool for organizational assessment was presented, the European agricultural sustainability regulations were discussed, and the Annual Work Plan was reviewed, prioritizing traceability and sustainable practices.





Strengthening Ties with CODESPA

Official presentation of the CODESPA project

ANECACAO and CODESPA jointly presented a project aimed at promoting sustainable development in Ecuador's cocoa sector. This project marks a significant step in enhancing the technical and entrepreneurial capacities of cocoa producers, representing a milestone in collaboration between both institutions for the benefit of Ecuadorian cocoa.

Visit from Michel Arrion of the ICCO

ANECACAO executives met with Michel Arrion, Executive Director of the ICCO, to analyze challenges and opportunities in the global cocoa market. Discussions included production, exports, and Ecuador's role in the international market, highlighting progress on the 2010 International Cocoa Agreement.



Connecting Ecuadorian Cocoa with the ICCO



Nestlé, Partner of ANECACAO, Introduced its Nescuelita

Visit to Nestlé plant (NESCUELITA)

Our Executive Director, Merlyn Casanova, and Technical Manager, Cristian Noboa, visited Nestlé's plant for the inauguration of La Nescuelita, an educational space for children focused on healthy habits, recycling, and the origin of food. Congratulations to Nestlé for this remarkable initiative.

Industrial chamber event (Social Fabric - Mangle INC)

ANECACAO participated in the Mangle INC initiative, launched on July 17 in collaboration with guilds, universities, and Segura EP, to strengthen social coexistence and improve security in Guayaquil.

During the launch event, ANECACAO highlighted the involvement of the private sector, which experiences firsthand the security challenges within the production and commercialization chain of their products.



Efforts to Strengthen Guayaquil's Social Fabric

European Union Forum

ANECACAO participated in the seminar on the EU-Ecuador Trade Agreement, where Iván Ontaneda, president of the Association, highlighted the opportunities for Ecuadorian organic cocoa in the European market. The EU Ambassador, Jekaterina Dorodnova, emphasized the 16% growth in exports and the challenges of attracting foreign investment. In his speech, Ontaneda stressed the importance of sustainability and the quality of Ecuadorian cocoa to establish it as a leader in the European market. Additionally, the crucial role of the trade agreement in opening new doors for innovation and the development of the Ecuadorian cocoa sector was highlighted.



Opportunities in the European Market

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2024-2026**

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GLOBAL COCOA



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A gusto con la vida



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- Main Export Products and Destinations
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Principales bloques económicos de Exportación. Expresado en TM

Bloque Económico	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	TM	%	TM	%	TM	%	TM	%
EUROPEAN	108213	34,29%	101773	33,77%	127465	35,33%	103993	33,51%
USA	86198	27,31%	84995	28,21%	119764	33,20%	126633	39,51%
ASIA	80169	25,40%	84685	28,17%	81510	22,59%	100353	31,11%
AFRICA	25857	8,19%	15647	5,19%	13305	3,69%	11111	3,41%
AMERICA LATINA	4375	1,39%	4636	1,51%	11111	3,11%	11111	3,41%
OTROS	1021	0,32%	590	0,19%	11111	3,11%	11111	3,41%

