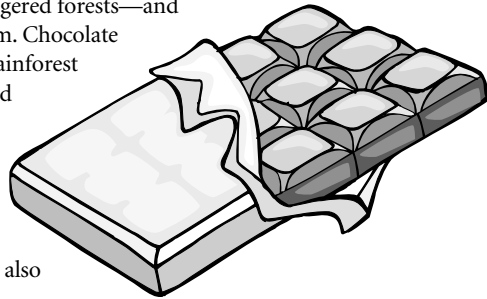


Saving the Rainforest, One Morsel At a Time

The next time you bite into a bar of chocolate, consider that taste as a link to some of the world's most endangered forests—and to the millions of farmers who live near them. Chocolate comes from the seeds of the cacao, a small rainforest tree native to the Americas. Produced around the world, it is grown mainly on lands that have lost their original forest cover, sometimes to the cocoa itself. Today, all of the world's major cocoa areas are “biodiversity hotspots”—regions that are unusually rich in biodiversity, but which are also highly threatened.



The world's retail chocolate business is worth an estimated \$42–60 billion annually. Yet only about 6–8 percent of this revenue actually makes its way back to the cocoa farmers, many of whom are poorer smallholders. Labor abuse is said to be rife in some cocoa regions, and reports of farmers enslaving thousands of child workers in places like Côte d'Ivoire have sparked widespread criticism of the industry.

Fortunately, a number of manufacturers now offer chocolate bars and other products that are more environmentally friendly and socially responsible. These products contain cocoa that comes from farms that conserve forest, that don't use child labor, or are organic.

DID YOU KNOW...?

- * Cocoa is grown commercially in nearly 60 countries, but production is concentrated in just a few. In 2002, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Brazil accounted for 79 percent of global production.
- * The global area in cocoa production has expanded by nearly a quarter since 1990 and now totals more than 70,000 square kilometers, an area larger than Ireland.
- * Cocoa accounts for more than 13 percent of the original forestlands of Côte d'Ivoire, and is still chewing up forest in parts of West Africa and Indonesia.
- * Although cocoa is sometimes grown alongside other plants, in many cases it is grown as a monoculture in full sun, an arrangement that supports far less species diversity.
- * One of the most common pesticides used on cocoa in West Africa is lindane, a toxic organochlorine cousin of DDT.

SUCCESS STORIES

- ❖ In some places, cocoa farming now represents a de facto conservation system where the farms in effect become the forests. In Bahia, Brazil, and in south central Cameroon, cocoa is cultivated under thinned native forest in areas where little other forest remains.
- ❖ Cocoa has important social and labor potential because of its high value and small-scale nature, with farms spanning just 1–3 hectares. Cacao trees respond well to extra care, so skilled smallholders can achieve higher productivity than bigger farms with too many trees to look after individually.
- ❖ In 2002, Côte d'Ivoire ratified a treaty against labor abuse of children, and the big chocolate companies launched an initiative to certify Ivoirian chocolate as “slavery-free” by 2005.

❖ In November 2003, British chocolate manufacturer Cadbury Schweppes announced that it would use a cornstarch polymer candy package that dissolves in water for its chocolates sold in Australia, to cut down on waste.



SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO:

- ✓ When buying chocolate, look for a brand with high cocoa content (more cocoa means higher quality and—at least potentially—more farm income). Look also for chocolate that carries a “fair trade” label or the mark of a similar socially responsible producer, and that is organic.
- ✓ Encourage your favorite stores or supermarkets to carry chocolate brands that are certified as being fair trade, organic, or slavery-free.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF AND OTHERS:

The next time you entertain, try to serve a dessert made with only chocolate that is fair trade, organic, or both. Explain to your guests why you chose this type of chocolate and encourage them to reevaluate their own chocolate choices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ☛ **Anti-Slavery International** (www.antislavery.org) and the **Child Labor Coalition** (www.stopchildlabor.org/internationalchildlabor/chocolate.htm) both publish information on forced child labor issues on cocoa farms in Africa.
- ☛ **The Rainforest Alliance** (www.rainforest-alliance.org/programs/cap/index.html) has a sustainable agriculture certification program that includes cocoa farms.
- ☛ **The Fair Trade Federation** (www.fairtradefederation.com/memcof.html) is a resource for information on buying fair-trade certified cocoa products.
- ☛ **Equal Exchange** (www.equalexchange.org/products/products.html) is a distributor of fair-trade certified cocoa products in the U.S.