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World Cocoa Foundation Launches Cocoa Livelihoods Program in Nigeria

Five-Year Program to Reach Nearly 30,000 Smallholder Farmers in Nigeria

LAGOS – At a ceremony held in Osogbo, Osun State, the World Cocoa Foundation today launched the Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) in Nigeria. The program initially announced in February 2009, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and 14 chocolate industry companies, is expected to significantly improve the livelihoods of nearly 30,000 cocoa farmers in Nigeria by 2014.

The work in Nigeria is part of a larger five-country program targeting 200,000 cocoa-growing households across Nigeria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Liberia. The program will be active in five states: Abia, Cross River, Edo, Ondo, and Osun.

Preparations are underway for the start of the activities later in March. Representatives from state extension agencies and representatives of the respective cocoa-farming communities are learning how to facilitate farmer training sessions, work with farmer organizations, and manage these activities. This month will mark the beginning of farmer field schools, a key activity for the program. Through this interactive training approach, farmers will learn techniques to increase yields, reduce crop losses, and improve cocoa quality.

“Since the Nigeria Sustainable Cocoa Development Committee adopted the farmer field school approach a few years ago, we have been working to improve the state extensions agencies’ ability to reach farmers through this approach,” said Dr. Sayyadi Ruma, Nigeria’s Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources, “Experience has shown us that this is a very effective way for reaching cocoa farmers and we are excited about this opportunity to expand these efforts further.”

“Helping farmers grow more crops has little impact if you don’t also give them access to markets where they can sell them,” said Richard Rogers, program officer at the Bill &

Melinda Gates Foundation. “This program provides cocoa farmers with critical training and support, so they can increase their incomes and improve their lives.”

“Farmer field schools are just one of the many activities that the Cocoa Livelihoods Program will undertake in Nigeria,” said Mbalo Ndiaye, the World Cocoa Foundation’s Cocoa Livelihoods Program Director, “We will also be working to improve farmers’ business skills, professionalize farmer organizations, improve access to inputs and services, and promote the diversification of income. We are grateful for the engagement of the Nigerian government at all levels as well as the cocoa-farming communities in the implementation of these activities.”

The Cocoa Livelihoods Program is managed by the World Cocoa Foundation and implemented through a consortium of five organizations including Agribusiness Services International (ASI) an ACDI/VOCA affiliate, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)/Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), SOCODEVI and TechnoServe. Funding for the program comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the private sector: major branded manufacturers The Hershey Company, Kraft Foods and Mars, Incorporated; cocoa processors Archer Daniels Midland Company, Barry Callebaut, Blommer Chocolate Company and Cargill; and supply chain managers and allied industries Armajaro, Guittard Chocolate Company, Ecom-Agrocacao, Noble Resources S.A., Olam International Ltd., Starbucks Coffee Company and Transmar Commodity Group Ltd. Additional support is provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The governments of the five participating African countries have representation on the Steering Committee.

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About the World Cocoa Foundation

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation is a leader in promoting economic and social development and environmental stewardship in 15 cocoa-producing countries around the world. With nearly 70 member companies from the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, the Foundation actively supports a range of farm-level programs harnessing sustainable agriculture practices to improve the quality of life for the millions of smallholder farmers growing this unique crop. For more information about the World Cocoa Foundation, visit: www.worldcocoafoundation.org