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World Cocoa Foundation Launches Cocoa Livelihoods Program in Cameroon

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

YAOUNDÉ – At a ceremony held in Yaoundé, the World Cocoa Foundation launched the Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) in Cameroon. The ceremony was timed to coincide with Cameroon’s celebration of 50 years of independence. The program is managed by the World Cocoa Foundation and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and 15 chocolate industry companies. CLP is expected to significantly improve the livelihoods of nearly 30,000 cocoa farmers in Cameroon by 2013.

The work in Cameroon is part of a larger five-country program, first announced in February 2009, targeting 200,000 cocoa-growing households across Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria. The program will be active in three regions of Cameroon: South West, Central and South.

“A major objective of this program is improvement in cocoa yields and quality,” said Michael Ndoping, the director general of the National Cocoa and Coffee Board of Cameroon, “This is very much in line with our national goals for developing the sector. Amongst other activities, the program will help farmers to reduce losses to diseases, such as black pod, and learn proper post-harvest techniques.”

“Making real progress against hunger and poverty starts with small farmers,” said Richard Rogers, senior program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “This program gives farmers tools to boost productivity every step of the way—from seeds to sale—so they can increase their incomes and improve their lives.”

In addition to providing training on cocoa production, the program will promote diversification of income and business skills development. For Cameroon, market studies were completed on cassava, plantain, oil palm and cocoa yams to determine their viability as diversification options. This information will be used to train farmers to identify appropriate options to incorporate on their cocoa farms.

“Income diversification is part of a larger emphasis on building the capacity of farmers to manage their farms as profitable businesses,” added Mballo Ndiaye of the World Cocoa Foundation, the program’s director, “This includes training on recordkeeping and business training – skills which will allow farmers to further increase their incomes.”

“As we celebrate 50 years of independence and reflect on our achievements, we also look forward to the future,” said Luc Magloire Atangana Mbarga, the Minister of Trade. “The Cocoa Livelihoods Program represents an opportunity to promote reinvestment in the cocoa sector and build a better future for Cameroon’s cocoa farmers.”

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., Petra Foods 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