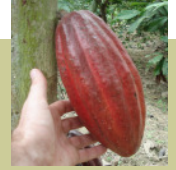


Organic Cocoa Panama

Cooperativa de Seivicios Múltiples Cacao Bocatereña COCABO R.L.



GENERAL INFORMATION:

Organisation:

1469 associates, and up to 3000 families benefiting from the program, typically indigenous small scale farmers. Belonging to the ethnic group of Ngöbe Bugle they conserve the ancient traditions in the special way of agro-forestal crop production. The cooperative is located in the buffer belt around an important tropical forest reserve. Therefore, COCABO plays a key role in ecological as well as social aspects.

Goals:

- Promote development of productive activities, crop diversification and basic industrial transformation.
- Conserve biodiversity of the nature reserve inhabited.
- Offer technical assistance, credits, production means.
- Offer marketing and export logistics.
- Offer continuous formation in technical, economical, ecological and gender issues.

Structure

Small scale, family farms of 3-10 ha (average)
Total area of 4500 ha with average yield of 200 kg/ha
Very diversified agro-forestal lots with fruit and timber trees.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

COCABO was the first cooperative registered in Panama. It was founded 1952 with 19 members. COCABO evolved as a pioneer in sustainable management of conservable resources and has become one of the leading social organizations of the local indigenous groups.

LOCATION:

Located at the north-eastern region of Panama, communities are spread over the hillsides of Talamanca mountain range towards the Caribbean sea. Head offices are located in Almirante port town. Climatic conditions are tropical: all year long wet, with average rainfall of 3000 mm p.a. and temperature of 27°C. The Talamanca mountain range belongs to the nature reserve « la Amistad » which was declared world heritage site by the UNESCO.

Bocas del Toro
Panama

PRODUCT (cocoa):

Variety mix: Trinitarios, and Criollos. Very extensive cultivation; low cocoa tree number per ha due to intercropping with other crops and mainly timber trees (conserved from primary forest and active reforestation) yields around 200 kg/ha.

Post harvest handling (fermentation) is carried out individually on farm by women. High quality is reached with 8 day fermentation, 5 days sun drying and manual selection.

Certifications:

BioSuisse, EU-Bio (EG 837/2007), NOP, FLO fair trade



ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

Due to the strategic location COCABO counts on support of several organisations involved in research and conservation of tropical forest areas. They all work to provide acceptable life standards in balance with natural conservation of the forest.

Specifically, the following activities were promoted:

- Improvement in efficiency and productivity through rehabilitating tree care, construction of fermentation boxes and drying plastic tents for product quality improvement.
- Demonstrative lots are prepared in neighbourhood groups.
- Systematic reforestation programs with timber trees has been initiated.
- COCABO runs a store offering all production means and tools to the members.

Additionally, in 2010, the following projects were achieved:

- agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture for the rehabilitation of 200 hectares and replanting of 200 ha (100 beneficiary families)
- cocoa contract with a regional promotion program PCC
- technical advice and training with 12 field agronomists

With FLO premiums the cooperative has been able to invest in vehicles for product transport as well as basic infrastructure for education and training activities. Furthermore, the premiums go into a tree husbandry program in order to achieve higher yields. In 2010 the fairtrade premium was used for:

- 4 new cocoa receiving centers for the regional purchase
- 35 new individual preparation units, consisting of fermentation boxes and plastic house for drying
- remodeling of the main building
- purchase of land for planned centralized fermentation center

PRONATEC'S CONTRIBUTION

- PRONATEC and COCABO have been partners for 10 years. At that time, their cocoa was widely unknown to the market
- Co-financing of working capital, harvest pre financing
- Co-financing of farm rehabilitation program

GOALS AND PHILOSOPHY

- Produce top quality cocoa to generate safe income to members
- Maintain organic and fair-trade certifications
- Long-term business relationship for mutual benefit
- Promote fair and respectful behaviour towards the environment, business partners and society
- Set up sustainable projects in different areas
- Organic workshops and technical assistance to farmers in all of their agricultural requirements in order to optimize yields
- Women and men receive the same wage for the same work
- Support local social structures



- **Top quality cocoa**
- **Environmental friendly production**
- **No pesticides used**
- **Fair trade conditions**
- **Trained stakeholders**
- **No child labour**
- **No forced labour**
- **Agroforestral systems**
- **Reforestation**

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