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Contact:
John Rowsome: (416) 510-8034
jrowsome@cmaconline.ca

Côte d'Ivoire 2008 Certification Report a Major Step Forward in Improving Conditions on Cocoa Farms

Results Will Help Children, Adults, Farming Communities

Survey Covers More than 50% of Country's Cocoa Production

Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (June 27, 2008) – The government of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) has advanced efforts to make a better life for children on cocoa farms, with the release of its 2008 cocoa farming "Certification" report. The report provides a detailed, frank assessment of labour practices and socio-economic conditions in the country's cocoa farming sector – and will guide future assistance and remediation programs.

"This report demonstrates a sustained commitment on the part of the Côte d'Ivoire government," said Bill Guyton, President of the World Cocoa Foundation, "to improving conditions in cocoa farming communities. This commitment starts with providing a regular, transparent assessment of the challenges cocoa farming families and communities face."

"The report represents an important first, providing data on labour practices for farms representing more than 50 percent of the nation's cocoa production," said Larry Graham, President of the National Confectioners Association. "Accurate, actionable data – across a broad swath of the cocoa sector – is essential to the cocoa certification process."

Certification for cocoa farming labour practices was established as part of the "Protocol," an agreement developed with the leadership of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), U.S. Senator Herb Kohl (D-WI) and U.S. Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY), which committed the worldwide chocolate/cocoa industry to ensure that cocoa is farmed without the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. Certification is a transparent and credible process that reports on the incidence of the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour in a country's cocoa sector, and on progress in reducing their incidence.

- The certification process involves four steps that work together to improve labour practices:
- Data collection at the community and farm level that provides a statistically representative view of child and adult labour practices;
 - Transparent, publicly available reporting on the findings from data collection activities, and on what must be done to address the issues raised in the report;
 - Remediation – a range of programs to address issues identified in the data collection process and that improve the well-being of children;
 - Independent verification of the certification process.

The report is based on in-depth research conducted in late 2007 on cocoa farms in 18 regional departments in Côte d'Ivoire. Together, the departments and farm communities surveyed are representative of more than 50 percent of the country's yearly cocoa output.

The release of the 2008 certification report is part of an ongoing effort by the government of Côte d'Ivoire to ensure cocoa is grown responsibly, without the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. The government's National Plan on Child Labour and Trafficking is driving action in a number of important areas, including the implementation of the certification process for cocoa farming.

In June of 2008, the Ivorian government hosted a two-day workshop in Abidjan, to address labour practices on cocoa farms and broader social and economic issues impacting cocoa farming communities. The workshop brought together more than 200 experts from around the world, and included an in-depth discussion of the certification process.

In addition to data collection, reporting and remediation/response programs, the cocoa farming certification process includes rigorous, independent verification. The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB), which is composed of one representative from each of the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, two representatives from industry and five representatives from civil society, is responsible for the governance of verification, but not for its actual execution (which will be carried out by organizations appointed by the ICVB).

In line with their mandate, the ICVB recently selected two expert organizations, FAFO AIS from Norway and Khulisa Management Services from South Africa, to undertake verification of the certification data collection process in both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, including visits to cocoa farms in the areas covered by the previously completed data collection efforts and certification reports. The verifiers will issue an interim report to the ICVB by July 2008, with a final report expected by the end of the year.

All information relating to the ICVB's work can be found at www.cocoaverification.net. The site includes an interactive tool that allows stakeholders to submit feedback to the Board.

"The Côte d'Ivoire report highlights several areas of concern – such as children not receiving an education and/or participating in hazardous farming tasks, and some adult farm workers stating that they do not have the freedom to leave the farm," said John Rowsome, President of the Confectionery Manufacturers Association of Canada (CMAC). "It is critical that programs supported by the government of Côte d'Ivoire, industry and other organizations address these priority issues, building upon work already underway."

The chocolate/cocoa industry works with West African governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts and other stakeholders to ensure cocoa is grown responsibly, without the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. These efforts are part of a broader commitment to the economic and social development of cocoa farming communities, and to environmental stewardship.

Industry efforts to make a better life for children on cocoa farms, and to support cocoa farming communities overall, focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring that cocoa is grown responsibly, and that children are neither harmed nor denied schooling in the process of helping out on the family farm;
- Improving the long term sustainability of cocoa growing and the economic return from cocoa for smallholder farmers growing this important crop;
- Strengthening farming communities by addressing such needs as access to quality education and training;
- Supporting efforts to protect and enhance the environment in which cocoa farmers grow their crops.

The International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) is a unique initiative combating the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour on cocoa farms. Established in Geneva in 2002, the ICI is supported by individual chocolate and cocoa industry members. ICI efforts are led by a board composed of industry and civil society representatives.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the ICI is working in 104 farming communities, implementing community-based programs to change labour practices and supporting social protection for victims of exploitation. At the national level, the ICI works to ensure effective and appropriate policies are in place, and supports capacity-building among local partners and institutions.

The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) also plays an important role in improving the quality of life on cocoa farms in West Africa. Established in 2000, the WCF supports and manages multiple programs that help farmers earn more for their cocoa crop; address important social issues like access to education, and encourage use of safe, responsible labour practices.

The Côte d'Ivoire report was released by the Office of the Prime Minister; the research was conducted by trained surveyors. To access the full report, visit www.cacao.ci.

Information on the activities of the International Cocoa Initiative can be found at www.cocoainitiative.org

Additional information on industry-supported efforts to support the social and economic development of cocoa farming communities can be found at the World Cocoa Foundation Web site, www.worldcocoa.org.

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