

FOR RELEASE
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**Release of Cocoa Certification “Verification Report” a Major Step Forward:
Will Help Cocoa Farming Communities**

**Provides Independent Verification of Certification Data on
Cocoa Farming Labour Practices**

TORONTO, CANADA – The release of the first independent verification report, as part of the overall cocoa farming “Certification” process, will help improve conditions in cocoa farming communities. In a number of areas, including the collection of accurate data on cocoa farming labour practices; government transparency, and the involvement of civil society, the verification report is a groundbreaking effort.

The report, released on December 5, 2008 by the International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB), provides a rigorous, independent review of data on cocoa farming labor practices that was previously collected and released by the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana in June of 2008, as part of the certification process.

“Independent verification is essential to certification, ensuring that the process drives real change in how cocoa is farmed,” said Larry Graham, President of the National Confectioners Association (NCA). “With the release of this report, we have a certification process that reports on cocoa farming labour practices; drives change to address priority issues, and is thoroughly verified by qualified, independent experts.”

Certification for cocoa farming was established as part of the “Protocol” agreement and with the leadership of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY). It 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. Certification includes several key elements:

- Data collection, to generate detailed, accurate data on cocoa farming labor practices and related issues;
- Reporting of the data, by the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, in a public, transparent manner;
- Remediation/response programs, to address the issues identified in the data collection and reporting process;
- Independent verification, to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the certification process – in particular, the data collection effort

The International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB) is a uniquely composed governance organization, composed of five representatives from civil society, one representative from each of the governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana and two representatives from industry.

Among the significant achievements: both the Governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana participated in a completely transparent manner, providing unfettered access to their certification data on cocoa farming labour practices, methodologies used and other related information. Both governments welcomed the ICVB to conduct its own farm-level surveys to verify the data previously released.

Earlier this year, the ICVB 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 released certification reports. These two organizations co-authored the verification report.

"The recommendations in the verification report will help improve the certification process," said David Zimmer, Secretary General of the Association of the Chocolate, Biscuit & Confectionery Industries of the EU (CAOBISCO). "The report also recognizes the considerable progress achieved by the governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in understanding labour issues on cocoa farms and the well-being of children on the farm."

Information on the ICVB's work – including the 2008 verification report -- can be found at www.cocoaverification.net.

"This report complements other efforts that are working to make a better life for millions of West African adults and children who live in cocoa farming communities, in areas such as farm family incomes, access to education and protecting children from unsafe farm work," said Bill Guyton, president of the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF).

Background on Responsible Cocoa Farming:

The chocolate/cocoa industry works with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the Government of Ghana and other stakeholders to ensure that cocoa is grown responsibly, without the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. This work is part of a broader commitment on the part of the industry to help cocoa farmers, their families and cocoa farming communities.

Industry-supported efforts focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring that cocoa is grown responsibly, and that children are not harmed in the process of helping out on the family farm;
- Improving the economic return from cocoa for smallholder farmers growing this important crop;
- Strengthening farming communities by addressing such needs as access to quality education;
- Supporting efforts to protect and enhance the environment in which cocoa farmers grow their crops.

The International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) is a critical component of industry efforts to help children on cocoa farms. Established in 2002, The ICI is the leading vehicle to promote responsible labour practices on cocoa farms, and is supported by individual chocolate and cocoa industry members. ICI efforts are led by a board composed equally of industry and civil society representatives.

The ICI is working in more than 225 farm villages in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, employing a community-empowerment approach that engages local leaders in the development and implementation of action plans to address the worst forms of child labour and forced adult labour. The approach drives change in labor practices, improves educational opportunities for children, while engaging the community in driving change.

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) plays a leading role in strengthening the partnership between industry and cocoa farmers. The WCF supports and manages programs that boost cocoa farmer incomes (by 20-55%); improve educational opportunities for children in cocoa farming communities, and educate farmers on safe, responsible labour practices (for example, the appropriate role of children on the farm).

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

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