



Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cameroonian cocoa stakeholders sign a Roadmap towards sustainable and deforestation-free cocoa

- *Through this commitment, signatories pledge to promote a sustainable cocoa sector, thereby protecting the third largest forest range in the Congo Basin and improving the livelihoods of up to 600,000 cocoa farmers in Cameroon.*
- *The Roadmap comprises nine commitments, including promoting forest conservation and restoration, enhancing cocoa productivity in the long term, and implementing cocoa full traceability from farm gate to export port.*
- *The implementation of the Roadmap commitments will be based on three main pillars: forest protection and restoration, sustainable production and marketing of deforestation-free cocoa, community engagement and social inclusion.*

Yaoundé, Cameroon, 13 January 2021 – Today, the Cameroon government, international development partners, the private sector and civil society, signed a Framework for Action towards deforestation-free cocoa in Cameroon. Through this agreement, the signatories commit to working together, both technically and financially, towards the sustainable production and marketing of cocoa, the preservation and rehabilitation of forests, and the inclusion of cocoa farming communities in Cameroon.

The signing ceremony took place in the presence of Gabriel Mbaïrobé, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, Minister of Trade, and representatives from companies, farmer organizations, research institutes, and civil society organizations. All of whom are signatories of the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa. Also in attendance were technical and financial partners that have endorsed the Roadmap.

The Roadmap will contribute to the conservation and, where necessary, restoration of the permanent forest domain, and the conservation and sustainable management of forests in the non-permanent forest domain. The Roadmap signatories will also enhance cocoa productivity in the long term through, amongst other actions, rehabilitation of aging cocoa farms, provision of improved seeds, or soil fertility interventions. They will work together to implement full cocoa traceability from the farm gate to the port of export by 2025, to strengthen respect for cocoa farmers and communities' rights, and finally, to facilitate farmers' access to a living income.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Gabriel Mbaïrobé, the Minister of Agriculture, said, "I confirm the support of the Government of Cameroon for the efficient implementation of this Framework for Action. We need to ensure that the cocoa sector not only flourishes but also benefits cocoa farmers, their communities and the environment. This is the only way to guarantee long term sustainability of our cocoa economy."

The Minister of Commerce, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, clarified the reciprocal commitments of the signatories. "The producers must ensure that the forest is not destroyed, but this is not a one-way contract. At the end of the chain, there is the market, the exporters, the industries, and I am pleased that they have also signed this Framework for Action. Each party must take on a share of these commitments. This is also why public authorities are engaged in this Roadmap."

The cocoa sector plays a vital role in Cameroon in terms of job and wealth creation for local communities. It could also contribute to forest protection and ecosystem conservation through the implementation of sustainable farming practices. Given that Cameroon's tropical forests still cover about 46% of the national territory and

account for 11% of the Congo Basin forests, it is even more urgent to take action. By signing this Roadmap, the Government of Cameroon has recognized the risks posed by deforestation and the adverse effects of climate change, and has understood the critical importance of growing cocoa while preserving forests.

"The Roadmap is an important tool to demonstrate Cameroon's effort towards implementing the Nationally Determined Contribution under the UN Framework Convention for Climate Change," added Clotilde Ngomba, National Director of WWF-Cameroon. "We are proud to be part of these efforts and work alongside IDH towards the implementation of the Roadmap commitments, through our joint landscape program, the Green Commodity Landscape Program."

Sustainable cocoa farming is not just a question of good business and respect for forests. It also improves the farmers' livelihoods, especially the younger generation of farmers. "If young cocoa farmers can make a decent living from cocoa produced on small farms while preserving the surrounding forests, then there will be continuity of supply, and Cameroon as a country can continue to enjoy the benefits of this important sector", explained Alexis Koundji, President of the National Confederation of Cocoa Producers of Cameroon.

"The Roadmap signed today will help create a competitive advantage for Cameroonian cocoa in the global market. It will help coordinate public-private-civil society efforts to produce a higher and more stable cocoa quality, and enhance revenues of cocoa farmers," concluded Jonas Mva Mva, Cocoa Program Director at IDH.

About the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa in Cameroon

The Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa is a public, private, civil society partnership that aims to end cocoa-related deforestation in Cameroon. It builds on the [Cocoa & Forests Initiative Statement of Intent](#) signed in March 2017 by the industry, in which they commit to work together, pre competitively, to end deforestation and forest degradation in the cocoa supply chain.

The Framework for Action of the Roadmap was developed through a participatory process that was launched in Yaoundé on 31 January 2019. This process brought together representatives of the Government of Cameroon, public and private sector actors, national and international civil society organizations, farmers, research institutions, development partners, and other stakeholders in Cameroon and at the global level. Over time, more than 200 stakeholders have been involved in this consultation process.

The Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa is led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, and Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development. The process is facilitated by IDH - The Sustainable Initiative, through funding from its institutional donors: BUZA (The Netherlands), SECO (Switzerland), and DANIDA (Denmark).

[See video introduction of the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa](#)

About the Cocoa Sector in Cameroon

Cameroon is the 4th largest cocoa producing country globally and the 3rd largest in Africa with 290,000 MT in the latest cocoa season¹. The nation's ambition is to lift this to 640,000 MT per year by 2030. Cocoa plays a vital role in the country's economy as it is the second-largest export product, with an average of US\$2 billion in export sales per year². However, over the last two decades, the Cameroon cocoa quality decreased due to a lack of sectoral support. As a result, the cocoa from Cameroon can no longer be sold on the premium market - it is now sold for a discounted price on the international conventional market. These developments have made cocoa farming an

¹ Statista.com, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/263855/cocoa-bean-production-worldwide-by-region>

² MINADER (2020). Etude de faisabilité. Projet d'Appui Au Développement Du Cacao (PAD-CACAO).

unattractive occupation, and younger generations are opting out to seek more lucrative employment elsewhere, while remaining cocoa smallholders seek to increase their incomes by expanding cocoa cultivation into forests.

The rainforests in Cameroon cover approximately 46% of the national territory and account for 11% of the Congo Basin forests. Therefore, Cameroon has the 3rd largest forest range in the Congo Basin, after the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon. However, the country is grappling with the adverse effects of climate change and with increasing pressure on forests: from 2001 to 2019, Cameroon lost 1.32 million ha of tree cover, equivalent to a 4.2% decrease in tree cover since 2000, and 519Mt of CO₂ emissions³. This rate is expected to increase significantly over the coming years due to urbanization and commodity-driven deforestation. The major driver of deforestation is agriculture, particularly the expansion of commercial crops and, in particular, cocoa. If not well planned, the nation's ambition to lift the cocoa production to 640,000 MT per year may create additional unsustainable pressure on Cameroon's forests.

Press contacts:

For further information or interview requests, please contact us:

- Ngwa Elvis Suh: ngwa@idhtrade.org. Tel. +237 650748888
- Gillian Evans: evans@idhtrade.org. Tel. +31 642287488

³ Global Forest Watch. <https://www.globalforestwatch.org/dashboards/country/CMR>