

# The National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa in Europe

## *Alignment & Collaboration*



### Common Challenges

- Contribute to a living income for cocoa farmers and their families
- Halt cocoa-related deforestation and promote sustainable reforestation and biodiversity
- End child labor and forced labor in the cocoa value chain
- Enhance the transparency in the cocoa value chain

Over the past few years, national initiatives for sustainable cocoa (ISCO's) have taken shape in Belgium (Beyond Chocolate), the Netherlands (DISCO), Germany (GISCO) and Switzerland (SWISSCO). These national initiatives are crucial for creating impact at scale, and equally crucial is creating alignment across these initiatives. Therefore, the four ISCO's have signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MoU), documenting their collaboration and their common endeavor to realize a more sustainable cocoa sector.

By cooperating, the ISCO's want to bundle efforts to address the key issues in the cocoa industry. In this document, you will find an overview of the joint activities undertaken by the ISCO's to address the common challenges.

## Overview of the National Platforms for Sustainable Cocoa in Europe



### GISCO

German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa  
June 2012



### Swissco

Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa  
January 2018



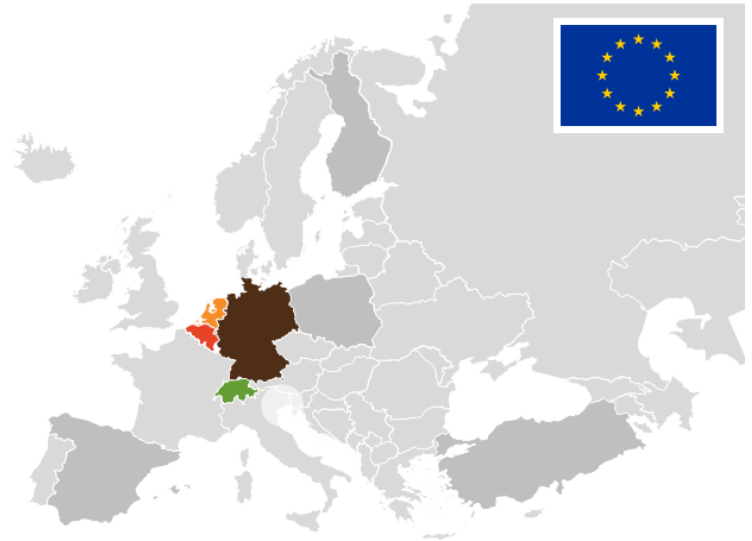
### Beyond Chocolate

Partnership for a more sustainable Belgian  
cocoa sector  
December 2018



### DISCO

Dutch Initiative for sustainable cocoa  
September 2020



## Monitoring & Evaluation

One of the MoU's cornerstones is the harmonization of monitoring frameworks. Previously, Beyond Chocolate, GISCO and SWISSCO each had their own monitoring framework in place. Since the signing of the MoU, the three initiatives have been working on harmonizing these frameworks. As such, they have agreed on common indicators to monitor and report on the four main challenges in the cocoa sector. DISCO joined the harmonization after its signing in January 2021 by aligning with the harmonized framework during the design of the newly established monitoring framework for DISCO.

Beyond Chocolate and GISCO have now brought this newly developed common monitoring framework into practice. The two platforms have synchronized monitoring cycles and have together commissioned the development of a joint online reporting tool. The tool allowed partners to report on a set of joint indicators and a limited set of individual indicators. It was used for a first time by partners in May 2021 to report on their 2020 data. Partners have indicated the harmonization of frameworks and the development of the tool have significantly decreased their workload.

SWISSCO and DISCO have not yet participated in this first joint reporting exercise in 2021, but are actively involved in the development of both the monitoring framework as well as the online reporting tool and have expressed the intention to join in 2022.

## Knowledge exchange & capacity building

Another important element in the MoU is the coordination and alignment of activities on the operational level and among the working groups of the individual initiatives. While previously the different national initiatives each only organized their own set of working groups and learning events, they are now additionally developing joint strategies to support signatories to reach their goals.

As such, a joint working group on traceability and a joint monitoring working group have been established. The initiatives are now discussing to establish more joint working groups to address the common challenges.

Furthermore, knowledge-exchange will be brought to a higher level through the organization of joint learning events (at least two/year).



## EU Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

In September 2020, the EU announced the launch of a multi-stakeholder dialogue on sustainable cocoa, with a strong focus on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. To avoid duplication of efforts the European Commission proposed to work closely with initiatives originating in EU Members States and non-EU partners, such as the ISCO's. In response, the ISCO's handed in a joint feedback form, along the lines of the four challenges identified in the MoU.

Concretely, a series of conferences were organized in the first half of 2021, covering a number of relevant topics in the sector. As proposed by the Commission, the ISCO's jointly appointed one panelist per cocoa talk.

## Joint research, studies and benchmarking

One of the priorities of the ISCO's is to collect consistent and reliable (baseline and progress) data that enables increased accountability amongst members of the initiatives. A first reporting exercise showed that such data is currently limited and sporadic. Therefore the ISCO's are bundling efforts to jointly conduct studies and benchmarking exercises. On the longer term, the platforms envision to co-construct a wide range of instruments that will serve the purpose of increasing knowledge, transparency, and accountability amongst stakeholders.

### *ITC Benchmark*

In a joint effort, GISCO, SWISSCO and Beyond Chocolate have commissioned the International Trade Centre (ITC) to benchmark sustainability schemes (standards and corporate sustainability programs, developed by organizations and companies to promote sustainability along their supply chains' operations related to cocoa and chocolate production), against the GISCO, SWISSCO and Beyond Chocolate objectives.

This exercise will help understand how well companies and standard organizations are equipped to address the sustainability goals of the platforms and to identify gaps in policies and criteria regarding specific topics. However, the ISCO's also acknowledge the limitations of the benchmarking tool. As the exercise is compliance-based, the collected information will not enable to show how topics are dealt with and to which degree they contribute to delivering impact on the ground.

Additional studies and tools will be developed in cooperation with research institutions to address the need to assess sustainability impacts.

Please note that the benchmark is an internal instrument to the cocoa platforms.

## Traceability Brief

Cocoa traceability and transparency are considered to be vital means to achieving a truly sustainable cocoa value chain. To provide more clarity on the subject, IDH the Sustainable Trade Initiative, GISCO, Beyond Chocolate, DISCO and SWISSCO have jointly commissioned a study on cocoa traceability.



The ambition of the study is to contribute to a common vision on how traceability can and should evolve to contribute to the objectives of initiatives in producing countries such as the Cocoa & Forests Initiative and the Roadmap to Deforestation-free Cocoa in Cameroon, and consuming country initiatives such as the ISCO's. The study is carried out by C-Lever.org and obtained funding from GISCO and the UK-aid-funded Partnerships for Forests (P4F) Programme in the context of the Cocoa & Forests Initiative. The traceability study is discussed in the ISCO Traceability Working Group. It was published in April 2021 and can be found [here](#).

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