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Newsletter | 07

Looking back on DISCO in 2022

As we move to 2023, we want to reflect on 2022, looking back on the different events, milestones and collaboration.

DISCO working groups and events

Working Group ICE Futures Market – workshop

On Monday October 31st, 2022, an information workshop was held with input from external experts Nicko Debenham (independent consultant) and Toby Brandon (ICE). The Working Group was established to explore possible support mechanisms for DISCO signatories in reaching the ambitions of DISCO on the cocoa that is traded through the ICE Futures Market. To be able to define whether support mechanisms should be further developed, the Working Group organized an information workshop to increase their understanding on the working and functioning of the ICE Futures Market. They also identified the ICE-related factors that have impact on reaching the DISCO ambitions related to living income, deforestation, child labour, and traceability, complemented with the impact from upcoming EU regulations. The Working Group reported back to the Steering Committee with recommendations on the next steps. These will be shared during a next communication moment.

Working Group Consumer Communication – kick-off meeting

This Working Group, initiated by the subsector ‘manufacturers/brands’, aims to develop a joint central and uniform DISCO communication strategy around the main sustainability challenges in cocoa to provide clarity and create consumer awareness. This Working Group builds upon the DISCO declaration in which the partnership agreed that the *“Dutch consumers will be informed on the main sustainability challenges in the cocoa sector, the ongoing initiatives and the effects of the joint efforts. Raising awareness about sustainability and the improvements implemented in the cocoa sector is an integral part of the partnership’s communication strategy.”* The Working Group agreed in the kick-off meeting on their objective, outputs and next steps forward. They will meet in March to further develop the communication strategy. When this draft strategy is finished, it will be shared with the Steering Committee for approval.

Working session on Price

Within the DISCO declaration, the role of farm gate prices as part of a wider mix of interventions towards a living income is clearly recognized. To build upon this commitment, the civil society organizations within DISCO suggested to have a working session on price. The session aims to explore what is possible within the boundaries of competition law (possibly together with a lawyer), and discuss the options, constraints, what support is needed and how the partnership can jointly take next steps in achieving its ambitions. A core group of representatives from various subsectors is currently designing the session, aiming to organize it this year.

General Assembly

On December 1st, 2022, the Annual General Assembly was held in the Passenger Terminal Amsterdam, hosted by the Port of Amsterdam. In the morning, half of the group also visited a newly built cocoa storage facility in the port area. The visit was organized by the Port of Amsterdam.

During the General Assembly, external speakers were invited to reflect on the role of the partnership based on their expertise and experience, the developments and progress after 2 years were presented, and an annual plan 2023 was introduced.

The General Assembly was also an opportunity for all participants to brainstorm, reflect on the strategic direction of the partnership, and address questions on the topic of purchasing practices, international collaboration, and DISCO roadmaps.

The event ended with signatories agreeing with the extension of the Steering Committee term and signatories giving the mandate to further work out the annual plan for 2023 in which the partnership will work more around purchasing practices, international collaboration, and accountability.

You can find the full report of the General Assembly 2022 [here](#).

First monitoring round and publication of annual report 2021

DISCO signatories have all reported in May 2022 on their progress towards the DISCO goals in 2020 and 2021. This provided the large majority of the Annual Report 2021 in which all developments, achievements, and challenges within DISCO in 2021 are presented.

Based on the results from the 2022 monitoring round, we can see that progress has been made on some DISCO goals. Although we see more progress around ending deforestation and child labour, there are also some signals that living income will progress in the upcoming year as well. Since the living income theme is a relatively much newer topic than deforestation and child labour, this is not surprising. However, this should be reflected in the next year's reporting round in which it should at least show that signatories are measuring income gaps and implementing living income strategies for a large part of their supply chain.

For more specific conclusions and more detailed graphs, please have a look at the report [here](#).

ISCO collaboration

In 2022, the National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa (ISCOS) increased the alignment and coordination of the Working Groups and learning events. This has led to five workstreams reflecting the common challenges: living income, forests & agroforestry, child labour, traceability & transparency, and monitoring & evaluation. The Working Groups aim to foster peer learnings, and support members in reaching their commitments. Should you wish to join one of the Working Groups in 2023, feel free to reach out to the contact persons listed in the [2023 ISCO activities document](#).

On September 1st, 2022, the first physical gathering of the ISCOs took place in Brussels during the ISCONference. This event was the opportunity to have meaningful and inspiring exchanges amongst members of the different platforms and allowed the participants to strengthen the European network. Having these transparent and open discussions in the precompetitive space is crucial to move towards a more sustainable chocolate sector. You can find and read the ISCONference report [here](#).

Annual Plan for 2023

During the annual General Assembly on December 1st, a plan for the DISCO partnership in 2023 was presented to the members. This plan has been based on the 'DISCO House' and focuses on three areas of attention for 2023:

- ❖ **Purchasing practices** - DISCO is a "market-based initiative" of the Dutch cocoa and chocolate sector. The procurement practices – both on the importing and exporting side – can have a great impact on the three main sustainability impact areas.
- ❖ **International collaboration** - DISCO needs to become more responsive to international developments and opportunities. Together with the other ISCOs, the partnership will collaborate with the EC in Europe. In cocoa origin countries, organizations such as CIGCI are important partners.
- ❖ **Accountability** - Accountability within DISCO will be further strengthened to accelerate progress. Sufficient measurement of progress on the core commitments and a clear division of roles of actors in the accountability system is key.

The detailed annual plan 2023 (including activities and budget) is shared separately with all signatories. In case there are objections or fundamental elements missing, signatories can reply to the Secretariat **before January 27th COB, 2023**. Afterwards, the annual plan and budget is approved.

ISCO secretariats mission to Ghana

In November 2022, the first joint mission of secretariats from the National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa in Europe (ISCOs) took place. The primary objective of the mission was to strengthen the relationship and collaboration with local partners, including cocoa origin country governments. The vision of the ISCOs is to build on existing initiatives and activities in the sector instead of duplicating efforts. In this light, the mission to Ghana allowed the ISCO secretariats to better understand the local processes and structures supporting a sustainable transition of the sector, and to identify potential synergies and areas of cooperation. Furthermore, the mission allowed the ISCO secretariats to better grasp the realities on the ground during field visits and interactions with cocoa farmers.

During the joint mission, the secretariats of the ISCOs visited several projects and factories and research institutes. For example, the ISCO secretariats were given a tour of the Cargill processing plant in Tema, visited the Way to Go!, project of Lidl, Rikolto, Fairtrade Africa and Kuapa Kokoo in Konongo but also went to see the Dynamic Agroforestry (DAF) plots on the Cocoa Research Institute Ghana (CRIG) premises. The ISCO secretariats were also able to see the chocolate factory of Fairafric close to Suhum which gave insights into local manufacturing of organic chocolate.

Next to visits, the secretariats participated in different stakeholder meetings with for example Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD), Côte d'Ivoire – Ghana Cocoa Initiative (CIGCI), Cocoa & Forest Initiative (CFI), the Ghana Civil Society Cocoa Platform Roundtable and the Swiss Embassy. These meetings were an opportunity to have exchanges on, for example, the background and mandate of the ISCOs, underlining the multistakeholder character of the initiatives and the targets and key challenges shared by all five ISCOs. But especially on how the ISCOs and the origin country initiatives could be complementary to each other.

A full report of the mission can be found [online](#).

Latest developments in Europe: updates from other ISCOs

Update on Beyond Chocolate

Last month, Beyond Chocolate welcomed two new Steering Committee members. The SteerCo will now consist of 8 instead of 6 members. The decision to add two new members was announced during the Beyond Chocolate General Assembly of October and comes from the wish to ensure a better representation of all stakeholder groups in the SteerCo. The new members Anne Widart (VP Global Gourmet, Barry Callebaut) and Ricardo Romero (MEL Manager Global Cocoa, Mars) will represent traders and large manufacturers respectively. A full overview of the Steerco can be found [here](#).

In January, the new SteerCo will convene for a first time and will discuss and validate the Beyond Chocolate 2023 annual plan. The plan will be shared with all partners.

In December, the Beyond Chocolate secretariat got the chance to visit one of the projects that is co-financed under the partnership: "[a living income for cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire](#)". This project works on 6 different components to close the living income gap for 102 cocoa farming families (price, access to finance, agroforestry, diversification, productivity & quality). The secretariat joined Colruyt Group, Puratos, Fairtrade, Rikolto and Impact Institute to the ECSP cooperative in Côte d'Ivoire to discuss successes, challenges, and points for improvement with both the farmers and project partners involved. Find out more [here](#).

Update on the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO)

On November 2nd, GISCO published its second monitoring [report](#), based on a comprehensive data collection among its members. It shows that the volume of cocoa from end products containing cocoa sold on the German market covered by the monitoring report is now approximately 88% of the total cocoa volume. This significant increase from last year's approximate 35% is an important step forward and contributes to greater transparency in the cocoa supply chain.

On November 8th, DISCO welcomed 50 members and guests to the parliamentary evening marking “10 years German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa – Together for a sustainable cocoa sector” at Deutsche Parlamentarische Gesellschaft in Berlin. DISCO was particularly honoured by the attendance of HE Philippe Mangou, Ambassador of Côte d’Ivoire in Germany, and HE Alex Assanvo, Executive Secretary of Côte d’Ivoire Ghana Cocoa Initiative (CIGHCI), who shared his expertise and perspective in a speech and on our panel.

Update on the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO)

At the ICCO Research Symposium in Montpellier (5-7 December 2022), SWISSCO’s research sector was represented with a joint booth and a [Book of Abstracts](#) that summarizes 43 abstracts on current cocoa and chocolate research conducted at SWISSCO-affiliated research institutions. At this occasion, the Swiss research sector had the opportunity to network with more than 500 attendees from the scientific community, partners and sponsors, civil society, international organizations, and private companies to share the latest scientific advances in the cocoa sector.

Under the new cooperation agreement with SECO (2023-2026), SWISSCO will be in charge of the management of **three funding windows**: (1) landscape projects, (2) projects aimed at **collaboration and peer learning** (pre-competitive space) and (3) **innovative value chain projects** with a focus on SMEs and smaller members. The landscape call for proposals was already launched in June 2022 while the call for proposals for the two other windows will be launched soon. Especially under the second window, SWISSCO is looking forward to fostering peer learning, knowledge transfer, and common approaches through joint undertakings between SWISSCO members and international partners.

Update on the French Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (FRISCO)

FRISCO’s members have gathered in October for two events:

- A FRISCO General Assembly, to review the progress of the initiative, on Monday, October 3
- On October 4, the “Syndicat du Chocolat” organized the World Cocoa Day at the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Territorial Cohesion, bringing together nearly 100 players in the chocolate sector to discuss the major issues and the responses to be provided by stakeholders. This event was organized around the theme “From the producer to the consumer: crossed views on the sustainability of cocoa” and two roundtables highlighted the cocoa producing countries as well as the consumption of chocolate in France and the various colleges of the IFCD.

FRISCO published its [first annual report](#) for its first anniversary. An executive summary is to be published in English in a few days. Next year, FRISCO wishes to have its annual report published in French and in English.

DISCO timeline

For the upcoming period, the following meetings, events and milestones within DISCO are scheduled. Additional meetings will be planned and therefore this overview will be updated within each newsletter.

January 30th 2023	DISCO Steering Committee – 2023 Kick-off meeting
March 7th 2023	DISCO Steering Committee meeting #1 2023
April/May 2023	DISCO reporting round for all signatories
Q2 2023 (Date TBD)	DISCO General strategic meeting #2 2023
Q3 2023 (Date TBD)	DISCO Steering Committee meeting #3 2023

Q4 2023 (Date TBD) DISCO General Assembly

Q4 2023 (Date TBD) DISCO Steering Committee meeting #4 2023

An overview of ISCO Working Group meetings and learning events can be found in the [overview of 2023 ISCO activities](#).



DISCO

DUTCH INITIATIVE ON
SUSTAINABLE COCOA