

Joint statement by the National Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa in Europe on Procurement Practices

Brussels, 22 April 2024

Introduction:

Whilst participating at the ICCO World Cocoa Conference 2024 in Brussels the Steering Committee / Board chairs and secretariats of the five national multi-stakeholder platforms (ISCOs¹) in Europe convened a meeting. The main objective of this meeting is to define how the collaborating national platforms could support the ICCO's objective of this year's Conference related to a more equitable distribution of value in the supply chain towards enabling a living income for cocoa farmers.

As market-based initiatives of national government organisations, civil society, retailers and cocoa and chocolate industry, the five ISCOs all have a living income for male and especially female cocoa producers as a key aspect of the economic sustainability objectives. As stated also at the previous World Cocoa Conference we have re-affirmed that the cocoa sector will not be sustainable if farmers are not able to earn a living income².

Numerous different initiatives and strategies are pursued by the ISCOs and our signatories towards enabling a living income for cocoa producers in various regions around the world, and in particular in West Africa, the main cocoa-producing region. Whilst important steps have already been taken at different scales, the overall effectiveness of these initiatives and strategies can be enhanced by amplifying the collective efforts of all stakeholders. Given the important role that the ISCOs play in setting the agenda for a sustainable cocoa and chocolate sector in the European consuming markets, we have decided to work together towards accelerating progress in reducing the average living income gap of cocoa producers.

Conclusion:

We emphasize the importance of looking at the “smart-mix” of living income strategies to be able to close living income gaps. This “smart-mix” should always include strong service delivery programs, the creation of an enabling environment and sustainable procurement practices. These practices must not be regarded isolated but in the context of market mechanisms like commodity exchange, nationally regulated markets, competition, and standards and premium systems. From the perspective of key consumer countries, We recognise a shared role to foster sustainable procurement practices in cooperation with our members. This area of action has also been pointed

¹The Initiatives on Sustainable Cocoa, notably: Beyond Chocolate in Belgium German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO), Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa (SWISSCO), the French Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (FRISCO) and the Dutch Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

²<https://www.icco.org/berlin-declaration-of-the-fourth-world-cocoa-conference/>

out to us by West Africa cocoa producers³ as one of their primary concerns. Therefore, we concluded that the five European ISCOs should play an important role in developing and promoting cocoa procurement practices that lead to higher incomes and better management of risks for cocoa producers as part of the “smart mix”. Improved procurement practices will help to create a reliable business case and provide agency to cocoa producers to grow cocoa sustainably and earn a living income. Combined with other initiatives and strategies aimed at improving farm income levels, the joint promotion of sustainable procurement practices can lead to the necessary impact in reducing the living income gaps in the cocoa sector.

Agreement:

Our aim is to place cocoa procurement practices as one of the key elements on the living income agendas of the ISCOs and to work together on a set of unified principles provided to our members. Thereby we aim to actively contribute to improve cocoa farmer’s income and to help close the living income gap.

We agreed to discuss this conclusion with the broader membership of our national platforms. We also agreed that we would continue to collaborate in the monitoring and reporting on the ISCO objectives, including on procurement practices and explore how we can further strengthen the accountability of all members.

Finally, and as part of the “smart mix” of strategies, we agreed to engage more closely with producer countries, to improve the enabling environment for effective implementation of sustainable procurement practices.

³ [Declaration from Cocoa Producers’ Summit on Living Income](#), Abidjan, 11 May 2023