Sustainable Fine Flavor Cocoa Program
Ecuador

Fine flavor cocoa farmers of four selected provinces in Ecuador are provided with suitable training in agricultural, environmental and social topics, as well as access to farm investments necessary for a professional cocoa farm management.

Context
Ecuador is the largest producer of fine flavor cocoa worldwide. Yet, smallholder fine flavor cocoa farmers in Ecuador have a low productivity and subsequently low income, due to ageing cocoa trees, lack of knowledge about professional farm management (e.g. farm rehabilitation, pruning, fertilizing, shade) and lack of tools and investments necessary for a professional farm management (e.g. pruning tools, suitable fertilizer). As many cocoa growing areas in Ecuador show great biodiversity, environmental factors need to be properly addressed while enhancing the yield on the farms. This four year project tries to overcome these barriers by providing the necessary training and access to farm investments.

Project Content
The pilot project supported during the 2015/2016 cocoa season was successful, appreciated and valued by the farmers involved in the project. We therefore decided to extend and upscale the project to cover more farmers with trainings and farm investment services over the next four years. Lessons learned from the pilot project have been consequently incorporated. Support to farmers is reduced over time, and ownership of the target group fostered.

Within this project, A&D Sanchez Cocoa’s aim is to implement a traceable and sustainable cocoa bean supply chain for Nacional cocoa from Ecuador. Within the continuation of the project, 2'000 cocoa farmers are organized in groups in order to ease the availability of farmer trainings and visits from agronomists of A&D Sanchez Cocoa. The farmers

About the Lindt Cocoa Foundation:
The Lindt Cocoa Foundation was founded in 2013 and has the declared purpose of working to achieve social and ecological sustainability in the cultivation, production and processing of cocoa and other raw materials used in chocolate production.

Learn more:
www.lindtcocoafoundation.org
are offered a comprehensive support package in the form of trainings and farm investments. In training sessions farmers learn about good agricultural, environmental and social practices with particular focus on productivity, including the use of inputs and improved planting material. The farmers are for example trained on pruning and removing chupons regularly to obtain and maintain optimal tree architecture. The training also includes good sanitation practices on the farm to make sure that diseased or infested pods, branches and other plant material are regularly removed from the trees. Further, the farmers are trained to maintain and plant shade trees on the farm to enhance a good biodiversity and as protection against weather risk, as well as on techniques to prevent soil erosion. Also one module is given on good social practices, especially responsible labor practices. As training alone is not sufficient to foster professionalization of the farmers, they additionally receive access to quality technical advice from agronomists, which enables them to create capacity to maintain cocoa farms for optimal performance. The agronomists monitor how farmers are applying the learnings from the trainings. After finishing all the modules, a graduation ceremony is held, where farmers receive a graduation diploma to certify their participation in the training plan. Moreover, during this event, selected farmers are rewarded for their good performance in different areas such as assistance to training meetings, active participation in the activities, results of class evaluations or results of field monitoring. Finally, a separated workshop to teach farmers how to produce different kinds of organic fertilizer is carried out and an accounting and financial management workshop is developed to teach farmers how to manage their farms as a profitable business.

Farmers also receive comprehensive support for farm investments in the form of community solar/gas dryers and fermentation boxes to ensure high and stable quality of the cocoa beans, quality based in-kind premiums in form of planting appliances, free access to pruning and weeding equipment and the distribution of disease resistant and more productive Nacional cocoa seedlings for free completes the support the farmers receive. The objective of the seedling distribution is to increase the production of fine flavor cocoa through rehabilitation and replanting using high-yielding and disease resistant fine flavor cocoa varieties promoted by INIAP, the National Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries. This avoids monocultures that are not seen as sustainable. As we want to establish a self-sustaining supply of those seedlings for propagation in cocoa farming communities, willing and enthusiastic farmers are organized into “Nursery Groups”, which are thought on how to manage cocoa seedling nurseries and propagate new plants. The seedlings are distributed at discounted prices to other farmers supported by A&D Sanchez. The aim is to have the planting and distribution fully managed by the farmers themselves by the end of the project.

The project is accompanied by an extensive monitoring and performance management system for the participating farmers. A baseline farmer survey was conducted individually, and records continuously updated. Further, the project is also evaluated by an external and independent party.

Serving the mission of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation:
By offering smallholder farmers training and access to farm investments, the project touches upon 2 of the focus areas of the Lindt Cocoa Foundation:

1) Through training in good agricultural, environmental and social practices, the motivation, capabilities and capacity of farmers to improve their farming practices are created.

2) Through access to inputs, equipment and fine flavor cocoa seedlings, an enabling environment is fostered and constraints farmers face to improve their practices are removed. March 2017