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PRESS RELEASE

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World Cocoa Foundation Launches Cocoa Livelihoods Program in Liberia

Five-Year Effort Will Reach 7,500 Smallholder Farmers

October 13, 2010, Monrovia, LIBERIA – At a special ceremony today attended by Liberian Minister of Agriculture Florence A. Chenoweth, the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) officially launched the Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) in support of cocoa farming families in Liberia. The WCF program, which is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and 15 chocolate industry companies, is expected to significantly improve the livelihoods of 7,500 cocoa farmers in Liberia by 2013.

The WCF CLP efforts in Liberia are part of a larger five-country program, first announced in February 2009, targeting 200,000 cocoa-growing households across Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria. The program will increase farm families’ incomes by training farmers on production technologies, encouraging farmers to diversify crop production, and strengthening farmer organizations. In Liberia, efforts will focus on the cocoa growing communities of Bong, Nimba, and Lofa County.

“Cocoa represents a critical part of our agricultural economy,” said Minister Chenoweth. “We welcome this opportunity to improve farmer knowledge and productivity, and to build a better future for many Liberian cocoa farmers.”

WCF CLP activities in Liberia will focus on training farmers on how to regenerate and improve financial management of their cocoa farms. The program will also supply farmers with improved planting material and support establishment of a Business Service Center where farmers can obtain planting material and supplies.

“The training provided through the Cocoa Livelihoods Program will allow farmers to develop skills to further increase their incomes,” said Mballo Ndiaye, program director for the World Cocoa Foundation. “We are especially grateful for the engagement of the Liberian government in our efforts to support cocoa farmers, their families, and their communities in this way.”

WCF’s Cocoa Livelihoods Program is implemented through a consortium of five organizations including Agribusiness Services International (ASI) an ACIDI/VOCA affiliate, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)/Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), SOCODEVI and TechnoServe. Funding for the program comes from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the private sector: major branded manufacturers The Hershey Company, Kraft Foods and Mars, Incorporated; cocoa processors Archer Daniels Midland Company, Barry Callebaut, Blommer Chocolate Company and Cargill; and supply chain managers and allied industries Armajaro, Guittard Chocolate Company, Ecom-Agrocacao, Noble Resources S.A., Olam International Ltd., Petra Foods Ltd., Starbucks Coffee Company and Transmar Commodity Group Ltd. Additional support is provided by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The governments of the five participating African countries have representation on the program Steering Committee.

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The **World Cocoa Foundation** (WCF) is an international membership foundation that promotes a sustainable cocoa economy by providing cocoa farmers with the tools they need to grow more and better cocoa, market it successfully, and make greater profits. These efforts help increase the supply of cocoa and help guarantee chocolate lovers access to their favorite products. WCF’s membership includes more than 70 cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, processors, supply chain managers, and other companies worldwide. Member companies range in size from small and medium size firms to large international corporations and represent over 80% of the global cocoa market. For more information, visit www.worldcocoa.org.