

Mobile phones inform and connect cocoa farmers in Ghana

The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), The Hershey Co. and the Ghana Cocoa Board have launched a mobile technology communication program to assist cocoa farmers.

The technology will deliver practical information on agricultural and social programs to enable the farmers to ask questions and provide feedback.

The program, called *CocoaLink — Connecting Cocoa Communities*, will make use of Ghana’s developing mobile phone infrastructure and build on the existing successful WCF education and literacy programs to reach more than 8,000 Ghanaian cocoa farmers and community members in 15 pilot communities in the cocoa-growing regions of western Ghana.

The program will connect cocoa farmers with information about improving farming practices, farm safety, child labor, health, crop disease prevention, postharvest production and crop marketing. Through voice and text messages delivered in their local language or English, cocoa farmers will receive the information at no charge. They will be able to share information and receive answers to specific questions relating to their cocoa-farming livelihoods.

“Harnessing emerging technology that directly benefits farmers and their communities will dramatically accelerate the flow of information to the cocoa regions,” said Hershey Company vice president Andy McCormick. “We expect more than 100,000 cocoa farmers and their families to benefit from this program during the next three years.”

“CocoaLink is another great example of the public-private partnerships that form the basis of WCF’s programs to benefit cocoa farmers, their families

and their communities,” said Bill Guyton, president of the World Cocoa Foundation.

Ghana, which has more than 700,000 cocoa farmers, now has mobile phone coverage across approximately 85 percent of its geography, including remote rural areas. Recent studies estimate that more than 65 percent of Ghana’s rural residents have access to mobile phones.


The Ghana Cocoa Board (Cocobod) is providing program management and oversight on the development of the agricultural information and will provide ongoing field support and ensure relevance of information throughout the cocoa-growing season. The Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG) will provide agricultural and social content, and Dream Oval, a communications technology firm based in Accra, is providing technological support.

World Education, local partner for the WCF ECHOES Alliance’s existing functional literacy and numeracy training, also will oversee training for CocoaLink. Local trainers chosen by their communities who are already teaching literacy will also now be teaching farmers how to use the mobile technology provided through CocoaLink. Those Ghanaian trainers also will serve as a connection point for responding to farmers’ specific questions with information provided through the CocoaLink network. As part of an existing partnership agreement between WCF and the Peace Corps, Peace Corps volunteers working in Ghana will assist with logistics and program training in the CocoaLink communities. In 1961 Ghana was the first country to receive a Peace Corps volunteer.

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