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World Cocoa Foundation Announces Launch of Cocoa Livelihoods Program in Côte d'Ivoire

Five-Year Program to Reach Over 75,000 Smallholder Farmers in Côte d'Ivoire; Grant Awarded to National Research Institute

ABIDJAN – At a ceremony held in Abidjan, the World Cocoa Foundation today announced the launch of the Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) in Côte d'Ivoire. The program, first announced in February 2009, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and 14 chocolate industry companies, is expected to significantly improve the livelihoods of 75,000 cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire by 2014.

“Cocoa is a vital component of our economy and a major part of the daily lives of so many people in Côte d'Ivoire. This program is a wonderful opportunity for us to work with the private sector, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, our colleagues in other cocoa-producing countries, and the World Cocoa Foundation to improve the livelihoods of smallholder cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire,” said Gilbert Anoh N'guessan, President of the Coffee-Cocoa Sector Management Committee (CGFCC), Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

The work in Côte d'Ivoire is part of a larger five-country program targeting 200,000 cocoa-growing households across Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Liberia. Activities in Côte d'Ivoire will focus on professionalizing farmer organizations, improving production and quality at the farm level, equipping farmers with business skills, promoting diversification of income, and improving access to inputs and support services. The program will be active in seven departments of Côte d'Ivoire: Dalo, Divo, Issia, Abengourou, San Pedro, Soubre and Duekoue.

“Making real progress against hunger and poverty starts with small farmers,” said Richard Rogers, program officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. “Strengthening farmer organizations, and improving farmer knowledge and productivity, and the quality of the cocoa production, can help these small farmers boost their yields and incomes so they can improve their lives.”

The Cocoa Livelihoods Program announced the award of a 2010 World Cocoa Foundation Challenge Grant to Centre National de Recherche Agronomique (CNRA – the national agricultural research institute in Côte d’Ivoire) to develop an innovative approach for educating farmers on regeneration of their farms. Through this approach, farmers will learn to assess the productivity of each cocoa tree, rehabilitate less productive trees, and replant when necessary.

“The concept of ‘bringing science to the field’ is an important part of the World Cocoa Foundation’s programs. These challenge grants support local efforts to conduct research that is relevant to local farmers’ needs and disseminate information in a way that is meaningful to farmers, especially women. Strengthening these linkages between farmers and their national research institutes is essential to the long-term sustainability of our efforts,” said Mballo Ndiaye, Cocoa Livelihoods Program Director, World Cocoa Foundation.

The Cocoa Livelihoods Program is managed by the World Cocoa Foundation and implemented through a consortium of five organizations including Agribusiness Services International (ASI) an ACDI/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., 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 Steering Committee.

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About the World Cocoa Foundation

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation is a leader in promoting economic and social development and environmental stewardship in 15 cocoa-producing countries around the world. With nearly 70 member companies from the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, the Foundation actively supports a range of farm-level programs harnessing sustainable agriculture practices to improve the quality of life for the millions of smallholder farmers growing this unique crop. For more information about the World Cocoa Foundation, visit: www.worldcocoafoundation.org