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**World Cocoa Foundation and Partners Announce
Innovation Challenge Grants to Improve Cocoa Sustainability**

*Awards to Spur Innovation in Labor-saving Technologies, Production Efficiency,
Farm Safety, Education and Community Development*

WASHINGTON DC – The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) has announced \$140,000 in challenge grants to drive innovation in sustainable cocoa farming. The grants will focus on labor-saving technologies and production efficiency; farm safety; education and community development and will be awarded in October 2008 to local organizations and institutions in cocoa-producing countries. Funding for the grants comes from the United States Agency for International Development, MC/Manufacturing Confectioner, Mars Incorporated, and GTZ GmbH.

In announcing the challenge grants, Bill Guyton, President, World Cocoa Foundation, said, “We have a tremendous opportunity today to transform how cocoa is farmed and unlock the economic potential of this unique and important crop. Our goal is that these grants not only will drive significant innovation in cocoa farming practices, but will improve the livelihoods and well-being of the world’s five million smallholder farm families that depend upon this unique and important crop.”

More than 70 experts from around the world gathered at the WCF’s Cocoa Innovations Symposium in Washington DC on July 17 – 18 to discuss the challenges facing cocoa farmers and to identify the most significant opportunities for innovation and change. Key among these were opportunities for:

- Farm-level innovation, focusing on labor-saving technologies and production efficiency in such areas as applied research, post-harvest mechanization, cocoa-pod composting, and solar driers;
- Improved farm safety, including alternative tools, harvesting mechanization, and integrated pest management; and,
- Expanded education and community development, including improved training approaches and methods of disseminating information related to basic education, farmer training, sensitization on social issues, and farmer organization development.

Universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations in cocoa-producing countries have been asked to work with cocoa farmers in submitting grant proposals. The grants, designed to benefit cocoa farmers and build the capacity of local extension services and farmer associations, will be announced at the World Cocoa Foundation's Partnership Meeting in Hamburg, Germany, October 8 – 9, 2008.

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 and Asia, 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.

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