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World Cocoa Foundation and Swedish Chocolate, Confectionery and Biscuit Manufacturers' Association to Address Farm Safety and Health in Cocoa-growing Communities

18-month grant will support farmer training and development of innovative technologies in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and the Swedish Chocolate, Confectionery and Biscuit Manufacturers' Association (CHOKOFA) today announced a new occupational safety and health project. The "Improving Occupational Safety and Health on West African Cocoa Farms" project, supported by an 18-month grant, will focus on farmer training and development of innovative technologies in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana.

"Improving farm safety is essential to fostering healthy and thriving cocoa-farming households and communities. This project is an excellent opportunity for farmers to learn practical safety measures and valuable health information that will make a real difference for their families," said WCF President Bill Guyton, "At the same time, the project is providing grants to local research institutes and universities to develop new technologies that will improve farm safety and family wellbeing in the long term."

"Improving the occupational safety of cocoa farmers is critical for increasing cocoa productivity," adds Dr. Sonii David, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture/Sustainable Tree Crops Program (IITA/STCP) extension specialist.

In order to improve farmers' understanding of occupational safety and health issues, the project will work with IITA/STCP to develop training modules and relevant extension materials. These materials will be used in conjunction with ongoing farmer field school programs to reinforce concepts during training sessions and serve as a reference guide for farm families. The farmer field school methodology is an interactive training approach that emphasizes learning-by-doing. The training modules and materials will be piloted in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana with an initial group of 930 farmers. By the conclusion of the project, the materials will be available for use by other programs and institutions in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. The materials will be readily adaptable for use in other countries.

In addition to the farmer training activities, the project has a challenge grant component that provides funding for the development of innovations in the areas of farm safety, farm level innovations and health education materials. A total of two grants will be awarded to Ivorian research institutes, national universities or non-governmental organizations as part of the 2009 World Cocoa Foundation Challenge Grants Program.

“Focusing our efforts on the two largest cocoa producing countries allows us to achieve maximum impact and develop new approaches and technologies that will ultimately benefit the entire West Africa cocoa-producing region,” said Håkan Björklund, director general of the Swedish Chocolate, Confectionery and Biscuit Manufacturers’ Association, “Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana are the main sources of cocoa for Swedish manufacturers. The wellbeing of farmers of these countries is very important to us and our members. We are pleased to partner with the World Cocoa Foundation and the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, two organizations with successful ongoing programs in the region.”

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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 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

About the Swedish Chocolate, Confectionery and Biscuit Manufacturers’ Association

The Swedish Chocolate, Confectionery and Biscuit Manufacturer's Association (Chokofa) was founded in 1895. According to its statutes, a key priority is to promote social responsibility and good governance.

Internationally Chokofa strives, primarily through its Caobisco membership, to contribute to the joint effort of the global cocoa user industry aiming to eliminate forced and/or hazardous child labor in cocoa growing regions in West Africa.

In total, the members of Chokofa make up more than 90 per cent of sales of chocolate and confectionery in the Swedish market. The members are Kraft Foods, Cloetta, Toms, Göteborgs Kex, Leaf, Fazer, Lindt & Spüngli, Mars, Ferrero, Nestlé, Storck, Haribo, Cadbury, Warberg Candy Group, Candinavia, Nilssons Gott, Dals Konfektyr, Aroma, Totte Gott, Bubs godis, Wrigley and Valora Trade.

About the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture

Africa has complex problems that plague agriculture and people's lives. We develop agricultural solutions with our partners to tackle hunger and poverty. Our award winning research for development (R4D) is based on focused, authoritative thinking anchored on the development needs of sub-Saharan Africa. We work with partners in Africa and beyond to reduce producer and consumer risks, enhance crop quality and productivity, and generate wealth from agriculture. IITA is an international non-profit R4D organization since 1967, governed by a Board of Trustees, and supported primarily by the CGIAR.