Ghana Cocoa Board and World Cocoa Foundation Sign Agreement to Continue Successful CocoaLink Program

ACCRA, GHANA, September 06, 2012 – Over the past three months, the number of cocoa farmers who receive farming and family well-being SMS messages from the CocoaLink program has grown to more than 4,500, with subscribers across the main cocoa-growing regions. In the first year alone, CocoaLink, a mobile phones outreach program, sponsored by The Hershey Company, the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) and the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), has delivered more than 100,000 messages. This week, in a ceremony marking the achievements of the CocoaLink program, both COCOBOD and WCF signed an agreement to ensure the long-term success and continuation of the program, with COCOBOD taking the helm with overall management of CocoaLink by 2014.

The program continues to grow and benefit cocoa farmers, their families and their communities. Within 15 CocoaLink pilot communities, community educational sessions continue to be held every week to provide farmers with mobile phone training and expert advice. A dedicated short code has been secured from Airtel, which will enable better efficiency in the management of CocoaLink’s feedback support system, which provides farmers with the option of sending inquiries and requests for additional extension support.

“The World Cocoa Foundation is pleased to participate in this innovative program, which uses mobile phone technology for two-way communications with cocoa growing communities”, said World Cocoa Foundation President Bill Guyton.

“This program is offering a cost effective and innovative way to enhance the work of our Community Extension Agents by providing timely agronomy and child labour messaging to improve the livelihood of the cocoa farmer,” said Anthony Fofie, Chief Executive Officer of COCOBOD.

CocoaLink is a first-of-its kind program that uses mobile voice and SMS text messages delivered in Twi or English, and connect cocoa farmers with important information about improving farming practices, farm safety, child labor, health, crop disease prevention, post-harvest production and crop marketing. CocoaLink enables farmers to ask specific cocoa growing questions and share learnings with other farmers about critical agricultural and social information. Working with many on-the-ground partners, CocoaLink is on track to reach 25,000 farmers by the end of the year.

About the Ghana Cocoa Board:
The Ghana Cocoa Board traces its beginning further back to the cocoa hold-up of 1937 and was formally established by ordinance in 1947 with the sum of €27 million (Ghana's share of the net profit of the West African Produce Control Board) as its initial working capital. In 1957, the late Dr. Kwame Nkrumah the then President of the Republic of Ghana, laid the foundation stone to mark the construction of Cocoa House at Liberty Avenue, Accra, to provide offices for the Board. Cocoa House represents a concrete expression of the Board's faith in the future of the cocoa industry and is a monument to the hard work of the Ghanaian farmer.

About the World Cocoa Foundation: 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. WCF’s membership includes cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, processors, supply chain managers, and other companies worldwide, representing more than 80 percent of the global cocoa market. For more information, visit www.worldcocoa.org.