



World Cocoa
Foundation

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World Cocoa Foundation Announces Establishment of Americas Cacao Breeders Working Group

Americas Cacao Breeders Working Group Meeting and CacaoNet/Bioversity workshop on in situ and on-farm conservation held at CATIE

Washington, D.C., October 30, 2014 – The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service (USDA/ARS) and Costa Rica’s Tropical Agricultural Research & Higher Education Center (CATIE) announce the creation of the Americas Cacao Breeders Working Group. This group, the first of its kind in the Americas, will be established during an Americas Cacao Breeders meeting that will be held at CATIE in Turrialba, Costa Rica, October 29 – 31, 2014. The Working Group, also supported by Bioversity International and INGENIC, will bring together cacao breeders, scientists in related disciplines, and industry members to collaborate and coordinate on cocoa breeding and management of germplasm resources.

“WCF is pleased to support the establishment of the Americas Cacao Breeders Group and the International Cacao Collection,” said Bill Guyton, WCF President. “With threats to cocoa including pests, disease and climate change, the Collection is an important resource for the global cocoa community to conserve the unique genetic makeup of the cocoa plant.”

The Americas currently produce approximately 13% of the world’s cacao, however, average productivity remains low (approximately 300-500 kg/ha) due to the effects of devastating diseases and limited incorporation of good agricultural practices. The Group will take advantage on successful models developed in Africa and Asia, which are supported by WCF, and will exchange information on progress obtained by cacao breeders in the Americas, discuss cacao germplasm exchange in the Americas, and facilitate dialogue between cacao breeders and the private sector.

“The future of chocolate is threatened by the increasing effect of diseases and weather changes,” said Wilbert Phillips, Curator of the International Cacao Genebank at CATIE. “However, the genetic richness of this tropical American species could radically change the prognoses, serving as the basis for creating varieties that diminish the risks as has it has been demonstrating in Central America, where the species was domesticated a long time ago.”

This year CATIE is also celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of International Cacao Collection in Turrialba, Costa Rica in 1944. This anniversary will celebrate the collection’s immense value to the world including conservation, providing plant material for genetic enhancement studies as well as providing propagation material for the breeding programs and the establishment of commercial plantations in different countries. This cocoa germplasm collection, which contains nearly 1,200 clones of cacao, is a significant representation of the broad genetic diversity that the species possesses in tropical America. It also includes clones obtained in Africa, Asia and Oceania.

About WCF: The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) is an international membership foundation of more than 115 members 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.

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