

Case study – “Beyond Chocolate”

1. Background

Belgian chocolate has been a major industry for many decades now. It forms an important part of the nation’s economy and culture. Every year, more than 300 000 tons of cocoa beans enter Belgium. With yearly production of the Belgian chocolate, 275 000 small scale suppliers are involved. Belgium, after the Netherlands and Germany is the third largest importer of cocoa beans in Europe. The Belgian chocolate sector accounts for an annual turnover of almost 5 billion euros (2), from which over € 1 billion is exported worldwide. What is important is that this sweet desert does not have a bitter aftertaste. Belgium is known as home to high quality chocolate. However, the producers of the Belgian chocolate also need to ensure that the product they sell is sustainable.

2. Beyond Chocolate introduction

The project introduced by the Belgian development cooperation – „Beyond Chocolate” has the aim to work towards the sustainably sourced chocolate and bettering the situation of the small-scale cocoa producers. The „Beyond Chocolate” venture is the first large-scale initiative of the Belgian SDG Charter. The charter consists of over 100 signatories; companies, civil society organizations and representatives of the public sector. By signing to this, signatories indicate that the sustainable development goals will become an integral part of their core operational proceedings. The signatories commit to actively work on developing multi-actor partnerships. Beyond Chocolate builds on the Belgian SDG Charter for International Development that works towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

3. Vision

The central objective of "Beyond Chocolate" is the sustainable improvement of the living conditions of the cocoa producers and their families. The main objectives of this project is to eliminate child labor, combat deforestation in the supply chain and reach living income for cocoa farmers.

In order to improve farmer incomes, the project will focus on the main Belgian chocolate sector production regions: Africa, Latin America and Asia.

4. Implementation plan

a. Broad range of signatories

Sector federation and retail chains committed themselves for their own brands to work towards the prerogative of “Beyond Chocolate” project. Belgian universities, governmental and non-governmental institutions, impact investors and trade unions will support the efforts of the new partnership and contribute in their own field towards a sustainable Belgian chocolate. The companies and retail sector are working together with civil society organizations and government. This approach ensures that the development project is supported financially, policy wise and with

business community in favor. The Belgian universities and other knowledge institutes, governmental and non-governmental development organizations and trade unions support this strive and contribute on the basis of their own mandate and field of work. This varied stakeholder group commitment is important, because to make Belgian chocolate more sustainable and to be able to write real success stories, every actor in the chain must cooperate and actively work towards the common goal. By joining forces, the responsibility for this partnership will increase as the impact of the joint effort and the monitoring of compliance is a sum of various stakeholder contributions. Additionally, over 40 signatories as of 5th of December 2018 are dedicated to concrete goals within this project which ensures commitment to reach the bigger objective the “Beyond Chocolate” carries.

b. Measurable goals

Another strength of this project are defined, concrete goals. With their signature, every actor commits themselves to working together on a range of challenges: from tackling child labor through combating deforestation to ensuring a living income for local cocoa producers. In concrete terms, this means that all Belgian chocolate produced or traded in Belgium meets a relevant certification standard or is produced with cocoa products from company-specific sustainability programs by the end of 2025 at the latest. Additionally, by 2025 signatories who have agreements that fall under the Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) must be fully respected. The agreement aims to end deforestation in the supply chains of the two largest cocoa-producing countries; Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. Deforestation as a result of cocoa production for the Belgian chocolate sector must end by 2030. By then, all cocoa farmers must earn at least a living income as well. (1)

c. Progress tracking and reporting

In terms of coordination, a reliable and independent organization is appointed. That organization will work independently to monitor the progress, measure traceable effects of the project as well as the transparent communication about the deployment and results to the signatories and partners. The efforts of this organ will be reported to a steering committee with representatives from the government and business. Annually, the progress will be reported in communication with the participants of the “Beyond Chocolate” partnership. This strategy will continue until the 2030 horizon.

The progress of the project will be measured as of 2019. The main key performance indicators will measure the following: (1) increase in the young people & kids attending school, (2) decreasing the forest area of the cocoa production, (3) improvement in the netto income for the farmers.

5. Important steps in the implementation of the prerogatives of the partnership

- 1. Making sure to build on top of the on ongoing sustainability initiatives and programs including the existing sustainability standards (Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance/UTZ; supplemented with EKO certification) and company-specific sustainability programs and their measuring instruments;*
- 2. Where necessary, these initiatives and programs will be strengthened, improved and / or supplemented to jointly ensure that the objectives are achieved, transparently communicated and unanimous;*
- 3. To ensure recognizability of the project no new sustainability label or logo will be created. All signatories will use the logos of “Beyond Chocolate” project.*

4. *All Belgian companies that will work towards the “Beyond Chocolate” project promise to work to make a contribution towards the increase in the purchase of sustainable cocoa and chocolate;*
5. *Transparency: The effects are measured by an independent party at a reasonable cost and form the basis for transparent communication about the sustainability effects of the Belgian sector among producers and their families. Awareness around sustainability issues and solutions in the cocoa chain is an integral part of the communication strategy of the partnership;*
6. *Progressive: Signatories commit themselves in each year to take substantial and innovative efforts in order to be able to move forward towards achieving the objectives of the project. (1)*

6. Sources

- (1) https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/uploaded/2018/12/Beyond-Chocolate_NL.pdf
- (2) https://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/newsroom/news/2018/beyond_chocolate