



EcoFinia press-release:

Organic chocolate does not need child labour

Producers and consumers should be aware of their responsibilities



[15.02.2012] Media reports are once more highlighting the fact that children are being used as slaves in certain regions of West Africa. Children between the ages of 10 and 14 on cocoa plantations which supply cocoa to many international chocolate manufacturers, are working without pay, are being underfed and falling sick from pesticides. The producers of organic and fair trade chocolate are acting in a more responsible manner.

The cocoa fruit needed to produce chocolate still has to be harvested by hand in a complicated and expensive manner. The accusations which major producers deny out of hand are often harsh reality. In many places children are being used to undertake this laborious task. Media reports claim that some chocolate producers are closing their eyes to this fact because all they are doing is buying the raw material for making chocolate. Nonetheless if the work was more strictly controlled this would prevent the use of child labour. This is the case with the organic chocolate produced by the German market leader VIVANI*. Andreas Meyer, CEO of the VIVANI manufacturer EcoFinia GmbH, says that producers should be more aware of their responsibilities. "It goes without saying that we have to look very closely at where we get our cocoa. We have a duty to ensure that both people and the natural environment are protected."

The cocoa used in VIVANI organic chocolate comes from certified organic plantations run by farming cooperatives in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. Andreas Meyer paid a personal visit to the plantations in order to get a closer idea of the life of the farmers and to assess the quality of the organic farming. He reported back that: "In Latin America the structures are different from those in most parts of Africa – they allow a higher standard of living. Here farmers and their families are working their own land and joining forces as co-operative ventures often to market their products". In the last analysis this benefits the environment. For the biologically grown cocoa trees grow in a natural environment – the South American rainforest – on the farmers' own land. Thanks to higher prices for organic cocoa on the world markets the farmers are able to earn a higher income, and can use part of this, for example to engage workers to help with the harvest. This enables them to send their children to school.

Most of the child workers in West Africa are not in such a happy situation but consumers can help to improve their condition Andreas Meyer emphasises that "All chocolate lovers have to decide for themselves what price they are willing to pay. If they opt for organic or fair trade chocolate they can be fairly certain that no one in the manufacturing chain is being exploited for their labour"

**Source: bioVista evaluation 01.2010-06.2010*

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