The Amsterdam Declarations towards deforestation-free and sustainable commodities were launched in 2015. Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom signed these declarations. Cocoa is one of the focus commodities.

Relevant organisations and private sector related alliances

- Caobisco – Association of Chocolate, Biscuit and Confectionery Industries of Europe.
- CFI – Cocoa & Forests Initiative.
- ECA - European Cocoa Association: Federation of cocoa bean trade and processing (representing 2/3 of European cocoa beans grinding, and 50% of European chocolate production).
- GISCO – German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa
- IDH – Sustainable Trade Initiative (incl. cocoa).
- VOICE – European Network for Sustainability in the Global Cocoa Supply Chains, part of the Cocoa Barometer Consortium.
- WCF – World Cocoa Foundation with 90 members (representing 80% of global market).

Status of cocoa production and European import

Côte d’Ivoire (43% of global production), Ghana (20%), Ecuador (6%) and Indonesia (6%) were the main cocoa producers and exporters in 2016-2017. Africa produced 76% of global production followed by 16% from Latin America and 8% from Asia (ICCO, 2018). In 2017, the EU imported almost 50% of global cocoa production (4.7 million tons). The EU also conducts 37% of the global grindings of cocoa beans with the Netherlands having a 35% share in grinding and Germany 25%. Côte d’Ivoire is the second largest processor globally after the Netherlands (ICCO, 2018). In 2017, the AD countries accounted for 77% of the total European cocoa import (beans, paste and butter).

Monitoring of progress

The proxy indicator chosen for deforestation-free cocoa is “volume of certified commodity import with Europe and signatory countries”. EUROSTAT and ITC (UNCOMTRADE) are the primary sources for obtaining trade data of EU28 and Norway. Information on volume of certified cocoa imported is not registered through customs data and has to be provided by the private sector or voluntary sustainability standards. At the moment, such (aggregated) information is not available. Other relevant third party monitoring initiatives for in-country deforestation related to cocoa include for example FAOSTAT, WRI Global Forest Watch and landscape / jurisdictional initiatives in producing countries.

Share of European cocoa import per ADP country (2017)

Source: EUROSTAT and ITC-COMTRADE for Norway.
Towards deforestation-free, sustainable cocoa

Cocoa is the most important export crop for Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, and is mainly grown by smallholder farmers. Although there is currently an oversupply, the cocoa demand is expected to increase significantly in the coming years, especially in Latin America (Ecuador, Brazil and Peru). However, many cocoa trees in West Africa are old, have low yields and need replacement, and many producers are fairly poor. The incentive for replanting cocoa trees is therefore low which could result in deforestation. Cocoa production was the main cause of deforestation in 23 protected areas in Côte d’Ivoire (Ohio University, March 2015). Also in Ghana, cocoa farmers encroached into forest reserves. Adversely, the cocoa sector could contribute in forest restoration and creating resilient landscapes. A major sustainability issue in the sector is ‘living income’.

Cocoa trees are understory rainforest trees and sensitive to drought. Climate change affects, amongst others, rainfall patterns and soil moisture resulting in a decline of the area with favourable climatic conditions for growing cocoa. There is a need to improve yields on less land. New varieties of cocoa trees are able to grow in full sun in monoculture systems.

The voluntary certification schemes Rainforest Alliance (RA) merged with UTZ Certified and is the main scheme with a cut-off date for deforestation (2005).

Through the individual AD-countries, we work together and support the important Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) launched in 2017. CFI brings together 32 companies with a commitment to end deforestation and cooperates with the governments of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana.

In the Netherlands and Germany national private sector led initiatives committed to sustainable cocoa (measured by level of certified cocoa). The Netherlands’ Chocolate Working Group committed to 100% sustainable cocoa by 2025 (50% by 2015) and reached 58% in 2016. The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO) - covering 80 % of the German cocoa sector - has set a target of 70% until 2020 and reached 60% in 2017.

In addition, the AD-countries support supply chain and landscape initiatives with the private sector in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana through for example, GIZ, IDH Cocoa and Partnerships-4-Forests (P4F). Landscape initiatives are for example implemented in Western Ghana by companies together with the Ghana Cocoa Board and Forestry Commission; and near Tai National Park, Côte d’Ivoire by IDH-ISLA.

Other important cocoa initiatives are for example CocoaAction by WCF and the ICCO Global Cocoa Agenda. In addition, there are companies with a commitment to 100% sustainable cocoa by 2020 (e.g. Mars, Hershey, Lindt & Sprüngli, Ferrero) and European retailers source certified cocoa for their private label brands.