



Cultivation

Growing Cocoa

Taste by the ton.

The cacao tree is grown around the equator, between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. It thrives most when grown with a tropical companion crop, reaching heights of up to 15 meters. Above it, banana and coconut palms provide shade, which is why they are also known as "mothers of cocoa". At its feet, avocado, maize or cassava protect it against drying out, nutrient loss and erosion. This agro-silvicultural method also benefits smallholder farmers: higher yields, rising incomes, better nutritional opportunities and greater economic stability. At the same time, soil productivity is ensured in the long term and the deforestation of the rainforest effectively contained.

With what is known as "non-shaded monocultures", by contrast, tracts of rainforest are felled to make way for cacao trees. Only the hardy Forastero and some Trinitario species are suited to this. The method requires highly intense care, irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides, and the cacao flowers still need to be pollinated by hand.

Every year, more than 3.5 million tons of raw cocoa beans are harvested globally. 95% of these are the strong, hardy ordinary or bulk cocoa, Forastero, while sensitive fine or flavor cocoas such as Criollo and some Trinitario varieties make up only about 5% of global harvests.



Cocoa trees school

Europe mainly gets its bulk cocoa from the Ivory Coast and other Central African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria. The fine or flavor varieties from northern South America, Ecuador and Venezuela are mainly processed by German chocolate manufacturers, while North America, and especially the USA, gets most of the raw cocoa it needs from Brazil.