

Sustainable land management and labelling of cacao

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Background and Objective

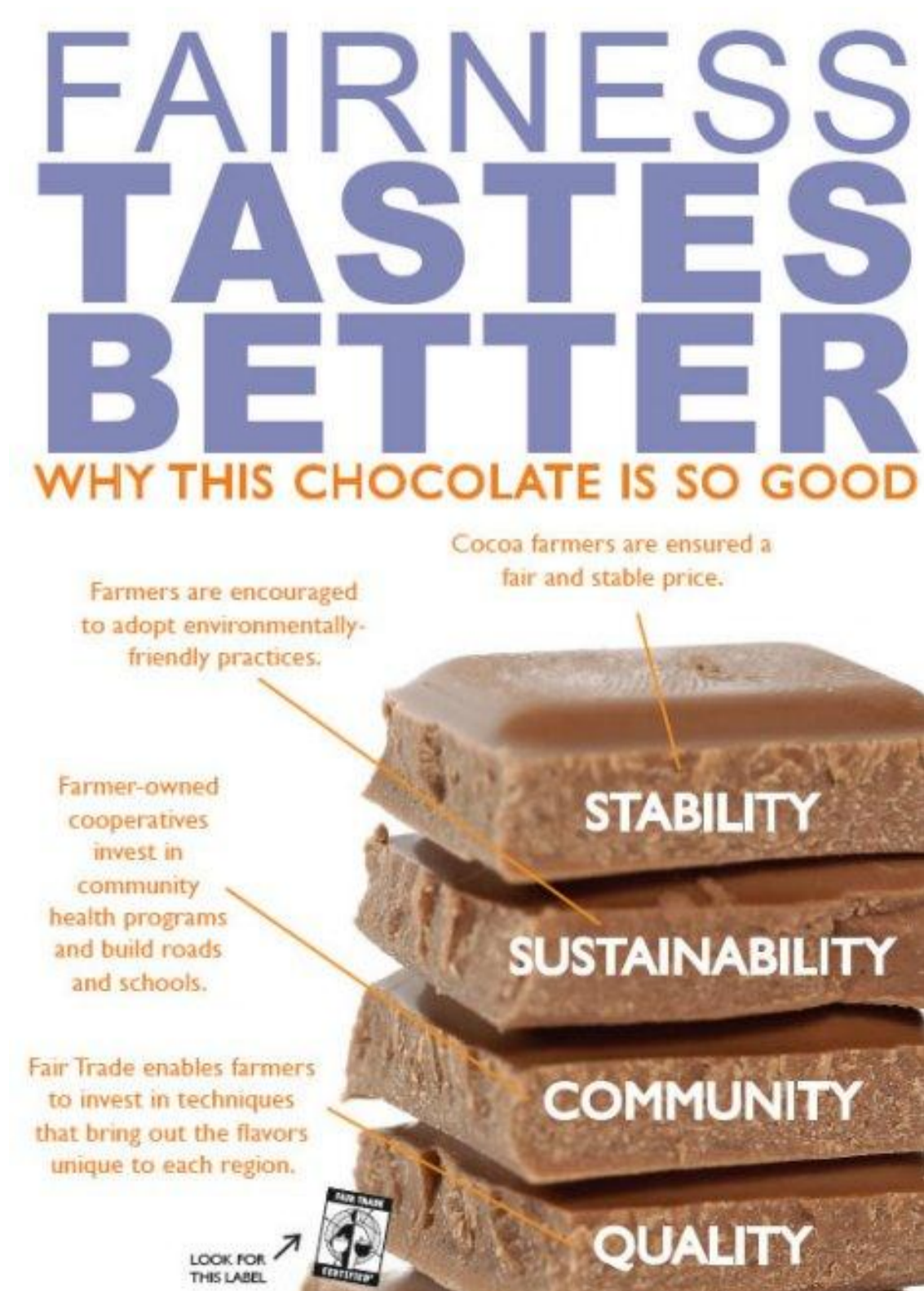
In 2006, Oxfam Novib started a campaign in the Netherlands called the 'Groene Sint'. The aim of this campaign was to get attention for Fair Trade chocolate products during the Dutch Sinterklaas, when chocolate letters are a standard present. However, poor labour conditions are a common problem in the production of the cacao beans which are used for these letters.

This problem was already part of the Harding-Engel covenant, in which producers promised chocolate would be slave-free in 2005, but this goal was far from being reached. In 2004 the Dutch consumer program 'Keuringsdienst van Waarde' investigated this issue, and one of the program directors reported himself to the police for being an accessory to slavery (1).

In 2008 Verkade, one of the largest chocolate producers in the Netherlands, announced to switch to 'fair' cacao beans. On March 4th 2010 a covenant was signed by the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, cacao-traders, chocolate manufacturers, supermarkets and Oxfam Novib to switch to sustainable cacao.

However, there are a lot of different 'fair' labels, and good labour conditions do not automatically mean sustainable cacao in terms of land management. The research question of this research is: *how does fair trade chocolate production influences sustainable land management on cacao plantations?*

In order to answer this question, several 'fair' labels are compared to see how they score on sustainable land management.



Italian fair trade chocolate advertisement.

The Labels

- The Fair Trade label is a NGO-driven label and focuses on labour conditions in production and paying 'fair' for production to support poor farmers with premiums. It mostly focuses on small farmers.
- The UTZ label is a market driven label which focuses on higher quality and volumes of production using good agricultural practices, It focuses more on large farmers.
- The Rainforest Alliance label is an NGO-driven label that focuses on changing land-use practices to improve labour and ecological conditions on plantations.

Indicator	Fair Trade (2)	UTZ (3)	Rainforest Alliance (4)
Fertiliser use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training for proper application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease-free organic waste is left in the field for composting (optional) • Users are able to tell which fertilisers are used, when, and in which dose (year 3) • Fertiliser recommendations should be demonstrated to be reliable (year 1) • Mandatory up-to-date list of allowed fertilisers and their properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertiliser use must be based on soil properties • Fertiliser use should be based on advice from external competent party
Degradation prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory training to reduce/prevent soil erosion • Mandatory identification of eroded areas and areas at risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shade trees mandatory by (re)planting. • No cropping at slopes >25%, new areas over >8% slope mandatory erosion prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Execute soil erosion prevention and control program. Special emphasis on runoff and wind erosion. • Use and expanding vegetative cover against erosion.
(Integrated) Pest Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pesticides only used if not banned/severely restricted by: EU, US, POP by Stockholm Convention, Annex III Rotterdam Convention or PAN Dirty Dozen list • Use at least 10 meters from human activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pesticides only used if not banned by: EU, US or Japan, classified 1A or 1B by WHO, POP by Stockholm Convention, Annex III Rotterdam Convention or PAN Dirty Dozen list • Use >5m from water streams or bodies up to 3m wide, >10m from water streams of bodies over 3m wide, >15m from springs, unless stricter laws apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory training for knowledge on pesticide use and handling, prescribed storage. (varying degrees) • Pesticide use restricted (Red and Amber list) and mandatory monitoring (year 0) • Mandatory minimization of pesticide use by using alternative weed prevention and control (year 3) • Use according to local laws, in case of absence: >60m human activities in buildings; >100m public roads;>120m from rivers, streams, lakes; >200m human consumption water source; 50> fuel tanks; >10m, with natural barrier
Additional planted buffer zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on local conditions 5-50m from water bodies, 5-30 from human activities or ecosystems 		

Table 1. Comparison of the Fair Trade, UTZ and Rainforest Alliance labels on different aspects of Sustainable Land Management.

Conclusions

It appears that 'fair' labels have a strong effect on land management. Although the labels are different in their approach, probably due to their different target groups, they all have regulations on similar environmental aspects of cacao production.

The difference in target groups is reflected, for example, by the types of pesticides that are allowed. Fair Trade and UTZ are clearly driven by market requirements of western countries. The largest difference is the distance from other human activities when using pesticides. The Rainforest Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Standard sets very strict guidelines which will probably be hard to reach for small sized farms on which a large portion of the cacao is harvested. Concluding land management will probably improve regardless of which label is used.

References

1. Keuringsdienst van Waarde, television program, RVU, Hilversum, episode of February 6th, 2007.
2. FLO (2011). *Generic Fair Trade Standards for Small Farmer's Organizations*. Fair Trade Labelling Organization. http://www.fairtrade.net/fileadmin/user_upload/content/2011-12-27_SPO_EN_FINAL.pdf (accessed April 2012).
3. Utz Certified, *Code of Conduct*. http://www.utzcertified.org/index.php?pageID=111&showdoc=111_0_14 (accessed April 2012).
4. Sustainable Agriculture Network (2010). *Sustainable Agriculture Standard*, San José.