

## Ghana and Switzerland today: cocoa, gold and responsibility

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The economic relationship between Switzerland and Ghana, which the Basel Mission Trading Company inaugurated in the nineteenth century, has taken new forms. Ghana remains one of the largest cocoa producers in the world, and Swiss chocolate manufacturers and cocoa processors, among them one of the largest cocoa processors in the world, headquartered in Zurich, buy Ghanaian cocoa. The conditions of cocoa production, in particular the use of child labour on cocoa farms in West Africa, have been the subject of international campaigns and of commitments by the chocolate industry. The due diligence obligations of the Swiss Code of Obligations on child labour apply to companies that process cocoa.<sup>1</sup>

Gold is the second pillar of the relationship. Ghana, the largest gold producer in Africa, sends a large share of its gold exports to Switzerland, whose refineries process a majority of the world's gold. The origin of the gold refined in Switzerland, including gold from artisanal and small-scale mines in Ghana and other West African countries, has raised questions about human rights, environmental damage, the financing of armed groups and money laundering. The companion volume on Geneva examines the gold trade and its regulation in detail. The Swiss authorities, for their part, have strengthened the due diligence requirements for refiners in recent years.<sup>2</sup>

The Basel Mission Trading Company, which refused to trade in spirits and firearms in the 1860s, applied its own standards of responsible trade to the goods it bought and sold. The modern cocoa and gold trades between Ghana and Switzerland are subject to legal requirements and industry standards that pursue similar purposes: to ensure that the goods traded are produced under acceptable conditions and do not finance violence or crime. The practitioner who advises Swiss traders, refiners or banks on these requirements works in a field whose historical roots lie, among other

places, in the stores of the Basel Mission Trading Company in the Gold Coast.

## 1 Notes

1. On child labour in West African cocoa production and the commitments of the chocolate industry, and on the application of Art. 964j ff. CO to products suspected of being made with child labour, see the relevant reports and legislation. To be verified. ↩
2. On Swiss gold imports from Ghana and other African countries, the Swiss refining industry and the due diligence requirements for refiners (Precious Metals Control Act, SR 941.31; revisions and FINMA supervision of refiners as financial intermediaries), see the reports of the Federal Office for Customs and Border Security and the companion volume. To be verified. ↩

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