

Cocoa and coffee

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West Africa supplies the greater part of the world's cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana being the leading producers, followed by Nigeria and Cameroon.¹ Coffee is produced in Ethiopia, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Tanzania and other countries. These products, traded from Geneva, Lausanne and other Swiss centres, supply the chocolate industry and coffee roasters around the world, several of which are established in Switzerland.

Cocoa and coffee traders buy from producers, often through cooperatives, local exporters or marketing boards, then transport, store, sometimes process and sell to manufacturers. Specialist houses in Geneva and the Lake Geneva region dealing in these products, one of which was cited among the Swiss companies active in Africa at the 2017 Africa CEO Forum, rank among the leading global players.²

The cocoa and coffee trade raises questions of its own. The producers are millions of smallholder farmers, whose incomes depend on world prices and on the share of value they manage to capture. Production conditions — child labour, deforestation, the use of chemicals — are the subject of growing demands from manufacturers, consumers and legislators. The due diligence obligations concerning child labour introduced into the Code of Obligations, described in Part H, directly concern these supply chains, as does the European regulation on deforestation.³

In response, the Geneva traders have developed traceability, certification and producer-support programmes, often in partnership with manufacturers, non-governmental organisations and development institutions. These programmes are an example of the way in which sustainability requirements are transforming the trading business. In the Geneva financial centre, where traders, manufacturers, international organisations and foundations work side by side, they offer ground for cooperation.

1 Notes

1. International Cocoa Organization, forecasts for 2024-2025: world production of around 4.8 million tonnes, including 1.85 million in Côte d'Ivoire and 600,000 tonnes in Ghana, together some 56%; “Le marché mondial du cacao sera excédentaire en 2024/2025 (Icco)” (The world cocoa market will be in surplus in 2024/2025 (ICCO)), Agence Ecofin, 3 March 2025. ↩
2. “Genève deviendra la capitale de l’Afrique” (Geneva will become the capital of Africa), Bilan, 27 January 2017, which cites Sucafina among the Swiss companies active in Africa. ↩
3. Regulation (EU) 2023/1115 on deforestation-free products, whose application, scheduled for 30 December 2024, was postponed first to 30 December 2025 and then, in November 2025, to 30 December 2026 for large companies and 30 June 2027 for small ones; Deloitte Société d’Avocats, “Règlement Déforestation : un nouveau report pour fin 2026” (Deforestation Regulation: a further postponement to the end of 2026), blog.avocats.deloitte.fr (accessed September 2026). ↩

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