

**Mardis du Quai Voltaire**

**Will we still be eating chocolate in 2050?**

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on line with: Institut National Agronomique Paris; Clermont Ferrand; Rennes; Angers.

*Minutes of the debate on the cocoa sector in the run-up to the Salon du Chocolat (Paris, October 30, 2019), with a focus on fair-trade issues.*

**Speakers:**

- **Christophe Bertrand**, artisanal chocolatier ("[A la Reine Astrid](#)"),
- **Christian Cilas**, [CIRAD](#) researcher,
- **Blaise Desbordes**, Managing Director of Max [Havelaar France](#),
- **Patrick Poirrier**, President and CEO, [CEMOI](#) Group.

**Moderator:** **Nathalie Helal**, journalist, author of "*Dictionnaire exquis du Chocolat*."

**Conclusion:** **H.E.M. Charles Providence GOMIS**, Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire in Paris.

**Background:**

- 5 million producers in the world.
- About 4.5 million tonnes of dried beans produced annually, 70% in four countries, including Côte d'Ivoire (43%) and Ghana (20%); the latter two countries have reached an agreement (sometimes referred to as "the OPEC for cocoa").
- Production is 95% on smallholder family farms.
- Yields: between 150 and 2,500kg/ha.
- Two major international markets: New York and London; world prices are currently low (overproduction).
- Consumption: France: 7.3 kg/capita/year; Germany: 11.0 kg/capita/year; China: 0.1 kg/capita/year.

**Debate**

**Threats:**

- Climate does not appear to be a major threat though rainfall is slowly decreasing in Côte d'Ivoire (-2mm/year over 40 years), rising temperatures are not an issue. Cocoa is also prone to many diseases.
- Deforestation may appear as a threat to biodiversity and climate change but, according to Christian Cilas, planters are not responsible for deforestation though they do tend to settle in deforested areas.
- The main threat is arguably the aging planter population. In Côte d'Ivoire, the average planter is 65 years old! which likely reflects the unattractive price of the crop. Young people prefer to migrate to cities. Child labour, poorly documented, can be a sign of family poverty.
- One listener raised the question of the the lack of industrial plantations in the cocoa sector. Christian Cilas said industrial plantations were not a policy objective.

- The Cargill/Barry-Callebaut oligopoly in world cocoa trade was not mentioned among the threats.

#### *Leverages or remedies*

- Higher producer prices, the strategic goal of Max Havelaar and fair trade. Blaise Desbordes and Patrick Poirrier considered the adoption of the [Fair Trade Charter](#), was encouraging. The charter guarantees minimum prices to planters.
- Education of consumers, insufficiently aware of fair trade issues. Their role is paramount; they should become interested in brand commitments and in the origin of the product, and choose their product accordingly.
- Extension and training of planters, per the example of Chr. Bertrand's Cameroonian cooperative. Mr Bertrand considers the quality of fermentation is a priority.
- Strengthening cooperatives to improve the first stage of cocoa bean preparation. The cocoa fair trade charter provides development bonuses for that purpose.
- On the last two points, Africa appears to be lagging behind Latin America (Ecuador).

#### *Outlook (evolution scenarios)*

- The climate threat is not overwhelming, therefore we should expect to be still eating chocolate in 2050!
- By not paying the fair price, the European consumer is ignoring "negative externalities" at the expense of the planet (Blaise Desbordes). The main negative externality appears to be the underpayment of planters. Compared to Europe, the American consumer pays a higher price for lower quality.
- Despite its encouraging progress, fair trade accounts for only 2% of cocoa production. In addition, consumer chocolate accounts for only 20% of the market while quality is a lesser concern for industrial chocolate. Therefore, will the food industry support fair trade?
- In France, chocolate is becoming a sought-after delicacy, like wine, and artisanal chocolate production is expanding, as for beers. France has developed a varied market for luxury chocolate.
- In terms of production, tropical areas are safely protected from competition from temperate zones. On the other hand, tropical areas could develop their own consumption. In Côte d'Ivoire, CEMOI is developing the local market.
- China remains a big potential market, little mentioned in the debate.

#### **Conclusion by the Ambassador from Ivory Coast**

The Ambassador expressed his gratefulness to the participants of the event. For the Salon du Chocolat he announced that the "First Lady" of Côte d'Ivoire would serve as its godmother. He underscored the virtues of the Ivory Coast-Ghana agreement. Referring to the global cocoa market worth \$ 100 billion, he pointed out that producers received only 6%. He listed supportive measures taken by his government (in contrast to the poor condition of the sector as appeared in the presentations). He stated that the chocolate sector provided employment also in industrial countries (30,000 in France environ).

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