

Rainforest Alliance and Mars Team Up to Make Sustainable Chocolate



One of the world's largest chocolate makers, Mars, Incorporated, and the Rainforest Alliance have announced an ambitious new goal in their on-going campaign to help cocoa farmers get on the path toward sustainability. The two companies have agreed to redouble efforts to help thousands of farmers meet holistic social and environmental standards so that their farms could earn Rainforest Alliance certification.

Mars aims to buy enough certified cocoa so that the Galaxy chocolate bar, highly popular in the United Kingdom, can bear the Rainforest Alliance Certified green seal of approval by early 2010. Mars has also committed to getting its entire cocoa supply certified as sustainably produced by 2020. The Rainforest Alliance accepted the company's challenge to bring enough farms up to code so that 100,000 tons of Rainforest Alliance Certified cocoa would be available each year by 2020. This move is an unprecedented milestone for the cocoa industry, farmers and chocolate lovers.

Farmed in the hot and humid lowlands of many tropical countries, cocoa is the main livelihood for millions of farmers. There are an estimated two million cocoa growers in the western Africa nations of Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, which together produce about 80% of the world's cocoa supply. Nearly all cocoa is grown on small, family farms that are vulnerable to disease, inclement weather and price fluctuations. Since farmers manage small plots of about three hectares, the amount of cocoa beans required for Galaxy will require the annual harvest of several thousand farmers.

The Rainforest Alliance and Mars' staff began sharing ideas and expertise a decade ago. The Rainforest Alliance has been working with Mars in Cote d'Ivoire for two years as part of the Mars Partnership for African Cocoa Communities of Tomorrow (iMPACT) program, a coalition of groups whose goal is to ensure future supplies of cocoa and a responsible approach to its production so that the communities in which it is produced can thrive. Mars also began sourcing coffee from Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee farms for three of their Flavia coffee offerings in 2008.