

# 1. Cacao Beans:

**know the farmer, talk about them, talk about their beans, buy directly, don't hurt neither humans nor the environment**

1.1 We have a **personal relationship with the plantations** which provide us with their cacao beans. We have either visited the plantations or know the owners or managers personally.

We know the origin of our cacao. We know the cooperative, the manager or even the farmer. We know how the beans have been cultivated, harvested, fermented, and dried.

It is difficult, time- and money-wise, for small artisan chocolate-makers to have visited all the plantations they work with. But the minimum requirement is to know the people who run it. To have met them in person, or via phone, skype, email. To have created a link.

On the chocolate bar packaging and the website we talk about them, share their story and passion.

1.2 We **state the name of the plantation, cooperative or post-harvest center** on the packaging and on our website. It's a matter of transparency and traceability to show where our cacao is coming from. When we make blend chocolate we list all the plantations used.

It's not enough to say that a chocolate has been made with beans from a specific country. The varieties even in a region of a country can be very large, the flavours, too, are different.

Therefore we work with specific plantations and producers, sometimes associated in cooperatives with post-harvest centers. Post-harvest centers can be independent, then we mention both.

The origin is important. Even the cheapest wine in the cheapest supermarket mentions its vineyard. That has to be the standard for quality chocolate as well.

1.3 The cacao plantations we are working with guarantee that they are **child-labour free**, that they guarantee **fair pay** for their workers and that the cacao plantation is **in harmony with nature**. The plantations should be socially and environmentally sustainable.

Children don't belong on a plantation. They should go to school, play with friends... have a childhood. Unfortunately child labour is common place in Ghana and Ivory Coast, the two biggest cacao producers in the world. We are vividly opposing any tolerance towards child labour.

But we are also not naive: small cacao farmers need every extra pair of hands during harvest season. It's normal that children take over small chores. You can check this on any family-run farm in Europe. The important part: first comes school and education, aiding on the plantation is secondary.

To guarantee education for children, their parents need to receive a fair payment for their work. We pay the plantations at least double the world market price. The plantations ensure that their farmers get a fair share of this extra revenue.

The farmers and plantation owners are well aware that their business is only sustainable if they take care of the natural environment. We prefer working with cacao producers who avoid deforestation, and favor preservation of biodiversity. The usage of pesticides shouldn't be commonplace and remain a last resort, which we understand, as a plantation needs 4-6 years to recover from fatal infestation.

1.4 We aim to import our cacao beans “as **direct** as possible”, therefore cutting out brokers and middle-men, to guarantee higher profits for the plantations and fair-pay.

There are many “Fair trade” labels, but most are weak and functional mainly for marketing purposes. Some are even straightright ‘whitewashing’ and nothing more than a marketing stunt. “Fair trade” labels are popular, but often result in an opposite effect: exploiting plantations and companies can hide behind and can do business as usual.

“Direct trade” means that the chocolate-maker imports the cacao beans directly from the cacao plantation. The objective is to cut non-value-adding middle men, and to ensure traceability. In real life, the involvement of traders, logistics or warehouse companies is commonplace. Furthermore “Fair trade” certification usually comes with a hefty fee for the plantation, cooperative, farmers and chocolate-maker, as someone needs to pay for the paperwork, inspections and public relations work. While trying to cut as many middle-men as possible, but keeping a fair price, “direct-trade” assures plantations and its workers a fair and much higher income.

Over the last years the average price for cacao on the world market was 2,20 € per kilo. The signers of this charter commit to pay at least double the world market price. This number is set to 4,40 € for 2018, and is annually reviewed at our General Assembly.

[\[https://www.statista.com/statistics/498496/global-cocoa-price/\]](https://www.statista.com/statistics/498496/global-cocoa-price/)

[\[https://originalbeans.com/stable-income-for-cacao-farmers/ \]](https://originalbeans.com/stable-income-for-cacao-farmers/)

At a later stage we should be able to distinguish between the prices we pay to traders, post-harvest centers and farmers/producers.

1.5 The choice of the **type of cacao** to work with is personal to every chocolate-maker. We decide following our own taste. We mention the different cacao varieties and their fermentation on our packaging and/or website.

For us it's key to talk about the cacao, the farmers and their story. No fine cacao = no fine chocolate.

There are many varieties of 'Theobroma Cacao', and we don't dare to list or classify them. What ultimately counts is the flavour and the diversity of fine cacao beans, that allow the diversity of fine chocolate. We wish to conserve fine cacao diversity, and the way producers have been related to their local beans. We want to contribute to preserve local knowledge of traditional seeds in terms of harvest, care, and resistance to local environment and diseases, while contributing to an "increased shared knowledge" of fine flavors that can be obtained from them. That is why we prefer local varieties and their hybrids to productive less flavored and more commonplace beans. We aim to communicate to farmers the flavor and market benefits they can obtain from these beans, as well as good farming practices to increase their productivity. The fermentation of the cacao beans is the perhaps most important step in flavour development. We work only with producers and post-harvest centers which ferment naturally and not using industrial short-cuts.

Belgian Bean-to-Bar Charter

[www.btbc.be](http://www.btbc.be)

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