

Fair Trade Certified Chocolate Campaign

Fair Trade Cocoa Farmers in Costa Rica: APPTA

The APPTA Cooperative

The Asociación de Pequeños Productores de Talamanca (APPTA), located in southeast Costa Rica, was founded in 1987 by a non-governmental organization called ANAI that wanted to help farmers in the Talamanca area. The 1,500-member cooperative joined the Fair Trade system in 1997 and has about 1,030 cocoa-producers, with about 25% women. APPTA aims to improve the standard of living of the member families, use sustainable agricultural methods, increase quality, and diversify both agricultural and industrial production so that members have income sources other than agricultural products.

All members have decision-making ability through the General Assembly, which is governed by a smaller elected Board. Community members participate through Producers Committees and a community Board.

Cocoa Production in APPTA

Southeast Costa Rica offers an ideal growing climate and enough rain to guarantee the necessary water supply. The majority of APPTA's members use organic methods and technical assistance programs have been set up to develop additional organic techniques and help more farmers learn to apply them. For example, APPTA has tried using a natural fungicide found in healthy, resistant cocoa pods to handle the common cocoa disease Monilia. Fair Trade provides added support for farming methods that are safe for the environment and public health by encouraging shade cultivation, composting, and minimization of chemical inputs, and offering a higher price for organic cocoa.

The cooperative has especially high yields since it is so large. In 1998, Organic production totalled 150 tons in 1998 and 140 tons in 1999 while conventional production amounted to 20 tons in 1998 and 15 tons in 1999.

The cooperative has been as successful in its marketing as it has in its production. During the 1998 and 1999 production seasons, the co-op sold all of its conventional cocoa in the domestic market. The cooperative also sold all of its organic cocoa in the international market in 1998 while all but 20 tons were sold internationally in 1999. Because the farmers are united in a cooperative, they have the power to negotiate higher prices than they could on their own and are insured fair individual returns.

The Fair Trade Market

Until very recently, all of APPTA's sales took place

without Fair Trade terms because the cooperative had a good contract with a US company for their organic cocoa and there was no demand for their conventional cocoa in the Fair Trade market. APPTA began selling to the US Fair Trade market in 2002. This was an important step in ensuring their continued success because only Fair Trade guarantees a minimum price of \$.80/pound under long-term contracts and access to credit. Fair Trade farmers are also required to reserve a portion of their revenues for social projects, ensuring that community development and technical training for farmers will always be possible. APPTA has always directed its revenues towards administrative and agricultural programs and set up a fund for social projects when they began to sell their cocoa through the Fair Trade system.

Future Plans for APPTA

APPTA's advances into the Fair Trade market will clearly help the cooperative and the community to grow in many ways and realize more long-term benefits. However, in order to meet the needs of their families and community, APPTA's producers must expand their Fair Trade market. To this end, the cooperative is working to increase their Fair Trade cocoa sales and obtain Fair Trade certification for their bananas. APPTA's members clearly have a good understanding of how important these development would be. "The Fairtrade market...would contribute a lot to the improvement of the standard of living of all our associates and for the maintenance of the environment." Juan Carlos Barrantes, production manager APPTA. Consumers who want to help APPTA's producers and their community realize their vision for a better life can play a crucial role by buying Fair Trade cocoa and chocolate and encouraging more retailers and companies to offer it. See the resources below to learn more and get started today!

RESOURCES

This company uses cocoa from APPTA

Dean's Beans
dean@deansbeans.com, www.deansbeans.com

Get involved & learn more!

Global Exchange Fair Trade Chocolate Campaign
415-575-5538, melissa@globalexchange.org
www.globalexchange.org/cocoa

Fair Trade Labeling Organizations International

