



COPAL COCOA *Info*

A Weekly Newsletter of Cocoa Producers' Alliance

Issue No. 264

1st – 4th January 2008

Cocoa Producers' Alliance

ICCO Daily Cocoa Prices

	ICCO daily price (SDRs/tonne)	ICCO daily price (US\$/tonne)	London futures (#/tonne)	New York futures (US\$/tonne)
1 st January	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2 nd January	1345.49	2123.82	1089.67	2100.33
3 rd January	1352.60	2144.78	1108.00	2116.00
4 th January	1348.21	2132.96	1098.00	2110.33
Average	1012.00	1600.00	824.00	1582.00

Up-coming Events

- 11th January 2008, Adhoc Committee Meeting and Extraordinary General Assembly, London, UK

In the News (from Newspapers worldwide)

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Do your health a favour, drink Cocoa everyday

International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (LIFFE)
London Futures Market – Summary of Trading Activities
 (£ per tonne)

Tuesday 1st January 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2008						
May 2008						
Jul 2008						
Sep 2008						
Dec 2008						
Mar 2009						
May 2009						
Jul 2009						
Sep 2009						
Dec 2009						
Totals		#DIV/0!				0

Wednesday 2nd January 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2008	1041	1068	25	1073	1041	5,225
May 2008	1061	1086	25	1089	1061	1,924
Jul 2008	1089	1115	25	1118	1089	2,429
Sep 2008	1084	1095	23	1096	1081S	359
Dec 2008	1078	1092	24	1095	1078	296
Mar 2009	1087	1101	25	1100	1087	164
May 2009		1111	26			0
Jul 2009		1122	27			0
Sep 2009		1132	25			0
Dec 2009		1142	23			0
Totals		1106				10397

Thursday 3rd January 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2008	1067	1086	18	1087	1062	6,112
May 2008	1085	1104	18	1105S	1080	710
Jul 2008	1111	1134	19	1136	1111S	832
Sep 2008	1092	1109	14	1110	1090S	846
Dec 2008	1088	1105	13	1107S	1086S	334
Mar 2009	1102	1114	13	1115	1102	166
May 2009	1126	1125	14	1126	1126	1
Jul 2009		1135	13			0
Sep 2009		1145	13			0
Dec 2009		1155	13			0
Totals		1121				9001

Friday 4th January 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2008	1086	1076	-10	1090	1065	5,740

May 2008	1103	1094	-10	1106	1083	1,515
Jul 2008	1133	1124	-10	1136	1115S	1,362
Sep 2008	1109	1102	-7	1110	1098	500
Dec 2008	1105	1099	-6	1110	1097S	446
Mar 2009	1115	1107	-7	1118	1105S	204
May 2009		1117	-8			0
Jul 2009		1127	-8			0
Sep 2009		1137	-8			0
Dec 2009		1147	-8			0
Totals		1113				9767

Average for the week	1119					7291
Total for the week						29,165

Spot Prices (US\$ per tonne)

	1st January	2nd January	3rd January	4th January
Main Crop Ghana, Grade 1	-	2537	2565	2543
Main Crop Ivory Coast, Grade 1	-	2417	2433	2411
Main Crop Nigerian, 1	-	2410	2418	2396
Superior Arriba	-	2597	2565	2543
Sanchez f.a.q.	-	2455	2502	2480
Malaysian 110	-	2097	2097	2075
Sulawesi f.a.q.	-	2302	2337	2315
Ecuador Cocoa Liquor	-	3740	3703	3665
Pure Prime Press African Type Cocoa Butter	-	6200	6261	6196
10/12% Natural Cocoa Press Cake	-	958	954	944

Source: Cocoa Merchants' Association

News

Health and Nutrition

Chocolate: A Health Food After All

AlterNet, CA, By Esther Walker, The Independent UK.

January 4, 2008.

Ever since the Atkins Diet revival made sugar public enemy No. 1, confectionery manufacturers have had their work cut out to sweeten up their image. It hasn't been easy: sugar doesn't just make you fat, and thus can contribute to the development of adult-onset diabetes, it also rots your teeth. Willy Wonka would be weeping into his top hat. But recently, chocolate has been undergoing something of a rehabilitation, and the current thinking is that it may actually be good for you. So, what's going on?

In fact, the idea of chocolate as a health tonic goes back centuries. Long before goji berries, broccoli and tomatoes were hailed as "superfoods", cocoa and chocolate were celebrated as natural remedies. Cocoa and its derivatives have, historically, been prescribed for a range of ailments, including liver disease and kidney disorders, and by the 1600s, chocolate was identified as a mood enhancer.

It is only relatively recently that chocolate fell out of favour with the health lobby. Although cocoa is rich in flavonoids (which promote healthy cellular tissue), the practice of mixing it with saturated fat, cholesterol and sugar made it less friend, more foe. But now chocolate has been thrown a lifeline: antioxidants. An antioxidant is something that slows down, or prevents, the oxidation of cells; oxidation produces free radicals, which damage cells and can lead to heart disease and cancer. The flavonoids in dark chocolate (containing 70 per cent or more cocoa solids) act as antioxidants, and it contains almost five times the flavonol content of apples (though they also have fibre and vitamins). The industrial processes that turn cocoa into chocolate reduce its antioxidant properties, which is why the less-processed dark chocolate has more antioxidants.

What may come as less of a surprise to chocolate addicts is the growing evidence that chocolate is a mood enhancer. Chocolate contains as many as 400 different compounds that promote a better mood and alleviate anxiety, which helps to explain why so many people experience cravings for it. Serotonin, endorphins and phenylethylamine are all found in chocolate and can lift the mood; it also contains the stimulants caffeine and theobromine, and the amphetamine-like compounds tyramine and phenylethylamine.

However, one set of researchers found that cocoa-filled capsules were unable to satisfy the cravings of chocolate "addicts" in the same way as chocolate itself, so it seems that the sensory experience of eating chocolate, its sweetness and melting softness, contribute to its uplifting effects. Perhaps most surprisingly, chocolate even works effectively as a cough remedy. Scientists at Imperial College London discovered that theobromine, one of the stimulants in chocolate, is a third more effective in stopping persistent coughs than codeine, the medicine most commonly used. The theobromine suppresses the nerve activity that causes coughing, and it is thought that the viscous quality of melted chocolate could help soothe tickly coughs.

The health benefits of chocolate have not gone unnoticed by its manufacturers. Prestat, for example, has come up with a new product called Choxi+, saying that two squares per day contain the recommended daily dose of antioxidants, while having fewer calories than an apple. And the Japanese company Glico makes a chocolate called GABA, marketed as an anti-stress product, and Japanese businessmen can't get enough of it. Chocolate's mood-enhancing qualities are given a turboboost by the addition of gamma-aminobutyric acid, a neurotransmitter that occurs naturally in the brain, so GABA acts as an inhibitor and has anti-anxiety properties. People who eat GABA report reduced stress levels and an enhanced feeling of relaxation.

Clearly, chocolate also contains fat and sugar, but it is worth noting that the nation with the lowest incidence of obesity and coronary heart disease in western Europe is also the one with the highest per capita chocolate consumption: Switzerland.

Alasdair McWhirter, editor of *Foods that Harm, Foods that Heal*, believes there is nothing wrong with promoting chocolate as a health supplement, particularly for its antioxidant properties. "I was also interested in a study into the Kuna people of South America. They have a low incidence of cancer and heart disease and drink several cups of a cocoa drink per day."

Sue Baic, a lecturer in nutrition at Bristol University, isn't so sure about this rebranding of chocolate. "Using chocolate as a dietary supplement is fine if you can stick to a prescribed amount. And there are flavanols in other foods -- fruit, vegetables, wine and tea are all a better source. Not only do they have lots of vitamins and nutrients that chocolate doesn't, they don't have the fat and sugar. Choxi+, for example, has 23g of saturated fat per 100g; the RDA for a woman is 20g per day. "Do people really need more encouragement to eat chocolate? Considering that most of the population is overweight, I'm not sure it's such a good idea."

Dark desires

Deccan Herald, India

Jan 4, 2008

Confirmed dark chocoholics cannot even look at your ordinary sweet version. But dark chocolate is an acquired taste like no other, says Meera Iyer. You don't ordinarily see a complicated graph and accompanying instructions on how to eat it when you unwrap a chocolate bar. But then, a 99 per cent cocoa bar is no ordinary chocolate bar.

The first thing you see when you unwrap part of a 99 per cent cocoa bar is a cautionary notice. "Important," it screams, "The chocolate you are about to have is a chocolate that has a very high cocoa content! To fully appreciate this exceptional chocolate, we invite you to follow our suggestions on tasting." If the intent is to intimidate, Lindt, the most well-known manufacturers of dark chocolates, succeed admirably.

In most cases anyway. But a confirmed dark-chocoholic only drools in anticipation on reading this and feverishly tears off the outer cardboard package. Inside is a golden wrapper with more instructions. And more warnings. "This chocolate brings out all the force and richness of cocoa beans," it intones, before going on to suggest that you prime yourself, or rather your palate, by first adjusting to 70 per cent, and then 85 per cent cocoa. Been there done that, I think.

Geography matters!

Next? Lindt suggests you first take a small bite and let it melt on the tongue to savour the flavours. Now we're talking. Except there is a scary graph that follows which lists the various flavours you can expect and their intensities — bitter, acidic, astringent, fruity. Whew!

Chocolate these days is serious business, comparable to wine with all its attitude. Like wine, good chocolate has terroir, which means geography matters. So the true chocolate connoisseur will detect the hints of vanilla in cocoa beans from Madagascar, smoky or earthy undertones from West African beans and fruity or even flowery flavours in those from Central and South America. But many a fine chocolate is made of a blend of premium beans.

Lindt uses beans mainly from West Africa with a small proportion from South America - the exact blend is a closely guarded secret! Not all chocolate is created equal. Milk chocolate can have anywhere from 25 to close to 50 per cent cocoa (although some American chocolates can have far less) and as the name suggests, milk, milk powder or condensed milk, along with sugar and emulsifiers.

Not comfort food

Dark chocolate, sometimes called bittersweet chocolate, contains a lot more cocoa, upwards of 60 per cent and much less sugar. If you're wondering how it is different from simply eating cocoa powder, the answer lies in the fat. Cocoa, or to be more precise, cocoa solids, include cocoa butter and cocoa cake. Cocoa powder is made from cocoa cake alone, while chocolate also contains cocoa butter.

While the sweetness of milk chocolate has almost universal appeal, dark chocolate is not your everyday comfort food. Like wine, it is an acquired taste and needs a refined palate to truly appreciate its nuances. So to get back to the 99% percent cocoa bar. The not-so-fine-print and the daunting graph and instructions past me, I finally take a bite and wait to be transported to chocolate heaven. Heaven is bitter. And somewhat dusty, initially. But patience has its rewards and a few short moments later, as the chocolate melts, I can feel the myriad flavours of the cocoa beans coming through. There are the hints of acidity, lots of fruity notes, a whisper of sweetness, and finally, a creaminess that, once the experience is over, begs for an encore.

Third of people choose low fat food to stay trim

By Laura Crowley

All Decision News Media

03/01/2008 - Low fat food products are most popular when attempting weight loss, according to a survey looking at weight management across 13 countries worldwide.

The study was conducted by global market research firm Synovate and had more than 9,000 respondents from the UK, France, Czech Republic, Romania, US, Canada, Brazil, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia.

Obesity and the related health issues are ever-increasing problems in Europe. In 2006, 30 per cent of European children were estimated to be overweight. The prevalence of obesity in the UK has more than doubled in the last 25 years.

The findings offer insight into what health-conscious consumers want, and how food manufacturers can angle their products to appeal to them.

Two thirds of all respondents said they take some measures to manage their weight. The use of low fat food products proved the most common technique, with a third saying they use them.

Respondents from Saudi Arabia appeared most likely to choose low fat food products as a way to shed pounds, with 60 per cent saying they opt for this method.

Low fat foods are also popular in the UK and the UAE, with 43 per cent and 44 per cent respectively saying they buy them.

At the other end of the scale, people from Singapore (19 per cent) and Romania (20 per cent) are least likely to purchase low fat foods, according to the survey.

Another popular way to lose weight proved to be eating low carbohydrate food products. A fifth of all respondents said they use these in their weight management regime. The same proportion of people said they choose to exercise at home or in the gym.

People in the UAE (27 per cent) and Brazil (26 per cent) were more likely to choose products that are low in carbohydrates, while few people in France (7 per cent) and the Czech Republic (4 per cent) employed this method of weight loss.

Ten per cent of people said they use herbs and supplements designed for weight loss, or meal replacements such as shakes and bars.

Meal replacements appeared to be used most in France (14 per cent), Saudi Arabia (16 per cent) and the US (19 per cent). Similarly, results suggested that herbs and supplements are most popular in France (15 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (21 per cent), but also in Romania (15 per cent).

Synovate asked people what they believed the main cause of obesity was and found that 40 per cent of all people attribute food as the culprit. A fifth of respondents blamed eating at irregular hours, while another fifth pointed the finger at unhealthy food choices.

People in the UK (21 per cent) and the US (20 per cent) selected lack of self-discipline and the leading factor in obesity.

Across the globe, very few people blame their government as the number one factor causing obesity.

The study also asked a series of attitudinal questions, which respondents agreed or disagreed with. Steve Garton, global head of media, said this revealed just how conflicted people seem to be about food.

"On the one hand, more than half of all respondents (54 per cent) agreed that they eat whatever they want, whenever they want," he said.

"On the other hand, more than two thirds say 'I watch my food intake carefully and strive to be healthy', which rather flies in the face of the first claim. This is the crux of food issues across the globe. People are torn by food as fuel versus food as pleasure."

Production and Quality

Global cocoa deficit increases, says report

BakeryAndSnacks.com, France

By Charlotte Eyre

03/01/2008 - The International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) estimates that the world's current cocoa shortfall is now 55 per cent larger than previously thought, after adverse weather conditions led to crop reductions over the 2006/07 season. According to the ICCO's latest quarterly bulletin, the global production deficit is now estimated at 242,000 tonnes, compared with the earlier projected figure of 156,000 tonnes. The news could indicate further commodity pressure for manufacturers, many of whom have already suffered decreased margins because of higher costs in recent months. Over the 2006/07 cocoa season, most of the major production regions were affected by weather problems, the ICCO said.

Africa - which accounted for 70 per cent of the world's cocoa output over this period - experienced the greatest decline - 10 per cent - after severe dry and windy conditions affected the continent at the end of 2006.

Over the same period, other climate issues such as the El Nino temperature fluctuations led to crop declines of eight per cent in the Asia and Oceania region, and six per cent in the Americas, the organisation said.

However, the ICCO estimated that demand for the commodity has not decreased and still remains at a record high, consequently leading to price increases on both the London and the New York stock markets. World cocoa consumption, as measured by grindings of cocoa beans, has grown on average 3.8 per cent each year over the last five years, and 2.5 per cent over the 2006/07 season. This demand, combined with some manufacturers anxiously stocking up on cocoa, has led to average price increases of 12 per cent, ICCO experts estimated.

However, the ICCO also said that it is too early to make precise future predictions, as the market has fluctuated over the past two years with prices rising and falling at regular intervals. Manufacturers will have new forecasts for production and grindings for cocoa year 2007/08 once the next bulletin is published in February, the organisation said.

The Markets

London Cocoa Climbs 25 Percent during 2007

Source: Reuters
02/01/2008

London, Dec. 31 - London cocoa futures ended slightly down on Monday but were up 25 percent for the year, boosted partly by growing demand for soft commodities from investment funds. The benchmark second position settled at 1,061 pounds a tonne, up 25 percent from a year earlier.

Indonesian cocoa prices up

Reuters
January 04 2008
JAKARTA

Prices of Indonesian cocoa beans rose this week, aided by gains in futures, but exports were slow due to dwindling stocks as the mid-crop harvest has ended and exporters have shipped most of their beans.

Sulawesi's fair-average cocoa beans were quoted at around 17,600-17,800 rupiah (\$1.87-\$1.89) a kilogram this week, up from 17,500 rupiah last week, in line with gains in cocoa futures at the New York Board of Trade. The March cocoa contract settled up 3.1 percent, or \$62, at \$2,097 per tonne on Wednesday. It was also higher than last week's close of \$2,034 a tonne on December 26.

"Gains in local prices are mainly because of cocoa futures, nothing else," said a dealer at an exporting firm in Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi province and Indonesia's key port for cocoa exports.

Cocoa beans supplies have also tapered off with the end of the mid-crop harvest. Daily arrivals from plantations to Makassar averaged 10-20 tonnes, down from 30 tonnes last week. Heavy rains in the island have hampered shipments of cocoa beans from plantations and have caused quality problems as lack of sun could lead to the rotting of cocoa beans. "Heavy rains are now falling in the plantations area. We have to be careful because it would cause beans to get mouldy," said the Makassar dealer.

Dealers said exports of cocoa beans from Sulawesi island have been slowing in the past weeks due to low supplies. Regular shipments to neighbouring Malaysia were still ongoing but there have been few shipments to the United States, which has been one of Indonesia's key buyers in the past months as supplies dwindled.

Indonesia, the world's third largest producer after Ivory Coast and Ghana, is expected to have produced around 510,000 tonnes of cocoa beans in 2007, down from an estimated 590,000 tonnes in 2006 after wet spells cut output.

"In the last five years, I've been in the business, this is the lowest harvest I've ever seen," said another dealer in a foreign exporting firm based in Makassar. "The main reason why there's barely any shipment is because nobody has any beans. Warehouses are empty," he said. Exports of cocoa beans from Sulawesi island may taper off in coming weeks as exporters have shipped most of their beans and fresh supplies won't be coming in until the main crop harvest starts in March. Central, Southeast and South Sulawesi provinces account for 75 percent of the cocoa bean output from Indonesia.

Processing and Manufacturing

Sprayer launched for chocolate enrobingment

All Decision News Media

04/01/2008 - A new pressure spray system, that uses precise temperature settings, gives confectioners better control when coating products with chocolate and other viscous liquids, the manufacturer claims.

The AccuCoat sprayer, created by US company Spraying Systems, is likely to be welcomed by confectionery and bakery firms wishing to apply extra coatings to foods, as even minor temperature variations can ruin the product - leading to scrapped batches and a loss in profits.

"Coating methods such as enrobing and panning are imprecise, messy and difficult to adapt to different products," the company said.

In order to combat these problems, the AccuCoat sprayer is equipped with an inbuilt closed-loop temperature control, which operates through a system of multiples temperature sensors.

These sensors record any changes to the temperature of the enrobing liquid and automatically make any necessary adjustments, therefore "waste caused by coatings that are too warm or too cool are eliminated," the company said.

Similarly, no waste will come from the jet squirting out liquid at high speeds, as the machine operates at a low pressure, the company added.

According to Spraying Systems, the machine can be used to coat a variety of confectionery products, including bars and biscuits, as AccuCoat automatically adjusts for line speed changes. The design allows multiple batch modes to be preset, eliminating the need for an individual worker to intervene, the group says.

Suggestions for uses of the AccuCoat include spraying chocolate on ice cream desserts and the inside ice cream cones, or coating bread, crackers and cakes with oil prior to browning.

Spraying Systems is a leader in spray technology for the food industry.

Although based in the US, the company has sales offices in over 85 countries in Europe, Asia and South America.

Business & Economy

Central Cameroon Cocoa Trade Resumes as Security Stems Attacks (DJ)

Source: Dow Jones Newswires

02/01/2008

Yaounde, Cameroon, Jan. 2 - Cocoa trade is in full swing in Cameroon's second main cocoa region of Center Province after security was stepped up to halt persistent attacks on cocoa traders there, security sources, cocoa traders and farmers told Dow Jones Newswires Wednesday. Center Province, which officially accounts for 30-35% of Cameroon's yearly cocoa output of around 179,000 metric tons, witnessed slow cocoa trade in November and the first week of December after robbers attacked traders as they traveled to buy cocoa beans.

Bandits have shot and killed at least three cocoa traders, and wounded eight others, causing panic among traders and farmers.

"The last three weeks of December witnessed smooth trade in cocoa beans without any incident of attacks on farmers or traders," said middleman cocoa trader Ambroise Evele who buys cocoa beans within the province.

"I bought over 112 tons of cocoa beans during this short period and all of this took place in perfect harmony and tranquility," added Evele, who said he could "barely obtain a quarter of that amount in October and November".

"Armed paramilitary gendarmes and police troops patrolled all the key cocoa trading zones of the Center Province, so that traders should not suffer from the recurrent attacks by bandits," added Bertin Sofia, a grower in the province's main cocoa trading town of Bafia, located some 150 kilometers northwest of Yaounde.

Several security officers, who declined to be named, told Dow Jones on the telephone that total calm has returned to the region and cocoa trade was smooth. Cameroon is in its main crop cocoa harvest, which generally runs from September through February/March.

Cocoa exporter Ivory Coast economy seen growing 2.9 pct in 2008

Reuters South Africa, South Africa

Fri 4 Jan 2008

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Ivory Coast's economy minister said he expected the resource-rich West African country to grow by 2.9 percent in 2008, the fastest rate since a 2002-2003 civil war split the country in two. "Growth was 1.5 percent in 2007 and we're forecasting a rate of 2.9 percent for 2008," Charles Koffi Diby told development partners and financial institutions when presenting the state budget for the world's top cocoa grower on Thursday.

Diby said investors had regained confidence now the government was trying to clear arrears on World Bank loans while the country progresses towards reunification and long-delayed elections after a breakthrough peace deal between government and rebel sides last March. "Calm has been returned to the country ... and confidence has been restored since we renewed ties with donors. We've become accepted," he said.

A breakdown of the budget showed that tax revenue was expected to increase by 3 percent in 2008 to 919 billion CFA francs.

One of the biggest single income sources for the country, a 220 CFA franc export tax per kg of cocoa exported, was expected to rise by more than a fifth in 2008 based on a forecast of total production of 1.3 million tonnes -- the average amount of cocoa the country produces annually.

A source at the economy and finance ministry told Reuters cocoa tax the increase was expected because a system under which exporters could pay the tax for the season ahead at a discounted rate of around 180-190 CFA had now been ended from this season. It had enabled the government to raise extra cash during tenuous times in the first years after the war. It is expected to rise to 204.5 billion CFA francs compared with 167.4 billion in 2007. Taxes raised on petroleum products were seen rising this year to 115 billion CFA compared with 92.2 billion in 2007, thanks to rising output.

Barry Callebaut sets up shop in China

By Charlotte Eyre

04/01/2008 - Swiss chocolatier Barry Callebaut will open a new Chinese manufacturing plant near Shanghai later this month, a company spokesperson today confirmed.

Josiane Kremer told ConfectioneryNews.com said that the plant is an exciting new venture for the company, which already opened a 'chocolate academy' in China late last year.

Like many other chocolate multinationals, Barry Callebaut is eager to cash in on a burgeoning taste for chocolate in this region, driven by increasingly globalised eating habits as well as higher consumer power in the area.

According to the Financial Times, the Suzhou plant will cater for local trade buyers from the food industry, hotels and restaurants, and will initially manufacture up to 25,000 tonnes of chocolate a year.

The company is optimistic about the market, designing the unit for a possible threefold expansion if required, the FT said.

However, this is not Barry Callebaut's first foray into Asia, as last year the company announced it was moving into India as part of plans to increase the share of sales generated outside Western Europe and North America to 20 per cent by 2010 from 11 per cent presently.

Other companies keen on the region include Cadbury, which this year increased its hold with the acquisition of Japan-based candy company Sansei Foods, while Hershey is in the process of tailoring US products to Asian tastes, by reformulating products such as Reese's cups with almonds and hazelnut.

According to market analysts Global Business Insights (GBI), the Asia Pacific region is currently one of the hot spots for confectionery New Product Development (NPD), as well as more traditional 'European style' treats.

In 2007, 30 per cent of new confectionery products were launched in the area, second only to Europe, where just over 35 per cent of new products were launched, GBI said.

Surprisingly, this figure was found to be way above the US's new product market share, recorded as just over 20 per cent, with more new chocolates and sweets launched in Asia than in Latin American and the Middle East combined.

Flavours popular for new confectionery launches in Asia include goji, salt, pomegranate and eucalyptus, said GBI analyst Helen Lewis.

Labour Issues

Ivory Coast cocoa sector staff strike for 4th day

Reuters South Africa, South Africa

Wed 2 Jan 2008,

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Staff at Ivory Coast's Coffee and Cocoa Bourse (BCC) and other industry bodies staged strike action for a fourth business day on Wednesday, preventing registration of cocoa shipments for export, a union official said.

Philippe Zohou Bi, deputy secretary general of the union representing staff at the BCC, told Reuters some staff who had not joined the strike had continued processing some cocoa exports during the first three days of the strike, but union members were now preventing them from doing so. "We're still on strike today and this time, as we said, we're getting tougher and are preventing the alternative (export) registration system which the BCC director set up near his office, from working," he said. "It's true that exporters could register (shipments) during the strike ... but since this morning that's no longer possible because we've barricaded the office where the computers are and chased out the workers using them," said Bi.

A buyer for one international exporter said he had been able to continue registering cocoa for export through the BCC since the strike began last Thursday but had not attempted to declare any new loads for export on Wednesday. No cocoa can be shipped from the world's top cocoa grower without obtaining documentation from the BCC for every load. The strikers say they are seeking better pay and conditions and also changes in the senior management of the various structures controlling the highly politicised cocoa industry.

ICoast official says US lawmakers to check child cocoa labour

AFP

Jan 5, 2008

ABIDJAN (AFP) — US lawmakers will visit plantations in cocoa-rich Ivory Coast next week to evaluate its progress in establishing a certification system against child labour, a senior Ivorian official said Friday.

Senators Bernard Sanders and Thomas Harkin along with congressman Eliot Engel are expected in the West African nation, the world's largest cocoa-producer, January 7 to 9. Their visit comes ahead of a July 2008 certification deadline to ensure cocoa heading to the United States -- the third largest importer of Ivorian cocoa -- has not been produced with child labour. "We're going to show them concretely how the certification protocol is applied on the ground," said Amouan Acquah, head of SSTE, an Ivorian agency attached to the prime minister's office that tracks child labour. She expressed optimism the lawmakers' visit would lead to US certification of Ivorian cocoa.

Harkin and Engel are the authors of a 2005 protocol established between the American government, the chocolate industry and cocoa-producing countries that obliges them to show child labour has not been used in any stage of production.

Non-governmental organisations have accused Ivory Coast of abusive use of children in the country's plantations.

One 2005 study said as many as 200,000 children worked in Ivorian plantations, with three-quarters of them handling pesticides. Still, the study noted most of the children worked for their families. The fact most children were offspring of cocoa producers proved "this is not about slavery but about transmitting know-how," although possibly under adverse conditions, Acquah said.

TIT BITS

(Source: Business Recorder – www.brecorder.com)

London coffee, cocoa, sugar rise

LONDON (January 04, 2008): Robusta coffee, cocoa and white sugar futures posted solid gains on Thursday as the broad-based commodities rally continued, traders said. Grains, gold and crude oil were among the other markets to rise sharply again as investors poured money into the commodity sector for the second trading day of the year.

US MIDDAY: cocoa, coffee rise

NEW YORK (January 04, 2008): Arabica coffee futures trading on ICE climbed in early trade on Thursday while US cocoa also moved north, with both markets supported by fund buying, traders said. "Funds are buying commodities here, did a couple of size orders here in the May (contract). We have some Brazilian selling," one coffee trader said.

Indonesian cocoa prices up

JAKARTA (January 04, 2008): Prices of Indonesian cocoa beans rose this week, aided by gains in futures, but exports were slow due to dwindling stocks as the mid-crop harvest has ended and exporters have shipped most of their beans.

New York cocoa jumps to a firm settlement

NEW YORK (January 04, 2008): US cocoa futures surged to a sharply higher settlement on the first trading day of 2008 Wednesday, as fund buying and a four-day strike in top producer Ivory Coast buoyed prices, brokers said. "People will buy on the strike, but these strikes are never long lived," one analyst said.

London sugar and coffee hold gains; cocoa dips

LONDON (January 05, 2008): London sugar reached a fresh 6 months high on Friday while robusta coffee held this week's gains but cocoa slipped under profit-taking, traders said. After a two-day rally across soft commodities that also saw fresh fund money flowing into grains, gold and crude oil, all markets ended the week on a quieter note.

Coffee and cocoa down

NEW YORK (January 05, 2008): Arabica coffee futures sank sharply in early trade on Friday, after hitting a series of sell stops, while US cocoa slipped moderately, traders said. "Technical levels were broken," one coffee trader said.

New York cocoa futures close firm

NEW YORK (January 05, 2008): US cocoa futures settled firmer on Thursday as continued fund interest pushed prices near recent five-month highs, brokers said. "The funds were definitely active again here today. It was a little soft overnight. I think that was on the soft sterling and a little bit of profit-taking, but once the market took out yesterday's highs the funds came back in here and bought March (contracts)," one trader said.

New York cocoa and coffee weaker

NEW YORK (January 06, 2008): US cocoa futures closed lower on Friday in options-related trade as February options expired, said brokers who cited speculative selling. "There was some follow-through selling on the fact that the strike seems to be over," one trader said, referring to Ivory Coast.