



COPAL COCOA Info

A Weekly Newsletter of Cocoa Producers' Alliance

Issue No. 276

24th – 28th March 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)
24 th March	1474.98	2396.85	1275.67	2300.67
25 th March	1503.85	2457.44	1280.67	2393.00
26 th March	1503.06	2469.16	1289.67	2394.00
27 th March	1539.46	2534.94	1322.00	2458.00
28 th March	1490.09	2452.67	1286.67	2382.00
Average	1502.00	2462.00	1291.00	2386.00

In the News (from Newspapers worldwide)

Health and Nutrition

- ✦ Cocoa Room offers a true chocolate experience
- ✦ Eating dark chocolate may regulate cholesterol levels, blood pressure
- ✦ Mars: Sterol chocolate reduces cholesterol levels
- ✦ Special chocolate especially heart-healthy

Production and Quality

- ✦ Ghana reassures grinders over cocoa crop sale
- ✦ Cocoa Channel
- ✦ UK committed to Ghanaian cocoa farmers
- ✦ Nigeria state to give farmers 2.3 mln cocoa trees
- ✦ High prices fuel Cocoa planting boom in Cameroon

The Market

- ✦ Cocoa Falls to Lowest Price since January as Supplies Increase
- ✦ DJ ICE Cocoa Review: Commercial Buying Emerges
- ✦ DJ Liffe Softs: Coffee, Cocoa up slightly, Pare Losses
- ✦ DJ Liffe Softs: Coffee, Cocoa up alongside Commodities Complex
- ✦ DJ ICE Cocoa Review: Rises despite Liquidation, US Dollar Weight
- ✦ DJ Southwest Nigeria Graded Cocoa price Flat at 250,000 Naira/Ton

Business & Economy

- ✦ DJ Some Cocoa Flows From W Ivory Coast after Local Army Mutiny
- ✦ Cocoa farmers happy about new price
- ✦ Research and Markets: Nigeria's Food and Drink Industry continues to attract Investment from Foreign Operators despite it's difficult Operating Environment
- ✦ The new choc elite: How Britain is turning into a nation of chocolate snobs
- ✦ Chocolate in small doses the wise option
- ✦ Xocai - Healthy Chocolate Co attracts Top Internet Marketer Brian McCoy
- ✦ Ivory Coast Cocoa Exports increase 4.9% in February (Update1)
- ✦ Brits, Swiss, Belgians are most avid chocolate fans
- ✦ Mars pushes heart-healthy chocolate line
- ✦ Mars claims benefits of new chocolates

Labour Issues

- ✦ The real cost of the Easter eggs we buy

Others

- ✦ Giant Eagle Grocer alleges Chocolate price fixing in Lawsuit (DJ)

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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)**

Monday 24th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008						
Jul 2008						
Sep 2008						
Dec 2008						
Mar 2009						
May 2009						
Jul 2009						
Sep 2009						
Dec 2009						
Mar 2010						
Totals		#DIV/0!				0

Tuesday 25th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	1252	1275	7	1298	1252	5,473
Jul 2008	1292	1308	10	1330	1287	2,219
Sep 2008	1245	1259	13	1266	1240	783
Dec 2008	1231	1251	19	1259S	1224	928
Mar 2009	1181	1236	19	1245	1181	88
May 2009		1241	17			0
Jul 2009		1251	17			0
Sep 2009	1237	1261	16	1249S	1236S	21
Dec 2009		1271	15			0
Mar 2010		1271	15			0
Totals		1262				9512

Wednesday 26th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	1293	1284	9	1319	1273	5,090
Jul 2008	1326	1316	8	1353S	1307	2,799
Sep 2008	1278	1269	10	1300	1259S	1,747
Dec 2008	1268	1262	11	1293	1252S	1,677
Mar 2009	1250	1241	5	1272	1235	264
May 2009	1278	1246	5	1278	1240	41
Jul 2009	1280	1256	5	1280S	1280S	5
Sep 2009		1266	5			0
Dec 2009		1276	5			0
Mar 2010		1276	5			0
Totals		1269				11623

Thursday 27th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	1292	1318	34	1318	1,235	5,677
Jul 2008	1326	1353	37	1353	1,266	4,314
Sep 2008	1280	1295	26	1294	1220	1,337
Dec 2008	1271	1286	24	1286S	1216S	1,338
Mar 2009	1249	1266	25	1267S	1200	346
May 2009	1261	1272	26	1270	1210	199
Jul 2009	1271	1282	26	1283S	1243S	35
Sep 2009	1284	1292	26	1293	1233S	31
Dec 2009		1302	26			0
Mar 2010		1302	26			0
Totals		1297				13277

Friday 28th March 2008

Month	Opening Trans	Settle	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	1318	1281	-37	1320	1278	3,858
Jul 2008	1360	1316	-37	1360	1312	1,855
Sep 2008	1293	1263	-32	1293	1262	1,031
Dec 2008	1280	1254	-32	1281	1252S	754
Mar 2009	1260	1235	-31	1260	1232S	94
May 2009	1252	1242	-30	1252	1252	5
Jul 2009		1252	-30			0
Sep 2009		1262	-30			0
Dec 2009		1273	-29			0
Mar 2010		1273	-29			0
Totals		1265				7,597

Average for the week	1258					1519
Total for the week						7,597

New York Board of Trade
(New York Futures Market – Summary of Trading Activities)
(US\$ per tonne)

Monday 24th March 2008

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

Tuesday 25th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	2399	2424	26	2460	2384	9564
Jul 2008	2420	2450	31	2481	2405	2451
Sep 2008	2425	2461	37	2477	2425	1323
Dec 2008	2436	2445	43	2464	2436	836
Mar 2009	2432	2440	43	2440	2432	15
May 2009	2455	2440	40	2455	2440	24
Jul 2009	2462	2462	54	2462	2462	115
Sep 2009	2454	2454	37	2454	2454	-
Dec 2009	-	2426	-	-	-	500
Totals		2445				14828

Wednesday 26th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	2399	2423	25	2460	2367	9564
Jul 2008	2420	2445	26	2481	2390	2451
Sep 2008	2425	2452	28	2477	2404	1323
Dec 2008	2436	2438	36	2464	2392	835
Mar 2009	2432	2440	43	2440	2405	15
May 2009	2455	2441	41	2455	2413	24
Jul 2009	2462	2449	41	2462	2428	115
Sep 2009	2454	2457	40	2457	2448	-
Dec 2009		2470	44	2470	2470	500
Totals		2446				14827

Thursday 27th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	2408	2432	9	2449	2288	7742
Jul 2008	2430	2456	11	2473	2311	2248
Sep 2008	2454	2462	10	2475	2318	1080
Dec 2008	2438	2455	17	2464	2320	355
Mar 2009	2380	2461	21	2461	2313	178
May 2009		2464	23	2464	2464	10
Jul 2009		2473	24	2473	2473	5
Sep 2009		2482	25	2482	2482	6
Dec 2009		2498	28	2498	2498	0
Totals		2465				11624

Friday 28th March 2008

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
May 2008	2444	2363	-69	2447	2353	7316
Jul 2008	2470	2390	-66	2470	2381	2469
Sep 2008	2450	2395	-67	2450	2385	1009
Dec 2008	2445	2395	-60	2445	2386	466
Mar 2009	2386	2388	-73	2388	2386	77
May 2009	2395	2397	-67	2397	2386	2
Jul 2009	2403	2406	-67	2406	2403	1
Sep 2009		2415	-67	2415	2415	0
Dec 2009		2432	-66	2432	2432	0
Totals		2398				11340

Average for the week	2403					13155
Total for the week						52,619

Spot Prices (US\$ per tonne)

	24 th March	25 th March	26 th March	27 th March	28 th March
Main Crop Ghana, Grade 1	2708	2831	2856	2865	2796
Main Crop Ivory Coast, Grade 1	2597	2703	2728	2737	2668
Main Crop Nigerian, 1	2582	2686	2711	2720	2651
Superior Arriba	2610	2723	2748	2757	2688
Sanchez f.a.q.	2657	2776	2801	2810	2741
Malaysian 110	2260	2406	2431	2440	2371
Sulawesi f.a.q.	2502	2626	2651	2660	2591
Ecuador Cocoa Liquor	4151	4125	4168	4183	4064
Pure Prime Press African Type Cocoa Butter	6566	6762	6833	6858	6664
10/12% Natural Cocoa Press Cake	1051	1023	1034	1038	1008

Source: Cocoa Merchants' Association

News

Health and Nutrition

Cocoa Room offers a true chocolate experience

VUE Weekly, Canada

JAN HOSTYN / jan@vueweekly.com

27 Mar 2008



What do you do when you've developed an intense addiction to chocolate—really good chocolate—and there's none to be found in the city you now call home? Well, in the case of Kerstin Roos, you open up an on-line business that imports the best of the best. Not only are you able to satisfy your own cravings, you can then initiate countless other fortunate souls to the intricacies of the whole delicious chocolate experience.

Kerstin Roos is passionate about chocolate, something immediately evident from the moment you descend the gently sloping ramp and emerge into her newly opened shop, The Cocoa Room. Inside, you are surrounded on all sides by everything chocolate, like a dream you never want to wake

from. Unique chocolate bars, assorted boxes of chocolates, glorious chocolate you can drink, soothing beverages that you can enjoy while savouring chocolate and even glossy books about chocolate. If you stand in the middle of the cozy room and let your senses take over, the effect is overwhelming.

For Roos, chocolate is without a doubt a multi-sensory experience, one she wants to share with anyone and everyone. She wants people to experience the pure taste of good chocolate, unmasked by “other” ingredients and too much sugar; she wants them to luxuriously savour the smooth, lingering sensation of chocolate melting in their mouths. And she wants them to inhale deeply and experience the heady, intoxicating aroma that encompasses them. The “mmms” and “oohs” that escape from unsuspecting mouths as samples are nibbled and sipped are added benefits.

Roos was fortunate enough to develop a taste for good chocolate at a young age. Time in Edmonton meant a forced hiatus, but after moving to Japan to teach English, she was once again exposed to premium chocolate and her passion was reignited. A journey to glorious New York, just as the city was in the midst of a chocolate revolution, solidified her fascination. She credits New York with exposing her to the full spectrum of chocolate possibilities, as it was there she became immersed in the whole chocolate culture—savouring chocolate, becoming educated about chocolate and learning to make chocolate.

Once she got back to Edmonton, she found it hard to satisfy her intense chocolate addiction, so Roos opened up an on-line chocolate business in 2004, importing fantastic premium chocolate. That, along with hosting chocolate tastings to inform and educate people on the intricacies of chocolate, kept her busy but a bit unfulfilled.

One thing led to another and in 2006, Roos started to make her own chocolate, the “Chocophilia” line, right here in Edmonton. She uses single-origin chocolate, meaning all the beans come from one specific region. It is a relatively new trend in chocolate making—most chocolate makers still blend chocolate, using different beans from different areas. With single-origin chocolate, you can actually taste the subtle differences between the different regions, making specific kinds of chocolate more unique. Earthy, fruity, mellow and intense undertones all vary depending on where the bean was grown. Roos takes premium single-origin chocolate and adds a bit of a twist, or in the case of her Hot Chocolate (chocolate with cayenne pepper), a bit of punch.

Originally, the Chocophilia line was only available wholesale. But because most of her interactions were via the computer or phone, she missed the human connection. She wanted to talk to people about chocolate, educate people about chocolate, and see the expression on people's faces when they ate amazing chocolate.

So, early this year, Roos's vision of one day opening a retail chocolate shop was finally realized. Early February saw the grand opening of The Cocoa Room, an oasis of chocolate delights. Set foot in the shop and prepare to be mesmerized by all things chocolate. Roos or one of her staff will amaze you with their enthusiasm, their knowledge and their passion. The contagious enthusiasm will rub off on you and, before you know it, you will be learning a bit about the fascinating history of chocolate—it was such an integral part of ancient civilization that the Aztecs and Mayans actually used the cocoa bean as currency. It was as revered back then as it is today in The Cocoa Room.

The enthusiasm carries over as the discussion turns to the shop and they passionately tear open bars and gently lift lids off boxes, urging you to taste a morsel, sample a bite and savour a sip. As I nibbled my way through the shop, I was especially impressed with their chocolate caviar and the rich sipping chocolate—almost like warm, dark, intense, liquid chocolate. It's made with or without spices and, before I knew it, a small cupful of the spicy version was pressed into my hand. I was somewhat skeptical because, although they won't divulge the secret spices, cayenne pepper is on the list. Cayenne pepper and chocolate just didn't seem like a natural fit to me, but I was so wrong. The cayenne has a gentle heat that lingers and warms, radiating contentment throughout your whole body.

The Cocoa Room is enabling Roos to expand her line of delicious chocolate. The day I visited, I got a glimpse of their Easter egg molds. Kind of amazing—it was less than three weeks until Easter and they were just going to start making the eggs. (Talk about fresh eggs.) Expect more seasonal delicacies, more organic chocolate for kids, and a truffle of the week.

They also hold chocolate tastings; for \$15, you can sample a range of different kinds of chocolate and educate your palate as well as your mind. The next tasting is Thu, Mar 27. In April, they're going to start hosting 3- to 4-hour chocolate-making workshops.

Venture off the beaten path and seek out The Cocoa Room. Immerse yourself in the whole delicious chocolate experience, and watch Roos's eyes light up with enthusiasm as she helps you find your passion. But be warned: once you've had the good stuff, there's no going back. V

Eating dark chocolate may regulate cholesterol levels, blood pressure

Thaindian.com, Thailand

Journal of Nutrition. (ANI)

March 27th, 2008

Washington, Mar 27 (ANI): For all those chocolate lovers, a new study has revealed that daily intake of dark chocolate bars containing plant sterols and cocoa flavanols may reduce cholesterol levels and improve blood pressure.

A collaborated study led by researchers from University of Illinois and Mars has found that daily consumption of CocoaVia dark chocolate bars significantly improves blood pressure and helps in regulating cholesterol levels. The researchers conducted the study over 49 men and women with elevated cholesterol. They were asked to consume flavanol-rich dark chocolate bars formulated with or without added plant sterols daily for four weeks.

All the chocolate bars contained approximately 180 mg of cocoa flavanols and were matched in calories, nutrients, and the amount of theobromine and caffeine, natural compounds in cocoa that can affect blood pressure. The findings revealed that as a part of a balanced, low-fat diet, regular consumption of CocoaVia(r) plant sterols (natural plant extracts) lowered total cholesterol by 2 percent and LDL cholesterol (or bad" cholesterol) by 5.3 percent in individuals with elevated cholesterol.

Furthermore, it also reduced systolic blood pressure by 5 percent after 8 weeks. "Our study supports the possibility that chocolate products specially formulated to contain both plant sterols and cocoa flavanols can, in the context of a balanced diet, be a practical and enjoyable dietary strategy to help support healthy cholesterol levels and a healthy blood pressure," said Catherine Kwik-Urbe co-author, PhD and a research scientist for Mars. *The new study is published in the Journal of Nutrition. (ANI)*

Mars: Sterol chocolate reduces cholesterol levels

NutraIngredients.com, France

By staff reporter

27-Mar-2008

An industry sponsored, peer reviewed study has found consuming chocolate containing plant sterols and cocoa flavanols can lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels. Published in the March edition of the Journal of Nutrition, the researchers from the University of Illinois, in conjunction with Mars Inc, compared groups eating sterol and non-sterol fortified chocolate with only those eating sterol chocolate registering significantly lower levels of cholesterol.

Sterol benefits

In the double-blind, placebo controlled, cross-over study, a group of 24-70 year-olds were fed Mars Inc sterol-imbued CocoaVia chocolate bars and, as part of a balanced diet, it was found that total cholesterol was lowered by two per cent and LDL cholesterol by 5.3 per cent. They then consumed regular dark chocolate but no significant reduction in either form of cholesterol was detected. There was no wash-out period between the two interventions.

The CocoaVia-consuming group also recorded reduced systolic blood pressure levels of five per cent in the eight-week trial (four weeks on each chocolate form). The American Heart Association estimates about half of all Americans have high cholesterol levels and one third with high blood pressure.

Cocoa and cocoa-containing products, including chocolate, can be rich sources of a subclass of flavonoids known as flavanols and their structurally related oligomers known as procyanidins. "We know that Americans are increasingly looking for foods to help them maintain their health," said study co-author and Mars research scientist, Catherine Kwik-Urbe, PhD. "Our study supports the possibility that chocolate products specially formulated to contain both plant sterols and cocoa flavanols can, in the context of a balanced diet, be a practical and enjoyable dietary strategy to help support healthy cholesterol levels and a healthy blood pressure"

Sterol call

Forty nine men and women with elevated cholesterol took part in the trial which had them eat an American Heart Association-recommended diet in addition to the chocolate products that were exchanged after four weeks. The chocolate bars were identical bar the inclusion of sterols. Both contained 180mg of cocoa flavanols as well as identical levels of calories, nutrients, theobromine, caffeine and other nutrients.

The plant sterol-imbued CocoaVia chocolate bars contained 1.1gms of plant sterols. Participant blood cholesterol levels, blood pressure, body weight, and other cardiovascular measures were taken during the eight-week study. Plant sterols, natural compounds found in certain vegetable oils, cereals, fruits and vegetables, have previously been shown to be safe and effective in lowering cholesterol levels, and this study adds to that body of research.

A 2006 study published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association produced similar results.

Sterol foods and beverages were pioneered by Benecol in 1994 when it launched a spread in Scandinavia. The category has grown to include milks, yoghurts, cheeses, juices, chocolate and other confectionery and more.

Source

'Daily Consumption of a Dark Chocolate Containing Flavanols and Added Sterol Esters Affects Cardiovascular Risk Factors in a Normotensive Population with Elevated Cholesterol'
Journal of Nutrition, 138: 725-731, 2008. Authors: Robin R. Allen, LeaAnn Carson, Catherine Kwik-Urbe, Ellen M. Evans and John W. Erdman Jr.

Special chocolate especially heart-healthy

United Press International

March 27, 2008

HACKETTSTOWN, N.J., March 27 (UPI) -- Adding plant sterols to cocoa flavanols makes for a chocolate that lowers elevated cholesterol and blood pressure, U.S. researchers said. Researchers at the University of Illinois and Mars Inc. found that, as part of a balanced, low-fat diet, the daily consumption of CocoaVia dark chocolate bars containing cocoa flavanols and plant sterols -- natural plant extracts -- lowered total cholesterol by 2 percent and low-density lipoprotein, LDL or "bad" cholesterol, by 5.3 percent in individuals with elevated cholesterol.

In the double-blind, placebo controlled, cross-over study, the researchers studied 49 men and women with elevated cholesterol, who followed the American Heart Association Step I diet. Study participants who consumed dark chocolate bars without added plant sterols had cholesterol levels not significantly affected. The study, published in the Journal of Nutrition, also found the regular consumption of these flavanol-rich chocolate bars reduced systolic blood pressure by 5 percent after eight weeks.

Mars, the makers of CocoaVia, said the percent of cacao or cocoa does not indicate cocoa flavanol content -- only careful handling of the cocoa can help to retain cocoa flavanol content.

Production and Quality

Ghana reassures grinders over cocoa crop sale

Reuters South Africa, South Africa

By Kwasi Kpodo

Mon 24 Mar 2008

ACCRA (Reuters) - Ghana remains committed to dedicating cheaper cocoa beans from its light crop to local processing companies, a senior government official said. Robert Kwabena Poku Kyei, special government advisor on cocoa, was clarifying comments made to Reuters earlier this month by an industry regulator official who had said this exclusive access for the local grinders was being ended. "The policy to sell light crop beans available in the season to local factories, as has been the case over the years, has not changed and we don't intend to change it," Poku Kyei told Reuters at the weekend. Light crop beans, harvested between July and September, make up only a small proportion of annual output but regularly sell at a 20 percent discount to larger main crop beans. They have been sold exclusively to local grinders.

An official at the Cocobod regulator told Reuters on March 14 the body was revising its beans supply contracts with the processors and had written to inform them that the light crop would no longer be "their preserve". That Cocobod official declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the cocoa industry in the world's second biggest producer. But Poku Kyei said the Cocobod official might have misconstrued plans to encourage the local processors to be less dependent on the light crop. The light crop, with its smaller, cheaper beans compared to the main crop, has dwindled in size over the years as a result of improved growing practices and adoption of modern methods of farming, which has boosted good quality main crop production.

Ghana's government has set a target to process domestically about 40 percent of total cocoa output. But with more and more processing companies being registered, it was increasingly clear the light crop beans would not be enough for all of them, Poku Kyei said. But he added this did not mean the government would be going back on bean supply contracts signed with processors.

"BALANCE"

Light crop beans make up only 7-8 percent of an average year's output -- 50,000 tonnes of a forecast 650,000-tonne crop in 2007/08 -- so they still only make up a small proportion of the local cocoa grind. Local grinding capacity is set to increase to 350,000 tonnes by the end of 2008, from 250,000 now.

Cocobod also issued a statement to clarify what it said was the "erroneous impression" given by the March 14 comments by one of its officials to Reuters. "Ghana is committed to the spirit of the Beans Supply Agreements signed and will accordingly do our utmost to dedicate all light crop beans for the local processing companies," the Cocobod statement said. But given that the light crop output was declining, Cocobod urged local processors to be less dependent on it and to incline more to using main crop beans to enable the factories to run. "The Board will do everything to bring a fair balance between beans exports, and deliveries to local factories," Cocobod said.

Ghana's main crop beans command a premium on world markets thanks to their relatively high quality, and sales of cheaper light crop beans have tied in with government efforts to promote a local grinding industry to maximise local revenues from cocoa. Industry officials have questioned the capacity of some local grinders, such as the partially state-run Cocoa Processing Company (CPC) and debt-ridden West Africa Mills Company, to sustain their profit margins with high premium beans.

Cocoa Channel

WeeklyDig.com

Aroa Fine Chocolate arrives

By CHRISTINE LIU



March 26, 2008 "I have 6,000 pounds of chocolate in my office right now," confesses Alejandro Luna. Luckily, the profusion of fair trade El Rey Venezuelan single-bean origin chocolate is in good hands. I'm chatting with Luna, one of Boston's foremost dessert authorities, over the counter of his comfortable, yet ambitious, on-the-cusp-of-opening chocolaterie Aroa. Last seen as the Langham's executive pastry chef and genius behind the hotel's infamous Chocolate Bar (and to imagine it all started with baking cakes with his grandmother in Venezuela), Luna is ready to unleash his concept—an extensive wholesale business in addition to a European-style café serving petit gateaux, petits fours and plenty of chocolate—upon the streets. The neighborhood seems all too ready to receive him; a continuous, grinning stream of "When are you opening?" inquiries from glass-tapping passersby keep anticipatory energies high.

Aroa, the embodiment of Luna's dream 15 years in-the-making ("He's 15 years old," jokes Aroa's manager, Carlina Maldonado), leaves no detail untouched in the pursuit of perfection. The menu includes 14 flavors of macaroons, five types of

marshmallows, seven types of hot chocolate (served from gleaming \$350 Japanese pots, "making you warm and fuzzy in every place," according to Luna) and twenty-some (developing into an eventual 37) flavors of chocolate treats. A slew of events, like ongoing tastings, classes and "closed-door chocolate degustations" are planned throughout the year. Degust away, I say. An expansive glass wall, allowing Aroa visitors to observe chefs' movements in the climate-controlled kitchen, anchors the space with voyeuristic allure. "People think making desserts is so difficult, taboo," Luna says, referring to reverent perceptions of the craft. The kitchen's openness is designed to let people see that "it's not some geniuses; it's just us, cooking." Luna's crew is wholly comprised of culinary students from the likes of Johnson & Wales or the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts rotating under work-study co-ops. The educative model seems akin to a teaching hospital, "except with more toothaches," teases Luna. As tribute to what it's all really about, 16 framed photographs on one wall elucidate every step of the chocolate process, from pod harvesting to shipping preparations. "Chocolate, or cocoa beans, is like wine," says Luna of the intricacies of production. He's all too eager to explain the story—and meaning—of chocolate. "The concept [of Aroa] is different; there's nothing like it in town," he says with a quiet pride. "Here, we're trying to expose what true chocolate is."

UK committed to Ghanaian cocoa farmers

The Statesman Online, Ghana

Peter Abban ,

25/03/2008

The British High Commissioner in Ghana, Nicholas Westcott said on Thursday that improvement in cocoa production in Ghana should be the responsibility not only of the government but every Ghanaian individual. Over the years, he noted, cocoa has been the main stay of Ghana's economy and has also been the UK's source of supply for chocolate production, saying that it is now time for individual support for increased production.

Speaking at a workshop on cocoa farming and biodiversity in Ghana at the Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana at New Tafo in the Eastern Region, Mr Westcott observed that cocoa has remained the central point for Ghana's development and commended the government and Ghana Cocoa Board for working to increase production.

Organised by the Cadbury Schweppes, Earthwatch Institute of UK, Nature Conservation Research Center, and CRIG, the workshop was attended by 67 participants drawn from policy makers, scientists, NGOs, Government Institutions, the Private sector, University of Ghana and University of Reading in the UK.

Mr. Westcott said what has been achieved in the cocoa industry has been a joint effort between the Cocobod, Cadbury and CRIG, urging that it should be maintained. He commended cocoa farmers for the effort they have put in over the years to sustain the cocoa industry, but said they still need more information to do more. He said with correct information, the farmers could make an informed decision in cocoa production. The High Commissioner promised that the British government would continue to support research work in cocoa production in Ghana.

Alfred Oteng - Yeboah, chairman of the Biodiversity Committee stressed the need for Ghana to take a critical look at the concept of ecosystem. He noted that many farmers do not take the ecosystem into consideration when they are planting, saying that it creates a lot of problems in agricultural production.

An Ecotourism Center was later inaugurated at Adjeikrom near Begoro. The Center would provide information on ecotourism and research in cocoa production.

Nigeria state to give farmers 2.3 mln cocoa trees

Reuters South Africa, South Africa

Tume Ahemba

26 Mar 2008

LAGOS, March 26 (Reuters) - Nigeria's cocoa growing state of Oyo will procure 2.3 million seedlings for free distribution to farmers this year, the News Agency of Nigeria said on Wednesday. Nigeria, the world's number five cocoa grower, launched a cocoa revival programme in 2004 to lift its output by supplying improved seedlings free to farmers and subsidising agro-chemicals.

The programme, which also aims to raise output to the half million-tonne mark this year and catapult Nigeria to the world's number two by 2010, overtaking Ghana, has encouraged competition among cocoa farming states, many of which have seen their output climb rapidly in the last few years.

Oyo state commissioner for agriculture Kunle Ishola said the government has concluded arrangements to raise another 1.5 million seedlings for distribution to farmers in the 2008/09 season. The commissioner said some farmers had been trained on new cocoa planting and farming methods in a step to boost production in Oyo, which is ranked as Nigeria's number four

growing state. The government has also bought 20 million naira (\$171,086) worth of agro-chemicals for distribution for farmers in the state which currently produces about 36,000 tonnes per annum.

The main growers group in Africa's top oil producer, the Cocoa Association of Nigeria, estimates that Nigeria's 2007/08 crop will come in at around a total of 300,000 tonnes. Nigeria's cocoa revival programme also hopes to boost local processing and consumption of cocoa-based products to help depress global supply and raise international prices.

High prices fuel Cocoa planting boom in Cameroon

Source: Reuters

28/03/2008

Yaounde, March 27 - High international prices are fuelling a boom in cocoa cultivation in eastern Cameroon which could help the central African country beat its production target of 200,000 tonnes by 2010, officials said on Thursday.

Jerome Mvondo, general manager of Cameroon's Cocoa Development Company (SODECAO), said the creation of new cocoa plantations in eastern Cameroon was outstripping the supply of seeds. Some 120 hectares of new cocoa fields were planted in 2007 in the east -- Cameroon's fourth largest growing region with just five percent of its national production -- and 500 hectares more are being created this year.

Cameroon produces around 180,000 tonnes a year of cocoa and ranks fourth in world cocoa production, following a disastrous liberalisation of the sector in the early 1990s. "We were amazed by what we saw in the East province. Almost every family in the region has now taken to growing cocoa and those who have not done so complain of lack of cultivable land," Mvondo told reporters after a tour of the region last week. "If this trend ... continues in the East, as is also the case in the South province, I foresee our national production hitting the 200,000 tonnes mark and even going beyond by 2010," Mvondo said.

He expressed hope that Cameroon could one day regain its spot as the world's second largest cocoa producer, behind Ivory Coast. Second-ranked Ghana currently harvests around 650,000 tonnes of beans a year, but aims to boost that to 1 million by 2010. Mvondo, whose company works with the Agriculture Ministry to promote a return to cocoa cultivation, said demand for improved cocoa seedlings outstripped supplies of 600,000 plants.

Eastern Cameroon was one of the regions hardest hit by a prolonged economic crisis in the 1990s following a slump in commodities prices and the liberalisation of coffee and cocoa production. Many farmers abandoned cocoa for production of timber or staple foods.

According to statistics published by the Cocoa and Coffee Interprofessional Board (CCIB), South-West province is Cameroon's leading producer with 50 percent of its crop, followed by the Centre with 30, and the South with 15 percent. The cocoa season runs from August 1 to July 31, with the peak harvesting and marketing period being November to January. Before the country started exporting crude oil in 1977, cocoa and coffee was the mainstay of the economy.

The Market

Cocoa Falls to Lowest Price since January as Supplies Increase

Bloomberg

By Shruti Date Singh

March 24, 2008

(Bloomberg) -- Cocoa fell to the lowest price in almost two months as increasing supplies from Ivory Coast, the biggest producer, and other growers ease concern that demand may outpace production this year.

Deliveries of exportable cocoa beans to Ivory Coast's main ports jumped to 12,000 metric tons in the week ended March 16 from 4,000 tons a year earlier, exporters said March 21. Cocoa exports from Cameroon, the fourth-largest producer, rose 22 percent in the week through March 23 compared with a year ago to 186 tons, the country's Cocoa and Coffee Board said. "You are getting output increases," said Adam Klopfenstein, senior market strategist for Lind-Waldock in Chicago, a unit of MF Global Ltd. "That's causing the market to have weakness and there's still continued fund selling."

Cocoa futures for May delivery dropped \$13, or 0.6 percent, to \$2,286 a metric ton at 11:29 a.m. on ICE Futures U.S., the former New York Board of Trade. The price earlier reached \$2,252, the lowest for a most-active contract since Jan. 30. The commodity on March 14 reached \$2,971, the highest for a contract closest to expiration since April 1980, said Nathan Golz, a researcher at Wachovia Securities in St. Louis.

Cocoa surged as investors scooped up agricultural commodities earlier this year and as Ivory Coast workers waged several strikes to demand better working conditions and pay. "Persistent Ivory Coast labor strikes have prevented cocoa prices from falling too far during the general sell-off triggered by fund liquidation since the beginning of March," said Goldman Sachs analysts led by David Greeley in a report March 20. "We continue to expect labor tension to likely stall exports and put upward pressure on prices."

Goldman Sachs raised its 12-month forecast from \$2,000 a metric ton to \$3,200 in last week's report. *To contact the reporter on this story: Shruti Date Singh in Chicago at ssingh28@bloomberg.net.*

DJ ICE Cocoa Review: Commercial Buying Emerges

Trading Markets (press release), CA

March 24, 2008;

(Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- ICE Futures U.S. May cocoa settled lower for the sixth session in a row Monday, but a slowdown in the pace of the recent declines was seen. "The market isn't going to go down 200 points a day indefinitely," noted Judy Ganes Chase, president of JGanes Consulting.

Strength in the U.S. dollar was also seen as a negative factor for cocoa Monday. May cocoa ended \$34 lower at \$2,265 a metric ton and July futures settled down \$32 at \$2,285 a ton. In recent sessions, ICE cocoa has collapsed sharply along with other commodity markets as players bailed out of speculative long positions. On Monday, "we continued to see speculative selling based on margin call selling. Specs were major longs over the past 30 to 60 days," noted James Cordier, founder of optionsellers.com.

However, on Monday, ICE May cocoa sellers ran out of gas right around the \$2,250 a metric ton level. "We did see good commercial buying today," Cordier said. "It looks like cocoa is going from speculative hands to commercial hands," he added. That could be a signal that the market may be close to a bottom, he explained.

However, Ganes wasn't quite as optimistic: "Usually when markets jump off a cliff they tend to fall farther and faster than people expect." Looking ahead, Ganes said: "The market is probably going to come off a bit more."

Liffe cocoa trading was shut down Monday, in observance of the Easter holiday.

ICE cocoa open interest decreased by 7,760 positions as of March 20 to total 158,514 contracts.

Volume was estimated at 9,405 contracts, according to the exchange. In options, approximately 643 calls and 2,244 puts traded.

Close Change Range

May \$2,265 -34 \$2,252-\$2,415 July \$2,285 -32 \$2,271-\$2,431

DJ Liffe Softs: Coffee, Cocoa up slightly, Pare Losses

Trading Markets (press release), CA

By Sarah McFarlane, Dow Jones Newswires; +44 (0)20 7842 9327

March 25, 2008

LONDON, Mar 25, 2008 (Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- Liffe robusta coffee and cocoa traded higher within limited ranges early in the session Tuesday, digesting last week's dramatic slide across commodities which was driven by funds' liquidating positions.

COFFEE

May robusta coffee traded up \$41, or 1.8%, at \$2,335 a metric ton with 3,753 lots traded as at 1148 GMT. July traded up \$32, or 1.3%, at \$2,282/ton with 2,151 lots traded. Early in the session there was some residual speculative selling, taken up by trade, said a London-based broker.

Vietnam, the largest producer of robusta coffee, has slowed down trade, with farmers reluctant to sell after prices dropped. "People are very nervous on the May contract," following recent volatility, added the broker. Late last week, the May/July spread swung from \$141/ton to just \$44/ton, with no fundamental reason for the move.

New York front-month arabica coffee traded up 395 points, or 3.1%, at \$1.3280 a pound as at 1150 GMT.

COCOA

May cocoa traded up GBP1, or 0.1%, at GBP1,269/ton with 1,918 lots traded as at 1151 GMT. Early in the session cocoa drifted higher, corrective to last week's selloff, said a London-based broker.

Seeing over GBP200/ton shaved off its value in just two days last week, cocoa led the soft commodity fall on fund selling, followed by sugar and coffee. "At the moment the amount of money in commodities is massively overextended," leading to very unpredictable markets, added the broker.

New York's front-month cocoa futures traded up \$85, or 3.8%, at \$2,350/ton as at 1151 GMT.

DJ Liffe Softs: Coffee, Cocoa up alongside Commodities Complex

Trading Markets (press release), CA

By Sarah McFarlane, Dow Jones Newswires

March 26, 2008

LONDON, Mar 26, 2008 (Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- -- Liffe cocoa and robusta coffee were up Wednesday, in line with the commodities complex, and supported by a weak dollar.

COCOA

May cocoa traded up GBP30, or 2.3%, at GBP1,305 a metric ton, with 1,770 lots traded as at 1130 GMT. Although there seems to be a lull in buying, traders are confident fund interest in cocoa and other agricultural commodities isn't in decline. "I think prices will recover" from the recent selloff, said a London-based broker.

In just two days last week, the May contract lost around 21% of its value, hitting a low of GBP1,200/ton. However, activity this week has trimmed these losses. "A period of positive consolidation is expected in the days to come, although cocoa may prove to be the more reluctant in the softs complex as industry are less willing to pay up even at these levels," said the Sudden daily report.

New York front-month cocoa traded up \$30, or 1.3%, at \$2,428/ton, as at 1131 GMT.

COFFEE

May robusta coffee traded up \$42, or 1.8%, at \$2,370/ton with 1,525 lots traded as at 1132 GMT.

A weak dollar is supporting coffee alongside other soft commodities, making them look cheaper, said a London-based broker. With very little origin selling coming out of Vietnam, the world's largest robusta coffee producer, physical trade is limited.

Fund's recent liquidation of positions has led Vietnamese farmer's to withhold coffee in the hope of a full recovery in prices.

Front-month New York arabica futures traded up 215 points, or 1.6%, at \$1.3480 a pound as at 1133 GMT.

DJ ICE Cocoa Review: Rises despite Liquidation, US Dollar Weight

Trading Markets (press release), CA

By Holly Henschen, Dow Jones Newswires

March 27, 2008

NEW YORK, Mar 27, 2008 (Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- -- ICE Futures U.S. cocoa settled slightly higher Thursday despite pressure from fund liquidation and the stronger U.S. dollar, signaling upcoming market strength.

May cocoa ended \$9 higher at \$2,432 a metric ton, and July settled up \$11 at \$2,456. Cocoa opened up and traded choppy higher until May futures suddenly dropped below \$2,300 support midsession. Light volume added volatility to trade, but cocoa climbed back to the upside, a signal of technical strength, said Boyd Cruel, senior softs analyst at Alaron Trading in Chicago.

The market continues to consolidate and will likely trek higher in coming sessions, analysts said. "We're simply redistributing the cocoa contracts from weak specs into stronger hands, and it should be just about completed," said James Cordier, founder of Optionsellers.com in Tampa, Fla. Speculators are licking their wounds from recent price run-ups and sell-offs in light of economic worries in the collapse of the bloated commodities complex, Cordier said. Longs are getting out of the market, depleting open interest and pressuring prices, however, cocoa is likely rebound soon, he said.

Underlying fundamental concerns faded but could still tilt cocoa's direction, analysts said. West Africa cocoa midcrop production will likely surpass previous expectations due to precipitation in beneficial cocoa-growing regions, taking the shine off the market, Cordier said.

Should remaining speculators stand by cocoa past the end of the month and the fiscal quarter, prices should reach higher, Cruel said.

Liffe May cocoa futures settled up GBP34 at GBP1,318 ton and July settled GBP37 higher at GBP1,353.

ICE cocoa open interest decreased by 2,105 positions Wednesday to total 151,629 contracts, the exchange reported.

Volume was estimated at 5,769 contracts, according to exchange data. In options, approximately 107 calls and 573 puts traded. Close Change Range May \$2,432 +9 \$2,288-\$2,441 July \$2,456 +11 \$2,311-\$2,462

DJ Southwest Nigeria Graded Cocoa price Flat at 250,000 Naira/Ton

Trading Markets (press release), CA

By Obafemi Oredein; Dow Jones Newswires

March 28, 2008

IBADAN, Nigeria, Mar 28, 2008 (Dow Jones Commodities News via Comtex) -- -- The price of graded cocoa in southwestern Nigeria remained steady at 250,000 naira (\$2,146) a metric ton, buyers said Friday. Graded cocoa, which has been inspected and certified fit for export, sold last week at the same price. "Local buying agents are giving notice that the price may fall next week because mid crop cocoa, which is smaller in size than the main crop, is being traded now," a buyer in Akure, capital of Ondo state, told Dow Jones Newswires. He added that the market is seeing a transition from the bigger-sized main crop to the mid crop and prices were likely to fall in the weeks ahead as exporters and merchants are complaining that the current cocoa price is high.

Farmers in the southwest usually harvest the mid crop cocoa from March/April to July or August while harvest of the main crop starts in September/October and ends in January or February. Nigeria produces 50,000-55,000 tons of the mid crop a season.

Bisi Omoyeni, a buyer in Ile-Ife, Osun state, said graded cocoa price remained at NGN250,000 in the state. Harvest of the mid crop was picking up, he said, because of the abundant rainfall in the state but "there is uncertainty in the market as cocoa price could fall because of the marketing of the mid crop cocoa." "Rainfall is continuing in the entire southwest cocoa belt erasing completely the fear of a drought in the region in the first quarter," an official of the Cooperative Produce Marketing Union in Ile-Ife said.

There had been fear among farmers, buyers and exporters of a drought in the region this year following a lack of rainfall in the region between December and February. Traders contacted in the other southwestern states of Ogun, Oyo and Ekiti said cocoa prices are also stable at NGN250,000/ton. Farmers sold their cocoa at NGN235,000-NGN240,000 a ton on Friday, the same level as last week.

Business & Economy

DJ Some Cocoa Flows From W Ivory Coast after Local Army Mutiny

Trading Markets (press release), CA

By Vincent t'Sas and Ousmane Attai; Dow Jones Newswires

March 25, 2008

ABIDJAN, Mar 25, 2008 (Dow Jones Commodities News Select via Comtex) -- Cocoa buyers and transporters in the western town of Duekoue went back to business last night after mutinous soldiers returned to barracks, but warehouses in nearby Guiglo remained closed, industry sources said Tuesday. "Last night a convoy of six (35-metric-ton) trucks left for Abidjan," said cocoa buyer Theodore Konan, talking by phone from Duekoue, 435 kilometers northwest of Abidjan.

Monday, soldiers took to the streets firing in the air in protest at the killing of one of them by bandits the night before. Residents of Guiglo, 40 kilometers west of Duekoue, contacted by telephone said their town was still tense, with armed soldiers occupying strategic points in town, and cocoa warehouses closed. Duekoue and Guiglo are part of the greater Man cocoa growing region, which produces around 150,000 tons of cocoa beans annually, or almost 12% of Ivory Coast's total crop.

The army has relatively large garrisons in both towns since a 2002 civil war and subsequent division of the world's top cocoa grower in a rebel-held north and a loyalist south. Until recently these garrisons mounted patrols and manned roadblocks but in compliance with a 2007 peace accord these tasks were handed back to police and gendarmerie.

Monday's mutineers want the government to review the decision as insecurity is rampant in the area where a fairly large private militia have yet to be disarmed. The military governor of the area, Colonel Globo Guie, told journalists on Tuesday that the army's chief of staff was looking into the demands.

Cocoa farmers happy about new price

Kessben FM, Ghana

25-03-2008

Cocoa farmers in some communities in Asunafo North District of Brong-Ahafo have expressed gratitude to the government for the recent increment in the price of cocoa.

The communities are Kasapin, Asuadai, Nyamebekyere, Ayomso, Asumura and Akrodie. The farmers noted that the new price of GHC75 per bag of cocoa would boost their morale to increase their yield. A survey conducted by the Ghana News Agency showed that the farmers were also happy about the on-going mass spraying exercise as well as the distribution of insecticides for the exercise. "The insecticides have helped us to improve our yield," they said and appealed to the government to increase the supply of the insecticides.

Research and Markets: Nigeria's Food and Drink Industry continues to attract Investment from Foreign Operators despite it's difficult Operating Environment

Trading Markets (press release), CA

March 25, 2008

Dublin, (M2 PRESSWIRE via COMTEX) -- Research and Markets (<http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c86499>) has announced the addition of Nigeria Food and Drink Report Q1 2008 to their offering. The Nigeria Food and Drink Report provides independent forecasts and competitive intelligence on Nigeria's food and drink industry.

Despite a difficult operating environment and persistent issues of corruption, Nigeria's food and drink industry continues to attract investment from foreign operators, thanks to the industry's vast untapped potential, as discussed in BMI's recently published Nigeria Food & Drink Report for Q108. An example of this is Swiss food and drink giant Nestle's decision to expand its production in the country. According to reports in the local press, Nestle is receiving support from the Ogun State government to expand production at its Agbara plant, located in the south-west, near the main city Lagos. According to Nestle press reports, it is expected that this investment will further stimulate sustainable growth, increase the company's market share and broaden the nutrition, health and wellness business platform for the company in Nigeria. Any such investments, and particularly those made by large multinationals, are welcome news in Nigeria, given the country's reputation as a risky place to do business. Nigeria is known to suffer from widespread corruption, lack of transparency, political instability and the arbitrary enforcement of trade and investment regulations which have in the past limited its growth potential and deterred foreign investors.

Nestle has been present in Nigeria's food processing industry since 1961, with the Agbara factory operational since 1981. Nestle produces baby food, confectionery and bottled water, and is a leader in the coffee and cocoa markets. One of the reasons behind the company's decision to expand its local production is surely the fact that cocoa is a major crop in Nigeria and it is the world's fourth-largest producer. Cocoa was Nigeria's main export product in the 1960s, but with the discovery of oil, the government began to neglect the sector, causing production to fall. Following the oil boom, which started in the early 1970s, the economy experienced a major expansion. Yet despite being Africa's largest oil producer and benefiting from high global prices, more than half of the population still live in poverty, with economic progress undermined by deep-seated corruption and mismanagement. A few years ago the government decided to refocus its efforts on cocoa production, with an ambitious project, the aim of which was to triple cocoa production. Yet despite the major investments made, the project was not entirely successful, often because of widespread graft. Although most traders and farmers estimate the country's cocoa production to be around 242,000 metric tonnes annually, as mentioned above, the government claims that production is around 400,000 tonnes annually.

In October traders and exporters in Nigeria's cocoa market were complaining of a shortage of supply, due to a low annual harvest. The low production was attributed to a number of factors, including poor weather conditions, ageing cocoa trees and a failure of replanted cocoa to quickly produce new yields. However, in December the Cocoa Association of Nigeria reported that the outlook for Nigeria's cocoa crop this year appears to be more positive than originally anticipated, amending the expected harvest for the 2007-08 season. Although the food and drink and agricultural industry will surely continue to face certain obstacles, these above-mentioned developments are positive signs for Nigeria's food and drink industry.

Companies Mentioned:

Guinness Nigeria
Nigeria Breweries (NB)
Cadbury Nigeria
Park n Shop

For more information visit <http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/c86499> Source: Business Monitor International

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The new choc elite: How Britain is turning into a nation of chocolate snobs

Daily Mail, UK

By WILLIAM SITWELL

23rd March 2008

Still feeling peckish? Thinking about nipping to the shops for yet another Easter egg? Well, think very carefully before you do. The chocolate you choose will say a lot about you - and not just that you're greedy and are eating between meals. For we are in the midst of a revolution: it's chocolatey, but also very complicated.

Because - as with every other aspect of food shopping these days - you can no longer simply buy chocolate you like the look of.



Chocolate connoisseur: Chloe Doutre-Roussel

You need to combine intelligence and good taste with a social conscience. So as you reach for that left-over Easter egg (we get through approximately 80 million of them each year, costing more than £330 million), have you considered what variety of bean the chocolate comes from, let alone which country?

Does it hold the Fairtrade label or are you condemning its picker to a miserable life of near-slavery? And how much cocoa is actually in the final product?

We have now reached that strange point in the development of the human race where the percentage of cocoa in your bar of chocolate is treated as a status symbol.

Choc-snobbery is rife - and woe betide those who haven't grasped the basics.

Chocolatiers - that's people who make posh chocolate to me and you - are springing up all over London and, I'm told, in Glasgow, Belfast, even Hull.

The subject has made prime-time television with Channel 4's Willie's Wonky Chocolate Factory. If you haven't caught a glimpse, it's the story of Willie Harcourt-Cooze's mission to make his own gourmet chocolate from bean to bar.

How things have changed. "I remember when I started cooking at Gleneagles in Scotland back in the late 1980s - for the chocolate desserts we had a choice of dark, white or milk," says William Curley, one of the rising stars on the London

chocolate scene. These days his recipes are rather more sophisticated. Curley's signature Amedei egg is made with chocolate that comes from an exquisite brother-and-sister operation in rural Tuscany, with Gianduja almonds and orangettes (don't ask).

girl eating chocolate



The chocolate we eat can say a lot about us

Oh, and while your bar of Easter Toblerone from Woolies might have given you change from a couple of quid, Curley's egg would have cost you the best part of £50.

Curley, of course, feels the price is justified. "You get what you pay for," he says. "I remember a time when I was happy to buy a £3 bottle of Bulgarian plonk from Somerfield, but these days I might spend a bit more for something decent." The comparison is not entirely fanciful. As all true foodies will tell you, there are quite a few analogies between chocolate and wine.

Food writer Kevin Gould says: "Chocolate is the new wine. People love to ascribe compelling complexities to what they eat and drink. "Chocolate has the same facets as wine, such as terroir, technique, provenance and variety."(There you were thinking different varieties of chocolate meant Mars, Twix or Curly Wurly.)

For a start, there are different varieties of cocoa bean, the two main ones being criollo and trinitario. Moreover, the aficionados will tell you that the cocoa bean is a bean of many parts. "It's the most complex of foods," explains Louise Nason, the founder of Melt, a chocolate shop in London that sates the choccy appetites of Notting Hill's fashionistas. (Only two weeks ago, Elle Macpherson walked in and bought the shop's entire stock.)

"Chocolate has 400 to 500 flavour profiles," adds Nason. "Whereas an onion has 14."

While I'm not quite sure how you count "flavour profiles", I do appreciate that chocolate is a more sophisticated food type than I might have thought. Like wine, the different nuances that develop in production can lead to a very different taste when we finally come to stuff it in our faces. The magic is in the manufacture. After harvesting, the cocoa beans are left to ferment. The seeds are removed, roasted and ground to a paste.

The leftover liquor is then either pressed and pulverised to make cocoa powder, or "conched", which entails adding sugar, thus turning it into chocolate. It's a process that has been refined by human ingenuity for centuries. But it is today's obsession for provenance and handmade treats that makes high-end chocolates so expensive.

Yet despite the surge in demand for posh chocs, according to Melt's head chocolatier Keith Hurdman, we are still way behind Europe. "We are at the stage I reckon British wine-buying was at in the late 1970s," he says. "There are half-a-dozen top-quality chocolate shops in London, whereas in Belgium there are 2,300. "That means there are more chocolate shops in Belgium than there are Tesco stores in Britain."

It may be some time before we get as many chocolate shops as Belgium, but the growth of interest looks set to continue. "It's all part of the birth of Britain as a nation of true gastronomy. It wasn't long ago that if you wanted olive oil you had to get it on prescription from a chemist. Similarly, back in the 1970s there were two types of wine: red and white.

Today, the quality of olive oils and wines available in Britain can rival anywhere in the world. Now the same is becoming true of chocolate. "Until quite recently, London was derided for its restaurants, but now it's the most exciting city in the world for

food," says Angus Thirlwell, founder of Hotel Chocolat, a growing chain of shops. "The same is happening in the chocolate world."

Hotel Chocolat's mantra is "less sugar more cocoa", which reflects the posh part of the industry's fight against the big boys such as Cadbury.

"The major companies do whatever they want," says Louise Nason. "They use terrible beans, take out the cocoa butter and sell it to cosmetic companies, and load their chocolate bars with cheap fat and sugar. "To call a Mars Bar chocolate is like comparing orange squash with fresh orange juice." And there's another compelling reason to splash out on classier chocs: they're actually good for you.

Angus Thirlwell describes dark chocolate as a superfood. "Connoisseurs have always known they feel good when they eat dark chocolate, but recent research confirms it," he says.

Kevin Gould adds: "It's high in anti-oxidants and helps prevent deep-vein thrombosis. You can get a good fix on just a small bite of good chocolate." As with wine, it's vital you start boning up on the details to impress your friends at dinner parties.

Chloe Doutre-Roussel, a former chocolate buyer for luxury grocer Fortnum & Mason, has written a book called *The Chocolate Connoisseur* to guide you through the essentials. She is also a member of the Academy Of Chocolate, a group of the UK's top chocolatiers. One of the first things you must learn, according to the Academy, is that real chocolate must contain at least 60 per cent cocoa. You should also know that the finest beans are from countries like Venezuela, Grenada and Madagascar.

Carenero Superior 100 per cent Venezuelan Black is a particular favourite of mine. But as the posh chocolate message spreads across the land, I suspect our cheap habits will remain hard to break. Even as a foodie under pressure to do the right thing, I still find that, in times of need, Cadbury's Fruit And Nut can hit the spot. It may risk the wrath of the experts, but somehow that sinful element makes it all the more delectable.

• *William Sitwell is editor of Waitrose Food Illustrated.*

Chocolate in small doses the wise option

The Canberra Times, Australia

Catherine Saxelby

23 March 2008

Easter is here and the shops are groaning with Easter eggs, so it's time to explore the truth about chocolate: is it really a super food packed with antioxidants or just a pleasurable indulgence?

First, the bad news.

Chocolate, whether dark, milk or white, is rich and fattening. With roughly one-third fat and half sugar, it's a very concentrated food, packing many kilojoules into a small weight. Compare 50g of three foods - a 50g bar of chocolate has 1107 kilojoules (264 calories); 50g of lean steak supplies a mere 410 kilojoules (98 calories) while 50g of fried potato chips has less than half that of chocolate at 500 kilojoules (120 calories). Bushwalkers and mountaineers make use of chocolate for this very reason and it is always part of army survival rations.

Now for the good news.

Thanks to its cocoa solids from cocoa beans, chocolate contains small quantities of B vitamins and the minerals potassium, phosphorus and calcium (especially milk chocolate) and copper. But remember that the levels are small. And yes, there are antioxidants - called flavonoids or procyanidins - similar to those in red wine and tea. But only dark cocoa-rich chocolate (70 per cent cocoa chocolate) qualifies (sorry!).

It has a higher concentration of cocoa liquor, the original cocoa bean extract with more of the bean "goodies".

Flavonoids protect the body from harmful free radicals. They may help prevent heart problems and slow the clock on ageing. So given that it's not only high in fat but hard to resist, small doses of chocolate as part of a healthy diet still seem the wisest option.

Despite the marketing hype, you'll never see chocolate as one of the foods on the healthy food pyramid. Catherine Saxelby is a nutritionist and author of *Nutrition for Life*. Get more healthy eating tips at www.foodwatch.com.au

Xocai - Healthy Chocolate Co attracts Top Internet Marketer Brian McCoy

WebWire (press release), GA

March 25, 2008

Top online marketer Brian McCoy partners with Xocai healthy chocolate in what has developed to be the greatest re-transformation to take place in the MLM, home based business and direct sales industries. Brian remarked, "wow, as the #1 income producer for 2 other companies online, I wasn't looking for anything else, but I just couldn't pass up on this opportunity for long term residual income"

Xocai boasts healthy chocolate products that are capitalizing on the wellness revolution, which is growing closer every day to a trillion dollar industry. Xocai's incredible antioxidant rich, unprocessed cocoa dark chocolate products has created quite the stir in the health and wellness industry.

When asked what had attracted him to Xocai, Mr. McCoy replied, "multiple things but what stood out the most was the incredible taste and the fact of the scientific research that has been done on unprocessed cocoa. I couldn't believe that something that tasted this good could be so healthy, but the facts don't lie. I did my research by searching google and entering in the keywords dark chocolate health and found numerous studies from Harvard and other accredited universities around the world on the benefits of chocolate... to say the least I was blown away"

Brian added, "the fact that this tastes so good and the fact of the automated systems they have in place to duplicate, I knew this would be an easy sell. Not only that, but who doesn't like chocolate"

When you have a combination of McCoy's internet marketing skills and the power of delicious chocolate that is healthy, it's no wonder why so many people are seizing the opportunity to create a six-figure income working with Xocai and his team. Brian provides private team training to his team members and shows them exactly how he sponsors 30-60 people every month all done via internet marketing.

Ivory Coast Cocoa Exports increase 4.9% in February (Update1)

Bloomberg

By Pauline Bax

March 26, 2008

(Bloomberg) -- Cocoa exports from Ivory Coast, the world's biggest producer of the chocolate ingredient, rose 4.9 percent in February. Shipments increased to 149,818 metric tons in the month, compared with 142,787 tons in February 2007, according to data supplied by the ports of Abidjan and San Pedro today.

Exports from Abidjan rose to 71,639 tons, from 69,574 a year earlier, while the western port of San Pedro shipped 78,179 tons, compared with 73,213 previously. While total shipments increased, exports cocoa product fell to 23,481 tons, from 26,816 tons.

Ivory Coast's mid-crop is collected from April through September after the main harvest is completed in February and March. The following is a breakdown of cocoa-product exports:

Port	Amount	
Abidjan	19,836	
San Pedro	3,645	
Total:	23,481	
Product:	Abidjan	San Pedro
Butter	4,652	--
Cake	2,469	703
Liquor	8,917	2,942
Powder	2,353	--
Unspecified	1,445	--
Total:	19,836	3,645

Shipments of coffee products, mainly soluble coffee produced by Nestle SA in Abidjan, fell to 376 tons, from 1,032 tons in February 2007. To contact the reporter on this story: Pauline Bax in Abidjan via Johannesburg at pmrichardson@bloomberg.net.

Brits, Swiss, Belgians are most avid chocolate fans

AFP via Yahoo! News

Mar 25, 2008



Chocolate maker Denis Vermaillen makes chocolates at a Cote D'Ivoire or shop in Brussels in February.

GENEVA (AFP) - When it comes to chocolate, it is the Brits, Swiss and Belgians who just cannot resist a bite. Almost one in two living in Britain, 46 percent, Switzerland, 45 percent, and Belgium, 43 percent, eat chocolate several times a week, according to a survey conducted by Swiss chocolate manufacturer Barry Callebaut.

For many, simple milk chocolate is no longer good enough. Four out of ten respondents in western Europe and the United States have started eating origin chocolate, or chocolate made from cocoa beans harvested in a specific country, said Barry Callebaut, also one of the world's largest chocolate makers.

That represents growth of 26 percentage points from 16 percent in 2006. One in five Swiss are eating such premium chocolate at least a few times a month. Fair-trade and organic chocolate are also gaining in popularity. Some 33 percent of consumers said they had tried fair-trade chocolate, while 24 percent have tried organic products, up 23 and 17 percentage points respectively from 2006.

Switzerland's chocolate makers sold over 180,000 tonnes of chocolate last year, an increase of 7.7 percent from the previous year, industry body Chocosuisse had said in February. Chocosuisse said then that increased domestic demand as well as growing exports to Germany, Britain and France had boosted sales.

Mars pushes heart-healthy chocolate line

United Press International

HACKETTSTOWN, N.J., Sept. 20 (UPI) -- Candy maker Mars Inc. created a new division to push its CocoaVia line of chocolate snacks that retain heart-healthy flavanols removed by typical processing. The CocoaVia line also includes cholesterol-lowering plant sterols from soybeans and is fortified with calcium and other vitamins. "It's a first-of-its-kind product that was purposely designed to deliver heart-health benefits and real chocolate pleasure in products that are less than 150 calories per serving," said Mars Chief Science Officer Harold Schmitz.

Mars said it spent 15 years developing a patented process to retain flavanols in processed chocolate. Flavanols also are found in red wine and green tea. Mars, which has M&M's, Dove Chocolates and Snickers under its candy banner, will push the CocoaVia line through its newly created Mars Nutrition for Health & Well-Being division.

Mars claims benefits of new chocolates

United Press International

ALBANY, Ga., Oct. 31 (UPI) -- U.S. confectioner Mars Inc. is ready with its new line of chocolate bars and chocolate-covered almonds it says are good for the heart and arteries.

The CocoaVia confections are produced at a factory in Albany, Ga., and serve as the centerpiece of a corporate quest to transform chocolate into a healthy indulgence, reports The New York Times.

The new rice and flavanol-filled cocoa powder in the chocolate bars are injected with liquid-canola plant sterols, separating them from the company's more well-known M&M's, Snickers and Dove bars.

Flavanols are naturally occurring chemicals in cocoa that have antioxidant qualities. Sterols are plant-based chemicals found in a variety of foods, the report said. If the company can show flavanols help improve blood flow and lower blood pressure, then foods with them could potentially help prevent heart disease. The bars will be placed in health food aisles. Some skeptical nutritionists say the effort seems less of a breakthrough than a sly way to scare up chocolate sales.

Labour Issues

The real cost of the Easter eggs we buy

Independent, UK

By Nina Lakhani

23 March 2008

Most Easter eggs enjoyed by chocolate lovers in the UK this weekend will have been made from cocoa beans farmed by exploited child labour, according to anti-slavery experts. This is despite promises by the chocolate industry to eradicate child labour in West Africa.

A US government-sponsored study reveals that children are still working long hours in dangerous conditions, and regularly missing school. Industry promises were worthless, anti-slavery experts said yesterday, adding that chocolate giants such as Nestlé and Mars cannot guarantee that popular makes of Easter eggs do not involve abusive child labour.

That labour will almost certainly include children such as eight-year-old twins Hassan and Hussein who, during the last harvest in Sinikosso, Ivory Coast, used machetes to scoop beans out of pods on a neighbour's farm, working from sunrise to sunset. The farmer was in debt and could not afford to pay them. As in many such cases, his family helps the twins' father in return. None of the children working with the twins goes to school. "It is very likely your Easter egg today will have been made from beans harvested by exploited children," said Phil Lane, of the anti-slavery coalition, Stop the Traffik.

Easter eggs account for 8 per cent of all chocolate sold in the UK. Last year £336m was spent on Easter chocolates with £75m spent on Fairtrade eggs. That figure is expected to grow by £30m this year. "Chocolate manufacturers hold all the power; they control the prices and are making the big profits. Farmers have no power. Abuses happen because [farmers] are not paid enough by the multinationals so cannot afford to pay adult wages," Mr Lane said.

An estimated 12,000 children have been trafficked into cocoa farms in Ivory Coast, which produces nearly half the world's cocoa. As many as 280,000 children work on small farms across West Africa. Eradicating abusive child labour was central to an agreement the chocolate industry signed in 2001. The industry claims it will meet its commitments by 1 July, but the US report criticizes it for renegeing on targets. Campaigners argue fair and stable prices would lift hundreds of thousands of people out of absolute poverty and remove the main reason for child labour.

The industry claims its International Cocoa Initiative is currently working with 88 cocoa communities in Ivory Coast and 154 in Ghana. But critics point out there are more than 600,000 cocoa farms in Ivory Coast alone.

A spokeswoman for the UK chocolate industry said: "Our industry is committed to responsible cocoa growing. We cannot, however, give a guarantee that there are absolutely no circumstances of inappropriate child labour associated with cocoa growing, now or in the near future. To provide such assurances would require independent auditing of over two million cocoa farms every day of the year." Ian Bretman of the Fairtrade Foundation said: "If companies see customers are serious about where their chocolate comes from, that's what will bring them around in the end."

Others

Giant Eagle Grocer alleges Chocolate price fixing in Lawsuit (DJ)

Source: Dow Jones Newswires

28/03/2008

Pittsburgh, Mar. 28 - Giant Eagle Inc. is accusing chocolate companies of conspiring to increase prices and stifle competition. The O'Hara Township-based grocer claims it was overcharged for \$200 million worth of chocolate products between 2002 and 2007. The grocer doesn't say by how much it was overcharged it said its suit filed in U.S. District Court.

Defendants are Hershey Co. (HSY); Mars Inc. of McLean, Va.; Nestle SA (NSRGY) of Switzerland; and Cadbury Schweppes PLC (CSG) of London, and subsidiaries. A Canadian network of food distributors, ITWAL Ltd., is also named.

The defendants declined comment. The suit is at least the fourth filed in the U.S. since last year alleging a chocolate conspiracy. Giant Eagle operates in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland.

TIT BITS

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

Ghana reassures grinders over cocoa crop sale

ACCRA (March 25, 2008): Ghana remains committed to dedicating cheaper cocoa beans from its light crop to local processing companies, a senior government official said. Robert Kwabena Poku Kyei, special government advisor on cocoa, was clarifying comments made to Reuters this month by an industry regulator official who had said this exclusive access for the local grinders was being ended.

Sugar, coffee and cocoa climb

LONDON (March 26, 2008): Trade buyers drove up white sugar futures on Tuesday as bargain hunters took advantage of last week's commodities sell-off, while cocoa consolidated with industry support and speculative buying underpinned coffee. Sugar futures jumped five percent on trade buying in the morning after a heavy sell-off across the commodities complex late last week, traders said.

US MIDDAY: cocoa and coffee surge

NEW YORK (March 26, 2008): Arabica coffee and cocoa futures galloped higher Tuesday as trade buying and investment fund short-covering enabled both markets to recoup some of their recent sharp losses, traders said. The benchmark ICE May cocoa contract surged \$98, or 4.3 percent, to trade at \$2,363 per tonne at 9:55 am EDT (1355 GMT), dealing from \$2,283 to \$2,395.

New York cocoa easier

NEW YORK (March 26, 2008): US cocoa futures settled quietly lower on Monday, after speculative pressure briefly pushed the market to an eight-week low following a boost from overnight fund buying in thin dealings, traders said. ICE Futures US was shut on Friday for the Easter holiday. The London market remained closed for the holiday on Monday.

cocoa smugglers swap sacks on Ivorian-Ghana border

YELLOW CAMP (March 26, 2008): At this border village on the Ivory Coast-Ghana border, sacks of smuggled Ghanaian cocoa beans are being repacked in fresh sacks to be sold on international markets as Ivorian-origin beans.

Ivorian cocoa arrivals seen rising

ABIDJAN (March 26, 2008): Cocoa arrivals at Ivory Coast's port of San Pedro reached 446,254 tonnes from October 1 to March 16, according to data from the Coffee and cocoa Bourse (BCC) obtained by Reuters on Tuesday. That compared with 370,415 tonnes delivered to the port during the same period of the 2006/07 season, the data showed.

Patchy rain, sun suggest good Ivorian cocoa mid crop

ABIDJAN (March 26, 2008): Patchy rains and long spells of sunshine in Ivory Coast's main cocoa growing regions last week suggest a good April-to-September mid crop, farmers and analysts said on Tuesday. In the western regions of Soubre and Gagnoa, and southerly Aboisso and Agboville, farmers reported good rains and hot weather.

London sugar and cocoa up; coffee down

LONDON (March 27, 2008): A weak dollar, combined with higher oil and gold prices, drove speculative buying of robusta coffee, white sugar and cocoa futures on Wednesday, but robustas erased gains in late trading on profit-taking, dealers said.

US MIDDAY: cocoa climbs, coffee mixed

NEW YORK (March 27, 2008): cocoa futures trading on ICE Futures US extended Tuesday's rebound in early trade Wednesday, on continued fund buying, while arabica coffee futures were mixed. ICE Futures US May coffee 0.40 cent higher at \$1.3305 per lb at 9:15 am EDT (1315 GMT). Range was \$1.3145 to \$1.3535 per lb.

New York cocoa settles up

NEW YORK (March 27, 2008): US cocoa futures settled 6 percent higher on Tuesday amid renewed fund interest and strength in sterling relative to the dollar, traders said. "It's the weak dollar, strong British pound. London (cocoa) is up and the CRB is higher. I think there have been funds buying dips, which is why it moves up so quickly," one cocoa dealer said.

Cocoa and coffee recover; sugar weakens

LONDON (March 28, 2008): London coffee and cocoa staged a mild recovery on Thursday but a strengthening dollar capped some of the gains for now, and sugar ended weaker. Robusta coffee closed higher, reversing early losses due to Far Eastern origin selling, as the market bounced from the heavy sell-off seen across the commodities complex last week.

US MIDDAY: cocoa sinks

NEW YORK (March 28, 2008): cocoa futures trading on ICE Futures US tumbled more than 5 percent in early trade Thursday as speculative pressure weighed on prices, and arabica coffee futures also fell. Benchmark May contract sank \$92 at \$2,330 per tonne by 9:25 am EDT (1325 GMT), after falling 5.6 percent to the low at \$2,288. The rest down from \$93 to \$127.

Cocoa futures settle with modest gains

NEW YORK (March 28, 2008): US cocoa futures settled higher on Wednesday. The Reuters-Jefferies CRB Index of 19 commodities rose 2 percent to a one-week high. Analysts said money was returning to commodity markets as investors realised the fundamentals that drove oil, gold and wheat to record highs this year will not change regardless of credit conditions.

Ivorian cocoa prices mixed

ABIDJAN (March 28, 2008): Farm-gate cocoa prices in Ivory Coast's main growing regions were mixed in the week of March 17 as main crop supplies dried up and the small size of available beans weighed on prices, buyers and farmers said on Thursday.