



Tropentag, October 5-7, 2011, Bonn

“Development on the margin”

Does Organic Cocoa Certification Contribute to Socioeconomic Development and Environmental Conservation in Brazil and Peru?

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Abstract

Small-scale producers are responsible for over two thirds of total global cocoa production and most of it occurs in areas of high biodiversity (Clay 2004; Donald 2004; Mendes 2011). In Latin America, 5–6 million farmers are involved in cocoa production (Somarriba 2006; World Cocoa Foundation 2010), in an area of 8 million hectares (COPAL 2009). 15,000 cocoa farms, being the majority family farms, are currently located in the Brazilian Amazon, location of origin of the cocoa species. The organic cocoa market represents less than 0.5% of total production, yet the production of certified organic cocoa has reached 15,500 tonnes (ICCO 2011). Latin America has had annual growth rates of volume and economic value of organic cocoa production of over 70% in the last 15 years. Considering the increasing relevance of cocoa production in the Amazon region, and the combination of income generation and labour allocation — having generated 18.800 US\$/family and 40.000 jobs in the state of Pará, Brazil, in 2010 (Mendes 2011) — as well as ecological features of cocoa farms, the main research question is whether and under which conditions organic cocoa certification may contribute to enhancing smallholders' well-being and environmental conservation. This paper presents findings of an ongoing research project led by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), by conducting a cost-benefit analysis of organic certification based on the results of survey questionnaires applied to cocoa farmers, while exploring smallholders' perceptions concerning the opportunities and limitations of organic cocoa certification based on qualitative assessments of environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions. The methodology was applied in Peru and Brazil enabling the comparison of two case studies, both in the Amazon, one in Juanjui, San Martin (Peru) and the other in the Transamazon Highway region, Pará (Brazil). In the latter, preliminary results indicate that only 1.5% of the producers are currently participating in certification systems, which are not creating additional jobs, yet having a positive to very positive effect, in both study areas, on local working conditions and biodiversity, conservation of soil and water. Further adaptation of certification schemes to local conditions are to be explored in both countries.

Keywords: Amazon, cacao, certification, smallholders, sustainable development