



Tropentag, September 16-18, 2026, hybrid conference

“Towards multi-functional agro-ecosystems  
promoting climate resilient futures”

## The role of certifications in enhancing cocoa exports from trinidad and tobago to switzerland

FARIHA KAMALUDDIN<sup>1</sup>, INGRID FROMM<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL, Agriculture, Switzerland*

<sup>2</sup>*School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences HAFL, International Agriculture,*

### Abstract

Cocoa production in Trinidad and Tobago is internationally recognised for its fine-flavour quality and cultural significance; however, it remains marginal in global supply due to structural constraints and limited scale. Despite strong reputational advantages, smallholder producers face persistent barriers to accessing premium markets, including weak export coordination, high transaction costs, and limited institutional support. At the same time, demand for certified and traceable cocoa is increasing in Switzerland, a key hub for high-value chocolate production, positioning sustainability standards as potential instruments for market integration.

This study examines the role of certification schemes, Fairtrade, Organic, and Rainforest Alliance, in shaping market access, price formation, and value chain coordination. A mixed-methods design combines survey data from 21 cocoa farmers with 18 semi-structured interviews with exporters and institutional stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago, and 4 interviews with Swiss market actors, complemented by desk-based analysis.

The findings reveal a substantial gap between awareness and adoption: while most farmers are familiar with certification, only 2 out of 21 ( 10 %) are currently certified. Certification facilitates access to niche markets and improves traceability; however, economic benefits remain limited and uneven. The most significant constraints are financial costs, administrative requirements, and uncertainty regarding returns. Exporters and institutional actors confirm that certification functions primarily as a market entry condition rather than a driver of price premiums, with quality consistency, traceability, and supply reliability identified as more decisive factors by Swiss buyers.

The results indicate that certification alone is insufficient to enhance export competitiveness. Effective market integration requires complementary institutional support, improved coordination, and targeted measures to reduce financial and administrative burdens.

**Keywords:** Certification, cocoa, exports, Fairtrade, market access, smallholders, sustainability, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago