

Documentation of the European trade union conference **Cocoanet.EU** “Fair trade – fair work in the cocoa- and chocolate industry” –



Almost 100 delegates representing 21 trade union organizations and 14 countries met from September 14th to 17th 2010 in the Bildungszentrum Oberjosbach (BZO) close to Frankfurt to establish the trade union and employee representatives network **Cocoanet.EU**. This network is co-funded by the European Commission and will include two further international meetings within the next months. Under the auspices of the European Trade Union Federation **EFFAT**, the German trade union **NGG** organized this conference which was attended by representatives of **FNV** (Netherlands), **ACV** (Belgium), **ABVV** (Belgium), **Pro-Ge** (Austria), **Unite** (UK), **CFDT** (France) and **Solidarnosc** (Poland). Trade union members from Spain, Croatia, Italy, Malta, Lithuania, Turkey and Norway also attended the conference.

Wednesday, 15th September 2010

Michael Bergstreser, trade union secretary of the **NGG**, Germany and **Wolfgang Wolter**, director of the **BZO**, welcomed the international audience and officially opened the conference. The vice chairman of the **NGG** in Germany **Claus-Harald Guester** emphasized the important role of the European sweets industry which alone in Germany has more than 50.000 employees and referred to precarious working conditions in this sector. In his welcome address, **Claus-Harald Guester** particularly stressed three aspects which should serve as key messages to the conference: 1) to achieve fairness in the entire cocoa chain, 2) to discuss sustainability and 3) to create a network beyond borders of nations.

Michael Bergstreser spoke about the start of the project and that the number of project partners has grown remarkably since **EFFAT** has created the steering group in October 2008. His presentation included various definitions of the terms network and sustainability. He stated that the people behind the network **Cocoanet.EU** were the main actors that the network will be based on personal contacts and meetings as well as an electronic network implemented in a website. Sustainability had various definitions and the aim of the conference should be to publish an own, trade union definition of the term sustainability.

Klaus Maack of **Wilke, Maack and Partner**, Germany outlined the background, work schedule and objectives of the **Cocoanet.EU** project. With the funding of the European Commission **DG Employment**, the project will be financially supported for 12 months and cover two further workshops in February/March 2011 and June 2011. One of the expected outcomes should be a European Map including contact details of partners in the national



trade unions and various chocolate companies in Europe. He also stated that a common position of trade unions on topics “we find important” is a significant project objective.

The first conference day was placed under the key topic “Sustainability”. Therefore the presentations of **Paul Elshof** of Food World R&C in the Netherlands, **Friedel Huetz-Adams** of Suedwind e.V. in Germany and **Mieke van Reenen** of the Tropical Commodity Coalition (TCC) in the Netherlands provided important background information on the present developments, challenges and threats in the cocoa value chain, the “dark sides of chocolate” and certifications in the cocoa sector.

Dick de Graaf of FNV, Netherlands presented a trade union definition of the term sustainability and demanded a “good and fair life” for every single person working in the cocoa value chain. More precisely, he demanded healthy working conditions for all workers, fair wages for workers in the producing countries, fair prices for cocoa on the world market, soil improvement and a prudent use of pesticides on the plantations in Africa, South America and Asia. The trade union definition of sustainability also includes the adherence of the basic trade unions rights as defined in the ILO conventions and OECD Guidelines for multinational companies. He stated that if governments would adhere to the ILO conventions, trade unions could fight for fair wages and fair working conditions. Another remark concerning the three million farmers in the cocoa producing countries was that “we trade unions in Europe cannot organize them; they have to do that themselves. However, they are the weakest link in the cocoa value chain and we need to protect and support them”.

The presentations of **Paul Elshof**, **Friedel Huetz-Adams** and **Mieke van Reenen** as well as the trade union definition of sustainability presented by **Dick de Graaf** served as an important input to the following working group session in the afternoon.

For the working group session, the participants were asked to form groups according to languages. Each of the eight working groups was chaired by a speaker responsible for the moderation of his/her group and the presentation of results to the audience.

Key questions leading the discussion were:

1. What are the main aspects and effects if the production in the cocoa value chain is not sustainable?

Aspects and Effects	In the producing countries (Africa)	In Europe
Environmental		
Economic		
Social		

2. What can we do to achieve a sustainable cocoa chain?

The moderator **Paul Elshof** asked all participants to discuss whether they agreed with the definition presented by Dick de Graaf and to summarize their ideas, comments and possible amendments. Since a major objective of the conference was to adapt and publish a commonly agreed trade union definition of sustainability, remarks and comments were welcomed.

The first report was presented by **Gerhard Riess** of PRO-GE, Austria as the chair of one of the German speaking working groups. He wondered if certificates on fair trade can be trusted and stated that society demanded more security and reliable information on the background of products. He also demanded an advanced differentiation of the term child labour and referred to the various cultural backgrounds and a different perception of child labour in other countries.

Hilde Verhelst of ACV in Belgium presenting the results of one of the Dutch and Flemish speaking groups specifically demanded that employer had to be pressured to adhere to their responsibilities. Another demand was that employers had to regularly report on their activities and duties in the producing countries and that a sustainability fond had to be set up. Generally, **Hilde Verhelst** stated that a better exchange of information between trade unions and NGOs on a European level was necessary.

Bente Loevaas of the Norwegian Food & Allied Workers and vice chairwoman of the Kraft Food EWC reported back from the first English speaking working group who demanded to pay attention to the great differences in



wages in the same sector between eastern and northern European countries. Another important demand was to closely cooperate with farmers in the producing countries and to provide them with support in order to organize themselves. Her group presented an addition to the trade union definition of sustainability and stated that not only decent living conditions for people in the cocoa chain needed to be established, but also decent living conditions for their future. Another remark concerning the definition was that companies and governments should not only ratify ILO conventions, but should also live according to them.

Julie Blondeel from ABVV in Belgium presented the results from the French speaking group and specifically demanded to introduce a charter which should oblige all employers to respect the rights of every single worker worldwide. She also spoke on the present information gap and deficient state of knowledge – even among the conference participants – and suggested to use the website to systematically provide information on the cocoa sector and conditions in Africa.

The Polish speaking group was chaired by **Arthur Krasinski** from Solidarnosc and the company Mars in Poland, who emphasized that also European workers and employee representatives had enormous problems themselves and that their situation should not be forgotten. He stated that trade union rights were restricted in his country (Poland) and demanded to set a priority first on the situation of workers in Europe in order to effectively pressure employers in a second step. Further demands of the Polish speaking group were to apply “No child labour” certificates on cocoa beans processed in European companies and to critically reflect “Anti-child labour campaigns” of multinational companies. According to him such campaigns were rather used as PR campaigns and trade unions needed to check upon the truth and the reliability of the sources.

Barrie Roberts of Unite in the UK representing the second English speaking group added that trade unions had to make better use of the media and to improve international solidarity and cooperation with different actors.

Klaus Gumpert of Bahlsen in Germany summarized the results of the second German speaking group and demanded awareness raising campaigns and better information for consumer on fair trade certificates. In many cases the consumer would only see fair trade in the context of rising prices for products. Also he stated that it was urgently necessary to cooperate, to act together as European trade unions and that this would make trade unions stronger to effectively pressure employers.

Julie Schouten of FNV in the Netherlands had three specific demands as results from the second Dutch and Flemish speaking working group. She demanded cooperation and lobbying together with NGOs in order to a) set a minimum price on cocoa, b) to establish decent working standards in the producing countries in Africa and c) to guarantee decent working conditions in Europe. Another demand was to set the topic of sustainability on the agenda of EWC of cocoa and chocolate companies and to provide better information on sustainability for all employees working in the sector.

Claudio Riso, of FAI CISL in Italy and secretary of the EWC of Ferrero suggested naming one person in each EWC with a distinct responsibility on sustainability. He further stated that companies had to inform about price policies and working conditions in the cocoa producing countries and that this obligation should be included as a regulation into contracts.

Thursday, 16th September 2010

The second day of the conference was placed under the key topic “Networking” and was officially opened by **Harald Wiedenhofer**, the general secretary of EFFAT. **Harald Wiedenhofer** welcomed the international participants to the conference which was supported by EFFAT and spoke about the work of EFFAT, the importance of European networking and European works councils. He also referred to the seven flagship initiatives of the EU commission to combat poverty and precarious work as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy and provided a profound overview on the work of EFFAT. Since its 3rd congress in October 2009, EFFAT has set a first priority on the threat of precarious work in the EU and has officially adapted a “Charta on precarious work – Social justice from farm to fork. Fight precarious work!” He also emphasized that the cocoa and chocolate sector in Europe was confronted with specific problems as for example the strong competition between companies and the dictation of prices by solely the food retail market (discounters).

His speech was followed by presentation held by six European Works council chairs of the leading multinational cocoa and chocolate companies **Ferrero, Nestlé, Barry Callebaut, Unilever, Kraft Foods and Cadbury**. Each of the chairpersons set a focus in their presentations on the founding and composition of the EWC, its transnational work and most importantly on its activities in regard to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability.



For example **Klaus Hoffmann** of the Nestlé EWC referred to a “cocoa plan of Nestlé” which aimed at a sustainable cocoa value chain and was based on active cooperation with farmers’ organizations in the producing countries. Accordingly, Nestlé was involved in various initiatives such as the International Cocoa Initiative, the Cocoa World Foundation and has introduced a “Sustainable Tree Crops Programme”. Other presentations were held by **Wolfgang Salzer** of the EWC of Ferrero, **Hilde Verhelst** of the EWC of Barry Callebaut, **Hermann Soggeberg**, chairman of the EWC of Unilever, **Bente Loevaas**, vice chairwoman of the EWC of Kraft Foods and **Barrie Roberts** of the EWC of Cadbury.

One important success story was presented by **Hermann Soggeberg**, who spoke about a European demonstration against the shutdown of company sites of Unilever. In this case, the EWC was not informed and consulted prior to the process and has then organized a massive demonstration in front of the European Unilever headquarters. Impressed by the great presence of employees, the Unilever management now informs and consults the EWC in cases of transnational decisions from the beginning onwards. **Hilde Verhelst** reported from the work of the Barry Callebaut EWC, which placed the topic sustainability on the agenda of their next meeting. Their demands were to push through monitoring and reporting by the management on all production sites of the company, also in Africa and to adapt international company agreement covering countries outside of the EU.

In the afternoon a panel discussion with two management representatives, **Fritz Schroeder-Senker** of Mars and **Karl-Heinz Feussner** of Ferrero in Germany, was chaired by **Harald Wiedenhofer** of EFFAT. Other speakers on the panel were **Eddie Gerlo** of FGTB in Belgium, **Regina Dremmen**, chairwoman of the EWC Lindt & Spruengli, **Wolfgang Salzer** of the Ferrero EWC and **Bente Loevaas** of the Kraft Foods EWC. Participants had the opportunity to directly address their questions and concerns to the two management representatives. The debate covered the situation of agency workers in the companies, the issue of flexible working hours, child labour on plantations in Turkey which were said to be suppliers of nuts for Ferrero, sustainably produces raw materials such as cocoa, hazelnuts and sugar and the dominant role of discounters dictating the prices of chocolate.

One particularly interesting issue was raised by **Arthur Krasinski** from Mars in Poland who directly confronted **Fritz Schroeder-Senker** (management Mars) with the condition of employee representatives at the company Mars. **Arthur Krasinski** stated that Mars has dismissed trade union members and that the management did not share any information on the existence of a EWC of Mars. He was kept under the impression that there was no EWC of Mars. He stated that if Poland was not yet represented he would be interested in joining the EWC.

In his closing remarks, **Harald Wiedenhofer** urged the two management representatives to clarify the questions raised on child labour in Turkey and the restriction of fundamental trade union rights in Poland. He also stated that an initial question could easily develop into a rumor and then possibly into a public campaign threatening the image of the company. Accordingly, it would be advisable to immediately check upon these issues and deliver an answer to EFFAT. **Harald Wiedenhofer** also emphasized that companies have often used CSR and sustainability reports to improve their image, while focusing on environmental and sometimes social issues, but hardly ever on the rights of employee representatives and trade unions. In regard to the lack of information on the existence of a Mars EWC in Poland, he required **Fritz Schroeder-Senker** to inform the responsible manager of Mars about this issue and to send an invitation for the next EWC meeting to the Polish colleague. In this regard, the panel discussion has contributed to an improved work and structure of the Mars EWC, which soon will be enlarged by Polish representation.

Eckhard Voss of Wilke, Maack and Partner in Germany presented a networking project of employee representatives and trade union secretaries in the agricultural machinery sector, coordinated by the European Metalworkers Federation (EMF) in close cooperation with the German IG Metall which was financially supported by the EU Commission between 2007 and 2010. He visualized the surplus of networking on a European level and presented the different cooperation steps, project partners in the Agritec network and outcome of the project. His experiences in the network were very positive and served as an input for a discussion in the plenary on the role and importance of networking in the cocoa- and chocolate industry in Europe – the CocoaNet.EU.

The number of speakers and the wealth of interesting information presented by the EWC representatives as well as the vivid debate during the panel discussion delayed the agenda of the second conference day. The working group sessions on networking could not take place in the afternoon as planned and had to be shifted to the following conference day.



Friday, 17th September 2010

Under the moderation of **Julie Blondeel**, the third and last conference day was opened. Julie Blondeel reported from the decisions of the project's steering group to change the agenda of the last conference day and to provide time and space for a working group session on the key issue "networking". Like on the first day, the participants were asked to work in groups according to languages and to share the main results in the plenary.

Following key questions were relevant for the working group session:

1. Which information do we need to set up an electronic network?
2. Which industry-related information must be available on the Cocoanet.EU homepage?
3. For what kind of topics do we need the network most urgently?
4. Which instruments do we need to achieve the objectives according to our definition of sustainability?

The working group results were presented by **Klaus Gumpert** for one of the German speaking groups, **Bente Loevaas** and **Ian Kavanagh** of Nestlé in the UK for two English speaking groups, **Liliane Minner** of FGTB in Belgium for the French speaking group, **Hilde Verhelst** and **Julie Schouten** for the two Dutch and Flemish speaking groups, **Arthur Krasinski** for the Polish group and **Ermanno Bonaldo** of FAI CISL in Italy. Unfortunately the second German speaking group did not report back to the plenary.

Bente Loevaas even handed in a draft outlining a proposal of the website's structure and **Julie Schouten** referred to two aspects, a) to develop an activity calendar as an overview on what activities were taking place in each country and b) to upload the trade unions' definition of sustainability with a link to the website of the ILO.

Among other comments and demands following aspects were repeatedly mentioned. The network should provide contact details on partners in the project inclusive of a photo ("put a face to the name"), email, phone number, address and information on function in the company or trade union, an overview and contact details on all EWCs in the sector, an overview on company locations in Europe, links to trade unions, the ILO and NGOs working on sustainability and fair trade. Also, the speakers demanded a simple website structure and to refrain from confidential information on the website. A newsletter and information on the sector such as basic data on companies and locations, precarious work, re-location and restructuring shall be provided on the website. Another demand was to collect and update news on developments and conditions in the cocoa producing countries in Africa, South America and Asia.

Paul Elshof of Food World F&C summarized the main demands and aspects raised by the working groups and stated that a common action program needed to be developed for the following steps in the Cocoanet.EU project.

Kim Schuetze of Wilke, Maack and Partner presented the new website www.cocoanet.eu which will serve as the electronic network of the project. She stated that all remarks and requests of the working groups will be discussed within the steering group of the project and implemented into the website. The Cocoanet.EU website was currently in a working stage and will be completed in few weeks time. **Kim Schuetze** showed the plenary the website of the BZO (www.bzo.de) where pictures of all Cocoanet.EU participants and a selection of the presentations held during the conference had already been uploaded. This was positively perceived by the conference participants.

As the final speaker of the European trade union conference, **Franz-Josef Moellenberg**, chairman of the NGG in Germany summarized the main aspects discussed during the conference. In his resumé, **Franz-Josef Moellenberg** stressed the importance of employee and trade union networks and also criticized that companies tended to use Corporate Social Responsibility to lift their public image instead of factually acting according to social responsibility. He stated that "the social dimension of sustainability cannot be left to voluntary and hence random activities of companies."

Franz-Josef Moellenberg asked the delegates of the European trade union conference to adapt the "**Frankfurt Declaration Fair Trade – Fair Work**" which according to him, would be a significant outcome of the network. He then summarized the six main demands and aspects of the Declaration of Frankfurt:

1. to abolish child labour and to fully implement the ILO convention 182;



2. to support and qualify farmers in the producing countries;
3. companies and SMEs in the EU must to live up to the OECD guidelines for multinational companies;
4. to guarantee fair prices for cocoa farmers;
5. fair work and social minimum standards in the EU which must be documented by a social label;
6. to strengthen cooperation with NGOs and other stakeholders in order to reinforce a network for more safety in social, environmental and economic aspects across the entire cocoa value chain from cocoa beans to the box of chocolates.

The Frankfurt declaration was then adapted by the plenary by acclamation.

Kim Schuetze, wmp consult, 28.09.2010

(For programme, participants, and presentations and further information on the conference, see www.cocoanet.eu)