



CacaoNet
Global Network for Cacao Genetic Resources

A Global Strategy

for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources, as the Foundation for a Sustainable Cocoa Economy

Compiled by Brigitte Laliberté




Bioversity International
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CacaoNet (www.cacaonet.org) is the Global Network for Cacao Genetic Resources, coordinated by Bioversity International with member representatives from various cocoa[1] research institutes and organizations that support cocoa research. CacaoNet aims to optimize the conservation and use of cacao genetic resources as the foundation of a sustainable cocoa economy (from farmers through research to consumers), by coordinating and strengthening the conservation and related research efforts of a worldwide network of public and private sector stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

CacaoNet would like to thank all those organizations and individuals who contributed to the development of the Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources. We particularly thank all the many organizations, institutions and individuals who have assisted us by contributing to the genebank surveys and who have provided constructive feedback during the development of this strategy, which was supported by financial and in-kind contributions from the Cocoa Research Association Ltd., UK (CRA Ltd.) Mars Inc, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service (USDA/ARS), World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), Bioversity International and the CGIAR Research Programme on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry.

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This booklet summarises the key elements of the Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources. It and the full and detailed Global Strategy are available as PDF files for download from the CacaoNet website.

Disclaimer

This document has been developed by cacao genetic resources and breeding experts. The objective of this document is to provide a framework for the efficient and effective conservation of the globally important cacao genetic resources and strengthening their use. This strategy document is likely to continue evolving and being updated as and when information becomes available. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of their individual institutes. In case of specific questions and/or comments, please direct them to the CacaoNet Secretariat at Bioversity International.

[1] Although the term "cocoa" is generally used for the plant and its products in many English speaking countries, this document will refer to "cacao" for the plant and the unprocessed seeds of the species *Theobroma cacao*. Once the cacao seeds, commonly known as "beans", are harvested, fermented and dried, the product is known as cocoa.

Preface

On behalf of all the donors that have generously supported the preparation of this important document, it is a pleasure to write this brief preface. The publication of this Global Strategy is the culmination of a major international effort involving many experts, many revisions and intense discussions over a long period of time amongst members of the cocoa research community who have often had strongly held views on the best way forward. We believe that though it has been time consuming this international debate has been fruitful and will have greatly strengthened the Global Strategy that is presented here.

Some 95% of global cocoa production comes from small cocoa growers who might have an average of some three hectares allocated to the crop with perhaps an annual yield of some 330 kg per hectare leading to their producing about one tonne of dried beans per annum. The cultivation systems described later in this Global Strategy cannot be considered as sustainable and they barely, if at all, deliver a living wage to such a cocoa farming family. As a minimum, current cocoa farm productivity needs to be trebled. Cleary the availability of a broad range of genetic resources and breeding from them to provide improved planting material will have a major role in enhancing the sustainability of cocoa cultivation for the myriad of small growers who presently face a somewhat uncertain future.

In view of the substantial international importance of the trade in cocoa and the several millions of very small farmers in the tropics involved in its cultivation, some observers have expressed surprise that the crop was not designated as a priority crop in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA). In the absence of such an international legal and financial framework to support its conservation and use, cocoa is a vulnerable crop *vis a vis* its long-term and sustainable funding. However, thanks to the strong commitment and efforts of CATIE and CRU/UWI to ensure global access to these resources by designating their collections under the ITPGRFA Article 15, these valuable genetic resources can be accessed for utilization and conservation in research, breeding and training and the benefits arising out of their use shared in a fair and equitable way. This Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources has been developed since we believe that this will greatly enhance the impact of this work and the opportunities to get international support for the development of better cocoa planting material.

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the experts who so freely gave of their time and their opinions, as well as the vision of the sponsors that has enabled the completion of this important piece of work. The supporters of this strategy development process and the wider cocoa industry look forward to working with national authorities and international donors to effectively deliver the vision laid out in this Global Strategy.

Tony Lass, Chairman
Cocoa Research Association Ltd., UK (CRA Ltd.)

The future of the world cocoa economy depends on the availability of genetic diversity and the sustainable use of this broad genetic base to breed improved varieties. Decreasing cacao genetic diversity is a serious problem and all its many causes need to be urgently addressed: the destruction of the Amazonian rainforests, the loss of traditional varieties, and threats from natural disasters and extreme weather to material conserved in genebanks and field collections. This loss of diversity increases the vulnerability of crops such as cacao to sudden changes in climate and to the appearance of new pests and diseases.

Cocoa farmer, Côte d'Ivoire © D. Pokou

Most of the countries involved in the improvement and production of cacao are highly dependent on genes and varieties characterized and conserved in other countries and regions. The efforts necessary to manage cacao genetic resources effectively can therefore only be carried out through international collaboration.

What needs **to be done**?

A coordinated Global Strategy

There is now an urgent need for an integrated Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources and the organization of related information by the cacao community. CacaoNet facilitated a series of consultations with a wide group of experts in cacao genetic resources research and management in order to develop a complete Global Strategy. This booklet summarises the full and detailed strategy, which is published by Bioversity International on behalf of CacaoNet and available to download as a PDF from the CacaiNet website.

The **vision** of the Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources is to improve the livelihoods of the 5-6 million farmers in developing countries across tropical Africa, Asia and Latin America who produce around 90% of cocoa worldwide, and the 40-50 million people who depend upon cocoa for their livelihoods.

The overall **goal** of the Global Strategy is to optimize the conservation and facilitate the use of cacao genetic resources, as the foundation of a sustainable cocoa economy, by bringing together national and international players in public and private sectors. The Global Strategy promotes the rationalization of conservation efforts at regional and global levels by encouraging partnerships and sharing facilities and tasks.

The Global Strategy is intended to be used as a **roadmap** towards building an efficient and effective global system that focuses on the needs of small-scale producers. The Global Strategy is an important guiding document for donors, international and national research organizations and the private sector, that will facilitate the raising of support by identifying funding priorities that ensure the conservation, availability and use for improvement of cacao genetic diversity worldwide.

The **objectives** of the Global Strategy are to:

1. Provide a platform for securing funding for the long-term, ensuring the coordination and implementation of priority cacao genetic resources research, breeding and use of improved varieties.
2. Assess the global cacao genetic diversity and identify critical gaps in existing *ex situ* collections and prioritize collecting missions.
3. Ensure the cost-effective long-term conservation of cacao genetic resources and access particularly to poorly-known gene pools.
4. Strengthen the on-farm conservation of landraces and the *in situ* conservation of wild species especially where the natural habitat is threatened.
5. Strengthen the use of the cacao genetic resources by providing support to breeders and key users through improved characterization, evaluation and support to population enhancement programmes as well as distribution of improved varieties.
6. Improve the documentation on cacao germplasm and the sharing of key information of most value to users.
7. Strengthen the distribution mechanism and safe movement of germplasm.
8. Strengthen the networking and partnerships for global collaboration.

The **expected outputs** of the Global Strategy are:

- Output 1: The cacao genepool is conserved *in situ* and *ex situ* for the long term by a global network of partners maintaining the most important diversity of cacao germplasm.
- Output 2: The global system for the safe exchange of cacao germplasm is strengthened.
- Output 3: The use of cacao genetic diversity is optimized.
- Output 4: The effectiveness of global efforts to conserve and use cacao genetic resources is assured.

The rest of this booklet sets out the background to the Global Strategy and summarizes its actions in eight key strategic components.

Where we **are today**

Cacao production

Cocoa is produced mainly on small-scale farms in developing countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) estimates that 90% of world cocoa production comes from farms with only two to five hectares. According to the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) there are 5-6 million cocoa farmers worldwide, and the number of people who depend upon cocoa for their livelihood is 40-50 million. Of the total production, 70% comes from Africa (mainly from West Africa), 19% from Asia and Oceania and 11% from the Americas.

Breeding trials at the Mabang Megakarya Selection Programme (MMSP), Ghana. © G. Lockwood

Cocoa supply has been characterized by wide fluctuations in production with an average increase in demand of 3% per year (for the past 100 years). Industry experts predict the annual cocoa production in 2020 to rise by some 25%, or 1 million tonnes, to keep pace with the rapidly increasing demand for chocolate in the developing economies of Brazil, China, Eastern Europe and India. The estimated global annual market value of the cocoa crop, according to the ICCO, is between USD 8-10 billions, based on an annual production of 4 million tonnes and a monthly average daily price of cocoa beans between USD 2,264 to 2,359 per tonne. Compared to many other tree crops, there has been little investment in scientific research to improve cacao production, and the number of breeders is very low.

Most of the planting material is low yielding, often due to its high susceptibility to prevailing pests and diseases. However, preliminary evaluation of collections and farmers' populations has shown the existence of wide variation for disease resistance and quality. Furthermore, only a few varieties have been selected for sensory quality aiming at the specialty cocoa market.

Genetic diversity of cacao

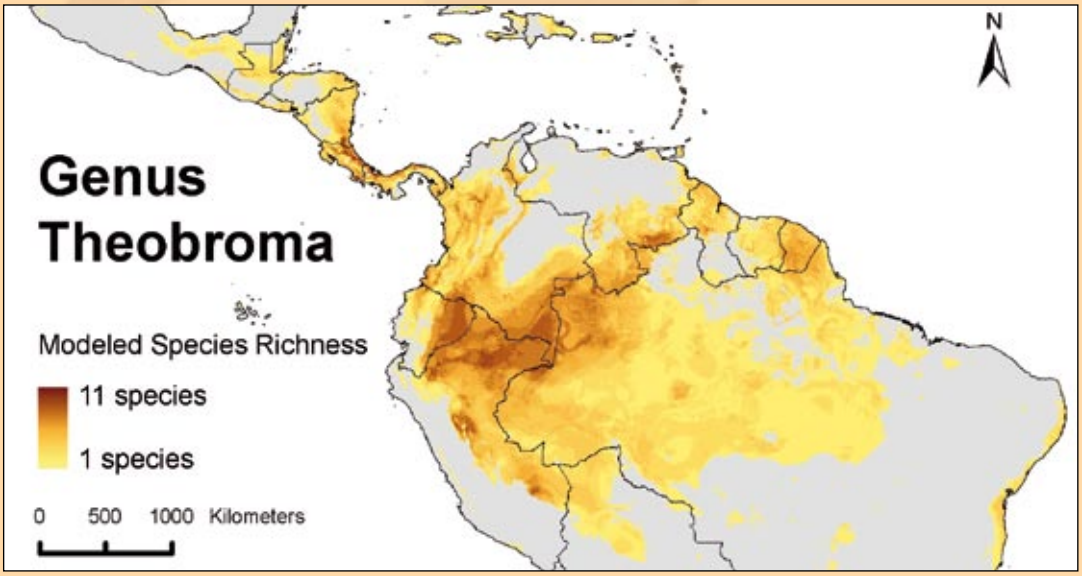
Pod diversity, CATIE, Costa Rica. © A. Mata/ W. Phillips

The genus *Theobroma* is divided into 22 species of which *Theobroma cacao* is the most widely known. These *Theobroma* species are found naturally in tropical lowland rainforests extending from the Amazon basin through to southern Mexico (18°N to 15°S). Cacao was domesticated at least 3000 years ago in Mesoamerica. The diverse use of cacao led to it being widely grown in Mesoamerica before the arrival of the Europeans, with further subsequent spread through South America and then globally in the early 18th century.

Hybridization between genetic groups, both natural and caused by human actions, has resulted in novel hybrid populations and varieties.

Cacao genetic resources comprise the range of genetic variability that provides the raw material for breeding new and improved varieties to achieve a more economically sustainable cocoa production system, thus contributing to the economies of cacao producing countries.

Modelled species richness of genus *Theobroma*.



© E. Thomas

Conservation of diversity

Conservation and management of cacao genetic resources includes: targeted collecting, maintenance of field collections, effective characterization and identification, evaluation for important traits, information management, effective and safe exchange of germplasm and related information, and in some cases germplasm enhancement.

Since the early part of the 20th century, numerous missions have been undertaken to collect and conserve cacao *ex situ* in genebanks. The catastrophic impact of cacao diseases led to the expeditions to collect disease resistant germplasm from the Upper Amazon region in the 1930s, but in recent years more emphasis has been placed on systematic collections to capture genetic diversity.

There are many national collections in the Americas, the centre of origin, and in other cacao producing countries. Over 40 collections maintain more than 24,000 accessions of cacao.

Of these, two are international collections managed by the Cocoa Research Unit of the University of the West Indies (CRU/UWI), Trinidad and Tobago and the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), Costa Rica. These two institutes have entered agreements with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) to maintain global collections of cacao genetic resources for the long term and to make this germplasm freely available to any professionally qualified institution or individual. This strong international commitment requires sustainable funding to ensure these resources are conserved in perpetuity.

Ex situ collections worldwide

Asia/Pacific:
Fiji - Dobuilevu
India - CPCRI
Indonesia - Bah Lias & ICCRI
Malaysia - MCB
Papua New Guinea - CCI
Philippines - USMARC/PICRI
Solomon Islands - BPCU
Thailand - CHRC
Vanuatu - VARTC
Vietnam - Nong Lam Uni.

Americas:
Bolivia - El Ceibo Cooperative
Brazil - CEPEC - SUEPA - SUERO- ICA
Colombia - CORPOICA
Cuba - EIC/ECICC
Dominican Republic - IDIAF
ERO - ICA
Ecuador - INIAP
French Guiana - CIRAD
Guyana - MHOCGA
Honduras - FHIA
Mexico - INIFAP
Nicaragua - UNAN
Peru - CEPICAFE - ICT- UNAS - UNSAAC
USA - USDA
Venezuela - INIA

International collections:
Costa Rica - CATIE
Trinidad & Tobago - CRU/UWI

Africa/Europe
Benin - CRA/SB
Cameroon - IRAD
Côte d'Ivoire - CNRA
Ghana - CRIG
Nigeria - CRIN
Togo - CRAF
France - CIRAD

International quarantine:
UK - ICQC,R

Although the international collections at CATIE and CRU/UWI have been supported by public and industry sources for many years, this support has not yet been secured for the long term.

Photos: left, CRU/UWI in Trinidad and Tobago. © M. Gilmour - right, CATIE, Costa Rica. © W. Phillips

Most collections have some degree of duplication, internally and with other collections. At the same time, only a few have a strategic safety duplication of their unique materials at a different site to guard against natural disasters. Misidentification of trees within collections, which can be as high as 30%, is also an important problem.

In surveys of collection curators, the main limiting factors they mention that hinder the use of germplasm in breeding, are: (1) lack of information and knowledge (particularly evaluation) about the materials, (2) constraints in accessing materials (quarantine and policies), (3) relatively narrow genetic base available, (4) few breeding programmes and breeders and (5) lack of funding for research and breeding programmes. Current funding of most institutes is inadequate.

High-yielding clone, Brazil. © A. Eskes

Improvement of cacao

Although scientific cacao breeding began more than 70 years ago, only about a quarter of all cacao farms consist currently of improved varieties.

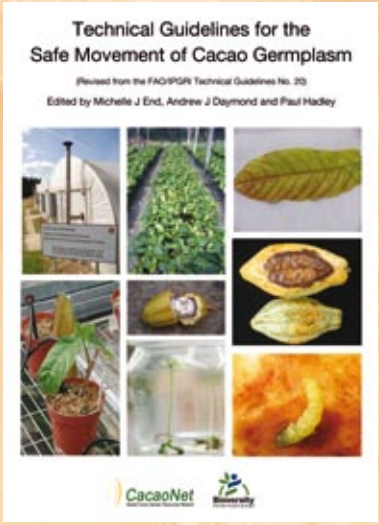
Ecuadorian clone EET 399 from INTA, Nicaragua © C. Montagnon

Cacao has always been plagued by serious losses from pests and diseases, with estimates of losses as high as 30% to 40% of global production (USD1-2 billion).

Scientists worldwide are looking for ways to produce cacao trees that can resist evolving pests and diseases, tolerate droughts, meet manufacturer's needs, and produce higher yields. These programmes depend on the availability of substantial genetic diversity together with an understanding of how best to use it, and powerful new technologies, such as molecular genetics, genomics, proteomics and eco-geographical remote-sensing techniques, have increased the value of these genetic resources. The preliminary sequencing of the cacao genome is a promising step in advancing breeders' ability to deliver improved trees to farmers, and advances in informatics have also markedly increased the capacity to use, analyse and communicate related data and information.

Movement of germplasm

Exchange of cacao germplasm and related information is an essential condition for use in research, plant breeding and agricultural development.



Although national and international genebanks hold a considerable range of cacao genetic diversity, access to these resources and information is often restricted by the lack of a clear legal and policy framework at institutional, national and regional levels. National laws that restrict access and use of plant genetic resources have emerged in many countries.

Partly as a result, current global arrangements for the exchange of cacao genetic resources rely heavily on the two international collections held by CATIE and CRU/UWI. With the exception of these collections, there is little transfer of germplasm between countries.

Movement of cacao germplasm brings with it the potential risk of transfer of pests and diseases. The risk is particularly acute when germplasm is moved between cacao-growing regions that have different endemic diseases. Currently the safe global movement of germplasm, including testing for the presence of viruses, is through the International Cocoa Quarantine Centre at the University of Reading UK, (ICQC,R). The USDA/ARS facility in Miami, USA, offers quarantine facilities for regional transfers.

It is essential that users have access to the latest information highlighting the risks associated with pests and diseases and recommendations on appropriate quarantine measures. The 2011 updated Safe Movement Guidelines for Cacao, compiled under the auspices of CacaoNet (available on the CacaoNet website), includes descriptions and information on an extensive range of pests and diseases and information on quarantine measures.

Cacao pods, Côte d'Ivoire © M. Glimour

Information on diversity

Providing access to important information about cacao germplasm is an essential component of the Global Strategy. The main purpose of conserving the genetic diversity is so that it can be used, but a key factor in its utilization is the availability of related useful data.

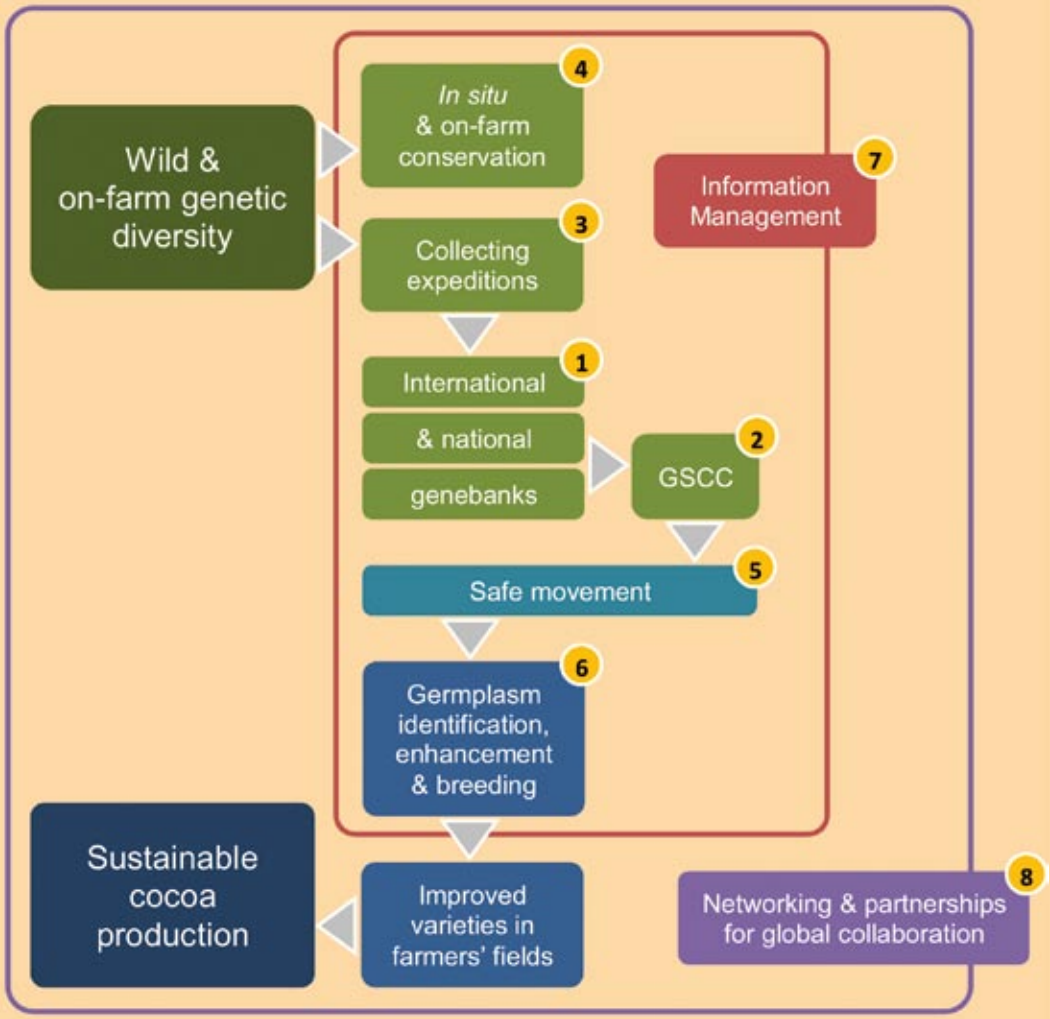
Information on morphology, evaluation, origins and locations of a large number of cacao varieties (genotypes) can be found in the International Cocoa Germplasm Database (ICGD), developed for the cocoa community at the University of Reading, UK, and genetic information is available online through TropGENE, hosted by CIRAD in France. ICGD and TropGENE contain information related to clonal material or varieties. And although they link some information to individual trees or accessions, they are not designed to be germplasm management tools.

Genebank curators recognize the need for information management systems to manage their collections and to provide access to data and images. The two international collections have adequate systems, but a lack of local expertise, time and funding are major constraints that prevent progress in many other collections. The resulting lack of adequate documentation systems for cacao collections restricts the further development of a global cacao genetic resources information system.

Documentation for field trials, MMSP nursery, Ghana @ G. Lockwood

Where we **want to go**

Strategic components from genetic diversity to sustainable cocoa production



1. Securing existing *ex situ* cacao genetic resources and their distribution.
2. Developing a Global Strategic Cacao Collection (GSCC).
3. Genetic diversity gap filling in *ex situ* collections and collecting.
4. Ensuring the *in situ* and on-farm conservation of important genetic diversity.
5. Strengthening the distribution mechanism and safe movement of germplasm.
6. Strengthening the use of the cacao genetic resources by providing support to breeders and key users through improved characterization, evaluation within collections and supporting population enhancement programmes.
7. Improving documentation and sharing of information on germplasm.
8. Strengthening the networking and partnerships for global collaboration.

Securing existing *ex situ* cacao genetic resources

The immediate priority of the Global Strategy is to secure the conservation and accessibility of genetic diversity currently in *ex situ* collections to all users, particularly those held in the public domain. This diversity is critical to ensure the future of the world cocoa production to generate improved planting materials to face new challenges of pests and diseases, climate change, agronomic conditions, and changing consumer preferences.

The Global Strategy provides a clear framework for public and private sector investment. The current funding of cacao conservation and use activities is born by the many national research institutes with the help of industry and international organizations and is below optimal levels. Many national collections are struggling to keep their material alive. Even the funding to the two international collections at CATIE and CRU/UWI and the ICQC,R is only on a 3-year planning basis, is not guaranteed and therefore their sustainability is not secured over the long term.

The Global Strategy calls for the development of an endowment fund (or similar sustainable funding mechanism) dedicated to the conservation and use of cacao genetic resources. Such a fund would secure valuable genetic resources in the public domain, forever, by: (1) securing its conservation and availability (including safety duplication), (2) promoting participation of all partners through support for collecting to fill gaps, characterization and evaluation, documentation systems, and promoting access to and use of materials and (3) increasing efficiency and effectiveness to reduce costs and increase sustainability.

Theobroma speciosum, CIRAD collection, French Guyana © Ph. Lachenaud

Developing a global strategic cacao collection

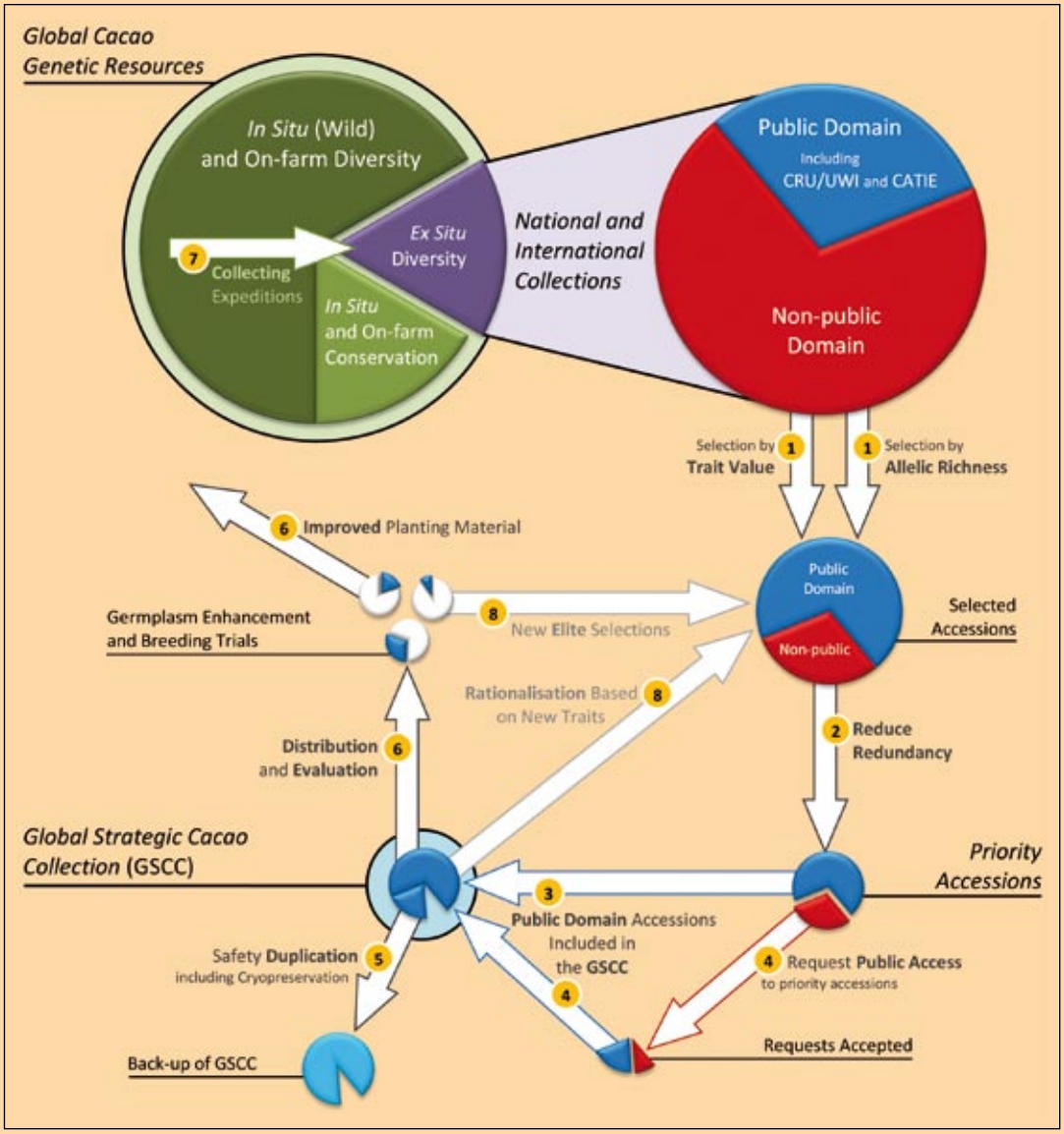
The Global Strategy calls for a Global Strategic Cacao Collection (GSCC) to be established as a virtual collection of materials that have been identified as unique and interesting, which each of the participating institutes agrees to maintain in the public domain and make readily available to any *bona fide* user. The formation of the GSCC will require a coordinated effort to characterize and rationalize available cacao genetic resources.

Improved clone, Papua New Guinea. © A. Eskes

The development of the GSCC will be based on a thorough assessment of the cacao genetic diversity currently conserved in *ex situ* collections and the identification of those unique accessions for use by breeders and researchers, available in the international and national collections. It will be a dynamic and geographically dispersed collection composed mainly of wild accessions and landraces. The backbone will consist of accessions from the international collections managed by CATIE and CRU/UWI collections, for which considerable characterization and evaluation data are already available in the public domain, complemented with priority accessions from national collections.

The GSCC has agreed criteria that will be used to identify priority accessions. A first set of accessions will be selected on the basis of capturing the greatest possible genetic diversity (in the form of allelic richness) held in *ex situ* collections worldwide. A further set of accessions will be selected on the basis of key traits of interest to breeders and farmers, such as yield, flavour characteristics and disease resistance. The allelic richness component of the GSCC will be relatively static, with new accessions introduced as they are made available from national collections or if unique material is found during collecting missions. The trait component of the GSCC, however, will be more dynamic and subject to a process of rationalization, where existing accessions may give way to new material that expresses a given trait more highly or has a better combination of traits.

Global system for the conservation and utilization of cacao genetic resources



© C. Turnbull

Partners will agree on how to share responsibilities for conserving and distributing material from the GSCC, and long-term funding will be discussed with the Global Crop Diversity Trust, other international donors and with the private sector. CacaoNet will continue to facilitate the dialogue between the ITPGRFA and the countries that are maintaining cacao materials targeted by the GSCC, in order to encourage countries to follow the example of CATIE and CRU/UWI and place selected accessions under the Treaty. CacaoNet will also ensure the continuing development of the GSCC in consultation with all its members.

Diversity gap filling in *ex situ* collections and collecting

Analysing the status of the cacao genepool in its centre of diversity (Upper Amazon and Mesoamerica) is a priority for the Global Strategy in order to promote the development of early warning systems for endangered diversity and to understand the threats of genetic erosion.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will be used to map the spatial distribution of different cacao populations, using additional information about genetic diversity in wild cacao populations to guide future collecting missions. In addition, collecting will be directed to places where one might reasonably expect to find a higher frequency of desirable traits, such as disease resistance. The main priority for collecting will be to fill gaps in *ex situ* collections, with a focus on threatened wild relatives of cacao and landraces, to facilitate use.

The research will be carried out by a network of experts with complementary skills in taxonomy, diversity analysis and conservation of genetic resources, especially *in situ* conservation. CacaoNet will play a role in ensuring the participation of key stakeholders and to build capacity in diversity analysis in the partners responsible for conservation of cacao in its centre of diversity.

Collecting budwood, Costa Rica. © A. Mata/W. Phillips

Ensuring the *in situ* and on-farm conservation of important diversity

Farmer's nursery, Côte d'Ivoire © D. Pokou

***In situ* and on-farm conservation** is influenced by complex social, political and biological factors. Habitats suitable for wild *Theobroma* species are increasingly degraded and fragmented and the drivers and consequences of these changes are currently not well understood. On-farm conservation depends ultimately on farmers as the final decision makers, choosing particular varieties they wish to use and conserve. The traditional cacao varieties that many farmers prefer often have lower yields, but recently some of these have acquired a reputation for high quality and are increasingly coveted by specialty gourmet markets. Some of these landraces can also be important sources of pest and disease resistance valuable to breeders. It is therefore critical to understand the social and economic factors that influence farmers' decisions to maintain cacao diversity, and to assess the implications of these factors for the design of *in situ* and on-farm conservation strategies.

The Global Strategy calls for a greater effort to understand and conserve the diversity of cacao and its wild relatives, using a variety of initiatives such as national forest reserves, wildlife refuges, and private reserves, all of which can help preserve natural plant communities. Partnerships with governmental agencies with responsibility for forestry and environmental issues and local-level authorities in target countries, plus national and international conservation NGOs, forestry research institutes, farmer communities and civil society organizations, as well as the private sector, will be needed for successful *in situ* and on-farm conservation.

Strengthening the distribution and safe movement of germplasm

Risks associated with pests and diseases need to be minimised before cacao diversity can be freely accessible and used by different research institutes around the world. The safe movement of cacao germplasm will be promoted through the updated 2011 safe-movement guidelines, available to download on the CacaoNet website can also be disseminated as printed copies to relevant institutes and to plant health authorities. The guidelines will be translated into French and Spanish and will be updated as new information becomes available.

CacaoNet will work with the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and its regional organizations to ensure that the updated guidelines are widely available to those responsible for the phytosanitary systems in cocoa-producing countries. Part of this will involve developing effective ways to raise awareness of the importance of safe movement of germplasm to the cacao community, working closely with groupings such as INGENIC and COPAL.

The Global Strategy will strengthen the current system of germplasm distribution through the ICQC,R and support the development of new quarantine centres in each of the three regions (Americas, Africa and Asia) to facilitate the safe movement of germplasm within regions.

International Cacao Quarantine Centre, Reading UK. © A. Daymond

Strengthening the use of cacao genetic resources

The use of accessions in the GSCC should start with their further evaluation for economically important traits. Accessions that possess the required traits can then be sent to quarantine before distribution to requesting countries. The Global Strategy will collaborate closely with INGENIC's regional breeding networks and other partners to develop a network of field trials that will evaluate GSCC materials at multiple sites. The network of evaluation sites will develop reliable and standardized methods and share evaluation information publically through the GSCC Information Portal.

Drying of cocoa beans, Ecuador. © A. Eskes

To facilitate the selection of new accessions to be introduced by user countries, a list of the main traits of accessions held in the ICQC,R will be compiled, which will help breeders identify materials of potential interest that are currently available for international distribution. Moreover, information on the GSCC Information Portal will assist them in prioritizing material from local and international genebanks for inclusion in their breeding trials following appropriate quarantine procedures. This work will be done in collaboration with INGENIC and the regional breeding networks where CacaoNet will play a coordination role.

The identification of the most useful GSCC germplasm for distribution, adapting to the evolving needs of breeding programmes, will continue. Germplasm of current interest includes the material from the CFC/ICCO/Bioversity project, materials from the black pod and witches' broom enhancement programmes in CRU/UWI and genotypes with frosty pod resistance identified in CATIE.

Photos: left to right: © M. Gilmour, © S. Weise, © A. Eskes

Improving documentation and sharing of information

A simple yet robust information management system, that combines comprehensive and accurate information on the origins, conservation locations, availability and characteristics of individual accessions, will be the portal to accessing all relevant information and a key component in the establishment, management and use of the Global Strategic Cacao Collection (GSCC).

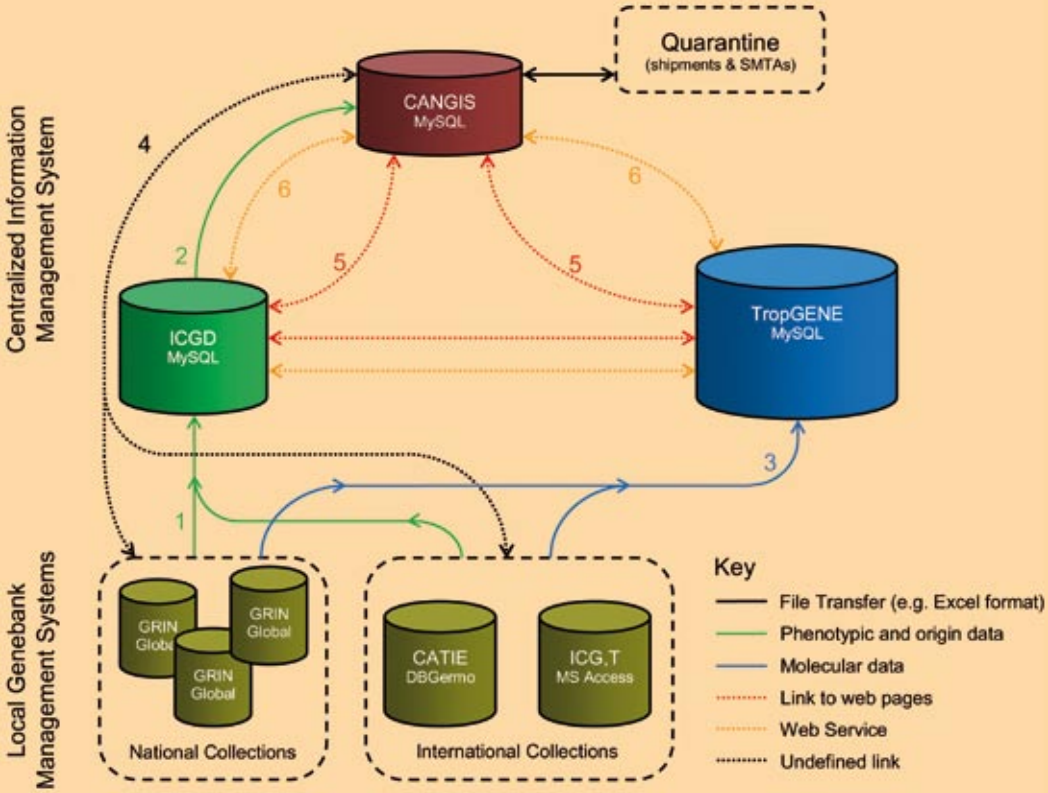
Cocoa farmer, Uganda © M. Gilmour

As part of the GSCC information portal, a central database, CANGIS (CacaoNet Germplasm Information System), will bring together all the genebanks and other service providers that collectively form the GSCC and facilitate their effective management. CANGIS will maintain specific, high quality data (including passport descriptors and the characters supporting an accession's inclusion in the GSCC) on all the individual accessions (trees located at specific sites) that make up the GSCC, and provide a means for users to access this germplasm. CANGIS will coordinate the compilation of characterization and evaluation data from all collections, supported by the molecular verification of the accessions to which the data pertain. CANGIS will link to existing international databases, such as ICGD and TropGENE, in order to access additional information that is of interest to potential users of the germplasm.

Mechanisms will be developed to link the GSCC to information and local knowledge on *in situ* and on-farm genetic resources. These databases will be linked over time to multicrop global information systems, such as GENESYS, as they are developed.

The development of CANGIS will be coordinated by CacaoNet and work closely with national programmes, and collections that do not have a local information management system already in place will be encouraged to adopt GRIN-Global (a freely available genebank management tool and information system developed by the USDA and partners).

Components of the GSCC Information Portal



1 Characterization and evaluation data are sent to ICGD (includes non-CacaoNet accessions and information).

2 Once checked and standardized, information on the Global Strategic Cacao Collection accessions is entered into CANGIS.

3 Molecular data are sent to TropGENE (includes non-CacaoNet accessions and information).

4 A degree of direct networking between Global Strategic Cacao Collection IMS and the local genebank management systems is required for monitoring/tracking accessions in the base and active collections. The form this will take will largely depend on the genebank management systems that are adopted (e.g. GRIN-Global).

5 In order to access additional information available from one of the other databases, the user can be linked directly to the relevant page on the collaborating website (all of the databases use the same variety identification codes).

6 Web services allow an information management system to query distributed databases and integrate the results with its own output, removing the need to physically transfer the user to the other database.

Strengthening partnerships for global collaboration

All countries with an interest in cacao, i.e. producers, processors and, of course, consumers, will have to collaborate if the goal of the Global Strategy is to be realized.

National cocoa research institutes and their governments will play a key role in ensuring access to a wide range of diverse genetic resources and related information, facilitating the rationalization of collections and building trust among partners. There will have to be dialogue with decision-making political and administrative bodies in each country, not least to facilitate implementation of agreed regulations for cacao quarantine. Capacity building will need to provide training and equipment support to the collections in the GSCC, with particular reference to genebank management, germplasm evaluation, information management and data analysis, and policy and legal aspects of germplasm exchange.

CacaoNet will play an important part in these efforts. It will ensure agreement on the establishment of the GSCC and oversee its development on behalf of all its members, and will actively engage in fund-raising for the implementation of the Global Strategy. CacaoNet will also encourage collaboration with national collections, FAO and the ITPGRFA to help ensure that germplasm, particularly accessions identified for inclusion in the GSCC, is placed in the public domain.

CacaoNet consultation meeting, July 2011, UK. © K. Lamin

How can **you help**?

Funding for the conservation and use of cacao genetic resources is currently provided by the many national research institutes (with the help of the cocoa industry, public funds from consuming countries, and international organisations) and is below optimal levels. Support for the two international collections at CATIE and CRU/UWI and to the ICQC,R is offered on a 3-year cycle and is not secure over the long term. Many national collections are struggling to keep their material alive.

In order to safeguard the security of cacao diversity, on which the world depends for cocoa production now and in the future, and to ensure its accessibility and sustainable use, the Global Strategy has estimated the cost of annual recurrent management activities at 1,832,736 USD. It is anticipated that these costs will be significantly reduced over time as the size and composition of the GCSS are refined as a result of the proposed genetic diversity analysis and improvements to the efficiency with which germplasm can be conserved and distributed following research on *in vitro* methodologies and as new priorities for germplasm distribution come into effect. The costs for the initial research on the most efficient and effective conservation and management standards, and the resources needed to bring the capacity of partners up to a state where they can play an international role, is approximately 1,350,000 USD for a 3-year period. The workplans and budgets for each of the eight strategic components are detailed in the long version of the Global Strategy available on the CacaoNet website.

The annual recurrent management activities are the following:

- Support for the on-going maintenance of the GSCC.
- Emergency support to safeguard threatened material.
- Management of the GSCC information portal.
- Maintenance of the cacao safe movement network (quarantine facilities).
- Support for priority collecting missions.
- Network of field evaluation trials of priority GSCC materials.
- Training and capacity building for GSCC partners.
- Global partnerships towards the Strategy implementation.

The research and capacity building activities over the first 3-years:

- Support for the GSCC partners to link their *ex situ* collections to the GSCC Information Portal.
- Development of *in situ* and on-farm conservation strategies.
- Diversity analysis to complement existing knowledge and to identify gaps for priority collecting.
- Research on tissue culture methods for safe movement of germplasm.
- Establishment of the regional quarantine network.

CacaoNet **partners**

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- Brazil - Comissão Executiva do Plano da Lavoura Cacaueira (CEPLAC) and Instituto Agronômico de Campinas (ICA)
- Costa Rica - Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE)
- Côte d'Ivoire - Centre National de Recherche Agronomique (CNRA)
- Cuba - Estación de Investigaciones de Cacao (EIC-ECICC)
- Dominican Republic - Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuarias y Forestales (IDIAF)
- Ecuador - Instituto Nacional Autónomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIAP)
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- Ghana - Cocoa Research Institute of Ghana (CRIG)
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- India - Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI)
- Indonesia - Indonesian Coffee and Cocoa Research Institute (ICCRI) and Bah Lias Research Station, Sumatra
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- Nicaragua - Laboratorio de BIOciencia, UNAN-Managua
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- Togo - Centre de Recherche Agronomique de la zone Forestière (CRAF)
- Trinidad and Tobago - Cocoa Research Unit of the University of the West Indies (CRU/UWI)
- UK - International Cocoa Quarantine Centre, University of Reading (ICQC,R)
- USA - United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Venezuela – Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agrícolas (INIA)

Abstract

The future of the world cocoa economy depends on the availability of genetic diversity and the sustainable use of this broad genetic base to breed improved varieties. Decreasing cacao genetic diversity (*in situ*, on-farm and conserved in collections) is a serious problem and all its many causes need to be urgently addressed: the destruction of the Amazonian rainforests, changing patterns of land use, the spread of pests and diseases, sudden changes in climate, and threats from natural disasters and extreme weather. These factors are resulting in an irreversible loss of the cacao genetic diversity so essential for farmers, breeders, and consumers. Most of the countries involved in the improvement and production of cacao are highly dependent on genes and varieties characterized and conserved in other countries and regions. Effective management of cacao genetic resources can therefore only be carried out through international collaboration.

A considerable portion of the global cacao diversity is *in situ*, in farmers' fields and held in genebanks around the world, including two international collections maintained at the Cocoa Research Unit of the University of the West Indies (CRU/UWI), Trinidad and Tobago, and at the *Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza* (CATIE), Costa Rica. Unfortunately, much of the genetic resources maintained in national collections is under-used or at risk, and funding remains insufficient and unstable.

The vision of the Global Strategy for the Conservation and Use of Cacao Genetic Resources is to improve the livelihoods of the 5-6 million farmers in developing countries across tropical Africa, Asia and Latin America and the 40-50 million people who depend upon cocoa for their livelihoods. The specific goal is to optimize the conservation and maximize the use of cacao genetic resources as the foundation of a sustainable cocoa economy. This it does by bringing together national and international players in public and private sectors. The expected outputs are: (1) the cacao genepool is conserved *in situ* and *ex situ* for the long term by a global network of partners, (2) the global system for the safe exchange of cacao germplasm is strengthened, (3) the use of cacao genetic diversity is optimized and (4) the effectiveness of global efforts to conserve and use cacao genetic resources is assured. To ensure these outputs are implemented, the first and urgent task will be to secure funding for the existing cacao genetic diversity currently maintained in *ex situ* collections and accessible in the public domain. CacaoNet will work towards the establishment of an endowment fund for the conservation and use of the most valuable resources in perpetuity.

At the centre of the Global Strategy is the Global Strategic Cacao Collection (GSCC): a "virtual genebank" of accessions of highest priority for conservation, wherever they are physically located. The accessions will be selected to capture the greatest range of genetic (allelic) richness and key traits of interest to users. The inclusion of materials in the GSCC will be on the basis that governments concerned will be willing to place them in the public domain, and will take the necessary political and legal steps to do so.

The Global Strategy, developed by the Global Network for Cacao Genetic Resources (CacaoNet), is the result of a consultation process that drew upon the global cocoa community's expertise in all aspects of cacao genetic resources. It provides a clear framework to secure funding for the most urgent needs to ensure that cacao diversity is conserved, used and provides direct benefits to the millions of small-scale cacao farmers around the world.

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