Almost 90 percent of the world’s cocoa originates from smallholder producers farming less than five hectares of land. These farmers face considerable challenges, from changing weather patterns and diseased trees to limited access to improved varieties of cocoa, inputs such as fertilizer, and technical assistance. These barriers leave many farmers earning less than one dollar per day. Yet as global demand for cocoa outpaces its supply, opportunities emerge for smallholder farmers to benefit from higher incomes through improved cocoa production and sustainability, particularly in Latin America.

The Maximizing Opportunities in Coffee and Cacao in the Americas (MOCCA) project is a five-year initiative, funded by USDA’s Food for Progress Program with TechnoServe as consortium lead, aimed at helping more than 100,000 farmers overcome the barriers limiting their capacity to effectively rehabilitate and renovate their coffee and cacao plants in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru. Lutheran World Relief (LWR) leads cocoa programming for the MOCCA project, implementing a comprehensive approach to promoting cocoa production that focuses on increasing crop yields through agroforestry systems, improving cocoa quality, enhancing the professional capacity of both farmers and producer organizations, and facilitating linkages between cocoa buyers and sellers.

Through MOCCA, LWR works with trade associations, producer organizations, exporters and research institutions that want to invest in the agricultural and market systems that make cocoa value chain improvements possible for the future, such as higher prices, good genetic material for planting, and more direct, feasible and profitable supply chains for smallholder farmers. Through partnerships with private sector entities, MOCCA has awarded more than $500,000 to strengthen cocoa livelihoods in its matching grant program. Market system actors are selected to pilot business models with the private sector that enhance access to higher-value markets and reward high-quality products with increased prices. These investments also foster a more sustainable supply of cocoa for regional and international markets.

With our cocoa activities across Latin America, LWR advances sustainability, climate-smart agriculture, market transparency and regional strategies that help farmers to implement crop renovation and rehabilitation. By championing co-creation with local and regional partners to strengthen market-based agricultural development in MOCCA, we are committed to supporting cocoa producers and markets through an integrated approach that advances climate and community resilience across the sector.
CACAO MÓVIL

Our Cacao Móvil (Mobile Cocoa) application gives cocoa producers the technical expertise they need, right at their fingertips. The app is a solution to the geographic isolation that makes it difficult for many farmers in Latin America to learn how to grow quality cocoa. The app’s practical guides include information on cocoa cultivation and cover subjects ranging from soil management, pruning techniques, pest management, and a primer on cocoa marketing. Cacao Móvil is used by cocoa producers in the MOCCA project and is freely available through cacaomovil.com or Google Play. Cacao Móvil was funded by the U.S. Department of State and the World Environment Center’s Pathways Innovation Challenge, an award for innovative and successful models for strengthening and expanding small and medium enterprises in Latin America.

OUR RESULTS TO DATE

16,214 PRODUCERS were trained in cacao pruning and formation, shade management, fertilization, integrated pest and disease management, nursery establishment and management, field grafting, certification standards and post-harvest practices.

214 TECHNICAL STAFF completed cocoa diploma programs in partnership with the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE), local universities and research intuitions across five countries.

LWR’S COCOA FLAVOR MAP, an innovative initiative documenting the distinct flavor profiles of cocoa produced by our farmer and cooperative partners, expanded to Guatemala, Peru and Ecuador.

TWO CACAO GERMPLASM BANKS, which store genetic material that can be used to preserve and enhance cocoa varieties, were developed with the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

OVER $36,000 IN ENTERPRISE GRANT FUNDS were awarded to promote women- and youth-led cocoa business initiatives.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF COCOA QUALITY AND FLAVOR were updated and are being utilized across MOCCA target countries.