

GOURMET GARDENS

CONGOLESE FAIR TRADE AND ORGANIC COCOA



The Democratic Republic of Congo is the third most populous country of Africa and counts hundreds of ethnic groups. It is considered a treasury trove for its diamonds, valuable raw materials and rare metals... Its many natural resources have aroused the appetites of armed groups and covert powers, which do not hesitate to resort to violence and corruption. Moreover, because of its size and central position at the heart of the continent, the Democratic Republic of Congo has to deal with major influxes of refugees that destabilise the fragile ethnic and local balances.

The civil war, which killed more than four million and displaced another two million, officially ended in 2003, but the agony still remains. The Democratic Republic of Congo, probably even more than its neighbours, must transform from a colonially modelled multi-ethnic format to a nation state with a shared identity.

Under such conditions, fair and sustainable trade offers interesting perspectives as it brings together communities and enriches the populations. A challenge for the hearth of Africa.

SURVIVE

In the east of the country, North Kivu is one of the regions that suffered most from violence and the influx of refugees. Production infrastructure, particularly in the coffee sector, has been very badly affected and the populations of this border region have had a hard time surviving on subsistence farming and small trade.

Since a few years, the country is trying to come back as well as it can, but the economy is not improving and the outlook remains bleak for the local populations, as thousands of displaced persons are living in makeshift camps. Investments remain negligible, the agricultural potential is greatly underused and local field hands are often condemned to emigrate or to plunder forestry resources, in particular in the Virunga National Park, the oldest and the richest wildlife and flora national park in Africa.

MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON

Between the savannahs of eastern Africa and the large forests of the

Great Lakes rise the Mountains of the Moon, whose slopes offer perfect conditions for a variety of agricultural activities. Here, in North Kivu, Gourmet Gardens, a Kampala-based Ugandan company, started up a fair (Fair for Life) and organic certified vanilla and cocoa production chain in 2005. "Le Jardin Bio-Equitable", a local producers association, was established to meet the certification requirements and to manage production, which is then purchased by Gourmet Gardens and commercialised under the Mountains of the Moon brand.

AND NOW, QUALITY PLEASE

Certifying products of smallholder members of the "Le Jardin Bio-Equitable" organisation helped implementing a first series of social programmes, to the benefit of farmers and their families. But commercialisation of their products suffered from the distance from Europe-bound export infrastructure (the port of Mombassa in Kenya and the airport of Entebbe in Uganda).

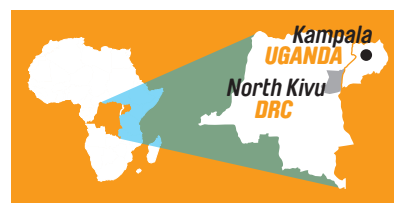


"In such a tough environment, fair trade provides perspectives of stability and allows one to establish sustainable relations with the producers, thanks to which they can build a new future."

Clemens FEHR,
Director of Gourmet Gardens

To further help the producers, Gourmet Gardens set up a new project that aims at positioning the production of the “Le Jardin Bio-Equitable” farmers on niche markets with high added value. The key idea of this programme is to produce a “Single Origin” cocoa which is fair, organic and of the best quality, and which can meet the requirements of the greatest European chocolate makers.

To get there, the Ugandan company has implemented a three-point action programme. The first part was launched in 2010 and aimed at improving quality and at enhancing fair and organic cocoa volumes. To do so, a network of extension farms was set up and training was given to farmers who, for the larger part, had had very few training because of the years of civil war. A second series of actions aim at improving the harvest-processing infrastructure, especially through the installation of solar-powered fermentation stations, as well as the setting up of a cocoa bean drying and weather and parasite proof storage station. Thirdly, resources are mobilised to provide the farmers’ association with solid decision-making and management bodies.



A TOP-OF-THE-RANGE FAIR AND ORGANIC COCOA VALUE CHAIN

The Gourmet Gardens project is supported by the Trade for Development Centre of BTC, the Belgian development agency. It aims at setting up a fair and organic cocoa production chain of high quality, which should generate a sustainable income for some 1,500 producers involved in the project. The resources made available should strengthen the North Kivu farmers association, increase the profitability of the farms and in the end provide the cocoa growers of the region with decent incomes.



With the insecurity that still prevails in the region, the cost of certification and the deplorable state of infrastructure, there are still many obstacles to achieving these results. These obstacles should not be underestimated but the stakes are equally important.

Find out more:
www.mountains-of-the-moon.com

IN THIS REGION OF THE WORLD, SUBJECTED TO THE WORST VIOLENCE FOR A LONG TIME, THE GOURMET GARDENS PROJECT GIVES HOPE TO THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES.

LET US SAVOUR THE COURAGE OF THESE PEACE WORKERS.

KEY FIGURES

BTC contribution : 105,000 euros
Project duration : 2 years
Beneficiaries : 1,500 cocoa growers



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