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# Asociación de Recolectores de Cacao Silvestre Yuracare (ARCASY)

## Wild cocoa from Bolivia

The Yuracaré – an indigenous population of hunters and gatherers – live in the Bolivian part of the Amazon Basin, in the central Bolivian lowlands north of Cochabamba. Collecting wild or forest cocoa – a chocolate lover’s quality product – is an important activity for this small community.

Over the past decades, the habitat of the Yuracaré has been threatened by deforestation. Through the new constitution, which gives indigenous communities ‘native community lands’, the Yuracaré want to protect their way of life.

That is why in 2011 the Yuracaré council created ARCASY, an association of about 150 forest cocoa collectors, to find better sales opportunities for wild cocoa and generate incomes for the community.

### Fairwild

ARCASY started looking for advice and backing and contacted the Rainforest Exquisite Products SA (REPSA), a Bolivian company that already operated in the fair trade circuit. After some study, FairWild certification appeared as the most appropriate approach.

However, it was not evident to meet the social criteria and the environmental and quality requirements, but with the financial support of the Trade for Development Centre, eventually – in 2012 – ARCASY became the first wild cocoa producer to be FairWild certified. However, certification does not mean you have clients. In addition, ARCASY still had a lot of work to do to become a strong organisation.

### Project in figures

Aantal betrokkenen: 300 families  
TDC supported Arcasy twice

#### Project 1

Duration: 2014 — mid 2015

What: start-up organisation + Fairwild-certification

Total budget: € 72.770

Contribution TDC: 75% = € 54.580

#### Project 2

Duration: 2016 — end of 2017

Total budget: € 186.000

Contribution TDC: € 139.500



## Management plan

Over the past few years ARCASY put a lot of energy into making a 'Management plan for the collection of wild cocoa'. It did so in close collaboration with the Bolivian forest management agency, which is unique for Bolivia. On the one hand, it obliges the Yuracaré to protect the forest, while on the other hand, it lays down the right to collect, transport and commercialise wild cocoa for domestic and exports markets.

## Collection centres

This Management plan was further detailed in annual 'Collection plans' for 11 specified areas. With further project backing of the TDC, ARCASY is now developing the 11 collection centres, one for each area.

Collection centres are locations where ARCASY members bring their wild cocoa and receive immediate payment above the price offered by traditional middlemen. At the same time, these centres become gathering places where ARCASY staff can inform and train families that live in remote places. By doing so, ARCASY is able to boost the quality –forest



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cocoa beans must also undergo a drying and fermentation process – and improve the registration system aimed at traceability.

This registration system is also important for organic and fair trade certification. Smallholder producers can be certified as a group. In concrete terms, this means that ARCASY must develop an internal control system (ICS) which collects and stores data about the crop. An external certifier assesses and inspects how the control system functions.

ARCASY's weak point is financial resources. For instance, it can only purchase part of the crop, which means the families have to rely on middlemen for the rest of their crop. One of the current project's action points is to obtain credit to address this issue and to increase the volume of cocoa purchased.

## Commercialisation

The project's underlying goal is to boost the income of collectors. Breaking the traditional role of buyers and middlemen is an important step to get there.

This requires progress to be made in two areas: on the one hand, a broader financial basis for ARCASY to purchase more cocoa from its members, and on the other hand, better access to the market. ARCASY now primarily works with Sumar and Chocolates Para Ti, two Bolivian cocoa enterprises. As part of the ongoing TDC project, ARCASY managers attended the largest organic fair worldwide, Biofach in Germany, where they were in direct touch with the organic and fair trade sector in Europe.

In 2014 and 2015, ARCASY obtained organic certification. Because it is expensive to maintain, further certification was not pursued, even though

the organisation fulfils all criteria and wants to improve its internal control system. However, new organic or fair trade certification should be easy to obtain if (new) clients were to ask for it. This may actually happen in 2017 with an American client of Chocolates Para Ti. The organisation also looked into the opportunity of Protected Designation of Origin certification.



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