

Corporación Fortaleza del Valle



Organic cocoa from Ecuador

Origins

Fortaleza del Valle is a recognised and well positioned farmers association in Ecuador. It is a member of the Corporation of Fine Flavour Cocoa National Producers Associations (CONCACAO).

The 2nd degree association is comprised of five farmer cooperatives in the Carrizal Chone region: La Fortaleza, Valle Carrizal, Rio Grande, Quiroga and Rio Chico. Today there are 920 farmer families involved, with an average of 2 - 5 ha of land.

Farming

In an arid zone unsuitable for agriculture, the farmers benefit from the Carrizal Chone irrigation project, an embankment dam installed by the central government of Ecuador.

The farms stand out due to their organic certification. The association is one of the few Fairtrade certified organisations in Ecuador.

Due to the usage of Nacional arriba, a fine flavoured, high quality cocoa, the yields are rather low.

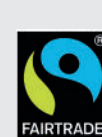
Product

- Cocoa beans
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Certificates

BioSuisse, EU Bio, NOP (USA), FLO Fairtrade



Historical background

The association Fortaleza del Valle was founded in 2005 to improve life conditions of small-scale cocoa producers.

Goals:

Offer a platform to support small-scale farmer organisations and provide them with efficient technical assistance for production and post harvest management. One of the main targets is to enhance marketing and offer the logistic channels for export.

The member farmer families benefit from the following services:

- Micro credits, mainly pre-financing of harvest
- Technical support with own staff agronomist; rehabilitation of farms (pruning and replanting), farmers education and training,
- Centralised fermentation and drying infrastructure

PRONATEC's contribution

Strengthen the local organisation, amplify infrastructure for post harvest and commerce, extend organic certification, renew plantations train framers, and consolidate the export chain:

- Long term commitment since 2006: Joint set up of first independent cocoa export, as well as FLO Fairtrade and BioSuisse organic certification.
- Co-financing of working capital: Triangular financing credits with Rabobank, based on Pronatec guaranteed purchase contracts Direct loans in case of need.
- Co-financing of local micro projects: PPP partnership between Fortaleza and Pronatec for the amplification of new Post harvest infrastructure, warehouse and offices in Calceta.



Following members decision, the Fairtrade premium has been invested in:

- Technical assistance and internal control
- Productivity improvement
- Social participation and incentives

Factsheet

Region	Chone region, Manabi
Founded	2005
Members	approx. 935 associates
cultivable land	2034 ha
no of cocoa trees	aprox. 100'000
Villages	124
Farm size	on average 2-5 ha
Production	around 200-500 kgs/ha
Varieties	Nacional Arriba
Climate	Dry subtropical
Main crop	November - March
Fly crop	July-September
Quality	Humidity 7.5%, 105 beans/100 grams max. 6% slaty, max 20% violets max. 6% defects (mouldy, insect damaged)
Taste profile	Little acidity and bitterness, nice decent cocoa taste, some fruity and floral notes

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