

2.7.1 Sources of bulk cocoas

Over 95% of the world's cocoa production is classed as "bulk", "basic" or "ordinary" cocoa. This does not refer to the delivery size or method of transportation, neither does it imply cocoa of inferior quality. Bulk cocoas generally come from the Forastero type cocoa trees (see Section 2.2.2). They are used to manufacture milk and dark chocolate, cocoa mass, cocoa butter and cocoa powder. The other type of cocoa is "fine" or "flavour" cocoa (see Section 2.7.9).

Some of the characteristics of the main origins and types of cocoa are described below.

2.7.2 Côte d'Ivoire

Since 1977 the Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) has been the world's largest producer of cocoa. The country now produces about 1.5 million tonnes of beans each year (ca. 38% of the world crop – see Figure 2.2). The cocoa is nearly all grown by smallholders, many of whom are immigrants.

The type of cocoa grown is Forastero. Originally it was the Amelonado variety but this has virtually all been replaced by improved Upper Amazon hybrids (see Section 2.2.2). Most cocoa is properly fermented in heaps and is sun dried. Cocoa is often not fully dried on the farm. This can sometimes lead to higher levels of both mould in the beans and FFA in the cocoa butter. Cocoa beans are dried to final moisture and blended in the ports to achieve minimum export grade standards. This cocoa tends to have a slightly lower yield of nib and cocoa butter than cocoa from Ghana, a fact which is reflected in the price.

A significant quantity of Côte d'Ivoire cocoa (ca. 30%) is processed locally and the semi-finished products exported. The local market for confectionery is very small. The 2012 cocoa reform by the government has contributed to restoring quality and reducing the vulnerability of the supply.

2.7.3 Ghana

Cocoa first arrived in West Africa in the late nineteenth century from the island of Fernando Po (Bioko) into Ghana. Cocoa growing developed strongly during the twentieth century. Ghana is currently the second largest producer in the world with around 21% of the world crop (around 870 000t – see Figure 2.2). A large amount (ca. 25%) of the cocoa beans is processed locally.

The Ghanaian farmer uses the traditional heap method to ferment the cocoa and drying is on raised mats in the sun. Due to absence of artificial drying, there is no risk of smoke contamination. The hybrid planting material, based on Upper Amazon Forastero and Amelonado varieties, and the traditional processing methods give a full chocolate flavour, very suitable for the manufacture of chocolate. The quality control in the internal cocoa marketing system is also well established and effective. This has resulted in Ghana cocoa being the world's foremost quality bulk cocoa against which other cocoas are judged. Hence, it commands a price premium on the world market.

2.7.4 Indonesia

Cocoa production in Indonesia expanded rapidly at the end of the twentieth century and is currently around 400 000t (ca. 10% of the world cocoa crop). Cocoa is grown in most parts of Indonesia, but the principal areas are Sulawesi, Sumatra and Java.

Indonesia is mainly a bulk cocoa producer with the cocoa coming from varieties derived from Upper Amazon and Trinitario types.

In Sulawesi, most of the production is from smallholders but some 95% of the production currently receives little or no fermentation. The cocoa is normally dried in the sun and is consequently free from the smoke contamination frequently associated with artificial drying. The lack of fermentation produces a cocoa that is very bitter and astringent. Fermented or partially fermented Sulawesi cocoa has a medium level of cocoa flavour. It has high shell content and a low percentage of fat in the nib. These factors explain why Sulawesi cocoa is traded at a discount. For chocolate makers, the plus points are the hard cocoa butter (high melting point) and the absence of off-flavours (the bitterness and astringency are flavours normal to cocoa). Sulawesi cocoa can be included in blends with other beans to make chocolate.

Generally, Indonesian bulk cocoa is of variable quality although efforts are underway to improve the quality. The majority of the crop (63% in the 2012/3 season; ICCO 2015) is processed in Indonesia. Purchasers of cocoa materials should note that these factories may also import cocoa from West Africa and other origins, mainly to improve the quality of the cocoa products.

There is a small production of a fine cocoa that is concentrated in Java. This is a light-breaking, “Criollo” type of cocoa (also called Java Fine or Edel cocoa). Actually, this is not a true Criollo cocoa but a Trinitario type that produces white cocoa seeds. Java light-breaking cocoa is mainly used for its colour. A dark chocolate made from these beans has the light brown appearance of a milk chocolate.

2.7.5 Nigeria

Production levels are increasing slowly and now stand at around 244 000t (6% of the world crop). Cocoa in Nigeria is normally properly fermented and then sun dried on concrete terraces. The cocoa is similar in type and quality to Côte d’Ivoire, although quality is considered by some to be less consistent. Several processors and manufacturers use Nigerian cocoa interchangeably with Côte d’Ivoire or even Ghana cocoa.

2.7.6 Cameroon

Unlike the rest of West Africa, Cameroonian cocoa is of the Trinitario variety. It is generally purchased to make reddish coloured cocoa powder. Very little Cameroonian cocoa is used to make chocolate due to the risk of smoke flavour (from the artificial drying) and the price which is sometimes at a premium. The annual production is between 200 000–220 000t.