



## **Cacao of Excellence Awards Quote Bank**

### **Programme Director – Stephan Weise**

*“The Awards are one of the few places where cacao from dozens of countries is evaluated under the same conditions. That makes them less a ceremony and more a snapshot of how the sector is evolving.”*

*“If quality is going to influence markets, it needs a shared reference point. The Awards help create that reference by putting very different origins into a common framework.”*

*“We see the Awards as infrastructure. They are part of building a language around quality that producers and buyers can both recognise.”*

*“We’re not trying to ‘celebrate chocolate’. We’re trying to make excellence legible in a market that usually treats cacao as interchangeable.”*

*“Specialty coffee is a useful comparison, not because cacao will copy it, but because it shows what happens when origin and craft become part of price formation.”*

### **Programme Manager – Julien Simonis**

*“On the ground, farmers don’t talk about ‘value chains’. They talk about whether their work is noticed and whether it changes what they earn. Quality is one of the clearest ways to make that happen.”*

*“For many producers, the Awards are the first time their cacao is evaluated alongside samples from around the world. That comparison is powerful. It tells them where they stand and what’s possible.”*

*“The national competitions feeding into the Awards create a local conversation about quality. Farmers start talking about fermentation, drying, and flavour in a much more precise way.”*

*“In some countries, there’s a strong national competition and a whole local network behind it. In others, producers submit more directly because the national structure is still coming together. That unevenness is part of the reality we’re working with.”*

*“When a producer is recognised for quality, the conversation with buyers changes. It’s no longer ‘how many tonnes’. It becomes ‘what is this cacao, and what makes it different’.”*

### **Head of Cacao of Excellence R&D Laboratory and Training Centre – Sebastian Escobar Parra**

*“If we want quality to matter, we have to be able to measure it and repeat it. That’s the role of the lab: rigour, consistency, and methods that stand up to scrutiny.”*



*“We use standardised protocols so we’re not comparing apples to oranges. The goal is to isolate what comes from the cacao itself and the post-harvest choices behind it.”*

*“Our job is to make sure that every sample is treated the same way, so differences come from the cacao and not from the process.”*

*“When we document flavour carefully, we’re not just ranking samples. We’re building a record of global cacao diversity.”*