



Cacao of Excellence Awards Fact Sheet

Programme overview

- An international programme helping cacao producers improve their livelihoods by using quality and flavour diversity to access higher-value markets.
- Supports more resilient cacao-producing communities through quality recognition
- Combines scientific analysis, sensory evaluation, and producer recognition
- Links research, training, and market visibility
- Inspired by structural shifts seen in specialty coffee markets
- Provides a global reference framework for cacao quality

Awards structure

- Established in 2009, held every two years
- Global network of national partners
- Blind international evaluation of cacao quality
- Standardised chocolate preparation to isolate flavour differences
- Recognises producer skill, post-harvest practices, and flavour diversity

Scale and participation

- 191 cacao bean samples in the current edition
- Samples from 45 cacao-producing countries
- 45 National Organisation Committees operating under shared guidelines
- 36 international jury experts in sensory science, cacao research, and chocolate making

Evaluation methodology

- Blind sensory assessment and scientific sample analysis
- Standardised chocolate protocol
- International Technical Committee (cacao) and Jury Panel (chocolate)
- Focus on flavour, genetics, and post-harvest practices

Programme activities beyond the Awards

- Professional training in cacao quality assessment
- Capacity building in producing countries
- Research on cacao flavour and quality markets
- Knowledge exchange between producers and chocolate makers
- Development of long-term quality infrastructure

Sector relevance

- Positions farmers as recognised producers of differentiated value
- Supports transition toward quality-driven cacao markets
- Links flavour, biodiversity, and producer expertise to economic visibility
- Strengthens technical standards in evaluation
- Contributes to long-term sector transformation