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# Cacao of Excellence National Competitions GUIDELINES

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These guidelines are intended to help National Organisation Committees organise Cacao of Excellence National Competitions resulting in the selection of the cacao bean samples to compete at the international level for the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards. These guidelines are intended as suggestions and to be adapted.

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## Introduction and Guideline objectives

Established in 2009, Cacao of Excellence is led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and organised in partnership with several public and private sector partners. Cacao of Excellence **recognises, preserves, values, and promotes cacao quality and flavour diversity** across the value chain to improve smallholder farmers' livelihoods and drive sustainability of the cacao supply chain for thriving communities, from origins to consumers. It provides global recognition to producers of superior quality cacao and celebrates the diversity of flavours across producing origins.

Cacao of Excellence is the **entry point for cacao producers to participate in the Cacao of Excellence Awards**, the renowned and only global competition that recognises the work and expertise of cacao farmers and celebrates the quality and flavour diversity of cacao produced around the world. Held every two years, the Cacao of Excellence Awards bring together leading sensory evaluation experts and the chocolate industry to reward producers of excellence.

In the context of the Cacao of Excellence Awards, each participating cacao-producing origin is invited to establish a National Organisation Committee that oversees the participation of cacao producers from their origin, based on the requirements and conditions for participation provided by Cacao of Excellence. For more information about Cacao of Excellence, please visit: [www.cacaofexcellence.org](http://www.cacaofexcellence.org)

Cacao of Excellence encourages each participating origin to organise a national Cacao of Excellence competition as a unique opportunity to promote superior quality cacao and diversity and celebrate at the national level, the skills and know-how of the men and women who produce them. These competitions may be the opportunity to select the best cacao samples for submission to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.

These guidelines are therefore intended to help National Organisation Committees organise Cacao of Excellence national competitions and make suggestions based on the process, activities and calendar for the selection of samples to be submitted for the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards. They include suggestions that can be adapted to the specific needs, for the following main activities of a Cacao of Excellence national competition:

1. Setting up the vision and objectives of the Cacao of Excellence national competition.
2. Planning the activities and establishing a calendar.
3. Setting up the committee for the selection of cacao bean samples.
4. Announcing the competition broadly and providing clear guidelines to participants.
5. Selecting the cacao bean samples to be evaluated based on established rules.
6. Assessing the quality and flavour of the cacao samples and selecting the awards.
7. Organising a national celebration and award ceremony.
8. Providing confidential detailed feedback to the participating producers.
  - Linkage to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.
9. Reviewing and evaluating the success of the Cacao of Excellence national competition and planning the next national competition.



# 1 Setting up the vision and objectives

An Organisation Committee that is responsible for the national competition should be formed. This Committee may be the same as the National Organisation Committee which is responsible for organising the participation of the origin in the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards competition. If it is not the same, it should ensure close collaboration and regular communication with the National Organisation Committee for the 2027 Edition of the Cacao of Excellence Awards.

In order to ensure a transparent, participatory and inclusive process, it is recommended to include representatives from varying institutions involved in the cacao sector in the origin, who may be interested in playing a role. These may include cacao boards, producers' associations, cooperatives, key research institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), cacao and chocolate industry actors and other relevant stakeholders.

The vision and objectives of a Cacao of Excellence national competition should be clearly defined by the National Organisation Committee. They should give clear direction and dimension to the competition to allow for effective communication to a broad audience. The vision and objectives should be explicitly stated in the guidelines and any other communication materials of the Cacao of Excellence national competition.

The vision of the Cacao of Excellence national competition should be broad and consider longer-term impact on the sustainable development of the cacao value chain in the origin.

The objectives should be more specific. Some examples of objectives can be to:

- Celebrate cacao quality and flavour at the national level.
- Ensure broad participation of cacao producers representing the genetic diversity, geographic origins, and best practices for processing cacao beans.
- Increase awareness along the cacao value chain in the origin on the opportunity to produce superior quality cacao.
- Raise awareness of the importance of conserving the unique cacao diversity present in the origin.
- Create linkages between cacao producers and operators in the supply chain to promote market opportunities and generate quality premiums.
- Increase the capacity in the origin to evaluate the physical characteristics and flavour of cacao samples.
- Increase the capacity on best practices for cacao processing.
- Select the best cacao bean samples representing superior quality and diversity in the origin for participation in the 2025 Cacao of Excellence Awards.

The vision and objectives can be useful afterwards to evaluate the success and impact of the competition at all levels, including the participating producers, cooperatives, buyers, and manufacturers.



## 2 Planning activities, partnerships and budget

### 2.1 Planning the activities

Regular meetings of the members of the National Organisation Committee are recommended to plan activities, agree on priorities, discuss progress and make adjustments.

The National Organisation Committee would be responsible for the following activities:

- Agree on the main activities and responsibilities of its members.
- Define the specific rules, procedures and requirements for the Cacao of Excellence national competition including how cacao bean samples and data are collected and managed.
- Agree on a calendar of activities with clear deadlines.
- Agree on a budget based on the costs for each activity and seek financial support.
- Develop guidelines for the participation in the Cacao of Excellence national competition with all conditions and requirements for the samples and related information.
- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the samples during the process until the winning samples are selected.
- Announce the Cacao of Excellence national competition broadly to cacao producers from all producing regions of the origin and to the value chain actors.
- Establish a panel of experts (Selection Committee), that will advise on any technical matters, evaluate cacao sample quality (physical and sensory) and select the national winners.
- Coordinate the reception of the cacao bean samples and communicate with the producers to ensure that all related forms and information are complete.
- Attribute a unique identification code to each cacao bean sample so that anonymity is ensured during the process by the Selection Committee members. No other specific information about the sample should be communicated to those processing and evaluating the bean samples except the date of fermentation and drying, and the genetic origin in order to define the best roasting conditions for cacao mass processing.
- Coordinate the quality and flavour evaluation of the bean samples processed into cacao mass and chocolate and ensure that this is carried out in complete confidentiality and anonymity.
- Coordinate the celebration of the Cacao of Excellence national competition and ensure broad participation of national cacao value chain actors, and agree on a date and venue for the celebrations.
- Follow-up and provide detailed and confidential feedback to all cacao bean producers who provided samples including the results of the physical quality and sensory evaluation, with recommendations for improvement if needed.
  - Coordinate the submission and shipping of the winning bean samples for the 2027 Edition of the Cacao of Excellence Awards to be sent as soon as **November 2026 and by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027 at the latest.**
- Evaluate the strengths and improvements to be made to a future Cacao of Excellence national competition.
- Plan the next Cacao of Excellence national competition.

If the Cacao of Excellence national competition is to be linked to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards, when deciding on the rules, calendars and guidelines, the National Organisation Committee should take into consideration the requirements for the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards specified in the 2027 Guide for Participation available here: [www.cacaoofexcellence.org](http://www.cacaoofexcellence.org)



The following requirements must be considered:

- Participation fee of 100 USD per cacao sample entering the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards<sup>1</sup>.
- Cacao bean samples should be collected from the main harvesting period.
- The beans should be stored for a minimum of 6 weeks after drying and before shipping to Cacao of Excellence to allow the flavour to develop and stabilise prior to the physical and sensory evaluation by Cacao of Excellence.
- A minimum of 7 Kg of each selected bean sample should be sent to Cacao of Excellence as soon as **November 2026 and by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027 at the latest**.
- All bean samples should be accompanied with the completed Cacao of Excellence Data Form with all information available on the sample.
- No more than one sample per producer should be selected.
- No samples submitted by 2025 Cacao of Excellence Gold Award winners.
- No more than the quota of samples per origin should be sent to Cacao of Excellence.

It is recommended that the National Organisation Committee set up a calendar of activities with key dates, such as the reception of samples, and celebration and revealing of winners. If the Cacao of Excellence national competition aims to participate in the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards, it is important that the samples of the winners be sent to Cacao of Excellence by 31 January 2027.

Setting up the calendar should integrate the celebration date and sending of the sample to Cacao of Excellence and work backwards estimating the time needed for each activity, with sufficient flexibility in case of delays and unexpected events. It is important to establish the maximum number of samples to be processed and the time that it will take to conduct the physical and flavour sensory evaluations. An example of a calendar of activities is in **Annex A**.

## 2.2 Partnerships and budget

It is important to estimate the budget needed for the Cacao of Excellence national competition, the follow-up and financing activities. It could be interesting at this point to involve different professional partners that could be part of the evaluation process and selection.

Example of costs to consider in the budget for the organisation of the Cacao of Excellence national competition include the following:

- Communication and publicity to announce the Cacao of Excellence national competition.
- Meetings of the National Organisation Committee.
- Staff cost for the organisation.
- Equipment needed.
- Participation of cacao quality and flavour evaluation experts for the selection of the best samples.
- Venue and organisation of the final celebrations.
- Courier for shipping the samples to Cacao of Excellence and for obtaining the phytosanitary certificates.
- Participation fee of 100 USD per sample entering the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.
- Participation in the celebrations of the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards

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<sup>1</sup> Registration fee includes: A detailed Feedback Report on each cacao bean sample for all participants as well as, for those selected in the 50 Best samples, promotion among cacao buyers, traders and chocolate makers.



Sponsorships and in-kind contributions to support the cost of a Cacao of Excellence national competition could be discussed with:

- Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or governmental institutions with field programmes involving cacao producers.
- Laboratories or exporting companies with expertise on physical quality evaluation of cacao beans.
- Chocolate processing companies with expertise and material for cacao mass and chocolate processing.
- Buyers and traders of cacao in the origin to sponsor the event.
- Any other organisation that could benefit from high visibility with the event.

### **3 Setting up the committee for the selection of the cacao bean samples**

The National Organisation is encouraged to set up a committee for the selection of the participating and winning cacao sample, similar to the Cacao of Excellence Technical Committee. The National Organisation Committee may identify members with professional experience in the following areas:

- Processing of beans into cacao mass and chocolate.
- Development of finished products for consumers.
- Bean physical and aroma evaluation, resulting from a cut test.
- Flavour sensory evaluation of a range of cacao bean origins and *terroirs*, processed into a standard cacao mass and chocolate.
- Quantitative approaches using scores for flavour attributes and global quality.
- Data analysis of sensory panels for the selection of the best samples.

The Selection Committee may be chaired by one of the members responsible for overseeing the process and making final decisions when there is no consensus among members. The responsibilities of the Selection Committee could be primarily to agree upon a technical evaluation and selection process for the bean samples and to carry out sample evaluations. It should also advise on the confidential feedback to be provided to each participating producer.

## **4 Announcing the competition and providing Guidelines for Participation**

### **4.1 Announcement: communication of rules and deadlines**

It is recommended that the National Organisation Committee announces and widely promotes the Cacao of Excellence national competition in all cacao producing regions of the origin and to a variety of cacao producers, large and small. The National Organisation Committee may encourage cacao producers to participate through a press radio and social media release, and send information and the guidelines broadly, i.e., to all stakeholders in the cacao industry, associations and non-governmental organisations implementing cacao development programmes. The main information to communicate is as follows:

- The vision and objectives of the Cacao of Excellence national competition and the linkage with the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards if connected.
- Deadlines for submission of samples, results and celebrations.



- Who can participate - eligibility criteria.
- How to participate - requirements for the samples and associated data.
- Quality requirements of the bean samples.

## 4.2 Deadline for receiving the cacao samples

The National Organisation Committee should establish the deadline for receiving the cacao bean samples based on the following considerations:

- The main cacao harvest period.
- The time needed to process all samples by the Selection Committee in advance of the Cacao of Excellence national selection and celebrations.
- The dates of important events to partner for the Cacao of Excellence national competition celebrations.
- Submission of samples to the 2025 Cacao of Excellence Awards can start as soon as November 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 with a deadline set on **31<sup>st</sup> January 2027**.

## 4.3 Who can participate and how many samples can be sent

The National Organisation Committee should decide on the requirements for cacao bean producers invited to participate and the numbers and characteristics of the bean samples that will be accepted. If there are specific requirements for fermentation and drying processes, these should be mentioned. The National Organisation Committee may propose a total number of samples that will be accepted, depending on the capacity to process them, with a maximum of one sample per producer to ensure broader participation. The National Organisation Committee may want to have different categories of submission such as experimental and commercial samples.

**At the international level, Cacao of Excellence considers that “Cacao producers” are individuals, organisations and companies that are involved themselves or jointly in both cacao production and post-harvest processes – i.e. fermentation and drying.**

Organisations that can submit a sample as producers include:

- Individual producers
- Associations of producers
- Cooperatives
- Private estates
- National research centres

In cases where multiple actors are involved in the production and processing of the cacao sample – e.g. farmers of a community producing cacao pods and a company implementing fermentation and drying – all those involved in the resulting sample will be recognised in the official *Name of the producer* of the submitted sample. **An individual, organisation or company cannot submit a sample if they are only involved in the post-harvest process and cannot trace the origin of the cacao sample at the farm level.**

**Please note that 2025 Cacao of Excellence Gold Award winners are not eligible to participate in the 2027 Edition.**



#### 4.4 How producers can participate

The National Organisation Committee should specify the following in their guidelines:

- The quantities of the bean samples (Kg) for submission, taking into consideration the quantities needed for:
  - Cut test for physical quality evaluation
  - Assessment of cacao butter content
  - Processing into cacao mass for the Selection Committee members
  - Processing into chocolate for the Selection Committee members
  - Processing into chocolate for tasting during the national celebration
  - Processing into chocolate for eventual distribution to potential bean buyers and chocolate makers.
- A 7 Kg of the same beans should be available from the producers, stored in optimum conditions, to send to Cacao of Excellence by 31 January 2027 if linked to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.
- All the required information for each sample to be provided in a form or template such as the Cacao of Excellence Data Form that can be used to facilitate the compilation of data for samples that will participate in the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards. The Data Form can be downloaded from: [www.cacaoofexcellence.org](http://www.cacaoofexcellence.org)
- The detailed address to send the samples in the origin, with a focal person's full name, email and phone numbers.
- Who and how the cost of shipment of the beans and the participation fee of 100 USD per sample entering the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards, if linked, will be covered (i.e. by the producer, the Organisation Committee or another party).

#### 4.5 Quality requirements of the bean samples

No ingredients should be added to the fermentation, such as flavour material, fruit pulp or juices.

An evaluation of whole beans and a cut test should be performed for each bean sample and characteristics (qualities and defects) should be within the following internationally acceptable limits:

##### Whole beans

- Maximum 3% external mould.
- Maximum 3% with other defects: broken, insect-damaged, germinated, rotten or empty beans, etc.
- Properly dried with moisture content ideally between 6.5% and 7.5% and to a maximum of 8.5%.

##### Cut beans

- Maximum 3% slaty.
- Maximum 4% of internal mould.

The following are desirable characteristics:

- Absence of off-flavours, i.e. smoke, mould, earth, dirt or excessive acidity, bitterness and astringency.
- Absence of foreign matter and cacao residue, i.e. broken, flat, shrivelled and clumped beans or placenta, pod husk or shell fragments.



- Reasonably uniform in size.
- Bean count of 100 beans/100g or less is desirable, but not required.
- Stored for a minimum of 6 weeks after drying and before shipping to allow the flavour to stabilise prior to flavour testing.
- The colour of cut beans changes from fully purple (unfermented or partially fermented) to chocolate brown (fully fermented). The colour however can vary depending on the variety and genetics. A good fermentation contributes to the reduction of bitterness and astringency of cacao.

## 5 Selecting the cacao bean samples

Cacao of Excellence national competitions are a great way to recognise and celebrate the range of cacao diversity and producers in the origin. As such, the National Organisation Committee is encouraged to select samples of different genetic bean types and *terroirs*.

If the Cacao of Excellence national competition is to be linked to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards, the National Organisation Committee should give preference to new producers i.e. those who have not previously won an International Cocoa Awards for the years between 2009 and 2021 or a Gold Cacao of Excellence Award in the 2025 Edition. Or they should at least ensure that samples are from a different farm, genetic bean type, *terroir* and/or post-harvest process.

The number of winning samples should be in line with the quota set by Cacao of Excellence for the origin or have a ranking to facilitate the selection of the samples.

To ensure complete anonymity during the processing and selection, samples should be given a unique 3-digit blind code at reception by a member of the National Organisation Committee not involved in the evaluation of the samples. No information on the identity and location of the farm should be revealed until the selection process is completed.

Samples received should be acknowledged as well as all completed information and minimum requirements.

All samples should first go through a physical quality evaluation to ensure that the moisture content, presence of defective beans, mouldiness, smoky flavours, cut tests results, are all within acceptable limits as described in section 4.5. Beans with defects above the limits should not be further evaluated and considered rejected. This information should be recorded in the Feedback Report for each bean sample to provide to the producers at the end of the process, (see section 8). On the basis of this physical analysis, all accepted samples are selected for further processing and sensory evaluation.

## 6 Assessing quality and flavour and selection of the Awards

The National Organisation and Selection Committees agree on the next step for further evaluation of all accepted samples. The beans can be processed into cacao mass and/or chocolate for sensory evaluation. **It is strongly recommended to follow the protocols and standards set out in the [Guide for the Assessment of Cacao Quality and Flavour](#).**

If samples are evaluated as cacao mass and/or chocolate, particular attention must be paid to the protocols followed, documented and shared with the Selection Committee. The roasting



time and temperature may be adjusted based on the bean genetics, size and moisture content but the rest of the process should be standardised so that samples are comparable, i.e. the only difference in the quality and flavour is attribute to the beans and not the process.

The sensory evaluation of the cacao mass and/or chocolate must be carried by experienced professionals completely blind, meaning that the evaluators must not be able to recognise or identify any of the bean samples. The evaluators should be selected based on their expertise in sensory evaluation of cacao. In order to ensure transparency of the process, the National Organisation and Selection Committees should provide information on the names and organisations of the people involved in the evaluation and selection of samples. National Organisation and Selection Committees must ensure no conflict of interest and avoid cacao producers of the samples or closely associated to the samples to be part of this evaluation and selection panel.

The National Organisation Committee agrees at the beginning on how many samples will be selected and rewarded, and if there will be a ranking (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> position) or if all the winning samples will have an equal rating (i.e. the best 3). There are pros and cons for each of these options. For the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards, the 50 best samples are selected based on the cacao mass evaluation. These are then processed into a dark chocolate and analysed in this form by the Technical Committee and a Jury Panel of cacao and chocolate professionals. Subsequent to this, results are analysed to select the Cacao of Excellence Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

## **7 Organizing national celebrations and award ceremonies**

The National Organisation Committee is encouraged to organise celebrations for the Cacao of Excellence national competition with a public ceremony and announce broadly the date and the venue of this important event through all media channels. This should be done well in advance and may coincide with other important cacao and chocolate-related event in the origin.

It is important to invite all the organisers, partners and sponsors, participants, cacao producers' associations and cooperatives, cacao buyers, traders, manufacturers as well as official governmental representatives from the ministry of agriculture, natural resource or environment depending on where cacao production is nested within the national government.

The National Organisation Committee may consider issuing 2 types of certificates: (1) an award for the winning samples as an honourable distinction, without money value and (2) participation and recognition for the participants that have been through a preliminary selection.

In addition to a certificate, the National Organisation Committee may consider providing additional rewards such as:

- Cash prize.
- Cacao seedlings.
- Farming and cacao processing equipment and tools.
- Training in cacao production, fermentation, drying, physical quality evaluation, cacao mass and chocolate making for sensory flavour evaluation.
- Payment of participation fee of 100 USD per sample if entering the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.
- Participation in the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards.



Sponsorship in cash and/or equipment, training and travels may be interesting for partners benefiting from being closely associated to the national celebration, such as agricultural banks, nurseries, equipment companies, research institutes, non-governmental organisations etc.

The National Organisation Committee should publish the results of the competition in regional and national news and media and ensure that potential bean buyers and chocolate makers can access the names and contact details of the winning producers and the characteristics (quality and flavour profiles) of their beans. This provides visibility of superior cacao quality production in the origin and the work of the producers and create business opportunities, including those for commanding quality premiums.

## 8 Feedback to participating producers

The National Organisation Committee is strongly encouraged to follow up with a confidential and detailed feedback report to each participating bean producer with the results of the physical quality evaluation, sensory evaluation of the cacao mass and chocolate as appropriate. Most importantly, this feedback could include recommendations for improvements if needed. This information should be recorded during the process from the reception of the beans to the sensory evaluation and selection of the winners. The feedback should be confidential and not shared with anybody else than the National Organisation and Selection Committees and the individual producer.

The National Organisation Committee should ensure that the feedback is received by each participating producer and that they are available to answer any questions. This contributes directly to improving quality as the producers implement the recommendations. These could then participate again in a future Cacao of Excellence national competition.

## 9 Linking to the 2027 Cacao of Excellence Awards

Cacao of Excellence encourages origins who organise national Cacao of Excellence competitions to align the selection of the best samples with the 2025 Cacao of Excellence Awards. The National Organisation Committee should keep in mind the requirements and conditions to participate in the Cacao of Excellence Awards and consult the 2027 Edition Guide for Participation, available at: [www.cacaoofexcellence.org](http://www.cacaoofexcellence.org)

Some recommendations for the selection of the cacao bean samples are that they should be:

- Harvested in the main harvesting season.
- Processed, to preserve and enhance their potential flavour development.
- Selected based on their high quality and consistency.
- Properly fermented, resulting in moderate bitterness and astringency and low percentages of slaty beans.

The National Organisation Committee should ensure that:

- No previous 2025 Cacao of Excellence Gold Award winners be selected.
- Only one sample is provided per producer.
- Samples are not produced from modified or artificial fermentations with addition of flavour material, fruit pulp or juices.
- Bean producers maintain a safety duplicate of at least 7 Kg of the beans in storage until the Edition is completed, in case of damage, loss or any questions on bean quality.



- All bean samples are accompanied by a completed Data Form (separate Excel File) with all information available on the sample. The Cacao of Excellence Data Form can be downloaded at: [www.cacaoofexcellence.org](http://www.cacaoofexcellence.org)
- No more samples than the quota per origin are sent to Cacao of Excellence.
- The beans are stored for a minimum of 6 weeks after the date of drying in a cool room (20-22 °C), that is insect-free, in humidity less than 70% and with no abnormal odours.
- A phytosanitary certificate is obtained from the authorities of the origin.
- A minimum of 7 Kg of each bean samples are sent. Samples of less than 7 Kg will be rejected.
- Shipping instructions are followed to avoid import tax costs for Cacao of Excellence.
- The cost of shipping the bean samples to Cacao of Excellence in Italy is covered by the origin.
- The bean samples are sent to Cacao of Excellence as soon as **November 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 and by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2027 at the latest.**

Based on the results of the Cacao of Excellence National Competition, National Organisation Committees are encouraged to organise national celebrations for the selected and winning producers and publicise in the news and media. It may involve Ministries of Agriculture, National Cacao Boards and representatives of the value chain, as well as the cacao and chocolate industry to publicly recognise the achievement.

## 10 Reviewing and evaluating success and planning the next competition

Once the Cacao of Excellence national competition is over and feedback is provided to all producers, the National Organisation Committee may want to review and identify the following:

- the aspects that worked well and should be repeated
- the unexpected problems faced and how they could be resolved
- the most difficult activities, why and how difficulties could be overcome
- the improvements that can be implemented
- how the Cacao of Excellence national competition was received in the origin and the main benefits and constructive criticism
- how the process and outcomes contributed to the objectives and vision set initially

It is important that organisers are open to receiving feedback, reviewing process and proposing improvements for the next edition in an inclusive and participatory manner. It can take a few competitions before the process is well established, where participants are familiar with the process and partners and sponsors motivated to be associated with such a successful event. Cacao of Excellence national competitions can grow progressively, gain recognition from the cacao sector and raise awareness of the importance of cacao in the origin.



## Annex A – Example of a Calendar of Activities

Date	Activity
	Meetings to decide on the organisation of a Cacao of Excellence national competition, the main activities and related budget and funding.
	Guidelines and forms for participants in the Cacao of Excellence national competition published.
	Announcement of the Cacao of Excellence national competition, to the cacao producers from all producing regions of the origin and the cacao value chain actors through different media channels.
	<b>Deadline for Reception</b> of all cacao samples by the National Organisation Committee and attribution of blind codes for evaluation.
	Physical quality and sensory evaluation of whole and cut beans of all received bean samples (cut test).
	Accepted samples processed into cacao mass for blind sensory evaluation.
	Blind sensory evaluation by the selection committee of cacao mass samples.
	Analysis of results from the cacao mass evaluation, best samples selected.
	At this point, the best samples selected from the cacao mass sensory evaluation can be attributed a Cacao of Excellence National Award.
	If time allows in the calendar, the best samples can be processed into chocolate for blind sensory evaluation.
	Blind sensory evaluation by the selection committee of the best samples processed into chocolate.
	Analysis of the results from the chocolate evaluation and best samples selected for the Cacao of Excellence National Award.
	Celebration of the Cacao of Excellence national competition winners with the participations of producers, partners and sponsors, government representatives and cacao sector stakeholders.
	Publication of the information of the winning samples and the producers.
	Shipping of the selected samples to Cacao of Excellence for participation in the 2027 Edition of the Cacao of Excellence Awards with all required documents completed (see Guide for Participation available on the website: <a href="http://www.cacaoofexcellence.org">www.cacaoofexcellence.org</a> ) <b>between 1 November 2026 and 31 January 2027.</b>
	Confidential feedback provided to all participating producers on the results of the physical quality and sensory evaluation (cacao beans, mass and chocolate) with recommendations for improvement if needed.
	Evaluation for future Cacao of Excellence national competitions.
	Planning of the next Cacao of Excellence national competition.

