

Letter from the Ivorian Fair Trade Network in response to the announcement that Nestlé is stopping buying cocoa and sugar on Fairtrade terms

The Ivorian Fair Trade Network (RICE) is a network of all Fairtrade-certified Ivorian producers, bearing Fair Trade labels such as the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), Fairtrade International and Fair for Life and SPP. Our cocoa is used in some of the most popular chocolate brands in your country.

Fairtrade International's study on producers' income showed that 58% of cocoa producers in Côte d'Ivoire live below the poverty line. The results of this study reinforce the fact that collective efforts are more than ever needed to raise the dignity of producers.

Fairtrade means access to education for our children, access to health centres, electricity to enable our children to learn for a better future and improved living and working conditions for our and their families in the most remote areas where cocoa is grown.

Fairtrade is essential for us because it allows us to participate in the development of our communities independently. A non-Fairtrade trade relationship means regression and continued poverty.

Indeed, only Fairtrade provides a minimum price and a fixed premium, non-negotiable, which is paid 100% to producers, to decide for ourselves how this premium is used for the improvement of our living conditions and the development of our communities.

Fairtrade is 50% owned by producers, giving us the power to make our own decisions for our organizations, families and communities, giving us the opportunity to raise the voice of small producers. As Fairtrade producers, our voice is heard and taken into account. We are treated with the respect and dignity we deserve. Stopping the relationship with Fairtrade is to silence our voices.

It is therefore with deep regret and deep concern that we have learned that after proudly producing cocoa for KitKat in the UK for a decade, 16,000 small cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire will no longer enjoy the benefits of selling their cocoa on Fairtrade terms. This change represents a loss of £1.95m of Fairtrade premium for cocoa and sugar producers. This is a devastating blow for some of the world's poorest producers, many of whom live on less than a dollar a day.

Indeed, Nestlé is one of the leading buyers of Fairtrade certified cocoa through its KitKat brand and we are grateful for all this decade of partnership where we have contributed to the success of Nestlé.

Right now, we are experiencing one of the greatest health and economic tragedies of our lives. Besides the new global pandemic of COVID 19, producers remain deeply affected by long-term poverty, lack of services, low and unpredictable incomes and climate change.

We have seen how the Fairtrade minimum price, premium and safety net have benefited producers during this health crisis. These revenues have enabled us to act quickly against Covid-19 to protect our health, support our communities and deal with a food disaster in some cases.

That Nestlé chose this period of global crisis to break the relationship between KitKat and Fairtrade is hard to hear for the producers who produce cocoa that brings so much pleasure and joy to others.

The decision to stop buying cocoa and sugar on Fairtrade terms means fewer schools, water pumps, health centres and the end of many other essential services.

We invite Nestlé to continue negotiating with us producer representatives and the Fairtrade label in order to find ways of agreement so as to reconsider their decision not to buy on Fairtrade terms.

We call on Nestlé to maintain its commitment to us Fairtrade producers by considering the devastating effects of the current COVID 19 crisis.

We ask Nestlé to continue the incredible work that has been done over the past 10 years so as not to cut the lifeline of the Fairtrade premium at a time when we producers need it most.

On behalf of cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, we ask Nestlé to keep KitKat Fairtrade!

The President of the Administrative Committee

Atse Ossey Francis

Translation from French