

Press Release

U.S. Gifts Sulawesi Farmers with Training to Boost Cocoa Production

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Cocoa farmers in Sulawesi will soon enjoy higher yields and produce more premium cocoa for sale to the United States' chocolate industry, thanks to a new farmer training program announced by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) today.

The Valentine's Day event was held by the USAID Agribusiness Market and Support Activity (AMARTA), in honor of its new Corporate Responsibility Program for Productivity and Quality Training of Small-holder Cocoa Farmers in West, South and Southeast Sulawesi.

The AMARTA activity is based on an agreement facilitated by USAID, between Blommer Chocolate Co. – the largest U.S. manufacturer of chocolate – and PT Olam Indonesia, a primary supplier to Blommer. Under the agreement, PT Olam will support the training, which promises to improve cocoa productivity and quality by about 30 percent, enabling some 20,000 farmers to increase production by 35,000 metric tons a year. Blommer, meanwhile, has agreed to purchase the premium quality beans at higher-than-market value. The Sulawesi farmers could find their crop fetching as much as U.S. \$52 million over a three year period.

However, to gain this access to more American chocolate lovers, the Sulawesi farmers must overcome a far less benign consumer of their cocoa beans: the Cocoa Pod Borer. This moth-like pest lays its larvae in the pod of the cocoa plant, destroying the cocoa bean seeds. The borer reduces yields by as much as 60 percent and leaves the farmer with poor quality cocoa beans – reducing income and threatening the position of Sulawesi as a major producer and exporter of cocoa to the world. Indonesia is the world's third largest producer of cocoa, but recent research indicates the island's cocoa farmers lost about U.S. \$127 million last year to the ravages of the cocoa pest.

The AMARTA training program will teach new pest control technologies and best management practices to mitigate the impact of the Cocoa Pod Borer while improving farm productivity with better soil nutrition, sanitation, and planting material.

The United States is an important trading partner within the Indonesia cocoa industry, importing 136,000 metric tons of cocoa in 2005. U.S. chocolate manufacturers are the largest international buyers of processed cocoa products from Sulawesi, purchasing about 40 percent of the island's cocoa butter exports.

Source: [http://indonesia.usaid.gov/\(S\(qemayruxkb5pzri5wfo5uvaj\)\)/en/Article.239.aspx](http://indonesia.usaid.gov/(S(qemayruxkb5pzri5wfo5uvaj))/en/Article.239.aspx)