



COPAL COCOA *Info*

A Weekly Newsletter of Cocoa Producers' Alliance

Issue No. 221

5th – 9th March 2007

New Deputy Secretary General of the Alliance assumes office

ICCO Daily Cocoa Prices

	ICCO daily price (US\$/tonne)	London futures (£/tonne)	New York Futures (US\$/tonne)
5 th March	1863.55	1002.33	1801.67
6 th March	1804.76	970.67	1741.67
7 th March	1846.44	992.67	1778.33
8 th March	1869.21	1010.00	1792.00
9 th March	1884.17	1010.67	1817.00
Average	1854.00	997.00	1786.00

Up-coming Events

✓ **34TH EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 9TH MARCH 2007,**

In the News:

- US: Vitamin tablets can't match fruit and veg
- A Chocoholic's Paradise: Indulging in a Chocolate Pedicure
- Cocoa may lead to sustained improvement in blood vessel function
- Cameroon: Cocoa - CFA 655 Million to Boost Marketing
- Ivorian cocoa farmers declare hunger strike
- A daily cup of special cocoa drink may improve blood vessel function
- Cocoa may reverse blood vessel damage, study
- Dry weather harms upcoming Ivorian cocoa harvest
- Flavonoid-rich cocoa found healthy for the brain
- Gloomy cocoa forecast as bad weather hits supply

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Have you had your cocoa today?

COCOA PRODUCERS' ALLIANCE, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX TAFAWA BALEWA SQUARE,
P.O. BOX 1718, LAGOS, NIGERIA. TEL: +234(0)1-263-5574 FAX: +234(0)1-263-5684

Email: econs@copal-cpa.org Website: www.copal-cpa.org

Cocoa Producers' Alliance

**International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (LIFFE)
London Futures Market – Summary of Trading Activities
(£ per tonne)**

Monday 5th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	974	975	1	985S	969	2584
May 2007	989	988	-1	997	980	5075
Jul 2007	1004	1003	-1	1011S	994	2132
Sep 2007	1017	1016	-2	1023S	1009	1402
Dec 2007	1015	1012	-1	1019S	1005	1582
Mar 2008	1020	1017	-1	1025	1010	1629
May 2008	1032	1024	-1	1032	1019	466
Jul 2008	1036	1033	-1	1036	1028	122
Sep 2008	1039	1040	-1	1039	1039	2
Dec 2008	1049	1043	-1	1049	1049	1
Totals		1015				14995

Tuesday 6th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	974	944	-31	981	939S	5670
May 2007	988	957	-31	995	948	10355
Jul 2007	1002	971	-32	1008	963	2199
Sep 2007	1015	984	-32	1020	976S	702
Dec 2007	1010	982	-30	1017	975	687
Mar 2008	1022	987	-30	1022	1022	3
May 2008	1029	994	-30	1030S	995S	83
Jul 2008		1003	-30			0
Sep 2008	1047	1010	-30	1048	1011S	124
Dec 2008	1058	1020	-28	1059	1025	83
Totals		985				19906

Wednesday 7th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	946	966	22	966	936	2836
May 2007	959	979	22	988	949	6325
Jul 2007	970	993	22	1001	963	2101
Sep 2007	984	1006	22	1004	978	311
Dec 2007	982	1005	23	982	975	1197
Mar 2008	987	1010	23	1010	981	1561
May 2008	991	1018	24	991S	991S	5
Jul 2008	999	1025	22	999S	999S	5
Sep 2008		1033	23			0
Dec 2008		1043	23			0
Totals		1008				14341

Thursday 8th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	946	971	25	970	939	3391
May 2007	961	986	25	986	955	9182
Jul 2007	978	1000	25	999	968	1398
Sep 2007	993	1014	25	1011	983	333
Dec 2007	984	1010	23	1011S	981	1028
Mar 2008	990	1015	24	1016	988	748
May 2008	993	1022	24	1017	993S	484
Jul 2008	1012	1031	24	1026S	1012	251
Sep 2008		1038	24			0
Dec 2008		1046	24			0
Totals		1013				16815

Friday 9th March 2007

Month	Opening Trans	Settle	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	991	1014	25	1019	991	14,355
May 2007	1000	999	3	1005	992	17,242
Jul 2007	1014	1011	1	1018	1007	1,815
Sep 2007	1028	1022	-2	1031	1016	2,369
Dec 2007	1026	1020	-4	1030S	1019	781
Mar 2008	1030	1025	-4	1033S	1022	303
May 2008	1030	1031	-6	1035S	1030	30
Jul 2008	1038	1038	-6	1043S	1038	8
Sep 2008	1046	1045	-6	1046	1046	2
Dec 2008	1058	1055	-6	1058	1057	32
Totals		1026				36,937

Average for the week	1009					20599
Total for the week						102,994

New York Board of Trade
(New York Futures Market – Summary of Trading Activities)
(US\$ per tonne)

Monday 5th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	1720 ^B 1765 ^A	1769	-26	1760	1721	5
May 2007	1765 1770	1779	-25	1782	1765	7429
Jul 2007	1793 0	1805	-25	1808	1793	1222
Sep 2007	1815 ^B 1820 ^A	1829	-24	1827	1823	510
Dec 2007	1837 0	1847	-27	1847	1834	237
Mar 2008	1857 0	1862	-24	1857	1857	289
May 2008	1865 ^B 1875 ^A	1879	-25	0	0	91
Jul 2008	0 0	1893	-28	1890	1890	57
Sep 2008	0 0	1919	-26	1900	1900	3
Dec 2008	0 0	1930	-29	1913	1913	1
Totals		1851				9844

Tuesday 6th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	1730 ^B 1780 ^A	1710	-59	1780	1710	268
May 2007	1790 1793	1715	-64	1793	1711	14557
Jul 2007	1815 ^B 1818 ^A	1742	-63	1818	1740	2609
Sep 2007	1838 0	1766	-63	1838	1765	2537
Dec 2007	1855 ^B 1865 ^A	1786	-61	1856	1788	733
Mar 2008	0 0	1802	-60	0	0	493
May 2008	0 0	1816	-63	0	0	30
Jul 2008	0 0	1826	-67	0	0	0
Sep 2008	0 0	1850	-69	1918	1905	113
Dec 2008	0 0	1864	-66	1935	1863	140
Totals		1788				21480

Wednesday 7th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	1701 ^B 1715 ^A	1740	30	1701	1696	17
May 2007	1716 1719	1755	40	1758	1697	10271
Jul 2007	1741 1742	1782	40	1783	1728	1171
Sep 2007	1765 ^B 1769 ^A	1806	40	1807	1753	389
Dec 2007	1784 ^B 1791 ^A	1826	40	1796	1775	443
Mar 2008	0 0	1842	40	0	0	191
May 2008	0 1823 ^A	1857	41	0	0	20
Jul 2008	0 0	1869	43	0	0	9
Sep 2008	0 0	1893	43	0	0	10
Dec 2008	0 0	1909	45	0	0	1
Totals		1828				12522

Thursday 8th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	1625 ^B 1750 ^A	1761	21	1739	1739	42
May 2007	1750 1757	1776	21	1782	1735	9764
Jul 2007	1781 0	1803	21	1808	1773	1574
Sep 2007	1800 ^B 1806 ^A	1827	21	1825	1790	1181
Dec 2007	0 0	1847	21	1836	1819	503
Mar 2008	0 0	1864	22	0	0	126
May 2008	0 0	1879	22	0	0	5
Jul 2008	0 0	1893	24	0	0	5
Sep 2008	0 0	1917	24	0	0	0
Dec 2008	0 0	1932	23	0	0	0
Totals		1850				13200

Friday 9th March 2007

Month	Open	Price	Change	High	Low	Volume
Mar 2007	1720 ^B 1790 ^A	1778	17	0	0	3
May 2007	1788 1790	1793	17	1804	1778	8131
Jul 2007	1818 0	1820	17	1827	1806	1660
Sep 2007	0 1842 ^A	1843	16	1845	1845	893
Dec 2007	0 0	1863	16	1869	1869	2105
Mar 2008	0 0	1880	16	0	0	71
May 2008	0 0	1895	16	0	0	10
Jul 2008	0 0	1906	13	0	0	25
Sep 2008	0 0	1928	11	0	0	0
Dec 2008	0 0	1936	4	0	0	1617
Totals		1864				14515

Average for the week	1836					17890
Total for the week						71,561

Spot Prices (US\$ per tonne)

	5 th March	6 th March	7 th March	8 th March	9 th March
Main Crop Ghana, Grade 1	2162	2098	2142	2163	2180
Main Crop Ivory Coast, Grade 1	2062	1998	2045	2066	2083
Main Crop Nigerian, 1	2032	1968	2032	2053	2070
Superior Arriba	2687	2623	2697	2718	2735
Sanchez f.a.q.	2047	1983	2027	2048	2065
Malaysian 110	1764	1700	1753	1774	1791
Sulawesi f.a.q.	1832	1768	1810	1831	1848
Ecuador Cocoa Liquor	3528	3401	3428	3469	3502
Pure Prime Press African Type Cocoa Butter	4845	4671	4885	4943	4991
10/12% Natural Cocoa Press Cake	937	903	930	941	950

Source: Cocoa Merchants' Association

News

US: Vitamin tablets can't match fruit and veg

Source: living.scotsman.com

VITAMIN C, beta carotene, cranberry capsules, green tea extract, high-dose vitamin E, pine bark and grape-seed extract have all been heavily marketed for their potent "antioxidant" properties. Anti-oxidants are said to prevent cancer and heart disease, improve brain function and prolong life, so it's little wonder that up to 30 per cent of adults in the US take an anti-oxidant pill daily. Is the hype justified? To explain, antioxidants are substances that protect the body from damage by unstable molecules called free radicals. Antioxidants protect cells, preventing disease and slowing the ageing process. Antioxidants are found naturally in various produce including fresh fruit, vegetables, red wine, dark chocolate and tea.

Green tea is thought to contain up to ten times more anti-oxidant flavinoids than fruit and veg. A recent study suggests five or more cups of green tea per day reduces stroke and heart disease deaths by up to a quarter (Journal of American Medical Association). Widespread consumption in China and Japan may also contribute to lower rates of Alzheimer's disease. The compound thought to be responsible for its many medicinal effects is epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG). Researchers are now considering giving high doses of this compound as a therapeutic drug.

Dark chocolate also contains antioxidants. Cocoa appears to lower blood pressure, reduce cancer and heart disease. It is also reported to prevent tooth decay, relieve pain, improve immunity, and help brain function (American Association for the Advancement of Science). Indigenous Kuna Indians living on the San Blas islands, near Panama, consume large quantities of cocoa and suffer less heart disease and cancer, compared with their mainland relatives. Although intriguing, whether this is wholly due to the cocoa or other factors isn't clear.

Most of us, despite consuming tea and chocolate, do not however reap the health benefits. This is partly because we - or the manufacturers - add milk to improve taste. Milk proteins, called caesins, can interact and block antioxidants. In a small study, blood vessel relaxation seen following black tea was not observed after the addition of milk (European Heart Journal).

In addition, unhealthy sugars and fats added to most confectionery probably negate any cocoa benefit. Consumption of fresh natural produce (particularly fruit and veg) has proven its worth. Large studies however consistently fail to show the same health benefits from pills containing anti-oxidant extracts. In 1992, a study assessing effects of beta-carotene tablets on progression of lung cancer (US national cancer institute) was stopped early because alarmingly it appeared to increase lung cancer deaths.

Vitamin E, the world's favourite anti-oxidant, suffered a similar downfall. Two large studies in the 1990s suggested a strong link between high consumption of vitamin E in the diet and lower heart disease. Later research failed to show vitamin E tablets could do the same.

The nail in the coffin has just been struck by a publication in the Journal of the American Medical Association released a few days ago. It reviewed 68 studies on nearly a quarter of a million people and concluded there was no convincing evidence that antioxidant supplements have beneficial effects. Alarmingly, beta carotene, vitamin A and vitamin E supplements appeared to increase the risk of death.

Although certain foods are beneficial to health, pills containing the same purified compounds appear not to be. Why this is, isn't fully understood. What is clear is there is no easy way to reap the benefits of a rich and varied fresh diet. There is reasonable evidence to recommend green tea - without milk! - and for the occasional square of unsweetened dark cocoa-rich chocolate. However, the latest research suggest vitamin pills and purified extracts should carry a health warning and perhaps even be withdrawn from stores.

A Chocoholic's Paradise: Indulging in a Chocolate Pedicure

Good news chocolate lovers! Preliminary evidence shows that cocoa and other chocolates may help you keep high blood pressure down, your heart healthy and you blood flowing strong. But when all you crave is a good chocolate fix... who cares about all that! Now you can take that chocoholic status one step further - the chocolate pedicure.

Popular at many high-end salons, the chocolate pedicure wraps you in the warm smell of cocoa from the moment you begin. Depending on your location, expect to pay at least \$50 for a full chocolate spa treatment, or you can create your own at-home chocolate pedicure for a fraction of the price. Add a mocha, some truffles or even M&M's and you might get your sweetie to join you!

Start things off with a warm soak in a basin or foot spa. Add unscented foaming bath gel while filling with very warm water and sprinkle with pure cocoa. Relax and let your skin soften as long as the water stays warm. (Hint: have a carafe of hot water beside you so you can maintain the water temperature.) Follow with a chocolate scented scrub from heel to toe and a pumice stone on any dry patches. Next comes the wonderful paraffin wrap. You can purchase chocolate paraffin or add the same cocoa or chocolate oil to regular paraffin for the same effect. Allow paraffin to heat until melted then add the powder or oil and blend well. If you don't have access to paraffin wraps, strips of paper towel will work nicely. Heat your paraffin (those mini crock pots work well) and dip your strips. It works best to glide the strips gently over the surface. Allow excess to drip and wrap strips from ankle to toes covering all your skin. Sit back and enjoy until the strips have cooled. Starting at the ankle, slide the strips off and rinse your feet. Follow with a rich cocoa butter cream massage. Here is where it pays to do this with the one you love, after all, Harvard studies show that men who ate three chocolate bars a month lived longer than the ones who didn't. Be sure to hit those pressure points and don't neglect the toes. If you're enjoying your pedicure during blissfully quiet "alone time," try a massage ball or roller. Finish with a coat of your favorite nail polish and, what the heck, another piece of chocolate.

Not only was your pedicure relaxing, the antioxidants found naturally in chocolate help protect the skin from free-radicals, pollution and sun damage, so don't be afraid to limit chocolate treatments to your feet. The same treatment on your hands and even whole body soaks in chocolate oils found at many beauty supply stores or high-end shops are good and good for you.

Important note! Cocoa may stain containers and dry skin. Be prepared with a loofah or pumice stone.

Cocoa may lead to sustained improvement in blood vessel function

Heart : Cocoa may lead to sustained improvement in blood vessel function

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

Drinking a specially-made cocoa beverage daily may have the potential to reverse impairments in the functioning of blood vessels, according to a first-of-its-kind study published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Pharmacology. The cocoa used in the study was rich in flavanols, naturally-occurring compounds abundant in freshly harvested cocoa prior to their destruction during the typical processing and manufacture of cocoa and chocolate products.

These results suggest this flavanol-rich cocoa could have important implications for cardiovascular health since reduced endothelial function is recognized as an early stage in blood vessel diseases such as atherosclerosis. As noted in the paper, the magnitude of the blood vessel benefits to study participants after consuming this special flavanol-rich cocoa drink for a week was comparable to long-term drug therapy with statins. Previous studies have demonstrated acute or short term improvements in endothelial or blood vessel function after consuming this flavanol-rich cocoa, but this is the first study to suggest that these benefits may build and be sustained over several days - even to the point of apparent reversal of impairments in blood vessel function. While this study is very promising, the researchers do indicate that larger trials are necessary to demonstrate the clinical relevance of these flavanol-rich foods.

To study the impact of both immediate and sustained consumption of this well-studied flavanol-rich cocoa, researchers in Germany fed the cocoa to a group of male smokers – a population known to have impaired blood vessel function. In the first part of the study, participants drank specially made cocoa beverages that contained different flavanol levels – ranging from 28 to 918 milligrams. At each level, the optimal effect occurred after two hours. The drink containing 179 milligrams of cocoa flavanols resulted in a 50 percent improvement increase in blood vessel function in study participants. Each higher level also significantly increased endothelial function, with the highest level of 918 mg appearing to reverse impairments in blood vessel function to such an extent that it was restored to a performance level expected in a person with no known cardiovascular risk factors.

Contrary to statements often made in the popular media, the effect of this flavanol-rich cocoa on blood vessel function appears to be independent of any changes in established markers of oxidative stress or damage, suggesting that the potential blood vessel benefits of this cocoa are likely not attributable to a general "antioxidant" effect of cocoa flavanols.

In the seven-day feeding study designed to evaluate sustained benefits, the participants drank three doses of the cocoa drink each day for a total of 918 mg of flavanols daily. Researchers tested blood vessel function daily before the first morning dose of flavanols and two hours after the first dose. They found daily improvements in blood flow, with near reversal of impairment after consumption of the drink containing 306 mg of cocoa flavanols on day seven.

However, a week after the study ended and consumption of this cocoa stopped, endothelial function had returned to its lower level measured at the beginning of the study. "This new research is the first to provide clear evidence suggesting that daily intake of this flavanol-rich cocoa could have a sustained benefit for circulatory health. This study also suggests that the effects of this flavanol-rich cocoa on blood vessels is independent of generalized 'antioxidant' actions often incorrectly reported in the media," said Harold Schmitz, PhD, Chief Science Officer at Mars, Incorporated, which has conducted and supported the vast majority of the research conducted on flavanol-rich cocoa reported in peer-reviewed scientific literature. "This study should give pause to those claiming that flavanols in cocoa act as antioxidants when describing their link to cardiovascular or circulatory health."

This is the latest study supported by Mars demonstrating potential blood vessel health benefits of this specially-made cocoa uncommonly rich in flavanols. The Journal of the American College of Cardiology named another study conducted by a collaborative group of researchers in Germany, the University of California, Davis and Mars examining the effects of this specific cocoa on blood vessel function to be one of the major advancements in cardiovascular research in 2005. (DeMaria AN et al. Highlights of the Year in JACC 2005. Journal of the American College of Cardiology. 2006; 47:184-202.)

Working in collaboration with top research institutions throughout the world, Mars, Incorporated continues to lead the way in exploring the full nutrition and medical potential of the flavanols that are naturally abundant in fresh cocoa prior to their destruction during typical handling and processing practices. For more than 15 years, Mars' commitment to breakthrough scientific research is evidenced by more than 100 peer-reviewed research publications on cocoa and more than 30 patents held by Mars scientists – numbers that dwarf the combined research efforts of all other companies in this promising area of health science. Scientists at Mars, Incorporated developed a patented process called **Cocoapro®** that helps retain more of the naturally occurring flavanols in cocoa. **Cocoapro** cocoa is the best understood and most studied cocoa in the world in terms of its potential effects on health. The cocoa in the flavanol-rich cocoa beverage in this study was prepared using the **Cocoapro** process to enable the higher and specific levels of cocoa flavanols necessary for high quality research. Mars products that are made with the **Cocoapro** process include **Dove®** Dark Chocolate and **CocoaVia®**, a new line of heart healthy snacks that are guaranteed to contain at least 100 mg of cocoa flavanols per serving. One of the newest **CocoaVia** products is a cocoa beverage, available in select stores. See www.cocoa.com for store locations.

Cameroon: Cocoa - CFA 655 Million to Boost Marketing

Cameroon Tribune (Yaoundé)

Lukong Pius Nyuylime

March 6, 2007

Eight cooperatives have signed a cooperation agreement with IITA to join the Upcocoa project. It was with all smiles that representatives of eight farmer cooperatives all from the Centre province region signed a cooperation agreement with the Upcocoa project to boost marketing activities in the sector. According to the terms of the agreement, the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture has committed itself to disburse CFA 655 million from its Cocoa Buffer Fund to finance cocoa marketing related activities among the eight Cameroonian cooperatives. The Minister of Trade, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana presided at the signing ceremony, which took place at the head office of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). According to the Upcocoa project manager, Dr. Teun Wolters, the project sets out to upgrade all eight cooperatives into sustainable business organizations. "The Upcocoa project is a multi-stakeholder project representing different links in the international cocoa supply chain", Dr Teun said. The project will be managed in collaboration with the sustainable Tree Crop Project (STCP) of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). "We preferred to collaborate with STCP because of its far-reaching contacts with farmer organizations in the central region of Cameroon", he said.

The Upcocoa project is, in effect, a pilot project for Cameroon. "If it's successful, we would like to implement in other parts of the country, but the main thing is that we want the cooperatives to grow because we have the intension of having a large scale production centralized in one sales organization", he said. The new project was highly appreciated by the Minister of Trade, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana. "There has been no lack of good

ideas about cocoa marketing in Cameroon, but what fails is convincing practice," he said, adding that, "the Upcocoa project is strongly market-oriented and this is exactly what the farmers and the country need."

Approximately 1600 farmers are expected to benefit from the project, which has set a scheme of capacity building. "We really need comprehensive scheme of capacity building, especially by training, improved cultivation and logistics, improved health and safety procedures and improved financial income for the individual farmer," Dr Teun said. When operational, the project could enable each cooperative to produce between 500 and 1000 tons of cocoa per year.

Ivorian cocoa farmers declare hunger strike

Wed Mar 7, 2007

By Ange Aboa

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - A group of around 30 farmers in the world's top cocoa grower Ivory Coast have gone on hunger strike to demand the replacement of the heads of industry bodies they accuse of mismanagement. The growers from the SNAPRICC-CI union want President Laurent Gbagbo to enact a decree he announced in February 2006 stipulating that the directors of the industry's management structures must be changed through elections each year.

Farmers groups say the bodies are poorly run and squander the levies that planters pay on their cocoa to cover the running costs of these structures. "We're staying here until the president meets with us or makes an appeasing gesture by creating the conditions to hold elections," said farmer Andre Kando, also the union's communications chief. The strikers said they stopped eating more than a week ago. Threats of protests over the running of the \$2 billion cocoa sector feature on a weekly basis in Ivory Coast's daily press but rarely take place or are short lived.

The SNAPRICC-CI farmers are holding the hunger strike at a small marquee outside St. Paul's cathedral in the centre of the economic capital Abidjan, with banners informing passing motorists about their campaign. Kando said Gbagbo's decree had instructed industry bodies to carry out a census of coffee and cocoa farmers to enable a vote to elect new leaders. The structures include the Coffee and Cocoa Bourse (BCC) marketing body, the Coffee and Cocoa Producers' Development Fund (FDPCC), the Regulatory and Control Fund (FRC) and the Coffee and Cocoa Regulatory Authority. They replaced the state-controlled Caistab, which controlled the sector before liberalisation reforms took effect from 2000.

Farmers say they have been paid less for their cocoa since the reforms and have never received cash from a fund they pay into which is supposed to provide them with a top-up payment when fluctuating prices for cocoa fall sharply. A joint World Bank and International Monetary Fund mission to the country last year called for more transparency on how revenues from the country's cocoa sector and rapidly expanding oil production were spent. Agriculture is the backbone of Ivory Coast's economy and the cocoa sector accounts for around 40 percent of the West African state's export revenue and around 15 percent of its GDP.

A daily cup of special cocoa drink may improve blood vessel function

Wednesday, March 07, 2007 (EST)

Washington, Mar 7: Researchers have found that the daily consumption of a specially-made cocoa drink may have the potential to positively influence blood vessel health. The cocoa used in the study was rich in flavanols, naturally-occurring compounds abundant in freshly harvested cocoa prior to their destruction during the typical processing and manufacture of cocoa and chocolate products. These results suggest this flavanol-rich cocoa could have important implications for cardiovascular health since reduced endothelial function is recognized as an early stage in blood vessel diseases such as atherosclerosis.

The researchers in Germany noted that the benefits to study participants, a group of male smokers – a population known to have impaired blood vessel function, after consuming this special flavanol-rich cocoa drink for a week, was comparable to long-term drug therapy with statins. In the first part of the study, participants drank specially made cocoa beverages that contained different flavanol levels – ranging from 28 to 918 milligrams.

At each level, the optimal effect occurred after two hours. The drink containing 179 milligrams of cocoa flavanols resulted in a 50 percent improvement increase in blood vessel function in study participants. Each higher level also significantly increased endothelial function, with the highest level of 918 mg appearing to reverse impairments in blood vessel function to such an extent that it was restored to a performance level expected in a person with no known cardiovascular risk factors.

"This new research is the first to provide clear evidence suggesting that daily intake of this flavanol-rich cocoa could have a sustained benefit for circulatory health. This study also suggests that the effects of this flavanol-rich cocoa on blood vessels is independent of generalized 'antioxidant' actions often incorrectly reported in the media," said Harold Schmitz, PhD, Chief Science Officer at Mars, Incorporated, which has conducted and supported the vast majority of the research conducted on flavanol-rich cocoa reported in peer-reviewed scientific literature.

"This study should give pause to those claiming that flavanols in cocoa act as antioxidants when describing their link to cardiovascular or circulatory health," he added.

In the seven-day feeding study designed to evaluate sustained benefits, the participants drank three doses of the cocoa drink each day for a total of 918 mg of flavanols daily. Researchers tested blood vessel function daily before the first morning dose of flavanols and two hours after the first dose. They found daily improvements in blood flow, with near reversal of impairment after consumption of the drink containing 306 mg of cocoa flavanols on day seven. *The study is published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Pharmacology. (ANI)*

Cocoa may reverse blood vessel damage, study

Source: Journal of Cardiovascular Pharmacology 2007

By Catherine Boal

07/03/2007 - Smokers should be encouraged to indulge their sweet tooth, judging from the results of a new study into how daily consumption of a specially-prepared cocoa beverage benefits blood vessel function. The research, published in the Journal of Cardiovascular Pharmacology, monitored a group of 11 healthy male smokers who consumed three doses a day of a flavanol-rich cocoa drink provided by confectionery giant Mars. The volunteers consumed a total of 918mg of flavanols daily during the trial.

Within two days participants showed a significant improvement in blood vessel function and researchers noted that impairment of blood flow could almost be reversed with consumption of a mixture containing 306mg of flavanols on day seven. Scientists concluded that regular consumption of special cocoa containing flavanols may have a sustained benefit on blood vessel health and possibly even reverse damage in vessel function. The discovery joins the growing body of research into the far-reaching health benefits of cocoa and in particular the flavanol present in unprocessed beans.

Recently chocolate manufacturers have been vociferous in pushing the health aspects of cocoa to combat consumer concerns, with confectioners such as Nestlé and Mars pouring investment into nutrition research. Aside from the circulatory benefits of flavanols, other research into their effects suggests they can halt the development of cancer cells, lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure. A week after the study ended, participants discovered that blood vessel function had returned to pre-trial levels, indicating that flavanol consumption must be maintained. The study, conducted by the University of California and the University Hospital in Aachen, Germany, stresses that further clinical trials are necessary to more accurately determine the impact of flavanols on circulatory health.

Dry weather harms upcoming Ivorian cocoa harvest

Fri Mar 9, 2007

By Ange Aboa

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - A long spell of dry weather in the world's top cocoa grower Ivory Coast has harmed flowers and small pods and is likely to slash output during the imminent April-September mid crop season, exporters said on Thursday. Some shippers said production during the mid crop, the second six-month growing cycle of the 2006-2007 season, could fall as low as 200,000 tonnes while others expected a larger harvest of at least 250,000 tonnes. Output during last year's mid crop, when weather conditions were favourable for the cocoa's development, surpassed 400,000 tonnes, shippers said.

"The climate is generally pretty tough. First came the harmattan (desert wind) in January and now the sun is hitting the development of the flowers and cherelles (small pods)," said the director of foreign exporting company in Abidjan.

"Taking all of that into account, I'm thinking of around 200,000 to 225,000 tonnes for this smaller harvest, and that wouldn't be too bad when you think that we can expect worse if the climate deteriorates further," he said.

The tropical country is currently in its dry season, with rain scarce and temperatures high. Barely any rain fell in January and showers in early February proved short-lived in central areas but are continuing in southwestern areas.

RAIN REQUIRED

Some farmers in the southwest say they are upbeat about the upcoming crop because their plantations are displaying the signs of a good harvest to come, but central-western areas producing the bulk of the cocoa have borne the brunt of the dry weather. "At the moment there are new leaves appearing on the cocoa trees more so than flowers, and even when the flowers appear, many of them die because it's too hot and there's not enough rain," said a buyer for an exporter based in the centre west.

Some growers in these driest regions complain that the last few (October-March) main crop pods they are gathering now contain very small beans and say this is due to lack of moisture which they require to swell to full size.

A dealer at a major European exporter based in the southwestern port town of San Pedro said prospects for the harvest could still improve if more rains came soon in inland cocoa regions. "If it starts to rain in the coming days I think that will help the flowers (to blossom) and the cherelles to develop normally," he said. "There's rain on the coast but it should gradually reach the interior as usual," he said. "There's just a slight delay in the rains coming, otherwise things are okay," he said, estimating the mid crop would turn out at least 250,000 tonnes but not attain 300,000.

Flavonoid-rich cocoa found healthy for the brain

By William Atkins

Friday, 09 March 2007

By studying differences in people living on and off the group of islands called Kuna, researchers found that people who regularly drank cocoa rich in flavonoids had less chance of having dementia, diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes.

Researchers from Harvard Medical School (Boston, Massachusetts, United States) found that native people living on the island group Kuna, off the Caribbean coast of Panama in Central America, did not have high blood pressure when young and old. However, if these natives left their homeland for the Central American mainland, their blood pressure went up.

After about fifteen years of research to find a cause for this difference, the researchers found that Kuna natives drink several cups of cocoa each day. However, if they move away from Kuna, then that habit did not continue or did not continue in exactly the same way. The researchers eventually found the crucial link. They discovered that cocoa drunk by Kuna natives is very high in the compounds called flavonoids, while the cocoa drunk on the mainland is not rich in flavonoids.

Derived from plants, flavonoids is a class of secondary metabolites that have been shown in previous studies to improve the body's response when attacked by carcinogens, allergens, and viruses. If proven true, flavonoids have the potential to help prevent cancers and cardiovascular diseases. (Other foods and drinks shown to contain flavonoids compounds include fruit, vegetables, tea, and red wine.) Because flavonoids compounds have a bitter taste, they are often removed from cocoa made by manufacturers in large quantities in most countries.

To confirm their findings, the researchers gave flavonoid-rich cocoa to 50-year-old and older people, while another group of the same age range was given cocoa without flavonoids. Their study found that the flavonoid-rich group had blood flow in the brain that was 10 to 15% better than the brain flow in the non-flavonoid group. Within their study, the collaborators mention that some chocolate and cocoa manufacturers are beginning to realize the health benefits of flavonoids. As a result, they are reintroducing them into their products.

Gloomy cocoa forecast as bad weather hits supply

By Catherine Boal

3/9/2007 - The International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO) has published its first cocoa forecast for 2006/07 in which global supply is expected to dip. The bulletin, available from this week, includes revised estimates for the 2005/06 period on world production, grindings and cocoa bean stocks. Last year's estimate for world production

reached 3,592 thousand tonnes but the ICCO have since upped the figure to 3,675. For the coming period however this figure is predicted to drop by 5.5 per cent to 3,472 thousand tonnes.

Similarly pessimistic forecasts have been noted elsewhere with investment bank Fortis forced to increase its 2006/07 cocoa deficit figure from 131,000 tonnes to 215,000 last month due to unfavourable weather in West Africa. Unseasonably dry weather in the area has raised fears that crops will be damaged and production from the major growing region will fall. With supplies dipping and factors such as weather, disease and civil unrest having an increasing impact on the production chain, many companies and government bodies are becoming involved in helping cocoa farmers at grass roots levels.

This week, the Netherlands donated 655 million CFA francs to Cameroon cocoa farmers to improve the co-operative structures throughout the farming communities and improve their marketing position. And members of the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) teamed up recently to extend their five-year plan to help 150,000 cocoa farming families in Ghana through programmes related to education, health and labour conditions. The ICCO bulletin examines factors affecting the industry and comments on crop and demand prospects for leading countries as well as giving a review of statistics on price, exports, imports and consumption. The Quarterly Bulletin of Cocoa Statistics Volume XXXIII can be ordered from the ICCO secretariat.

TIT BITS

(Source: Business Recorder – www.brecord)

New York cocoa closes higher

NEW YORK (March 10, 2007): US cocoa open-outcry futures contracts settled firm on Thursday on late-day fund buying amid light volume, floor sources said. "The week (the) market responded to the peace (deal) being signed in the Ivory Coast and then it's back to business as usual with concerns (about) weather in the Ivory Coast possible reduction in the size of the midcrop," said Judy Ganes of J Ganes Consulting.

Nigerian cocoa prices flat

LAGOS (March 10, 2007): Nigerian cocoa prices were flat at 190,000 naira (\$1,480) per tonne at the farm gate in the past month despite fears of a big shortfall in the 2006/07 crop, growers and buyers said on Friday.

Ivory Coast cocoa arrivals rise

ABIDJAN (March 10, 2007): cocoa arrivals at ports in Ivory Coast reached 888,893 tonnes from October 1, 2006 to March 4, 2007, compared with 887,120 tonnes received in the same period last year, exporters said on Friday. The figures showed 4,269 tonnes arrived at ports from February 26 to March 4, down from 7,263 tonnes in the same period of the 2005/06 season.

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