

Beyond compliance: driving performance in the coffee and cocoa value chains

The coffee and cocoa sectors are of great importance both to African countries and to the Belgian and European agri-food industry.

The vast majority of cocoa and coffee is produced on small-scale farms, for which these crops represent a vital source of income: In Côte d'Ivoire, a country that accounts for around 40 per cent of the world's cocoa supply, the sector accounts for nearly 15 per cent of GDP and 35 per cent of exports (65 per cent of which are absorbed by the EU). In Belgium, the chocolate sector is one of the mainstays of the food industry.

The cocoa as well as the coffee sectors are currently under considerable strain. Climate change is in overdrive, global prices are volatile and diseases caused by fungi and viruses are spreading. The entry into force of regulatory frameworks arising from the EU's Green Deal is reshaping the conditions for access to the European market: For producer countries, these new regulations pose a major risk of small-scale farms being marginalised, but at the same time offer an opportunity to professionalise operations and capture a larger share of the added value by selling products that meet ethical and sustainability criteria at higher prices.

Also, the cocoa sector is facing economic and quality-related challenges linked to the replacement of cocoa with new substitute products in chocolate manufacturing.

Positioning

Enabel promotes an integrated development model for the cocoa and coffee sectors. By drawing on public-private partnerships, strengthening local governance and promoting 'of origin' quality branding, Enabel aims to guarantee a living income for producers whilst ensuring climate resilience and securing Europe's supply chain.

This model falls within Enabel's 2030 Strategy: to build sustainable agricultural supply chains that benefit all stakeholders, and to champion an approach based on balanced partnerships. The aim is to meet the supply needs of European industry whilst promoting the creation of decent

jobs, respect for the environment and compliance with ESG criteria.

Enabel enables local cooperatives and businesses – which are often vulnerable – to become dependable economic partners and to be better equipped to meet the demands of the international market.

The aim is no longer simply to professionalise cooperatives but to transform these initiatives into bankable investment opportunities. The agency positions itself as a driving force capable of maximising the leverage effect on public and private funding. Its work is structured around eight complementary areas of action.

Enabel's 8 areas of action

1. Corporate governance and financial sustainability

Enabel is convinced that the sustainability of businesses depends on their becoming professional rather than on mere capital investment. That is why Enabel is facilitating the transfer of skills in governance, financial management and business management. This assistance takes the form of the introduction of rigorous procedure manuals, clear job descriptions and strategic planning tools (OGSM or Objective, Goals, Strategies and Measures methodology). This promotes the development of responsible, transparent agricultural businesses based on the delegation of authority.

Ensuring a good level of liquidity is essential. Indeed, if producers are not paid straight away, they tend to turn to informal middlemen, which compromises the entire traceability chain. To guard against this, companies must ensure they keep their costs under control, make use of management tools and demonstrate complete financial transparency.

In Côte d'Ivoire, through the assistance provided to the COOPANEK cooperative banking irregularities were brought to light and over a period of just five months 1,787,770 FCFA (2,725.4 euros) in unjustified penalties (agios) were cancelled.

In Uganda, the LAVISKSCOF cooperative succeeded to secure, manage and repay in full a working capital loan from DFCU Bank, demonstrating remarkable financial viability.



2. Economic differentiation through quality

Enabel focuses on 'specialty' and 'fine taste' segments with a view to making most of the added value for producers. This strategy of moving upmarket ensures more decent incomes whilst highlighting the unique identity and genetic potential of African terroirs.

This involves selecting cocoa beans and coffee cherries, implementing post-harvest protocols and strictly segregating export batches in order to target markets that offer higher added value. This work also involves ongoing communication with national research organisations as well as support to public institutions to help shape national strategies aimed at bringing these high-quality products to market.

The results were evident at the Chocoa trade fair in Amsterdam in 2026, where the supported Côte d'Ivoire cooperatives (Cafugo, Yeyasso and Scamed) far exceeded the 'cocoa of excellence' threshold and demonstrated the very high quality of their cocoa.

Offering a high-quality product is the first step, but it only creates wealth if you can win over the right markets. Enabel is transforming the commercial culture of manufacturing companies, turning them into genuine sales forces capable of prospecting internationally. Enabel provides them with professional communication tools to shape their brand image and stand out, particularly at major events (Biofach, Salon du Chocolat, Chocoa, World of Coffee).

3. Livelihoods, economic diversification and social inclusion

Ensuring a decent income for producer households is a key objective for Enabel. The calculation of the Living Income Gap by Enabel, Galler Chocolaterie and Fairtrade Belgium, among 350 households in the Côte d'Ivoire cooperative Yeyasso, revealed that 11 per cent of them were living below the extreme poverty line, and that cocoa accounted for 48 per cent of their total income.

To tackle this, Enabel supports pilot initiatives and participates in technical working groups aimed at establishing a benchmark for a living income. Enabel's programme with the Union of Coffee Producers' Cooperatives in Uganda focuses on digitising the value chain to ensure transparency and facilitate the effective payment of the benchmark price directly to farmers.

The vulnerability of producer communities to asymmetric shocks stems from their excessive dependence on cocoa or coffee. Impact studies confirm that diversification into food crops and other cash crops or by-products (cocoa juice, organic fertilisers made from crop residues) is strongly correlated with an improvement in the overall economic situation of households. Enabel's projects to promote good agricultural practices in Côte d'Ivoire have led to a 36.50 per cent increase in net income per hectare in the Centre region.

At the same time, the agency is working to promote the social inclusion of women producers, who are often disadvantaged

by the lack of legal land rights and, as a result, denied access to quality premiums and digital payments. To ensure that land ownership certificates are issued securely, Enabel supports advocacy efforts with customary authorities and encourages the establishment of village savings and credit associations. These community-based financial mechanisms enable women to overcome financial exclusion so that they can invest in supplementary income-generating activities, thereby helping to even out their income during the quiet periods of the agricultural year.

4. Regulatory constraints as a competitive advantage

The export of agricultural products to Europe is subject to an increasingly stringent regulatory framework, notably the Deforestation Regulation (DREU). Enabel turns compliance with standards into a competitive advantage.

HREDD (human rights and environmental due diligence) coaching as well as funding from Enabel's Trade for Development Centre are enabling African cooperatives to adapt their day-to-day management to European requirements. When rolling out digital due diligence systems, the focus is on practical tools to map social and environmental risks, geolocate farms and verify their 'zero deforestation' status via satellite. Enabel supports the Côte d'Ivoire SME Agency, which is dedicated to supporting businesses and equips the institution to help local SMEs turn new European requirements (such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive – CS3D) into drivers of competitiveness.

5. Climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry and carbon markets

The increasing severity of climate-related shocks is leading to crop diseases, lower yields and the proliferation of insect pests. It calls for a complete rethink of agricultural practices. Enabel is responding to this by promoting climate-smart agriculture, in particular through the integration of dynamic agroforestry systems. This method restores biodiversity, protects cocoa and coffee trees from drought and heat stress and enhances the aromatic complexity of the beans through slower ripening.

In Uganda and the DRC, hundreds of thousands of high-value commercial shade tree seedlings (macadamia, cordia) have been distributed to coffee growers. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Sustainable Cocoa Team Europe Initiative, implemented on behalf of the European Union, has converted more than 2,000 hectares to agroforestry practices and fully preserved 64 hectares of dense forest in the Mabi-Yaya region.

Beside agricultural practices, these efforts open up financial opportunities by monetising environmental services. Enabel acts as a catalyst for ecosystem services payment schemes. In agro-forestry, by restoring degraded agricultural landscapes so that they once again become recognised carbon sinks, these mechanisms offer a threefold sustainable benefit: global climate mitigation, large-scale restoration of forest ecosystems, and the creation of a new, sustainable source of income for rural communities that is not affected by commodity market fluctuations.

In Côte d'Ivoire, private agreements concluded with major players (Ferrero, Hershey, Valrhona, Ethiquable) have raised over 245,000 euros in direct payments to thousands of producers committed to forest conservation. On a larger scale, Enabel supports feasibility studies aimed at integrating entire regions into voluntary carbon markets.

6. Sustainable investment and the organisation of agricultural stakeholders

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the agroecological transition and guarantee access to appropriate capital for the coffee and cocoa sectors, Enabel's technical assistance prepares agricultural stakeholders to become 'bankable', by optimising the use of public funds to attract private capital.

Enabel can specifically target suppliers of processing companies that have received investment from the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries (BIO) and other development finance institutions. For example, it provides technical assistance to Côte d'Ivoire cocoa-producer cooperatives that supply a processing company, the Compagnie Cacaoyère du Bandama, which has received investment from BIO. This comprehensive approach reduces risks for investors by consolidating the supply chain, whilst accelerating the professionalisation of cooperatives, thereby strengthening their long-term bankability.

7. Partnerships with the private sector and multi-stakeholder initiatives

Enabel is committed to forging partnerships with Belgian and European companies and responds to the political call to align international cooperation with the defence of Belgium's and the EU's interests. Enabel's expertise, combined with that of the private sector, helps to reduce investment risks and secure supplies, whilst providing producers with a better income.

In Côte d'Ivoire, Enabel and Puratos are working together to improve cocoa quality through fermentation centres and by supporting neighbouring communities. This enables a quality bonus to be paid to producers and allows Puratos to secure its long-term supply.

Cafés Rombouts and Enabel have signed a non-binding memorandum of understanding to pool their expertise in social responsibility, to support cooperatives in the renovation of their plantations and the improvement of quality at washing stations, and to demonstrate the direct benefits of international cooperation for Belgian suppliers and buyers.

To give its work wider reach and maximise its impact, Enabel takes part in multi-stakeholder initiatives: by bringing together all the stakeholders in a sector, these platforms connect African businesses directly with major European buyers of ethically sourced cocoa and coffee, and, above all, enable a collective effort to tackle the systemic challenges of deforestation and ensuring a living income for producers – challenges that no single stakeholder can resolve on their own.

Among these partnerships, the Beyond Chocolate initiative, launched in 2018, brings together more than 70 organisations representing around 90 per cent of the Belgian chocolate production market. Its objectives for the cocoa sector are ambitious: to ensure that zero deforestation is achieved and to guarantee a living income for producers. In the same vein, a Belgian Alliance for Sustainable Coffee (BASCOF) is currently being set up.

8. Responsible consumption as a means of fostering global citizenship

Raising awareness of responsible consumption lies at the heart of Enabel's global citizenship strategy, based on the principle that active citizenship is demonstrated through an understanding of the social and environmental impacts of one's consumption patterns. To raise awareness amongst consumers, Enabel uses educational tools aimed particularly at young people, such as the interactive theatre piece Cacao Quest.

Recommendations

Drawing on its operational experience and anticipating the need to adapt to the requirements of the European Green Deal, Enabel has drawn up recommendations, structured around five pillars, for cooperation stakeholders, governments, the private sector and any other technical or financial partners.

1. Climate resilience and carbon markets

- Support the renewal of plant material and the implementation of dynamic agroforestry systems in order to restore soil fertility and ensure the long-term sustainability of the plots.
- Strengthen the scientific evidence base and the collection of certified primary data at cooperative level, enabling coffee roasters and chocolate makers to make indisputable environmental claims on the European market.
- Support the structured integration of producer communities into voluntary carbon markets (high integrity, international carbon certification standards such as VCS/CCB) and payment schemes for ecosystem services. Turn orchards into carbon sinks so as to provide growers with a new source of guaranteed income in the face of climate-related uncertainties.
- Use platforms such as BASCOF to design continent-wide climate-smart projects that could be aligned with the EU's Global Gateway, mobilising blended finance.

2. Strengthening local businesses

- Strengthen formal and delegated governance by strictly separating the powers of the boards of directors from those of the management teams and systematise the use of multi-annual planning frameworks such as OGSM.
- Secure access to working capital for cooperatives through credit guarantees, blended finance instruments, the inclusion of structured pre-financing clauses in international purchase contracts or other forms of access to finance.
- Fund the roll-out of integrated management software to ensure auditable financial transparency and prepare agricultural businesses for audits and other analyses aimed at strengthening investor confidence.

- Make it easier for women farmers to obtain land titles so to ensure that quality premiums benefit those who do the agricultural work.

3. Added value and market access

- Co-fund the establishment of modern fermentation and drying facilities and provide technical assistance with organoleptic analysis, with a view to standardising batches, reducing rejection rates, maximising the untapped aromatic potential of African coffee varieties and gaining a foothold in specialty coffee markets.
- Provide technical support for local initiatives aimed at creating and protecting intellectual property through Protected Geographical Indications registered with the African Intellectual Property Organisation so as to 'de-commoditise' the origin of West African products and to combat the anonymisation of value.
- Fund the roll-out of communication tools so as to establish a digital presence and facilitate direct B2B networking at international trade fairs.
- Set up 'contract clinics' and provide legal coaching to production companies to assist them with their commercial negotiations, thereby ensuring fair purchasing practices and risk-sharing clauses within supply chains.
- Systematically integrate supply chains into the dynamics of the strategic corridors supported by the EU (Global Gateway): combine improvements to logistics infrastructure with direct support for the productive capacities of local cooperatives. Harness blended finance instruments (EFSD+ guarantee funds) via Team Europe so as to mitigate investment risks and ensure that these corridors benefit local communities.

4. Regulatory compliance (DREU, ECGT, CS3D) and transparency

- Support the roll-out of national traceability systems (producer databases, geolocation of plots), ensure that producers have control over their data and guarantee interoperability with the systems deployed by major buyers.
- Incorporate due diligence processes relating to human rights and the environment into the day-to-day management of organisations.

5. Advocacy and awareness-raising

- Use the expiry of the ECGT Directive (aimed at empowering consumers to take action in support of the ecological transition) as an advocacy opportunity to promote market transparency and inform citizens about reliable green claims, thereby strengthening demand for certified ethical products.
- Use policy advocacy and the influence of sector alliances (Beyond Chocolate, BASCOF) to standardise the adoption of responsible sourcing practices, encourage the inclusion of the living income benchmark in international trade contracts, whilst promoting diversification amongst producers so as to increase their resilience.
- Fund educational resources specifically aimed at young consumers and school-aged youth so as to raise their awareness of the interdependencies within supply chains and the issues surrounding fair pricing.



**Belgian agency
for international cooperation**

Public-law company
with social purposes

Rue Haute 147
1000 Brussels, Belgium
T + 32 (0)2 505 37 00
info@enabel.be
www.enabel.be



Editing board

Samuel Poos, Sofie Van Waeyenberge, Sabine Soetens, Désirée Bossé-Blé

Edition

Sonia Gsir

Published in French, Dutch and English.



Belgium

partner in development