

20 15

Annual Report VOICE Network

1. Introduction
2. Vision & Mission
3. Publications & Public Awareness
4. Influencing policies and practices
5. Annual Financial Statement
6. Organizational Structure

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2010, a group of interested civil society organisations from all over Europe came together for two days of sharing information and building connections. Over the years, from this informal 'meeting of minds' the VOICE Network has emerged.

At first, our joint activities were hosted and administered by various member organisations. However, as our collaboration deepened, it became apparent that VOICE needed become a legal entity, able to stand alone as a separate body from its individual members. After a long process, this was finally achieved in August of 2015, when the VOICE Network became an Association (Vereniging) under Dutch law.

What a year it has been; releasing the seminal 2015 Cocoa Barometer, hosting a workshop for farmers and civil society in Accra, Ghana, and with a strong presence in all of the major global cocoa platforms, it is safe to say that VOICE has become a mature and key player in the global cocoa conversation.

Whilst the network is growing ever stronger, we are painfully aware of the dire social, economic and financial conditions that the vast majority of cocoa producers are forced to call daily reality. As long as this is the case, we shall continue to work for a reformed and truly sustainable cocoa sector.

Jos Hendriks
Chairman of the Board, VOICE Network

2. Vision & Mission

The VOICE Network is an association of NGOs and Trade Unions working on sustainability in cocoa. VOICE's mission is to be a watchdog and catalyst for a reformed cocoa sector. A reformed cocoa sector will provide a decent livelihood, good labour conditions, adherence to human rights & sustainable environment in cocoa growing communities. We focus on Advocacy and Research.

3. Publications & Public Awareness

3.1 2015 Cocoa Barometer

March saw the release of the 2015 Cocoa Barometer, a semi-annual publication reporting on the **state of sustainability** in the cocoa sector, as well as providing a deeper look at a few of the the most **urgent topics** for the sector. The 2015 Cocoa Barometer focussed on the topics of **living income** for smallholder cocoa farmers and on **value distribution** in the cocoa supply chain.

The Barometer has kicked off a **sector-wide conversation on living income**, and has led to many actors to **acknowledge** the need for better approaches to **increase farmers' livelihoods**. The release was met with significant **press coverage** throughout the world, as well as in all the major industry news outlets. In the Netherlands, in direct response to the Barometer, a follow up



study was commissioned by the **Dutch government** on **market concentration** and the position of smallholder cocoa farmers.

The Barometer is seen by many in the cocoa sector - Civil Society, government, and industry alike - to be an important and **influential publication** in the cocoa sector. It is published by a **consortium** consisting of the VOICE network and several other external CSO partners (*HIVOS, Solidaridad, FNV Mondiaal, and for the USA Edition Green America, Oxfam America, and Green America*), and is administered and coordinated by the VOICE network.

The 2015 Cocoa Barometer was the first Barometer to be released in **languages** other than English; **French, German and Dutch** translations were distributed in both digital and hard-copy format. In addition, a special **USA Edition** was released, focussing more on American developments, and partnering with several USA based civil society organisations.

3.2 Voice of Farmers and Civil Society workshop

In September of 2015, VOICE organised a workshop for a broad representation of cocoa farmers, farmers organisations, and non-governmental organisations in Accra Ghana. More than thirty representatives of farmers, farmer organisations, unions, and NGO's from all over the world were present at the Workshop.

The objectives of this workshop were to **facilitate dialogue** between civil society actors, **obtain input** from farmers and NGO/Union representatives on key issues facing farmers in cocoa production, and **prepare an advocacy agenda** for 2016-2017. The key questions to the workshop revolved around **how to influence** the global and national cocoa conversations for the next two years and **how to strengthen** the voice of farmers.

One of the key outcomes of the Workshop was a **Priority List** of ten 'advocacy issues' that the farmers and southern CSO's identified, which was used by VOICE in our advocacy work as described in chapter 5 of this Annual Report. With the advent of several (international) "**farmers organisations**" - such as the ICCFO, the WCFO and the WCPO - who are aimed at speaking out on behalf of farmers, VOICE has taken a **step back** in these areas.

4 Influencing policies and practices

4.1 International Cocoa Organisation

The Consultative Board is the non-governmental advisory panel to the International Cocoa Organisation (ICCO), the UN body for cocoa. VOICE has been member of this body ever since they accepted NGO membership in the fall of 2013. A variety of actions were undertaken within this framework.

As members of the Consultative Board, VOICE has been instrumental in pushing for **transparency and accountability** in progress on the so-called **Global Cocoa Agenda**, an agreement signed by all major cocoa nations and all major cocoa and chocolate companies in

2012. However, a proper **monitoring** framework to measure progress on these commitments **was absent**; as such companies and governments can claim progress, without any verification of these claims. At VOICE's insistence, a **working group** was set up to draft a framework, **chaired** by VOICE. The proposed framework was **approved** for use in March, and the **first reporting** along this framework took place in September of this year. However, the response rate was **dissapointingly** low, causing several signatories to the Global Cocoa Agenda to **postpone further monitoring**. The progress for monitoring has been **set back significantly**.

The ICCO is the organiser of the semi-annual **World Cocoa Conferences**, the next one which is to be held in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, in May of 2016. VOICE acts as one of the spokespersons for civil society in the lead up towards these conferences. Towards the WCC3, key **priority areas** were identified in the Ghana Workshop described in Chapter 4.2 of this Annual Report. In addition, VOICE spent significant time and effort **influencing** the conference **programme, advocating for key issues** on the agenda, such as **living income** for smallholder farmers, as well as for the inclusion of farmers and women in the conference programme.

4.2 World Cocoa Foundation and CocoaAction

The World Cocoa Foundation is the global sustainability association of cocoa and chocolate companies. VOICE was a plenary speaker at their annual Partnership Meetings in Washington DC, challenging the hundreds of top officials present to be **more ambitious**, to be **more transparent** about their efforts, and for CocoaAction - the flagship programme of the WCF - to be **more open** for input from other actors. The **USA Edition** of the **Cocoa Barometer** was also released during this meeting.

4.3 ISO/CEN

Since 2011, work has been underway to create a new **international standard** on sustainable and traceable cocoa, under the banner of the **ISO/CEN** global platform. As the **leader** of the **working group** responsible for the "**Social Chapter**" of the standard, VOICE has played an active role in ensuring a high standard will be set on **labour rights, human rights, childrens rights, womens rights**, etc. At the same time, the process provides a **platform for VOICE to connect** with important actors in the value chain, and to influence their work and thinking. It is expected that the standard will be finished for **publication in 2017**.

4.4 Bilaterals

In addition to advocacy on larger sector-wide platforms such as the ICCO, WCF and ISO/CEN, VOICE also deploys efforts through bilateral engagement with actors in the chain. These include companies (such as Mondelez, Nestlé, Mars, Cargill, and Barry Callebaut), governments (in both chocolate consuming nations, such as the American Department of Labor, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture, as well as cocoa producing nations, such as the Ghanaian Cocobod, the Ivorian Conseil du Café-Cacao), farmers and farmer organisations, civil society organisations, and multi-stakeholder platforms (such as the International Cocoa Initiative, and the "Community of Practice on Living Income", hosted by the Sustainable Food Lab, ISEAL and GIZ).

5. Annual Financial Statement

This chapter outlines the finances (income and expenses) of the VOICE Network over the fiscal year 2015. As this is the year that VOICE was officially registered (and therefore also the year that VOICE obtained a bank account and financial streams separate from its members), the financial statement for this year does not cover all our activities; both the 2015 Cocoa Barometer and the Voice of Farmers and Civil Society workshop were financially administered by VOICE member the Berne Declaration. Reserves for contingencies are needed to secure the sustainable working ability of the association.

The financial administration of the VOICE Network is performed by MDM Group, an accredited accountancy and administration firm based in The Hague, the Netherlands. In addition, an internal audit committee consisting of members of the VOICE Network perform an annual audit on the bookkeeping, and have approved the 2015 books.

The core funding of the Network is provided through contributions by its members. In addition, funding for specific projects, such as Cocoa Barometers and Workshops, can be obtained through other organisations. The VOICE Network does not accept funding from companies whom it is our mission to critically follow.

Please note that many of our members contribute in-kind through human resources, legal and/or technical expertise, media outreach and engagement, organisation of workshops etc. which are just as crucial to advance our cause. An exercise to 'monetise' this is virtually impossible but we would not be where we are today without their support.

2015 Financial Statement	
Income	€ 55.141
<i>Contributions by members</i>	€ 55.141
Expenditure	€ 55.141
<i>Human Resources</i>	€ 39.600
<i>Operating Expenses</i>	€ 2.606
<i>Reserves for contingencies</i>	€ 12.935

6. Organizational Structure

The VOICE Network is an association (vereniging), a legal entity within Dutch law, operating on a global level.

Members

Our highest body is our Members Assembly, which met three times in 2015. In 2015, our members were ABVV-FGTB/Horval (Belgium), Berne Declaration (Switzerland), FNV (Netherlands), Oxfam Novib (Netherlands), Oxfam Wereldwinkels (Belgium), Stop The Traffik (Netherlands/Australia), and Südwind Institut (Germany).

Board

The Members elect a board, which currently consists of Jos Hendriks (FNV, Netherlands, Chairman), Madeleine Brassier (Oxfam Novib, Netherlands, Treasurer), and Andrea Hüsler (Berne Declaration, Switzerland, Secretary).

Staff

The staff of the organisation consists of the Antonie Fountain, the Managing Director, who is directly accountable to the Board. For the final months of 2015, the Managing Director was assisted by Erik Jan van Dorp in a variety of activities.

Contact

For questions, please contact

VOICE Network

Antonie Fountain

antonie@voicenetwork.eu

For contacting the board directly

Jos Hendriks

Chairman of the Board

j.hendriks@bg.fnv.nl