



Sweden, October 12th, 2011

DEAR COCOA GROWERS OF FIJI:

Cocoa Bello withdraws from joint chocolate project

In 2005 Cocoa Bello began cooperating with a couple of you cocoa growers up in the northern parts of the Tailevu province. Our non-profit NGO did this because we believed we were able to help and assist you farmers and your families to enjoy, refine and add value to your crop. At this point cocoa farming in Fiji was an industry in serious decline that had almost vanished and the few Waimaro cocoa beans that were produced were sold well below world market prices. And chocolate was entirely an import commodity.

Together with you cocoa growers and your regional cooperative we began to outline how the dormant industry could be awakened and turned into a sustainable and integrated part of Fijian agriculture, without being dependant on the world market. Our mutual solution was to transform your growers' coop to also include processing and adding value to your commodity, suitable and adapted to Fijian society, climate and low local expenses. We assumed this arrangement would guarantee you farmers to be in control of and profit on your own crop. This culminated in the successful Sida-funded knowledge exchange of 2007 where delegations of eight, from Sweden and Fiji, visited each other. This was also the very first time Sweden officially hosted cocoa farmers.

Shortly after the exchange a split occurred among Tailevu cocoa growers when a group of core cocoa farmers formed a village cooperative and left the regional one. Cocoa Bello didn't agree to exclude any cocoa growers and urged these two groups to continue as one. The split delayed our joint project and it is not until now, more than three years later, that all cocoa growers are uniting under one big umbrella, Fiji Cocoa Growers' Coop. During the past years we have had no pronounced counterpart/sister group in Fiji to follow up the exchange with and opinions on *what to do* and *how to proceed* began drifting apart. While voices in Fiji promotes conventional sweet chocolate in larger scale production, Cocoa Bello believes in a darker, healthier and more textured chocolate, made for a niche market and suitable for the tropical climate. We also believe that production should start in very a small scale and develop slowly in small and secure steps in order to easier correct mistakes.

Cocoa Bello will not decide for others what to do and think. You should do what you believe in. Believing in what you do is by far the best base to begin from, or else you risk loosing faith and inspiration. Therefore Cocoa Bello has now decided to withdraw from an active part in the joint cocoa/chocolate project. We also believe you are ready to continue on your own with united local management. However, we will still be available for you when our opinion or help is asked for, not as an official partner NGO, but as individuals, network and your friends.

We wish all of you Fijian cocoa farmers all the luck in the future, and we hope there will be opportunities for future dialogue and discussions on your way to a prosperous future!



Fabian Rimfors
Chairman, Cocoa Bello



Malin Jansson
Secretary, Cocoa Bello



Mathias Blob
Treasurer, Cocoa Bello