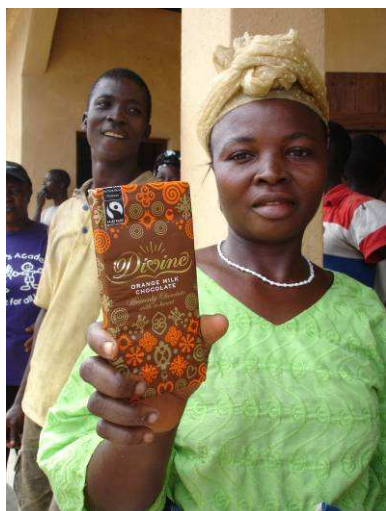


News release
Fairtrade Fortnight 2010

THE FIRST FAIRTRADE COCOA COMING OUT OF SIERRA LEONE IS



Divine Chocolate, the only Fairtrade chocolate company co-owned by cocoa farmers, is delighted to announce that, for the first time chocolate lovers can taste Fairtrade cocoa from Sierra Leone in all its products. Sierra Leone has been ravaged by a brutal and disruptive civil war for over 10 years, which ended eight years ago. This first Fairtrade shipment of cocoa out of the country is a sign of hope that the fortunes and prospects of the country's farmers can be turned around.



The first container of cocoa from Sierra Leone's only Fairtrade certified cooperative Kpeya Agricultural Enterprise (KAE), has been bought by Divine Chocolate and is of the required quality to be included in the Divine recipe. Kuapa Kokoo, the Ghanaian co-operative that owns 45% of Divine Chocolate, agreed to Divine buying this shipment of cocoa from their fellow farmers in Sierra Leone.

Sophi Tranchell, Divine Chocolate's Managing Director says:

"KAE's achievement in both creating a cooperative and trading company, and in addition meeting all the criteria necessary to be Fairtrade certified is to be celebrated. This move builds on the advances made by Fairtrade and is

an example of certified farmers being in a position to help and support their fellow farmers in other regions and countries. As Kuapa co-owns Divine and receives profits from Divine as well as the Fairtrade premium, supporting other farmers to access the Fairtrade market makes sense to them – and Divine's mission has always been to improve the livelihoods of West African farmers. With this cocoa from KAE we are extending our reach beyond Ghana."

KAE is based in Kenema, 200 miles out of Freetown, and has over 1200 members and 50 village committees. It was first established in 1996, during the civil war, and its growth and achievements are mainly down to the determination, passion and tenacity of cocoa farmer Ibrahim Moseray – the organisation's general manager. Against enormous odds, Moseray has convinced farmers of the benefits of being part of an organisation that has farmers' welfare at its heart. With the help of Twin (the

Fair Trade NGO behind Cafédirect, Divine Chocolate and Liberation Nuts), and other organisations such as the UN FAO and German Agro Action, KAE has trained farmers how to produce good quality cocoa, developed democratic structures, and learned how to export its own cocoa. Representatives from Kuapa Kokoo have come to Sierra Leone to share their expertise both in terms of running a cooperative and, importantly, improving the quality of their cocoa. Exchange visits have also been arranged with KAE representatives visiting Kuapa Kokoo.

Ibrahim Moseray says: **“I am a cocoa farmer myself and my mother and father before me. During the war I saw the struggle of my brothers and how we were cheated by traders, and I wanted to do something to make a better life for us. Kpeya means ‘Give Way’ in Mende – and we are asking the traders to ‘give way’ and let us farmers trade for ourselves”**

The challenges facing a fledgling cooperative are much greater in Sierra Leone than they were in Ghana when Kuapa Kokoo was first set up in 1993. The economy is liberalised, so anyone can trade cocoa, and there are many competitors wanting to buy farmers’ cocoa. Most farmers have little understanding of world market prices and often receive low prices for their cocoa. In Sierra Leone there is only one harvest – and in between harvests, July through to August, is known as the Hunger Season for obvious reasons. Cocoa farmers are often cheated, and many have also become dependent on traders who buy their cocoa in advance during the ‘hunger season’ before it is harvested, in exchange for rice. Rice is the staple food, but there is hardly a local market for it as American imported rice undercuts homegrown. Some cocoa farmers grow a little for their own use, but often need more to tide them over. The farmers are very conscious that the traders don’t have the farmers’ interests and welfare at heart – and this is why they have started joining KAE – an organisation run by farmers for farmers. KAE has been offering a good price and other incentives, which other traders cannot match.

The cocoa exported from Sierra Leone each year is generally of a low quality – intended for bulk use. The members of KAE have been learning how to improve the quality through more careful fermentation and drying, and how to do their own quality checks. As a result their cocoa is now good enough to be used for good Fairtrade chocolate.

Kpeya has already helped its members with a number of initiatives – including building a school in Batiama village (and arranging for a teacher to come every day to teach there) so the children there no longer have to walk four miles to the nearest school, building a cocoa depot and food store, and coordinating Farmer Field Schools. The first Fairtrade premium has been spent, on the agreement of the farmer members, on the buying of land for KAE to build its own HQ offices and store in Kenema.

KAE has just sent out its second 12.5 tonne container of Fairtrade cocoa.

Ends

For images and further information about KAE, Divine Chocolate, Twin and Kuapa Kokoo please contact Charlotte Borger on 020 7378 6550 or charlotte@divinechocolate.com

Editors’ notes:

Sierra Leone statistics

- Population c 6.4 million
- Second last on World Development Index
- A constitutional republic – current president is Ernest Bai Koroma
- 70.2% of population living below poverty line
- 282 of every 1000 children die before five years
- National literacy rate 35.1%
- Approximately 50:50 Christian and Muslim

(Source nationmaster.com)

- For more information about Twin and the farmers they work with visit www.twin.org.uk
- For more information about Divine Chocolate, its wide range of products, and its unique story visit www.divinechocolate.com
- To find out more about Kuapa Kokoo visit www.kuapakokoo.com
- Divine Chocolate Ltd is the only Fairtrade chocolate company that is also co-owned by cocoa farmers. Kuapa Kokoo, a co-operative of 45,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana, benefit not only from the Fairtrade premium on the sale of their beans, but also receive a 45% share of Divine's distributable profits giving the farmers more economic stability, as well as the increased influence in the cocoa industry company-ownership brings